

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

March 2019

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Chaska Brick

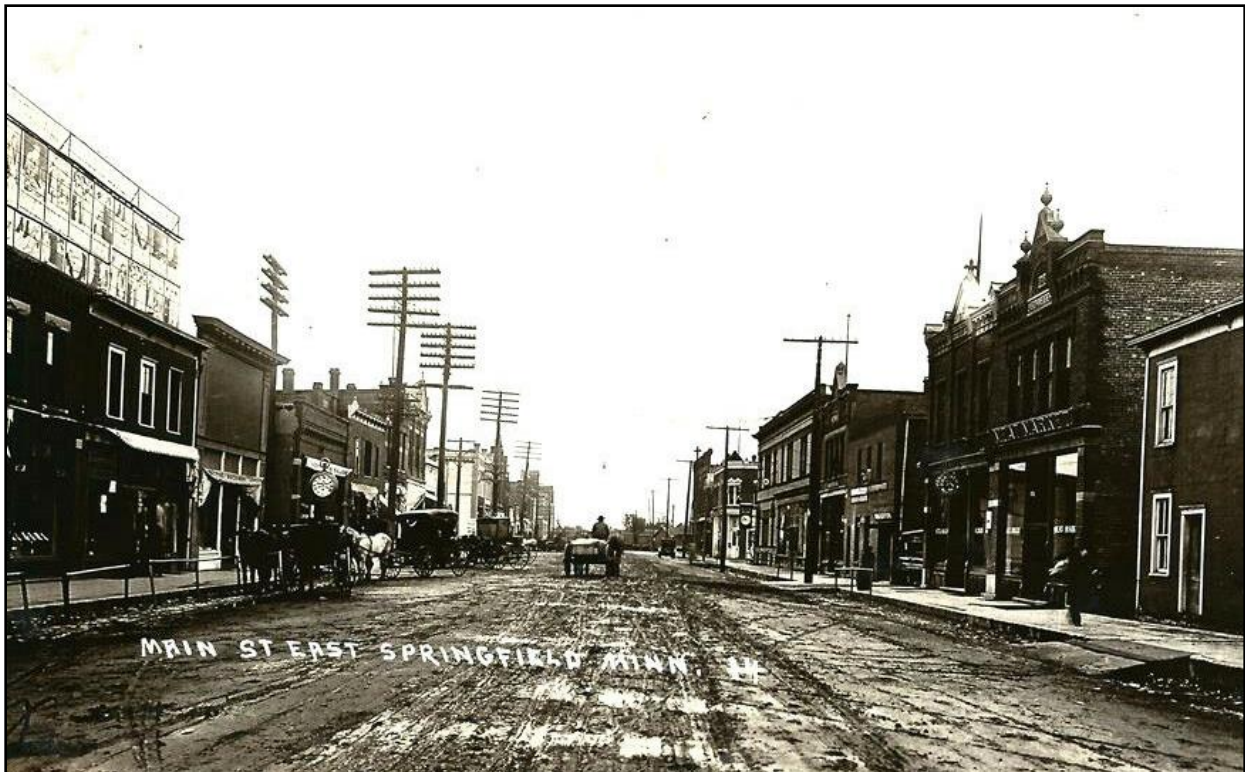
Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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Brick Buildings along Main Street in Springfield, MN & Muddy Street

1. What's New?

- I am really enjoying putting together historical YouTube videos. This past month, I completed two new videos. The first video is about John W. Gregg, one of the earliest Chaska brick manufacturers. The second is about Daniel F. Brawley, the earliest Minnesota brick manufacturer, and a St. Paul and St. Vincent resident.
- Both of the above mentioned videos are fascinating looks at Minnesota history and can be found at:
<https://www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos/>
- Feel free to send me new information. History is something that can be a lot of work. I can't read every book or visit every historical society in Minnesota, so I appreciate when people send me tips or information.
- You can sign up to automatically receive this newsletter at www.mnbricks.com
- If there is something you would like to see added, send me an email at mnbricks@gmail.com.



2. Photo of the Month



**THESE MINI RED
WING FLOWER POTS
ARE ~2 INCHES
TALL**

What is interesting?

