

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

November 2019

Minnesota Bricks

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

www.mnbricks.com

Chaska Brick

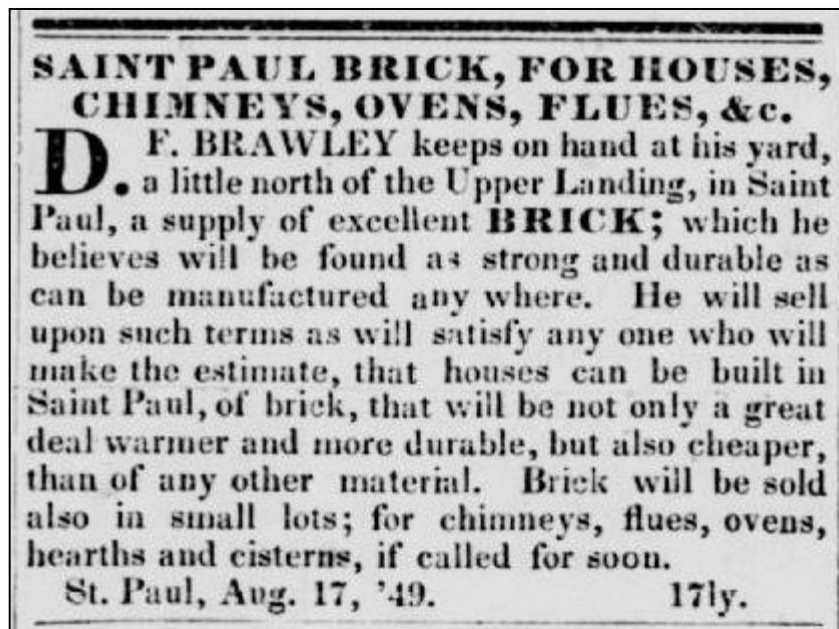
Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



www.chaskabrick.com

Contents

1. What's New?	3
2. Photo of the Month	4
3. For Sale	5
4. A Look Back	6
5. Brick Structure of the Month	10
6. News Nuggets	12



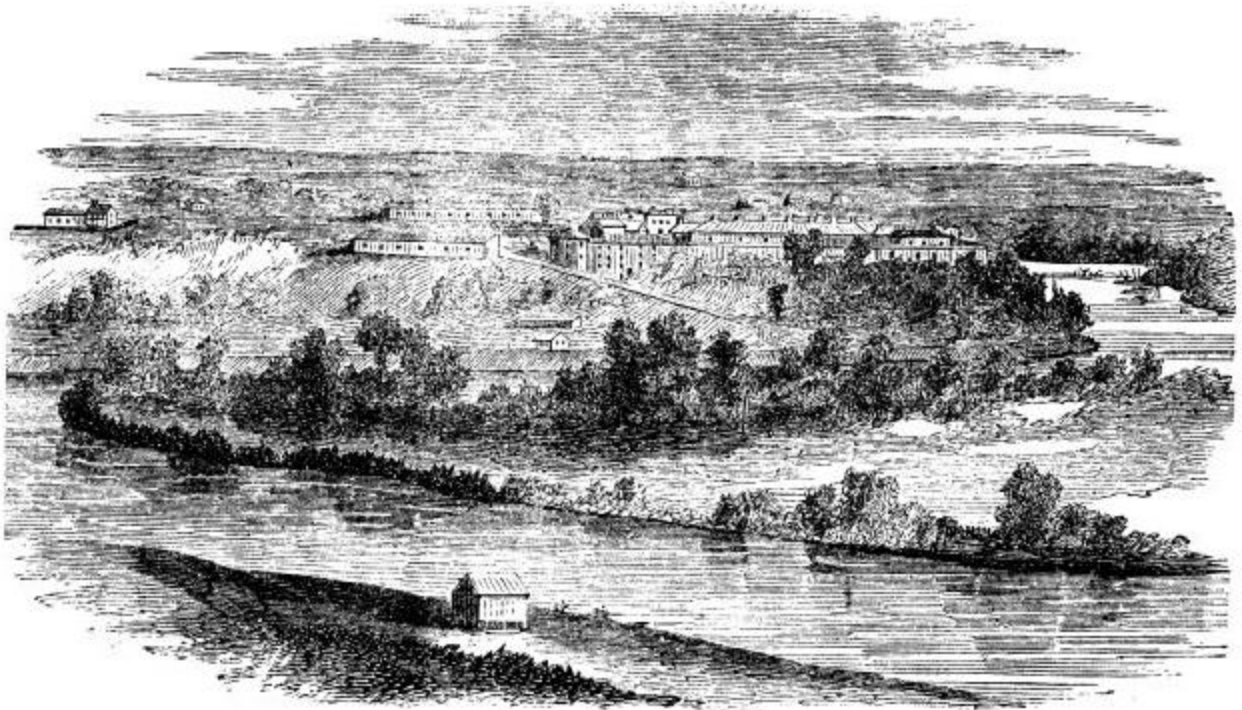
Daniel F. Brawley was the first brick manufacturer in the State of Minnesota. He began making bricks at St. Paul in 1849. This was his first advertisement in the *Minnesota Pioneer*.

