

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

May 2020

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Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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This picture was titled "The Rabbit Hunt" and was taken near New Ulm, Minnesota in the early 1900s.

1. What's New?

- It appears the ACO silo and barns in south Grand Forks, North Dakota, will be torn down soon. I received a comment from a reader in Grand Forks who also noticed this going on. The photo of the month on the next page shows this silo and barns.
- I produced a new brick related video this past month, about the Schumacher barn near Fairfax, Minnesota. I have been waiting to tell this story for a long time, and am happy it has now be told. This can be found on my website 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. If you like what you see, tell a friend about it. I am always looking for more readers!



2. Photo of the Month



ACO silo and barns near the intersection of Washington and 32nd avenue south in Grand Forks, ND.

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 of the historic Minnesota River Valley churches. You can find it for purchase on the “Shop” page of my website:

www.mnbricks.com/shop

On the same page, there are other posters for sale on various brick towns, Iowa and Minnesota silos, and the Minnesota Winter of 1880-81.



4. A Look Back

The Appetite for Wood

Minnesota History Segment

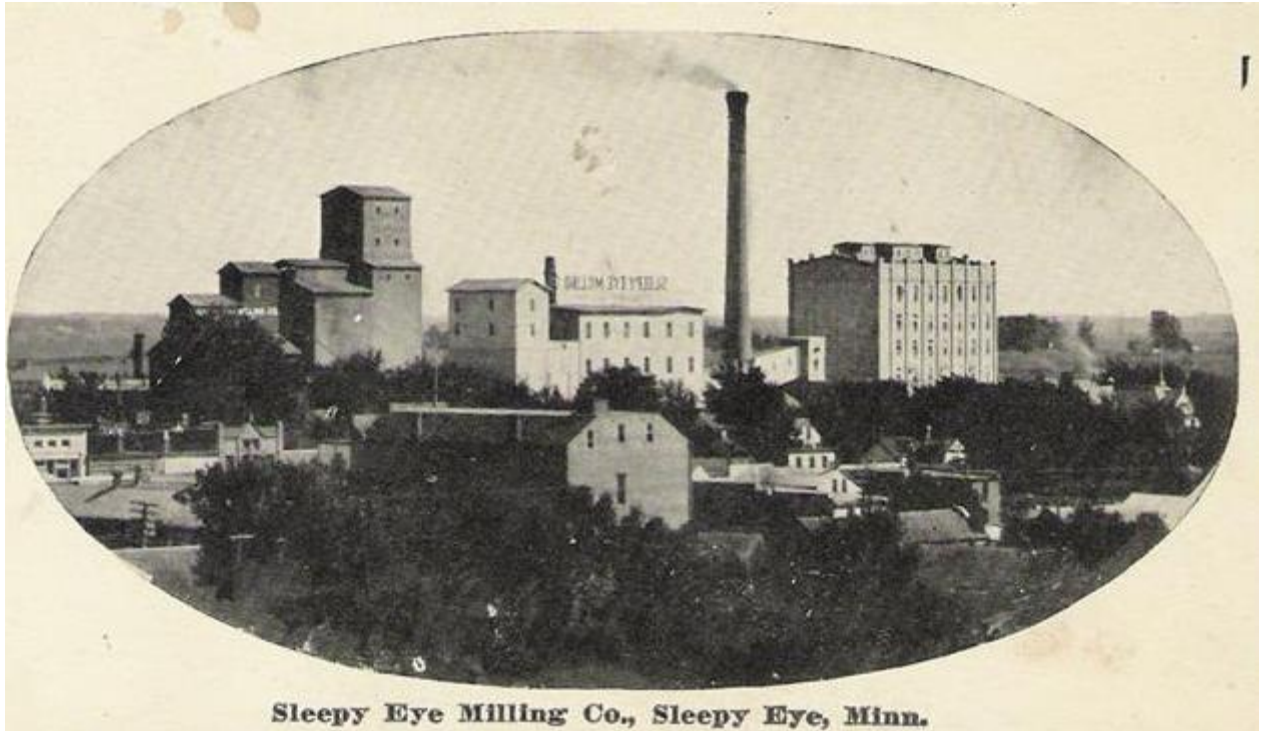


It is estimated that, in the city of St. Paul, the amount of wood annually consumed is seventy thousand cords. Along the timbered regions of the Minnesota river, wood can be had at a price ranging from \$2.50 to \$3 per cord. This wood can be brought to this city in barges, during the summer season, with anything like a fair stage of water, at from \$2 to \$2.50 per cord, making it cost here not to exceed \$5 per cord. At this rate seventy thousand cords would cost \$350,000. Wood is now selling at the yards in the city as high as \$10, and, in some instances, \$12 per cord. By taking the lowest figure, the amount consumed would cost \$700,000 - just double the original amount - enabling the monopolists to pocket the neat sum of \$350,000 per annum of the hard earnings of the consumer. (*The Saint Paul Press*, Saturday, October 28, 1865, Page 4)

5. Brick Structure of the Month



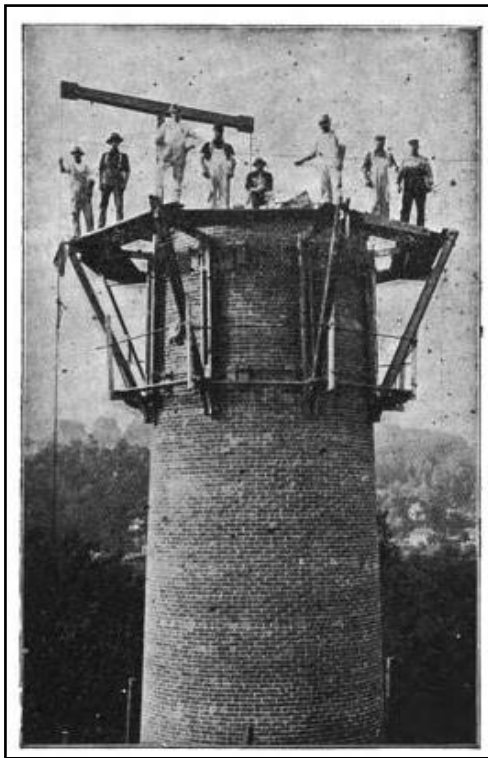
Sleepy Eye Milling Company Smokestack Sleepy Eye, Minnesota



