

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

November 2020

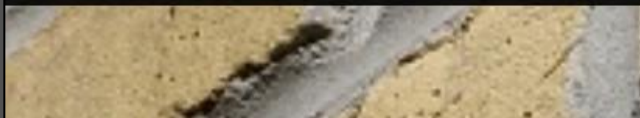
Minnesota Bricks

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

www.mnbricks.com

Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



www.chaskabrick.com

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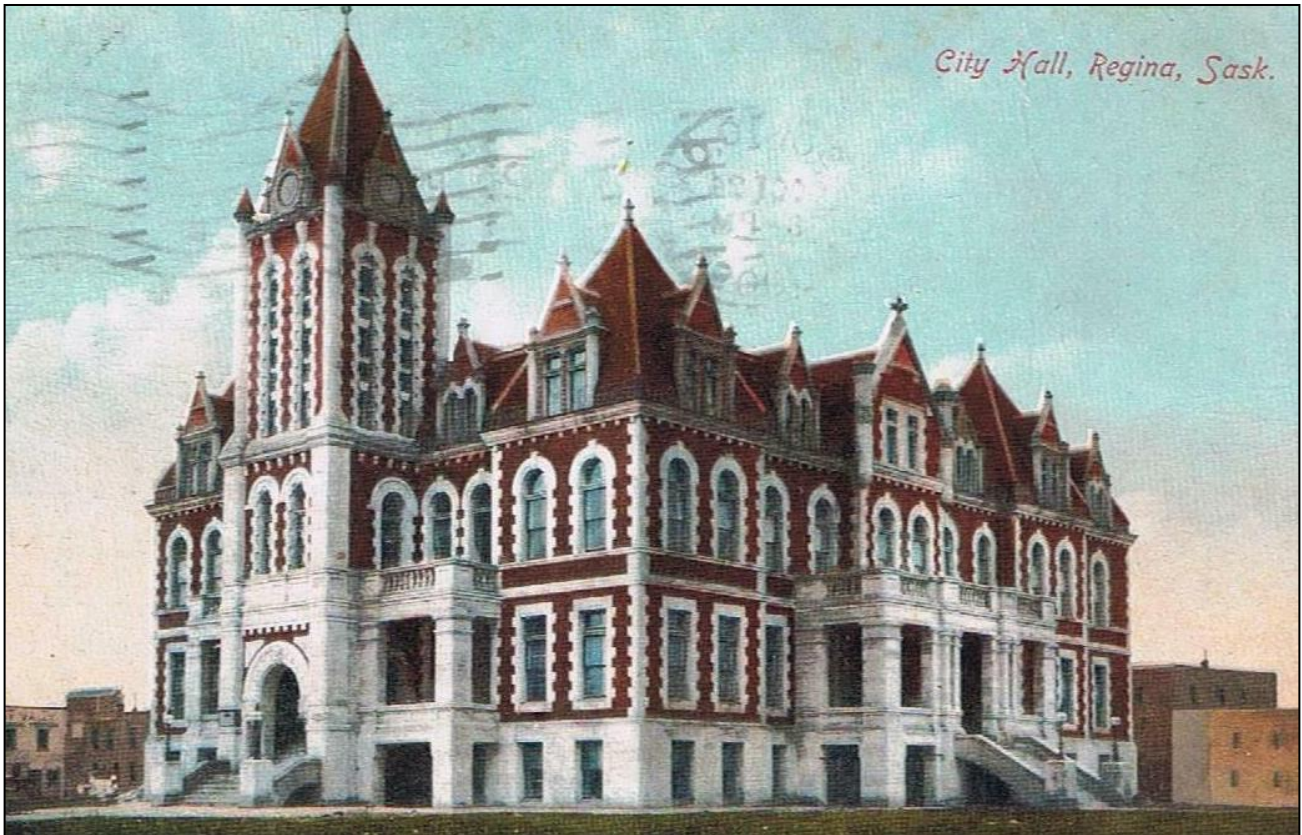
When I see old postcards, I try to imagine what it was like back then. When I look at this postcard, I am immediately drawn to the expressions on the men's faces. The man on the left looks like a child who has just opened a Christmas present, and it was the gift he or she wanted. The man on the right seems happy just to be a part of it.