I enjoy delving into the uses of Minnesota clay, which usually involves bricks. However, Red Wing was famous for making pottery and terra cotta. Some of their little antique salesman samples, like the flower pots shown above, can sell for over \$1,000 dollars. Other Minnesota brickyards made pottery and terra cotta too.

4. A Look Back

DOWN THE MISSISSIPPI

MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT

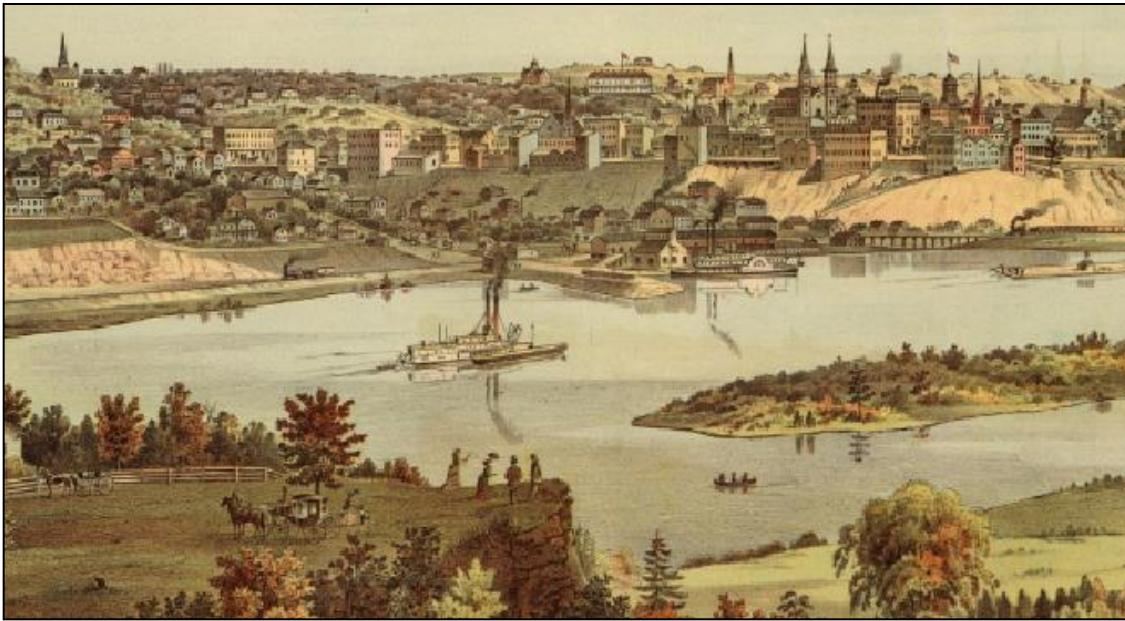
Down the Mississippi in a Skiff [a small, flat bottomed boat]. At precisely ten o'clock Saturday morning our boat was launched on the boiling waters that had just passed over the Falls. We were soon in mid-current, and the "Seat of Destiny" was shortly left in the distance. Nothing of special interest was observed until Fort Snelling was reached. One needs to see the Fort from the river in order to fully comprehend the beauty of its location.

The scenery along the banks of the river was very interesting, and helped to pass the time away. Two hours from the time of starting, St. Paul lay behind us. The rate of speed, therefore, between the two places, was between five and seven miles per hour. Nothing unusual transpired during the remainder of the day, and at night we pitched our tent about five miles below Hastings. I might mention that game of every variety in the bird line was quite plenty.

Ducks, geese, pigeons, squirrels, etc., were scattered all along, and it needed but an ordinary sportsman to reap a bountiful harvest of this kind of game. The drum of the partridge, and the defiant boo-woo-hoo of the prairie fowl sounded on every hand, and their indifference to our presence would seem to imply that some intelligent one of their number had secured a copy of the State laws, and posted up its fellow citizens on those parts that pertain to their present security.

The second day of our trip was a short one; for, as we neared Lake Pepin, a sound "as a rush of many waters" greeted our ears, and on our arrival at the head of the lake we found the wind spending its fury upon its bosom, and we forebore to venture upon its troubled surface.

