

*Exploring Historical Brickmaking in Minnesota*

# Minnesota Bricks

February 2021

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[www.mnbricks.com](http://www.mnbricks.com)

## Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



[www.chaskabrick.com](http://www.chaskabrick.com)

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This is an antique brick made in Ottawa, Minnesota.

# 1. What's New?

- I am taking some time off from working on my next YouTube video, which is about the historic Minnesota River flood of 1881. All my completed videos can be found at: [www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos](http://www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos)
- Another brick enthusiast emailed me a picture of an Ottawa, Minnesota, brick he had in his collection (pictured on the previous page). When I began my brick journey, I didn't realize how big the Minnesota brick industry once was!
- An architectural historian emailed me to ask what kind of brick were used in a rural farmhouse near Jordan, Minnesota. During the late 1800s, there were a bunch of brickyards in close proximity within the Minnesota River Valley, but usually the brick were not hauled very far. If a brick house still survives today, the brick usually were made fairly close. Small towns were like islands, they encouraged buying locally if at all possible.
- Feel free to contact me at [www.mnbricks.com](http://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](http://www.mnbricks.com)



## 2. Photo of the Month



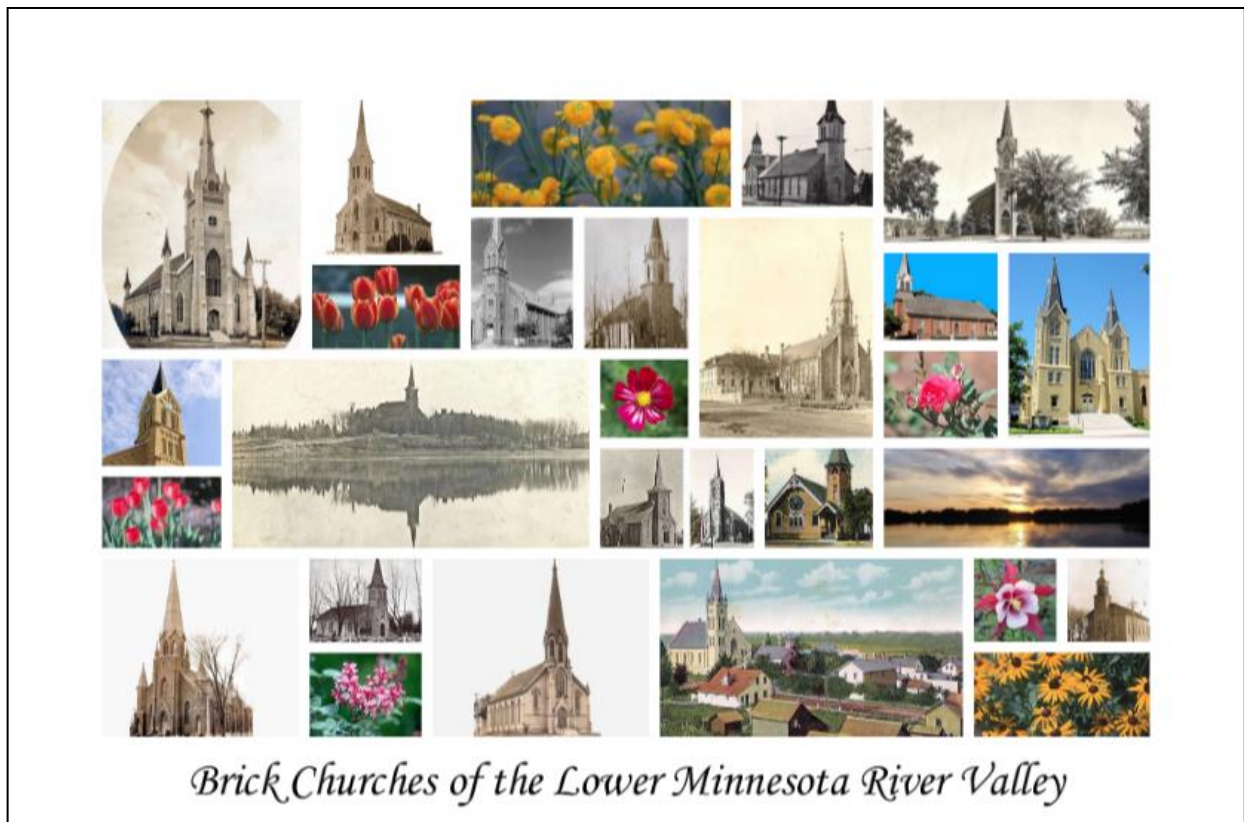
Farming is a dangerous occupation. Here is an old postcard that shows the remnants of a steam boiler explosion near Springfield, Minnesota.