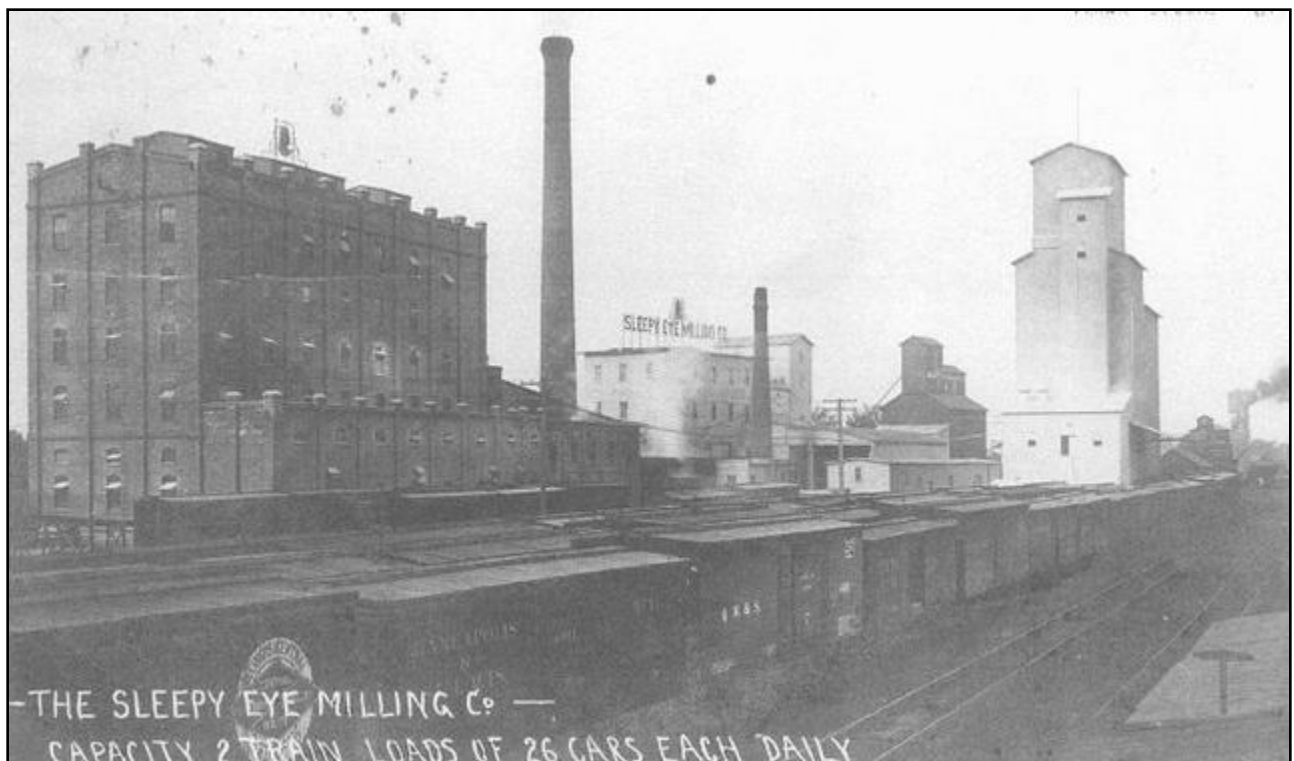
Sleepy Eye Milling Co., Sleepy Eye, Minn.

This is a postcard of the Sleepy Eye Milling Company complex at Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. If you have ever driven by this complex, the smokestack definitely stands out. I have not been able to determine when it was built or whose bricks were used in its construction, but I have always been impressed with it. I have wondered how it was built, as it is so tall, especially back before modern cranes and lifting devices.

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I have only come across one picture of masons building a tall smokestack. They must have been daredevils.



6. News Nuggets

News Nuggets

Green apples and peaches are among the delicacies of the present day in our town. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, September 4, 1862, Page 3)

A model wedding came off in our village a few evenings since. The company was large and fashionable, and the whole was a pleasant affair. The wine, however, would have been more palatable had it been heated up, and a little cream and sugar added. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, September 4, 1862, Page 3)

The New Ulm Belle, a new stern-wheel boat built at St. Paul this season, while on her second trip to St. Peter last Tuesday, run on a snag near Walker's Landing and immediately sunk in six feet of water. She is reported to be broken in two. We understand that she was owned by Messrs. Scott & Hardee, of St. Paul, and cost some \$6,000, and will probably be nearly a total loss. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, September 4, 1862, Page 3)

Yesterday the fare to St. Paul on the daily packets [steamboats] was raised to \$1.25 – the old rates. Of course some compromise has taken place between the opposing boats, though we have not yet learned what it is. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, October 9, 1862, Page 3)

On Tuesday last, C. A. Warner, Esq., shipped for Springfield, Mass., Forty barrels of Cranberries, and a large amount of seed wheat. Who doubts, now, that Minnesota is a producing State? (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, October 16, 1862, Page 3)

Ducks are quite plenty now a days, and we would suggest to our nimrods the propriety of rubbing up their fowling pieces [preparing their guns] and be up and doing while the season lasts; in the event of their making a good haul they will of course remember the printer [newspaper editor]... (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, October 16, 1862, Page 3)

On last Friday evening, as the Clara Hine [steamboat] was backing out from the levee, an unfortunate deck hand fell overboard and was nearing the verge of a 'watery grave,' when timely aid being rendered by some gentlemen on the shore, by throwing him a rope, he was rescued with but little damage to himself save a good 'ducking.' (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Thursday, October 23, 1862, Page 3)

