

STEARNS COUNTY

150 years of fascinating history

By Linda Marie

Stearns County

Organized in 1855, Stearns County was supposed to be named Stevens County, honoring General Isaac J. Stevens who conducted an expedition to the area in 1853. Due to a legislative clerical error, Stevens became Stearns and, thus, honored instead Charles Thomas Stearns, a distinguished pioneer resident of St. Cloud who also built the Stearns Hotel, which later became the original building on the campus of St. Cloud State University. According to a recent county newsletter, "Despite the clerical error . . . Mr. Stearns was well-entitled to public recognition."

Stearns County covers an area approximately 1,394 square miles or 892,160 acres and is ranked 14th in size of the 87 Minnesota counties and seventh in population. It contains 34 full congressional townships and 30 cities. In spite of an attempt in 1913 to move the county seat to the more centrally located village of Albany, the petition fell 66 signatures short; therefore, it remains in St. Cloud.

The first Stearns County Courthouse, a red brick, stone foundation structure, was built in 1864. The second, completed in 1922, with its generous granite double dome, oversized columns at its entrance, marble walls and floors in the first floor rotunda area, and a mural depicting pioneer heritage at the tip of the main stairway, is an impressive structure to this day.

During the last dozen years other county buildings have been constructed, including the law enforcement center and administration building.

A 1980 Stearns County Historical Society newsletter describes what goes on in the county buildings: "Each day of the week, people come from all corners of the county to the courthouse to perform the duties and tasks required of them by law. Every birth and death occurring within the county is recorded here, as is every marriage that is performed. Every transfer of property between citizens of the county is recorded. The results of each trial and hearing within the county courtrooms are recorded and retained for future legal reference.

"All of these and other types of records form the legal history of Stearns County. These records describe the growth and development of Stearns County. They also contain a small part of the personal history of each of its citizens. For these reasons, the Stearns County Courthouse is not only the seat of government for the county, but it is also a storehouse of Stearns County history."

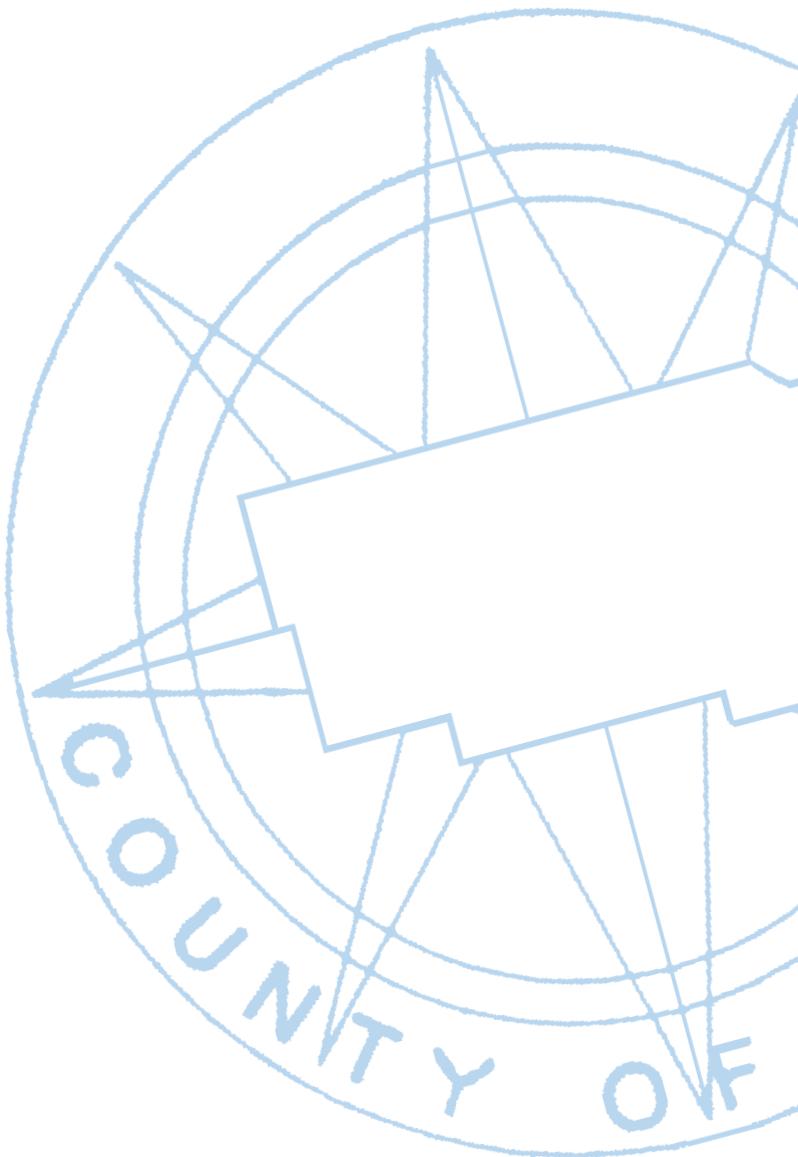
The people

Central Minnesota was home to the Ojibwe and Dakota people for 200 years prior to the arrival of European immigrants and the formal organization of Stearns County.

At the urging of missionary, Father Francis Pierz, Germans began arriving in 1854 and the population grew to large proportions quickly. Though difficult to leave their homeland, moving to America offered hope of opportunity and a better life. German land was in short supply, farms were small and fields had been infected with a potato blight. The idea of plenty of affordable land, soil rich with nutrients and craftsmen's skills in demand nudged families to uproot.

"Summer in Minnesota," Pierz declared in one of his writings, "is more favorable for human health and for the growth of farm and garden products than in any other country in the world."

Other ethnic groups included Irish, Canadian, English, Scots, Polish, Luxembourgers, Norwegian and Slovenian people. The population of Stearns County grew from about 5,000 in



<p>1850</p> <p>1853 – James Keough was the first settler to arrive in Stearns County and built the first farmhouse just west of St. Cloud.</p>	<p>1855 – Feb. 20., County of Stearns was created through the action of the Minnesota Territorial Legislature to serve the communities and citizens of Central Minnesota.</p>	<p>1860</p> <p>1861 – Civil War of the United States begins. Minnesota was the first to volunteer troops. Stearns County furnished 647 soldiers in the Civil and Indian wars.</p>	<p>1865</p> <p>1868 – The Wagon Bridge completed. This was the first crossing of the Mississippi River in Stearns County.</p>	<p>1870</p>	<p>1875</p> <p>1878 – Northern Pacific Railroad completes first railroad in county.</p>	<p>1880 – St. John's Abbey under construction. Benedictine Order establishes residence at current site in Collegeville in 1866. St. John's University established in 1857.</p>	<p>1885</p> <p>1887 – Cyclone Club, a local tobaggan club, formed in 1886. Tobaggan slide built on Fifth Avenue North by Cathedral.</p>	<p>1890</p> <p>1888 – St. Cloud Union Band, a community band that performed in the bandstand on the site of the current Empire Apartments.</p>
	<p>1856 – Benedictine monks arrive at lower landing in St. Cloud.</p> <p>1857 – Benedictine sisters arrive in St. Cloud.</p>	<p>1862 – Sauk Centre stockade built during the Dakota conflict. Seven forts could be found throughout the county.</p> 	<p>1869 – Founded in 1869, St. Cloud Normal School was the third normal school in Minnesota. Now known as St. Cloud State University, the college is home to 16,000 students and 700 faculty.</p>		<p>1874 – As late as 1874 the steamboat, Minneapolis, came up the river bringing passengers and supplies to St. Cloud.</p> 	<p>1885 – Great Soo Line Railroad expansion begins. The result was the formation of additional Stearns County towns along its rail.</p>		

1860 to 25,000 by 1905. By 1930, families from over 25 different ethnic or immigrant groups lived in Stearns County and collectively brought the population to over 62,000.

Other early residents of Stearns County included businessmen from the southern or eastern part of America, who brought experience in shipping, transportation or milling. Some came looking for work as shopkeepers and tradesmen or to start farms in the outlying areas.

The Germans brought their strong Catholic heritage to the county. The first Protestant organization was the Baptist Society of St. Cloud and soon to follow were Protestant Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal, Presbyterian, Congregational and Universalist denominations.

The arrival of the new settlers didn't bode well for Native American populations. Different values, language, religion, social rules, technology and government caused conflict between the old and the new. The Dakota Conflict of 1862, a bloody battle leaving 400 statewide dead, was a turning point. Federal troops defeated the Dakota and, by 1880, the Ojibwe and Dakota people, as well as other Native Americans, were forced into living on reservations outside of their original homelands.

After about 1970, the county experienced more changes.

Southeast Asians, many fleeing their homelands during the Vietnam War, settled in the county. More recently, immigrants have made their way to Stearns County after escaping conflicts in Bosnia and Eastern Europe, as have Somalians, also fleeing troubled homelands. The county is home also to Hispanics, African Americans and Latinos.

