

## DODGE COUNTY

Twenty-four miles from North to South and 18 miles wide, Dodge County is situated in the Southeastern part of the State of Minnesota. An early account says: "The surface of the county in the northern and central parts is high and rolling, and well drained, being as well suited for grain raising as any land in the state; while the southern part of the county is rather flat and wet, and admirably adapted to grazing and stock raising. The soil is rich, dark loam, varying in depth from two to five feet, and yields large crops. There is considerable timber in the northern part of the county. The southern townships are destined to become the most fertile part in time." That was written in 1873-74 and furnishes an interesting comparison for the rural-minded residents of the county today.

Another writer refers to the "heavy, black clay loam" of the upland plain, and of the looser and pebbly soil of the county's slopes.

Dodge County has sand and rock for building purposes in plentiful amounts. The stratus of rock concealed in some of the townships in pioneer days lay open in such other townships as Wasioja, Canisteo, Milton and Mantorville. The Mantorville quarries have been easy of access, famed for their quality, and once were a considerable enterprise when large shipments were made to cities and other outside points of use. This stone was favored for its building and trimming qualities, was found in layers up to three feet thick and any dimension desired. Wasioja was also known far and wide for its excellent "Wasioja stone".

Gold was once thought to exist in this region. H.A. Smith, in his history of Dodge County, published in 1884, says: "Gold is said to be found in small quantities in parts of the Zumbro Valley, and such is claimed to have been the case at Sacramento, perhaps suggesting the name of that now "deserted village"."

The authors of "History of Medicine in Dodge County" give us this explanatory comment on the "gold" story: "Sacramento itself is interesting as a "ghost town". It was platted in about 1857 between Wasioja and Mantorville on the Zumbro River, by a calculating fellow who apparently contrived to turn news of the "gold strike" at Oronoco in 1856 to his own advantage. He was said to have buried gold nuggets along the Zumbro River near his town site to attract those whose imaginations had been inflamed by deposits of gold along the same stream near Oronoco in Olmsted County. He shrewdly chose the name "Sacramento" because of its connotation of the California gold fields, it has been said. Sacramento eventually thrived to the point of being able to challenge Mantorville for the county seat in 1857, but was defeated by popular vote."

The first settlers here found a plentiful supply of timber. Besides the hardwood, Mantorville had white pine on its bluffs, and Concord possessed a grove of cottonwood. Milton had the largest timber area, followed by Mantorville, Wasioja, Concord, Ashland, Claremont and Canisteo townships.

Tom Holmes, of Holmes Landing (later Fountain City) joined his Indian friends annually and hunted in this region before the settlers came. He once declared to a friend that this was “the most beautiful country he had ever seen in his life”.

Early historical accounts report that herds of buffalo, elk and other game were plentiful in this area. One writer mentions antelope in this region.

Government surveyors set lines for the western townships of the county in 1853. A.A. Crampton, a later Mantorville resident, was one of the group. Dodge County in 1849 was a part of Wabasha County, and in 1851 was divided between Wabasha and Dakota Counties. Dodge County, including a number of townships which later were made a part of Steele County, became a separate unit in 1885.

Dodge County was named in honor of a Wisconsin man – Henry Dodge, twice governor of Wisconsin. One historian includes the son, Augustus C. Dodge, of Iowa, to share this honor.

Dodge County was organized for local government in 1855. Peter Mantor, one of the early founders of Mantorville, took a census of the county in the summer of 1855, discovered more than fifty voters among the inhabitants of the county who then numbered about 100 persons, journeyed to St. Paul and petitioned Governor Gorman to appoint county officials and institute county organization. The governor confirmed the following men to serve as county officers: Peter Mantor, Notary Public; James M. Sumner, George W. Slocum and William Durand as county commissioners; J.B. Hubbell as sheriff; J.H. Shober as Register of Deeds; J.R. Dart as treasurer; Samuel Burwell as district attorney; William Chadwell as county surveyor; J.E. Bancroft as assessor; and G.P. Bancroft, R. Herzog, Alonzo Way as justices. Constables were S.G. Irish, E. Watrous and O.B. Kidder.

An interesting sidelight on this event is that recounted by H.A. Smith in his history of Dodge County. “There has always been a popular legend current in connection with the above appointments, that they were made by the Governor with the understanding that Captain Mantor would recommend only good Democrats – which he perhaps did to the “best of his knowledge and belief – and if afterward many of them proved to be “Black Republicans”, he could hardly be held accountable.”

