

Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota

Minnesota Bricks

January 2021

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www.mnbricks.com

Chaska Brick

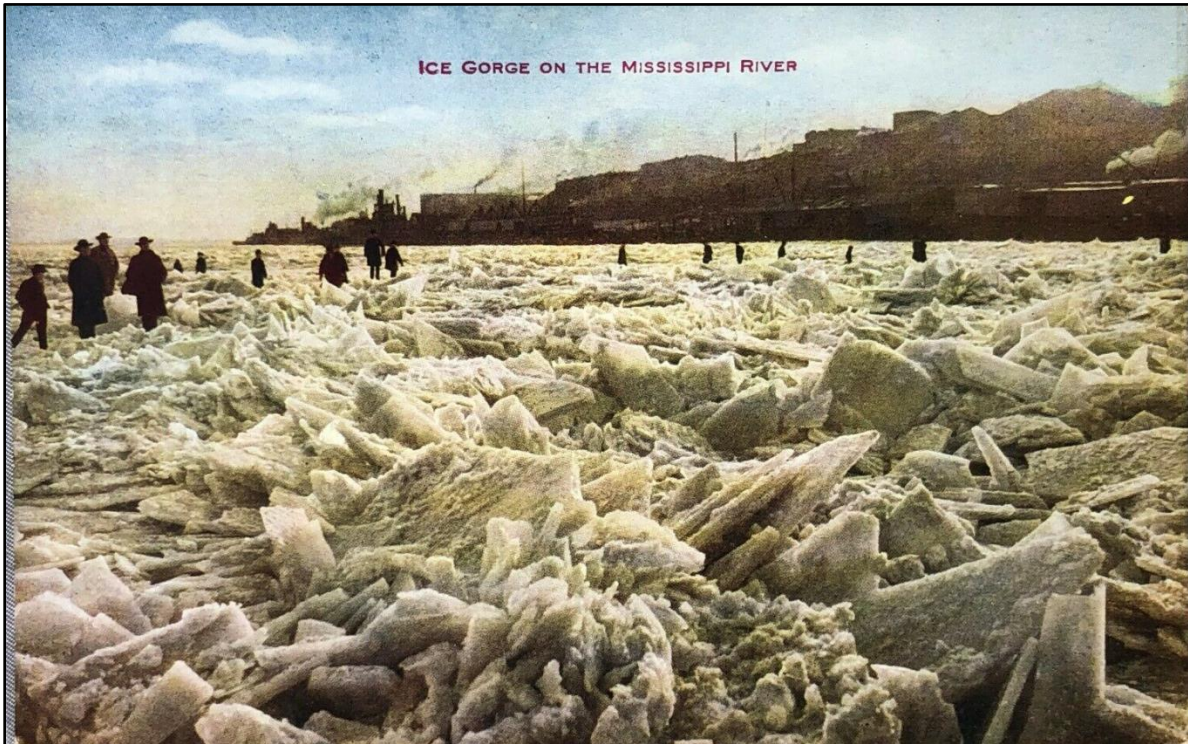
Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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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. Brick Structure of the Month	7
6. News Nuggets	10