Though each new wave of immigrants brings their own culture, ideas and religion to the area, early German Catholics were influential. However, Stearns County, at a population approaching 140,000, is becoming known for its diversity.



Sylvanus B. Lowry.

Slavery

Stearns County did not escape the influence of slavery. The arrival of General Sylvanus Lowry (politician and founder of St. Cloud's "Upper Town") from Kentucky brought changes to the area. He and his wife, along with several other wealthy, southern, pro-slavery residents, made their homes in the 1850s on the current St. Cloud Hospital site.

In 1857, while Lowry was in Europe treating an illness, his friend, Thomas Calhoun, came from Tennessee to manage Lowry's St. Cloud farm. Calhoun brought with him his two

African American slaves, 32-year old Mary Butler and her toddler son.

According to journalist Jane Grey Swisshelm, in an article in the St. Cloud Democrat newspaper, Butler thought she would be freed once she arrived in Minnesota, and was looking forward to reuniting with her husband and two older sons who had been sold earlier in the year to owners in other states.

During the cold, rainy trip to Minnesota, Butler tried to keep her young son warm by rolling him up in her skirt, as she had no extra clothing. The rough trip, however, claimed her son's life. She had become pregnant before her husband was sold and the birth of a new son gave her some joy; however, being the only African American woman in St. Cloud she was basically alone.

In Lowry's absence, his wife became accustomed to services provided by Butler, who even nursed the Lowrys' two-year-old along with her newborn. Finally, before the general's return, according to Swisshelm, Calhoun sold the Butlers in order to buy himself a fancy new horse and carriage.

In 1860, three more slaves came to the area. Lowry acquired a 16-year-old African American, William, while Samuel Hays of Sauk Rapids bought a 41-year-old African American woman, Chloe, and her 5-year-old daughter.

William was listed under Lowry's household and family in the 1860 census while Hays wouldn't consider recognizing Chloe and her daughter as citizens. Christopher Lehman, a St. Cloud State University Ethnic Studies Assistant Professor, said in a recent Stearns County publication, that Hays "... attempted to prove from the Bible, that [African Americans] were designed by

the Creator for slavery."

Though Chloe was twice as old as William, they formed a relationship and married, but were required to reside with their respective masters. The Civil War began shortly thereafter and its end in 1865 brought an end to slavery and a welcome freedom to these people.

Adoption trains

Stearns County was considered a desirable destination by those trying to find homes for New York's neglected, deserted, homeless, problem or orphaned children, from the mid-nineteenth century into the early twentieth. The following articles from Minneapolis newspapers related the arrival of babies from New York to Stearns County:

October 1, 1908. "Nearly a car load of foundlings from the New York Foundling Hospital, passed through Minneapolis yesterday on their way to St. Cloud and other towns in the northern part of the state where they will find homes. They were in the charge of two Sisters of Mercy. Homes have been promised for all of the children."

November 19, 1914. "One hundred orphans from a New York asylum conducted by the Sisters of Charity, arrived [in St. Cloud] today, and will be delivered to homes which have been provided for them. The orphans will go to homes at Avon, Cold Spring, Holdingford, Freeport, Lake Henry and other places. They range in age from one to four years."

Though the idea was to give the children a second chance at life, the results didn't always live up to expectations. Some of the adopted kids were subjected to abuse or hard farm work, while others believe their lives were actually better than they would have been. Records are scarce. Many were so young they don't remember the details and others are

no longer living, so stories may remain untold.

"I landed in Avon, on a farm," said Sister Justina Bieganeck, 93, of Little Falls. That was in 1913. She hadn't yet had her second birthday when her 26-year-old widowed mother of two, a Norwegian immigrant, let her go, citing "inability to care for the child" as a reason. To this day, Sister Justina doesn't know if her mother kept her brother or also let him go.

The last orphan train ran in 1929. Sister Justina recalls that by 1910 there were already 3,000 New York orphans placed in Minnesota. The numbers decreased after that, due to new state adoption regulations and reclining numbers of immigrants. It's hard to know how many actually "landed" in Stearns County. "It's too shameful to put in the history books," she said. She has been active in organizing "Orphan Train Reunions," but the number attending is dwindling. "The youngest one has to be older than 70," she said. "I'm grateful to be alive at 93."

"It was quite an era," she said. As for her placement? "It was okay."

Grasshopper plagues

Stearns County has experienced its share of catastrophes, beginning with the grasshopper plague in August of 1856. According to an account written by Father Bruno Riss from his parish in St. Joseph, the first signs came in the midst of a sermon.

"... a heavy darkness suddenly set in, accompanied, as we thought, by a tremendous hailstorm, the clatter of which drowned the voice of the preacher," Riss said, "but it was something worse than hailstones, for when we left the church our eyes beheld nothing but greedy grasshoppers, which had darkened the sun and in their descent had struck so heavily upon the roof of the chapel."

Within three days, the fields, which had been well on their way to harvest, had the appearance of having been newly plowed. Though the entire harvest was lost for the new settlers, their hope was not, and they managed to make it through a rough winter.

The spring of 1857, however, brought a new brood of grasshoppers which left nothing behind except peas. This time, they didn't stop with the fields. They made their way into houses, destroying clothing. The churches locked, in presses, every thread of cloth, except during the sermons. Then, altar boys were busy keeping the hoppers off the altar and from the folds of the priest's robes.

Cattle died from scarcity of food or blood poisoning caused by the bites of the grasshoppers. One story goes that a worker hung his coat on a fence post and when he returned to pick it up a few hours later, only the buttons remained.

Finally, the four pastors of the county came up with a plan of prayer and promises of annual vows to two saints, deemed in Germany to be special patrons of those afflicted, in which all eagerly took part. "And behold, God heard us who were weak and helpless against such small insects," Riss said. "In the early days of June when the young brood was ready for work, a brisk northwest wind set in and carried a whole cloud of the little fiends with it to other climes."

Eden Valley:

More than a dozen lakes can be found within a ten-mile radius of Eden Valley. The arrival of the railroad led to the founding of Eden Valley in 1886.

Elrosa:

Incorporated March 1, 1938. Growth began after the Soo Line passed through in 1907. The Hamlet of Lake George, located two miles south of Elrosa, was moved to Elrosa soon after.



Tornado of 1886 flattened Sauk Rapids and caused severe devastation in Stearns County. Seventy-three area residents died. Prior to 1886 Sauk Rapids was larger than St. Cloud and was expected to be the powerhouse of the two towns.



Tornado of 1894 started north of Kimball and angled northwest through Pearl Lake, Cold Spring and Collegeville. Many injuries, but no lives lost.

When the people were, once again, well on their way to prosperity, their vows were forgotten. And, once again, in 1875-76, the grasshoppers returned and were worse than ever before. The settlers' dedication was revived, and in answer to their prayers, the grasshoppers left - never to return.

The next year, two chapels were built, the St. Boniface between Luxemburg and St. Augusta, and Assumption in Cold Spring, as symbols of faith. Assumption was blown away during the 1894 cyclone and St. Boniface was moved to a nearby farm and used as a tool shed for a time. Finally, in the mid-1900s, Assumption was rebuilt and St. Boniface was moved back to its original spot and restored. Today, the "Grasshopper Chapels," as they have come to be known, continue to hold services.

Weather-related disasters

Back on April 14, 1886, portions of Stearns and Benton Counties were hit by what is called the deadliest tornado in the history of the state. From Sauk Rapids, through St. Cloud, Buckman and Pierz, 109 buildings were destroyed. Seventy-three area residents died and many more were injured. Property damage was estimated at \$300,000.

January 12, 1888 brought a ground blizzard, where winds did more damage than falling snow. More than 200 Minnesotans died.

On June 27, 1894, disaster struck again. "A furious cyclone swept through Stearns County..." reported the St. Cloud Times Weekly. Houses, granaries, barns and St. John's Abbey buildings were all damaged. To the dismay of the St. James congregation in Jacobs Prairie, its church was completely destroyed. There were many injuries, but no lives lost.

November 11, 1940 is one day many people, yet today, have not forgotten. Though only 16 inches of snow fell during the Armistice Day blizzard, the tragedies of the 60-hour ordeal was the result of lack of warning. Compared to weather forecasting practices used today, those relied on in 1940, and earlier, were considered primitive.

The January, 1991 issue of Stearns County Historical Society's "Crossings" recounts a 16-year old student's bus ride home from school on November 11, 1940. When the bus could finally go no farther, the bus driver knew he had to find a safe place to wait out the storm.

"There were 12 or 15 of us still on the bus," said Joanne Carlin. "We were told to hold on to each other's hands and form sort of a human chain so we would stay together, with the driver

in the lead. Some weren't even wearing mittens or caps because it had started out as a rather nice day. I think the bus driver was very brave and is surely responsible for

Town Tidbits:

Albany:

Incorporated January 20, 1890. Formerly known as Schwinghammers Settlement.

