

# Minnesota Bricks

December 2024

## Minnesota Bricks

*Exploring Historical Brickmaking & More in Minnesota*

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

## Chaska Brick

Brickmaking in Chaska Minnesota



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# 1. What's New?

## 2024 in Review

- With 2024 winding down, it's time to look back at the year. I want to thank all of you for subscribing to my newsletter, and the 8100+ subscribers to the MN Bricks YouTube channel for keeping me motivated to continue researching and producing more videos. In 2024, I made 26 videos, which had 585,513 views. For the lifetime of the MN Bricks YouTube channel, there are now more than 90 videos with over 2.5 million views.
- Through the year, I continued to revisit spots discovered many years ago to see how they've changed since I started taking photos in the late 2000's. My focus has been to gather video of these locations as best as I can. Now, many sites are gone or seriously deteriorated, so I'm trying to share their story from the images and documents that are still available.
- Whenever I travel, I'm always on the lookout for history, so my website and YouTube channel have covered more than Minnesota Bricks from the beginning. Maybe my site should be called "Minnesota Bricks *and More!*" Whenever I research a topic, I'm pretty much guaranteed to find something else I find interesting.
- How about you? What topics or suggestions would you like to see in future videos? I appreciate all the emails and comments. I do read all the video comments, but can't keep up with responding to them. I do my best to respond to emails, but please be patient as it may take me a bit to get back to you. The volume makes it's difficult to keep up. Please continue to pass along your suggestions and ideas for future videos as well as giving me feedback on what has already been produced.
- The YouTube videos can be found on my website at <https://www.mnbricks.com/mn-historical-videos/>, or on my Minnesota Bricks YouTube Channel at <https://www.youtube.com/@MNBricks>. Feel free to contact me at [mnbricks@gmail.com](mailto:mnbricks@gmail.com) any time.

## 2. Quarter 1 2024 Videos

### January:

#### [Crashing Locomotives for Show – Part 2](#)

Alfred Lincoln Streeter had a successful head-on locomotive collision for show at Buckeye Park, near Lancaster, Ohio, on May 30, 1896. Streeter also gained a competitor, Joseph S. Connolly, from Des Moines, Iowa. Connolly would go on to become the biggest name associated with made to order locomotive collisions, staging 73 train wrecks between 1896 and 1932.

#### [Crashing Locomotives for Show – Part 3](#)

The ultimate goal for a made to order collision was to attract a huge paying audience, which could be difficult, due to the weather, other competing events, and people's reluctance to pay an entry fee. Many central United States locations hosted events in 1896. The Crash at Crush, Texas became the most widely known head on locomotive collision of 1896, as there were several deaths and multiple injuries after the boilers exploded.

#### [Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad Remnants – Carver to Merriam Junction Minnesota](#)

In the Minnesota River Valley between Carver and Merriam Junction in the 1860's, Henry H. Spencer hoped a town and a railroad would become his lasting legacies. It wasn't meant to be. When a trestle broke in 2007, the segment was abandoned.

#### [Beardsley Minnesota – Where Links to the Past Still Remain](#)

The small town of Beardsley is located in the west central section of Minnesota, near Lake Traverse and Big Stone Lake. Early settlers suffered immensely during the historic Winter of 1880-1881. Like many small towns today, it continues to be challenged by shrinking families and job loss.

### February:

#### [The Skone Barn – A Carver County Minnesota Masterpiece](#)

Barns across Minnesota continue to vanish. The Skone barn was built in 1894, by Swedish immigrants in Carver County, Minnesota. The frame barn with a stone basement was described as one of the best barns in the county. Using stone for the lower portion of the barn was fairly unique. The stone was likely from the Louisville Quarry.

### [The Milwaukee Road – Roundhouse Grounds at Montevideo Minnesota](#)

The Milwaukee Railroad heavily invested in Montevideo, Minnesota, installing stockyards, a large train yard, and a roundhouse. As a transcontinental railroad, the Milwaukee Road was a major competitor in its prime. Although this railroad no longer exists, many historical features and structures still remain in Montevideo.

### [The Stagecoach House – Ney Nature Center](#)

In the 1850s, the Minnesota River was the main transportation corridor from St. Paul to Mankato. There were also stagecoach lines on either side of the river that connected the two cities. One of these lines ran by the Ney Farmstead, in northwest Le Sueur County, Minnesota, near Henderson. Remnants of a brick and wood building remain at the Ney Farmstead today, which are believed to be a stagecoach stop.

