

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

December 2020

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Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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Contents

1. What's New?	3
2. Photo of the Month	4
3. For Sale	5
4. A Look Back	6
5. News Nuggets	11
6. Brick Structure of the Month	15



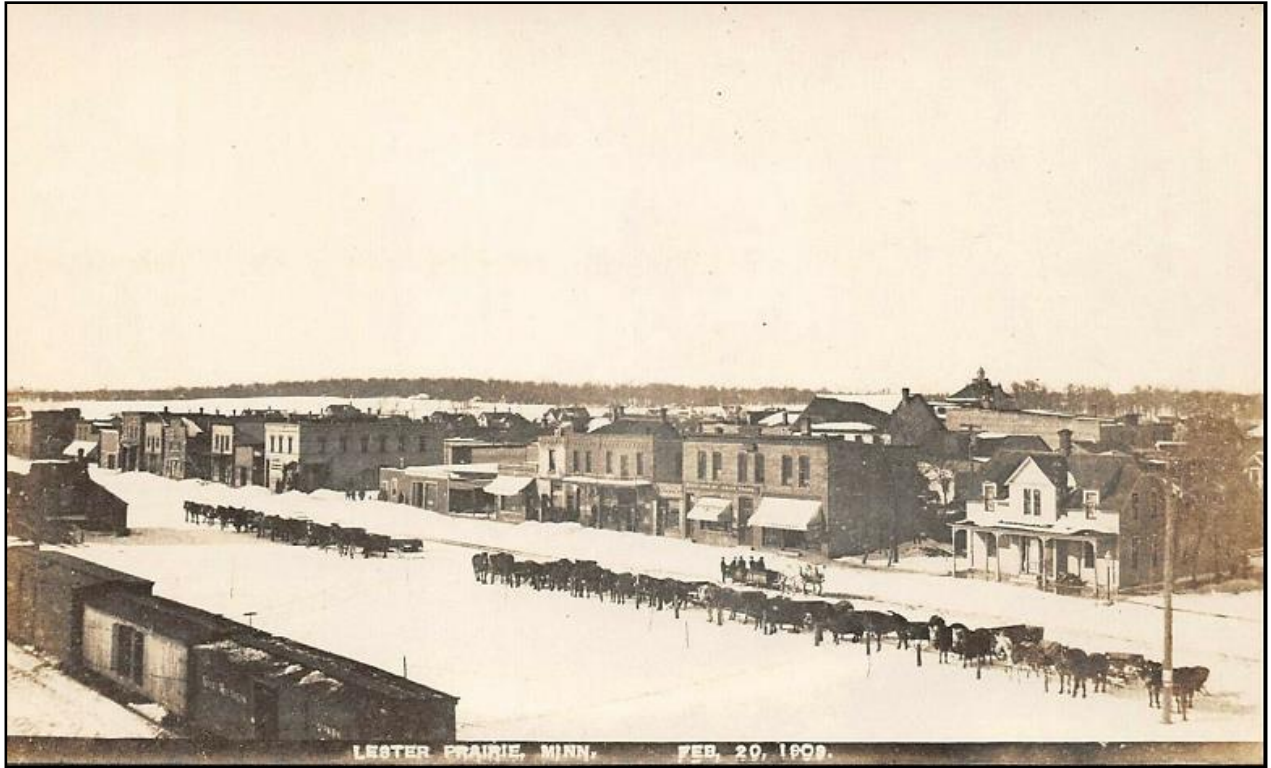
This is an eighth grade class heading out for a picnic near Barnesville, MN, in 1908.