The county commissioners convened for their first meeting August 4, 1855. One account says this first meeting was held at the Mantor store in Mantorville and that following meetings were held in homes, at the Hubbell House, and at the school house. For some years after this a place of meeting was rented for the board’s sessions. The county auditor, January 5, 1857, reported that the county had spent, up to that date, \$1,178.92.

Dodge County was placed in the Fifth Judicial District by the State Constitution effective May 11, 1858.

### Early Settlers and Settlement

Who the first white person was to visit Dodge county is not known. Some believe that a French fur trader, from Canada, was one of the first, if not the first, to tread the soil here, in the spring of 1655. Later visitors were James Reed, and Indian farmer and Tom Holmes of Fountain City. The latter once made mention of the "Zumbro". David Cratte, a famous guide, born in 1837, describes this locality as dangerous to travel because of Indians.

In 1854, following the government surveys of 1853, Eli P. Waterman, from Root River Valley, southern Minnesota, and Peter and Riley Mantor from Pennsylvania, came to the present site of Mantorville and established their claims. Later the Mantors returned to their home at Linesville, PA and persuaded Frank Mantor, a brother, E.P. Waterman, James Wilson, William Cunningham, J.M. Sumner, William Fowler, H.O. Parmeter, S.G. Irish, Joel Watkins, M.B. Dolson and two others, whose names are not know, to join them in their return to the new home site they had previously name "Mantorville".

On April 14, 1854, this little group of immigrants arrived at Mantorville. The next day they pushed on to Concord, felled timber and erected a log house for James M. Sumner, the first residence built in the county. They then returned to Mantorville and began labor on houses for E.P. Waterman, Peter Mantor and William Fowler.

Before the end of the year the future county contained many such cabins, with the exception of the extreme northwestern and extreme southern parts. In May, 1854, a number of pioneers settled in Milton township and other considered building at Claremont. An early writer gives us this picture: "Here and there (winter of 1854) over its (wilderness) inhospitable expanse rose the low roofs that sheltered the indomitable pioneer. At Mantorville and at Sumner's Grove (Concord) were little nuclei of a few cabins each, while in these same townships, as also in Milton, Canisteo, Ripley, Ashland, Wasioja and Claremont, were a few others, isolated, and several miles from each other – perhaps a dozen or twenty in the whole county."

Many of the first settlers were instrumental in bringing others to the new land of promise. By July, 1855, a considerable number of immigrants arrived to make their homes in the county. The early settlers were predominantly of New England birth. Some, too, came from Wisconsin, the more settled parts of Minnesota and east central states. A group of New Hampshire home-seekers located at Rice Lake village and the first cabin to be constructed in the village was later used as a stagecoach tavern. The first hotel in the county was built and operated by John R. Hubbell at Mantorville, who came here from Illinois. It was a log affair, 16 by 24 feet, two stories in height. The later structure, built of Dodge County stone, was started in October, 1855, and opened for business on Thanksgiving Day, 1856.

The Hubbell House at Mantorville has in its present possession the original desk register from the early day Hubbell House. This register contains such names as Horace Greeley, General Sherman and other notables.

Once under way settlement progressed rapidly. Stores were built in Mantorville. A photographic copy of the front page of the first issue of The Mantorville Express (July 16, 1857) the first paper published in Dodge County, portrays an interesting column of business and professional "cards". Three Attorneys are listed: A.J. Edgerton, Mantorville; James George, Wasioja; and M.N. Fowler, Mantorville. Dr. J.R. Dart was the county's first physician and surgeon, with "office at the drugstore". M.B. Lewis advertised himself as "Steamboat Agent, Red Wing, M.T." also "Receiving and Forwarding and General commission Merchant". Mantorville Lodge had a "card" which reads: "No. 11, A. of F. & A. M., meet in the Masonic Hall, every Thursday evening at 6 o'clock. R. Mantor, Sec'y".

William Chadwell was County Surveyor, residing at Mantorville village. A Mrs. G.W. Shultes, has a business card reading: "Fashionable Milliner and Dress Maker, first door south of Hubbell's Hotel, Main St., Mantorville, M. T. A general assortment of Bonnets and Bonnet Trimmings constantly on hand".

W. Stanard announces himself as "Boot and Shoe Manufacturer, also Leather Dealer. A general assortment of boot and shoe leather and findings for sale. One door north of the Printing Office, Mantorville, July, 1857." C.B. Russ advertises the Russ House "The proprietor having refitted and furnished the new and spacious Hotel, formerly known as the Mantorville House, is prepared to accommodate permanent and transient boarders and the traveling public generally." The last business card in the column is short and to the point: "MONEY TO LOAN. Inquire of Z.B. Page." Characteristic of early day newspapers there is not a news item to be found on the front page.

