

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

June 2020

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www.mnbricks.com

Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



www.chaskabrick.com

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This is a picture of the Academy of Music building in Minneapolis, after a December fire. Look at how much ice coats the building from the water that was sprayed on it. The quote below shows the date and approximate location of the fire.

At 3:30 yesterday afternoon fire was discovered in the large office building, corner of Hennepin and Washington avenues, known familiarly to the people of Minneapolis as the Academy of Music block. (*The Minneapolis Tribune*, Friday, December 26, 1884, Page 7)

1. What's New?

- Chaska brick has fascinated me for a number of years, because farm and brick buildings where I grew up were quite limited. The Chaska area is full of them! This interest is what fueled my decision to start a Minnesota brick website. When I tried to find answers to my questions about Chaska brick (or any Minnesota brick), there was limited information. Therefore I decided to compile information and write a comprehensive book about the Chaska brick industry. For the past 5 or so years, I have struggled with how to write the book within the confines of that medium. I have also become (in my opinion anyway) quite adept at producing historical videos. I get to use color pictures and graphs, and get to tell the story through pictures. To me, its easier to understand the concepts of brick manufacturing if I see pictures with the explanation. To that end, I decided to scrap my book idea and produce a 5 part series about the Chaska brickyards. Over the past month or so, I completed producing part one. Although I am happy with how it turned out, I am always looking for feedback. If you watch the video and have a comment, I would love to hear it. The video is found at: www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos
- I heard from the Jackson County Historical Society, who provided me with a photograph of a Jackson area brickyard. Thanks for the information!
- Feel free to contact me at www.mnbricks.com about any new topics or subjects. If you like what you see, tell others about it!
- If you want to sign up to automatically receive this newsletter via email, you can do so at www.mnbricks.com



2. Photo of the Month



Fergus Falls, Minnesota School

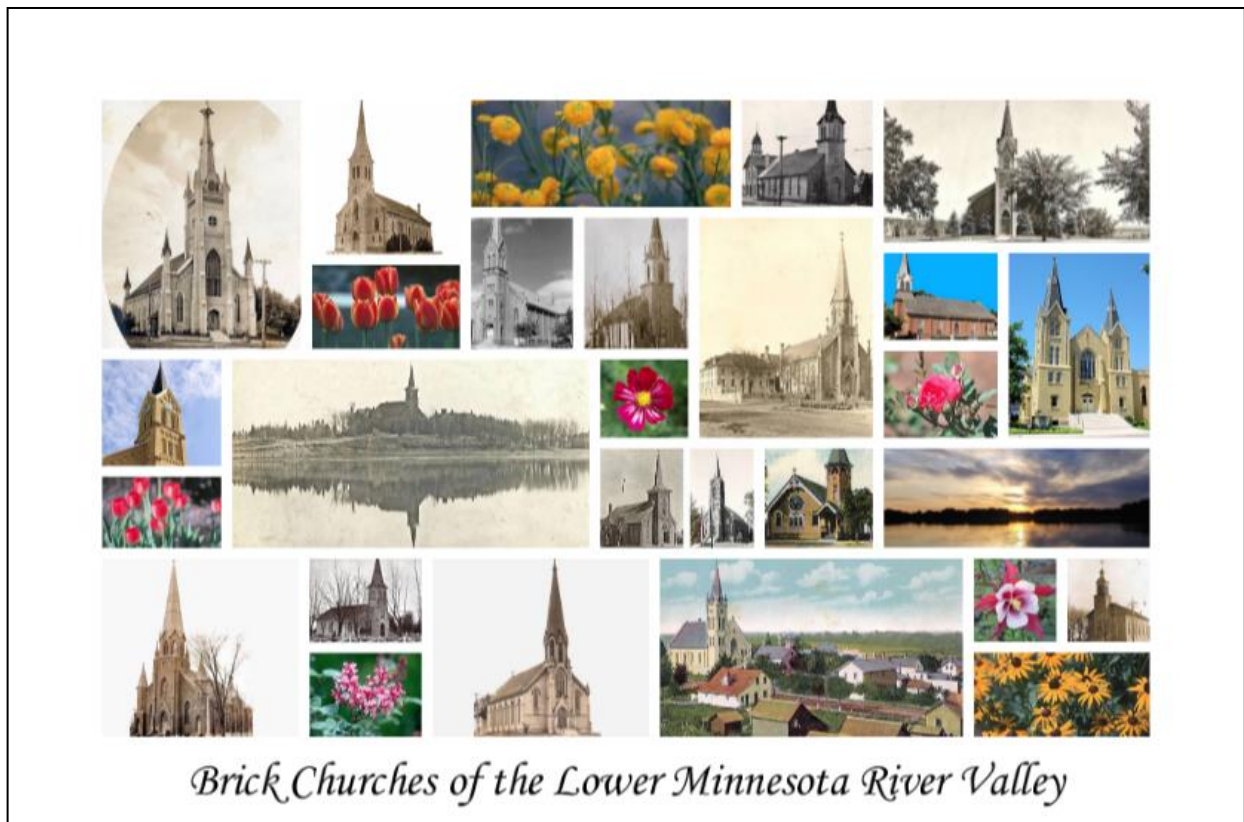
I have not been able to find any information out about this Fergus Falls school building, but I love the picture. In the late 1800s, communities and the attending children took great pride in their schools and communities. The openings of these buildings were huge events. The buildings were usually made of brick and were architectural masterpieces. I would love to have the story to go along with this picture.

