

Fifty years in the Northwest

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W. H. C. Folsom

FIFTY YEARS IN THE NORTHWEST.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND APPENDIX CONTAINING REMINISCENCES,
INCIDENTS AND NOTES.

BY William . Henry . Carman . FOLSOM. EDITED BY E. E. EDWARDS.

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TO THE OLD SETTLERS OF WISCONSIN AND MINNESOTA, WHO, AS PIONEERS,
AMIDST PRIVATIONS AND TOIL NOT KNOWN TO THOSE OF LATER GENERATION,
LAID HERE THE FOUNDATIONS OF TWO GREAT STATES, AND HAVE LIVED TO
SEE THE RESULT OF THEIR ARDUOUS LABORS IN THE TRANSFORMATION
OF THE WILDERNESS—DURING FIFTY YEARS—INTO A FRUITFUL COUNTRY,
IN THE BUILDING OF GREAT CITIES, IN THE ESTABLISHING OF ARTS AND
MANUFACTURES, IN THE CREATION OF COMMERCE AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AGRICULTURE, THIS WORK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY THE AUTHOR, W.
H. C. FOLSOM.

PREFACE.

Patrick Lillis was born in Ireland in 1807. He came to Polk county in 1856, and, with his amiable wife and enterprising sons, made a claim on what was afterward styled Milltown, an inappropriate name, but given by Mr. Lillis himself, as he humorously remarked, "because there was not a stream large enough for a mill site in the town," and Milltown it remains to this day. Mr. Lillis prospered and made himself a good home. He died Feb. 26, 1886. Mrs. Lillis died December, 1885. They left six sons. John C. is in Greene county, Texas, Simon C. is in Southern California, and Richard is in Memphis, Tennessee. Henry, the youngest, aged twenty-nine years, has for the past six years been a resident of Tacoma, Washington Territory. The residence of Martin and James is not known.

OSCEOLA.

Osceola contains all of township 33, range 18, except the eastern tier of sections, and ten whole sections and some fractions of range 19, made somewhat hat irregular by the St. Croix river boundary, and the obtrusion of three sections of Farmington in the southwestern part. It is a rich agricultural town, consisting chiefly of prairie, the whole forming a tableland, terminating westward on the precipitous bluffs of the St. Croix. It has a good steamboat landing and two good water powers, Osceola and Close's creeks. These are both fine trout brooks. The bluffs overlooking the St. Croix are bold and high, and, for a great part, precipitous. Most conspicuous of these bluffs is the promontory known as Eagle Point, situated just below the Osceola lauding. An escarpment of limestone, about two hundred feet above the river, projects over its base, not much unlike the celebrated 132 table rock at Niagara Falls. A tall and solitary pine tree stands upon the extreme verge of this rock, the whole forming a conspicuous landmark, visible to a distance of several miles down the river. The cascade on Osceola creek, a few rods above its mouth, has scarcely a rival amongst the waterfalls of the West. It has sometimes been called the Minnehaha of Wisconsin, but while it resembles somewhat in the lower part of its descent that celebrated cascade, the scenery around it is much wilder, perpendicular rocks towering over it to a great height, while the upper part of the fall is over an inclined plain, broken into steps. It is

a favorite haunt for artists and photographers. There are several minor waterfalls of great beauty in the vicinity. The trap rock formation crops out in the eastern and northern parts of the town, rich in specimens of copper and silver. Silver is also found in ledges at East Lake.

The first land claim in the town, made May 14, 1844, by Milton V. Nobles and Lucius N. S. Parker, included the cascade and the present site of the village. The claim was made with the intention of building a saw mill at the outlet of Osceola creek. The mill company, organized in 1844, consisted of M. V. and W. H. Nobles, Wm. Kent, Wm. O. Mahony and Harvey Walker. Mr. Nobles sold his interest and removed to Willow River; Wm. Parker removed to St. Anthony. The mill commenced cutting timber in 1845. It was run at first with a small flutter wheel, which was replaced by a an overshot wheel, 30 feet; that by another, 45 feet, and that by one 50 feet in diameter. In 1845 the company built a two story boarding house, also a shop and office, near the mill. After the completion of the mill Walker withdrew from the firm and Anson Northrup was for a short time a member. Kent & Mahony for a number of years operated the mill, selling lumber in Galena and St. Louis. Mahony left for California in 1852. Around this mill, as a nucleus, the settlement of Osceola and the village were built up. The mill, with its immense water wheel, for so many years a conspicuous object on the river, has long since disappeared.