1. What's New?

- I finished part 5 of my new 5-part video series on the Chaska, Minnesota, brickyards. I am extremely happy to finish this series, as my research into them started me on my brick journey. You can find this video at: <https://www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos>
- I recently heard from a historical researcher in Regina, Saskatchewan. He was looking to find out who made the brick for their original city hall. They knew the brick came from Minnesota, but did not know from which brickyard. I searched my references, but came up empty. A picture of the city hall is shown on the following page. It is a beautiful brick building! Unfortunately, it was torn down years ago.
- My next historical video is about the Winter of 1880-1881. I think any historian would be fascinated by this topic. The video will be done in the new few days.
- 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



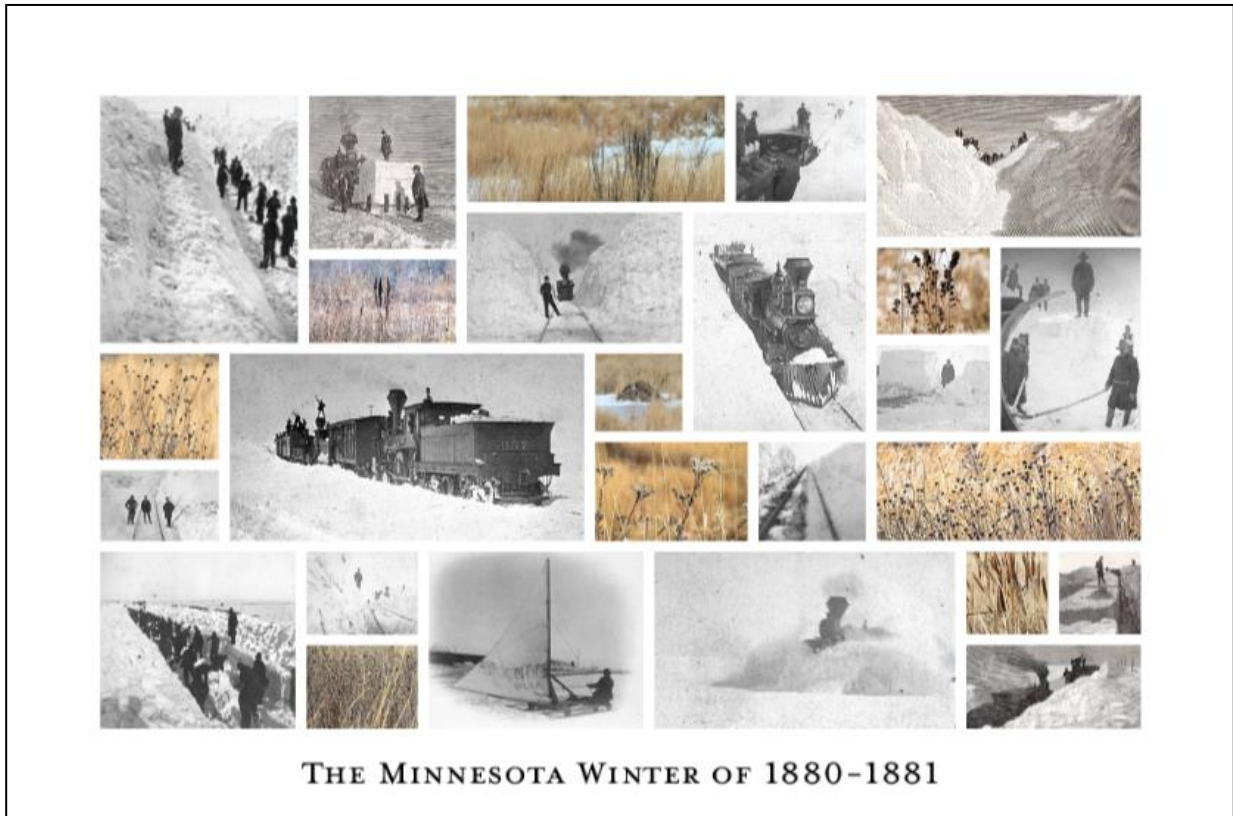
This is a postcard of the original city hall at Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