1. What's New?

- I finished my YouTube video on the historic winter of 1880-1881, from the *New Ulm Weekly Review's* perspective. I am really happy with how it turned out, and I think people will find it really interesting. I am in the finishing stages of my next video, which highlights how the snow blockade was cleared across southwest Minnesota. These videos can be found at: www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos
- I helped one reader find out where a brick stamped "Ristokrat" came from (a brickyard in Illinois). That is a unique name! Another reader said they had demolished an old brick bank building in Redwing, and had found several old brick with a "B" stamped on them. I did some digging, and think the B stood for Blodgett, the last name of the man who owned a sewer pipe manufacturing business in Redwing.
- 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



I have never seen a picture like this one. The first thought that comes to my mind is, "a horse and sleigh parking lot!" I admit it is a little hard to see the sleighs, but they were lined up in Lester Prairie, Minnesota, for some reason, back on February 20, 1909.

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 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

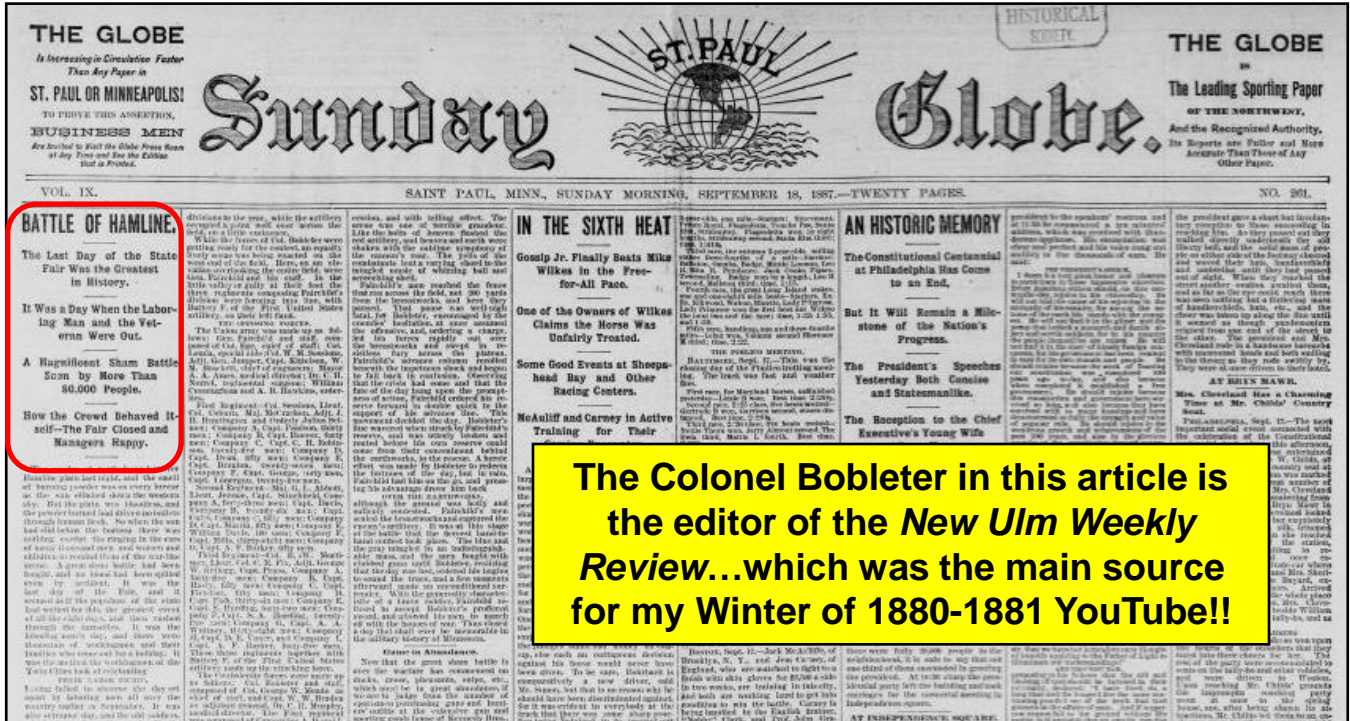
There are other posters for sale on my shop page as well.



4. A Look Back

The Battle at Hamline, Minnesota

Minnesota History Segment



This "mock" battle was staged by Civil War veterans during the Minnesota State Fair, at Hamline, on September 17, 1887.