# 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](http://www.mnbricks.com/shop)

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

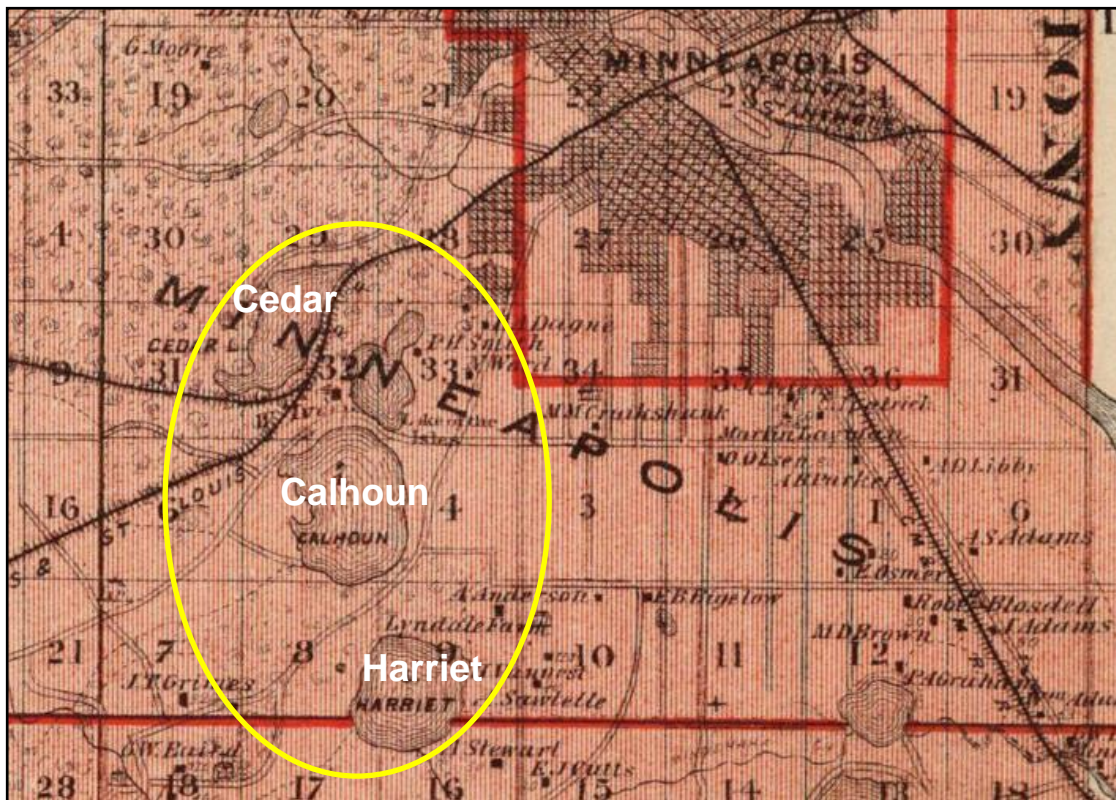




## 4. A Look Back

### Fishing in Lakes Calhoun, Cedar & Harriet

Minnesota History Segment



These lakes are within the Twin Cities metropolitan area today, so it is hard to imagine a time when they were out in the wilderness.