Albany petitioned for the County Seat in 1913 because of its central location, but fell slightly short of the required signatures needed to put it to a vote.

Avon:

First settled by Nick Keppers in 1863, originally called "Spunk Lake" after an Indian Chief "Spunk" who lived there. Incorporated January 26, 1900.

Nationally known during the Prohibition as a center for moonshine production. "Minnesota 13" was made in circus tents hidden in the woods.

At least nine lakes can be seen from the top of the Avon water tower. A total of sixty-eight lakes can be found within a 12 mile radius of Avon.

Belgrade:

Home of the world's largest crow. The only place in the United States that flags from all 50 states are flown at the same time.

Incorporated March 19, 1888.

Brooten:

In 1911, 6,000 people visited Brooten for the "Halling Lag", a reunion for the descendants of people who emigrated from Hallingdal, Norway.

Incorporated February 16, 1892.

Cold Spring:

Cold Spring Granite Company is one of the largest producing granite companies in the world, with five manufacturing locations throughout North America.

In 1852, frontier trader Ashley Riggs coined the name "Cold Springs" in reference to the numerous natural springs in the area.

Bavarian Michael Sargl started a brewery in 1874 that grew with the town. Although it looks quite different today, the Gluek Brewing Company still occupies the same site.

1900

– St. Benedict's Academy. College of St. Benedict opened in 1913 by the Sisters of St. Benedict's Monastery which grew out of St. Benedict's Academy founded in 1889.



1905

1905 – A favorite pastime among residents was getting together to play cards. Popular games were Euchre, 500, Skit, Shoot the Moon, Sheep-head, and Skat. To this day these games remain a favorite pastime.



1910



1912 – Northwestern Bell Telephone Company operators at switchboard, Sauk Centre. St. Cloud had its first exchange built in 1883. There were 38 customers.

1915



1917 – United States enters World War I. First draft train leaving from Stearns County in September 1917.

1920

Prohibition was well underway and the Feds would often raid the local stills and shut them down.



1923 – Tobacco growing was the most profitable crop in Stearns County.

1930



1938 – REA Stearns Electric Co-op was formed in 1935. First rural electricity provided in 1938.

1935 - Whitney airport opens in northwest St. Cloud. Alice Wheelock Whitney donated the land.



1940



1941 – United States enters World War II. 217th Coast Artillery going to east side train station for trip to Camp Haan, California. 120 Stearns County residents lose their life.

1945

1946 – Rox was the first official baseball team in Stearns County. A farm team for three major league teams and eventually the Minnesota Twins.



1950



1952 – General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Presidential candidate visits St. Cloud and speaks at a rally in front of the Stearns County Courthouse.

1955

saving our lives as the storm lasted nearly three days." The group ended up spending those three days in a store, complete with supplies and a warm stove. Forty-nine Minnesotans lost their lives during the Armistice Day storm.

Industry

Farming. When one thinks of the economy in Stearns County, agricultural production comes quickly to mind. Stearns County is home to approximately 2,600 livestock operations. Recent data from the Minnesota Agricultural Statistics Service shows that Stearns County is ranked number one in the following: total cash farm receipts, cattle and calves and milk, oats and hay production.



1921 Granite City of the World.

Dairy production puts Stearns at 16th in the nation. Principal crops in the county are oats, hay, corn, and soybeans. Sugar beets are also raised in the Bonanza Valley. The county also ranks high in poultry production. These achievements directly affect farm related businesses located in the county such as: Gold 'N Plump, Jennie-O, Land-O-Lakes, AMPI (Associated Milk Processors Inc.) and Kraft food processing facilities. Former County Commissioner, the late Rose Arnold, relayed her husband's words, "As the farmer goes, so goes the nation".

Granite. No one could have predicted the effect the 1870 discovery of granite deposits would have on the county - and the world. By 1874, quarries were operating just west of St. Cloud. Granite was first used for road pavement and building foundations. Modern equipment has made granite useful for a multitude of products, from memorials to architectural enhancements and

from furniture to gift items and more, often with ornate etchings.

Scottish immigrants, such as Henry Alexander and John Clark, brought skills to the county that expanded the industry to Rockville and Cold Spring. At one time, 30 quarries were operating within the county. Today, Cold Spring Granite is one of the largest producers of granite in the world with operations world-wide.

The production of granite, however, prompted related industries, such as Monumental Sales, Inc., one of the oldest distributors of granite products, going strong in St. Cloud since 1917.

Automobiles. One of the more colorful business stories Stearns County has to offer is that of the short-lived Pan Motor Company. In 1917, Samuel Pandolfo, an insurance man, started an automobile factory in St. Cloud. Not only did he convince members of the business community to support his idea, he also provided housing for his workers.

World War I slowed manufacturing and by the time the first Pan cars were ready to market Pandolfo was indicted, and eventually

convicted for federal mail fraud. By 1922, in spite of 737 Pan cars making it through the assembly line, the company was naught. One of only a few remaining Pandolfo cars, owned by the St. Cloud Antique Auto Club, is on display at the Stearns History Museum.

Tenvoorde Ford got its start in 1895 when Stephen Tenvoorde opened a bicycle shop and then went on to bring the first automobile to the area in 1899. Over 100 years ago, Tenvoorde began its auto dealership, which remains in the family today.

Eich Motor Company also began selling cars more than a century ago. Established in 1897 as a carriage, buggy and farm implement dealer, it is a fourth generation family business.

River industries. Rivers throughout the county were ideal locations in the mid to late 1800s for saw mills, flour mills, breweries and logging operations.

Beginning in the 1850s, breweries were a hit. Preiss & Wimmer was one of the earlier ones in St. Cloud but, by the turn of the century, breweries had multiplied across the county. Prohibition later took its toll and, today, Glueck Brewery in Cold Spring, which began as Cold Spring Brewing Co. in 1874, is the only brewery in the county still in operation. Some dining establishments, however, have successfully started up their own micro-breweries.

Heim Milling Co., located where the Sauk River meets the Mississippi, has survived floods and fire, but has been milling flour since 1860. Fair Haven Mill, established in 1867, on the Clearwater River, is no longer operating, but is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, as is Swany White Flour Mills in Freeport, which dates back to 1898 and is still in operation.

Saw mills, logging companies and lumber yards also grew, in keeping up with the rapid development of Stearns County.

And more. The advent of irrigation accelerated crop production and saved many farms and small towns across the county from dying. The formation of Bonanza Valley Irrigators Association in 1966 was instrumental in changing agriculture across the 320 square mile area which consists of properties in Stearns, Pope and Kandiyohi Counties. When irrigation was successful, development of related industries, such as well-digging, specialized equipment and consulting operations, followed.

The optical lens and printing industries have flourished in Stearns County, as well as manufacturers of refrigerators, freezers, lawn and garden supplies and more. Professional services and construction companies have also successfully made homes in the county.

Prohibition

Stearns County knows its corn. Always working toward improving



1899 Logging on Mississippi. North side of railroad bridge.

the quality of the crop so popular in the area even back in the early part of the 20th century, no one had an inkling how one particular strain, "hybrid number 13," would come to be used.

A law passed in 1920 outlawing alcoholic beverages was designed to scare Minnesota bar owners and their patrons into sobriety. In fact, it did just the opposite. Melrose, which actually called one of its roads "Whiskey Street" after the unusually high number of saloons on it, reports that when Prohibition began, "... people who had never taken a drink in their lives rushed out in search of one because it was suddenly illegal."

Thirsty residents across the county got creative and discovered that the hybrid corn, grown best in conditions such as in Stearns County, made a more-than-respectable corn liquor. Dubbed "Minnesota 13," it was in demand across the state and as far as Chicago and Al Capone.

Distilleries popped up everywhere overnight. Illegal liquor was smuggled, sold and consumed as fast as it could be brewed. Whiskey Street didn't close down; it just changed its business ventures a little, including the installation of trap doors for a quick dump of the evidence if needed.

"The Feds" raided regularly, not always finding what they wanted, but enough that court hearings were the norm through the 1920s. They would arrive with the promise to "make Stearns as dry as it now is wet." Residents did not take the raids lightly. One account says that after a successful 1928 raid in St. Cloud, federal agents confiscated five hundred gallons of liquor, at a value of \$10,000, and started dumping it into the river. A resistant spectator threw in a match, igniting the alcohol, causing the agents to take the rest of it away.

When prohibition ended in 1933, Melrose noted that bringing beer back caused no disturbances - not the case for taking it away. The headline in its local newspaper read "Beer back in town and all is well."

Transportation

Red River Ox Cart Trails. History of the ox carts and the trails traveled from Canada to St. Paul through Stearns County is intriguing. The trips, beginning at the turn of the century, were a challenge in the all-wooden, squeaky-wheeled carts, which served, not just as a land transport vehicle, but as tent, home and sometimes boat during the two months it took to get from one end of the trail to the other. Travelers included hunters, traders, missionaries, military men, journalists, tourists and sometimes whole families. By 1870, with newer transportation methods on the rise, this method of travel had drastically dwindled.