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 Winter of 1880-81. You can find it for purchase on the “Shop” page of my website: www.mnbricks.com/shop

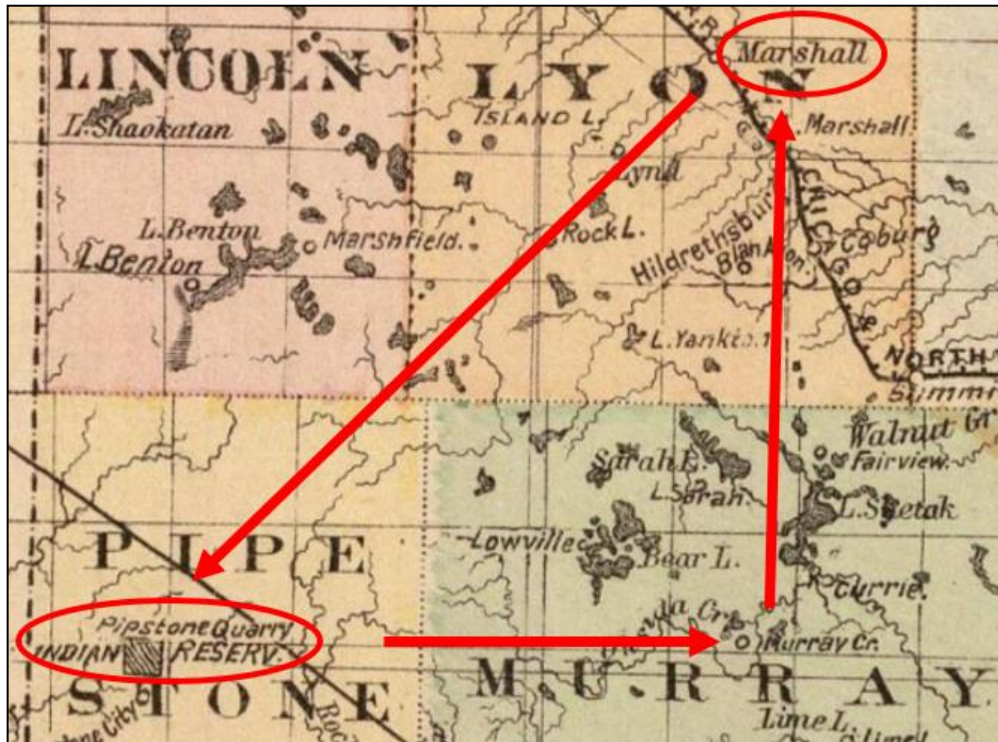
On the same page, there are other posters for sale on various brick towns, Iowa and Minnesota silos, and the Minnesota Valley Churches.



4. A Look Back

A Trip to the Pipestone Quarries

Minnesota History Segment



Leaving Marshall in a southwesterly course we pass over prairie lands dotted here and there with new farm houses, surrounded with little cottonwoods and other varieties of transplanted shade trees, which already have the appearance of small groves, and break the monotony of a continual range of wild prairie. Rock Lake is a fine sheet of water, and under its shade trees we rested for a picnic dinner, while our good horses feasted on the tender grass of the meadow. Pursuing our course southward we pass Currant Lake, which is surely the clearest and most beautiful appearing lake in all this part of the country.