1. What's New?

- Fall (or winter it seems) has come early, making trips out into the field a lot tougher. So that gives me more time to work on brick history.
- 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



FORT SNELLING.

This is a picture of Fort Snelling from the 1856 St. Paul City Directory. Fort Snelling was built in 1819, at the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers. In this picture, the Mississippi River is shown in the right center and the Minnesota River is shown along the bottom. The lone house in the bottom center was a trading post, which eventually became known as the town of Mendota.

4. A Look Back

FORT SNELLING MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT

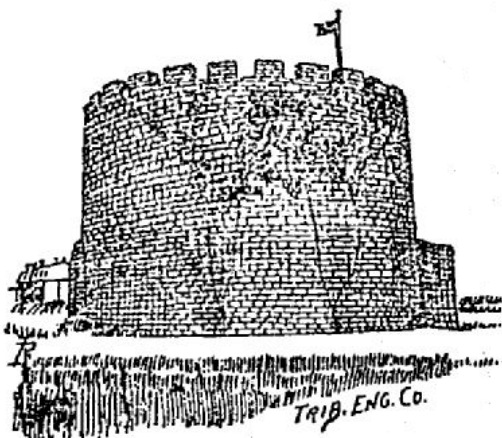


Old Fort Snelling. It is surprising to many who are unapprised of the facts to learn that Minnesota has an early history antedating [starts before] many of the older and more populous states of the union. But a glance at that excellent historical work "Mills History of Minnesota" will show how large a place was filled by Minnesota, while Ohio, Indiana and Illinois were in the wilderness condition. But the history of Minnesota as a prospective commonwealth of the great American nation would probably date from the establishment of the military post of Ft. Snelling in 1819.

Continued on the Next Page

In the early part of the present century the American fur trade was a monopoly of a rich English company, which had its stations scattered all along the northern shores of the lake chain as far north as Hudson bay, and westward through British Columbia and the mountain regions of what now constitutes Montana, Idaho, and Washington territories and the state of Oregon. John Jacob Astor organized the American Fur Company early in the century, and commenced competing with the great English "trust" known as the Hudson's Bay Company.

Traders sent out by him [Astor] found their way through the trackless forests of what now constitutes the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Iowa and Minnesota, and even penetrated across the prairies of Dakota and Montana to the mountain springs which give birth to the great Missouri river. In pursuing the policy of "encouraging American industry" the Democratic administrations of Jefferson, Madison and Monroe extended the protecting power of the American army gradually westward, and in 1819 the military entered the unknown region occupied by the Dakota Indians, and established at the junction of the Mississippi and St. Peter [Minnesota] rivers the frontier post since known as Ft. Snelling.

