

*Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota*

# Minnesota Bricks

September 2019

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[www.mnbricks.com](http://www.mnbricks.com)

## Chaska Brick

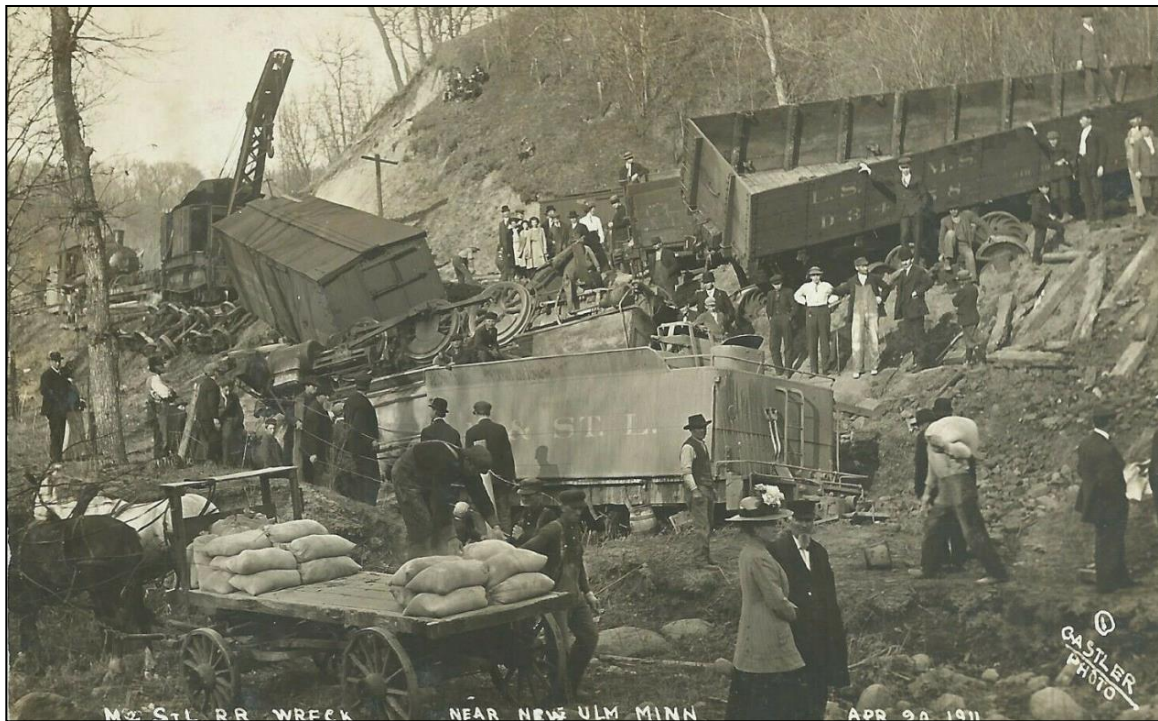
Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



[www.chaskabrick.com](http://www.chaskabrick.com)

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Railroads helped transport brick from city to city in the old days. However, this method of transport was not always safe! This is a postcard of a train wreck near New Ulm, Minnesota.

# 1. What's New?

- I am not quite as active in producing extra material in the summer. However, I am still finding a ton of information, I just don't have as much time to process it.
- A woman in the Twin Cities area wrote me to say she had some "CHASKA" stamped bricks and wanted to donate them. I referred her to the Chaska Historical Society, which uses them as a fund raiser.
- 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](http://www.mnbricks.com)
- If there is something you would like to see added, send me an email at [mnbricks@gmail.com](mailto:mnbricks@gmail.com).



## 2. Photo of the Month



This is an old postcard of a brick house in Springfield, Minnesota. It appears that it was built of Ochs brick from Springfield. If you drive through Springfield today, there are still numerous Ochs brick houses scattered across the town. The A. C. Ochs house is also still there. The Ochs logo is above the front door (shown below).





# 3. For Sale

There are still many brick-related remnants left from the old days.

Shown below is a 20 x 30 inch collage poster with pictures of New Ulm, Minnesota. You can find it for purchase on the "Shop" page of my website:

[www.mnbricks.com/shop](http://www.mnbricks.com/shop)

On the same page, there are other posters for sale on various brick towns, the historic Minnesota River Valley churches, and the Minnesota Winter of 1880-81.