Osceola has had many enterprising business men engaged in merchandising and manufacturing. The first flouring mill was built by Kent Brothers in 1853, just above the cascade. This mill changed owners several times, and was burned in 1880. It was rebuilt by Lovejoy & Sutton in 1883. Its present capacity 133 is one hundred barrels per day. The second flouring mill was built by Dresser & Wilson in 1867. It is situated on the same stream, a few rods above the first. It has also changed owners several times. Its capacity is fifty barrels per day. The first merchants were Wyckoff and Stevenson, in 1856. These have been succeeded by Rice, Webb, Clark Brothers, Armstrong & Co., Talboys & Staples, Dresser & Wilson, lacy & Johnson, W. A. Talboys, Gridley & Co, Heald & Thing, Dresser Brothers, and others. Dr. Gray was the first practicing physician. After him, at

different periods, came Drs. Hilton, Brooks, Gaskill, Garlick, Marshall, Searles, Cornbacker and Clark. The first deed recorded of Osceola property was a quitclaim from Wm. H. Nobles to Anson Northrup, consideration \$3,250, in 1847. The first lawyer settled here was I. P. Freeland. His successors were Button, Dowling, Dyke, McDill, and others. The first sermon preached in Osceola was by Rev. Lemuel Nobles, a Methodist minister, in 1851. There are two church organizations; each has respectable church buildings. The first Baptist preacher was Rev. S. T. Catlin, in 1854. The Baptists built the first church in the county in Osceola, 1856. The first log house in the town was built by Richard Arnold in the locality of the famous Drake Troutmere springs. This house was built in 1848. Mr. Arnold raised the first crops in the town of Osceola. The first school house was built in 1852. A high school building was erected in 1868. W. A. Talboys taught the first public school in 1852. Until 1861 the schools were under the town system. In 1875 a free high school was established. The first post office was established in 1854, and W. C. Guild was postmaster for twenty years. The first town election was held April 5, 1853, when the following supervisors were elected; Wm. Ramsey, chairman; Nelson McCarty and W. C. Guild. At this meeting the town voted a tax of thirty dollars for school and fifty dollars for town expenses. The first Sunday-school was organized by W. A. Talboys in 1852.

The first marriage, that of John Buckley to Elizabeth Godfrey, was in 1853. The first white child born was John Francis, in 1847. The first death was that of **Leroy Hubble**, by accident, in 1854.

CHANGE OF NAME.

The name of the town was originally Leroy, in Honor of **Mr. Hubble** above mentioned. It is to be regretted that this name 134 was not retained, inasmuch as Osceola, though the name of one of the most celebrated Indians in America history, is shared by a post town in the eastern part of the State. It was therefore necessary to call this post town Osceola Mills, a distinction that correspondents and postmasters are not always careful to note. Osceola village remained unorganized until Aug. 10, 1887. The first officers

were: President, H. B. Dyke; trustees, W. C. Reilly, R. S. Sutton, G. W. De Long, H. E. Cornbacker, Pual Filzen, S. C. Benjamin; clerk, S Rowcliff; treasurer, C. W. Staples; supervisor, G. D. McDill; justice of the peace, George Wilson; police justice, T. Post. The village has a splendid situation upon the bluffs overlooking the river, and communicates with points on the river by boat, and with overland points by the Minneapolis, Soo & Atlantic railway, completed to this place Aug. 21, 1887. There is also a branch road from Dressers's station to St. Croix Falls. The village was visited by destructive fires at various times. Most prominent of these was the burning of the Freeland Hotel in 1857, the Western Hotel in 1878, and the first flouring mill in 1880.

