


Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

December 2019



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www.mnbricks.com

Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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The advertisement shown above appeared in the source shown below (on Page 3). Can you imagine having to cut 54 miles of trees for a road? And get paid in gold?

Captain Dodd is pushing forward his portion of the work on the Mendota and Big Sioux Road, in earnest. By reference to another column it will be seen he wants 150 good choppers to put upon the Road, in addition to the 70 he put to work last Friday and Saturday. He has to cut 54 miles of his division through solid timber, and expects to complete the work by the middle of November next. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, June 12, 1855, Page 2)

1. What's New?

- Recently, I was able to purchase a miniature brick from the Ochs Brickyard in Springfield, Minnesota. I had never seen one before, and it is pictured below.
- Check out my historical videos at www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos
- I am always looking for new topics or neat subjects. Feel free to contact me at www.mnbricks.com
- If you want to sign up to automatically receive this newsletter via email, you can do so at www.mnbricks.com



**SHARE INFORMATION
& OLD
PHOTOGRAPHS!**

2. Photo of the Month



Bridge Square, Minneapolis

I have come across numerous references to Bridge Square in Minneapolis over the years. This was close to the Minneapolis Suspension Bridge near the Mississippi River, and was a place that vendors would come to sell their products. It was like a downtown street fair. This old photograph shows what the square looked like at that time.

3. For Sale

I have acquired quite a bit of brick silo related material over the years, which include pictures, plans, and various drawings that are quite fascinating.

Shown below is a 20 x 30 inch collage poster showing some of these images. You can purchase it on the “shop” page of my website, www.mnbricks.com/shop

There are other posters for sale on various brick towns, historic Minnesota River Valley churches, and Minnesota brick silos on my shop page as well.



On the morning of the **17th**, early reveille, we crossed the bridge in single file each leading his horse, picketed our ponies on the opposite bank, and returned to help the wagons over. All was accomplished with safety; after which, we rode 6 miles, to the second creek above Sauk Rapids, where we found it necessary to build another bridge, 120 feet long, which we could no doubt have built, *like a fox*, before dark; but *cui bono* [what was to gain]? Uncle Sam does not expect his beloved troops to work miracles *every day*, so we encamped; but after breakfast on the **18th** every man was in the swamp preparing materials for the bridge! Presto change! In 4 hours it is completed - every thing hustled over and - hold - only one mile and here we are in a swamp - a dismal swamp.

Off, every man! Your shoulders to the wagon wheels and every thing moves through. Thus does American energy, pass under, pass over, or pass through, whatever opposes. Another mile takes us to Sauk River. Dislocate, dismember and unlimber every thing, to be ferried over in the ponton [ponton] wagon beds, which being water proof, serve for boats. All over now but the animals. In trying to drive them over, 7 horses, 9 mules and 1 pony escaped and turned back - actually deserted the American flag! A non-commissioned officer and a private were sent in pursuit of them; but their horses fagged out before they could overtake the runaways. Those animals knew perfectly well, that they had got north of the oat-fields. On the evening of the **19th** a sergeant and 4 privates were detailed to pursue the deserters; they met the animals coming into camp, in the custody of two citizens who had arrested them at Sauk Rapids.

Poor Uncle Samuel had to pay the men \$5.00 for their trouble; but Uncle took it patiently. On the **20th** we left camp early and after a march of only 6 miles, night caught us encamping on the prairies; for having had heavy rains, the wagons mired horribly. Three times, we had to put 4 mules to each wagon and all our shoulders to the wheels, to get out of the mud. The next morning at 8 o'clock, we left with our wagons half loaded, and after going a mile returned for the rest of the loads; fully loaded, we got another mile - now in the mud again - double teams - out again; now breaks a picket-rope - now the chain of a mule harness - until we struggle through 5 miles and encamp at David's lake, having left half our load a mile back. Oh!

Retrogression! It is as bitter as repentance. Men, horses, every body tired and no wood near for fuel. On the **22d** we lay encamped, fighting mosquitoes and flies. What an intolerable army of bores! How annoying!... Now and then a horse or mule breaks his lariat. Let every man, then see to his own beast! Now comes up a rattling thunder storm. There comes the guide and interpreter with fresh venison. So it goes. The insect feeds upon man and man "takes a tear" at the quadruped - hunger makes destruction. We remained in camp on the **23d**, bitten as bad as ever; the back-biting of a Sewing Society is *nothing* to it. On the **24th**, martyrs in the same camp. Lieut. Castor with a sergeant and one private, starts for Ft. Snelling to get another wagon. The weather is fine again. Quiet on the **25th**. Weather hot - mosquitoes [mosquitoes] annoying, expressive word, is it not?