## 4. A Look Back

### HASTINGS & DAKOTA RAILROAD MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT



The Hastings & Dakota railroad was completed from Hastings to Chaska, Minnesota, in 1871 (and eventually further west). This railroad helped fuel the brick industry of Chaska. The photograph above is of a Hastings & Dakota steam locomotive crossing the Vermillion River near Hastings.

Most of the railroad is gone today. However, when it was in operation, the railroad linked Shakopee to Chaska, Minnesota, by a bridge across the Minnesota River. The bridge was torn down years ago, but before it was, the railroad line had been converted to a pedestrian path.

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I have always wanted to trace the old pedestrian path (railroad line) from Chaska to the Minnesota River. On a recent trip to Chaska, I did just that. The path starts near the Carver County Courthouse, where a powerline also tracks across the Minnesota River. Along the dike at the courthouse, there are remnants of the wooden trestle that was built to keep the railroad line above the flooding Minnesota River. Floods have been a problem in recent years along the Minnesota River, keeping it persistently high. This has continued to erode what is left of the original railroad grade. However, if you look closely, you can still find it! See the pictures below.



# 5. Brick Structure of the Month



## **OLSTAD FARM ACO SILO NEAR HANSKA, MINNESOTA**



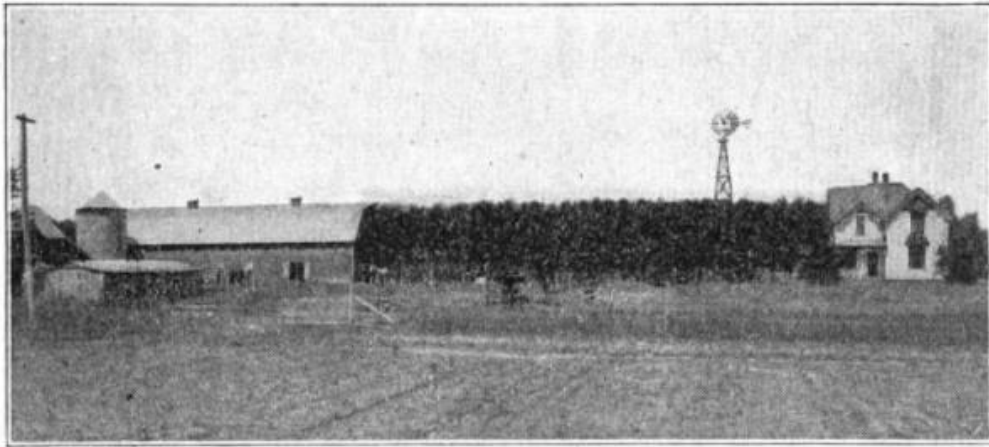
It is no secret my favorite brickyard in Minnesota was the Ochs Brickyard in Springfield, Minnesota. Years ago, I used to take trips to the Springfield area to see what remnants I could find of the Ochs brick industry. Earlier this month, I was able to make a trek back to the Springfield area.

The Ochs Brickyard was on the eastern edge of town, along the railroad track. To give some history, the Ochs Brickyard was the longest running brickyard in Minnesota. The family eventually sold it to the Acme Brick Company, which ended its operations in Springfield in 2016. As I drove by the brickyard, there were "For Sale" signs posted out front. I went to the realty company website and found that it was being sold for around \$1.5 million. If that land could talk! It has experienced a lot of history.

Springfield has more than its fair share of Ochs brick houses and business buildings. They are easy to spot, because of their orange-red colored brick. Ochs also branched out into farm buildings, and supplied the brick or block for many "A.C.O." silos scattered across Minnesota. The picture of the ACO silo shown above was taken at the old Carl Olstad farm near Hanska, Minnesota, which is in eastern Brown County, south of New Ulm. Carl Olstad, an early 1900s graduate of the agricultural school at the University of Minnesota, is said to have had the first ACO silo built on his farm.

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Farm home of Carl Olstad's Hanska, Minn., new barn and silo on the left and good shelter belt in the background. Minnesota needs more such prosperous looking farm homes.