Mississippi River. The Mississippi, running along the edge of Stearns County, has been used for transportation longer than there are records. In addition to their early explorers and settlers, one early documented trip was that of explorer Zebulon Pike and his men in 1805. Travel on the river became the norm and within 50 years

steamers transferred people and freight back and forth from other cities. Beginning in 1855, ferries were used for short trips across the river. Passengers on foot paid ten cents to cross the river. Extra fees were charged for animals and freight.

In addition to the income-producing industries the river provided for settlers came the construction of bridges and the opportunity to easily travel to neighboring communities. The Wagon Bridge, completed in 1868, later known as the St. Germain Street Bridge, was the first crossing of the Mississippi in Stearns County. A ten cent toll was charged to use the bridge.

Though the eventual construction of dams to create more power for growing industries made steamer travel obsolete, the railroad had already become the preferred method of moving goods and people.

Railroad. By the 1870s and 1880s, Soo Line, Great Northern and Northern Pacific railways provided the means for farmers to sell their products to distributors, which helped farms and towns prosper. It didn't take long for residents, farmers and other commercial industries to become accustomed to catalog ordering, receiving and shipping goods and supplies by train. In addition to numerous quarrying operations and processing sheds, important railway links aided in St. Cloud becoming known as the Granite City. Eventually, travel by residents themselves to other cities by railway became commonplace. By World War I, Stearns County was an established shipping center, aiding in the success of many companies, and remains so today.

Streetcars. Beginning on St. Germain in 1887, the use of streetcars spread to Waite Park, south St. Cloud and across the river to Sauk Rapids until the 1930s when buses took over.

Airplanes. Air traffic in Stearns County began in the mid-30s, when Whitney Memorial Airport was constructed on Northway and Stocking Drives. Though airline ventures were a welcome step into the modern world, patients at St. Cloud Hospital complained that the airport's revolving beacon kept them awake at night. Finally, an agreement was made between the hospital and the airport to install the beacon on top of the hospital, allowing patients their sleep, which turned out better, too, for the airport as the hospital was the highest nearby structure, giving the beacon light a wider range.

When the St. Cloud Municipal Airport opened in 1970, Whitney closed. The land was later donated to the City of St. Cloud and named Whitney Memorial Park. A brick wall, which was part of the entrance to the airport, still stands. Hangars and buildings are now part of Whitney Senior and

Recreation Center while the fields are used for athletics and other community activities.

Major roadways. Changes brought on by the onset of automobiles and trucking industries are, not surprisingly, significant. Key road systems in Stearns County include approximately 58 miles of interstate highways, 174 of trunk highways, 366 of county roads, 593 of county state aid roads and 1,517 of township roads, in addition to



1860s Ox Cart Transport.

Meire Grove:

Meire Grove's city band was organized in 1883 and holds the record of the longest continuing band in Minnesota.

In 1908 Meire Grove won the state butter championship. City holds day long celebration.

Incorporated December 24, 1896.

Melrose:

Edwin Clark, known as the "Father of Melrose," invited the railroad to town and built almost an entire block of buildings on north Main street.

Melrose has ties to the early days of aviation. James Gallagher, a Melrose native, piloted the first non-stop flight around the world, refueling in air. August Lindbergh, grandfather of Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr. who was the first to fly over the Atlantic Ocean, helped organize Melrose Township.

Incorporated February 9, 1887.

New Munich:

Once home to Mathias Pitzl Brewing Company, which produced Pitzl's Famous Beer. By 1910, Pitzl Brewing Company had the distinction of being the largest beer producer in Stearns County and the third largest in Minnesota.

Incorporated January 28, 1896.

Opole:

In 1911, a dynamite bomb was hurled at the wagon of a farmer named Wolne, which caused a sensation in the City of Opole.

Padua:

Was called Rooneyville until 1900.

Paynesville:

The center of excitement during the Dakota Conflict of 1862. The entire village was burned including the stockade.

The Paynesville Co-Op Creamery, built in New Paynesville in 1888, was the first creamery in Stearns County and the second in Minnesota.

Paynesville was named after Edwin Payne, an original officer in the land company and the first postmaster. Founded in 1858.

Richmond:

Originally called Torah after an Indian chief, but the citizens referred to the city as Richmond or Richmond's Prairie. The government finally gave in to the citizens and changed the name officially to Richmond on March 4, 1909.

Home of the Pontoon boat, invented by Ambrose Weeres of Richmond.

Rose Arnold, first and only female Stearns County Commissioner, was born and raised in Richmond.

Rockville:

Received its name from the outcrops of Granite adjoing the Sauk River and Mill Creek.

Rockville granite buildings and monuments can be found in every state and in some foreign countries. The granite on the St. Paul Cathedral is Rockville granite. In 1946, Clark and McCormack Quarry's production shed burnt down.

Incorporated July 14, 1903.

Roscoe:

Formed in 1887 because it was on the railroad route. It was also called Zions after the name of the post office in town.

St. Anthony:

Called Gates until 1899, parish founded in 1869. City Incorporated on May 31, 1911.

Settled by Slovenians, Dutch & German immigrants.

St. Augusta:

In 1859 a tornado practically destroyed every building in the hamlet.

In 1856 Father Pierz founded his first church and constructed it out of logs. The St. Augusta parish dates back to be one of the earliest in Stearns County.

St. Augusta Township was incorporated into a city in 2000. Residents got to vote to pick the name of the city in the 2000 election. The choices were St. Augusta, Ventura, and Augsburg.

1960



1964 – United States sends troops to Vietnam. The Vietnam Era lasted until 1975 with 35 area soldiers losing their lives.

1965

1961 – New St. John's Abbey, Collegeville. Building began in 1958.



1966 – Crossroads Shopping Center opens.

1970 – March to the Stearns County courthouse protesting the Vietnam War.



1975

1977 – Final stretch of I-94 by St. Augusta is opened. Governor Rudy Perpich and other dignitaries take part in festivities.



1977 – Power line dispute in western Stearns County.

1980

1985



1980 – Tornado in Waite Park. One life lost in Bel Clare Acres.

1988 – Rose Arnold elected. She was Stearns County's first, and only female Commissioner.

1990 – December 3, the Stearns County Administration Center officially opens.

1992 – Stearns County purchases Quarry Park area from Cold Spring Granite.

1992 – Scenes from the movie, "The Mighty Ducks", starring Emilio Estevez, were filmed in the impressive third floor courtroom and on the grand staircase of the Stearns County Courthouse.

1995

1998 – Quarry Park opens to the public. It is currently 643 acres. 28-mile Lake Wobegon Trail from Avon to Sauk Centre opens to the public.

1998 – Mennonites first settled in Stearns County between Padua and Elrosa.

2000

2003 – John Gagliardi, St. John's University football coach, becomes the winningest college football coach with 409 wins. Takes the Division III National Football Championship capping off a perfect season.

2003 – Operation Iraqi Freedom begins. Freeport resident loses life. 2004 – President George W. Bush visits St. Cloud and speaks at Dick Putz Field.



Courtesy Mike Kokenapp

uncounted miles of city streets. Maintenance of 964 miles of these roadways provides many job opportunities within the county.

Medical facilities

One of the first doctors to practice in Stearns County was Dr. Benjamin R. Palmer, an Army Surgeon who came to St. Cloud in 1856 from the east coast. He was later stationed in Sauk Centre. Dr. William R. Hunter arrived the same year to practice medicine, while also operating a shingle mill.

Beginning as a small community hospital, St. Benedict's Hospital in St. Cloud, the first in the county, was founded by the Sisters of the Order of St. Benedict in 1886.

Later renamed St. Raphael's and finally St. Cloud Hospital, it has grown to a comprehensive, high-quality medical center serving more than half a million people in a 12-county area of Central Minnesota. Funds raised by the St. Benedict Sisters in 1928 made construction on its current site possible. Now, part of the CentraCare Health System, hospitals, clinics, specialty care programs and long-term care facilities are spread across the county and farther.



1886 St. Benedict Hospital.



In the early 1900s Richmond, Paynesville, Melrose, Freeport, Holdingford and Brooten all boasted local hospitals.

400 practicing across the county, mean medical services are most often just around the corner. The farthest a very few might have to travel for medical care is 25 miles.

Education

Optimum educational opportunities have always been a priority in Stearns County and 2000 census data prove it. Compared to national results showing that 79 percent graduated from high school and 24 percent went on to earn bachelor's degrees or more, Stearns County high school graduates number 86 percent and bachelor's degrees or more, 22 percent.

It all started back in 1856 when the first free day school was set up in Joseph Edelbrock's home. The first class of seven boys and three girls was taught by Father Cornelius Wittman, who later became a professor at St. John's Seminary. A school building was constructed a short time later in St. Cloud.

