

*Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota*

# Minnesota Bricks

March 2020

## Minnesota Bricks

*Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota*

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

## Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



[www.chaskabrick.com](http://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	9
6. News Nuggets	10



Farming in the early days of Minnesota was tough work. Can you imagine doing this type of work? All day long? Our ancestors were tough people!

# 1. What's New?

- It has been a relatively quiet winter. I have not had very many inquiries about brick related topics.
- I produced two new brick related videos this past month, both dealing with Minnesota agriculture and the A. C. Ochs brickyard of Springfield, Minnesota. One is titled, "Laforest E. Potter" and the other is "The First ACO Silo." I am extremely happy how these turned out, and hope you watch them. They can easily be found on my [www.mnbricks.com](http://www.mnbricks.com) website.
- 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



I am not sure where this creamery was located in Minnesota, but isn't it amazing that it says there are 700 more in the state? You can see how much brick was used in this building and how fancy the brickwork was. Local Minnesota brick was used to make many of these creameries.

# 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 Historic Silos of the Upper Midwest. 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

### MINNEAPOLIS SUSPENSION BRIDGE

MINNESOTA HISTORY SEGMENT



Isn't this a magnificent looking bridge? During my research, I came across an article which described the grand opening of this bridge in 1855. Once you read through the following article, ask yourself...can you imagine a celebration like this occurring today?

Grand Celebration of the Opening of the Mississippi River Wire Suspension Bridge, at St. Anthony and Minneapolis. The completion and opening of this beautiful structure, was celebrated at the above places on the Twenty-third day of January, 1855, in a highly creditable manner.

**Continued on the next page**

Description of the Bridge. We could gladly give place to the Report of Mr. Griffith, the Engineer of the work, but as that has already been submitted to the public, our readers will content themselves with a more general description. The Bridge is located about one hundred yards above the Rapids. The foundations supporting the piers are carried up about 15 feet above the low water level. The frames which rest upon these are very strong. We cannot explain the method in which the timber is disposed of more satisfactorily, than by referring our readers to the Report of the Engineer; but we will say that although we are not versed in the science of carpentry, it is difficult to conceive how the same amount of material could be made to sustain quarter the weight in the position required.

The two Towers, on either side of the river, are connected together by a sort of bridge work, which adds to their stability. The whole of this framing, which is of itself truly beautiful, is covered by a sheathing of boards, and much taste is exhibited to make amends for the mechanical beauties that stand concealed within. The top of each tower is ornamented with a species of balcony over which a light roof is thrown, and their general appearance naturally suggest that they will be the resort of those who (by the favor of Capt. Tapper) wish to enjoy on a warm summer evening, as the Sun sinks in the West, a view of the sparkling waters and the lovely towns on either side. The cables pass above the lattice railing of these balconies and rest upon the saddles.

These balconies are supported by brackets which are in character with the general style of the architecture. The sheathing commences below these balconies and consists of three tiers of nine inch boards and four and a half inch battens, which, having somewhat more inclination than the sides of the frame, the lower end of each sheathing is projected some distance beyond the tops of the succeeding course, and as the ends of the boards and batting are all pointed, the effect is very pleasing. Blinds are placed in three sides of each Tower which add much to their appearance; they are intended for ventilation. That portion of the frame connecting the Towers, is also covered in such a manner as to harmonize with the general character of the architecture.

In each tower there is an ornamental door by which access may be had at any time to any portion of the frame, there being a stairway inside. There is also a neat window in each of the towers which looks out on the river. This arrangement is also intended to accommodate the bridge keeper during the summer season. What style of architecture has been attempted it would be difficult to say, but to sum it all up there is no breach of good taste, no effort to pretention, and the "tout ensemble" [all in all] pleases the eye of every one. The anchorage was obtained in rather a novel manner, and reflects credit upon the capacity of the Engineer to adapt his plans to circumstances. Large holes were drilled through the limestone rock which is some ten feet thick, through which the anchorage irons were passed.