In the first few years of the county's growth Norwegians and Germans came for settlement. In the southern portion of the county a colony of Norwegian people formed in the 1850's. Ole Erickson and Jens Olson Fossum are recorded as first settlers in Hayfield Township. There were also groups of Swiss and some Danish, Scotch, English, Irish and Canadian home seekers. John Armstrong, of Irish descent, was Vernon Township's first settler. The village of Berne, in the northern part of Dodge County was the center of a Swiss settlement and received its name from motherland city.

Morris Dolson, son of Mr. and Mrs. M.B. Dolson, was the first white person born in this county. M.B. Dolson broke the first ground and planted the first crop in the county, at Concord. Early historical accounts tell of a "Terrible hail storm (in the summer of 1858), so violent as to destroy nearly all the crops, and in some instances, pigs and cattle." Its force was felt most in Milton, Concord, Mantorville, Ellington and Wasioja townships. Ice cakes ten inches in circumference and one half to two pounds in weight

were reported to have fallen. Suffering the privation threatened the settlers, but aid from various sources even as far distant as New York, relieved the situation. Mr. A. LaDue, at one time foreman and joint publisher of the Mantorville Express, writing to the Express on its twenty-fifth anniversary referred to his association with the newspaper and mentions the storm. "That being the year," he said, "of the never to be forgotten hail storm, when what few settlers we had were obliged to subsist on slippery elm bark, corn meal and turnips..."

Deep and terrible tragedy sometimes struck in the early pioneer homes. The three sons of Peter DeSent, in Ripley township, were killed by lightning in the spring of 1870. The lads were in bed, asleep at the time.

Among the earliest settlers were: Isaac Irish, Ripley Township's first home builder; Isaac N. Taylors and Lorenzo Sanborn, first to settle in Wasioja Township; Dr. J.N. Dart, who began his practice of medicine in Dodge county in 1855. Ellington Township's first settlers were William South and James Harvey.

The first birth recorded in Vernon Township was that of Thomas Thompson, born July 4, 1856, son of Andrew Tompson and wife. Born on the same day was Mary Sabin of Ellington Township – first white child of the township; and first white child born in Wasioja Township was Neil Mason, July, 1856.

## INDIANS

Sioux Indians annually gathered at what was known in the early days as "Rice Lake" to harvest wild rice. The region of Dodge County was common hunting and combat ground for the Mdewakanton Sioux who often battled the Sauk and Fox Indians ranging this distance from their Iowa encampments. Indians resided in Vernon Township as late as 1856-57. Some died there during a winter's residence and were buried in the snow until the spring trek west. A band of Indians living in Milton Township lost a number of their members by smallpox in 1855.

On the third of July, 1855, Chief Waupaconta and a fellow tribesman visited the village of Mantorville and on their way back to the encampment in Milton Township removed provisions, money and a coat from a cabin belonging to a Mr. E.A. Bunker, who having faith that no white settler would stoop to thievery, he organized a band of 15 white settlers armed with rifles and pistols, and rode to the big timber where more than 300 men, women and children of the Sioux tribe were encamped. Dismounting and creeping close to the camp through high grass bordering it, the band of whites dashed into the Indian village and quickly surrounded the chief's teepee before he could escape. The Indian leader denied complicity in the theft, but by means of threat was finally persuaded to produce the money and return the coat.

An Indian panic in the summer of 1862 was reported by the Mantorville Express of that time. Indians were reported as a threat in a southerly direction from Mantorville

and many people rushed to the village for refuge, some ready to seek protection behind the stone walls of the Hubbell House.

## COUNTY SEAT

In the beginning of the county's incoming immigrant movement Mantorville was the leading settlement. It thrived to the extent that it was once regarded as a possible rival to Rochester and other cities of size in the state. Unable to retain railroad service and, perhaps, from other contributing causes, Mantorville dropped from the race for sizable growth and now remains an inland village. It has however, since the first meeting of the first county board August 4, 1855, remained the seat of the county government. The state legislature, in 1856, officially located the county seat at Mantorville with the provision that its permanent location should be subject to the voters of the county.

Voters in the fall of 1857 rejected a proposition to move the county seat to the village of Sacramento, a settlement platted in 1855 on the Zumbro River and adjoining the west edge of the present Mantorville Township. Then, in 1859, Wasioja aspired to be the county seat but lost by a vote of 117 for, 415 against, the change. Dodge Center tried unsuccessfully in 1899 to be the seat of county government, but the electorate at a special election, decided by a vote of 1,577 to 1,125 to make no change in the location of the county seat.

