

*Along the Mississippi
from
Rice Lake to Boom Lake*

by Ann M. Nelson

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Introduction

Throughout the early days of Brainerd, the Mississippi river served as the highway for the millions and millions of logs driven to the sawmills of Minneapolis prior to the establishment of large sawmills on the river in Brainerd. The river acted as a storage area for the logs that were to remain in the city to be milled in its sawmills. Steamboats plied the river carrying equipment and other supplies to the logging camps of the northern woods as well as providing pleasure excursions for the citizens of Brainerd before the dam was completed in 1888. Much of the water used in homes and businesses was provided by the river until 1920 when the city completed the water tower and the system of wells which finally provided clean, uncontaminated water to Brainerd citizens. Over the years, numerous bridges were built over the Mississippi at Brainerd, ferries carried passengers across the river; parks, as well as sawmills, breweries and hospitals were located along its banks. Even Evergreen Cemetery is located near the river. For years, property within the city of Brainerd located near the river was considered the most undesirable and this is where the “red light” district was located.

Steamboats

The early steamers on the Mississippi burned wood and were used mostly to haul men and supplies to the lumber camps that dotted the shores of the river. Although not as profitable, steamboat owners also operated excursions and hauled farm produce from and supplies to the few farms that had been established near the river. Old maps of Brainerd show several steamboat landings on the river; one was located on the east side of the



*Steamboat and ferry landing west side of the Laurel Street Bridge, ca. 1917.
Courtesy of Carl Faust*

river, just north of the Laurel Street bridge and one was located on the west side of the river a few blocks north of the Washington Street bridge. The newspapers of the early 1870's and 1880's made numerous references to the steamers that plied the waters of the Mississippi. In 1884 regular trips between Brainerd, Crow Wing and Fort Ripley were announced; the fare to Crow Wing set at fifty cents per roundtrip and one dollar for the roundtrip to Fort Ripley. After the Brainerd dam was completed in 1888, all serious steam boating below the dam between Brainerd and Little Falls was ended.

Steam boating on the Mississippi began to decline in the early 1890's. One cause of the decline was the invasion of various railroads. Another, and more immediate cause, was the complete possession of the

river by the lumbermen with the increased and increasing cutting of logs and their driving which had, through jams and blockades, rendered it impossible to carry on a steamboat business. For weeks in 1892, the boats were laid up by jams and by booms and for all of these reasons the owners concluded that they may as well surrender; the last regular steamboat passenger and freight business was finished on the Mississippi in 1893. The era of the Mississippi steamboat had lasted for the better part of half a century.

Anson Northup

The first steamboat to pass what was later to become Brainerd was the *Anson Northup* in May of 1858. Anson Northup purchased the *North Star*; a boat built at St. Anthony, and renamed it in honor of himself. The *Northup* made two trips up the river, one to Pokegama Falls (Grand Rapids) and the other in June 1858 across Sandy lake. During the winter of 1858-59 the *Anson Northup* was dismantled near the village of Crow Wing



Anson Northup

and the parts hauled overland on sleds, drawn by teams of oxen, to the Red river. It was rebuilt at Lafayette, North Dakota; the boat's capacity was fifty to seventy-five tons; its hull measured twenty-two feet wide and ninety feet long, equipped with engines capable of producing one-hundred horsepower. The *Northup* drew only fourteen inches with crew and fuel on board; with passengers and freight she sank four inches lower. No further attempts at steam navigation were made on the upper Mississippi until 1870.

Pokegama

At Sauk Rapids, in November of 1869, Captain George Houghton was working on his steamboat which, when completed, would run from there up to Pokegama Falls (Grand Rapids). The boat was launched on April 13, 1870, and christened the *Pokegama*. It was a sternwheeler, one hundred feet long, with a twenty-four foot beam, a two-foot draft, and could carry one hundred sixty passengers and fifty tons of freight for the logging towns and camps. The *Pokegama* began its first trip upstream on June 20th, reaching Crow Wing on June 24th, Sandy lake on June 26th, and the foot of Pokegama Falls on June 27th. During the rest of the season, it ran from Crow Wing, at that time the most northerly village of any size along the upper river, to Pokegama Falls; making such trips as they were needed in the spring to bring the lumbermen out of the camps and in the fall to supply the lumber camps for the winter season. In the fall of 1871, the *Pokegama* was frozen up twenty miles above the mouth of the Sandy river and it was not until April when the boat was finally freed. In April of 1873, Captain Houghton decided to extend the cabin of the *Pokegama* and otherwise improve its accommodations for the passenger trade. The new cabin was to have a dozen or so comfortable sleeping berths, with sitting room, wash room, etc., so that ladies and gentlemen could be comfortably accommodated. Morris C. Russell, editor of the *Brainerd Tribune*, noted in May of 1873, "The *Pokegama* has powerful machinery, and can run like a disgusted wolf."

Prior to the completion of the first Laurel Street bridge in October of 1883, a ferry was used to transport most people across the river; however, some adventurous souls would risk life and limb by walking across the railroad bridge which had been completed in 1870. The *Pokegama*, arriving in Brainerd on May 11, 1873, after traveling the two-hundred-thirty-four miles from Grand Rapids, loaded with horses and lumbering equipment, met with quite an accident just as she came into port, by running into the ferry wire which was elevated a few feet above the water. It seems the steamboat whistled several times, loud and long, as it came near the city, in order to notify the ferrymen of her approach, so that the wire could be lowered into the river. As the boat came around the point just above the ferry, Captain Houghton and Pilot A. R. Russell did not see the wire above the water, and at first thought it had been lowered per their warning whistles; but upon coming closer they saw the wire, and Russell immediately stopped the boat. There was a strong wind blowing down the river; and, since the shores were filled with overhanging trees, he could not run the boat to shore above the ferry without tearing it to pieces. Just as the paddlewheel stopped, a log, the river was full of them, floated right into the wheel, so that when he tried to back up, the wheel could not be moved in that direction, and pushed by the wind and current, it went helplessly onward toward the ferry wire, while swinging broadside as well. In a moment Russell saw that the only chance left, and it was a slight one, was to give the wheel still another turn or two ahead, so as to get the log out of the wheel, and then he could back the boat upstream, or shoot for the shore and take the consequences among the trees, in preference to being caught by the wire. There was not enough time or distance; however, and before he could carry out the only remaining plan, the wind blew the steamer broadside

on the wire, which caught just under the boiler deck, tearing away the jack staff, guards, stanchions, etc., including one of its smokestacks. The boat pushed the ferry wire downstream until it was tight as a fiddle string, before she stopped. Fully loaded as she was, lying broadside in the current with the logs accumulating on its upper side, the steamboat was slowly sinking in that direction, and in a few minutes more would surely capsize with all on board. Captain Houghton, understanding the situation in a moment, got a sledge hammer and axe, and with a few well-directed strokes cut the wire, after which the steamer righted itself and swung around to the shore below. Fortunately, no one was injured, although the damage to the boat was considerable. The *Pokegama* had narrowly escaped total destruction and the loss of several lives.

On the Fourth of July in 1873 a grand excursion and picnic was planned from Brainerd down the river to Fort Ripley and return. Captain Houghton placed the *Pokegama* in the finest possible condition for the holiday occasion and, for a small fee, took about fifty excursionists on a steamboat ride to see Fort Ripley and its garrison and to have a picnic, with lots of music, in a nearby grove of trees. Three or four hours were spent at the Fort looking around and picnicking, after which the excursionists began the return trip, arriving home about 9 o'clock in the evening.

Sometime during the night of November 12, 1877, the steamer *Pokegama*, burned at Aitkin. The fire broke out in the cabin and was thought to have originated from a candle which was left burning by a drunken watchman. The total value of all the property destroyed amounted to \$12,000; the loss was total, as the property was not insured.

