

“ Lac qui Parle County Courthouse and Jail ” *
IN
HISTORY
OF
Chippewa and Lac qui Parle Counties
MINNESOTA

THEIR PEOPLE, INDUSTRIES AND INSTITUTIONS

L. R. MOYER
AND
O. G. DALE
Joint Editors

**With Biographical Sketches of Representative Citizens and
Genealogical Records of Many of the Old Families**

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*** The following appeared on pages 428-434 of this joint history of Chippewa and Lac qui Parle Counties. It is complete, though reformatted. The author's spelling and punctuation have not been changed. The title has been added by the MLHP.**

ORGANIZATION OF THE COUNTY.

The three commissioners elected to perfect the organization of the county, Browning Nichols, Colben A. Anderson and Frederick Ehiens, held their first meeting on January 11, 1872, at the law office of F. W. Pearsall, in the village of Lac qui Parle. At this meeting Browning Nichols was elected chairman of the board and F. W. Pearsall was made clerk, pro tem. It was voted unanimously to locate the county seat at the village of Lac qui Parle, on section 27, township 118, range 42. The board then proceeded to appoint the following county officers: H. J. Grant, auditor; Peter F. Jacobson, treasurer; Emilius Brown, register of deeds; John Maguire, sheriff; L. C. Laird, surveyor; August Kaster, coroner. The board then adjourned to meet in extra session on January 24, 1872.

January 24 proved to be a very stormy day. None of the commissioners put in an appearance and the meeting was not held until the day following, when, with all the members present, the board reconvened in Mr. Pearsall's office. The board selected forty-nine names for the petit juries and thirty-four for the grand jury, this being the number officially set out by Redwood county, to which Lac qui Parle was still attached for judicial purposes. The commissioners then approved the bonds of H. J. Grant as county auditor and of Emilius Brown as register of deeds. Darius Tupper was appointed county superintendent of common schools, to serve for two years from April, 1872. The commissioners then adjourned, sine die.

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SECOND BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS.

On January 7, 1873, the commissioners elected at the preceding election held their first meeting. The board was composed of S. A. Anderson, chairman; William M. Mills and Ole Hanson. The bonds

of Emilius Brown, register of deeds; Z. B. Clark, clerk of the court, and Peter Simpson, sheriff, were approved.

A small frame building, sixty by twenty-four feet, built in 1870 and used for a time as a hotel, was occupied as the court house from the organization of the county government in 1872 until 1875.

The taxes levied the first few years were insufficient to pay the expenses of organizing the county government. On July 27, 1874, the board of county commissioners voted to issue bonds for two thousand dollars, to run for eight years at twelve per cent interest per annum, to pay the debt contracted in the purchase of records and supplies.

On April 3, 1875, the county board leased the first store building built in the village of Lac qui Parle and up to that time occupied by Henry Cross & Sons with a stock of general merchandise. The rental was seventy-five dollars per year. All the county records and offices were kept in this building from that time until 1883, when the new court house was occupied. In the spring of 1881 the board of county commissioners passed a resolution to the state Legislature requesting authority to bond the county for fifteen hundred dollars, for the purpose of building a new court house. A frame building at a contract price of one thousand dollars was finished by C. M. Anderson, November, 1883. In December, 1883, the county records and offices were moved into this building and they were kept there until, in November, 1886, they were moved, together with the court house, to Madison. The story of that removal is set out more fully in the chapter on county seat location.

The first district court held in the county was on September 24, 1878. The county then formed part of the twelfth judicial district. The only case before the court, Nils K. Nilson vs. Frederick Sorenson, was withdrawn, and settled by consent of parties.

POPULATION STATISTICS.

No permanent settlement was made in this county until several years after the outbreak of 1862 and the surrounding territory had been cleared of Indians. The federal census of 1870 gives Lac qui Parle county a population of 145. The state census taken midway between the ten-year federal census, in 1875, gives this county 1,428. In 1880 the population was 4,891; in 1885 it was 7,842, and in 1890 it was 10,382.

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COUNTY BUILDINGS.

The present admirable court house of Lac qui Parle county stands on block 10 in the city of Madison, which ground was presented to the county commissioners by H. L. Hayden, representing the Madison Townsite Company, on January 10, 1890. At that time, or even before, the people of the county realized that they needed a new county seat building, where the officers could have proper equipment to work with and where the county records could be safely kept. But it was not until July 12, 1898, that the county board decided to issue bonds in the sum of thirty thousand dollars, to build a new court house. This proposition was voted on by the people at an election held on March 14, 1899, and carried by a small majority. The bonds were first awarded to Stoddard, Nye & Company, of Minneapolis, at a rate of three and one-half per cent. and a premium of fifty dollars. When it became time to deliver them this firm refused to accept the bonds, on account of some misunderstanding as to the dates of maturity. The bonds were re-advertised and sold to Gustav Eliason, banker of Montevideo, for a premium of \$230.

The county board selected the plans of architects Buechner & Jacobson, and the general contract was let to Olof Swenson for the

sum of \$30,689.80. The piping for the plumbing system, the indirect radiators for heating and the marble base-board in the hall were later added to this contract price for \$1,550. The vaults, furniture and fixtures and electric lighting equipment were installed under separate contracts. J. H. Guenther was appointed to oversee the construction. The building was completed and accepted by the board of county commissioners on November 29, 1899.

This court house is a handsome two-story brick building, with basement of native boulders and trimmings of Minnesota sandstone. The interior is finished in marble and quarter-sawed oak, and so excellent was the construction and so thorough has been the care of the building that it looks practically as good as new. There are nine offices and four fire-proof vaults on the first floor, and six office rooms and the large court room on the second floor. In the basement, which extends under the entire building, is the heating plant, repair shop, toilet rooms and space for storage.

COURT HOUSE YARD.

The court house yard is one of the beauty spots of Madison. The smooth lawn slopes gently away from the building on all sides; the trees and shrubs were set out by an expert gardener and have been well taken care of. In the northeast corner of the grounds, a considerable space, thickly set with young elm trees and carpeted with blue grass, is fenced off for a deer park.

JAIL AND SHERIFF'S RESIDENCE.

On June 9, 1891, A. J. Haugen, chairman of the board of county commissioners, appointed a committee, consisting of I. L. Philley and C. A. Bolstad, to act with him in selecting plans for a new building to be used for a jail and sheriff's residence. At that time a small frame building, twenty by twenty feet and ten feet high,

standing in the southwest corner of the court house yard was used as a jail, but it had become obsolete. The committee selected plans drawn by B. J. Bartlett, of St. Paul, and the contract was let on July 13, 1891, to D. K. Osborne, who agreed to put up the building for \$6,600. It was completed and accepted by the commissioners on December 1, 1891.

This present jail and sheriff's residence is a two-story and basement brick structure, of plain Gothic architecture. The upper story is fitted up for the jail and the first floor is used as a home for the sheriff. At this writing (July, 1916), there are no prisoners confined in the jail. ■

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