## COURT HOUSE

On April 18, 1865, the Dodge County Board of Commissioners chose Lots 1, 2, 3, Block 22, Mantorville Village, as a site for the erection of the county court house. The land was donated to the county by the citizens of Mantorville. The total cost of the building was \$15,000.00 financed, in part, by a bond issue of \$8,000. The building committee was composed of Samuel Willson and Thomas Marshall. A Milwaukee, Wisconsin architect, C.T. Mix, was employed.

The county officials moved into their new quarters late in the fall of 1865, though the building was not completely done until September, 1871. Improvements were made on the building in 1900.

## POPULATION

The population of Dodge County June 1, 1857 was 4,130. By June, 1865, the population was 6,222, and in 1881 the Federal census gave Dodge County a population of 11,344. The 1950 population county was 12,605.

## AGRICULTURE

Dodge County's chief industry has been agriculture. As early as 1859 the county produced wheat, corn, oats, barley and potatoes in commercial quantities. Wheat became

a foremost crop early in the county's history. It reached peak production in 1880 and soon after began to decline. "In 1873," says the Andreas Atlas, "about 350,000 bushels of wheat from Kasson, and 200,000 from Dodge Center were shipped. Considerable flour is manufactured, and of fine quality." O.C.F. Sorenson began operation of his flour mill at Kasson in August of 1893. This mill's widely known buckwheat flour is now shipped to dealers in 41 states. The price of wheat in 1860 at Mantorville was 50 cents per bushel. Red Wing was paying 65 cents at that time. With the reduction of wheat growing, dairying and diversified farming gained rapidly. Stock raising became a large part of the agricultural picture. Dodge County has more dairy cattle per capita of population than any other county in Minnesota. Hay, alfalfa and corn have become important crops, and considerable quantities of flax are now grown. Dodge County is now the third largest soybean producer in the state compared to number of townships per county. The county's current production of leading crops is, approximately: corn, 65,000 acres; oats 62,000 acres; soybeans, 19,000 acres; flax, 15,000 acres; hay, 41,000 acres; wild hay, 29,000 acres.

Prosperous, well-equipped and efficient cheese factories and creameries furnish a large market for the county's dairy products. There were 1,796 farms in the county in 1940, averaging 150 acres each with a farm land total of 271,234 acres. The value of the land and buildings was estimated then at more than \$15,000,000. In 1951 the county had 1,775 farms, with a valuation of \$22,000,000.

## TOWNSHIPS

The twelve townships of Dodge County, named as at present, were divided by the County Board of Commissioners April 5, 1858. They were organized on the following dates: Ashland – July 15, 1858, Canisteo – no date found, Claremont – May 11, 1858, Concord – May 11, 1858, Ellington – May 11, 1858, Hayfield – March 30, 1872, Mantorville – May 11, 1858, Milton – May 20, 1858, Ripley – May 14, 1858, Vernon – March 4, 1858, Wasioja – April 1858, Westfield – March 22, 1868. Canisteo Township held their first election October 1856.

In the spring of 1869 an attempt was made to divide Mantorville township and make a new division known as "township of Kasson". Officers were elected, but later the Supreme Court ruled the action unconstitutional.

## VILLIAGES

The village of Claremont was incorporated in 1878. The Winona and Saint Peter Railway Company is credited with building the town of Claremont and obliterating the hamlet of Rice Lake, on the north shore of the small lake of that name in Dodge County. The settlement had been platted in 1856, and it had a post office, blacksmith shop, church and a few stores and houses. Dodge Center was platted in 1869 and incorporated in 1872; Hayfield was incorporated in 1896; Kasson was platted in 1865 and incorporated in 1870. It was laid out by Jabez Hyde Kasson and named for him. A Pennsylvanian, he

came to this county in 1856. Mantorville was platted in 1856 and incorporated in 1857; West Concord was incorporated in 1894. It was given its title because it lay to the west of Concord, one of the oldest communities of Dodge County.

In January 1870, the state legislature passed a bill changing the name of Dodge Center to Siles. The bill was reconsidered the next day, tabled and never further acted on.

## TRANSPORTATION

Early transportation through Dodge County was over a trail east and west. This trail seems to have been established in 1852 and chosen by three early settlers living at Rollingstone (now called Minnesota City). The route was from Rollingstone and near, or through, the present site of Rochester; hence to Mantorville, Owatonna and toward the northwest to join the Mendota-Big Sioux military road near St. Peter. Dodge County settlers by 1860 had highway connection with all villages and cities of southeastern Minnesota.