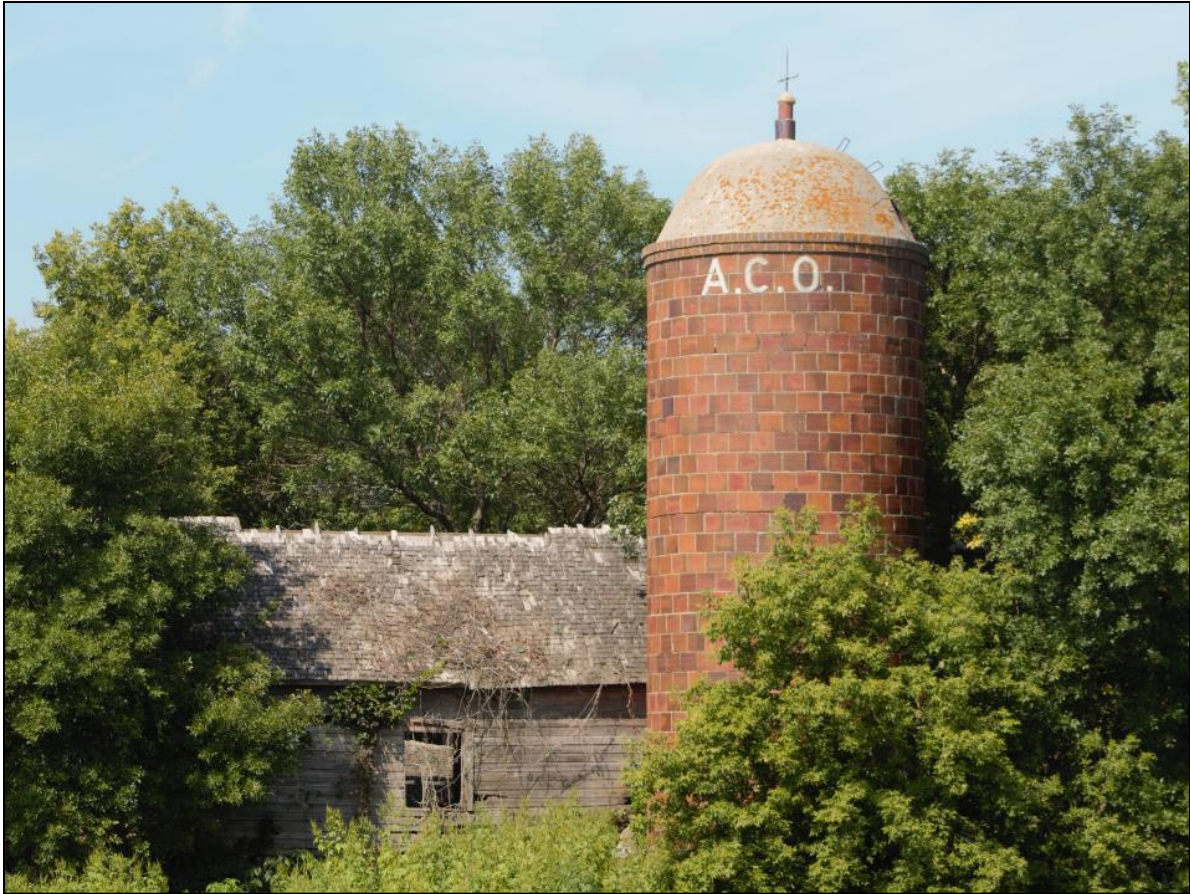
Using old plat maps and directories, I generally knew where the Olstad farm was. Upon driving by the farm, it was neat to see that there was an ACO silo still on the old farm, but I don't think it was the first one that was built (an image of the first silo at the farm is shown above). This first silo looks shorter with more of an inverted "V" roof. Even so, it was nice to see a well maintained older model ACO silo still there. In front of the farm, the current owners have a large rock with a carving on it that says "Olstad Farm."

However, along with the good, there is also some bad. As I drove around Brown County, there are spots I had visited old ACO silos or structures that are no longer there. These Ochs brick buildings and silos were well made. They could easily last another 100 years if they are maintained. But some people don't value them or they get in the way, so little by little the Ochs brick fingerprints are being erased. The following pictures are just a few of the other Ochs brick farm buildings I came across on my recent trip.