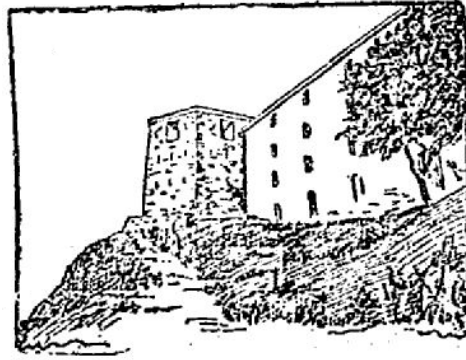


Round House.

This became the nucleus around which gathered the primitive elements of our modern civilization. The writer many years ago stood on the "lookout" at the fort with Hon. Joseph R. Brown, and heard with interest his account of the landing of the first little squad of soldiers sent into the wilderness to commence the task of giving more empire to the republic.

At the time Ft. Snelling was established Mr. Brown was a drummer boy in the army, and he described the conditions surrounding the spot most graphically. The low land between the high point where the fort now stands and the Minnesota (then called St. Peters) river was covered with a heavy growth of maple, birch and oak timber, the streams being fringed with willow. The channel just below the fort, extending from the Mississippi to the Minnesota, was not then in existence, and what is now the large island reaching down in front of the village of Mendota was a peninsula, also covered with a heavy growth of hard wood. Mr. Brown pointed out the exact spot where the troops landed, described the location and appearance of the first camp, and told of the hardships and sufferings of the first winter.

Continued on the Next Page



Old Roadway.

The fort now standing on the high bluff was commenced in the spring of 1820, the cantonment [camp] of the troops during the previous winter having been in the protecting shadows of the tall trees below. Forty years later, or the year 1860, found the old fort abandoned by the government as a military post and tumbling into ruins. Around the old military establishment had grown thriving towns and cities and the frontier had been pushed to Ft. Ridgely on the southwest, Ft. Abercrombie on the northwest and Fr. Ripley on the north. But a new and more important historical era was dawning for the old fort...

The guns at Fr. Sumpter had not yet cooled from the gallant defense of Maj. Anderson, before a thousand sons of Minnesota had made their rendezvous at old Ft. Snelling, and the monotonous "left, left, left," of the drill-sergeant bespoke the inauguration of a discipline which was to tell a story of dauntless courage and peerless patriotism upon a hundred southern battlefields. For four long years the old fort was the centre of military activity for the state of Minnesota. Here were born 11 regiments, one regiment of heavy artillery, two full cavalry regiments, three battalions of cavalry and several batteries of light artillery - the aggregate of all the troops sent by Minnesota, the youngest born of the sisterhood of states, being between 25,000 and 30,000 soldiers.

Each organization as its services was [were] needed proceeded to Ft. Snelling. Here it was officered; here the "awkward squad" was trained to become a finished block in the mosaic of a mighty army; here for weeks each regiment, battalion and battery would remain quartered and drilling while clothing and arms were prepared for their use...

Other states divided their places of rendezvous, but here "Old Ft. Snelling" is the one spot linked indissolubly in the memory of every Minnesota soldier with every minute transaction of his military history. The spot itself, and every particular of its surrounding is picturesquely beautiful, and historically suggestive. Minnehaha Falls, the epitome of nature's beautiful handiwork, Mendota, the rude village with a romantic history; "the meeting of the waters..."

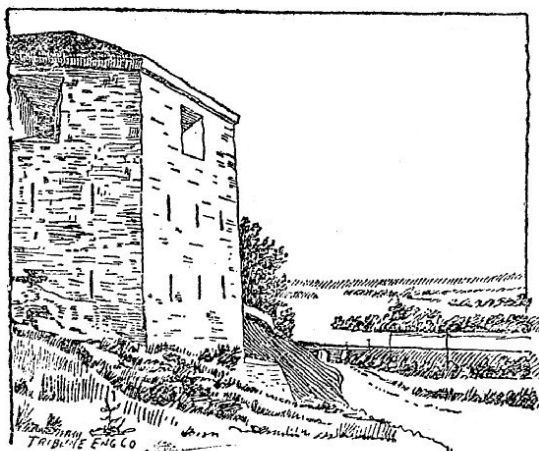
Continued on the Next Page

...As the hearts of other and happier circumstanced men, as age creeps onward, turn toward the shadows of university halls with loving remembrance, so, instinctively the recollection of every soldier of the great war from Minnesota turns toward the frowning walls of the "old fort." It has not been without pain, that he has seen the hand of vandal "improvement" destroy many of the old land marks about the sacred spot, and with infinite thankfulness he has discovered that the ant-spirit [memory] has been sufficiently strong in the bosoms of some of the gentlemen "vested with a little brief authority" at the classic spot to induce them to leave some faint reminders of the primitive era of its history.