Well may each soldier bless his stars,
Who brought along mosquito bars;
And bids defiance while he lies,
To gallinippers and to flies.

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Kind old uncle of ours! Good uncle Samuel! thou art willing that our blood should be drawn, if need be, in fighting the Musquito [Mosquito] king... On the **26th** we were off at sunrise - mired twice in going 6 miles - lift, lug, tug, now we move out again; timber in sight, distant from it half a mile, and here we encamp again. Off at sunrise on the **27th**, for the guide reported a bad route. Officers Woods, Pope, Nelson, our Doctor and Mr. Stillely, went ahead of us and encamped four hours before we came up; distance 16 miles. Coming in, we heard with regret of the heavy blow which Lightning had struck Lieut. Nelson - hitting him, no doubt unawares, although an officer of much presence of mind, while unguarded in his tent.

Nothing but prompt assistance recovered him. Next to Lieut. Nelson's tent was pitched Lieut. Gardiner's; the Lieut. Being out with his men - Lightning then cracked down on the poles of *his* tent and shivered them most shamefully. We were stuck many times that day; in fact we went along like a brace chain bearers, stick! stuck! stick! stuck!... Our wagons left half their load 3 miles back on the prairie, and returned for the surplus the same night. This was not – not altogether unalloyed happiness, you have better believe. On the **28th** we remained in camp; we did, Uncle! We had light showers; but took the opportunity to fish in a lake near by. We caught enough for "the cook and all hands."

On the **29th** we went out to the lake and fished with a seine. The fish were "monstrously taken in," say about 100 or 150 or 200 or may be 3 or 400 hundred pounds of them, or thereabouts. Charming fine, warm weather; the boys lie basking about the tents, like snakes in the sunshine. On the **30th** stirring at reveille - out again fishing - in this, imitating the disciples. A glorious day - fish, any quantity and a fine breeze to sweep away flies and mosquitoes. We remained in camp, except those who chose to go and catch fish on the **1st day of July**; quite a cool, fresh breeze stirring all day, so as to make fires comfortable. Again we have abundance of fish from the lake; affording us the double delight of catching and devouring the scaly victims.

On the **2d** we renewed our war upon the fishes, flanking the lake right and left, and could have taken all the fish by a coup de main [surprise attack], if we had had a seine long enough, the wind blowing fresh, and every man being full of courage. Oh, Uncle Samuel! It takes us boys in military gray to slay your fishes upon the public domain. On the morning of the **3d**, we were off, bag and baggage and marched 15 miles, the first day's march without miring [getting stuck in the mud]; and at night we encamped on a fine ridge of prairie, one quarter of a mile from the timber and about one mile from White Bear Lake. Snugly in our tents, down came a thundering shower of rain. The lake - well - you may as well go and see it for yourselves.

On its placid bosom you will see squadrons of geese and ducks, and whole navies of the wild, white swan leisurely evolutionizing. On the glorious **4th**, Uncle, we lay in camp, out of respect to your Eagle. Lieut. Castor, Serg. Rummel and Priv. Finley, came in with the extra wagon. At half past ten, up rolled a booming thunder shower pouring and rattling down for four hours... Rain through the night, so that we could not march on the **5th**; but a small party went to White Bear lake and caught fish, pike...

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For variety, a small party of Winnebago hunters came into camp with an elk just killed, most of which was bought of them by our command. On the **6th**, reveille at half past 3 o'clock in the morning - off at 6, miry every few hundred yards, in the mud 34 times, before we encamped, near a large lake at 5 or 6 o'clock P. M. having struggled through 16 1-2 miles. We were compelled to make a monstrous *circumbendibus* [roundabout] of progress at all, and were at night only 8 miles from our morning camp! That day, every man had to get into the mud and water waist deep - and men were sent forward constantly to make "coss bridges," that is, to make a turnpike of hay across bottomless quagmires.