City of Aitkin

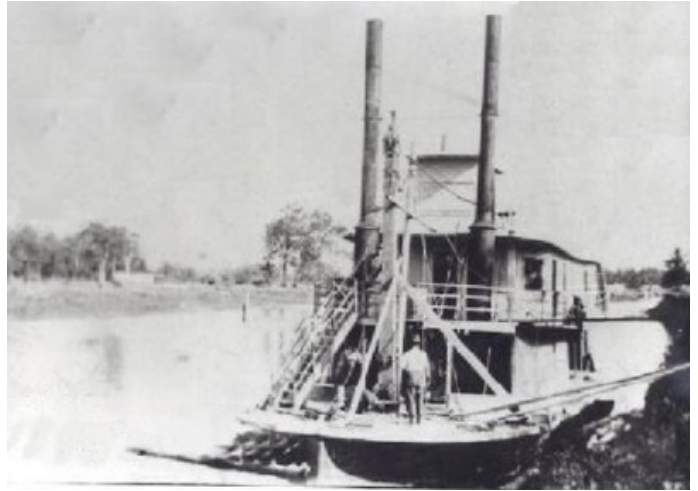
In December of 1877 Captain Houghton superintended the raising of the hull and machinery of the *Pokegama* from the bottom of the river at Aitkin preparatory to rebuilding the boat. Ed White, builder of the first Northern Pacific bridge in Brainerd, and W. H. Lewis, formerly the Master Mechanic at the Northern Pacific shops, were to be hired to complete the rebuild at Aitkin. The boat was one hundred twenty feet long with a beam of twenty-two feet. Early in July, the *City of Aitkin*, as the newly rebuilt steamer was called, was ready for her maiden excursion from Aitkin up the Mississippi to Pokegama Falls. A number of Brainerd citizens were onboard and spent their Fourth in the wilds of northern Minnesota.

The steamer, *City of Aitkin*, sank at her moorings in October 1883 when it hit bottom and began to list. The boat was raised, repaired, and was afloat within weeks. By July of 1886 the *City of Aitkin* had been abandoned and was purchased from Captain Houghton by W. E. Neal of Grand Rapids and W. H. Eustis of Minneapolis; the boat's former engineer, A. A. Storer, was hired to restore it to working condition. Storer found the hull to be in excellent condition, rebuilt the superstructure and fitted the steamer with new machinery manufactured by D. M. Swain of Stillwater. The reconstructed vessel measured one hundred fifteen feet long, with a beam of twenty-one feet, a fourteen inch draft, and could carry one hundred tons of cargo. The boat was launched on September 1st by its old captain and first builder, George Houghton. By mid-October, the steamer had become the *George H. Houghton*. On March 26th, 1889, the steamer *George H. Houghton*, moored twenty miles north of Aitkin, burned to the waterline and sank.

Fawn

Because of the success of the *City of Aitkin*, Captain Houghton built his third steamboat, the *Fawn*. This boat operated on the Mississippi from 1882 to 1894—longer than any other steamboat on this stretch of river; it was built in 1881 and began running the following season. It was a sternwheeler originally eighty-five feet long with a fourteen foot beam and a draft of fourteen inches empty and two-and-a-half feet when fully loaded. Later, both its length and its breadth were increased. It could carry sixty-five tons of freight, when there was a good stage of water and no logs were running. In August of 1884, Captain Houghton brought the *Fawn* to Brainerd where he planned to keep it for a month while running excursions. Besides the *Fawn* being a large steamer,

Houghton attached a large barge to the boat, which made its capacity three or four hundred people. The Baptist Sunday School sponsored a steamboat excursion at the end of August. The excursionists started from the west end of the Laurel Street bridge at eight o'clock in the morning and went down the river about fourteen miles, landing in a pine grove, where they spent the day picking blueberries, playing games, etc. Refreshments were for sale on the boat and the fare for the roundtrip was forty cents for adults and twenty cents for children under twelve. In 1885 the *Fawn* was sold to Captain Christopher Columbus Sutton; during this season, the *Andy Gibson* and the *Fawn*, led by Captain Fred Bonness and Captain Sutton, engaged in a 'Great Race,' each trying to better the other's travel time from Aitkin to Grand Rapids and back. The *Fawn* first recorded a forty-six-hour roundtrip, then the *Andy Gibson* did one in thirty-seven hours; the *Fawn* then recorded two thirty-six-hour runs.



Fawn
Courtesy of Aitkin County Historical Society

At some point in 1886 the *Fawn* was remodeled; owner, C. C. Sutton, cut it in two lengthwise from bow to stern, widening the boat by five feet and adding ten feet to its length. These changes reduced the draft to twelve inches. The elegant new cabin was designed to carry seventy passengers; the remodel was contrived in order to increase the boat's carrying capacity and speed. Near the beginning of the season, E. B. Lowell and Company purchased the *Fawn*, thereby monopolizing the steamer trade between Aitkin and Grand Rapids for the majority of the navigation season. It appears Captain Sutton became a partner in the Lowell Company while continuing to be in charge of the *Fawn*.

By 1888 the *Fawn*, once more, had been enlarged; by 1893, the boat was owned by Knox & De Laitre of Aitkin. The *Fawn* ended its days in towing service for the boom company and in handling logs, with occasional trips between Aitkin and Grand Rapids extending as far downriver as Brainerd. Early in November of 1894, the *Fawn* hit a snag below the mouth of the Swan river and sank in the channel. The boat was never again raised and it went to pieces where it sank.

White Swan

Sometime in May of 1877, Captain Charles H. Alsop and C. E. Williams began building a small sidewheeler steamboat called the *White Swan* to be used for pleasure excursions on the Mississippi at Brainerd. The boat was about forty-five feet long and was to be run by a twenty-five horsepower engine. The hull, completed and ready for launching in July, was loaded onto two flat cars and taken down to Boom lake on the railroad branch the Northern Pacific had constructed in May of 1876 for Eber Bly's sawmill. Once the hull was launched in the lake, construction continued and the engine was installed; when completed, the *White Swan* could carry twenty-five passengers. The boat operated from about August to the end of October of 1877.

In February of 1878 Alsop and one of the Mahlum's decided to rebuild the *White Swan* into a boat suitable for the lumber trade on the Mississippi between Brainerd and Pokegama Falls; this would put the *White Swan* into direct competition with Houghton's, *City of Aitkin* and, if successful, would prove a boon to Brainerd's merchants. The newly rebuilt hull was launched into the Mississippi at the docks below the railroad bridge in March. The machinery and boilers were made at the North Star Iron Works of Minneapolis. The engine was fifty-horsepower, the hull seventy feet long, sixteen feet wide, and the hold three feet; the boat was built by Ed White, who also built the *City of Aitkin* for George Houghton. The work was pushed with all

possible dispatch because of the very early and unexpected opening of the river, which was entirely free from ice; the steamer was expected to commence regular trips to Pokegama early in April.

The *Brainerd Tribune* provided this account of the newly rebuilt *White Swan's* maiden voyage on April 6th 1878, "The steamer *White Swan* was steamed up this afternoon by Captain Alsop for her first or trial trip, and though the experiment was sought to be privately made, a goodly number scented the game from afar and were promptly on hand and on board long before the starting time. The *Tribune* editor was, of course on hand, and at the proper time she left her moorings at the docks at the N. P. steam water-works, heavily freighted with many happy hearts and Captain Alsop's countenance beamed with satisfaction and pleasure as she steamed gaily and proudly off up the river. She soon, however, reached the ferry rope, and no one being on hand to obey the demand for passage, the only alternative was to turn about and run down stream. In doing so she unfortunately struck a blind pier sunk just below the ferry landing in the channel of the river for holding a boom buoy, and careened once or twice causing the steam to escape from the escape valve of the boilers, and considerably alarming most of the ladies and some of the gentlemen, and Mr. Alsop was importuned to run ashore and leave behind some of his passengers he had on board. It was not necessary that the demand be repeated and the guards had scarcely struck the shore when the exodus from her reminded one of a flock of sheep passing through a gap. With her load greatly diminished she started once more at about 5 o'clock, this time heading down stream, and those who remained on board enjoyed a delightful trip of about five miles and return, upon which the plucky little steamer proved the success of the enterprise and demonstrated the wisdom and judgement of her builders. She will start on Monday on her first trip for the Upper Mississippi and here are three cheers and success for the *White Swan*."