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1874 View of St. Paul, MN

The third day proved better than the second, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon we passed Reads Landing. Wabasha, a short distance below, was soon after behind, and as we turned a bend in the river, a little further on, the village of Alma, in Wisconsin, made its appearance. It was fast growing dark when we reached that place, and in attempting to make landing we miscalculated the distance to the shore, the result of dropping down the river a little too far, and a small island came between us and the mainland.

Nothing was left for us to do but to let the current have its way, and it was 12 o'clock midnight before we succeeded in making a landing, which was at Minneiska. After several attempts to awaken some of the inhabitants, that we might secure comfortable lodgings, we concluded to let them rest. We finally came to a small shed which had been used to storing lumber, and beneath its sheltering roof we sought repose. A late start next morning, with unfavorable winds, made our fourth day's journey rather short.

About noon of this day, after passing under the Winona bridge, a violent wind burst upon us, retarding our progress so much that we took to the sloughs on the Wisconsin side. Here but little speed was made, owing to the dead water, and we soon after pushed out for the main channel, but before reaching it one of us had made the attempt to sound the river by placing his toes on the bottom. It is needless to say that he was unsuccessful, and crawling back into the boat, wet and shivering with cold, made the report, 'n-o b-o-t-t-o-m.'

Night found us at Trempeleau, twenty miles from LaCrosse. We launched our boat for the last time at about 6 o'clock the next morning, and arrived at LaCrosse at 10, thus completing the voyage from the Falls to LaCrosse in exactly four days, to an hour. (*The Redwood Gazette*, Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Thursday, May 8, 1873, Page 1)

5. Brick Structure of the Month



RED LAKE COUNTY COURTHOUSE RED LAKE FALLS, MINNESOTA



I drove through downtown Red Lake Falls, Minnesota, for the first time this past month. I was surprised at what a beautiful spot it is and how the Red Lake County Courthouse dominates the landscape. The county courthouse was a cherished building for a town in the old days. There were many nasty fights between towns over which one should get it. Usually, the land on which they were built was donated by the town and local materials and labor were used as much as possible. I don't have a lot of information on the Red Lake Falls courthouse, but I do have an article about the laying of its cornerstone:

Red Lake Falls, Minn., June 13. Despite inclement weather a large number of people were on hand to witness Saturday afternoon the laying of the corner stone of the new Red Lake county courthouse. Dr. N. M. Watson of this city presided. Rev. Mr. Hughes of this city spoke while Attorney F. A. Grady gave a history of Lake county. Dr. I. Lemieux delivered an able address, having been a resident of this city and county many years. The history of the county and other papers and souvenirs were placed in a metallic box and the honor of sealing this was given to J. A. Duffy, mayor. The corner stone was laid in place by the county commissioners and the Stars and Stripes were planted thereon by W. H. Krueger, after which the audience sang "America." (*The Duluth Herald*, Monday, June 13, 1910, Page 2)

6. News Nuggets

News Nuggets

The *Minneapolis Tribune* tells it in this way: A tourist, wishing to get a bird's eye view of Minneapolis, tried it from the top of Dean & Co.'s new chimney, about one hundred and thirty feet above street grade. He was picked up - most of him - near Lyndale, in several pieces. The coroner thought an inquest unnecessary, and his funeral will take place as soon as a missing leg is found." The accident is claimed to have happened on Thursday last, on which day there was a heavy wind. Wind or no wind, there must be considerable blow in the man who wrote that story. (*The Redwood Gazette*, Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Thursday, May 8, 1873, Page 4)

The pork packing season, which has about closed exhibits much smaller operations than heretofore, owing to the exhaustion of the hog crop of the previous season. The high price of pork at that time, averaging 12 ½ cents per pound, and the large supply required by the government, induced the producers to cut close, and hence the number of hogs in the State during the past year has been unusually light. The price of pork this season has averaged a fraction over 9 cents per pound, which, though greater than the Chicago rates, has not been deemed high enough by our farmers to warrant them in making as thorough a sweep of their stock as in the more prosperous season of 1864-5. The principal business during this winter has been done by Mr. Thomas Lamb and Messrs. Hoyt & Seager, though several other packers have each cut enough hogs to supply the local demand. The following is a brief exhibit of the business of these two houses:

Thomas Lamb. Number of hogs packed...637. Average weight of each...236. Number of barrels packed...165. Pounds of hams smoked...17,836. Pounds of shoulder smoked...7,500. Pounds of lard...12,200. Average price of pork per pound 9 [and] 85-100 cents.