The limestone rests upon a bed of clay about four feet thick and below this is the sand stone rock. Tunnels were driven in the strata of clay, by which access was obtained to the under side of the lime stone at the required points, and the heavy cast iron plates carried in and attached. We are informed by the Engineer that this tunneling cost about one dollar per linear foot. The bridge way, which is that portion of the work which attracts the most attention, is supported by four cables, each composed of 500 strands of No. 10 wire. The bridge way is attached to these by small cables of the same material. The structure has a light appearance, from the fact that the bridge crowns like an arch about two feet.

**Continued on the next page**

The span of the bridge is 620 feet, and the width inside of the parapets, 17 feet. The strength is 30 lbs. per superficial foot, for that portion of the platform which can be occupied by teams. Although the structure has a most fairy-like appearance. The Celebration. At an early hour in the day the St. Charles Hotel was completely filled with visitors who had gathered to witness and participate in the ceremonies, and who, notwithstanding the severe cold weather, were in exhilarating spirits, and anxious to promote harmony. The merry bells run out on the air, as rapidly the dashing cutters, filled with life and beauty, discharged their precious loads.

At about one o'clock, the procession, under the direction of Dr. John H. Murphy, Chief Marshal, and Z. E. B. Nash, Assistant, began to form at the St. Charles, and when under way, presented a very lively and imposing scene. Heading the procession was a large wagon, drawn by two horses, decorated with small American flags, in which rode Lawrence's Brass Band, and over them floated the Star-Spangled Banner. Following, were upwards of sixty single and double-horse sleighs, containing, at least, some two hundred and fifty persons. As the procession moved through the main street, and as the horses gaily danced to most excellent music, a cannon, stationed on Niccollet [Nicollet] Island, sent forth its deep booming tones, welcoming the pageant to the first bridge that spans the "Father of Waters," and that, too, nearly two thousand miles from its mouth, and in a country where but a few years ago the savage [Native American] held undisputed sway.

On entering the Bridge, wreathes of evergreen encircled the arch and on either side, branches of evergreens met the eye. Not more than eight sleighs were on the Bridge at one time, and yet there was no perceptible jar - all passed over it safely, giving vent to their admiration in ejaculatory exclamations of - "Oh, how beautiful!" - "how strong!" - "how delightful!" The scene on the Minneapolis side was truly soul-stirring. It was the gathering of all the sleighs, with their variegated colors - the prancing steeds - the merry bells, the laughing beauties and the eager desire of the "sterner sex" to exhibit their skill with the reins, produced a sight, the like of which we have never witnessed in the West.

Shortly after the procession was again under way, and taking a circuitous route, passed through the principal portion of Minneapolis, affording a delightful sleigh-ride, which was much enjoyed by the company. It re-crossed the Bridge - passed through the main street in St. Anthony on "a fast trot," up by the churches, back to the St. Charles, where a general confusion occurred, but in which, we learn no one was injured. The streets became quiet again and inside, "All went merry as a marriage bell." The hour designated for dinner, was at 3 o'clock precisely; but as usual on such occasions, the announcement was not made until half-past four, and then a general rush followed.