A Magnificent Sham Battle Seen by More Than 80,000 People. The smoke of battle hung low over Hamline plain last night, and the smell of burning powder was on every breeze as the sun climbed down the western sky. But the plain was bloodless, and the powder burned had driven no bullets through human flesh. So when the sun had slid below the horizon there was nothing except the ringing in the ears of many thousand men and women and children to remind them of the war-like scene. A great sham battle had been fought, and no blood had been spilled even by accident. It was the last day of the Fair, and it seemed as if the populace of the state had waited for this, the greatest event of all the eight days, and then rushed through the turnstiles. It was the laboring man's day, and there were thousands of workmen and their families who came out for a holiday. It was the method the workingmen of the Twin Cities took of celebrating their labor picnic, having failed to observe the day set apart by laboring men all over the country earlier in September.

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It was also veteran's day, and the old soldiers, who had come from all over the Northwest, were all on hand, not only to see the Fair, but lured by the chance of once again smelling gun powder and hearing the booming cannon and rattling musketry. It was also Saturday, when many who could not, during all the week leave business, found half a holiday. Added to this the day was perfect, and under the fine weather the crowd was naturally increased. All these things conspired to bring together more people than were ever gathered together on the Fair grounds, and some said that **never in Minnesota had there been so many people to witness any single event**. All who were connected with the Fair smiled their broadest smile and when they had seen the great crowd safely in and out of the grounds, their cup of happiness was full.

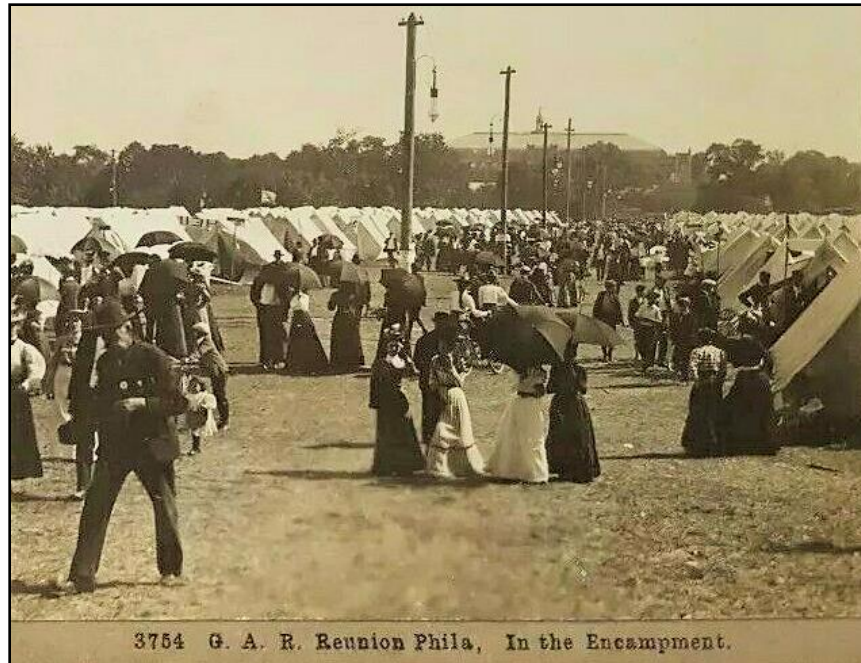
It is hard to say just how many people saw the sham battle. President Merriam said there were 100,000; others said more, some said less. From the turnstiles and carriage entrance records there were not far from 60,000 within the fair grounds fence and on the slightly points outside, conservative estimates agree that there were not less than 25,000 who were successful in getting within sight of the field where the mock battle was raging. No accidents happened in the handling of the crowd at the grounds, and when last night's stars began to twinkle, they were not more bright than the faces of the managers. **The last day was the greatest not only of this Fair but of all Fairs ever seen in the state.**