The first public school opened in the same building in 1858 and by 1860 ten public schools were operating in the county. Nineteen new schoolhouses were erected between 1869 and 1872. While frame structures were becoming the norm, four of the buildings were brick and one stone. In addition, 37 log schoolhouses were still being used.

The Indian Industrial School, which is now part of the St. Benedict complex in St. Joseph, was operated by the Sisters of St. Benedict from 1886 through 1896. Sister M. Grace McDonald, O.S.B., explains in her book, "With Lamps Burning," that the goal of the federal initiative was to train Native American girls in English and domestic subjects. The sisters, however, went one step further by also instructing them in "the truths of religion".

Though consolidation of the country schools began in the mid-1960s, many of the one-room schoolhouses remained in use until the early 1970s. Today, the public school system has grown to 39 schools and private schools to 27 throughout the county.

Higher education facilities include St. Cloud State University, St. John's University, College of St. Benedict, St. Cloud Technical College and several business and trade schools.

St. Cloud State University. St. Cloud State University (SCSU) began in 1869, as Third State Normal School. Housed in the Stearns House, a renovated hotel, it consisted of classrooms on the first floor, a "model school" (an elementary school used for practice teaching, later known as Gray Campus Laboratory School) on the second floor and a women's dormitory on the third for 43 of its 53 first-year students. The name was changed in 1921 to St. Cloud State Teachers College, in 1957 to St. Cloud State College, and in 1975, finally to St. Cloud State University. SCSU has evolved from a five-member faculty to one of more than 700, a student body of more than 15,000 and more than 80,000 alumni. Currently, more than 900 students from at least 80 countries study at SCSU.

St. John's University. When St. John's University (SJU) opened in 1857, with one professor and five students, it was reluctantly called a "college" because "seminary" was not familiar to the public. One of the early students described the college like this: "Think of the primitive log building about 12x20, then to this an additional structure about 14x20, in height one story and an attic (the latter weather boarded) situated about two miles below St. Cloud on the Mississippi River and you have a fine picture of St. John's in 1857 . . ."

After a few moves, SJU finally came to rest in 1866 at its present location on Lake Sagatagan in Collegeville, just west of St. Joseph. Its campus, operated by St. John's Abbey, is home to not only the Abbey, but St. John's University and prep and middle schools.

College of St. Benedict. The College of St. Benedict (CSB) in St. Joseph grew from St. Benedict's Monastery, founded by the Benedictine Sisters in 1889. CSB was opened in 1913.



1858 Everett School. First schoolhouse in the county.

A unique part of the history of CSB and SJU, after considering merging in 1968, is that they, instead, developed undergraduate education, including a common curriculum, a single academic calendar and identical degree requirements, but separate diplomas.

St. Cloud Technical College. St. Cloud Technical College (SCTC) began in 1948 when 100 students signed up for a variety of technical classes offered in existing high school shops and classrooms. The classes were such a success that in 1955 the H.B. Gough wing was added to St. Cloud Technical High School, specifically for SCTC's use. By 1966, SCTC was ready for its own complex, which was constructed at its existing location.

Rasmussen College, St. Cloud, and **Minnesota School of Business,** Waite Park, were each established more than 100 years ago and offer day, evening and online courses in a multitude of career options. **College of St. Scholastica** recently began offering classes in St. Cloud. Other well-established vocational schools help to make Stearns County a great place to learn.

Recreation

Parks and trails. By its own admission, Stearns County started in the park business late in the game (1970), but has emerged as a leader in Greater Minnesota in providing regional parks and trails. With an end goal of 2,426 acres of county parkland adopted in a 1970 "plan," the first parcel of parkland established was Upper Spunk Lake County Park in 1973.

Several other county recreational spots were established in the years following, with Quarry Park and Nature Preserve and the Wobegon Trail opening in the 1990s. The county also coordinated land acquisition at Quarry Park to create a State Scientific and Natural Area totally owned by the county and encompassed within the park. The Wobegon Trail has been designated as a National Recreation Trail. Lighted ski trails are popular at Quarry Park.

The Soo Line Rail Corridor, as well as the Beaver Island Trail along the Mississippi, are recent hits and worth every penny. As of the end of 2003, 1,978 acres of Stearns County is dedicated to parks and trails. And that's not the end of it. Expansions are in the works for a Granite Industry Interpretive Center at Quarry Park, an extension of the Lake Wobegon Trail linking it to the Central Lakes State Trail and to regional parks on the Sauk River Chain-of-Lakes and in the Avon Hills.

All together, Stearns County is home to over 90 state, county and city parks and countless miles of hiking trails.

Theatre. One doesn't have to live in the largest city in the state to get their fill of live theatre. As far back as 1897, Stearns County residents were given the opportunity to enjoy live shows at the Davidson Opera House on Fifth Avenue in St. Cloud, which hosted celebrities such as Ethel Barrymore and John Philip Sousa.

Pioneer Place, also on Fifth, has history in the county as well. Originally built in 1913 as an Elks Club, it ended up being used for other purposes over the years, such as apartments and gift shops, until 1998. Preservation and restoration of many of its historical features, such as an ornate granite façade and indoor hardwood floors, are now enjoyed by those attending shows, including plays, comedians and musicians.

Opening night in 1921 at The Sherman Theatre in St. Cloud featured a silent film "Way Down East" accompanied by a live orchestra. This was the beginning of generations of entertainment including Vaudeville acts, operas, concerts and Broadway road shows. The theatre, considered at the time to be quite grand, was renamed the Paramount in 1930 and renovated to accommodate "talkies." In 1990, after years of neglect and extensive damage from a 1985 fire, it was renovated once more and is again a "grand" home to live theatre.

Stearns County theatre doesn't end here. Community, dinner, educational, children's and college theatres are abundantly scattered throughout the county.

Baseball. Diehard baseball fans around the county will never forget the St. Cloud Rox. A farm team for the New York Giants, the San Francisco Giants, the Chicago Cubs, and eventually the Minnesota Twins, the Rox played in the Northern League from 1946 to 1971. Noteworthy players included Hall of Fame members Orlando Cepeda, Gaylord Perry, Lou Brock and manager Dave Bancroft.

Rox player, Nick Chanaka of St. Cloud, remembers when the new Rox Stadium was under construction in 1948 on the site where Westgate Shopping Center is now. "When the season opened, we played our home games in Little Falls until the new stadium was completed," he said. "We dressed at Cathedral High, bussed up to Little Falls, and then went back to Cathedral to shower after the games."

More recently, the River Bats baseball team has made its home at the Dick Putz Field in St. Cloud since its inception in 1997. The games are so popular, that more room is needed and options are being discussed.

Others making it to the major leagues from Stearns County include Jim Eisenreich, Greg Thayer, Tom Burgmeier, George Fisher, and Jake and Henry Thielman.

Driving back roads through small towns during baseball season provides a sure indicator that amateur baseball will never go out of style in Stearns County.

Dance Halls. There was a time when just about every community in the county had its own dance hall or, at the least, room to dance above the bar. Before automobiles and television became commonplace, meeting old and new friends at local dancing establishments was an easy way to have fun.

When Riverside Coliseum in Richmond first opened its doors in 1929, it played host to the likes of Tiny Little, Cec Hurst, Wally Erickson, Whoopee John and Lawrence Welk. Later on,



1931-35 Granite City Coliseum.

St. Cloud:

Russell T. Wing, inventor of the Parker "51" fountain pen in 1938, was born and raised in St. Cloud.

Alluding to the Granite quarries in the wards east of the river, St. Cloud is referred to as the "Granite City."

John L. Wilson is the father of St. Cloud. He chose St. Cloud as the name for his new town while reading the life of Napoleon I. He observed that the Empress Josephine spent much of her time at the magnificent palace at St. Cloud, a few miles out of Paris, France.

St. Joseph:

Settled in 1854 by Peter Loso and John Linneman who built a Dutch style windmill to grind flour. Incorporated January 18, 1890. The town bears the name of its church.

The beginnings of the College of St. Benedict were in 1863.

St. Martin:

First called *Ley's* settlement for the first settler, Henry Ley, 1857. Post Office named Leedston in 1868, changed to St. Martin in 1891. Named after St. Martin, bishop of Tours, born in 316.

St. Rosa:

Originally known as Isabel. Old Church of Freeport moved here in 1904 and became the community's first church. Incorporated August 9, 1939.

St. Stephen:

Incorporated May 18, 1914. Well known for their annual threshing shows, started in 1965 by William F. Vouk. He and his family hosted the threshing shows for 36 years. Average attendance was 5, 000 people! The last show took place in 2000.

Sartell:

Named in honor of Joseph B. Sartell, first settler of LeSauk. Sartell set up a sawmill at the mouth of the Watab River in 1854. Dam built on Mississippi River in 1903. Seven lives were lost in the process.