We noticed the other evening at Saint Anthony, the return of Capt. Monfort and Mr. Gairns, from a few hours' fishing excursion to the "chain of lakes" west of the Falls, with about as many pickerel and bass as their team could cleverly draw. There are no better fishing grounds in all Minnesota than at Lakes Calhoun, Harriet, Cedar, &c.; and aside from this, you see one of the greatest countries in all creation in getting there and going round the lakes. You can always procure comfortable conveyances by application at the office of the St. Charles; and when you return, just hand over the product of your excursion to mine host Clark, and if the delicacies of these waters are not served up to your taste, it's no use to attempt to please you at the most celebrated hotels and eating house in the Union – that's all. Your case is hopeless! (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 28, 1852, Page 2)

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Lake Calhoun. This is a sheet of water whose fame is world-wide. We had heard of it years before we came to Minnesota. It was named by officers of the army, in honor of John C. Calhoun, thirty-five years ago, when he was Secretary of War. Its lovely mate and near neighbor just below it, Lake Harriet, was named at the same time, in honor of the lady of Col. Snelling. We leave Lake Calhoun after a few moments' respite for our horses, keeping round its northern shore, and shortly find ourselves at Cedar Lake. By what means it ever got this name we are at a loss to imagine, as there is not so much as a shrub of cedar anywhere near it. It is a beautiful little sheet of water, and a great place for fish, which fact we can prove by Gairns and Capt. Monfort; for it was here they caught their two-horse wagon load, mentioned in the *Minnesotian* three weeks since. We thought of calling it Lake Monfort or Lake Gairns, we don't care which. From here our course was nearly due west, but over one of the roughest countries out of doors. The soil is generally good, with a thick growth of hazel, wild cherry bushes, &c., but very little timber. Plenty of water for stock, and excellent hay meadow; far off to the right is seen groves of tamarac and other good timber. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, September 18, 1852, Page 1)



Lake Calhoun in the 1900s.

## 5. News Nuggets

It is gratifying to see the large number of fruit trees that every boat brings up from below. There is not a doubt but what all the varieties of fruit usually raised in the northern states, unless it be peaches, and the experiment of raising that fruit must be thoroughly tried, before we shall be convinced that it will not do well. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, May 15, 1852, Page 2)

Travel to Minnesota is largely increasing since the treaties were ratified. The Nominee and West Newton this week were piled full – state-rooms and cabin floor. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, July 10, 1852, Page 2)

The hurricane of Monday was the heaviest blow ever before known in Minnesota, according to the recollection of the “oldest inhabitant.” The greatest damage done in St. Paul was in the vicinity of the capitol (where Mr. L. M. Oliver’s house was unroofed, several other buildings blown down, and Mr. Basil’s carpenter shop destroyed), and west of that locality. Mr. Irvine’s dwelling, near G. W. Farrington’s was lifted from the foundation, and only saved by a large tree from going down the hill in front. Part of the roof was taken from Rice’s (formerly Fuller’s) large brick store on Eagle and St. Anthony streets. On Kittson’s addition two or three slightly built houses were destroyed. Other and more slight damages occurred in different parts of town. The hurricane extended throughout the country. Up the Minnesota river, trees, two and three feet in diameter, were twisted and carried some distance. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, July 10, 1852, Page 2)

Col. Goodhue crossed the river for the first time with his new ferry boat on Thursday. We have not yet received an invitation to take a trip upon this new and essential craft, but presume the delay is for cause which we will appreciate as proper and right. When we do get a chance to travel upon her, our readers will know more about her speed and accommodations. Persons can form some estimate of the necessity of a ferry at St. Paul from the fact that teams constantly line the shores, wishing to cross. Col. Goodhue, we feel sure, has built a boat that will answer every purpose. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, July 10, 1852, Page 2)

Four steamboats were at the lower landing, St. Paul, at one time last Monday morning, viz: the St. Paul, Dr. Franklin, Black Hawk and Jenny Lind. A like incident never happened previously. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 7, 1852, Page 2)