A Bloodless Battlefield. The Sham Battle was a Success in Every Way. Those who have been in the field of battle, where bullets flew and where there was something harder than smoke coming from the mouth of the cannon, say that the sham battle was as near an imitation of the genuine article as can be had with blank cartridges. All that was lacking was the ping of Minnie bullets and the bursting of bombs, with, of course, the bloodshed that is their natural result. The movements of the opposing forces were the true battlefield movements, complete in all the details and executed after the manner of regular armies when they meet to slaughter one another in deadly combat. It is said to have been a better representation of actual war than most sham battles are. In the minds of the **3,000 and more veterans who took part** it called up the shadows of the dim past, and it sent their blood through their veins in quicker action than it had flowed for years. It was war itself with none of war's results.

The battlefield was the level plain within the race track, where the grass is green, and which may be seen from rising land on two sides of it as well as from the grand stand. Down to the south of the grounds, where Camp McGill is pitched, was the rendezvous for all the troops, and on the long, level field near by, the veterans were drawn in companies, as they came. It was earlier than 1 o'clock when the officers on horseback were first to be seen galloping about and getting the line in readiness. Muskets were distributed from the ordnance officer's tent and for an hour or more the distribution of ordnance was going on. Gen. Lucius Fairchild, of Wisconsin, who commanded one of the opposing armies, was early on field, his armless sleeve pinned across his breast and his bright buttons and epaulets [ornamental shoulder pieces] glancing full and fair in the afternoon sunshine, the picture of a commanding soldier to whom the sights of war were old. Gen. Lew Wallace, who was to have commanded the army against Gen. Fairchild, did not appear, and Col. Joseph Bobleter, of the Second Minnesota regiment, was made commander in his stead.

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It was a little after 2 o'clock when the forces of Col. Bobleter moved out from the rendezvous, marching in column up across the field out to the road and through the St. Pal entrance to the grounds. There they marched down the principal street and up through the gate to the track enclosure and around to the east end of what was a little later the battlefield. Here the hospital tents were pitched, the battery stationed and the officers' headquarters established. Hardly had this been done when Gen. Fairchild's troops were stationed in the west end of the grounds, over beyond the track and just outside the woods, near the state farm. It was a mile between the extreme forces of the two armies. Allegorically [figuratively] Fairchild commanded the Union army, and Bobleter the supposed Confederates.



Civil War reunion in Philadelphia.

Across the field an earthen breastwork had been thrown up, as a defense for the army to the east, commanded by Col. Bobleter; for, by the plan of the battle, Gen. Fairchild's army was to be the attacking force. Behind the earthwork a line of men was stationed, muskets in hand, the entire width of the field. Bobleter's reserve forces were stationed in two divisions to the rear, while the artillery occupied a point well over across the field, on a little eminence. While the forces of Col. Bobleter were getting ready for the contest, an equally lively scene was being enacted on the west end of the field. Here, on an elevation overlooking the entire field, were Gen. Fairchild and his staff. In the little valley or gully at their feet the three regiments composing Fairchild's division were forming into line, with Battery F, of the First United States artillery, on their left flank.

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The Fray Begins. It was 3 o'clock when small puffs of smoke were seen over beyond the track where Fairchild's men were, and this was the opening of the battle. Then for an hour and a quarter there were scenes of war. The advance of the skirmishers, the rapid firing, the galloping of mounted officers, the cracking of the muskets, the roar of cannon, the advance and retreat, the movements of the ambulance for the dead and dying, the bugle blast, the changing signals, clouds of smoke, and all the attendant pageants and pomp of war.