The steamer left Brainerd for Pokegama Falls on April 8th, returning to Aitkin on April 23rd. Although it carried a light load, the proprietors netted over \$60 on the trip; considered, at the time, to be a goodly sum. On



White Swan renamed the Pluck at the Alsop warehouse in Fargo, 1878.

Courtesy of North Dakota State University Library

June 16th the *White Swan* left the levee at the pump-house at 1:30 p. m. for an excursion trip up the river and return, arriving in Brainerd in the evening. Strawberries, ice cream and lemonade were served on board and a picnic on a convenient island were among the enjoyments of the occasion. Tickets for the round trip were fifty cents, children twenty-five cents. The steamer had recently been remodeled, outfitted with new machinery and provided with a comfortable cabin so that the trip could not fail to be one of pleasure, even in a rainstorm.

Owing to the unprecedented low water during the season of 1878, Messrs. Alsop and Mahlum were unable to make a single trip during the entire summer and autumn, and with the exception of two or three trips in the spring, had received no returns whatever from their

investment. By late summer, it had become clear to them that something needed to change. Unfortunately for their new venture, they had found themselves in competition upon the same waters and were compelled to divide the only trade that could be depended upon, the spring and fall run, with the newly constructed and larger boat of George Houghton, the *City of Aitkin*. So, receiving strong inducements from parties at Fargo, Dakota Territory, the proprietors decided to abandon the Mississippi and cast their *bird* upon the waters of the Red river of the North. Accordingly, the hull and machinery were loaded on a number of flat cars and shipped to Moorhead, where Captain Alsop engaged in rebuilding and getting the *White Swan* in shape as rapidly as possible for the remainder of the fall trade. On October 18th he launched the boat in the Red river, expressing his confidence in a profitable though brief fall trade to be followed the next season by a good run of business.

The boat would be the only one on the river that could ascend as far as Breckenridge and Fort Abercrombie; Alsop had also secured the transportation to Fargo of the wheat from the vast 40,000 acre Bonanza farm belonging to John L. and W. J. Grandin located thirty miles north of Moorhead. By mid-April 1879 Alsop had renamed the *White Swan* to the *Pluck* and by December 1879 he was planning on enlarging the *Pluck* to ninety-eight feet.

Lotta Lee

The *Lotta Lee*, also known as the *Lottie Lee*, was a steamboat built and christened near the end of July 1884 at Shell City, now a ghost town located on the Shell river in northern Wadena County. The boat was a sternwheeler built to carry farm produce, from the very productive Shell prairie, to Brainerd. The Shell prairie was producing bountiful crops but had no railroad so the farmers were compelled to haul their crops by wagon to the railroad at Verndale. Consequently, a group of farmers and businessmen at Shell City decided to build a boat to haul the produce down the Shell river into the Crow Wing river, landing at Brainerd. The *Lotta Lee* made one trip and was never able to return to Shell City.

After the one-hundred-fifty-mile trip on the Shell, Crow Wing and Mississippi rivers, the steamboat arrived in Brainerd at 5 p. m. on September 12th, Captain J. W. Speelman was in charge. The *Lotta Lee* was said to be neat, trim and well built, sixty-two feet long, twelve foot beam, sixteen feet across the deck, and two-and-one-half feet amidships, having a capacity of thirty tons on twelve inches of water, and she could pull barges that would carry twenty tons more, said barges drawing twelve inches of water.

Between her arrival on September 12th and her eventual departure for Shell City, Captain Speelman advertised several trips from Brainerd to Fort Ripley but, because of engine problems, these excursions were canceled. In late September the *Lotta Lee* was at the Morrison County Fair near Little Falls. On the 28th, the boat left Little Falls on its return to Shell City. By early October, the boat was again docked in Brainerd; the reason for its return remains unknown. However, on October 6th of 1884 the *Lotta Lee* took a trip downriver to Fort Ripley. The fort was reached about noon and the excursionists spent a few hours, very pleasantly, looking over the government buildings that had stood on that spot for over a half century. Some of the buildings were in quite good condition, owing, no doubt, to the solid and substantial manner in which they were constructed, while others were falling to pieces. Returning by moonlight was the most delightful part of the whole trip and the *Brainerd Dispatch* pronounced the *Lotta Lee* a fine boat, expressing its trust that Captain Speelman would “realize his most sanguine hopes from his enterprise.” The boat was docked north of the railroad bridge and no further mention was found of the *Lotta Lee* until July of 1888, when it was announced that the Brainerd Boat Club had purchased the steamer, moving it to Rice lake, repairing it, installing a new boiler and engine, and operating it as a pleasure boat.

On July 4th of 1889, a celebration sponsored by the Brainerd Boat Club and Liberty Hose Company Number 3, took place at Rice lake. The program consisted of a picnic, bowery dance and excursions up the river on the steamer *Lotta Lee*. Boat races, tub races, walking a greased pole over the water, etc., were also featured. Plenty of boats were advertised to be on hand for parties desiring to rent them; in the evening a grand display of fireworks was given from the steamboat. Various conveyances carried people to and from the lake, leaving the



Lotta Lee, ca. 1884.
Courtesy of *Brainerd DailyDispatch*

First National Bank corner at 8 a. m. for the first trip. In late July the *Lotta Lee* hauled a wanigan and *bateau* upriver to Aitkin for the Price Brothers. Between July and September, the steamboat made several more excursions upriver; one, a moonlight cruise with music and dancing, to Mission lake; another, a trip to Black Bear lake, to enjoy the magnificent and colorful scenery; the roundtrip cost fifty cents.

On July 28th 1890, the *Lotta Lee* made the first trip of the season carrying merchandise from Rice lake to Grand Rapids. A. J. Demueles, William Onstine and A. E. Whitney were some of those onboard planning to enjoy a hunting and fishing trip upriver.

The *Grand Rapids Eagle* gave this vivid description of the trip, “The Brainerd boat, *Lottie Lee*, had a tough trip, consuming eight days on the ‘passage.’ History is silent as to what was the chief cause, whether weakness of the steamer’s engines to pass rapids, the bother of running logs, low water, improper proportion of whiskey to head supply, or all combined. It is said that the aforesaid whiskey gave out the very first day; if true, there was too much grub, and the hands were overfed. Two days were consumed in getting over one bad place—Pine Rapids. Crew and passengers had to warp her over, by windlass. One person states that from the third day blueberries were the only food. Among the able bodied passengers were Captain Powers, City Treasurer Demueles, Alderman Whitney, Billy Onstine (and dog), and Win Green, all of Brainerd. J. Cullen swung the commander’s cutlass. When the boat touched the Grand Rapids dock, the distinguished crowd were cordially received by Chief Drumbeater, and other officials. Some of the party returned by rail, and the rest will go down river in birch canoes to save time.”

A week later the *Grand Rapids Eagle* published a second account of the trip, “We have received the following unique notes, claimed to have been purloined from the seat trousers pocket of “Windy” Green, of Brainerd, and supposed to be the ‘log’ of the *Lottie Lee*, of her recent trip here bringing the Powers Hardware stock. What “Windy” intends to do with the paper is a mystery, unless he expected disaster, and that he only would escape to tell the story. The ‘log’ is as follows:

“Left Brainerd Wednesday at 6 a.m.