The first mail delivery on the Minnesota City to St. Peter route through Dodge County was made in November 1855. This route was the development of the old trail on 1852. The mail route was superintended by O.M. Lord, of Minnesota City. Rice Lake, "Claremont street" and Wasioja were also stopping places on this route.

The first county road was one laid out on a direct route between Mantorville to the county line toward Red Wing. It was authorized on October 1, 1855 by the county board, who acted consequent to a petition.

The iron horse came to Dodge County with the building of the Winona and St. Peter Railroad (now the Chicago and Northwestern) from Rochester to Kasson in 1865, and from Kasson to Owatonna in 1866. In 1890 a branch of this road was constructed from Kasson to Mantorville, a track 2.9 miles in length. This branch was discontinued in 1932.

The Winona and St. Peter Railway Company sent their first train into Kasson on a November day in 1865. The first train on this road to steam into Dodge Center arrived there July 13, 1866.

In the spring of 1870 the people of Mantorville township held a special meeting at the court house to decide whether to issue seven per cent coupon bonds to the amount of fifty thousand dollars to meet the proposal of the Dubuque & St. Paul Railroad Company to construct a line through Mantorville if a bonus was given to aid in construction costs. The money was to be delivered to the company when trains were regularly making scheduled runs from the state line to Mantorville. The proposal met with popular approval and votes were cast – 334 for the issuing of bonds and 125 opposed. However, the railway company failed to proceed with the project and, consequently, the bonds were never issued.

A line, later sold to the Chicago & Great Western Railway, was built in 1886 from St. Paul to Lyle, a town on the Iowa border. The year 1890 saw a new line started from Eden to Wasioja and this was purchased in 1890 by the Chicago Great Western Railway Company who, also, the same year, acquired the line built from Wasioja to Mantorville in 1897. The rail line between Eden and Mantorville was discontinued in 1935.

In 1890 most of Mantorville's incoming freight was hauled by team from Wasioja, having been delivered to Wasioja on the branch line of the C & GW from Eden.

The Mantorville Railway and Transfer Company was incorporated in September, 1895. Officials were: O.D. LaDue, president; B. Kundert, vice president; Frank Roth, treasurer; F.L. Willson, secretary; and M.G. Peters, superintendent.

A big and hearty reception by the folk of the county seat village was given the first Chicago & Great Western passenger train as it puffed into Mantorville December 8, 1896. On December 20 the first train between Mantorville and the Twin Cities made its run. One hundred and thirty-four excursion tickets were sold at the Mantorville station.

The first train into Hayfield was over the Minnesota and Northwestern in October, 1885.

## THE CIVIL WAR

Dodge County made a total contribution of 451 men to the war between the states. Broken into townships we have the following order: Mantorville – 105, Wasioja – 104, Concord – 59, Milton – 58, Ashland – 40, Claremont – 38, Canisteo – 16, Ellington – 15, Ripley – 10, Vernon – 6.

Seventy-two men from Dodge County were mustered in as volunteers in the Second Minnesota Infantry in July, 1861. James George and Peter Mantor were captains; H.T. Couse and C.B. Cilley were lieutenants. The first county casualty was James M. Underwood, Co. F. First Minnesota Volunteers. He was killed July 21, 1861 at Bull Run. Mr. Underwood enlisted from Concord. The second county casualty was Joseph R. Garrison, who died in Libby prison from wounds suffered at Bull Run.

In January, February and March 1863 men from Dodge County were enlisted for service against the Indians on the frontier.

## CHURCHES

The Andreas Atlas of 1874 gives us this item relative to religious beginnings of Dodge County: "As near as can be ascertained, the first religious services were held in the Township of Mantorville, in the bar-room of the old log hotel, in 1855, by a traveling

colporteur. As usual in this new country, the Methodists were the first to establish a society.”

Besides the Methodist groups at Mantorville and Rice Lake village, Wasioja had a congregation of Free Will Baptists, and at Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptists labored. In the early years the Norwegian Lutheran Church served people of that faith in Vernon township.

In 1858 the Wasioja Seminary was founded. It was called “Minnesota Seminary” and began functioning as a school in 1860. Rev. A.D. Williams, M.A. was its president, and a student body of 300 young people attended the first year. The principal was professor C.A. Cilley, and the school was under the control of the Free Will Baptists. Prof. Cilley and a large number of the young men students enlisted in the Second Minnesota Volunteers when the Civil War broke out. In 1868 Wasioja citizens took over control of the institution and changed the name to Groveland Seminary. In 1873 it again changed hands, coming under the auspices of the Wesleyan Methodists who renamed the school the Wesleyan Methodist Seminary of Minnesota and kept the institution functioning until 1894. In 1905 the school was entirely gutted by fire and now remains a stone shell with only whispers of a significant and purposeful past.