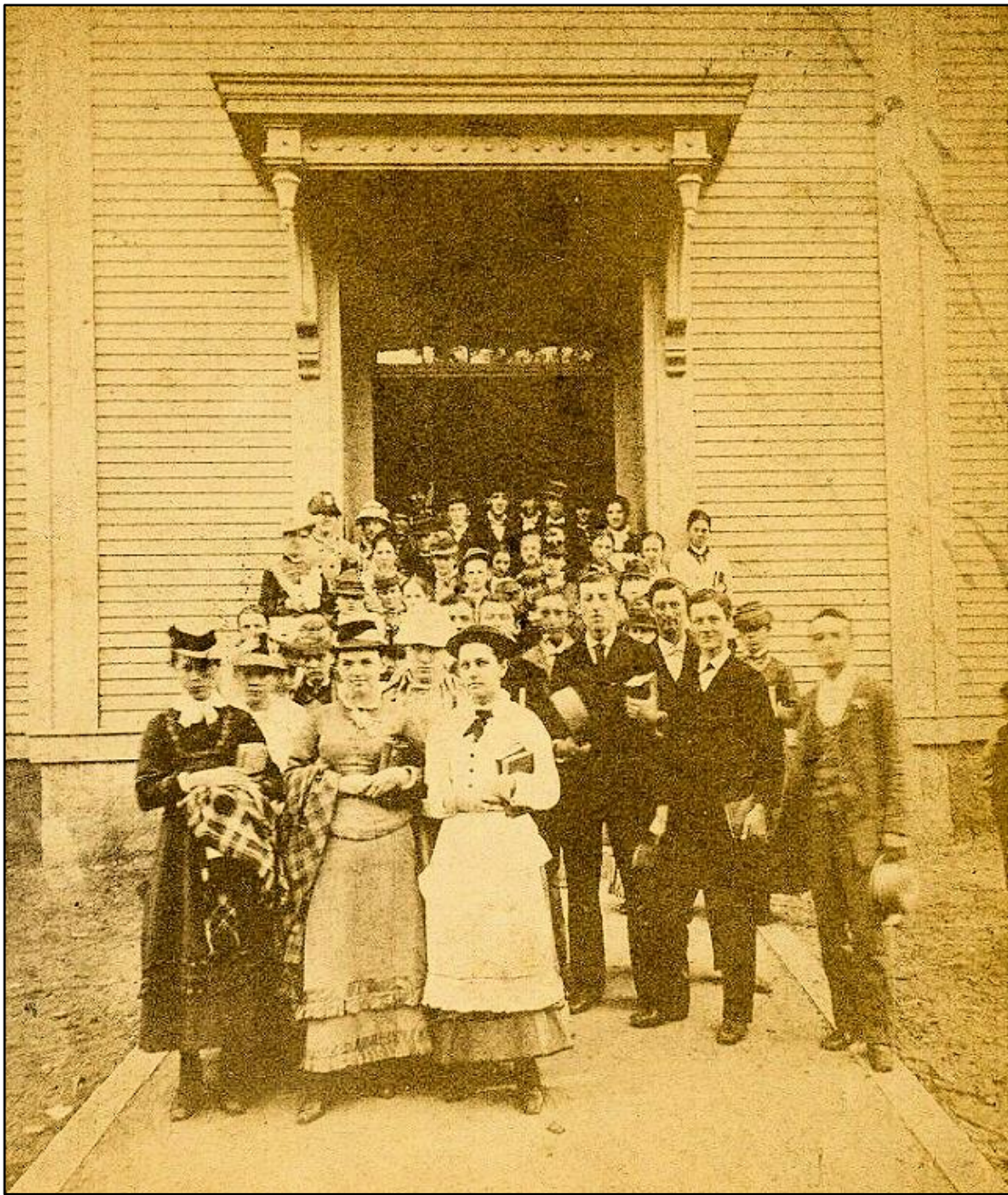
This is an old postcard of an ice gorge in the Mississippi River. Look at all the people walking around on the ice. If any person fell through, there is no way they could be rescued!

1. What's New?

- I finished a video about the trials of the Winona & St. Peter Division of railroad clearing snow during the winter of 1880-1881. Some towns were without rail service for 3 months! Laura Ingalls Wilder's book "The Long Winter" was based on this winter. This video can be found at: <https://www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos>
- I recently heard from the Washington County Historical Society. One of its members is writing a history on Stillwater brick. I passed along all the information I had, and I hope it is a successful project.
- My next historical video will be about the great spring flood in 1881 in the Minnesota River Valley. There are many interesting topics I am looking forward to sharing related to this flood that I found during my research of the Winter of 1880-81.
- 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



