

THE HISTORY
—OF—
FARIBAULT COUNTY
MINNESOTA,

From its First Settlement to the Close of the Year 1879.

IN THREE PARTS.

FIRST PART.

The Annals of the County.

PART SECOND.

Historical Sketches of the Several Townships.

PART THIRD.

Historical Sketch of the Government of the County,
and of the Several County Offices.

THE STORY OF THE PIONEERS

✓ BY
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"Let me speak to the yet unknowing world;
How these things came about." *Shakespeare.*

MINNEAPOLIS, MINN.
HARRISON & SMITH, PRINTERS.
1896.

43728-B²-1

one-fourth Scotch and one-fourth Sioux Indian. He settled at Fort Snelling in 1819, and removed to Faribault (Rice County) in 1853, where he still resides (December 12, 1871). He is the father of ten children, seven of whom are now living. He possesses a good business education and speaks the English language very correctly. Since his removal to Faribault, he has adopted the manners and customs of the whites and is a good citizen, public spirited and generous to a fault, and has ever taken an active and lively interest in the growth and prosperity of Faribault, which was named for him. Mr. Faribault is quite actively engaged in business, and owns one of the best flouring mills in Faribault, which was built by him some eight years ago at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars. His wife is a full blood, of the Dakota, or Sioux tribe of Indians, and still retains the dress and customs of her tribe. Mr. Faribault was chief of the Wabasha band of Sioux, up to the time of his settlement in Faribault."

It appears that Mr. Faribault once visited this region of country. It is stated in the history of Rice county, Minnesota, that he, "in the spring of 1833, followed the Indians south, to their hunting grounds, located in the present county of Faribault. (Should have added Martin.) The place had an Indian name signifying chained lakes."

He was a member of the second territorial legislature, being one of the representatives of legislative district number seven.

He died November 28, 1882.

The following tribute to his memory was written by one who knew him well.

"He was a man of the kindest feelings, the most inflexible integrity and an evenness of temper, which was seldom ruffled. A man more universally beloved and respected has never departed from among us."

The county being now bounded and named, we shall proceed to relate

THE STORY OF THE FIRST SETTLER.

Moses Sailor was the first permanent settler of Faribault county. He was born in Monroe county, state of Ohio, in the year 1808, and was married at the age of twenty-four years. He has always been a farmer by occupation. Immediately after marrying he emigrated to Elkhart county, Indiana, which was then quite a new and sparsely settled country. Here he continued to reside for twenty-two years. His wife died in 1849, leaving him with nine children. In the fall of the year 1854, he emigrated, with his family, to Chickasaw county, Iowa, where he took up quarters for the winter, in the village of Bradford. Finding that the country there had already been mainly taken up and, as he says, "Not being new enough to

suit his pioneer tastes," and desiring to get lands for his boys as well as a home for himself, he concluded to prospect further, as soon as the weather would permit in the spring. Having heard very favorable accounts of the territory of Minnesota, he, near the first of April, 1855, in company with James Little and John Love, carrying their guns, provisions and blankets, started on foot from Bradford, on an exploring expedition into Minnesota. After a day's journey, neither roads nor settlements existed, but striking out boldly into the wilderness, they directed their course by the aid of a pocket compass and a map, for the head waters of the Blue Earth river, as that stream was somewhat indefinitely laid down on the maps of that time. The first point at which they struck the Blue Earth river, was on the east branch, about two miles east of the site of Blue Earth City. Here they stopped and built a fire on the eighth day of April, at about eleven (11) o'clock in the forenoon. Leaving Mr. Little here, Mr. Sailor and Mr. Love proceeded across the prairie for the west branch of the river, to examine the timber and lay of the country. They reached the west branch on section twenty, in town 102, range 27, as was indicated by the section stakes and quite near where Mr. Sailor subsequently took his "claim."

After prospecting for a few hours and being much pleased with the country, they returned to Mr. Little and then all proceeded to the junction of the two branches of the river, afterwards known as "the forks," near which they were so fortunate as to find a small, rough log cabin, on the north bank of the stream. It was very rudely built, quite low and not more than ten by twelve feet in size, and had evidently been built as a mere temporary shelter.

This cabin had been erected by one Thomas Holmes, of Shakopee, a famous explorer and town-site locator, in the early days of the territory of Minnesota. He was in this region in 1854, and erected this cabin, with the intention of making a claim of the land adjoining, with a view of eventually laying out a town in the vicinity. This he never did, however, but went so far as to employ two men, whose names are now forgotten, to go upon the land and who occupied this cabin a short time. But Mr. Holmes not coming with provisions, as agreed, they returned to Shakopee and the project of laying off a town was given up by him. This cabin was the first advance made in the building of a human habitation, on the capacity and architectural style of an Indian tepee. It was the first house erected in the county. To return to our company, it being now near night, they concluded to camp here. This country at the time, presented a very favorable aspect. The snow of which there seemed to have been but little during the winter, had all disappeared.



NOSES SAILOR,
The First Settler.

The ground was dry and the grass just starting. The streams were very low and easily forded. A bright, warm sun, cloudless skies and a mild and balmy atmosphere, welcomed our explorers to this new land.

The next morning they started northward to Mankato, exploring the timber and adjacent prairies and camped in the evening near Jackson's lake, in Blue Earth county. The next day they reached Mankato, which they found to be a small village of some fifteen houses, large and small, and a frontier hotel, where they stopped. This town had been laid out some three years before. Here they learned that it was currently reported that the Winnebago Indians, who were soon to be removed from their location in the more northern part of the territory, were to be located upon a "Reservation" on the head-waters of the Blue Earth river, in Faribault county. Should this occur, our pioneers would, of course, have to abandon any intention of settling in this county. They then proceeded to prospect the country for a few days on the Blue Earth, Maple and Cobb rivers, in Blue Earth county, with which they were highly pleased. At this time there were but a few scattered settlers in Blue Earth county and but one small village—Mankato. At an election held in that county, in the fall of this year, but eighty-six votes were polled. There were but a few settlers in Freeborn county, and this county and all the territory west, and northwest was vacant.