A horse from N.P. Clarke's farm north of Sartell, Clyde Mains, won grand prize at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.

Sauk Centre:

The birthplace of Sinclair Lewis, Pulitzer and Nobel Prize winning author. Sauk Centre is thought to be the subject of his book, *Main Street*.

Sauk Centre is home to the Stearns County Fair. Its County Fair roots date back to the Union Fair in 1875.

Spring Hill:

Schwagel's grocery store owned by John and Dorine Schwagel only has one employee besides the owners and manages to stay open 365 days a year.

"The Dance Hall at Spring Hill" was written by Spring Hill native Duke Klassen; this book is named after the ballroom in town and is about growing up in Stearns County.

Waite Park:

First settled in 1851, came into being with the Great Northern Railroad in 1891. Incorporated March 20, 1893. Named in honor of Henry Chester Waite of St. Cloud. He was St. Cloud's first lawyer.

people regularly danced to bands like Bobby Roberts, Gil Steil, Jolly Fishermen, Six Fat Dutchmen or Ray Drontle. For those who didn't care to dance, roller skating was offered.

Things have changed. Today, most dance halls or ballrooms have disappeared; the ones remaining have had to make changes. When Kathy and Jerry Hemmesch bought the Coliseum in 1999, now called River Station, they hired bands and tried to have regular dances open to the public. "It wasn't feasible," Kathy said. "Now we are basically a special events center."

That's the path most ballrooms have taken in order to keep their doors open. They've expanded their services to accommodate wedding receptions, family celebrations, dinner theatre productions or Wednesday night chicken dinners.

Bowling. As early as 1860, bowling in Stearns County was and continues to be a favorite pastime. An 1898 newspaper clipping posted the results of a Granite City Bowling Club competition where each contestant had 30 chances to knock down ten pins. The first place trophy went to Casper Billen, with a score of 150. A 1904 St. Cloud Journal headline was "Bowling Will Be Fad This Season." Highlights of the article included farm leagues being formed and that "even ladies are interested."

To keep their doors open, bowling establishments, too, have expanded their services. Great River Bowl in Sartell, for example, offers not only bowling but a pub stocked with billiards, darts, and TVs large enough to attract sports enthusiasts. With the addition of burgers, pizza, snacks and smoke-free weekend bowling, it lives up to its description of a "family fun center."

Resorts. Taking advantage of hundreds of county lakes, resorts flourished for many years. Once numbering over 50, Stearns County is now home to

less than 30. That number continues to decline.

On Lake Koronis alone, where there were once 14 resorts, Bugbee Hive Resort is one of the remaining two or three. Paul Bugbee, the third generation of Bugbees to run the resort, believes the rising cost of lakeshore is the biggest factor in the decline. "There's not a resort in Minnesota," he said, "that the business value comes close to the property value."

It's often easier for retirement-age owners of "ma and pa" operations to sell out for more money than they've seen in their lifetimes than to struggle to continue the business.

Bugbee sums up the thoughts of many who are struggling to keep longtime family-owned resorts. "For me, the roots have a priceless value," he said. "Money can buy anything but it can't buy roots, so it's important for me to keep this as a resort, as it has been for 85 years."

Fishing and hunting. Add a thousand miles of streams and rivers onto the county's hundreds of lakes - most with public access - and there's no excuse not to find some good fishing. In addition to easily catching one's fill of walleye, northern, sunnies, crappies, catfish and more, the county is home to a dozen trout streams. At one time, Stearns County was known for its great commercial fishing.

Many Stearns County hunters are fortunate enough to own good hunting property, but if that's not the case, there are state and federal lands in the county available for deer, pheasant and waterfowl hunting.

Stearns County today

It would take volumes to relay all of the experiences, enterprises, lives lived, and lives lost that have made Stearns County what it is today. Those not mentioned here are not forgotten nor less valuable. The contributions and sacrifices of so many over the last 150 years have given Stearns County the opportunity of looking forward to its next 150 years.

For more information on the history of the county, contact Stearns History Museum.



1905 Ice Fishing, Sauk Centre.



Photo taken by Myron Hall, photographer for the St. Cloud Times. Photo appeared in the August 1973 issue of Time magazine.

Township Tidbits:

Albany Township:

Organized in 1968, having a name that is born by the capital of New York and by townships, villages, and cities in 17 other states.

Ashley Township:

The most northwestern township was organized in 1870 and received its name from Ashley Creek which flowed through the township.

Avon Township:

Organized in 1866 bearing the name of three rivers in England and two in Wales and of villages and townships in Maine, Massachusetts, Wisconsin and 12 other states of the Union.

Brockway Township:

Organized in 1858, was then called Winnebago but was renamed in 1860 after a post office established in September of 1857 honoring a local lumberman and farmer.

Collegetown Township:

Organized in January 1880, is named for St. John's College which was chartered by the legislature March 6, 1857.

Crow Lake Township:

Organized in 1968, and named for the Crow Lake.

Crow River Township:

Organized in 1877 and named for the North Branch of the Crow River which flows across the township.

Eden Lake Township:

Organized February 16, 1867, received this name by choice of its people after Eden Lake.

Fairhaven Township:

Organized April 5, 1859, receiving its name from an exclamation of Thomas C. Partridge, "This is a fair haven!"

Farming Township:

Organized March 11, 1873, it's a name that alludes to the occupation of all its people.

The parish in Farming was organized in 1879 with the first church completed in 1881 which was destroyed by a tornado and rebuilt later that year.

Getty Township:

Organized in 1865, John J. Getty, in honor of whom the town is named, was undoubtedly the first permanent settler.

Grove Township:

Organized in 1867.

Holding Township:

Organized in 1870, was named in honor of its first permanent settler, who made a homestead claim in May 1868.

Krain Township:

Organized in 1872, bears the name of a province of southern Austria, also called Carniola.

Lake George Township:

Organized in 1877, has a lake so named in honor of George Kraemer, one of its pioneer settlers.

Lake Henry Township:

Organized in 1869, took the name of a lake.

LeSauk Township:

Organized in 1866, received this French name, meaning "the Sauk," from the same derivation as Sauk Rapids, the Sauk River, Sauk Centre, and Lake Osakis.

Luxemburg Township:

Organized in 1866, was named by its Luxembourger settlers in honor of their homeland.

Lynden Township:

Organized January 15, 1859, was then

named Lyndon, like townships in Vermont and Wisconsin, and like townships and villages in five other states, honoring Josiah Lyndon, Governor of Rhode Island in 1768-69, a patriot for the American Revolution.

Maine Prairie Township:

Organized in 1858, was named by its many pioneers from Maine, who came as its first settlers in 1856.

Melrose Township:

Organized in 1866, was either named by first settlers Warren and Napoleon Adley and Robert Wheeler, all from Scotland, for the City of Melrose in Scotland near the home of Sir Walter Scott, or by Warren Adley, in honor of Melissa (or Melvina) and Rose, who were his daughters or were other near kindred or friends.

Millwood Township:

Organized in 1871, has a name that is born also by villages in Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, and seven other states.

Munson Township:

Organized in 1859, has the name of villages in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

North Fork Township:

Organized in 1867, is crossed by the North Fork of Crow River.

Oak Township:

Organized in 1860, was then called Oak Grove. Its present name dates from 1867, when Grove Township, formerly a part of Oak Grove, was separately organized.

Paynesville Township:

Organized September 20, 1867, had previously been included in Verdale. Edwin E. Payne was its first settler, coming in 1857 and making a homestead claim, on which in the same year he platted and named the first village site.

Raymond Township:

Organized in 1867, being named in honor of Liberty B. Raymond, one of its early settlers.

The Cyclone Cemetery (now referred to as Lyman Prairie Cemetery which is still in existence) was named for a twister which killed nine people on July 8, 1869. In the tornado of 1877 a boy was blown 800 feet, but landed softly in a marsh.

St. Joseph Township:

Organized in 1858.

St. Martin Township:

Organized in 1863. One of the vanished coach stops on the Old Coach Road was Pillsbury's Kennebec post office.

St. Wendel Township:

Was organized under the name of Hancock in the spring of 1868 but in the summer of the same year was renamed to St. Wendel.

Sauk Centre Township:

Organized in 1858, received this name in allusion to its central location on the Sauk River, between the Sauk Rapids of the Mississippi and Lake Osakis, which likewise was named for its former occupation by a small band of Sauk Indians.

Spring Hill Township:

Organized July 10, 1871, was named for its springs and low morainic hills.

Wakefield Township:

Organized May 27, 1858, was first called Springfield but was renamed as now in 1870, in honor of Samuel Wakefield, chairman of its first board of supervisors in 1858.

Zion Township:

Organized in 1867, is named for the hill or plateau of Mount Zion, the highest part of the city of Jerusalem, praised in the 48th Psalm for its beauty.