As soon as the first shots of Fairchild's attacking forces were heard Bobleter threw out his skirmish, which advanced at double quick, and when 200 yards of more in front of the earth work they dropped and fired in rapid order. This was returned with telling effect and, to carry out the mimicry of battle, the blue coated militia men fell, apparently mowed down by the whizzing bullets. Into the cloud of smoke that came from the musketry, went the ambulance wagon, a regulation affair, drawn by four government mules, with the hospital corps. Dr. J. H. Murphy, medical director, galloped a head of it and directed the corps, as they hurried about the field with stretchers, picking the dead and dying. The firing went on for five minutes, and the skirmish line of the defense remained firm; then it fell back for fifty yards or so, while the attacking line advanced at a double quick, firing incessantly. Then the skirmishers of Col. Bobleter rallied and, with a cracking of rifles drove back the enemy, while the artillery from the two armies kept up a booming that shook the blue sky and clouded the field with smoke. The skirmishers on both sides fell back and lay quiet in the grass for five minutes, and then the advance and retreat were repeated. Then all firing ceased. Consultations of officers were held, and the great yellowish cloud of smoke drifted away.

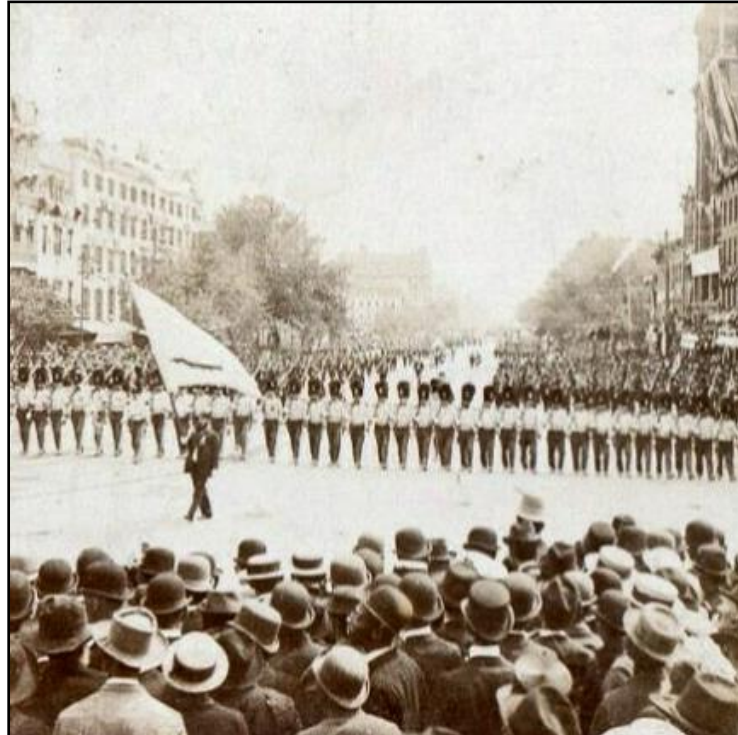
Then there was an advance of Fairchild's skirmishers, and a minute later a whole division in a solid column. This was a critical point in the battle. Bobleter's skirmishers fell back at a double quick, many a brave man biting the dust as the tide of the battle rolled across the plain. The attacking line came on with a step that was firm and even, when all at once there blazed a solid sheet of flame from behind the earthwork. Platoon after platoon followed, and the ranks of the enemy were rapidly thinned. But as gaps were made the columns closed up with soldierly precision, and when, after some minutes of the musketry, the firing died down and the smoke had cleared away, the flag of the attacking force had been advanced and floated 200 yards nearer the earthwork. A consultation was held in Bobleter's camp, and preparations were made for the worst. The hospital tents were struck, officers galloped hither and thither, with field glasses they watched the signals.

For ten mortal minutes there was a cessation of the firing. It was a crisis in the history of the army behind the breastworks. Then came Fairchild's men like a whirlwind, in platoons, on the double quick. They swept across the field, pouring hot shot into the brave men who heroically opposed them. At this point the guns of Shea's battery belched forth streams of fire and mowed great gaps through the advancing ranks of Fairchild's men. Shea handled his guns in beautiful style, firing them in rapid succession, and with telling effect. The scene was one of terrible grandeur. Like the bolts of heaven flashed the red artillery, and heaven and earth were shaken with the sublime sympathy of the cannon's roar. The yells of the combatants lent a varying chord to the mingled music of whizzing ball and screeching shell.