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# 6. News Nuggets

## News Nuggets

Yesterday evening at 4 o'clock, a terrible accident occurred to the immense freight train which came in from the West, when within a few rods of the depot in this city. It appears the custom is, when a train nears the depot, to cut the engine loose from the train and run on ahead with it, and by turning the switch permit the engine to run off on a side track, and then get the switch closed again to the main track before the cars come up, and allow them to continue on down to the elevator or main freight track. This way of "doing it" we believe saves some work and after the train passes they can return at once to the engine house with the locomotive. Yesterday evening, however, they failed, after running the engine off on the side track, to get the switch back ere the heavily loaded train arrived, and the result was the train ran off the end of the track on to the ground. The train contained some thirty cars, all loaded with flour and wheat save three flat cars which were in front. The train was a heavy one, of course, which accounts for the wonderful destruction of property; and although the breakmen [brakemen] did all in their power to check its headway, they were unable to stop the train before coming to the end of the track. Eight cars went off, three flat and five box cars, and were badly broken. The flat cars were literally smashed to pieces, and thrown into one confused mess. The five box cars were loaded with wheat and flour, and one or two that were loaded with the former made bad work with their cargoes, throwing the wheat in every direction. The loss of property we cannot tell, but it must have been some thousands of dollars. Fortunately only one person [was] injured, a breaksman, name Charles Gray. We are informed that his injuries are not of a serious nature, although quite severe. He was on top of one of the fated cars handling his break [brake], and was thrown to the ground, but fortunately not under the cars. Winona Democrat. (*Federal Union*, Rochester, Minnesota, Saturday, September 5, 1868, Page 3)

Many of our citizens are annoyed during the summer months, by the depredations of refractory [mischievous] boys, who invade their grounds during the season for fruits, carrying off or destroying as much as they are capable of doing, and in some cases making a clean sweep of it. There have been many instances where gentlemen have stepped into their gardens to ascertain if the plums of a favorite tree were fit for use, or an extra nice melon fit for picking and sorely vexed and disappointed to find that some thievish scoundrel had been in advance of them. Unless the little candidates for the Penitentiary desist from thieving we hope to see some of them receive the full penalty of the law, as a warning to others. (*Federal Union*, Rochester, Minnesota, Saturday, September 5, 1868, Page 3)

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Last Tuesday brought one of those rare mornings of which we have one or two every winter. A frost fog had silver plated all out doors. Trees, houses, fences, everything was tipped with a beautiful white, glittering shower of sparkling frost, and every little puff of wind filled the air with a diamond dust of the tiny crystals. It only needed the bright sunshine that generally follows such a morning to gild the scene into the beauty of fairy land. (*The Rochester Post*, Saturday, February 17, 1866, Page 8)

Last Sunday night we saw an old gal, who evidently was not a good Templar. She was sitting on the front step of a store, to the great annoyance of the proprietor who was just opening his door, and who didn't seem to relish the idea of getting whiskey by wholesale in that way. The moon wasn't lighted up and we couldn't see the style of her beauty, but her rich Irish brogue with its strong dash of profanity and odor of the still hadn't anything fascinating about it. A bystander told us that she frequently appeared in the streets of nights, and always in a highly poetic condition. (*The Rochester Post*, Saturday, February 17, 1866, Page 8)

We noticed in the Post of December 23rd the fact of a team driven through Broadway by some reckless fellow, knocking down and seriously injuring an old gentleman, Mr. O. T. White. We regret very much to announce that Mr. White died last Sunday from the injuries then received. This is a most melancholy result of careless and willful racing in a crowded street. (*The Rochester Post*, Saturday, February 17, 1866, Page 8)

Our enterprising fellow-citizen, Mr. D. Heaney, has purchased of Mr. Browning Nichols, for the consideration of \$20,000 - payment chiefly in hand - the beautiful grounds heretofore occupied by the State and County Fairs, and Rochester Driving Park - embracing 330 acres, on 10 of which is a growth of valuable timber. The tract is upon the margin of the present city limits; and, aside from the value which it derives from this fact, the larger portion of it is under a high state of cultivation, and the whole is better fenced than any farm in Olmsted county. (*Federal Union*, Rochester, Minnesota, Saturday, December 5, 1868, Page 3)

We are indebted to Mr. Hamilton, the gentlemanly station agent of the Valley Railroad at this place, for total shipments of lime by railroad since the opening of the spring lime trade. The amount of shipments of lime by railroad during the season, from Shakopee, have been 2,970,000 pounds, equal to 14,850 barrels. We have not yet received the figures showing the amount of shipments of lime by river but expect to soon. (*Shakopee Weekly Argus*, Thursday, December 24, 1868, Page 4)