There are still one or two features which linger to speak to those who are growing old of the splendid season of their youth, and echo back the first bugle-calls of '61. It is fearful to contemplate what the next gentleman who takes command down there may do, with his West Point education in architecture and his utter want of historical knowledge of the place and its surroundings. In the name of the state its soldiers ask: Is there not plenty of room on that great reservation for improvement without further emasculating this speaking monument of our early history.

Please, gentlemen, allow such features as have not yet been destroyed to remain intact - at least until the few old Minnesota soldiers yet living shall be sleeping noiselessly with their fathers. The illustrations by the Tribune artists recall some of the old features of the Fort. Notably the original roadway up the hill guarded by the block house pierced for musketry, and the old five-story building, used during the war indiscriminately, for company mess-rooms, and for storage of supplies - for all purposes, in short.

Aside from the Fort illustrations there is shown the present temporary quarters for the Soldiers' Home. The Home proper will occupy the high and beautiful peninsula between Minnehaha creek and Mississippi river - and with the labor to be expended on the grounds will soon be the most beautiful spot on the continent. The falls are within ear-shot of the quiet place selected for the honored veterans to spend the evening of their days, and will forever sing their requiem mass after they have passed to the other side. (*Minneapolis Tribune*, Sunday, May 27, 1888, Page 13)



Block House.

5. Brick Structure of the Month



ST. CLOUD NORMAL SCHOOL ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA



This is an early photograph of the St. Cloud Normal School. On the back of the photograph it says: "Tuition free to all pledging two years' service as teachers. Model School open to pupils of all grades. Tuition, \$6.00 per term in advance. The "Normal Home" (located on the Normal School grounds) is conducted on the family co-operative plan, affording good accommodations at very low prices. For circulars address D. L. Kiehle, Principal. ...Photographed August 13th, 1877, by N. J. Trenham, portrait and landscape photographer, Alexandria, Minnesota."

Continued on the Next Page

As the new building for the State Normal School at this place will be completed this week and turned over by the contractor to the State, we deem it a fitting time to give a brief outline history of the school. The bill establishing this school and the school at Mankato was passed by the Legislature of 1866; the State appropriating \$5,000 and agreeing to maintain the school for a term of ten years provided the people of St. Cloud donated an equal amount. At a public meeting some time afterwards it was voted to issue bonds to the amount of \$5,000.

These bonds were issued in July, 1868, and taken at once by citizens and the money deposited in the State Treasury. There was considerable discussion as to where the building should be located, but after a personal visit here and a careful examination of the different places proposed, the State Normal Board selected what was known as the "Stearns House" property. The location is a beautiful one, on a bluff of the Mississippi, commanding a fine view up and down the river. The price paid for the property and adjoining lots was \$3,350 and a further expenditure of \$3,250 was made in altering and improving the building, which had been used for a hotel, so as to make it serve the purposes of the school temporarily...

In 1869 an appropriation of \$10,000 dollars was made toward the erection of a permanent building, and this amount was expended on a foundation built of granite. Strong efforts were made during the three subsequent sessions of the Legislature to obtain further appropriations for putting up the superstructure, but they failed of success. Last year, however an appropriation of \$30,000 was secured, and the contract for completing the building was let to Mr. A. Montgomery, of this city, in accordance with plans drawn by Mr. A. M. Radcliffe, Architect, of St. Paul.