“Nothing remarkable till Pine River was reached. There were tied up.

“Crew and passenger list is as follows: Jim Cullen, Master, otherwise, Young-man-not-afraid-of-his-steam-whistle; Billy Onstine, Rain-in-the-face; Gus Whitney, Sitting Bull; “Windy” (S. W.) Green, Two Billies; Andy Wallace, Back-up-and-get-it; Walter Fife, Long String; Burt Powers, Big Ox. Big Ox under detail to trim colors, being a military man.

“Started with 8 cases beer, one of brandy, and good supply of lemons and ice.

“Struck logs 8 miles below Aitkin, 7 hours getting through. Replenished beer, ice and vegetables. Struck jam 12 miles above Aitkin, 7 hours. On passing each obstruction each man had two bottles——; One Bull in lieu of that had one quart lemonade. At Sutton’s Rapids stuck; one half day to get through.

“Sandy River Rapids, stuck, 14 hours; Crooked Rapids, 13 hours to get through. Here Rain-in-the-face lost his drawers, blew off drying line on deck.

“Made Pine Rapids after 48 hours hard work with full crew and heavy head of steam. Here One Bull lost pants. At first trouble below Aitkin, he fell into stream and ripped his pants. At Aitkin he bought cheap jeans, at Pine River lost first pair, thrown overboard by unknown man.

“Great experience at jacking logs. This good crew to employ for that. One Bull inebriated on lemonade; tied fast on deck to save him.

“Left part of cargo at Pine Rapids; Not-afraid-of-his-whistle, with Winchester and 170 rounds to watch it.

“5 p. m. Wednesday, the 8th day—Grand Rapids in sight. Will replenish our viands.

“N. B. If this is floated ashore, sealed in a bottle, it will indicate that we are all drownd-ed. If not we will all take a ‘smile.’

“2nd N. B. We are safe and have had the ‘smile.’”

The Brainerd Boat Club, once again, arranged for a Fourth of July celebration at their grounds at Rice lake in 1891. At 10 a. m. a grand parade of horribles and ragamuffins took place through the principal streets. The afternoon sports consisted of boating, steamboat races, dancing. etc. Busses ran to the boat landing from the First National Bank corner, during the afternoon, to accommodate those who desired to attend.

According to the *Minneapolis Lumberman*, in the spring of 1892, the *Lotta Lee* was caught by the early logs streaming down the Mississippi; the steamer was smashed to pieces and laid as a wreck in the Brainerd flowage until it sank.

Mayflower

In late August of 1900, Mr. Lively announced that he had just finished a beautiful steamer of fifteen tons, which would ply the Mississippi during the boating season. It was neatly arranged and finished for the accommodation of passengers as well as freight. It would make a regular trip to Pine river and return each week, stopping at all points to deliver and receive supplies. Mr. Lively made a specialty of excursions, and he was ready at all times to accommodate pleasure seekers. When he was ready to deliver the boat to Rice lake, he found that he had nothing with which to build a smokestack so he used a wooden barrel as a stack. Despite several fires in the barrel, he finally delivered a badly smoked up boat. The boat's carrying capacity was fifty passengers and twelve tons of freight.



*August Schultz, posthumously awarded the Carnegie Hero Award for bravery, ca. 1899.
Courtesy of Robert Brecht*

On June 7th, 1908 the *Brainerd Dispatch* provided the following account of an accident occurring on the *Mayflower*; "Two dead bodies lie in the undertaking rooms of D. M. Clark & Co. as the result of a weak railing on the steamboat owned by J. C. Herbst and Arvid Erickson.

"Mr. Schultz, with a party of friends, had been picnicking on the east side of the lake. The boat, which was in charge of Mr. Erickson assisted by a volunteer crew, went over and took them aboard. Mrs. G. H. Woerner, who was one of the party, fell or was pushed against a gangway gate which gave way throwing her into the water. August Schultz went to her assistance and succeeded in getting her to the boat and she was helped on board. Fred Hagadorn, who had been steering the boat left the wheel, with no one in charge, and jumped in after Schultz, according to his, Hagadorn's story. He succeeded in getting him to the side of the boat and several men were reaching down to help them onto the boat when about 16 feet of the railing on that side of the boat gave way and a number of men were thrown overboard. All were saved except Schultz, who was already exhausted, and D. W. Wayt. According to Hagadorn, Wayt got hold of the railing and tried to climb onto the other side and fell in again.

"The bodies of the drowned men were recovered about an hour and a half after the accident, but life of course, was extinct. They were brought to the undertaking rooms of Clark & Co. and an inquest held commencing at about 8:30 this morning.

"A jury was impaneled consisting of John Hess, C. N. Anderson, C. H. Kylo, Adam Bellmuth, John Wise and John Cochran. Mrs. G. H. Woerner, Fred Hagadorn, Arvid Erickson, J. J. Kaufman, J. A. Kaufman and others were sworn all telling substantially the same story. The jury after hearing the evidence brought in the

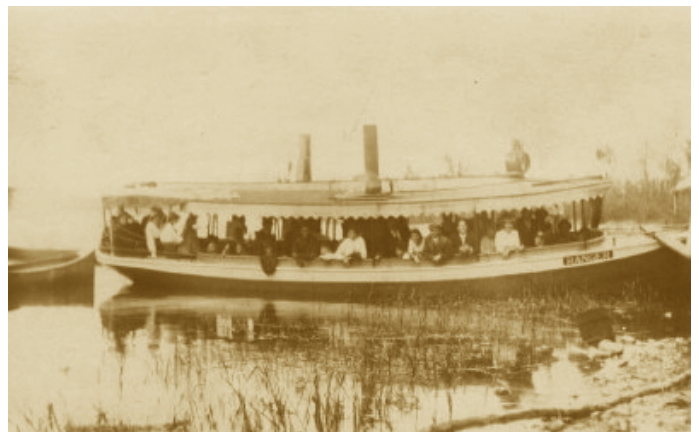
verdict of ‘accidental death while trying to save a human life,’ in the case of Mr. Schultz, and ‘accidental death,’ in the case of Mr. Wayt. No censure or blame was placed on anyone by the verdict.

“...Mr. Schultz was about 45 years of age and Mr. Wayt about 55, it is said. Both leave families Mr. Schultz leaving a wife and three children and Mr. Wayt a wife and several grown children.”

Mr. Schultz received, posthumously, the Carnegie Hero Award. The Carnegie Hero Commission chose recipients of this award based on their bravery in putting their own lives at risk while saving, or attempting to save, someone else’s life. Some died in the attempt, as August did. We may never have known about this award had the family not commemorated it on his monument in Evergreen Cemetery.

Ranger

Malon Mayo, born in 1874, spent nearly all his working life in various enterprises connected with the river and in the building and operation of boats used in the logging and excursion industry. The *Ranger*, *Theodora* and *Myrtis*, named for two of his daughters, were known as three of his boats. No history of activities on the river would be complete without Mr. Mayo’s name appearing many times. Allegedly, according to Mayo, one of the most profitable features of Mississippi river navigation was the suing of boom companies; the steamboat operators soon found out that, if the river was blocked so as to make navigation impossible, the steamboat operator could sue the boom company. Some of the most profitable seasons the boats had were those when they were tied up by logs most of the season. One of the Aitkin steamers allegedly found the river blocked so the captain went ashore and immediately began suit as usual. It was blocked by a huge logjam and the company was afraid the jam would let go and destroy the boat. They completely encircled the boat with piling. The suit and countersuits dragged on for a long time and the boat was still there after nearly fifty years. Sand eventually covered it and all that could be seen was a boat-shaped island with a few pilings sticking up out of the water.