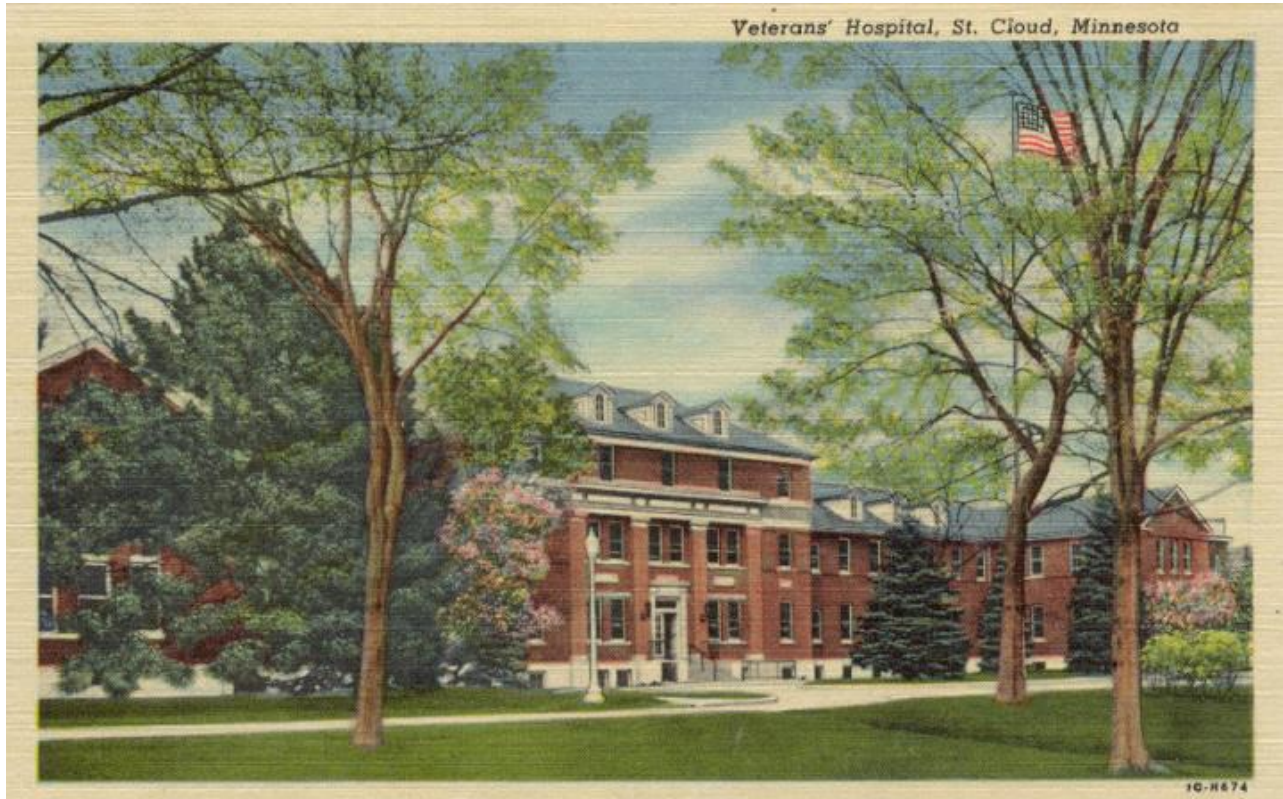
The Dining Hall and Ball Room of the St. Charles were crowded, and not less than from two hundred and fifty to three hundred persons partook of the entertainment. To the eye the tables presented a very pleasing appearance, and a sufficient number of dishes was on the Bill of Fare to feed an army, provided the dishes could be made palatable. Owing to the late hour of dinner, it was nearly evening before the cloth was removed and the regular toasts read. The music from the Band, was one of the most pleasing features of the occasion, and gave assurance that St. Anthony takes the lead in this department. [speeches followed...] (*The Minnesota Weekly Times*, St. Paul, Tuesday, January 30, 1855, Page 1)



# 5. Brick Structure of the Month



## **VETERAN'S HOSPITAL ST. CLOUD, MINNESOTA**



This is a postcard of the Veteran's Hospital in St. Cloud, Minnesota. The brick used in the structure are an orange-red color, but how would you know where they were made? Unless you come across that information somewhere, the brick will keep the secret forever! I was lucky and came across an article that said these brick were made by the A. C. Ochs Brick & Tile Company of Springfield, Minnesota. The article said that over 2,000,000 brick were used. This hospital is still standing today.