3. For Sale

I have acquired quite a bit of brick 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 the historic Minnesota River Valley churches. You can purchase it on the “shop” page of my website, www.mnbricks.com/shop

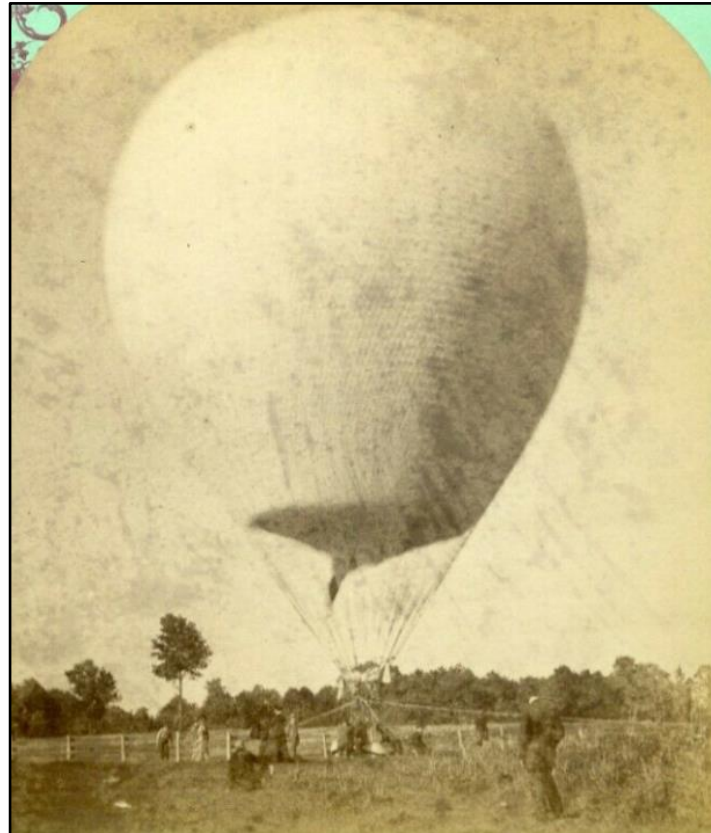
There are other posters for sale on my shop page as well.



4. A Look Back

Early Balloon Ascent

Minnesota history Segment



I came across this photograph of a late 1800s balloon launch in Minnesota. I have seen articles about early balloon launches in Minnesota before, but am unsure of the date associated with this one. When I did a quick search on the subject of the first balloon launch in Minnesota, one source said it was on August 9, 1863. I could not verify that, as some newspapers were missing during that period. I did find an interesting article about the 1863 balloon launch, which is shown below.