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Fairchild's men reached the fence that ran across the field, not 200 yards from the breastworks, and here they paused. That pause was well-nigh fatal, for Bobleter, encouraged by the enemies' hesitation, at once assumed the offensive, and, ordering a charge, led his forces rapidly out over the breastworks and swept in resistless fury across the plateau. Fairchild's advance column recoiled beneath the impetuous shock and began to fall back in confusion. Observing that the crisis had come and that the fate of the day hung upon the promptness of action, Fairchild ordered his reserve forward in double quick to the support of his advance line. This movement decided the day. Bobleter's line wavered when struck by Fairchild's reserve, and was utterly broken and routed before his own reserve could come from their concealment behind the earthworks, to the rescue.

A heroic effort was made by Bobleter to redeem the fortunes of the day, but in vain. Fairchild had him on the go, and pressing his advantage drove him back over the earthworks, although the ground was hotly and sullenly contested. Fairchild's men scaled the breastworks and captured the enemy's artillery. It was at this stage of the battle that the fiercest hand-to-hand contest took place. The blue and the gray mingled in an indistinguishable mass, and the men fought with clubbed guns until Bobleter, realizing that the day was lost, ordered his bugles to sound the truce, and a few moments afterward made an unconditional surrender. With the generosity characteristic of a brave soldier, Fairchild refused to accept Bobleter's proffered sword, and allowed his men to march off with the honors of war. Thus closed a day that shall ever be memorable in the military history of Minnesota. (*Saint Paul Daily Globe*, Sunday, September 18, 1887, Page 1)



Civil War veteran's parade.

5. News Nuggets

Some of the young folks of town went over to the depot Tuesday evening and enjoyed an hour of dancing on the new floor. Prof. Albright furnished the music and also favored the company with several songs. (*The Atwater Press*, August 21, 1885, Page 1)

Three tramps made a lively run for the way freight as it was pulling out from here for the west, Tuesday afternoon. Two of them got aboard all right, but the other fellow had evidently imbibed too freely [was drunk] of tangle foot to make good time. He managed to reach the train however just in time to catch hold of one of the rear cars, but the train by this time was moving too fast for him to climb on and he was dragged several rods and finally dumped all in a heap beside the track. The spectators who watched the efforts of the man expected every instant to see him fall under the wheels and be crushed to death. (*The Atwater Press*, August 21, 1885, Page 1)

The question is often asked why separate waiting rooms for ladies and gentlemen, are not put in the depot here, as required by the law passed last winter. The law does not require separate rooms at towns of this size; it applies only to places having a population of 1000 or more. (*The Atwater Press*, August 21, 1885, Page 1)

Complaint is made that small boys are in the habit of playing with powder and firing it among the main business houses of town. Our village authorities should put a stop to the dangerous practice at once. (*The Atwater Press*, August 21, 1885, Page 1)

The rage among newspapers for illustration has found its way into the Northwest, and during the Carnival at St. Paul the Pioneer Press propose to make this feature very prominent. Special artists have been secured in addition to those regularly attached to the paper. All sports, processions and ceremonies connected with the Ice Carnival will be elaborately reproduced. We advise our readers to send in their subscription at once. (*The Atwater Press*, February 5, 1886, Page 1)

Harrison Items. Last Monday P. A. Winqvist went to his timber in Union Grove, and just as he reached his destination he saw a man, or rather a diabolical forest pilferer, taking to his "heels," and so W. made his horses take to their "heels" until they reached the clodhopper [foolish person]. He gave him a select reading, and returning he found a scarf belonging to the over said clodhopper which has now perched itself on W.'s shotgun. (*The Atwater Press*, March 4, 1887, Page 1)

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**News Nuggets
from the late 1800s**