Mr. Montgomery began work in the early summer, and has the building completed in advance of the date fixed by the contract - August 1st, 1874 - and he has done an excellent job. It is said on all sides that the State owns no other building which makes so good a showing for the amount of money expended. As before stated, the foundation is of granite, while the superstructure is of cream-colored brick - both brick and stone being obtained in the vicinity of St. Cloud. It makes a very fine appearance, and from its commanding location can be seen for a long distance. The city has vacated, to be added to the school grounds, a small park and a street, which with the lots donated and purchased make a tract of ground of some five or six acres.

These grounds are now being graded, and will be improved with ornamental and shade trees, etc... The first term of the School opened September 15th, 1869... The Legislature at its last session appropriated \$10,000 for heating and furnishing the building. The new furniture is now on the way from Chicago. It is of the best pattern and most approved make. A Chickering piano for the use of the school is also on the way. The building will cost completed and furnished (excluding the cost of the grounds) \$50,000. (*The Saint Cloud Journal*, Thursday, July 23, 1874, Page 3)

6. News Nuggets

News Nuggets

St. Paul. This town, which was but yesterday unknown, for the reason that it had then no existence, is situated on the east bank of the Mississippi river, about five miles south of latitude forty-five degrees north – being about in the same latitude of New Hampshire and Vermont, and the central portion of the State of Maine. St. Paul is at the head of steamboat navigation on the river, being only eight miles by land below the Falls of St. Anthony, of which we shall say more hereafter. In approaching St. Paul by passage up the river, after making a large bend around the Sioux reservation on the western shore – a beautiful tract of well-wooded land – at a distance of about half a mile below St. Paul, the entire village breaks suddenly upon the view, resting upon a bluff nearly one hundred feet above the level of the river, and extending up the river about half a mile. At each end of the town, the bluff is cloven down, so as to afford a moderate grade down to the river; and these two points of access to the river, make the Upper and Lower Landing. A more beautiful site for a town cannot be imagined. It must be added that bilious fevers and the fever and ague are strangers to St. Paul. A description of the village now would not answer for a month hence – such is the rapidity of building and the miraculous resurrection of every description of domicils [domiciles]. Piles of lumber and building materials lie scattered everywhere in admirable confusion. The whole town is on the stir – stores, hotels, houses, are projected and built in a few days. California is forgotten, and the whole town is rife with the exciting spirit of advancement. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, April 28, 1849, Page 2)

The Wind got high in St. Paul, last Thursday and brought clattering down an entire frame [building], erected for a Bowling alley. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, April 28, 1849, Page 2)

Messrs. Bryson and Downie have just completed a public well in Saint Paul, at the corner of Jackson and Third streets, for the accommodation of that neighborhood of the town. We mention it as a fact of some importance, showing that wells can be obtained at no great expense, on the brow of the bluff along which our town is extending and within a stone's throw of the river. Although the bluff is nearly one hundred feet high, excellent water was found in the well at the depth of less than forty feet. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, May 5, 1849, Page 2)

Carpenters in Saint Paul, are now fully employed. Mr. Brawley is making a large supply of brick near the upper end of town. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, May 26, 1849, Page 2)

Continued on the Next Page

For the edification of our readers “down East” who have never seen the way they do these things on the Mississippi, we relate the following incident: On Wednesday last, a large ox fell overboard from the boiler deck of the Senator, which was crowded with cattle and horses migrating to Minnesota. The ox was held up by the horns, until a rope was passed under his belly. A pulley was run down from the hurricane deck and attached to the rope, and in this sort of a sling, the huge lubber was raised out of the water, and deposited upon the boiler deck. It was all done with careful haste, by the direction of Captain Smith, at a place in the river where landing was impossible. It was a specimen of very poor beef very well jerked. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, May 26, 1849, Page 2)

Quite a large company of the Winnebago Indians came through Saint Paul on Monday last, on their way from the North to visit the Sioux and Little Crow village, two or three miles below our town. They were all mounted on their ponies, and rode through the village in single file – the order in which they always travel, as will be apparent to any one who has seen the narrow Indian trails that thread the whole valley of the Mississippi river. It was understood that the Winnebagoes would have a grand “Medicine Dance,” in St. Paul, on Tuesday; but the rain pouring down in torrents all day, prevented. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, June 7, 1849, Page 2)