BIOGRAPHICAL

Daniel Mears. —Mr. Mears was born in Lynn, Massachusetts, in 1819. His first wife, Emeline Mendon, died in 1850, leaving three sons, Charles, David, and Daniel. In 1852 he was married to Susan Thompson. They have one daughter, Lulu, now Mrs. Wheeler, of Stillwater. Mr. Mears came West in 1848, and sold goods one year at Taylor's Place (since Taylor's Falls). In 1849 he removed his store to St. Croix Falls, where he continued merchandising and lumbering until 1852, when he went to Willow River as agent in building the first saw mill in what is now Hudson. In 1860 he made himself a permanent home on a farm near Osceola. He served as state senator from the Twenty-eighth district in 1858-59, and as state timber agent in 1874-75. As an officer Mr. Mears acquitted himself well. In politics he is a Democrat, and while in the senate took an active part in debates. The oldest son, Charles, is editor and proprietor of the *Polk County Press*. The three sons are married.

Nelson McCarty. —Mr. McCarty was born July 4, 1819, in Pike county, Pennsylvania; in 1834 was married to Mary McKune, and came to St. Croix valley in 1846, where he engaged in 135 piloting and lumbering. In 1847 he made him a farm on Osceola prairie. He died in 1856. His brother Philip came to Osceola in 1850, and settled on Osceola prairie.

and died in 1879, leaving a large family. Andrew, another brother, of the firm of Clark Brothers, died in Osceola.

Oscar F. Knapp. —Capt. Knapp has been conspicuous as a steamboat maker, owner and captain for the last thirty years. He was born in Clinton county, New York, in 1831. At the age of fifteen years he came West and located in Delavan, Wisconsin. In 1852 he removed to Osceola, Wisconsin, where he engaged in lumbering for about four years. In 1856 he was married to Miss Angeline Hayes, of Osceola. In the same year he engaged in the business of steamboating, with which he has been since identified more or less. His first steamboat was the H. S. Allen, which, in company with E.B. Strong, he bought of H. S. Allen, of Chippewa Falls, in 1856, for \$5,000. In 1862 he built the Enterprise, a small but serviceable boat of light draft and fair speed. In 1864 Capt. Knapp built the Viola, owned by a stock 140 company. In 1866 he built the G.B. Knapp, in 1879 the Jennie Hayes, and ran these two boats fourteen years. In 1877 he entered the employment of the United States government, improving the navigation of the St. Croix river, in which work he is still engaged. His two sons, Ben and George, succeeded him in the steamboat business. Ben, the oldest son, was born in Osceola in 1857; George, the second son, in 1859. These two boys spent their childhood and youth on the river, and have grown up to be expert pilots and captains, and inherit their father's popularity as river men. Ben was married to Addie Talboys, June, 1880; George to Claribel Wilson, in 1883. Capt. Knapp has two other children, Viola, now Mrs. Arthur Johnson, and Guy, still a minor. Mrs. Angeline Knapp died at her home in Osceola, March 6, 1883, respected and lamented by all who knew her. Capt. Ben Knapp died Oct. 5, 1887, leaving a wife and two children.

Mrs. Elisabeth B. Hayes. —Mrs. Hayes was born in 1811, in Dundee, Yates county, New York. In 1854 she removed with her husband to Missouri. After his death, in the fall of the same year, she came with her children to Osceola, where she built the Osceola House, which she kept a number of years. The daughters were Angeline B. (Mrs. O.F. Knapp), Mrs. Hubbell and Mrs. Milroy, of New York, and Mrs. Truman Foster, widow, since the wife of Capt. C.G. Bradley. Her sons were George, Frank and David. Capt. George Hayes

followed piloting and steamboating, excepting during the Rebellion, when he served as a soldier in the Fourth Wisconsin Volunteers. In the latter part of the war he served as a scout for Gen. Canby. At the present time he has the appointment of steamboat inspector, with office in St. Paul. David has been prominent as a steamboat captain. He now resides in Iowa.