Concord Township’s “Christian Church” was organized in March, 1858. The first church organized in West Concord was the First Baptist church organized June 8, 1863 at Concord and later moved to West Concord. The Congregational Church of Claremont was organized in March, 1859, the same year the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Dodge Center was organized. The first camp meeting ever held in the county was under Methodist sponsorship and held services in September, 1859 three-fourths of a mile west of Mantorville.

Other churches organized in the early days included Berne Zwingli Reformed Church, 1872; the Kasson Presbyterian Church, 1866; the Kasson Baptist Church, 1866 (built in 1875); and St. Peter’s Episcopal Church, Kasson, 1866.

By 1879 a definite denominational picture could be seen in the county. There were then twelve churches. The more than 1700 church members belonged to the following denominations, in order of membership totals: Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Episcopal, Congregational, Christian (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian, Evangelical, Baptists, Protestant Episcopal.

In 1941 twenty-nine churches were active throughout the county. There were Lutheran, Methodists, Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventists, Protestant Episcopal, Congregational, Evangelical, Disciples of Christ, Evangelical and Reformed, and Assemblies of God. Mantorville’s scenic “hilltop” church, now under the auspices of the Dodge County Historical Society and used by the society as a meeting place for its members was intended as a memorial church, but lack of funds made it necessary to call for community aid. In later years it

stood abandoned. The building of the attractive stone structure was begun in 1869 and occupies a beautiful site on the hilltop opposite the county court house on Main street.

## SCHOOLS

Mrs. Sarah Espey taught the first school in Mantorville in November, 1855, says a historian. It was a small log structure located east of the Hubbell House. A Miss Cornelius Grems, of Milton, was the first to teach school in the county, we read, teaching in May and June, 1855. Another account differs, saying "a few settlers got together in the spring of 1856 and built a log schoolhouse, the first in the county." Perhaps the only difference here is in the date. Who the first teacher was, seems difficult to determine.

Not confusing are the accounts that the first school in Vernon Township was taught by Miss Fannie Comstock; the first school in Ripley Township was taught by Miss Eudora Bixby; the first school in Westfield Township was taught by Jane Sprout; and the first school in Ellington Township was taught by Mrs. George Cornwell. Emma Webb is claimed as the first teacher in Canisteo Township. The year, 1856. And Miss Mercy Garrison the first to teach school in the village of Wasioja. The year, 1856.

The first school district in Dodge County was organized in 1855 in Milton Township, then known as Watkins Township. Less than 17 months afterward there were 11 districts; and in 1864 Rev. Sanborn of Wasioja was appointed county superintendent of schools at an annual salary of \$150.00.

As late as 1869 Dodge County's schools functioned without globes, outline maps, or unabridged dictionaries. These tools of tutoring appeared a year or two later.

The first teacher's institute held in the county convened at Mantorville April 30, 1867. Twenty-nine teachers attended.

## SOME EARLY BEGINNINGS

In June, 1869, Dodge County purchased the 200 acre Evarts' farm in Wasioja Township to convert into a county poor farm. Five thousand dollars was the sum paid.

The Dodge County Agricultural Society was organized July, 1857, at Mantorville. The officers were H.A. Pratt, J.E. Bancroft and H.P. Whallom.

Kasson's I.O.O.F. Lodge No. 45, had its beginning in that village the summer of 1874.

The Milton Grange was organized with 44 members February, 1872.

The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. granted a charter to Mantorville Lodge No. 11, A.F. & A.M., January 6, 1857.

Early day postmasters of the county included Robert Moffett, who, in the summer of 1856, became Ashland village's first postmaster. In February, 1879, M.J. Ellingsen was appointed postmaster at Oslo, but Ole Havey was Vernon Township's first postmaster. Date, 1868. Wasioja had its first post office in 1857. Postmaster was C.H. Moses. Claremont's first post office came in 1855; George Hitchcock was in charge. D.L. Tyler was not only the first mercantile store proprietor in Dodge Center, in 1867, but also the village's first postmaster. Berne had a post office in 1858. West Concord's first postmaster was Luke Garvin. The office was established about 1886. Mr. Garvin was also first agent for the C.G.W. Ry. at West Concord.