Last Sunday, at about two o’clock P. M., there appeared amongst the woods, on the west bank of the Mississippi, opposite Saint Paul, a drove of fifty cattle, all the way from Clayton county, Iowa. This is the first drove that ever came up by land from below. We are glad to see cattle coming in; for although we seldom get any beef in Saint Paul, some of us still retain a relish for it. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, June 14, 1849, Page 2)

Mr. Ayre has just arrived at Saint Paul, from the Red lake mission, several hundred miles north of us, in latitude forty-eight degrees north. Red lake is the source of one branch of Red river, which after a course of about 200 miles, forms a confluence with Otter Tail River and then takes the name of Red River. The branch flowing from the lake is about half as large as the Merrimac at Lowell. Red Lake is about thirty miles long and ten miles wide and abounds with fish – particularly the white fish – of which the Ojibway Indians upon its shores, numbering over nine hundred, take large quantities in the fall, with gill nets and dry them fresh, strung upon poles, in the smoke of their cabins, for winter subsistence. Salt lakes are found in those regions, however, of which the water yields salt in the proportion of one part of salt to three parts of water. These Ojibways (a name synonymous with Chippeways) are represented to be quite industrious; even the men engaging in agriculture with the women and girls, the boys alone being exempt from labor. Last season, they raised 2,500 bushels of corn, much of it being sold by them to the traders for clothing and supplies, at \$1.50 per bushel. They also raised 1,500 bushels of excellent potatoes – the potatoe [potato] rot being unknown there. Many of the Ojibways have built log houses to live in. the past season they have been more prosperous than usual, and have had no murders committed amongst them lately; owing to the efficient agency of Mr. Rice and of Gen. Fletcher, agent of the Winnebagoes, in intercepting the traffic in whisky formerly carried on at

Continued on the Next Page

Crow-wing. The past winter has not been unusually severe. The greatest depth of snow was about sixteen inches. Beside groves of pine timber, the most usual kinds of forest wood, are the pitch-pine, tamarac, sugar maple and elm. The soil is generally poor and rather sandy with occasional spots of considerable fertility. In winter, the principal mode of travelling is on sledges or trains, drawn each by two or three small dogs, with sharp ears, and resembling the dogs of the Esqui aux. The traders generally drive a larger breed of English cur-dogs – of which the price is usually from five to twelve dollars each, according to their docility, strength and action. Mr. Ayre intends to drive some working oxen back with him to Red Lake. Teams and farming utensils are much needed and desired by the Ojibways. They will come down to Saint Paul after a considerable amount of supplies, probably in June, or about the time of the arrival of the caravans here from the Selkirk and Red River settlement. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Saturday, May 5, 1849, Page 2)

The Steamboat *Yankee* leaves St. Paul next Monday, for the head of the river at Saint Peter. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, July 18, 1850, Page 3)

The Mississippi river has seldom if ever been as high at this season of the year, as it is now. The Saint Peter is not high; and the back water of the Mississippi retards its current as far up as the rapids, say 60 miles. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, July 18, 1850, Page 2)

Hon. Martin McLeod, just down from Lac-qui-parle, reports that within the distance of one hundred miles up the Saint Peter, on both sides, the whole country is swarming with herds of buffalo, which have been driven down by the freshets of the northern rivers. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, July 18, 1850, Page 2)

The upper Landing in our town is again submerged, as it has been much of the time since the opening of navigation in the spring. The water is also in the warehouses at the lower landing, except the new warehouse of Chouteau & Co. It is very fatal to the rats, of which multitudes are slain. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, July 18, 1850, Page 2)

Last Friday, in the morning, we had a terrible thunder shower, thunder bolts seeming to explode like cannon, shaking the houses. The night before the *Anthony Wayne* started up the river Saint Peter. The *Wayne* had to supply herself with wood by conveying it in canoes from the wood-yard below Roberts'. Steamboats now run their bows up Jackson street, between Randalls' store and Roberts'; and have infringed somewhat upon the corner of Roberts' roof and broken Randalls' stairs. (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Thursday, July 25, 1850, Page 2)