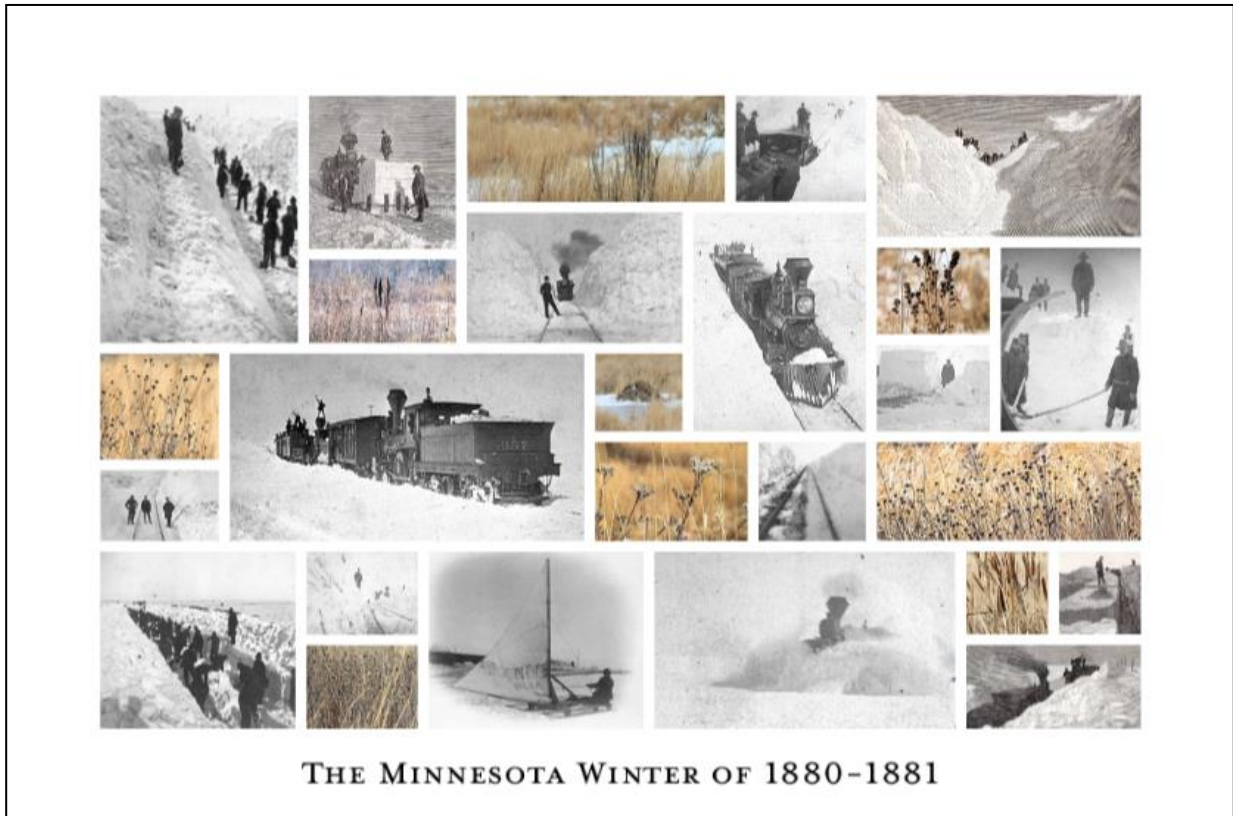
I thought this was a cute picture. I believe it is a group of young people posing after church, or a church meeting. Look at how fancy they were dressed! In those days, the church was the life of the town. Churches held social events, meetings, meals, as well as the spiritual aspect.

3. For Sale

There are still many brick-related remnants left from the old days.

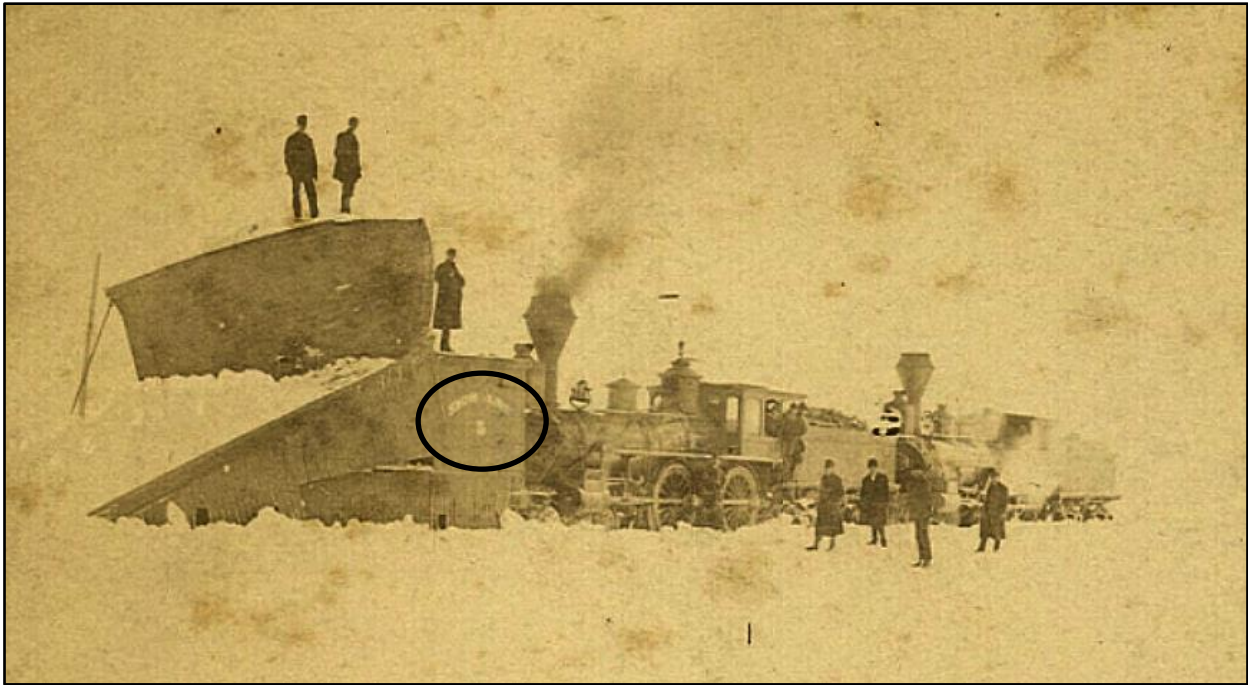
Shown below is a 20 x 30 inch collage poster of the historic Winter of 1880-81. You can find it for purchase on the “Shop” page of my website: www.mnbricks.com/shop