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**News Nuggets  
from the late 1800s**



Many strangers are now availing themselves of the fine opportunities afforded to view the delightful valley of the Minnesota river. They come back, without exception, elated with what they have seen. Those who come to the Territory to settle are very apt to return, with a supply of lumber and provisions. We have heard of several instances of this kind the past week. Farms are opening at every point along up the valley. The new towns are also attracting attention. At Traverse des Sioux there is great activity. A few miles above that point, Mr. J. W. Babcock has a trading post in operation, and a sawmill nearly completed. The Black Hawk had a large quantity of freight for this place on her last trip. The Mankato Company have their town at the mouth of the Blue Earth laid out and a map drawn of it, and we believe are ready to sell lots. Le Sueur, below Traverse des Sioux, on the south side of the river, is not yet surveyed, but will be in a few days. It is attracting considerable attention, and the excellent farming country adjacent is rapidly settling. Next year the Minnesota valley will number five thousand inhabitants. You may set that down. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, July 24, 1852, Page 2)

The bell for the Baptist church, from the foundry of Geo. L. Hanks, Cincinnati, arrived by the Martha since our last. It is large, weighing some 850 pounds, and said to be of very fine tone, of which fact we can all judge in a few days, as it will be hung immediately. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 14, 1852, Page 2)

A walk out to the capitol any day about these times, will satisfy the most incredulous that things now look as though the building would really be enclosed, and a portion of it finished before the first of January ensuing. Ten or twelve workmen are engaged in laying brick, and other portions of the work is keeping pace with the walls. So far as we could judge, we thought things were going on about right, both as regards dispatch and workmanship. The capitol promises to be a fine, imposing building, much more so than our citizens generally suppose. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 14, 1852, Page 2)

Somebody stole half a barrel or more of cucumber pickles from the farm of Mr. Vance, of the Pioneer Office, out at White Bear settlement, a few evenings ago. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 14, 1852, Page 2)

We have accomplished a Daguerrean artist in St. Paul as can be "scared up" anywhere. Mr. J. E. Whitney has, for the past two years, been a rigid student. He has spared neither time or expense to perfect himself in his art. Recently he spent several weeks in professional intercourse with the accomplished Hesler, of Galena; and since then he has taken some pictures unsurpassed, if not unequalled, by Helser himself. Gov. Ramsey he has taken as he is – not such a rigid face as we see from the plate engraved for the Whig Review; and Judge Meeker – why, that careless-carefully arranged lock of hair on the ermined brow, and those eyes of wisdom, speak for themselves. It is the Judge, and no mistake. Mr. Whitney's landscapes, taken at St. Anthony and Little Falls, and his view of St. Paul from Pilot Knob in the rear of Mendota, are also beautiful and grand beyond description. Call at Whitney's, by all means, and let him take you. His terms are of the most reasonable character, and in every respect he deserves to be well patronized. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 21, 1852, Page 2)

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J. E. Whitney was mentioned on the previous page. Here is an example of a Whitney stereoview.

Geese and ducks will be plenty in a few weeks, as the wild rice crop is unusually heavy this year. In the oak openings and upon the prairies are now myriads of pigeons and grouse. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 28, 1852, Page 2)