Next is Bear Lake, or a number of lakes running into each other, with strips of heavy timber and low marshy grounds; but a little farther from its shores we pass a belt of the richest soil and find a most luxuriant growth of vegetation. Three miles beyond is the first and only public house on this route of fifty miles; and there we partook of a good supper, and rested soul and body with a sleep without dreams for none sleep more soundly than the wearied traveler. In the morning we wait for a clear up of a heavy shower and start again with renewed strength and refreshing breezes.

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Leaving the boundary of settlements, we follow the old trail leading through the Pipe Stone. The first fifteen miles is a gradual rise of ground broken with gullies, small streams and springs, until we reach the highest land, when a feeling of high elevation comes over ones spirits and we seem to look down on the world, and as far as the eye can reach nothing rise up to obstruct the vision, not a tree or shrub, but a seemingly boundless prairie. From this there is a gradual descent for fifteen miles further when we reach the city of seven houses (not seven hills), standing out alone on the broad filed with two or three emigrant houses in view, that have just been raised and fitted for a summer stay.

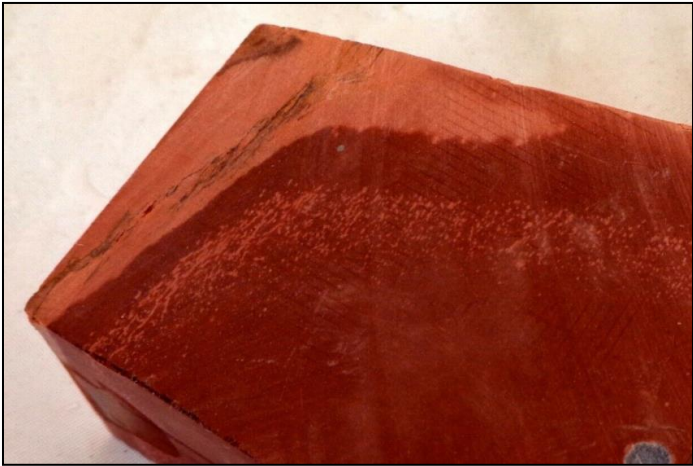
Here we obtain shelter for the night, and take a stroll for the falls of Pipe Stone creek. The quarry lies several feet below the surface, and only Indians have made diggings, as it belongs to them by right, but the view here of the high precipice of granite rocks and ledges, is grand and impressive. A perpendicular height of forty feet, with a dozen cut ridges, where the little streams fall separately over the stone in high water, but now, one is falling at the center, where the stream is deepest; the splashing spray seems to wash the rocky red granite until it is smooth as glass, and sparkles back the rays of a bright sunlight.



Out from the center part stands a lone rock, near forty feet high, shaped like a pyramid it looks very like a work of art, narrowing to the top several feet from the main shore. Here, legend tells us, a bold Indian chief attempted to land, by leaping over the chasm, from the shore, but the smooth top made a slippery footing, and he fell to the broken rocks below, never to rise again, but his name is sacred with his tribe, and this spot to them is hallowed ground.

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On our route home we passed through Murray County, which is more thickly settled, and the view is interspersed with groves and lakes and cultivated fields, and the Cottonwood river with its steep banks shaded with old oaks, seemed a great change from the level prairie. Just at sunset rose the beautiful village of Marshall in the distance. Its growing trees already give a cheerful surrounding to the cottage homes of the pioneer, and one will feel more satisfied with this lively town for a home after a journey over the wild prairie lands of the southwest, and will conclude that Marshall is not the "jumping off place," but a rapidly growing town, on the Northwestern R. R., in direct communication with all the civilized world. (*Marshall Messenger*, July 5, 1878, Page 1)



This is a block of Catlinite Carving Stone, or sacred Minnesota Pipestone

5. Brick Structure of the Month



St. Stanislaus Church Winona, Minnesota



This is a postcard of St. Stanislaus Church and school in Winona, Minnesota. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to determine where the brick came from.