Being entirely satisfied with the country, our company returned by their former route, through this county to Bradford and determined to remove into Blue Earth county, immediately in the vicinity of Mankato. In pursuance of this conclusion, Mr. Sailor, on or about the 8th day of May, started from Bradford with his family of children consisting of five sons, Jacob, Able, Daniel, William and Manuel and three daughters, Esther, Amanda and Roxina, all of whom subsequently remained here as residents of the county. He was accompanied by one Solomon Myers and Archibald Morris and family. They travelled in covered wagons heavily loaded with household goods and provisions, each wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, the great motive power of new countries. They had decided to settle somewhere on the Maple river, in Blue Earth county, and the route they travelled lay by Clear lake, in Iowa, Walnut lake and Minnesota lake, in this county. This country as before intimated was then a trackless wilderness, no roads, or bridges, no human habitations and the "trail" made by Mr. Sailor and his company, was the first wagon track made in the county, by any settler. They stopped on the Maple river, about ten miles from Mankato, where Mr. Sailor left the company in camp and proceeded to Mankato. Here he found that the Indians had selected their Reservation in Blue

Earth county. He then concluded to return and settle on the headwaters of the Blue Earth, in this county, but Mr. Morris decided not to accompany him and remained in Blue Earth county a short time. Mr. Sailor accompanied by Mr. Myers travelled on his return by the route he had taken when prospecting, there being no track, or road however, and on the twenty-fifth day of May, near noon, he had reached his journey's end and stopped on the west half of the southwest quarter of section twenty, which with the south half of the southeast quarter of section nineteen, adjoining, all in township one hundred and two, of range twenty-seven, he determined to claim.

On locating Mr. Sailor proceeded to break up about five acres of land, which he planted to corn and potatoes, camping in the meantime, in his wagon and a large tent, which he had brought with him.

This sod corn produced plenty of "roasting ears," and fodder sufficient for one horse and a dozen hogs during the succeeding winter. The potatoes yielded abundantly and were of a superior quality. After getting in his crop, he proceeded to erect a log house. This building was eighteen by twenty-four feet and one story high and was completed in about a week, except the roof, which was partly covered by the tent cloth. And this was the second house in this county.

Provisions now getting scarce, Mr. Sailor went about 120 miles into Iowa, for a supply. He was gone some twelve days and on his return he finished up his house, putting on a "shake" roof. This old house long since disappeared, but it was once the headquarters of the county—the only hotel, or stopping place, in a vast region for sometime—the first resort of new comers—the scene of many a hospitable entertainment and of many a frontier dance and social gathering in the early days. The boys set to work to break up some ten acres more of land in the early summer and a small additional tract was broken in October, which Mr. Sailor says did not prove valuable, as the sod instead of rotting, dried in tough strips and pieces like old sheep skins and lay about for some three or four years. He says he knows more about "breaking" now, than he did then.

During the year many Indians, sometimes as many as two hundred, or three hundred, in a company, would call on Mr. Sailor, generally wanting tobacco, sugar, pork and sometimes "fire-water," which latter article he never let them have. In fact the country was full of small bands of roving Indians, who were engaged in hunting and fishing and sometimes on the war-path, but he says they were always peaceable and well disposed towards him.

In those days he says game and fur-bearing animals were very plenty, especially wolves, foxes, mink, otter and elk, though but few deer. There were squirrels, rabbits, gophers, prairie chickens, geese, ducks, cranes, some few black bear, panthers, wild cats, wood chucks, musk rats and skunks, and the lakes and streams were stocked with fish. He further says that on his arrival he found no buffalo, but observed a stamping or herding ground near the state line, where a large number of buffalos had stopped during the preceding winter. During the year the health of himself and family was very good, and the weather until winter set in, unusually pleasant.

He has continued to reside on the land he first took up. His farm has been largely improved and he has long since erected a comfortable frame house and large barn. Mr. Sailor is of medium stature, well built and has black hair and a long dark beard, now well sprinkled with gray; dark eyes and dark complexion, and in his prime was a man of great muscular power and endurance—hard working and courageous. He belongs to that race of hardy adventurous pioneers, known only in the far west, who have the courage to abandon the advantages of old settled countries and go upon the extreme frontier, or plunge into the wilderness and amid want and hardships and privations, surrounded by many dangers, open up the ways of settlement and civilization.

He remarried some years ago (1869), and is passing his declining years in ease and comfort, owing no man anything, strictly honest in his dealings, hospitable and a Jackson democrat. In the early days of the county, he served the public well and faithfully for some years as County Commissioner. But he now takes no interest in politics, or public affairs, except to vote. He says he has no ambitions to gratify and hates turmoil and strife. May the evening of his days be cloudless, and his sun of life set in tranquility and peace, prelude a still brighter day that may break for him on the other shore.

Since writing the above sketch, Mr. Sailor departed this life. He died February 14, 1896.

OTHER SETTLERS AND VISITORS OF 1855.

A short time after Mr. Sailor had located, Austin R. Nichols and Harry G. Roberts, called upon him, having followed his wagon track from the north.

In a letter to the writer Mr. Nichols says, his and Robert's actual residence (or settlement) dates June 8th, and that Mr. E. Crosby came in a few days after their settlement.

These persons located in town 104, range 28, now Winnebago city township.