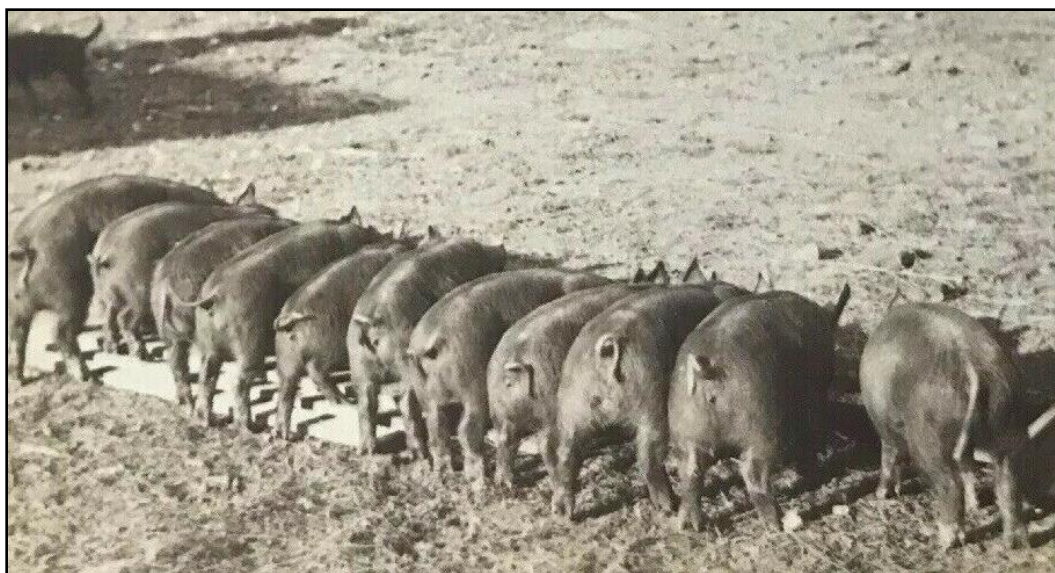
A horse attached to a buggy ran off the other day, and coming down Third street, discharged his buggy at the corner of Minnesota, and pitched into Presley's, playing smash with fruit stands, tobacco and cigar boxes, melons, candy jars, tumblers, &c. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, August 28, 1852, Page 2)

Jack Frost has paid his devoirs to Minnesota this year nearly one month earlier than usual. We had slight visitations Tuesday and Wednesday mornings of this week, sufficient to nip all species of tender vegetation. Everything, however, of consequence, except buckwheat, was out of its way, and most of that grain had ripened. Melons, tomatoes, &c., caught it. By the way, speaking of melons, Mr. Axtell treated all St. Paul the other day on a single muskmelon from the farm of Mr. Gibbs, near town. It weighed fifteen pounds. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, September 18, 1852, Page 2)

If anyone wishes to make a big pile of money the coming winter, let him or her go down below and purchase about five hundred hens, with a sufficient accompanying number of "he biddies" to scratch for them. Then let them be well fed and kept in a warm place, and they will lay all winter. Eggs will be worth twenty-five or fifty cents per dozen. Mr. Dutton, near town, has a fine lot of hens, but not enough to supply the winter demand. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, September 25, 1852, Page 2)

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“What are we going to do for Pork the coming winter?” is now a question Minnesotians and residents of Northern Wisconsin are beginning to ask one another. The population of this upper country, red, white and intermediate, would like to have two or three thousand barrels for winter use, yet there is not that quantity on the Mississippi river between here and New Orleans; and from here to St. Louis it is doubtful whether two hundred barrels could be “scared up,” all along shore. The market never previously was so bare of this great basis of American subsistence. Even at Cincinnati, the great hog mart of the world, there could not at this time a sufficient quantity be found to supply our demand, were we within reach of it. The price there, as everywhere else, is extravagantly high, having reached a larger figure than at any period since 1838. We are so situated that we cannot get up any great quantity of the new crop before the close of navigation, and even what is thus procured must be packed early, and is consequently liable to spoil. The price, also, is now likely to go down early in the season. We see that contracts are being made by the packers at Louisville and Cincinnati at five dollars per hundred. Minnesota next year must go to raising her own pork; meantime we think it a charitable notion, and a good speculation, to drive or freight several hundred head of fat hogs up this way yet this fall. (*The Weekly Minnesotian*, St. Paul, September 25, 1852, Page 2)





## 6. Brick Structure of the Month



### Ladies College Mankato, MN



This is a postcard of the Bethany Ladies College in Mankato, Minnesota. The buildings feature some fancy architecture, although I am not sure where exactly the brick were manufactured.