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

The Snow King Minnesota History Segment



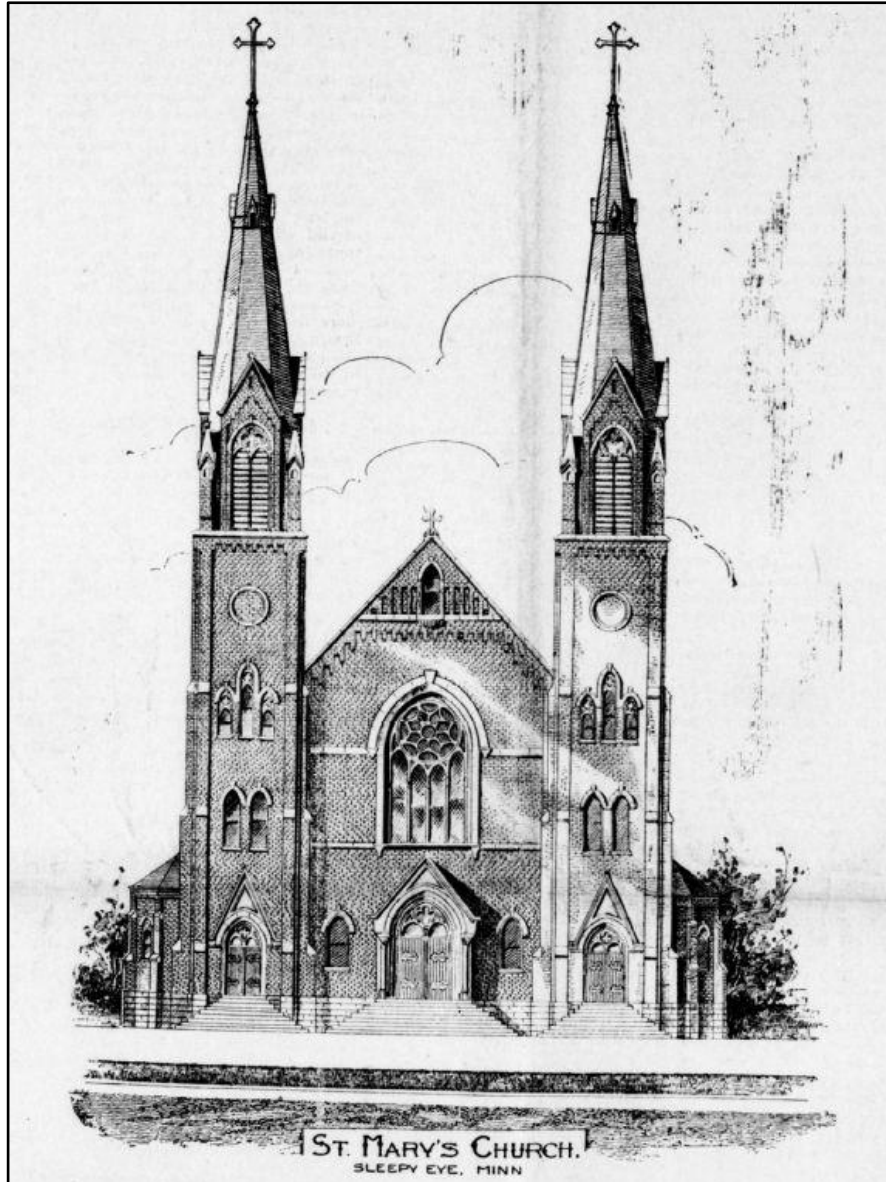
I don't have a lot of information on this type of snow plow, but it does say "Snow King" on the plow on the picture above (circled).