### [The Abandoned Phillips Farmhouse – A Historic Stone and Brick Combination Home](#)

Phillip and Ann Phillips were part of a Welsh Settlement in Le Sueur County, Minnesota, which was established in the 1860s and 1870s. They raised 12 children on their family farm. All that remains today is the abandoned farmhouse, a fabulous stone and brick structure.

## **March:**

### [The Fleck Corn Crib ACO Silo – One of a Kind!](#)

ACO silos are still common across southwestern Minnesota. Anton Fleck Jr. built a one-of-a-kind corn crib ACO silo on a portion of his farm in Essig, Minnesota. Anton worked as a mason on an ACO silo construction crew in the 1920s and early 1930s. When he became a farmer, he used his skills and connection to the Ochs brickyard to erect this rare corn crib silo.

### [Minnesota's Last Brickyard – Ochs Brick & Tile Company of Springfield, Minnesota](#)

Despite having hundreds of brickyards through the years, the last Minnesota brickyard closed in 2016. This brickyard, which was located in Springfield, began as the A. C. Ochs Brick & Tile Company in 1891. It was purchased by the Acme Brick Company in 2008, and remained in operation until 2016.

### [Zanger Barn Teardown – Another Lost Minnesota Barn](#)

One of the latest farms lost to development is the George A. Zanger farm, which was located in the southwest Twin Cities suburbs. George built the barn in 1900, but there were many other buildings on the farmstead as well. This parcel of land has been sold for commercial development, so all the buildings are being torn down.

### [The Schumacher Barn – Losing an Icon?](#)

This unique barn, which was built in the early 1930s, is located near Fairfax, Minnesota. The Loudon Machinery Company, from Fairfield, Iowa, designed the barn for Albert and Adolph Schumacher. The barn was built of fired clay block from the Ochs Brick & Tile Company, of Springfield, Minnesota. What makes this structure unique is that double ACO silos were built into the Ochs block barn. At the Schumacher barn, the interior hay loft, which ran the length of the barn, has recently been cut out.

## 3. Quarter 2 2024 Videos

### May:

#### [St. Vincent, Minnesota History and Memories](#)

Included are early 1900s views of St. Vincent, Minnesota, and what it looks like in 2024. From the 1930s-1950s, St. Vincent was a beautiful and memorable place to grow up. Hear journal memories about family, games and activities, mischief, and hunting as narrated by his children.

#### [Ghost Town – White Rock South Dakota](#)

White Rock, South Dakota, was formed in 1883-1884, when the Fargo and Southern Railroad built its line from Fargo, North Dakota, to Ortonville, Minnesota. The town peaked in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Get some history on the town, see some pictures of White Rock in its prime, and some photos of how it has changed over time.

#### [The Fergus Falls Insane Asylum – A Beautiful Place with a Dark History](#)

As you drive along Interstate 94 through Fergus Falls, if you look closely, you will notice three tall spires along the skyline. These three spires represent the corners of the old Fergus Falls Insane Asylum, which housed thousands of patients from 1890 through 2007. This massive brick complex was a community within a community. Learn more and see what it looked like in 2023.

### June:

#### [Combination Corn Crib and Granary – Kalo Brick & Tile Company, Iowa](#)

In the early 1900s, many farm structures were built of clay bricks, tiles, or blocks. Iowa had numerous brickyards, and the Kalo Brick and Tile Company advertised plans for a combination corn crib and granary. It was actually located south of Fort Dodge. Featuring their tile, the corn crib and granary design was uniquely beautiful.

## 4. Quarter 3 2024 Videos

### July:

#### [The Northern Pacific Railway – Abandoned Pembina Extension](#)

The Northern Pacific Railroad had an extension which ran from St. Paul, Minnesota, to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. This extension cut through one of the oldest settlements in the Northern Plains, Pembina, North Dakota. The town of Pembina celebrated when the railroad arrived in 1887. However, it all ended in 1969, when the railroad discontinued its service. See how the line from Drayton to Pembina has changed through the years, and what is left today.