The severest blizzard of the season occurred last Friday night and Saturday. All the trains were suspended for over two days. Two engines with a snow plow, two coaches and a crew of men were sent from Willmar at 8:30 Sunday morning to clear the track, but on account [of] the snow being packed so hard it were [was] difficult to get through, and [they] finally arrived here at 3:30 Monday afternoon, a distance of about fifteen miles. The plow was surveillanced [watched] by a large crowd as it passed through town. (*The Atwater Press*, March 4, 1887, Page 1)

McArdle and Wilkins have bought a restaurant in Willmar, [and] have closed out their business here and will open up the same line there. Mr. McArdle is a good baker. The boys have made a great many friends here by their gentlemanly conduct and strict attention to business. (*The Atwater Press*, March 18, 1887, Page 1)

Harrison Items [a town near Atwater]. William Pagel is getting pretty liberal now-a-days. He treated the boys to some sardines at Simons & Peterson's Saturday evening. (*The Atwater Press*, July 1, 1887, Page 1)

Harrison Items. Girls seem to be getting scarce now-a-days. A certain individual has been paying from twenty-five cents to a dollar for the privilege of sparking somebody's sister for ten minutes to an hour. Now another young man has followed his example. It isn't every young man that can scoop in the almighty dollar for the lending of his sister. (*The Atwater Press*, July 8, 1887, Page 1)

The fourth of July, 1887, has passed away, but the small boy with the toy pistol and the fire cracker, two of the worst nuisances in existence, is yet cracking away. (*The Atwater Press*, July 8, 1887, Page 1)

Two hundred and twenty passengers took the train for Litchfield, the fourth [of July], besides a great number went by team. It is safe to say that 300 people from this part of the county celebrated the glorious day at Litchfield. (*The Atwater Press*, July 8, 1887, Page 1)

Harrison Items. Raspberry pickers are plenty but berries are few. (*The Atwater Press*, July 15, 1887, Page 1)

Harrison Items. The young kids found a tramp sleeping under a map in district No. 3 schoolhouse last week. (*The Atwater Press*, July 15, 1887, Page 1)

At a meeting of the school board, held Tuesday evening, it was decided to employ, for teachers, only those who were graduates of Normal schools or State university. Also to let proposals for sealed bids for the furnishing of two heating stoves, storm windows for building[,] and for fuel. (*The Atwater Press*, July 22, 1887, Page 1)

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The picnic at Diamond Lake last Sunday was a complete success; about 250 person enjoyed the cool refreshing shade of the thick trees, boat riding on the beautiful waters and a few passed the time very zealously in pursuit of the finny beauties of the lake; generally being rewarded with a good catch of sun and bass, with three or four pike fishes. A very social time was had by all; nothing occurred that could offend the most fastidious [sensitive]. (*The Atwater Press*, July 29, 1887, Page 1)

The railroads have done well by the State Fair people this year. At no other time in the year can you go and come for so little money as during the fair. Excursion tickets only a cent and a half a mile, and good for return until Monday, September 19th. (*The Atwater Press*, July 29, 1887, Page 1)

Arrangements have all been made for the grandest sham battle ever seen in this country, to take place on the state fair grounds on Saturday, September 19th, the last day of the fair. Over three thousand old soldiers will live in camp outside the grounds during the fair, and take part in the battle on the last day. Breastworks will be thrown up, and there will be several full batteries beside a stand of over three thousand small arms. Several state militia companies will take part in the battle and it will be the grandest sight ever witnessed "since the wah." (*The Atwater Press*, August 12, 1887, Page 1)

Last Sunday we went to the house of Del. Cole, on the Crow River bottoms, according to a previous contract, as the festive prairie chicken was "ripe" on Monday and we had agreed to assist in the harvest of a few. Just as "old sol" began to dispel the fog that is so common to that locality we, in company with Messrs. D. Cole, W. Newman, Otto Hagen and Mr. Burt's boy Almond, to drive the team, set forth to the tune of "what shall the harvest be," and we returned as the shades of night was falling, having bagged seventy-six (76) prairie chickens and one large "Jackson Rabbit." It was a Royal Day's Sport, and one never to be forgotten. (*The Atwater Press*, August 19, 1887, Page 1)