# 6. News Nuggets

## News Nuggets

The telephone girl sits still in her chair and listens to voices from everywhere. She hears all the gossip, she hears all the news, she knows who is happy and who has the blues; she knows all our sorrow, she knows all our joys, she knows every girl who is chasing the boys; she knows of our trouble she knows of our strife, she knows every man who is mean to his wife; in fact there's a secret 'neath the saucy curl, of the quiet demure looking telephone girl. If the telephone girl would tell all that she knows, it would turn all our friends to the bitterest foes; she would sow a small wind that would soon be a gale; engulfing us all in trouble or jail; she could let go a story which, if given force, would cause half our wives to sue for divorce; she could get all the churches mixed up in a fight, and turn all our days into sorrowing night. In fact she could keep the whole town in a stew, if she'd only tell a tenth part that she knew. Now doesn't it set your head in whirl when you think what you owe to the telephone girl? (*Hector Mirror*, Friday, January 30, 1914, Page 1)

Early History of the Frontier. By E. T. Woodcock. Mr. Editor: In one of your late numbers, you invite correspondents to give local news of your county. Availing myself of this invitation, I propose to give a few items, which may be interesting to the readers of your paper, of the early history of your county which knowledge was derived from personal observation by a residence of three years in your county. In the month of June 1855 I found myself journeying from my native state of New York by rail for the then "far west." Galena [Illinois] terminated our journey by rail – thence by Steamboat to McGregor [Iowa] – then began our slow and charming journey by land conveyance, styled as "Prairie Schooner." I soon found myself wandering my way over the beautiful prairies of southern Minnesota at that time unbroken stretches of many miles without house or habitation, which is this day densely populated. After duly inspecting such embryo towns as Rochester, Mantorville and Faribault – I located four miles from the latter town on east prairie – remaining there one year, - sold out my interest advantageously, and then took to the camp again. Always shall I remember the incidents connected with that hour, accompanied by a young man from my native state, we prepared ourselves for a journey to the Crow River Country. Leaving Faribault July 20th 1856[,] passing up by the way of Owatonna, [unknown town] and through the Winnebago reservation to Mankato, continuing our travels to Henderson, thence to Glencoe, our expectations not being satisfied at that point, we passed to Hutchinson and Cedar City[,] which at that time were the outskirts of all settlements in that direction – Cedar City not coming up to our expectations we were about to retreat from the then "Howling wilderness" to more civilized parts, when we came in company with one J. M. Ayer who had made one trip to the Green Lake country[,] and now on the second. We listened to his description of the lake and surroundings. Overjoyed at the prospect of finding one place where we could our first choice in the beautiful lands of Prairie and Timber...

**Continued on the Next Page**

We gave up the retreat and I pressed onto victory – a day and a half’s travel over boundless prairie interspersed by lakes and Groves brought us to the beautiful shores of Green Lake [near Spicer, Minnesota]. Here our eyes rested upon the solitude of nature, the lake, the woodland and prairie, where the woodman’s axe never sounded and white man seldom traveled. There were days of grand anticipation, I thought a glorious future was in store for the Green Lake country. We resolved into a company, and immediately selected a half section of prairie and timber on the western shores of the lake, which was subsequently incorporated as “Columbia;” we each separately claimed a quarter section for farms under the preemption act. The claim that I selected was west of the town site. It was a most beautiful piece of land, now the property of J. W. Burdick Esq. As I said before, those were days of grand anticipations. We, as a company[,] took measures to duly possess our right of discovery, by making necessary improvements, building shanties &c. The bright side of every thing was looked upon, a glorious future was in store for us, a great city would grow up, steamboats would ply upon the waters of the lake, a great opening for a young man to commence active life. Laboring under this hallucination, I hastened to my native state and took to myself a wife to share the joys and glories of a western home. (*Willmar Republican*, Tuesday, April 2, 1872, Page 2)