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Corner Stone Laid. Although the weather seemed likely to prove a damper on the celebration attendant to the laying of the corner stone of the new St. Stanislaus church Sunday afternoon, the number of devoted Catholics in the parade and the successful carrying out of all the ceremonies of the day tended to dispel the unpleasant influence of the weather. About 2 p. m the Polish societies assembled at the corner of Carmona and Fifth streets, a block south of the church.

Already it was beginning to rain and the large crowd present were raising umbrellas. Mr. Julius Milke, as president of all these societies, and Mr. Vincent Lorbrecki as marshal of the day, headed the procession which began to move at fifteen moments after. Heading the line was the Polish brass band, the members of which acquitted themselves admirably. Behind the band in the following order came the Polish Legion with 40 members, the St. Stanislaus society with 180, St. Kasimar with 325, St. Cross with 90, the Sharpshooters with 40, and [the] Polish Dramatic club with over 90 in the rank. All the members of all the societies looked happy, although the use of umbrellas was forced upon most of them.

Gay uniforms, flags and society banners added to the general fine effect. The procession passed over and up to St. John's Bohemian church, corner of Broadway and Hamilton street, where the St. Vincelanes society, numbering 16, and St. John's society, numbering about 60 members, joined the line. Large crowds of people were gathered along the whole route from St. John's up Fifth street to St. Joseph's church, where the next stop was made. Here the St. Aloysius society, with 28 in file, and St. Joseph's, numbering 60, were deployed and filed in at the rear.

The march then continued up Fifth to Center street, on Center of Second, on Second to Main, on Main to Wabasha, on Wabasha to Center, where the cathedral societies, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, numbering 25, and the Foresters, with the same number, joined the ranks. The procession, now nearly six blocks long, marched from Wabasha to Walnut, on Walnut to Fourth, on Fourth to the new church, where the ceremonies were held. The mayor, City Council and city officers, as guests of the church, headed the procession from St. Joseph's church down.

On arriving at the church the line of march was broken so as to give all an opportunity to get as close to the corner stone as possible. Rev. Fathers Mier, Preiss, Gallagher, Bulsiewsz and Pacholski of Winona, Rev. Messrs. R. Guzowski of Pine Creek, Wis., N. Schmitz of Rollingstone, and J. Woztowicz were present; also eleven sisters of Notre Dame and as many acolytes, the city officers, mayor and Council, and the contractor, Mr. A. F. Wasiclewski of Minneapolis. There ceremony of blessing and sprinkling the corner stone and cap with holy water was performed by Rev. Guzowski, assisted by the before mentioned priests. The church foundations were also blessed in line manner. The corner stone is a block of West Superior brown sandstone, and is two feet square.

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This had been placed before the ceremony took place. Within it were copies of Saturday's *Republican* and Saturday's *Herald*, the last *Katolik*, the Polish weekly, a clipping from a May issue of the *Republican* containing an account of the projected church, a history of St. Stanislaus church in Polish, gold, silver and copper coins, a Columbian half dollar of 1893 issue, a cent and a nickel of 1894, and two Polish groschen, now just 150 years old. The capstone is a red marble slab 9 by 9 inches.

After the corner stone had been blessed and the incidental ceremonies completed the cap stone was put in position and the hole in the wall closed by the contractor. Next followed the speeches, one in English by Rev. P. J. Gallagher, acting for Bishop Cotter, who was unavoidably absent, and the other in Polish by J. Pacholski, pastor of the church. In substance Rev. Mr. Gallagher said: "All present are to be congratulated on the happy beginning of this church project. Soon it will be completed and will then be blessed by Bishop Cotter in person..."