*Ranger, used to carry excursionists and supplies from Lum Park upriver.
Courtesy of Judy Sundquist*

Sometime around 1908 a new chapter in river boating opened with the arrival of coal-burning steam launches. These boats were nearly all homemade and many were beautiful boats built by real craftsmen. A number of the engines and boilers, used in these launches, were also homemade and months were spent on their construction. The *Ranger*, built by Malon Mayo, was one of these; she was a forty-four-foot steam launch running excursion and supply trips to Riverton and other points on the river. Most of the owners mined their own coal. Mining coal near Brainerd sounds a bit odd; however, the Minnesota & International (M. & I.) railroad had a large coal dock on the edge of the river on the south side of the Mill Avenue bridge and after years of spilling coal onto the river bank an extremely large pile of coal and dirt was built up. Boat owners would pull up alongside the bank and dig out lumps of coal mixed with dirt; it was said that more black dirt than coal was burned.

The Dam

Sometime in early June 1874, Charles F. Kindred arrived in Brainerd as Chief Clerk in the Northern Pacific Land Department. On December 9th, 1880, Frederick Billings, President of the Northern Pacific, sent a letter ordering that Kindred be fired for “personal speculation, favoritism and absolute personal dishonesty.”

The Mississippi Water Power and Boom Company was created, in early 1884, by Charles F. Kindred, as part of a scheme to build a dam costing \$50,000, across the Mississippi river at Brainerd. Kindred claimed the dam would produce twenty-feet of head, creating 25,000-horsepower, which was grossly overstated; the back bay would provide boorage for 50,000,000 logs. All logs destined for Minneapolis would be chuted through the dam and, above the dam, a lake was to be created as a bay of the river called Rice lake. The citizens of Crow Wing County voted overwhelmingly to have the county issue \$50,000 in bonds to pay for constructing the dam. Two places were considered as possible sites, one was near the west end of Kingwood Street and the other was in Northeast Brainerd at the Schwartz Brickyard. A great deal of wrangling among the citizens of Brainerd took place as to the dam location; many Brainerd citizens wanted the dam at the Kingwood Street location because they believed it would greatly enhance the value of their property in the city. In any case, a purchase agreement



Charles Firman Kindred
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society

could not be negotiated, with landowner Charles Ahrens, for land on the west side of the river for the Kingwood location. C. J. A. Morris, who built the dam in St. Cloud, early in December of 1886, created the plans and specifications for the new dam; it was he who would be in charge of its construction.

In late January 1887, Kindred had a bill introduced into the Minnesota house and senate for a change in the location of the dam. It was rushed through both branches, with lightning speed, on the same day it was introduced. That evening, Kindred got the speaker and clerk of the senate to prepare the bill for the governor's signature and he personally aroused the latter from his bed to sign it. A delegation came from Brainerd to oppose the bill, but found it had already been made a law. After months of sniping, it was finally decided to build the dam at its present location. Near the end of January 1887, someone sent Kindred an anonymous letter threatening to put a bullet through him if he built the dam at the brickyard, but it did not stop the pile driver for a moment and the work continued. At the end of January 1887, the steam pile driver was at work on the east side of the river, and the horses worked on the west side. The piles were all of sufficient size to insure a good solid structure, and were driven about eighteen feet into the ground, the water was three-and-a-half feet deep at that point. There were some twenty teams engaged in

hauling rock and timber to the site of construction and about thirty men were engaged in driving and getting the piles in shape. A small sawmill was erected nearby with a capacity of 75,000 feet daily; it was to be used to saw the timber for the dam; after which, it would be converted into a sawmill for general use. By the end of March, the railroad had extended the brick yard track, completed in May 1881, to the dam. By the end of September, eighty men, constantly employed, were as busy as bees. The work had progressed to such a degree that it was not difficult to detect the day-to-day progress. Just above the dam a track was laid out over the water and a dump-cart continually piled sand from the hill into the river; although not actually necessary, this was to be followed up across the river and when completed, would take the greater part of the strain off the dam proper. A large force of men were at work loading flat boats with stone and floating them down to the works where they were used as fill; still another crew was at work rolling cord after cord of stone down the bank, which was conveyed by a pushcart to its destination. Men were at work placing the timbers that formed the apron and also laying the floor of the flume, which was corked with oakum. The west abutment or crib rose some thirty-five feet above the water and the hill behind it was graded down by a large force of shovelers to use as fill. When

completed, the dam was to be as solid as a wall of rock; it was claimed there would be power enough to drive the wheels of all the factories that could locate in the vicinity. In October, the city council issued \$25,000 in bonds to acquire land on which to build the approaches to the bridge located on top of the dam. Near the end of November, Kindred appeared before the city council, and, after explaining that the dam company had expended the \$50,000 of county money besides \$40,000 raised in other ways, and the work was still unfinished, asked the council to issue bonds in the sum of \$25,000 in order that the work might proceed. There was only one way out, for the city to come forward and, by funding these bonds, secure the completion of the work, which would otherwise have been stopped.

At the end of February 1888, over one hundred men were at work on the dam and it was expected it would be completed in early March. The *Brainerd Dispatch* wrote, "Parties who have not paid much attention to the matter can hardly appreciate the gigantic enterprise, but to a comprehensive mind the building of this dam is one of the grandest accomplishments that could have been devised for Brainerd's future welfare." When completed, the dam was made of wooden piling driven inside a belt one hundred feet wide and the spaces between were filled with rock. On top, the piles were bolted together with heavy planking like a cover. The sluiceway was fifty feet wide. The material used was 2,500,000 feet of pine, 70,000 feet of oak, 800 tons of iron, and 2,800 cords of stone. The water at the dam began running over the structure for the first time on April 17th. Above the dam, the water had reached the depth of about twenty-five feet, while below, there was hardly enough to float a log. The marshes and boom reservoirs had all been filled and were ready to hold every