Mr. Stilley left us the next morning for Saint Louis. He certainly found more fatigue with us than he will upon the cool, shady lounges, in front of the Planter's House [hotel]. We caught some fine pike in the lake, and fished on the **7th** again. Good bye Mr. Stilley. He will remember this excursion, "Oft in the stilly night." The weather is fine, fish plenty, but game scarce. On the **8th** the day opened boisterous, high wind, cleared off at 10 A. M., so we "embraced this opportunity," Uncle, to go a fishing; caught about 120 pounds of pike averaging 4 pounds each. Men all healthy and lively as corks, after all our wading in mud and water to extricate Uncle's wagons. Rain again at 1 o'clock P. M. until 3, when it cleared off. On the **9th** we marched at 6 o'clock A. M., crossed the Chippewa river, weather hot, mired only 4 times, encamped 3 miles west of the Chippewa, having made 15 miles and a mess of delicious duck for our mess.

Off at 6 on the morning of the **10th** - march rather favorable, met a War party of Chippewas hunting for Sioux; Major Woods bought of them some elk meat - Snap! An axle-tree broken. A few remain to mend it, and on we go, all getting into camp before dusk, having marched 20 miles. On the **11th** we marched at 5 o'clock A. M. 26 1-2 miles, to Otter Tail river, a swift stream 100 feet wide, having met the Red river train, on their way to Saint Paul, 98 carts, laden with buffalo robes, furs, pemmican, buffalo tongues &c. bought of the Indians. The day was warm, but with a fine breeze. Poor fellows! They look remarkably sober for men so long "on a train." On the **12th** we reached and crossed Red river and encamped, making 20 miles, ten of it over a swampy prairie, which but for a day or two preceding, of favorable weather, would have been impassable.

We had a cool umbrella of clouds over us; all was pleasant but the ground, if that may be called ground which is more than half water over, under and through which we wriggled... One of the two-horse teams, being fagged out, we shifted the load to another wagon. Plenty of wood and water at camp... About half past 7, on the **13th**, we were off again, worlds of pigeons flying, fine day and after 4 miles progress, we encamped again on the bank of Red river. The **14th** brought us one of those sultry, cloudy mornings, in which the mosquitoes go it with a looseness, dropping their bills in with as much facility as old army surgeons do their lancets. Here Maj. Woods had a guide post erected, marked, "163 miles to Sauk Rapids." There is plenty of timber, and the site being favorable, it is probable that Uncle will make a fort at this place. On the **15th**, we marched 21 1-2 miles, crossing Rice creek and encamped on the bank of the Chienne [Sheyenne] river. What fine weather we have up here toward the Arctic circle! The **16th** was a day of labor; for to cross the Chienne, taking every thing to pieces to ferry across in pontoon wagons, took 8 hours; and much fatigued we encamped amidst clouds of mosquitoes... (*The Minnesota Pioneer*, St. Paul, Wednesday, March 6, 1850, Page 1)

Conclusion of the story next week...

5. News Nuggets

Town of St. Peters. This new town on the Minnesota river seems to be progressing with gigantic strides. We learn that lots amounting to upwards of \$5,600 have recently been sold, and that various improvements are going on. We are informed by persons who came down on the Black Hawk that the emigration at this point is large. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, May 30, 1854, Page 3)

We learn that our Market House has at last several occupants. It is fitted up in good style, and ought to be well sustained. All the little meat shops about town should be concentrated there, and by that means make it an attractive spot, at least at dinner time. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, May 30, 1854, Page 3)

We are informed that P. T. Bradley, harness maker, in company with another person, contemplate starting a Tan Yard near Winslow's Mill, the first and only one in the Territory. The yard will be in operation in a few weeks with facilities for doing a good business. The bark for tanning will be procured at Lake Minnetonka. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, May 30, 1854, Page 3)

The Surveyors in laying out the streets and squaring the corners, find that many of the houses are on the street by some five and ten inches. As a matter of course these buildings, (mostly brick) cannot be removed without great inconvenience and expense to the owners, and as the proprietors were governed by the old survey in building, it cannot be expected that the city will compel them to tear down and erect their buildings over again. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, May 30, 1854, Page 1)

Come to Minnesota. If you want rich land, come to Minnesota. If you want cheap land, come to Minnesota. If you want rolling prairie land, come to Minnesota. If you want timbered land, joining the prairie, come to Minnesota. If you want good, pure, wholesome water, come to Minnesota. If you want to raise large crops, come to Minnesota. If you are fond of hunting and fishing, come to Minnesota. If you are a merchant, come to Minnesota. If you are a mechanic, come to Minnesota. If you are a man, and want to live among men, come to Minnesota. If you want to be rich, come to Minnesota. If you are discontented with your present abiding place, and desire a change, try Minnesota. If you want to see the New England of the West, look at Minnesota. If you cannot be suited in Minnesota, you are difficult to please. And if you don't like it clear out. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, June 6, 1854, Page 1)