Next followed Father Pacholski, who said that the good work in the Winona Polish church would prosper by the works and gifts of the heart rather than by those of the hand; that material prosperity would come in time; first must spiritual wealth. All should rejoice in their liberty and be strong in the church. During the ceremony and speeches, which were now over, most impressive was the reverent silence and respect given by the large crowd of over 4,000 persons. The men of the procession all stood with uncovered heads. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Monday, October 29, 1894, Page 3)

Church Description. The new church is a landmark that can be seen from almost any direction in entering the city, its large dome and surrounded towers and turrets standing out high above the surrounding buildings. It is a building unique and distinctive, entirely unlike anything else in the city. The church occupies a ground space of 124 feet at the widest part from east to west and 140 feet from north to south. The style of architecture is Roman, with classic detail. The general plan is a Greek cross, with the center very much enlarged and the arms shortened, so as to give a large auditorium in nearly circular form. The northern arm, which forms the main entrance and vestibule, is flanked by two towers fifteen feet square and 114 feet high.

Between these towers is the entrance porch of brown stone 39 feet wide, trisected by two handsome brown stone pillars, and from which three massive double doors of oak seven feet wide lead into the vestibule. The south arm of the cross forms the sanctuary. This arm is flanked by two towers 86 feet high and nine feet square. The east and west arms form transepts in the main auditorium. They are flanked by ventilators 73 feet high and five feet square. The large central dome rises to a height of 172 feet from the ground to the top of the statue of St. Stanislaus, with which it is surmounted, and has a diameter at its base of 30 feet.

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At a distance of 100 feet from the ground it is circled by a railed platform, from which a fine view of the city and surrounding bluffs can be obtained. On a line with this platform are sixteen windows with bulls-eyes above which flood the dome with light. The church has a stone foundation and above that is constructed of brick, pressed brick being used in the outer courses. Pressed brick to the number of 150,000, and 1,000,000 common brick were used. The metal shingle roof and galvanized iron cornices are painted a dark red to correspond with the pressed brick. The two front towers are where the bells will be hung. They are also provided with seven foot clock disks in case it is ever desired to place a clock therein.

The gilded statues form a distinctive feature of the exterior. There are nineteen of them in all. They are covered with genuine gold leaf, the outlay for this gilding along being in excess of \$500. On top of the dome is a statue in heroic size of St. Stanislaus, the patron saint of the church. Surmounting the two front towers are statues of St. Stanislaus. The two southern towers are topped with statues of an angel with trumpet extended. On the east ventilating towers are figures of St. John and St. Kasimor. At the base of each of the front towers are four statues, and still others are placed in niches, the selection including six angels, three Madonnas and three of St. Vincent de Paul. In addition to the statues are four large gilt crosses at the end of the roof of each arm.

The exterior appearance is improved by a neat stone walk, and curbing has been laid around the building. Passing from the exterior to the interior of the church the same massive proportions are observed. As before stated the vestibule is in the north arm. It is 15 by 39 feet in size and has a marble tiled floor. The south arm forms the sanctuary, 20 feet deep by 39 feet wide. On either side of this are niches in the main auditorium for altars, and back of them the sacristy, 28 by 32 feet, and the vestry, 15 by 18 feet. Of the sacristy is a fire proof vault to keep the church records. The main auditorium is 116 feet wide and 100 feet in depth from the entrance to the sanctuary.

The height from floor to main ceiling is 46 feet, and to the top of the dome 120 feet. This room is the largest auditorium in the city. It has a seating capacity of 1,400, and 400 more can be accommodated in the gallery in the rear, which is 29 feet in depth and 100 feet wide. Above this again is the organ loft, 18 by 39 feet wide. From the organ loft a fine view of the interior of the church can be obtained. The galleries are reached by stairs in the north corner towers. These stairs and all the woodwork in the main auditorium are of solid oak, handsomely carved and finished. The floors throughout are of Southern pine.