Tracy Trumpet. The "Big King" pushed by four engines over the road from Tracy to Winona would be at an expense of \$1,120 provided everything runs well and no breakages occurred. This is for labor of engineers, firemen and one conductor, besides the fuel, oil, etc., which is used. Several such trips have already been made this winter. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, February 4, 1887, Page 3)

5. Brick Structure of the Month



St. Mary's Church Sleepy Eye, Minnesota



This is a drawing from the newspaper of St. Mary's Church in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota. The brick for the church came from Ochs Brick of Springfield, Minnesota.

Continued on the Next Page

The celebration on July 4th, given under the auspices of the auxiliary societies of St. Mary's Church was a pronounced success despite the fact that a heavy rain fell the night of the third and the roads and streets were heavy with mud, so bad in fact that the proposed parade of the societies and school children was given up. This was the only part of the program abandoned however and as the principal interest of all visitors centered in the beautiful ceremonies connected with the laying of the corner stone of St. Mary's new church what little disappointment might have been felt over this was more than compensated for in the splendor of the scene at the church.

After special high mass the venerable Bishop Trobec attended by his clergy in magnificent vestments moved in procession from the church to the site of the new building where the stone was set that should bear the burden of the superstructure for the new church. It was fitting that this ceremony should occur on an anniversary marking a red letter day in the history of St. Mary's parish – the quarter centennial of the dedication of the present church edifice. Bishop Trobeck delivered an address after the laying of the stone, in German. In his introductory remarks, Bishop Trobec described in glowing terms the magnificence and beauty of the cathedrals he had recently visited in France, Germany and Italy, devoting considerable time to the cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome and to the cathedral of Cologne.

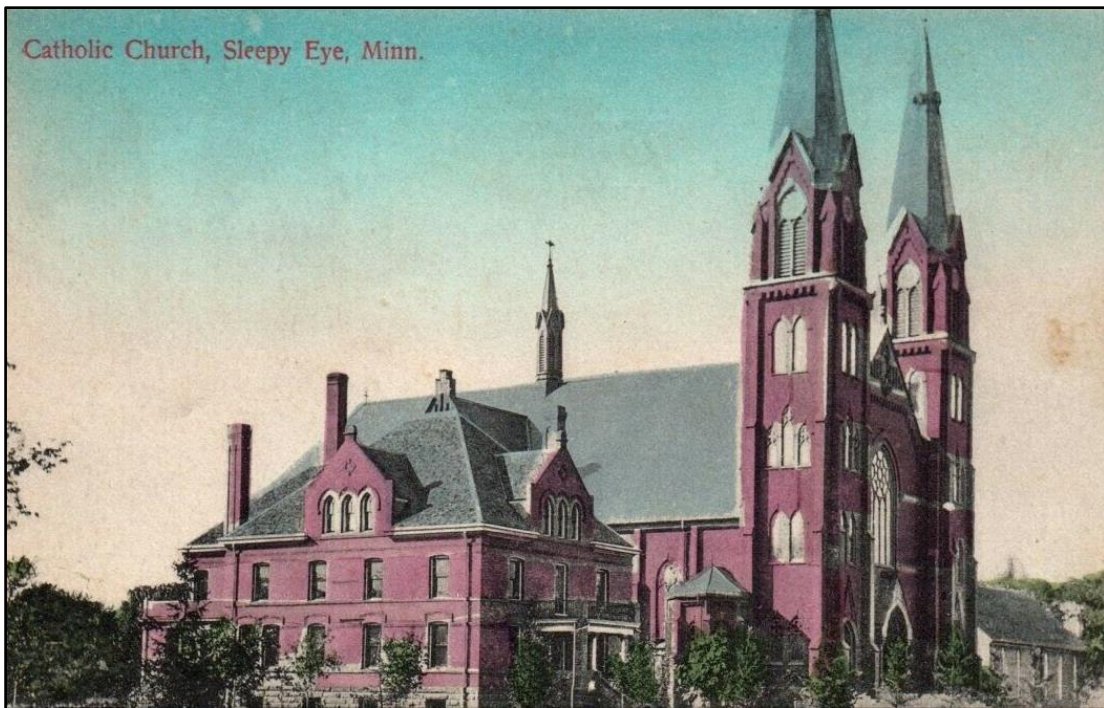
He said that the people of those countries were proud of these heirlooms which had come to them from out the centuries – pride in those temples which they did not build for themselves but which they are caring for for future generations. How much dearer to the Catholic people of this country were the beautiful temples which they themselves had paid for and how much greater would be their blessings for the sacrifices made and burdens taken up in order that they might have a temple of their own in which to worship and which they hoped to hand down to futurity. The bishop told his auditors what the church they were building ought to be to them. "God does not need churches," said the eloquent speaker, "but man does."