STEARNS COUNTY RECREATION & ATTRACTION TOUR

Sinclair Lewis Home and Museum
810 Sinclair Lewis Ave., Sauk Centre
Home of America's first winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature. Narrated guided tours take you through the restored turn-of-the-century home where Sinclair Lewis lived with his parents and brothers. Open Memorial weekend to Labor Day weekend. Hours of operation vary, call for more details, (320) 352-5201. The museum is located off I-94 and Highway 71.



Grottos
Grottos can be found along the roadside in the county. These shrines were crafted by local families in dedication to their faith.



Belgrade Centennial Memorial Park
The world's largest crow can be seen in Belgrade just south of the Highway 55 and Highway 71 intersection. The wall encircling the Crow is made of bricks, which bear the names of 4,000 individuals. Flags of the 50 states and many European nations, which represent some of the citizens of Belgrade, are flown over the park. Push a button at the base of the crow and a pre-recorded narration tells you more about the town. The Belgrade Centennial Museum is located downtown. It's open from Memorial Day to Labor Day, Tuesdays and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon and again from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Century Farms
There are over 300 century farms still in operation in Stearns County. Such historic farms will be marked with signs.



Sauk Centre

Charlie's Café
115 Main St. East, Freeport
Located on the Lake Wobegon Trail, you'll find great food and conversation here. Some say Charlie's Café is the inspiration for Garrison Keillor's Chatterbox Café as described in "Lake Wobegon Days." It's been frequented by many who visit the land of Lake Wobegon, including Governor Pawlenty, Steven Spielberg and Kirby Puckett. Open daily from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.



Lake Wobegon Trail
Take a scenic ride through the wooded areas and plains, and near ponds and lakes on the Lake Wobegon Trail. The Trail runs 46 miles, from St. Joseph to Sauk Centre and has another extension from Albany to Holdingford. It is used by bicyclers, hikers, walkers, runners, skaters and snowmobilers. Metal studs are prohibited. The Trail from Colledgeville to St. Joseph is planned for walkers in the winter.

Greenwald

El Rancho Manana
I-94 to Avon exit, 8 miles south on County Road 9, and left on Manana Road
Minnesota's largest campground and riding stable on 1,208 acres. Over 25 miles of trails for horseback riding, hiking and mountain biking. Many festivals and activities are planned for weekends throughout the summer.



Brooten

Belgrade

St. Martin

Grasshopper Chapel
Built as a symbol of faith after the grasshopper plagues in the late 1800s, Assumption Chapel, also known as Grasshopper Chapel, is located off Highway 23 and Chapel Hill Road in Cold Spring. Overlooking the city, the chapel is nestled among towering trees. Outside are Stations of the Cross and meditation grounds. The Chapel is open May through October. Services are still held here once during the summer. Another grasshopper chapel, the St. Boniface, stands between Luxemburg and St. Augusta.

Lake Koronis
South of Paynesville, this is the biggest lake in Stearns County. Lake Koronis has 33 miles of shoreline and 3,014 acres of surface water, which makes it a great place for all kinds of water activities. It also has good lake access for the public with five boat landings and two parks with public beaches.



Horseshoe Chain of Lakes
Located in the Richmond, Cold Spring area. Originally, the Chain of Lakes were created in part because of a dam constructed in 1856 near Cold Spring for operations of a sawmill. Today, the Chain of Lakes consists of 14 lakes and is one of Central Minnesota's best kept secrets.

Eden Valley

Saint Benedict's University
37 S. College Ave., St. Joseph (320) 363-2011
See the Sacred Heart Chapel, whose dome is a predominant campus landmark. Stroll through the Benedicta Arts Center and the Art and Heritage Place at Saint Benedict's Monastery.

Richmond

Powder Ridge Ski Resort
Kimball (320) 398-5295
Located 16 miles south of St. Cloud off Highway 15, Powder Ridge Ski Resort boasts 15 runs, a 290 foot vertical drop, ski lifts, beginner, intermediate and advanced trails. Trails are lighted for night skiing. Lessons are also available. There is a large chalet with an adult lounge. Enjoy the snow tubing area with special tubes attached to a tow that will pull you up the hill hands free. Prices and hours of operation vary.



St. Joseph

St. Martin

St. Stephen

Pan Town Residential District
8th St. to 10th St. N. & 33rd Ave. to 39th Ave. N., St. Cloud
In addition to the Pan car factory he planned to make one of the greatest in the U.S., in 1917 Sam Pandolfo also had 58 homes built near his plant for his employees to buy at low interest rates. Most homes are still in their original locations today. Pan Town had its own sewer, water and electric systems, a volunteer fire department, police officers, a school and hotel. If the Pan Car had been a success, Pandolfo would have added a hospital, athletic field, and community center.

Holdingford

St. Cloud

Paramount Theatre
913 W. St Germain St., St. Cloud
Located in downtown St. Cloud, this historic landmark is home to a variety of live theatre performances. This performing and visual arts center features a 730-seat theater, gallery, and visual arts studio.

Historic County Courthouse
725 Courthouse Square, Downtown St. Cloud
Open 8:00 – 4:30 Monday through Friday
Built in 1922, the Courthouse is an ornate and grand structure with its brick and granite exterior, marble floors, brass railings and original woodwork. It's a stately building with its granite columns at the front entrance, each of which weighs 50 tons. The structure consists of two domes; its outer dome is made of yellow terra cotta tile and has four clocks. At the top of the main stairway is a mural depicting the pioneer heritage, which was painted in place at the time the building was constructed. Scenes from the movie "Mighty Ducks", starring Emilio Estevez, were shot in the ceremonial courtroom. The Courthouse is registered as a historic landmark.



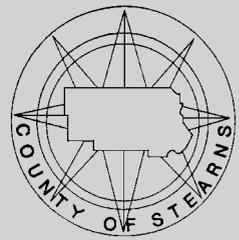
Stearns County History Museum
235 – 33rd Ave. S., St. Cloud
Open 10:00 – 5:00 Monday through Saturday and Noon – 5:00 on Sunday
One of the finest history museums in Minnesota, with over 1,000 artifacts in its 2-floor exhibit hall. Research your family history and shop the Museum Store. The History Museum is located in a 100-acre park with flower gardens and walking paths. Cost is \$4.00 for adults and \$2.00 for children to enter the exhibits.



Quarry Park
1802 Co. Rd. 137, Waite Park 255-6172
With 643 acres and 30 quarries, you can swim, fish, hike, scuba dive, bike, picnic, walk your dog, rock climb, snowshoe, cross country ski, or simply watch the wildlife. Hours are 8 a.m. to a 1/2 hour after sunset during spring, summer and fall. In winter, hours are 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. A one-day permit is \$4.00 and an annual permit is \$14.00.



For more information on local attractions contact area Chamber offices.



Down on the ol' Farm

by Linda Marie

“From Sturdy Roots” is the title the Hansen family of Rockville has given to their documented history and sturdy roots it has taken to sustain the family farm throughout 150 years and six generations.

First and second generation

It all started back in 1852, when second generation Michael Hansen, Jr., from the province of Rhine, Prussia, Germany, packed up his family and headed for America. They first settled in Illinois, but after a couple of years and a frightening outbreak of “swamp fever” (akin to malaria), decided to look for somewhere else to live. Michael, Jr. went on alone to Minnesota, acquired some land and went home to again pack up his family. The next year he and his wife, Mary Jan (Borman), their son and daughter, a herd of cattle and a team of oxen headed to Rockville, Minnesota.

Pierre, a fifth generation Hansen, who still lives on the property, explains how Michael, Jr. picked the spot the farm stands on today. “There was a good spring down there,” Pierre says as he points out his dining room window, “and there was six acres down there and ten acres that was open to plant wheat and hay for the oxen and later, horses.”

Michael Jr.’s 12-year-old daughter, however, didn’t survive the rugged journey. She was crushed under one of the wagon wheels. “We don’t even know where she’s buried,” said Pierre’s wife, Joyce (Kane), who has documented the Hansen history.

Pierre, who is also Rockville’s historian, and Joyce, recall stories of the first Hansens settling down and making a life in Rockville Township, including having another child. “All the Indians couldn’t get over that little white baby,” Joyce said. “They all came to see that white baby.”

The Hansen’s first log cabin went up that same year, which is also where Catholic Mass was frequently offered in those early years by Father Francis Pierz, a missionary who had a part in bringing many new settlers to the area. That was the start of the Hansen farm, now celebrating its 150th year, along with Stearns County.

Two years later, Michael Jr. sent for his elderly parents, Michael Sr. and Marie (Moliter). Pierre’s eyes light up as he shares the story of how his great-great-grandfather met his great-great-grandmother back in the first decade of the 19th century. “He fought with Napoleon,” he related, “and then the story goes that after the battle in France, he lost a leg and got back to Luxembourg just about dead. An elderly couple took him in and nursed him back to health. Then, they offered him their farm if he married their daughter, which he did in 1810. So they say, ‘a Hansen always knows a good deal when he sees one.’”