The main auditorium will be used only for services on Sundays and holidays. On week days mass will be celebrated in the roomy and well lighted basement, which will also be used for society meetings. The basement in general dimensions and arrangement, except as to seating, is similar to the large auditorium. There is an elevated platform in the place of the sanctuary, and there are two niches for altars the same as above. There are two double entrances and two single entrances. The steam heating plant is located in a room at the southeast corner. The pews from the old church will be used in seating the basement. (*Winona Daily Republican*, Saturday, November 23, 1895, Page 3)

6. News Nuggets

News Nuggets

It will be remembered that some time ago Mr. Wetherbee had a case of oysters stolen from him, and advertised a reward for the thief. Time passed on and our people had nearly forgotten it when Sheriff Hunter, acting under suspicions engendered by the remarks of a neighbor, went out south hunting for oysters and oyster thieves. Three men by the name of Kidder, Jarrett and Parr live in one house south of here, and have been subjects of neighborhood talk before when thefts have been discovered. Hunter interviewed this family, but not being received very socially went to amusing himself by pushing a pitchfork into all the straw piles he could find. He was about giving it up when he struck mineral, and fished out eleven cans of oysters. He finally found the 25 or so empty cans apparently hid in the cellar, and gathering up the whole lot, arrest the three men before named and came to town. An examination was called before justice Wakeman, county attorney Forbes appearing for the state and attorney Andrews for the defendants. A change of venue was taken to Justice Blake, when, after consulting with their attorney, one of them, Parr, plead guilty and was fined \$25. The case was then dismissed. We understand that they paid their attorney \$50, which with fines and costs brought the price of that case of oysters to about \$100, which is very high for oysters. At last accounts the fine has not been paid, and Sheriff Hunter will take Parr to the New Ulm jail. (*Marshall Messenger*, January 21, 1881, Page 5)

Look out almost any time and you will see streaks of white across our green prairies. They are strings of emigrant schooners, come west to gain homes and an independent future for their families. Still there is room for more. (*Marshall Messenger*, May 3, 1878, Page 1)

It almost takes the breath away from our folks to think of coming here from New Ulm in two hours and a half, but that's what the train does now. Leaving Chicago in the morning, it arrives at Marshall the next noon. We get a mail every day but Monday and express four times a week. (*Marshall Messenger*, May 24, 1878, Page 1)

Glencoe Enterprise. On our way through the big woods we learned that a majority of the farmers in the timber were becoming dissatisfied with their situation, and were leaving for the prairie districts as fast as they could dispose of their timber property. It was stated that very few, if any at all, of the many thousands of emigrants who are coming out west, can be induced to settle in the timber. One great reason for this is probably that the cord wood and hoop pole business, from which the majority of them derive their cash income, has been so overdone that the market has become glutted, the immense supply having reduced prices to such a degree that fair wages can no longer be earned. (*Marshall Messenger*, May 31, 1878, Page 1)

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It astonishes the oldest settlers here to see the number of breaking teams at work. One or two more such seasons, and we will not have open prairie enough to know that we are out west. (*Marshall Messenger*, June 7, 1878, Page 1)

A very sad looking schooner passed through here the other day bound east with "Home, sweet Home" written on its side. It is hoped its proprietor found rest on his native dung hill. Any man who goes through this beautiful country in June, when everything is lovely, and free land invites him to make a home on it, and goes back with the homesick cry of "Home, sweet Home," ought never to try to get a living away from his pa and man. (*Marshall Messenger*, June 7, 1878, Page 1)

Say, you fellow that made the remark that our band was a failure and could only play a few old tunes, how badly you do feel, and how awfully sour grapes have grown since our band boys have decided to go to Tracy. Boys, don't hang up your horns, or be discouraged by the remarks of this would-be critic. In "chin music" he seems to be proficient, and doubtless a good judge of horse fiddles or camp meeting hymns. (*Marshall Messenger*, June 28, 1878, Page 1)

Mark Twain's jumping frog is nowhere. Middleton, Conn., has a frog that is not only wonderful but useful. A farmer having placed a pail of milk in a spring of water to cool overnight, went there the next morning, and found, it is solemnly asserted, instead of the milk, a large bull-frog sitting upon a roll of fresh butter. The explanation is that the frog had jumped into the pail, and, in trying to extricate itself had churned the milk into butter. Still we would advise our farmers not to swap off their churns for bull-frogs, until the latter's churning efficiency has been further tested. (*Marshall Messenger*, July 5, 1878, Page 1)