Attention was then called to the significance of the laying of a corner stone, the stone typifying Christ upon whom the church is founded. Preceding the address of Bishop Trobec Fr. Max Wurst of Wabasha delivered an address in English, paying a high tribute to the zeal of the resident rector, Fr. Stulz, in undertaking this magnificent building and to the splendid courage of the congregation who were so loyally standing by him in the task. The exercises at the corner stone laying was participated in by the auxiliary societies of the church in a body and by a large concourse of friends and neighbors. After the ceremony the clerical party adjourned to the rectory and the people went to Schmitz' grove and soon after visited the Sisters school where a splendid dinner was served to several hundred of them at the noon hour.

Continued on the Next Page

This dinner deserves more than a passing comment as it was the best public dinner served at this place in a long while. The Ladies Society furnished the viands which were well cooked and well served and their pastry was delicious. After dinner the crowd put in the time at the grove, playing bowls, shooting at the gallery, throwing base balls, patronizing the refreshment booths, fishing at the fish pond, speculating in the grab bag and listening to the splendid music furnished by the all-soloists band until three o'clock when the Rev. Fr. Wurst, of Wabasha, delivered an eloquent and patriotic address.

At 4 o'clock came the decision of the judges in the award of prizes which created a good deal of interest. ...The day closed with a grand display of fireworks and the crowds departed homewards without an unpleasant incident having arisen to mar the enjoyment of the day. It was a complete success from the standpoint of the auxiliary societies and netted the treasury something like \$700, although this estimate may be only an approximate figure. (*The Sleepy Eye Dispatch*, July 11, 1901, Page 1)



6. News Nuggets

News Nuggets

Some of our farmers have been convinced of the necessity and benefit of tree culture. Young cottonwood trees with roots can be bought for about \$2 per thousand. They hardly ever fail and it is safe to say that 95 per cent of the trees set out last Spring did remarkably well, and they are so cheap that slips and cuttings should be abandoned, as very few are successful with them. (*Marshall Messenger*, April 15, 1881, Page 5)

Clay-eaters are found in Siam, in Siberia, in Kamchatka, and in our own country. In the interior of North Carolina, where food of different description is easily available, there are many persons, men, women and children, who make a practice of eating clay. (*Lyon County News*, Marshall, April 15, 1881, Page 1)

On Wednesday afternoon George McPherson started on a short cut through to China via one of the cistern holes, but as the horses were too much for the opening, the result was that a jam occurred and it took some time to get the team out of the mud and other predicament. It took the united efforts of twenty-two men to free the horses, four done the work and the other eighteen the bossing. (*Morris Tribune*, April 14, 1881, Page 3)

She was chassseing [gliding] down Mud avenue, at the intersection of Juicy lane, when the sidewalk or something else gave away underneath her, and she took a reserved seat in the loamy jelly which makes pedestrianism a nightmare in that vicinity. If our city fathers had been within hearing, and had had an opportunity to listen to a few brief but pungent remarks offered by the female as she scraped the semi-pellucid fluid from her garments, they would tremble in their boots for their future, which, according to her opinion, is somewhere in a very torrid and sulphureous region. Talk about a trooper's swearing, but that woman wouldn't take a back seat for a whole crack regiment. (*Morris Tribune*, April 14, 1881, Page 3)