Hoyt and Seager. Number of hogs packed...155. Average weight of each...201. Number of barrels packed...53. Pounds of ham smoked...4,100. Pounds of shoulder smoked...4,000. Pounds of lard...4,000. Average price of pork per pound a shade less than 9 cents. The pork this season, though smaller in bulk, has been much superior in quality to any ever before raised in the State. (*Saint Paul Daily Press*, Friday, March 16, 1866, Page 4)

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Saturday we did our business, and just night went on board the Steamer Osceola, and gave ourself up to enjoyment, and we were not disappointed. The Osceola has the most social and accommodating officers, and crew that has been our good fortune to meet. Captain Thimens and Mr. Macy, Clerk make every effort to have the time pass pleasantly. The Captain's wife came on board at Henderson and she with the Clerks wife who is spending the summer on the boat, added much to the social pleasure of the trip. The table was well spread, and bountifully provided, the cooking was as delicate as can be found in our first-class hotels, and steward and waiters were attentive. Freights were carefully handled and, delivered in good shape and without any scolding and swearing as is usual by boatmen. Now is the time for pleasure-seekers to take a trip, and the Osceola is the boat, and Minnesota the river to take it on. The idea of gliding along in the midst of heavy forest, and wild fruit trees in full bloom, with grape vines climbing to the very top and drooping in graceful festoons so near in some places, that you can grasp them from the deck, then a cheerful outlook on the beautiful farms with inviting looking dwellings, then another change to the wonderful bluffs and rocks for which the Minnesota and Redwood rivers are famous, is a pleasant one, the realization is delightful. (*The Redwood Gazette*, Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Thursday, June 5, 1873, Page 1)

The *Le Sueur News* tells about a startling discovery made recently on the farm of Mr. Edward Gleek of Ottawa township in the woods along the river. In clearing a piece of land it became necessary to cut down a gigantic white oak tree, which broke in falling disclosing the fact that it was hollow for a distance of about fifteen feet, beginning several feet above the ground and the cavity ending in a large opening concealing among the branches of the lower side of the tree, which leaned considerably. Within this hollow was found by the horrified choppers the mummified body of a man, not at all decayed, but dried and shriveled by the lapse of time into something rivalling the best Egyptian art. Mr. Gleek, on being summoned by the frightened laborers, recognized at once in the mummy the body of Jean LaRue, a former servant of Mr. Gleek, who had mysteriously disappeared from the farm the 30th day of August 1862. On the day, which was during the Sioux uprising, a boat load of soldiers on their way up the Minnesota river from St. Paul to New Ulm, foolishly discharged their muskets many times as they steamed up the river above Henderson, carrying terror to the hearts of people along the river who were already about to flee from the dreaded Indians. At Le Sueur one of the bullets thus discharged wounded a small boy, Cyrus MeEwen, in the leg. Mr. Gleek says that when Jean LaRue heard the firing he seemed to nearly lose his reason from fear, rushed into the house, seized his rifle and some other belongings, including about \$700 in money, and fled into the woods. He must have known of this hollow tree, sought to hide there, slipped down too far, and being unable to extricate himself, must have perished there where his body, preserved in the living oak, failed to decay. His rifle, bullet pouch and powder horn were found by him and the money, \$783.50, was found in his pocket. Also there was found the diary which Mr. Gleek says La Rue always faithfully kept, and in it undated, but on the page following the one dated Friday, August 29, 1862, was written in trembling words the following. "Can not get out; surely must die. If ever found, send me and all my money to my mother, Madam Suzanne La Rue, near Taron, in the province of Bouches Du Rhone, France." Through the consul at Marseilles Mr. Gleek will endeavor to learn something of the dead man's relatives, but there is not much hope of doing so at this late date. *Brown County Journal*. (*The Redwood Gazette*, Redwood Falls, Minnesota, Wednesday, June 25, 1919, Page 1)