To the Business Men of St. Paul. I propose to make a series of Balloon ascension[s] in this city, provided a sufficient amount of money is raised by subscription to defray the expenses connected with the enterprise. Expenses are as follows: \$200 for gas, preparing inclosure [enclosure] \$75, Printing \$50, music \$35, incidental expenses \$50. I propose to make one grand or cloud ascension, the first day, then reinflate the balloon and make the army or topical ascensions for three days, for the accommodation of ladies and gentlemen who may wish a short aerial trip of one thousand feet in the air. Hundreds of ladies and gentlemen have ascended with me in Philadelphia, and all have acknowledged that the sight afforded was the finest they ever witnessed. I propose to receive my compensation from the enclosure and those that ascend. Subscription papers will be concluded today. J. H. Steiner. (*Saint Paul Press*, August 5, 1863, Page 4)

5. News Nuggets

The steamer Alhambra, Captain Fawcett, will leave the Lower Levee [along the Mississippi River in St. Paul] this afternoon at one o'clock, touching at the Upper Levee [a short distance away], and will arrive at the Fort about two o'clock, in time for the Grand Review, by the Governor and Staff, and will return by tea time – Fare for the round trip fifty cents. This will be the only opportunity our citizens will have of seeing the soldiers on dress parade, as their departure is fixed for the first boats through the Lake [Pepin]. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, April 15, 1862, Page 1)

The Grand Review at the Fort [Snelling] attracted a large number of spectators, notwithstanding the unfavorable weather. The Jeannette Roberts and the Alhambra went up with good loads, and probably as many more went up in private conveyances, and there was also a large attendance from the [St. Anthony] Falls. There were seventeen companies of infantry in the line, ten of the Fourth regiment and seven of the Fifth, besides a company of artillery known as Hotchkiss's battery, making in aggregate about fifteen hundred men. The line was handsomely formed, and after waiting a short time the discharge of cannon announced the arrival of the Governor [Ramsey] and his Staff, which consisted of Adjutant General Malmross, Aids de Camp Col. R. F. Fiske, Maj. J. P. Pond, and Captain H. H. Western, of Company D, Second Regiment, Doctors Stewart and Le Boutillier, of the Medical Staff. The soldiers looked well, and received the commendations of the reviewing officers, for their general appearance and discipline. The marching was not quite as good as might have been expected, probably owing in some measure to the ground, rendered muddy by recent rains, and to the natural embarrassment attending an exhibition in presence of so many spectators. There was an epi-sod that created some amusement. The roar of the cannon made his Excellency's horse "move in a mysterious way," and notwithstanding "it is recorded" that the Governor assured the Grand Council of Ten, he "could ride with ease and safety," we observed, with unfeigned regret, the embodied dignity of the State stretched at full length in the mud. The Governor picked up his hat – the aids secured the horse – and "the dignity" resumed its seat, and there was "nobody hurt." One of the news boys was near the gun, and when he saw the Governor fall, he said to the artillerists, "there, you've played hell – you've shot the Governor!" (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, April 16, 1862, Page 4)

Major Smith, Paymaster of the Army, brought with him for payment to soldiers in this State, seventy thousand dollars, which he has been distributing for the last week to the different companies. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, April 17, 1862, Page 1)

Continued on the next page...

**News Nuggets
from the late 1800s**

John Lahr, near the Post Office, has received a monster turtle, the largest ever caught in this country, which will be served up in the shape of soup tomorrow. It will be on exhibition today. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, April 18, 1862, Page 1)

LAHR'S HOUSE,

(LAHR'S LUNCH HOUSE.)

No. 105 Third Street, - - St. Paul,

Near Merchants' Hotel.

J. B. LAHR, PROPRIETOR.

Mr. J. S. Adams, whose son was drowned last December in the river, by falling into an air hole while skating, on the river opposite this city, received a letter yesterday from Lake City stating that the body of a boy with a pair of skates on, had been found floating near Maiden Rock, in Lake Pepin, and had been buried at Warrentown, on the Wisconsin side. Mr. Adams believes the body, from the description, to be that of his son, and starts to-day to recover it. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, April 27, 1862, Page 4)

In noticing the renewal of the advertising card of Messrs. Borup & Champlin, so favorably known as Grocers and Commission Merchants on the Levee, we desire to bear our testimony to the business ability of Mr. M. H. Mills and Mr. James [J.] Hill, two of the employees of the firm. Mr. Mill's has been the office clerk for four or five years, and has performed his duties not only to the satisfaction of the firm, but he has the confidence of their numerous customers, as a correct accountant and an honest man. Mr. Hill has charge of the shipping and levee business, and we only repeat the general belief that he is not excelled as a reliable clerk, and for dispatch of business. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, May 6, 1862, Page 4)