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**News Nuggets
from the late 1800s**

Number the Houses. Why not? St. Paul is large enough, and in another year it will require something of this kind to let people know where other people live. – “Can you tell me where Dr. – lives?” said a stranger to us the other day. “Yes, sir; he lives in – street.” “I have been in that street from one end to the other, but cannot find his residence,” said the gentleman. What more could we do? And just so it is with a great many others, who are but recently among us. Now had the house been numbered, we could have said, - “number – such a street, sir,” and the man would have “gone on his way rejoicing.” It is very true that in sparsely settled portions of our city, the thing would not be so feasible, but in our business portion, the buildings could be numbered and be the means of much convenience to our citizens and strangers. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, June 6, 1854, Page 2)

The brick yard belonging to Messrs. Stevens, Tufts & Lewis is said to produce better clay than can be found this side of Illinois. We learn that they are about establishing a pottery near their brick yard. A kiln of brick is now ready for market, which judges pronounce to be but little inferior to the celebrated Milwaukee brick. *St. Anthony Express*. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, Saturday, July 22, 1854, Page 2)

Henry McKenty, Esq., who has just returned from a three weeks trip up the [Minnesota] river, speaks in the most flattering terms of the rapids settlement of the country in the neighborhood of the undine region, that of Mankato city, Shakopee, Lesuer, Traverse, &c. &c. He informs us that a company, numbering upwards of forty persons, men women and children, from Dodge county, Wisconsin, have arrived and settled near the Blue Earth or Mankato City. The members of the company have taken with them oxen, farming utensils, seeds, &c., and intend to commence cultivating the soil as soon as they arrive. A. Farnum, Esq., is at the head. Mr. McKenty also informs us that good, sterling farmers are coming in from all directions, from Iowa, Wisconsin and Reed’s Landing. He says that we can have no conception of the number of emigrants who are populating the Valley of the Minnesota. Sober, industrious, enterprising Germans constitute no small portion of the emigration, while trading Yankees and Maine men are scattered along the route as sentinels on the watch-towers of law and order. We must have a railroad up the Valley of the Minnesota. We don’t expect it this year, but it must be built, and in less than five years from this time, the matter will receive serious consideration. Our citizens who are pent up with their business, have no idea of the rapidity with which we are advancing as a territory. As we have remarked in a previous article, while one hundred emigrants come by the boats, two hundred come by way of land, and they come to make Minnesota their home, not merely to visit and then return east. Let them come, there is room enough, soil enough, air enough, and if they wish to live as God intended they should live, and die a happy death, let them come to Minnesota. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, June 13, 1854, Page 3)

Shakopee. Some fifty new farms have been opened this spring, and every thing bears the appearance of enterprise and industry. ...The river is high, and boats can pass over the rapids. The *Black Hawk* is now up. Although there are three steamers in the Minnesota River trade, they are not sufficient to supply the wants of the people. Judging from the large number of emigrants, who have passed through Shakopee, both in wagons and steamers, the upper country must be rapidly settling. I have no doubt but that three thousand people have gone up the River, since the beginning of spring. (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, July 4, 1854, Page 2)

6. Brick Structure of the Month



FURTHEST WEST ACO SILOS BARNES COUNTY, ND



The North Dakota Historical Society recently did a story on ACO Silos in Barnes County, North Dakota. The Ochs Brick Company from Springfield, Minnesota, made the block for the ACO Silos. These silos are generally the thickest around the Springfield area, but are common across southern Minnesota. They are more rare outside the State of Minnesota, so finding two in Barnes County, North Dakota, is fairly unique. With the help of online satellite imagery, I was able to locate both silos, and made a trek there before colder weather set in. The picture above is the first silo. If it was attached to a barn, the barn is no longer standing. However, the silo itself appears to be in excellent shape.

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The words "ACO" on the first silo (shown on the previous page) were not visible from that side. However, from the side road, shown in the top picture below, the words are there. The second silo was less than a quarter mile from the first, and its barn was also long gone (bottom picture). Since the two silos were located so close together, they were probably built about the same time, maybe even by family members.



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The picture below (top) shows the clay blocks that composed the silos close up. They were built to last. The second photo (bottom) shows the farmhouse associated with the second silo. It was a huge and beautiful house in its day. Can you imagine the stories it could tell?