*Brainerd Dam, 1888.
Frank Jay Haynes
Courtesy of Montana Historical Society*

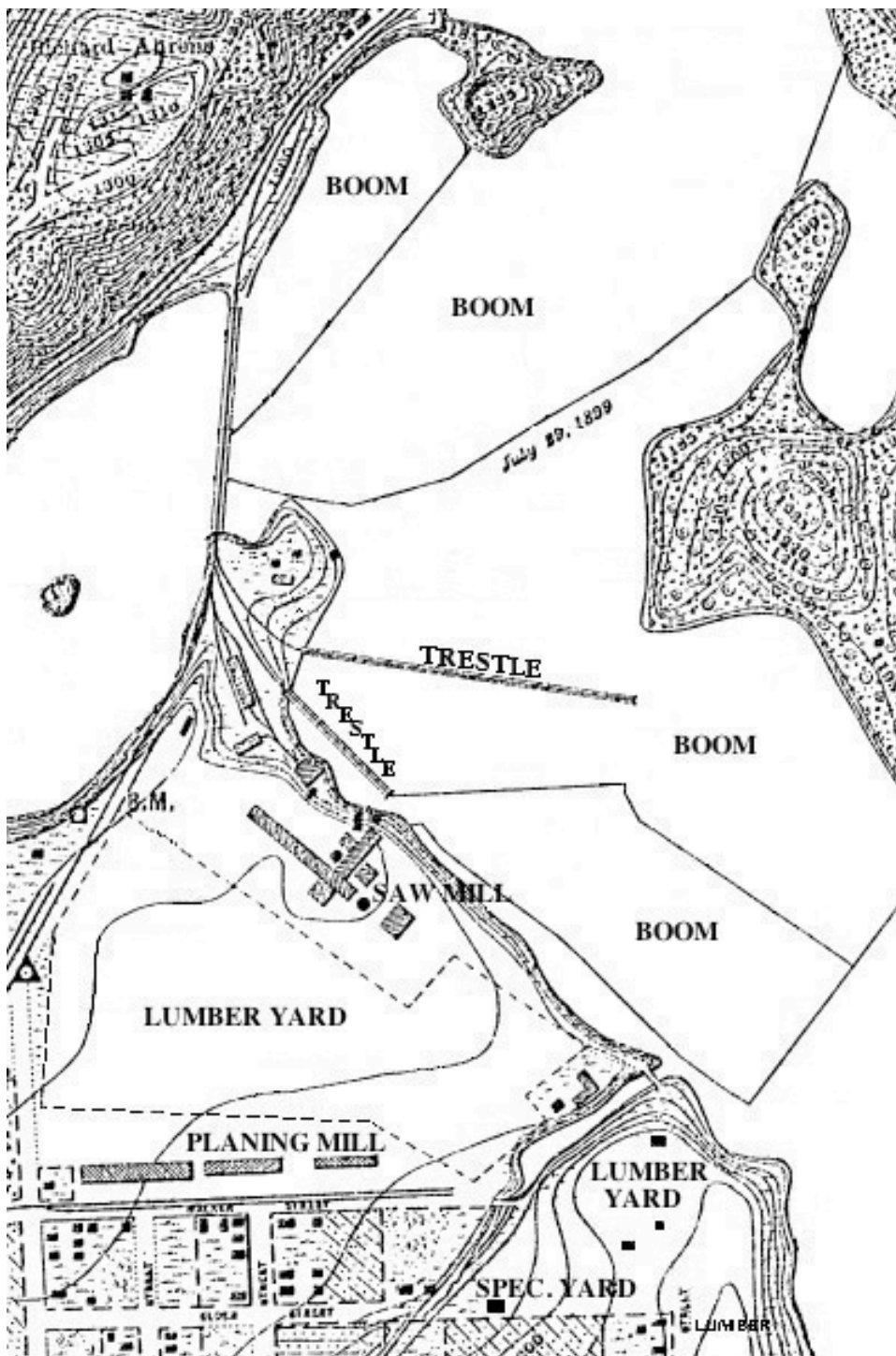
log that came down the river, if necessary. In October of 1888, Charles F. Kindred abruptly announced he was leaving Brainerd and moving permanently to Philadelphia. The *Brainerd Dispatch*, via the *Lumberman*, carried this note, "With the irony of fate, Mr. Kindred is about to remove from Brainerd, and will shake the dust of the 'City of the Pines' from his feet, disgusted with the treatment he has received by the citizens of that place who have not approved altogether his various schemes for municipal improvements through the medium of corporations organized in the interests of Mr. Kindred." He died in Philadelphia on October 26th, 1918. As early as November of 1888, the city council authorized buying timber to repair the dam and by April of 1889, \$5,000 worth of repairs had been made. Sometime in March or April of 1889, the Mississippi Water Power and Boom Company was declared bankrupt and fell into receivership. On April 29th its property, including the dam, was sold at a sheriff's sale in order to satisfy a judgment of \$17,657.37.

Brainerd Lumber Company

In May 1892, the Northern Mill company's sawmill was moved from Gull River to northeast Brainerd near where Rice lake met the Mississippi river. By the first week of October, the buildings at the new mill, had been completed and the machinery was being placed in position.

In June 1893, the Northern Mill company began the construction of a large planing mill to be used in connection with its sawmill; it would have the capability of sawing 200,000 feet of lumber in ten hours, enabling the filling of orders for finished lumber from its Brainerd mill. On November 21st, the Northern Mill Company became the Brainerd Lumber Company.

In January 1895, the Brainerd & Northern Minnesota Railroad (BN & NM) was dumping logs into the Mississippi at the rate of 600,000 feet every twenty-four hours. By the end of June, the Brainerd Lumber Company, second in size only to the Northern Pacific in employment, had enlarged and improved the mills and yards. The lumber company operated two band saws and a fifty-two inch gang saw besides the other necessary



*Brainerd Lumber Company Yards and Booms.
Mississippi River Commission Map (226), 1898*

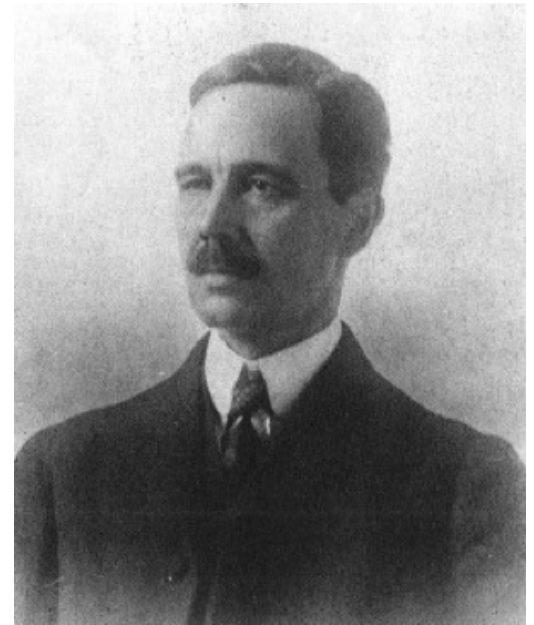
machinery, such as trimmers, two edgers, two shingle mills, lath mills, etc. Power was furnished by seven boilers and two Buckeye engines, one 800-horsepower and the other 200-horsepower. Logs were hauled by the B & NM to a trestle built about twelve to fifteen hundred feet out into Rice lake on which were run the cars bringing the logs up to where they were converted into lumber in the mill; the lumber was then passed to the three hundred twenty-six foot long sorting shed where it was moved out on overhead conveyors; there were several drops for the various lengths, each falling to its own platform where it was graded and loaded on three hundred lumber trucks to be transferred to different parts of the yard. Ten miles of tracks, covering all parts of the yard, ran from both sides of the sorting shed. A four-room Sturtevant dry kiln, 75x85 feet was used to dry the lumber; the refuse from the mill, such as slabs, edgings and sawdust were burned in an immense burner one hundred feet high and thirty feet in diameter. The planing mill was powered by boilers and a two hundred-horsepower Buckeye engine. From the planing mill along one side of the yard to the Northern Pacific spur track, the lumber company had one thousand feet of standard-gauge track over which were switched the

cars to be loaded for shipment. The company had its own water and light plant. Since the mill was run both night and day, it was necessary to have electric lights; the light plant housed two dynamos, each capable of running five hundred lights. In the yard and mills, there were about five hundred incandescent lights and fifteen

arc lights. At night, the yard and mills were as light as day and the plant attracted hundreds of night visitors who thought the lights were very pretty. Across the river at the landing of the B & NM railroad, there were lights for use when that company ran night logging trains from the woods. The company erected a large boarding house for the employees who did not live in Brainerd. About four or five hundred were employed, when the mill was running at its full capacity. Throughout the mills and yard there was a complete system of fire protection, pipes ran from the water plant to all parts of the yard and hydrants were placed at intervals so that the entire yard could be reached by hose. Throughout the sawmill and the planing mill, a sprinkler system was installed and no lumber was allowed to be piled within two hundred feet of either. A new office building was constructed at the northeast corner of Mill Avenue and 'Q' Street; after the Brainerd Lumber company closed in 1905, this building was brought to the corner of Sixth and Washington in 1906 and became Van's Cafe (now the Sawmill Inn).