After an absence of two months, to [New] York State, I returned to Minnesota accompanied by Mrs. Woodcock and several gentlemen of my acquaintance, who wished to have a taste of western life. We arrived at Shakopee by boat, where we procured a horse team to take us to Green Lake – a journey of five weary days – passing through the “Big woods” *via* Glencoe and Hutchinson, arriving at the lake October 18th 1856. Our reception after a bridal tour was not on a grand scale. We simply unloaded our worldly effects, and partook of the hospitality of Wm. Konts[,] who had a shanty under roof, without floor, door, or window. Here commenced our first house keeping, making our bed upon the rich soil of Minnesota[,] a dry goods box for a table, and traveling trunks for chairs. In less than two weeks we had another shanty 13x15[,] which could boast of a door, swung on wooden hinges, a six lighted glass window, puncheon [split log] floor[,] and one legged bedstead in one corner. This was our humble abode during a long dreary winter. During my absence East our settlement had increased in numbers, by the arrival of Wm. Konts & Bro.[,] Samuel Hoel, and H. Smith, who became permanent settlers. The gentlemen who accompanied us from [New] York State, stayed one night, and returned with the team as they thought it their only chance to escape from those isolated regions. After becoming domiciled in our new abode[,] I began to view the situation around us. The nearest families in the direction we came was at Hutchinson, forty miles distant, no settlements at the South nearer than Ft. Ridgely, for aught I know there was no white women between us and the Rocky Mountains. Our nearest neighbor was at Union Grove, eighteen miles distant. There had been a shanty built at Harrison by a Mr. Campbell, but then vacant, and also one at Irving[,] occupied a part of the winter by two young men (brothers) by the name of Putnam. By comparing notes I find the townsites of Columbia, Harrison and Irving were all brought into existence in the months of August and September 1856. The cold chills and frost of November came on with light snows, which accumulated to three feet in depth by the first of February. The townsite of Columbia was partly surveyed and platted in December by Mr. Wise of Le Sueur, and incorporated during the Legislative session of that winter. Winter came fearfully...

**Continued on the Next Page**

Some of our population began to seek more genial parts, Harrison had been abandoned, Irving was depopulated, and Columbia had no representation after February except two young men, Smith and Konts, and myself and wife. A Cold dreary Minnesota winter was upon us, with no communication with the outer world. Our stock of provisions began to fail, and our bill of fare [food] was reduced to three articles, flour beans and tea. Mrs. W. makes the very best of bread[,] which was one gratification, and for six weeks we had our regular meals of bread and tea – tea and bread, and our dessert was a pint of bean soup. For luxuries I would often travel a mile through the deep snow to get a chance on a partridge or prairie chicken, and would quite often miss my game. The last of March the situation became alarming – starvation began to stare us in the face, our flour had failed, the last loaf was on the table, and an effort must be made to replenish. One bright morning Hiram Smith and myself started for Union Grove and for the first time met our nearest neighbor, Mr. Allen and family, whose friendship I never shall forget. We were treated to a luxurious dinner. We both took a load of thirty-five pounds of flour on our backs and returned before the sun went down. Wild geese came the 28th of March and were shot in good numbers, which made us many times a fine dinner. About the middle of April the snow was so far gone that our famished oxen were brought under the yoke, and Smith and Konts started for Henderson for a load of supplies. During their absence we were left alone in our glory realizing the fact that the Romance of a pioneer's life was a farce. The Indians [Native Americans] often visited us in such numbers that they would fill our house, and were anything but agreeable. The nights were often made hideous by the howling of the timber wolf[,] which was anything but pleasant. Thus we breathed out an existence until the fourth day of May, which dawned beautifully. It was Sunday and we were presented with a daughter[,] the first white child born in your county. On the evening of the same day our hearts were gladdened by the arrival of Smith, Konts and Ayers[,] with a full stock of provisions, and a bundle of letters from friends [in the] East. Spring was unfolding the beauties of nature – we had stemmed the tide of a hard winter. Emigration was about to commence, and we would soon have neighbors – and on the tenth day of May we were made to rejoice on the arrival of J. W. Burdick Esq. and Mr. V. L. Forsyth and wife, which was the first white woman that Mrs. W. had seen for seven months. (*Willmar Republican*, Tuesday, May 14, 1872, Page 2)

William Woodside claims to have broken another American record. In a five-mile bicycle race at Corning, N. Y., on the 22d inst., Woodside defeated John Brooks of Canada, riding the distance in 15 min. 3-4 sec. The track was a quarter of a mile one, made of **brick clay**, and pronounced by experts to be very fast. (*The Willmar Republican-Gazette*, Thursday, September 10, 1885, Page 2)