This is the season for ducks, and two of our young men, Jackson and DeGraff, are prepared to instruct amateurs in all the details. They found a pond full of mud hens and shot one, but the awkward thing wouldn't come ashore, and DeGraff being cast in the same mould as the youth who sweeneyed himself shouting "excelsior," took off his pants to wade for the game. He got it, but just then the horse ran away with the buggy and his pants, taking the road to town, five miles off. That five miles was a long road for a hot day and so light a costume, but it had to be walked, and the boys struck out. Near town they met a man returning with the team but no pants. If DeGraf hadn't been living under a resolve to so walk before men that he could read his title clear to mansions in the beautiful beyond, there would have been a profane sinner on exhibition about that time, but he meekly got into the buggy and crept under a blanket. The lost pants were soon found, and a thanksgiving celebration immediately ensued. (*Marshall Messenger*, August 16, 1878, Page 1)

Catlin and Kayser got it into their heads the other day that they could hunt ducks, and started for Goose Lake. The next day they returned with a wagon load, 63 ducks, a jack rabbit and a pelican some 12 feet long. They have the belt for the season, so far. They, also, have our thanks for a donation from the pile. (*Marshall Messenger*, September 27, 1878, Page 1)

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J. R. Davis of Bloomfield, Iowa visited our city with one of his American Well Augers, and practically demonstrated its utility and worth by making several wells in our place. He has shown that his machine will earn \$25 per day, when properly handled, by doing it himself here. He commenced at about 8 o'clock a. m., boring a well for Mr. Bennett at his Sale Stable, and bored it three feet in diameter and 17 feet deep and walled it up with brick; then moved his auger to the farm of Capt. Goodwin, over three miles in the country, and bored one same size and depth, walling it up with brick, making both wells the same day. Mr. Davis has done about \$200 worth of well making in two weeks and a half, and sold four of his machines. Two of his machines were sold to practiced well auger men, who were running other augers and who laid them aside and purchased an American. Mr. Davis has thus thoroughly demonstrated his machine to be what this heading says "A SUCCESS." He is granting liberal terms to agents – 50 percent of all sales they make, and as he is dealing liberally with the public and introducing a practical and useful machine we wish him the success his invention deserves. (*Marshall Messenger*, August 16, 1878, Page 1)

Six years ago M. E. Wilcox was express agent here. He put his packages in the safe one day and soon after was called on for a money package which he said he had, but on looking failed to find. He paid the man \$25 and never after got track of the lost package till this week. The old safe after having been run here six years was lately exchanged, and at headquarters they found the package stuck by the wax to the underside of the drawer, where it had been shoved out and in for six years undiscovered. (*Marshall Messenger*, October 4, 1878, Page 1)

The whole town turned out Wednesday to fight prairie fire east of town, the fire starting from a burning straw stack of Whitney's, which he thought he had made secure. Considerable damage was prevented by hard work. (*Marshall Messenger*, November 8, 1878, Page 3)

Apples are so cheap in the east that we read of thieves breaking into an orchard and emptying out the apples to steal the barrels. (*Marshall Messenger*, November 15, 1878, Page 3)

There are now in our part of the state so many new comers who know nothing about our storms, that it may be well to mention that at any time after this we are liable to the worst storms ever let loose, and that they mostly come very suddenly after warm, pleasant days. Don't expose yourselves for long trips without proper protection, and prepare your houses for storms that you never saw anything like. They frequently last three days. (*Marshall Messenger*, November 22, 1878, Page 3)

The fur business here this fall is very light to what it once was. A few years ago the furs shipped out of here furnished quite a respectable source of revenue. Our lakes used to yield quite a harvest of several kinds of fur which cannot be found now. (*Marshall Messenger*, December 13 1878, Page 3)