One of the sub-contractors on the Willmar and Sioux Falls grade attempted to ride his pony into a saloon at Willmar the other day – "a-la-Jessy-James-style" – but marshall Odell objected and the village was \$10 richer. (*The Atwater Press*, September 2, 1887, Page 1)

Whitefield News. The prairie chickens are having an easy time. Very few of the upper class are seen spending their leisure hours scaring the chickens which, we suppose, is largely due to the determination of the Whitefielders to not let anyone hunt unless a special permission has been given. The hunters, in past years, have been a perfect nuisance, digging trenches in the fields and left them open for man or beast to fall into; but the special objects for the sporting nimrods and a sure hit appears to have been the guide posts which even to-day bear ample proof of the close proximity of some would-be crack shot. The lower class, to which your writer belongs, known otherwise as farmers, are busy turning the soil over hunting for some few stray gold pieces and when found ordered paid on demand. (*The Atwater Press*, September 2, 1887, Page 1)

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Whitefield News. The mosquitoes have rented this part of the earth, and are holding ward caucuses at all convenient places. At any rate they are as thick as politicians at the political harvest time, or Democratic candidates for post office honors. (*The Atwater Press*, September 16, 1887, Page 1)

Tuesday night a special train bearing Jim Hill and other "moguls" of the St. P. M. & M. R'y Co. went up the line passing Atwater between nine and ten o'clock. We didn't ask Jimmie what his business was, therefore our readers must draw upon their own imagination. (*The Atwater Press*, September 23, 1887, Page 1)

The Atwater Band boys got their instruments from Minneapolis, last Thursday; they had sent them away to be plated, which makes a great difference in the appearance of the band, although we can't see as they make any better music. (*The Atwater Press*, September 23, 1887, Page 1)

One, if not the largest gatherings in this part of the county occurred Wednesday and Wednesday evening in celebration of the completion of the Swedish Evangelical Lutheran church. Appropriate exercises were held in the forenoon to which nearly the whole country roundabout attended, including quite a number from Litchfield, Grove City, Kandiyohi, New London, Lake Lillian and Lake Elizabeth. Tables were set in the basement of the church and the hungry multitude were fed; more than "seven baskets full" was left unbroken for the greater crowd that assembled in the evening. By half past five the supper began and continued until nine o'clock, when the intellectual feast, as published in the last week's *Press*, began and continued until almost eleven o'clock. The committee reports a gross receipts of three hundred and ten dollars. Over one thousand meal tickets must have been sold for the price per meal was 25 cents, children 15. A very interesting as well as profitable session throughout. The church has been raised, a large room in the basement made which will be used as a schoolroom, besides a smaller room which serves as cook and store room. The belfry has been raised and remodeled and a fine large bell hung therein, besides the whole building has been repaired and painted inside and out; so that now the society has as fine a church building as can be found in a day's journey. (*The Atwater Press*, September 23, 1887, Page 1)

Some of our village sports (no names mentioned) started out the first of the week to slaughter ducks and geese. They went to Lake Lillian and made such a terrible racket, not killing anything but a muskrat and a fine bird with a very unsavory cognomen [name], that an old farmer got after them, took the gun away from a big strapping fellow and took it home. After a good deal of crying and begging, the old farmer gave him his gun on condition that the whole crew should skip. They skipped. *Willmar Argus*. (*The Atwater Press*, September 30, 1887, Page 1)

6. Brick Structure of the Month



Archer House Northfield, MN



This is the Archer House, a fancy remodeled brick hotel in Northfield, Minnesota. I was told by a relative that portions of the hotel were destroyed by a fire on November 12, 2020. In digging through the available old newspapers, I could not find out where these red brick were made.