Cyrus Q. Bradley was born in Kaskaskia, Illinois, in 1825. In 1845 he came to the lead mines in Wisconsin and to Osceola in 1848. He was married in 1846 to the widow of Truman Foster, of Osceola. Mr. Bradley engaged in lumbering, became a river pilot, running rafts to St. Louis, with stems and blades called oars and sweeps, before steamboat towing was in vogue. When steamboats became useful in running rafts, he built two steamers especially for raft towing. He had much to do in introducing the steamboat towing business. Mr. Bradley moved to his farm near Osceola in 1874, where he still resides.

141

W. Hale.—Judge Hale's early life was spent on a farm. He commenced lumbering in 1822, and followed that business and piloting on the Ohio and Alleghany rivers until 1851, when he came to Osceola prairie and opened a farm. Mr. Hale was the first county judge of Polk county, and held the position eight years. He has also served as county superintendent of schools. He was born in Harmony, Susquehanna county, Pennsylvania, in 1802; was married to Nancy McKeene, of Orange county, New York, in 1826. They have four sons, John, Isaac, Silas F., and Reuben W., and three daughters, Esther (Mrs. Treadwell), Malvina (Mrs. Merrick), and Achsah (Mrs. Thomas Kent).

Edgar C. Treadwell was born March 29, in Susquehanna county, Pennsylvania. He came with a team from Pennsylvania to Osceola in 1846, where he engaged in lumbering and piloting until 1863, when he enlisted in Company D, Second Wisconsin Cavalry. He was wounded at Yazoo river. He returned to Osceola in 1865 and was married to Esther Hale

attending lectures at the medical college in that city. In 1856 he came to Minnesota and located in Minneiska, where he practiced medicine, served as postmaster, justice of the peace, and member of the legislature. In 1861 he removed to Plainview, where he has taken rank as a leading surgeon and physician in that part of the State. He has also served as member of the state senate (in 1871-72). The writer had the pleasure of meeting him in the legislature of 1858 and found him a strong opponent of the \$5,000,000 bill. Dr. Tefft was married to Hattie S. Gibbs, of Plainview, Nov. 10, 1866.

James Wells. —In 1845 the writer found Mr. Wells living in a stone trading house on the west shore of Lake Pepin, on the first high ground on the shore above Lake City. Mr. Wells had a half-breed family and was very reticent in his manner. He was a member of the first territorial house of representatives. When the country became more thickly settled he went West and was killed by the Sioux Indians in the massacre of 1862.

WINONA COUNTY

Was named after the daughter of the Indian chief who, according to the well known legend, precipitated herself from the famous rock on the eastern shore of Lake Pepin, which has ever since been known as "Maiden's Rock." The county lies on the west shore of the Mississippi, below Wabasha county. The frontage of the bluffs on the river is unsurpassed for grandeur and beauty, the bluffs here attaining an altitude of six hundred feet above 603 the river. The natural castles and turrets crowning these bluffs remind the traveler of the towns on the Rhine and Danube, and it is difficult to realize that they are the handiwork of Nature and not of man. The most striking of these bluffs occupies a position in the rear of the beautiful city of Winona, overlooking the city and the valley, and affording from its summit possibly the finest view on the river. The city of Winona lies on a spacious plateau between the bluffs and the river. In 1845 a solitary log cabin, the resting place of the mail carrier, marked the site, and a large Indian village, belonging to the band of Chief Wapashaw, occupied a portion of the present site of the city. All traces of this village have long since disappeared, and given place to one of the fairest and most flourishing cities on

the river. The First State Normal School is located here. The St. Paul & Milwaukee railroad passes through, and the Winona & St. Peter railroad has its eastern terminus in this city. It is also the western terminus of the Green Bay & Mississippi. The Chicago, Burlington & Northern crosses the river here, and has a depot in the city.