Joyce continues the story. “Michael Sr.’s wife lasted three months here. She died of pneumonia. She was one of the first people buried in Jacob’s Prairie.” Michael Sr. continued farming with his son.

Beginning in 1860, that first log cabin also served as the meeting place when Michael Jr. and 11 other farmers helped form Rockville Township. To this day, six generations of Hansens have been involved in a variety of political and community endeavors.

Third generation

Michael Jr.’s son, Pierre Peter, was eight years old when they moved from Illinois to the Rockville farm. He grew up exploring, hunting and fishing. Indian children from the nearby Sioux village on Grand Lake were his playmates. Favorite pastimes were swim races in the Sauk River and hunting competitions. He only went once to his friends’ village to play because their wolf-like dogs and the scalping stories the older men told scared him.

Pierre Peter taught himself to read and write, as he rarely wanted to walk the ten miles to the nearest schoolhouse in St. Joseph to attend classes. However, he became an excellent farmer, had an eye for good horses and appreciated modern machinery.

Pierre Peter was the third generation to take over the family farm. He married Marie (Classen) in 1874. When the couple had five children, the community experienced a diphtheria outbreak and within a few weeks the Hansens lost three of their young ones. They went on to have six more.

In 1897, Pierre Peter built a stone barn, the first other than log, which is still in use today. Pierre Peter and his son, Charles, in 1905, also owned and operated the Rockville Creamery, harvesting red oak from their own property and burning it to create steam to run the equipment.

Another tragedy struck the Hansens in 1907. “Their sons, Charles and Pierre, Jr., were to take over the farm,” Pierre said, “but at 30 years old, Charles was crushed to death when horses pushed him up against the corn crib.”

Fourth generation

Pierre, Jr., after the death of his brother, Charles, went into the priesthood, so another of Pierre Peter’s sons, Harry, who was attending St. John’s University and aiming for a law degree, transferred to the University of Minnesota to study agriculture in order to take over the farm. In 1911, Harry named the property “Fawnland Farm” after the abundance of deer on the property that hadn’t diminished since the day his grandfather first saw the site, and for his father’s love of hunting.

After the death of his father in 1917, Harry was on his own until he married Mary (Krebsbach) in 1920. They had nine children. A tragedy not uncommon to Minnesotans today hit the family when Harry and Mary lost their second child, who at the age of 2 1/2, had gone out to play, wandered onto the icy creek and fell in.

Harry was successful in adopting new farm practices. In addition to supplementing their livestock with quality Ayershire dairy and Angus beef cattle, he revamped buildings and updated equipment. He developed his own strain of hybrid corn, adapted specially for Minnesota’s short, cool growing season, which ended up being in demand during prohibition for making bootleg whiskey.

When he built a new barn, using granite block from Alexander’s quarry, plans to equip the barn with the latest in dairy equipment were foiled by the 1929 stock market crash. With electricity still ten years away, Harry did manage to upgrade the milking process with a new surge system. Pierre, who was eight at the time, remembers. “The milk machine motor had a generator built in,” he explained. “It was hooked up to car lights to get enough light. Until then, we milked by hand.”

Pierre also remembers his dad building a new silo for their farm. “It was 18’ x 50’, the biggest in the area at the time,” he said. “One of the monks from St. John’s Abbey was so impressed, the Abbey ended up having Dad build two for them, which were in use until St. John’s discontinued farming. Dad ended up building and selling more - enough to pay for ours.”

Winter farm scene, 1937.



Hansen century farm, 2005.



Pierre Hansen, fifth generation Hansen, still lives on the original homestead.

Color photography by JaneBailey.com

Harry bought his first tractor in 1932, and in 1937, in keeping with his reputation, he added another - a John Deere "B" with rubber tires, a seven-foot mower and a two-row cultivator. "That's the one I cut my eye teeth on," Pierre said. "Dad never rode that tractor. That was my tractor. I still have it."

The mid-1930s were lean years. In addition to low beef prices, crops were poor. To make matters worse, testing on the Hansen herd of Ayershires found that there was a possibility the animals had contracted tuberculosis (TB). "The sixty head were sold for slaughter and butchered," Joyce said. "They didn't find any TB."

Always willing to take a chance, Harry started offering barn dances. Four summers of selling dance tickets and beverages, not to mention enjoying lots of polkas and waltzes, helped supplement meager farm receipts. "People came from miles around to these dances," Joyce says in her documentation of Hansen history, "and to this day have stories to tell about meeting their future husband or wife at one of them."

Harry served his community by acting as Township Supervisor for 35 years. In 1936, he was instrumental in the township purchasing a Caterpillar and road grader. Previously, farmers maintained roads with horse graders, but with the advent of more automobiles, roads needed more care.

By the mid-1930s, with transportation and better roads, students from all over were able to travel to St. Cloud crowding into Central Junior High and then St. Cloud Technical High School, which is what Pierre did. After graduation in 1940, he attended St. John's University for a year, but even with a car and updated roads he remembers the day when neither did him any good.

It was November 11, 1940. "I was going to St. John's as a 'day dog,'" Pierre said. "In the morning it was warm out and we dressed lightly." When the weather changed, he decided to head for home, but the transmission went out on his car while he was still in the parking lot. Before he could do anything about it, the Armistice Day Blizzard was in full force. "I spent four days with the pre-divinity students," he said.

He spent most of the time during those days worrying about the cattle back home. "The winds blew some into the slough and they drowned," he said. "Some broke through the fence and got to the neighbors straw pile and they were okay. Twelve didn't make it."

Fifth generation

In 1951, Fawnland Farm was turned over to Harry's sons, Pierre, Charles and Mike. Mike later went on to become a veterinarian, leaving the farm to his two brothers who changed the name to Hansen Brothers Farm. "I always knew I wanted to be a farmer," Pierre said. "I was supposed to get a college education but I got married before that happened."

Pierre met Joyce in 1943 when she came to Rockville to teach at John Clark School, which was built in 1936. They married in 1945. Pierre then finished his college education by attending the University of Wisconsin Farm Short Course, which consisted of intense six-week courses taught during the winters.

Pierre and Joyce had seven children while Charles and his wife, Dolores (Saidy), had nine. The brothers farmed together for over 40 years. During that time, they worked

hard to build the farm up. The loss of the Ayershires hurt. "Dairy pays the bills," Joyce explained.

"During the 1950s, we bought anything that walked to build the herd back up," Pierre said, "and it worked."

During harvest time, neighbors got together and helped each other. "We called it the thrashing run," Joyce said. "There would be 15 or 16 plus the kids, who were 'go-fers.' It would be two days here and then they all moved on." Joyce remembers cooking a lot for the hungry workers.

Another setback came in January of 1951, when a fire took the house. An extra challenge on that 40-degrees-below-zero day was that the Hansens did not yet have a phone. One of the boys had to run into town to call the fire department. When the trucks arrived, the water in the tanker was frozen; thus, all they could do was watch the house burn to the ground.

After living in rented quarters, the 1960s brought not only the combine, which changed the threshing tradition, and the installation of modernized "milking parlors," but the construction of a new house. They all kept working as hard as they could to revamp lost resources.

"Finally, in 1973, we made money," Pierre said. "But we had to pay it all out for taxes. So I said 'enough of that' and we incorporated and changed the name back to Fawnland Farm."

Sixth generation

Though Pierre and Charlie still live on the property and help out, Pierre's sixth child, Daniel, and his wife, Kathy (Schneider), now operate the farm. And it's still changing.

"Life changed when the highway came in," Daniel said. Twenty acres was shaved off one end of the farm for the recent moving and widening of Highway 23. More recently, the local fire department needed a new site, so he voluntarily parted with four more acres.

In comparison to earlier times, the farm is now home to six tractors, a corn-harvesting combine, a haylage and silage chopper, a hay swather, a seven-bottom 18-inch plow and a six-row corn planter. The addition of an irrigation system in 1976 also helps increase production.

Some things haven't changed. Daniel and Pierre both enjoy looking out Pierre's dining room window and seeing the lilac bush Pierre's grandfather, Pierre Peter, planted long ago. Out the kitchen window is an old granite quarry, which extends onto the property, and is one of the few quarries Cold Spring Granite still mines.

Like his great-grandfather, Daniel is an avid hunter and there are still plenty of deer on the property. "Our group never gets skunked," he said.

Daniel, like five generations before him, also stays involved, presently in his 11th year on the Rockville Planning Commission. "It's our civic duty," he said.



Photo, June 1960
Back row:
Pierre, Charles, Mary Jean, Bernadette,
Margaret, Mike
Front row:
Joan, Harvey, Mary, Jenny



Photo, March 2005
Standing left:
Myriah, Ashley, Julianna
Standing right:
Pierre, Kathy, Daniel
Seated:
Pierre, Joyce