Lum Park

Early in June 1909, Leon E. Lum, an early Brainerd attorney, offered to donate a tract of land located at Rice lake as a park. The piece of land donated by Mr. Lum comprised about eighteen acres and lay along the southeast shore of Rice lake. The *Brainerd Dispatch* provided this description, "There one finds picturesque clumps of white birch, sturdy oaks, graceful elms and whispering aspens, with here and there a white or Norway pine and hemlock. The contour of the lake shore is perfect for the purposes of a park, a point of land giving a site for a dock which will leave an almost land locked basin for an anchorage for small boats. The land lies well up above a handsome sandy beach, and is picturesquely rolling. At the upper end of the lake a beautiful little creek meanders through the forest to the lake and Mr. Lum has suggested that this land be cleared of underbrush as an ideal place where women can go with children and let them play in the creek to their hearts' content without the slightest possible danger of accident." By the end of June, preparations were being made for a celebration to be held at the park on July 4th. A large dance pavilion was built and a tent was ordered from the Cities to be erected over the pavilion so dancing could proceed regardless of the weather. A program of boat and other races was planned and a log rolling contest between expert river drivers was to be held. Sandwiches, coffee, soft drinks and ice cream were sold to the several thousand people who celebrated at the new park. The principal feature of the day was a ten-mile launch race won by the *Sincerity*, owned by Harold Forsberg. In the evening there was a fireworks display.



Leon E. Lum

In February 1910, the park was officially accepted and formally named Lum Park. In April, Frank H. Nutter, landscape architect and engineer of Minneapolis, was hired by the park board to draw plans for the park. Early in September 1912, the park was cleared and leveled, paths and roads built and various other improvements were being instituted by the park board. In July 1913, the *Brainerd Dispatch* noted the residents of Northeast Brainerd were complaining that boys frequenting the park were bathing in Rice lake without swimming suits, stating the matter had been brought to the attention of the police as there was a law regulating such things and it should be enforced.

In April 1916, the White Brothers completed the plans for the new buildings to be erected in the park. A new pavilion measuring 48x135 feet was the main building to be constructed. Its maple dance floor was 45x100

feet and the adjoining lobby held tables and chairs where refreshments were served. The interior was twelve feet high, covered by a heavy truss roof, eliminating all posts. On all sides, four-foot openings covered by screens for ventilation were provided. A boathouse measuring 26x48 feet, equipped to provide storage for more than



*Lum Park Memorial entrance built in 1926; donated by Dr. Lum in memory of his brother, ca. 1940s.
Courtesy of Andy Walsh*

twenty-seven boats, was built close to the lake with a platform from which they could be launched. The bath house, 16x60 feet, contained thirty booths and was divided into two sections, half reserved for men, half for women. The refreshment stand was twenty-four feet square with a three-foot cement walk surrounding it. The open band stand was twenty feet square. Electric lights were installed, walks were built and flower beds laid out; the entire cost of the improvements was approximately \$10,000. A sixteen-passenger Studebaker bus, top speed twenty miles an hour, was purchased and operated between Brainerd and the park. The newly enhanced park opened for business on July 4th with an estimated attendance of 2,500; picnickers were so numerous that

they formed a continuous community. The Brainerd City Band presented a concert and the lake was dotted with steamboats, launches, boats and canoes; the bath house was in constant use. Tom “Fatty” Wood, local movie star, gave an exhibition of swimming.

It was becoming apparent that the park was too small to accommodate the crowds wanting to use it and the matter was discussed with Mr. Lum. On January 19, 1925, the city of Brainerd was once again the recipient of a generous gift from Lum in the form of a twenty-six-acre addition adjoining his earlier park donation, increasing the total amount of land owned by the city at Rice lake to slightly over forty-one acres. When he died on March 18th, 1926 at his lake home in Nisswa, Leon Lum left an estate estimated at over half a million dollars. He was buried in Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis.

Trading Post

“...I found my father in charge of the construction of a building for Fuller & Huestis. That building still stands; it is the old Indian trading post and has been used for fifty-two years as saloon, hotel, trading post and dwelling. Hundreds of carloads of blueberries and tons and tons of deer saddles pass through its doors during the many years when James Hallett has it as a trading post. This is the first frame commercial building in the growing city.” I. U. White, 1923.

Isaac U. White arrived in Brainerd on September 20th, 1870, he was sixteen years old. The old trading post was the first job on which young White worked and it came near being the last. As soon as the location was decided upon, a small sawmill was built on the river bank between the current location of the railroad bridge and the Laurel Street



*Trading Post, ca. 1927.
Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society*

bridge; the first lumber sawed went into the building of the trading post. It was being erected for Fuller and Hustis, to be used as a saloon, gambling house, etc. A bowling alley was built in connection. The alley was built from lumber sawed from newly cut logs and dressed after it was laid. The roof of the alley was covered with wood slabs from the nearby sawmill.



*A teamster and his oxen in front of the Trading Post, ca. 1885.
Courtesy of Meg McGowan*

While Ike was dressing the alleys, the weight of the slabs, which were green and right out of the water, proved too much for the supports and the structure collapsed burying the young man in the debris. Ike said that the most vivid recollection he had of the accident was how badly his father was scared. He was not seriously injured, though he was pretty nearly dead when they got him out.

From about 1875 until his death in 1904, the trading post was operated by James H. Hallett. According to Anna Himrod, "The building was located just north of the railroad tracks and a little west of First Street. It faced south and one of the old trails of early Brainerd came

west on Laurel and turned north around the post. It was a two-story frame building, with a store front. Just west of this frame building, so close as to seem connected to it, stood a long log building that had fallen into decay by the early nineties. It was a low building, constructed of large round logs, and it also faced south. Mr. Hallett used part of it for an ice house and part for storing hides and furs. It is likely that this log building was actually the trading post erected by Joseph Wakefield in 1856."

Hallett did a booming trade with the Ojibwe and others who provided furs, thousands of bushels of blueberries, cranberries, tons of venison, fish, ducks and other game. Moccasins and other items made by the Ojibwe were sold at the trading post. The amount of blueberries, cranberries, venison, fish, ducks and other wild game shipped from Brainerd in the 1870s-1890s is mind-boggling. In November of 1874 Hallett sent a railroad car containing a thousand balsam and fir trees to Chicago to be used as Christmas trees. It was claimed that in 1881 there were 13,000 bushels of blueberries shipped from Brainerd to parts east; in 1886 it was predicted that 15,000 bushels would be shipped, which would bring between \$25,000-\$30,000 into the city. In May of 1884, nearly six tons of fish were shipped out west. The cranberry crop, in 1890, was described as the largest ever known and it was predicted that at least 6,000 bushels would be shipped that season. During November of 1894, more than a thousand saddles of venison had been brought to the city; as many as sixty deer were brought in one load.

A small barn located on the grounds of the trading post accidentally caught fire in June of 1886. A twenty-five pound keg of powder was stored in the barn and when it exploded it shattered the small building and the explosion jarred the ground for fully ten blocks. On January 7th, 1924 an overheated stovepipe threatened to burn the trading post down; it was the oldest building in Brainerd. The fire department was able to extinguish the fire before it caused much damage. On July 29th, 1929, a grass fire threatened the building but the fire department was able to extinguish the fire before it did any damage. As of this writing, the eventual fate of the trading post remains unknown.

‘Soiled Doves’

Brainerd, as many other towns, has a long history of ‘red light’ districts within the confines of the city; the residents of Brainerd who dwelt in its ‘red light’ district were often known as ‘soiled doves.’ The ‘doves’ contributed a steady and hefty stream of revenue for the city coffers in the form of fines. The houses of ill-fame were labeled ‘female boarding houses,’ on the *Sanborn Map of 1892*, and were primarily confined to the area near the river, namely west Laurel Street, South Second and South Third Streets south of Front Street. The escapades of three of the most notorious mistresses of Brainerd’s houses of ill-fame, as well as the fines paid and exploits of the lesser known, are chronicled below.

Cora Carey

There was quite a little row at Cora Carey’s place on Laurel Street at the end of February 1889 and in the fracas a brakeman, whose name could not be learned, was shot though not dangerously. It seems that the fellow went there and attempted to destroy the house; when he pulled down the chandelier, Cora thought it was time to settle him down and she whipped out a gun and fired, but the ball struck a rib and glanced off. No arrests were made.