Daniel S. Norton, at the time of his death United States senator from Minnesota, was born in Mount Vernon, Ohio, in April, 1829. He was educated at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio; enlisted in the Third Ohio Volunteer Infantry in 1846 for service in the Mexican War; had his health seriously impaired in the service; spent two years in California, Mexico and Central America; returned to Ohio and read law with his father-in-law, Judge R. C. Hurd, practiced in Mount Vernon, Ohio, with Hon. William Windom and came with him to Minnesota in 1855, locating at Winona. Mr. Norton served as senator in the first state legislature, where the writer served with him on several committees, among them the committee on the \$5,000,000 bond bill, a bill which Mr. Norton strongly and earnestly opposed, predicting clearly its disastrous results. He also served as senator in the legislatures of 1861-64 and 65, when he was elected to the United States senate, which position he held at the time of his death, in 1870. He was twice married, first in 1856, to Miss Lizzie Sherman, of Mount Vernon, Ohio, who died in 1862. The second time to Miss Laura Cantlan, of Baltimore, in 1868.

William Windom, a native of Ohio, came to Winona in 1855. He had been admitted to practice in 1853, and formed a partnership with D. S. Norton in Mount Vernon, Ohio, who came with him to Winona, where they continued their law partnership. Mr. Windom has been quite prominent in the politics of the State and county, having served in the United States senate two terms, from 1871 to 1883. He was also a representative in Congress from 1859 to 1869. He served as secretary of the treasury to fill a vacancy. During his congressional career he was an ardent supporter of the Union, and won the respect of the nation for his unswerving firmness in upholding his principles. He is a man of great executive ability, and has used his talents and his wealth, of which he has accumulated a considerable share, in the interests of the public. He has been heavily

interested in the building of the Northern Pacific and other railroads, and in real estate. His opportunities have been great, he has wisely employed them, and richly deserves the success he has achieved.

Charles H. Berry, the first attorney general of the state of Minnesota, was born at Westerly, Rhode Island, Sept. 12, 1823. He received an excellent school and academic education, graduating at Canandaigua Academy in 1846. He afterward read law and was admitted to practice at Rochester in 1848. He practiced his profession at Corning, New York, until 1855, when he removed to Winona and opened the first law office in that city. He was associated until 1871 with C. N. Waterman. When Minnesota became a state, in 1858, he was elected attorney general and served two years. He was state senator in 1874-75 and has been United States commissioner since 1873. He takes great interest in local and state affairs, especially in educational matters. He has been for many years connected with the city school board and for eight years its president. He was also largely instrumental in locating the State Normal School at Winona. Mr. Berry is a Democrat in politics, is prominent in Masonic circles and a leading member of the Episcopal church. He was married to **Frances E. Hubbell, of Corning, New York**, Nov. 14, 1850. They have one daughter, Kate Louise, married to Prof. C. A. Morey, principal of the State Normal School.

Thomas Wilson was born in Tyrone county, Ireland, May 16, 1827. He received his education in this country, graduating at Meadville College, Pennsylvania, in 1852. He studied law, 605 was admitted to the bar in 1855, and in the same year came to Winona and entered the law firm of Sargent & Wilson, known a few years later as Sargent, Wilson & Windom. He was a member of the Republican wing of the constitutional convention in 1857. He was elected district judge of the Fourth district, taking his seat in 1853, and serving six years. In 1864 Gov. Miller appointed him to a vacancy on the supreme bench, caused by the resignation of Judge Flandrau, and in the fall of the same year he was elected chief justice for a term of seven years. In 1869 he resigned this position to resume his law practice. In 1881 he was elected as a representative, and from 1883 to 1886,

were: President, H. B. Dyke; trustees, W. C. Reilly, R. S. Sutton, G. W. De Long, H. E. Cornbacker, Pual Filzen, S. C. Benjamin; clerk, S Rowcliff; treasurer, C. W. Staples; supervisor, G. D. McDill; justice of the peace, George Wilson; police justice, T. Post. The village has a splendid situation upon the bluffs overlooking the river, and communicates with points on the river by boat, and with overland points by the Minneapolis, Soo & Atlantic railway, completed to this place Aug. 21, 1887. There is also a branch road from Dressers's station to St. Croix Falls. The village was visited by destructive fires at various times. Most prominent of these was the burning of the Freeland Hotel in 1857, the Western Hotel in 1878, and the first flouring mill in 1880.

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