### August:

#### [The Barron Barn – Built by James J. Hill’s Carpenter](#)

In 1912, James J. Hill built a barn at his bonanza farm in Humboldt, Minnesota. He hired Sigurd Anderson as his head carpenter. George and Elizabeth Barron must have been impressed with his carpentry skills, as they hired Sigurd to build them a barn in 1913. The Barron’s lived near the town of McArthur, in Pembina County, North Dakota. An L-shaped barn was designed to keep horses on one side and cows on the other.

#### [Replacing the Bismarck-Mandan Railroad Bridge – Completed in 1882](#)

In 2023, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway received final approval to replace its bridge over the Missouri River between Bismarck and Mandan North Dakota. This unique bridge was completed in 1882, and has four large piers with three spans. Although it’s a beautiful bridge, it is unable to accommodate all modern rail cars. BNSF intends to complete the new bridge by 2026, just north of the old one.

#### [The Como Shops – Northern Pacific Railway at St. Paul Minnesota](#)

If you enjoy railroad history, book a room in a hotel that occupies what used to be part of a major railroad repair complex. The “Como Shops” were part of the Northern Pacific Railway. Although there are only four of the original buildings left today, they are being re-used by Bandana Square, a complex of businesses in St. Paul. Bandana Square also features steam locomotive 8327, a water tower, a part of a transfer table, and a Burlington Northern rail car.

## September:

### [Jackson Street Roundhouse & Shops – St. Paul Minnesota](#)

The Manitoba Railway built a stone shop complex on Jackson Street in St. Paul. This complex of shops was constructed of St. Paul blue limestone, mined at Dayton's Bluff. Only three of the original stone buildings remain, but they have been repurposed and are still being used today. See the unique exterior of these buildings and make sure to plan a visit to the nearby Jackson Street Roundhouse Museum.

# 5. Quarter 4 2024 Videos

## October:

### [Concrete Block Farm Buildings – Graceville Minnesota](#)

The use of silos and concrete products exploded during the early 1900s. Agricultural colleges and farming publications pushed the benefits of having a silo on every farm. Cattle and dairy farms needed silos to preserve silage for the cold winter months and periods of drought. Larger and stronger silos were needed to hold the silage, so the new silos were constructed of cement, clay blocks, or bricks. Over 100 years after they were built, some of these silos and farm buildings still stand.

### [Preventing a Soviet Union Sneak Attack - The Ground Observer Corps](#)

When the nuclear age arrived in 1940s, the US was largely unprepared for a surprise nuclear attack from the Soviet Union. Radars had been invented to detect aircraft, but they had yet to be deployed on a widespread defensive scale. The US military turned to civilian volunteers to report aircraft activity. This program was called the Ground Observers Corps, or GOC. Each state recruited their own members, and Minnesota had many observers. The GOC program ended by the late 1950s when radars were fully deployed.

## November:

### [Steen H. Nelson Barn – Steele County North Dakota](#)

Every now and then, as you drive across the Northern Plains, you find a gem. Such was the case when I found the Steen H. Nelson barn, in Steele County North Dakota. Sizable barns in North Dakota are fairly rare, especially ones that are over 100 years old. The Nelson barn is also unique, as it features two barns attached in a "T" shape. At some point, to help preserve it, it was covered in tin. Not much is left of the original farmstead, but this barn still stands today.

### [William Galloway Barns & Silos – Waterloo Iowa](#)

Several years ago, I came across a picture of “Twin Silos,” constructed of an orange-brown clay block, from the Mason City, Iowa, brickyards. These silos were built near Waterloo, Iowa, in the “Everlasting Silo” brand from Mason City. Recently, I came across a photo of the entire farmstead, where the buildings were all built of the same Mason City clay block. This complex was built by William Galloway, near Waterloo. It turns out that William Galloway was nationally known inventor of farm implements and developed new marketing techniques to sell his products.

## December:

### [The Orphan’s Barn – Lake Park Minnesota](#)

If you like spectacular old barns and silos, you’ll appreciate this one from Lake Park, Minnesota. Hollow clay block was manufactured at the A. C. Ochs brickyard in Springfield, Minnesota to build many fantastic barns and silos from 1910-1940. Very few farms had a barn and two silos made of the ACO blocks. In all my travels across Minnesota, I have only seen a total of three barns with double ACO block silos. Learn the story why these silos were labeled LPLCH, for the Lake Park Lutheran Children’s Home.

## 6. Other

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