A couple of young ladies who were, with a beau attachment, promenading up Third street near the park one day last week, will remember with no little chagrin the amusement furnished for the residents of that vicinity by one of them. They were about the center of a deep drift of rather wet snow, when one of the ladies dropped into the slushy mass, going almost out of sight. Her escort immediately made a rush to her assistance, but all efforts to release her from her ludicrous situation proved unavailing, until he with frantic haste, borrowed a shovel from a house near by, and patiently dug her out. A bevy of ladies in a residence close to where the affair occurred were almost drive to hysterics by the laughable scene, but we seriously doubt if the young lady in the drift was very much amused during her imprisonment. (*Morris Tribune*, April 21, 1881, Page 3)

Continued on the Next Page

Madelia Times. Mr. Jaquish utilized even the snow piles. Wishing to smoke his meat, he dug hole in a drift, fixed poles across for hanging up the meat, put in the smoke and covered it over, and in due time he had the nicest kind of smoked ham. He will now lend his smoke house to his neighbors. (*Daily Globe*, St. Paul, April 20, 1881, Page 3)

A team of horses, backing into Jake Liedel's feed store this morning, shied at something in the road and fell into the sewer ditch, nine feet deep. Though an hour was consumed in extricating them, they were uninjured. (*Duluth Evening Herald*, December 20, 1887, Page 4)

A man with a large, black fur coat on, going up Lake avenue today was attacked by a dog that evidently took him for some animal. The man's cries, by collecting a crowd, drove the animal away with no worse damage than a torn coat. (*Duluth Evening Herald*, December 20, 1887, Page 4)

A rather laughable accident, and one at the same time, which might have been attended with serious results, occurred yesterday on Piedmont avenue where the Gas & Water company, are at work. A cutter [sleigh] containing several occupants, while coming down the avenue, was overturned near an open trench and one of the lady occupants was tumbled into the ditch much to her fright and to the intense surprise of the working men who were in it. The trench is nearly fifteen feet deep and nearly half an hour was consumed in relieving the lady from her predicament, but it was at last accomplished, with no serious results save a good shaking up. (*Duluth Evening Herald*, January 7, 1888, Page 4)

A few nights ago, as a gentleman well known in Duluth and his daughter were walking past this place (West Duluth) about 8 o'clock, a gang of toughs blockaded the sidewalk and threatened them with violence, and it was only when the gentleman threatened to call for help that they allowed them to pass by unmolested, but not without having handled them rather roughly. The other evening a party of three, residents and business men of St. Paul, who were here on a contract with the Benedictine society, stopped there and civilly requested the information as to the time the street car line closed, as they wished to go down town. Instead of being treated as their question demanded, they were called vile epithets and were set upon and only escaped after being shamefully ill-treated. If it has come to be a regular state of affairs in Duluth that a citizen even when with ladies, can not walk the streets or civilly accost a person, without being subjected to rough usage, then it is time that the authorities were made cognizant of the facts and acted upon them accordingly. (*Duluth Evening Herald*, January 14, 1888, Page 4)

Peter Larson, a woodsman living near Hermantown, while cutting underbrush, was struck in the foot by a hatchet and the top of his foot cut half way through the bone. He walked to Duluth and reached Dr. Tuftes office very weak from loss of blood. He is now slowly convalescing. (*Duluth Evening Herald*, February 18, 1888, Page 4)

Continued on the Next Page

The stock of hard coal for sale in town was exhausted this week and some who had hard coal stoves were trying to solve the conundrum, what shall we do to be saved? There certainly has been a lack of proper effort on the part of those who furnish the fuel for this section to meet the demand. This shortage is the worst that the country can have in the winter. We can go short on food, but heat is life, and cold is death here from December till April. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 7, 1887, Page 3)

There is one custom indulged in here, by some of our farmers, that ought to be discouraged by the village marshal. That is the hitching of teams, warmed by driving, in our streets, often in the cold wind, and leaving them thus unprotected for hours. It is brutal and injures the teams much more than the cost of stabling. There is neither sense nor humanity in doing so, and our ordinances empower the marshal to take up and stable said teams. It ought to be promptly done if the owners are brutes enough to neglect it. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 7, 1887, Page 3)