A store was opened at Berne by Robert Schmidt in 1856. The first general store in Mantorville was operated by John Shober in 1854. We learn from the West Concord Enterprise of Oct. 3, 1935, that the first store building erected by Watson G. Avery who, for many years prior, had been a successful merchant at Concord, 3 ½ miles west of West Concord. The first dwelling house in the village was that of T.J. Dykes; the second was built by C.E. Sheils. The first law office in the county was established in Mantorville in the year 1855. In May, 1856, a steam sawmill was constructed in Ashland village by Messrs. Sumners and Webster. Henry Naegeli, Sr., organized the first brass band in Dodge County in the winter of 1861. A brewery was constructed on the South side of Fifth street in Mantorville, May 1, 1857, by John Hirschi, of Switzerland. In January 1862, B.S. Cook paid Dodge County fifteen dollars for the county's first license to sell intoxicating liquor within its boundaries.

In the summer of 1874 President Grant sent Peter Mantor, of Mantorville, to Bismarck Territory of Dakota, as Register of the U.S. Land Office there. Mantorville was host to the first county fair held in Dodge County. It was held late in the fall, October 8, 1857. It was also the first county fair in the Minnesota Territory.

The first marriage ceremony performed in Dodge County was solemnized at Mantorville October 3, 1855. The groom was John Hart, and the bride was Amanda Orcutt. The marriage took place in a tent with Justice of the Peace, G.P. Bancroft, officiating. The first wedding in Vernon Township took place in the spring of 1857. The parties were Lars Langland and Miss Aasa Olson. The first marriage in Westfield Township was that of Guttorm Hilson and Jane Christenson, July 27, 1857.

The first white person to die in Dodge County, says an old Atlas, was an infant child of Milton residents – Mr. and Mrs. John Livengood; but from the book "History of Medicine in Dodge County" we find the claim that in February, 1855, "Mrs. Mastin died in what is now Kasson, the first death of a white person in the town and county." Later county deaths of distinguished persons were those of Hon. Samuel Lord, Sr., Judge of the Fifth Judicial District, who died February 22, 1880, at Mantorville, when 49 years of age; Peter Mantor, who died in the village bearing his name, September 23, 1888 at 72 years of age; and then Hon. A.D. LaDue, who died at Mantorville, Jan. 12, 1899; an early pioneer attorney, legislator, newspaper publisher and railway builder. Twelve hundred

persons attended the funeral of Dr. Josiah R. Dartt, September 11, 1874, at Mantorville. Dr. Dartt was Dodge County's first physician.

## NEWSPAPER

Dodge County's first weekly newspaper was the Mantorville Express, published by J.E. Bancroft and R. Winegar. The subscription price was two dollars a year and the advertising rates were: "One column, per year, \$50.00; Half column per year, \$30.00; Quarter column per year, \$18.00; one square (12 lines or less) one insertion, \$1.00; each subsequent insertion, 50 cents. Business cards (6 lines or less) one year, \$3.00; one square one year, \$10.00."

After Mr. Bancroft's death March 15, 1866, at 39 years of age, Mrs. Bancroft took over the editorship and performed that function for nearly three years, the only lady editor in Minnesota.

Published only one day later than the first issue of Mantorville Express was the Wasioja Gazette. The Express made its first appearance July 16, 1857, and the Gazette, July 17, 1857. Charles Blaisdell and S.L. Pierce were the pioneer publishers of the Wasioja Gazette.

The Minnesota Historical Society has a few rare copies of the Wasioja Gazette and quite complete files of the early years of the Mantorville Express. It is interesting to note that an ox team hauled the printing machinery and equipment for the Express to this county in 1857 and in fording the Zumbro River near Oronoco some equipment accidentally dropped in the river and had to be recovered from its watery bath. With the exception of one lapse, due to sale and discontinuance of the paper in 1946, the county seat has had continuous publication of a weekly since the founding of the Express in 1857.

There are at present six weekly papers in Dodge County. There are: The West Concord Enterprise, L.W. and D.L. Smith, publishers; The Claremont News, Dana A. Hinckley, publisher; the Dodge Center Star-Record, Myron A. Stivers, publisher; the Hayfield Herald, Arch Crawford, publisher; the Dodge County Independent, Phil S. Duff and B.A. Montgomery, publishers; and the Mantorville Co-op Express, published by the Mantorville Co-op Printing Company.

West Concord's first newspaper was established October 4, 1893 by H.P. Ramsborg and G.E. Sloan. These young men purchased the plant of the "Concord People" a Populist publication which had published a small sheet at intervals. More equipment was added to the shop and the name of the publication changed to West Concord Enterprise which they published weekly on Thursdays. On May 17, 1894 the paper was sold to D.E. Ash and E.A. Berdan. Circulation was around 350 at that time and the paper a five-column sheet.