Mr. Samuel McConnell, so well known as a machinist and gas fitter in the employ of the Gas Company, was drowned at Carver, on Saturday night. Mr. McConnell went up on the *Antelope* on Saturday, for the purpose of repairing her machinery. After arriving at Carver, some time in the night, he had occasion to go upon the steamer *Ariel*, laying along side, and in walking on the deck of the *Antelope* with that intention, his foot caught in some projection, and he fell forward over the guard and between the two boats, and down into the deep water and before those who were standing by could realize the fact, his body was carried under the boat, and never rose again to the surface. Mr. McConnell was an estimable young man, faithful and attentive to his business, a skillful workman, and upright and honorable in all his dealings. He leaves a loving wife and two children to grieve over their fearful bereavement. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, May 6, 1862, Page 1)

The Ferry Boat at Fort Snelling was running all day yesterday. A channel was cut across through the ice, and will be kept open as long as is necessary. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 11, 1861, Page 1)

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Lost. On the ice, near the lower levee, Wednesday evening, a pair of long otter gloves. A reward of \$3 will be paid on their return to the store of Justice & Forepaugh. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 12, 1861, Page 1)

The Second and Third Cavalry Companies at the Fort, will march down to the city, in full dress, on Saturday, to give an opportunity to our citizens of seeing them before they leave for Missouri. After the parade, they will have a collation at the German Athenaeum, which has been tendered free of expense for that purpose. Those who feel disposed to contribute cold meats or other edibles, are invited to send their contributions to the Athenaeum on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 13, 1861, Page 1)

The wood inspector, (Jos. Near), informs us that the amount of wood brought into the city and sold, in the past week, averaged fifty cords per day. At the market price, for the week, the amount paid out would be \$1,400. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 13, 1861, Page 1)

A team in the employ of the Government, in crossing on the ice at Mendota, yesterday morning, loaded with clothing and equipment belonging to the second Cavalry Company, broke through the ice, and would have lost the whole load but for the timely assistance of the soldiers at the Fort. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 17, 1861, Page 1)

Capt. West, with a detachment of twenty men, Second Cavalry, departs this morning for La Crosse. Capt. West has in his company three sons and a brother. In the same company there are six men by the name of Olson, all of the same family. One or two more families like these would form a respectable company. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 18, 1861, Page 1)

A fellow was caught peddling whiskey at the Fort yesterday, and compelled to leave in short order. He was employed in the victualing department. His stock was turned over the hospital stores, but the doctor concluded it was too mean an article to bathe decent horses with, and so it was poured on the ground, but the thirsty earth refused to absorb it. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 25, 1861, Page 1)

Jos. Hall has fitted up a splendid suite of rooms for the purpose of serving up oysters and meals to ladies, and parties of ladies and gentlemen. The rooms are entirely separate and apart from the public saloon. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 27, 1861, Page 1)

Mr. J. B. Arnold, known as the recruiting officer for the heavy artillery of this city, proved himself, a few days ago, to be good on a retreat. While on a hunt alone in the woods over in Wisconsin he was attacked by an old enemy, in the form of a huge black bear. The enemy showed fight, and so did the artillery man. The enemy stood two rounds apparently uninjured, and made his advance on his foe quite lively, causing a general rout. The retreat was made good by climbing a tree, and by the time the enemy had advanced, the artillery man was ready for another charge, which was made in double quick time, and left him winner of the battle. The animal is said to be the largest ever captured in this region, and will be brought to this city to be devoured. (*Pioneer and Democrat*, St. Paul, December 28, 1861, Page 1)

6. Brick Structure of the Month



Furthest West ACO Silo Bordulac, ND



I have seen and photographed two ACO silos in Barnes County, North Dakota, which I had thought were the furthest west ACO silos in the Midwest. (ACO silo blocks were made in Springfield, Minnesota). I came across an old ACO silo brochure that lists several of the ACO silos that were built in Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, South Dakota, and North Dakota. That brochure mentioned an ACO silo that was built near Bordulac, North Dakota, which would be the furthest west ACO silo that I know about. I looked at satellite imagery and found that one of the silos was still standing (it looks like the location could have had more silos in the past). So I made a trek to the Bordulac area to take a picture of it, before it is gone. The silo stands next to a massive wooden barn complex. The original owners were huge cattle ranchers. It doesn't look like the wooden barns will last much longer. However, some cattle are still being raised at the location.