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We advise our farmers to stop cutting cord-wood and to cut hoop-poles until the wood will bring a better price than it has for the last four years [...] it will all be wanted and at a fair price in a few years more. We think time would be much better spent in cutting the timber into Rails and fencing farms than in cutting wood and drawing it from three to five miles at [\$]1.25 to 1.50 per cord and leaving your fields unprotected from breachy [unfenced] cattle and hogs who now have more rights and privileges conceded them than our citizens. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, December 20, 1862, Page 3)

We noticed a smoke rising from the chimney of the jail and proceeded toward the Court House to learn the cause. On our way we were hailed by the jail occupant, who, in broken English told his story. He is undoubtedly wrongfully confined, but we have not the sympathy for him we should have had, had he not refused counsel at the time when he most needed it. The facts as we gather them are these. Jacob Gehrig and a man of the name of Eichelmiller join farms, and there has been for years, a dispute in reference to the [property] line. Mr. Gehrig was chopping wood on what he claimed to be his land, and was summarily arrested for a misdemeanor under the Statute and lodged in jail. The Justice has no authority to imprison for such an offense unless the convicted party refuses for the space of ten days to pay the fine adjudged by the court. Now while Mr. Gehrig lies in jail, Eichlemiller or some one else by his order draws away the wood cut and claimed by Gehrig and pockets the profits. In the warrant of commitment there is nothing showing that the land upon which the wood was cut belonged to another man. Surely the courts of justice are made in this instance a vehicle of gross injustice. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, January 17, 1863, Page 3)

We were surprised on last Sunday morning to find, upon going out door[s], a very dense fog settled all along the valley. The night was a sharp, clear, freezing one, the thermometer indicating, at 7 o'clock in the morning, the temperature to be within eight degrees of zero – hence our surprise to find such a freezing cold weather accompanied by so dense a fog. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, January 31, 1863, Page 3)

For the past few mornings no sight could be more grand, or strictly beautiful, than was furnished by the neighboring forest in its robe of glittering frost, which, when the sun shone upon it, resembled one solid mass of sparkling jewels, interspersed with roses of the purest white. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, January 31, 1863, Page 3)

Since the recent snow the roads have been full of teams, engaged in hauling grain to the different mills in the country. We understand the Jordan as well as the Shakopee mills are jammed full to the roof, and thousands of bushels still arriving. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, January 31, 1863, Page 3)

Dead swine are coming into market like hot cakes of late. In fact, for the week past we have been compelled to look so many great, grinning monsters in the face, that we fear lest we have a turn of the 'night-mare,' (or hog). We should judge that the majority of these poor unfortunate porkers died happily, as they almost invariably had a corn-cob in their mouth. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, January 31, 1863, Page 3)

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This valuable crop [ice] having come to its full maturity, is being harvested on a greater or less scale during the past week by some of our citizens who evidently intend to keep cool the coming Summer... (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, February 28, 1863, Page 3)

Owing to the mild weather the past week which has nearly ended the sleighing, and the decline in wheat, there has not been the usual activity in trade. The work of hauling wood[,] hoop[-]poles and grain has been very much curtailed and people are awaiting another snow storm. Two weeks more, of sleighing would probably bring to our market the bulk of produce and wood. We see many of our country friends carrying with them large kettles which indicates a large business in the making of maple sugar as soon as sap runs, which can't be long hence at the present rate of temperature. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, February 21, 1863, Page 3)

The snow has almost disappeared in this vicinity but the ice in the river is bound not to be got rid of so easily. Heavily loaded teams still continue to cross at this place on the ice, and will we presume until some one gets in and loses a team if not their own life. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, March 14, 1863, Page 3)

The *Glencoe Register* informs us that a Buffalo was killed, a few days since, by some trappers, twelve miles west of that place; and that four others were seen by parties en route from Glencoe to Fort Ridgley. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, March 28, 1863, Page 3)

We see teams coming into town daily, loaded with lumber. It was sawed at Excelsior, about eight miles from here, and is to be used for the construction of a steamboat at this place during the fall and coming winter. (*Valley Herald*, Chaska, Saturday, July 18, 1863, Page 3)