June 12, 1895 the paper was again sold. U.B. and B.W. Shaver, Kasson publishers, acquired possession. They installed F.W. Hall as editor, and in April 1898 A.E. Ball took charge. A.E. Pennell, a former Brainerd Dispatch publisher, next purchased the Enterprise and took possession in August 1901. The paper was enlarged to a six-column, 8 page publication and a new press and equipment purchased.

In January, 1916, half interest in the Enterprise was sold to Leslie W. Smith, who had worked for this father-in-law, Mr. Pennell for several years. In August, 1925, Mr. Pennell, due to poor health sold his interest to Mr. Smith who, in February of 1926, installed an Intertype typesetting machine and other modern equipment, making the paper an all home-print publications.

Following the close of World War II, Mr. Smith's son, Donald L., returning from war service, entered into partnership with his father January 1, 1946, and these two, L.W. and D.L. Smith are the present owners and publishers.

The Enterprise plant was once entirely destroyed by fire on May 20, 1923. But it missed no issues, getting its paper printed at the Leader plant at Kenyon, Minnesota for a few weeks until new equipment was installed for local project publication at West Concord.

Claremont's first newspaper was a small, two-column project called The Windmill. Doctor Horace P. Porter, a graduate of an eastern medical institution, located in Dodge County at Kasson, then went to Claremont in September of 1874. During the close of that year he began publication (December) of a small, four-page newspaper which he entitled The Windmill "circulation immense" and "published when we feel like it." The book "History of Medicine in Dodge County" tells us this paper was printed at Kasson and distributed at the doctor's own expense. In December, 1880, the editor began another publication which he titled "The Cosmopolitan", but this was short lived. Dr. Porter left the state in 1883 but returned in 1884 to Claremont and managed the Cleveland House, sold drugs, and began another publication called The Q. In 1886 he left for Kansas and later died in Missouri (1912).

Some of the Windmill's ads and business cards give light on early-day business. Porter & Blakeslee, druggists, advertise a long list of drugs and also state they have "Toys for the Holidays, Valentines in Due Time, Wall Paper in the Spring, Paints and Oils when we are fixed for keeping a stock of that line of goods." Liniment and Cough Syrup are listed as well as a "Nobby Mustache Persuader." The same business partners advertise coal for \$16.92 per ton. "Dr. H.P. Porter is our authorized agent in this matter," the ad declares. Henry Riddle carried a business card announcing himself as "Deputy Sheriff" and further informs the public that "Life Insurance and Collecting" is a specialty. G.H. Houghton carries an ad offering "Pictures, Picture Frames, Cords, Tassels, &" and "Best assortment of Ammunition in Town." A milling concern call themselves the "Claremont Flouring Mill Co., and add "We toll but one-eighth, toll but once, and only one man tolls." Edward Buehler was Insurance Agent and also "Dealer in Farm Implements and

Machinery.” From the Wind Mill we find that “Best dry oak wood was “5.00 per cord” and Green Oak, \$4.00,” in 1874.

The present Claremont News has been published since 1909.

The Dodge Center Star-Record has been published under that title since June 1936, and is a merger of the Dodge Center Record published since 1909, and the Dodge County Star published since 1890. The Dodge Center Record was formerly the Dodge County Record which, in 1885, followed after the Dodge Center Index, established in 1880.

The present Hayfield has been published since 1917. In August 1896 the Dodge County Herald began publication at Hayfield and was followed by the Dodge County Transcript in August 1899. The Transcript was published as the Hayfield Transcript from 1899 to 1902, also from 1915 to 1916, with which was merged the Hayfield Guard which began publications in 1905 and continued to July 1917.

At Kasson, the first village newspaper was the Dodge County Republican, which published its first issue May 3, 1867. Ulysses B. Shaver was publisher and editor. Benjamin A. was at the helm from 1898 to 1903, followed by Julius P. Nottage and George W. Nottage 1903 – 1938. From 1938 to 1942 James Melone published the Republican, succeeded by Harold and Vanya Sattler, 1942 – 1949.

The name, Dodge County Republican, was changed to Dodge County Independent, June, 1949, when the paper was purchased by Philip S. Duff, Jr., and Bernard A. Montgomery. In the early 1950’s Ralph Walker and Bernard A. Montgomery were the owners and publishers. In June of 1963, Folmer Carlson became owner and publisher, and is the present owner and publisher. The present Editor is Randy Carlson.