The boys on the railroad are having a hard struggle with snow, and the road between Sleepy Eye and Lake Benton makes costly work for the Northwestern during the winter seasons. Much of the time a snow plow has to be run ahead of passenger trains, from station to station, telegraphing back that it is safe for the latter to go on another stage. With four or five such outfits between Huron and Waseca the expense is great, the work hard, and the delays vexatious. One or two winters of such expense would almost rebuild the line beyond the snow cuts and excessive grades. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 7, 1887, Page 3)

The Tracy [Minnesota] eating house has a lamp to illuminate its large waiting room, that for magnitude lays over anything we have seen. It is on the "Student lamp" plan, having a tank on one side feeding oil through a tube to the burner opposite. The burner is cylindrical, with a diameter of about nine inches, and the "chimney," more properly the globe, is ten inches in diameter. The tank holds nearly two gallons of oil, and the lamp burns a gallon in twelve hours. The flame is about three inches high, and with its twenty-seven inches of circumference affords a blaze of over seventy superficial inches. We haven't time to calculate its candle power, but it gives a grand light. Dave Evens, of Tracy, put up the lamp. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 7, 1887, Page 3)

The past week was the coldest of the year, the mercury reaching 32° below zero according to some of the thermometers. The large lay of snow now on the ground ensures a blizzard whenever the wind blows, and we have had one or two tastes this week of those aerial stimulations. Monday morning the janitor was even surprised to find snow sprinkled over the seats in the new school house, the same coming through the storm windows. To the old settler however, the gathering of a barrel or so of snow which has drifted through a keyhole, is nothing very wonderful, and this is nothing against the house. Owing either to defects in one of the furnaces or in the management, only a part of the school building could be warmed sufficiently to hold school in during the forenoon. The Ruttan Co. have been sent for to correct the weak points in one of these furnaces, and the hopes for the future are good. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 7, 1887, Page 3)

Continued on the Next Page

The pupils of the Stanley school, Mille Whitney, teacher, are arranging for a clam chowder supper at the house of L. A. Sprague on Saturday evening of this week, the proceeds of the affair to be used in buying a dictionary for the school. This is commendable on the part of the school, for a school without a dictionary is as bad as a church without a bible, and about as rare an occurrence. It seems to us that any school board who has not provided a dictionary has failed in doing its duty. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 14, 1887, Page 3)

The railroad surveyors have a comparatively comfortable shelter during their tedious work on the prairies. Lute Nichols' bus, a thoroughly storm and wind tight structure, is used to convey the party on their daily journeys, and furnishes comfortable shelter while the boys are eating their meals. A heating stove is located therein, with the smokestack passing through the roof, and this furnishes heat, and warms the food, and makes the coffee for the party. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 14, 1887, Page 3)

It is a disgrace to the elegant new school building, that old news papers should disfigure the windows, used to do duty for blinds, or curtains, to keep out the sun. It makes one tired to pass the building and look upon the unsightly windows, and is probably a source of discomfort to the teachers and pupils. A \$15,000 school house with old news-papers for curtains is too great a contrast. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 21, 1887, Page 3)

Those inexpensive yet elegant newspaper shades still adorn the windows of our beautiful school house. A neighboring school recently held a festival to raise funds to buy a dictionary that the district was too poor to provide. Perhaps Prof. Avery and his assistants might get up an oyster supper and buy some curtains or blinds for this poverty stricken district's \$15,000 school house. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 28, 1887, Page 3)

Ed. Healy is a good man for an emergency, whether it be at a fire, base ball, or anything else. Monday Ed hustled around among the boys taking up a twenty-five cent contribution, amounting to about fifteen dollars. Tuesday morning, Ed loaded his pung [sleigh] with three sacks of flour, sugar, coffee, tea, and a general assortment of groceries, until he could hardly find room for himself. Then he started out in the blizzard for a twelve mile drive to a poor soldier's family who were worthy and needy, to deliver his goods. It takes pluck and lots of humanity for a fellow to face twelve miles of blizzard over hard roads. (*The News Messenger of Lyon County*, Marshall, January 28, 1887, Page 3)

Butter is very scarce in Watertown [South Dakota]. The inhabitants of that burg have adopted the ingenious plan of tying a piece of string to a piece of pork rind and greasing their throats with it. The editor of the Courier had the misfortune to break his string last week and swallowed a favorite piece of rind that had done good service all winter, and now he is seriously discussing the advisability of returning to the old fashioned mode of using eleomargarine [margarine] on his victuals. (*The Grant County Herald*, Big Stone City, South Dakota, May 6, 1881, Page 1)