Jack Smith, a barber who had been living in a house of ill-fame, visited Cora Carey’s house and was reportedly taken home on a “shutter.” While visiting one of the inmates at Cora’s place in mid-November 1890, Smith got into a fight with one of the inmates and knocked her down, when Mrs. Carey came to her rescue armed with a beer bottle, which she handled dexterously, managing to crack his skull, break his nose, cut six gashes in the back of his head and lay open his cheek. Jack, in fact, got all he wanted. Smith’s wife had Carey arrested for assault and she was fined \$10. According to the *Dispatch*, “Mrs. Carey is lucky in not getting a term in the penitentiary and Smith can thank his stars that she did not kill him, so both parties ought to be satisfied.”

Mrs. Albert Zievertowski came to Brainerd from Little Falls, in May of 1894, in order to retrieve her two daughters, Augusta, eighteen and Stella, sixteen, who had been working as domestics in Little Falls. The two girls were found in Cora Carey’s house of ill-fame, and while the girls did not want to return home; they, after considerable urging, agreed to leave with their mother. After the mother boarded the train for Little Falls, expecting the girls to join her, the two did not appear and she left the train and went back to Cora’s house to get them. Upon the girls’ return to Little Falls, they lodged a complaint against J. Lemieux, known in Brainerd as a “tin-horn” gambler, and Charles Baldi, owner of a candy store on Broadway, who had lured Augusta and Stella to Brainerd; the two were arrested and charged with seduction.

In April 1897, Cora was arraigned in municipal court, under a state law, and charged with keeping a house of ill-fame. She waived examination and was held to await the action of the grand jury, with bail provided in the sum of \$250. In September, the grand jury returned six indictments, one each against Cora Carey, Nell Tyson and Stella Brown, for keeping houses of ill-fame. In the cases of the women charged with keeping houses of ill-fame, they were arraigned and plead guilty, a fine of \$25 in each case being imposed.

After he was elected mayor in 1911, Henry P. Dunn decided to clean out all the dens of iniquity and force them into the outskirts of Brainerd along the river bank. Among the proprietors thus compelled to establish new quarters was one Cora Carey, who retaliated by issuing engraved invitations to the reopening of her “House of Pleasure,” and sent them to the wives of every prominent citizen in Brainerd.

Galena ‘Mollie’ O’Neill

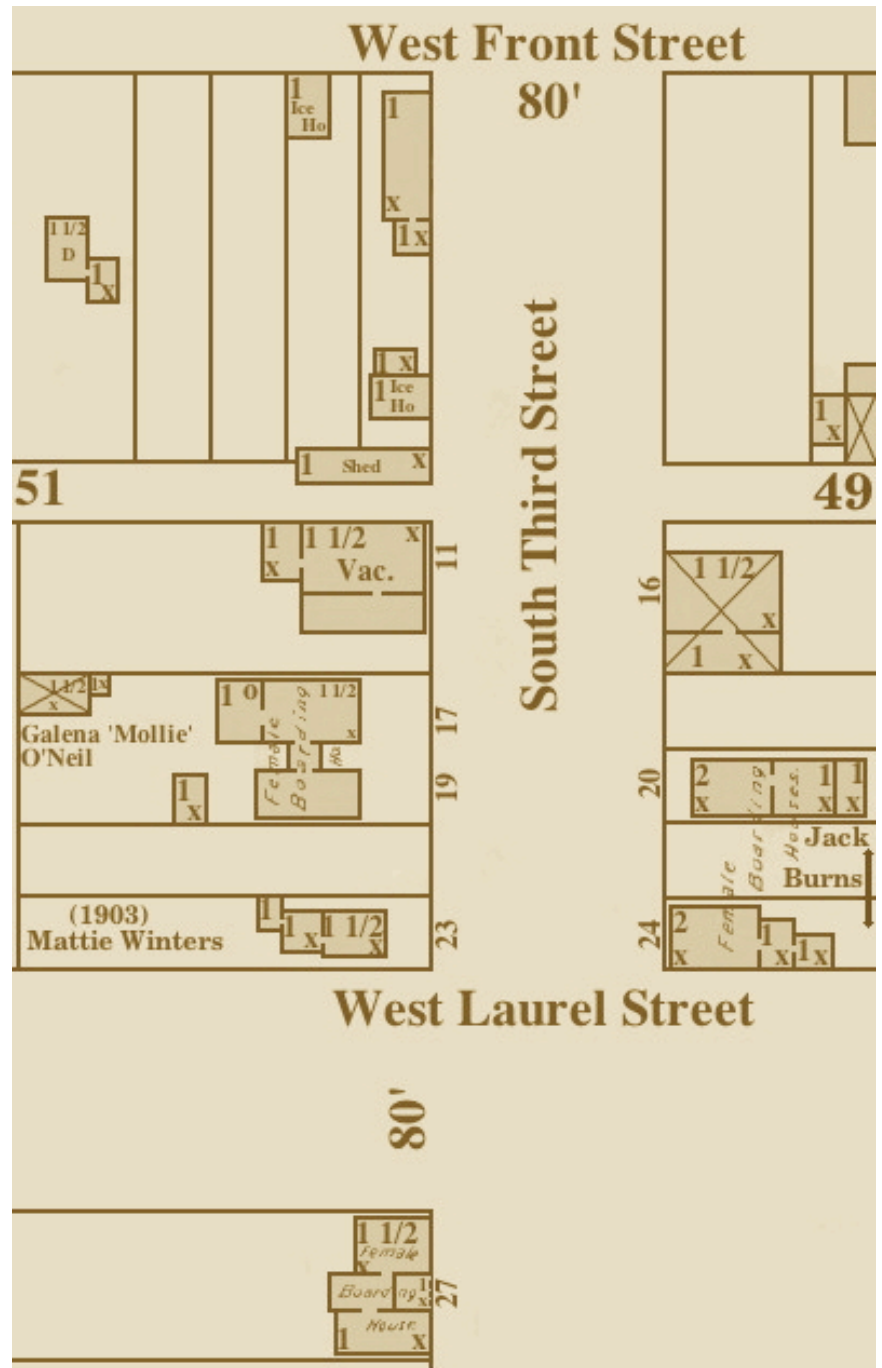
Upon the death of Jack O’Neill, proprietor of the Last Turn Saloon, on July 12th, 1883; the notorious, Galena ‘Mollie’ O’Neill, Jack’s wife, was appointed the administratrix of his estate; in August of 1884, ‘Mollie’ was removed from that position by the court and Peter Mertz was appointed in her place. The cause was “on account of ten barrels of prime goods” shipped to Wisconsin by Mrs. O’Neill, in her maiden name, and which

belonged to the estate. The goods were recalled and the matter was settled; after which, Mollie leased a saloon on Fourth Street and “opened up in good style.”

In October, she was arrested and charged with keeping a house of ill-fame. Mrs. O’Neill was found guilty of keeping a house of prostitution and fined \$50 and costs. A week later, a second trial of Mrs. J. O’Neill for keeping a house of ill-fame, was held; a jury was subpoenaed and were out only twenty minutes, when they brought in a verdict of guilty. The defendant made no defense whatever; the fine was one hundred dollars but the judge only imposed \$50 and costs. In June of 1885, ‘Mollie’ O’Neill was again arrested for selling liquor, without a license, in her house of ill-repute at the corner of Front and Fourth streets. In late August of 1885, Mrs. O’Neill engaged in a fist fight with one Georgia Owens; Mollie paid \$5 and costs for the fun of getting a black eye, while Georgia decided she would reside in the city jail for twenty days rather than pay her fine.

In late February of 1886, an inmate of Mollie’s house of ill-fame had a warrant issued for the arrest of one Edward Burns on complaint of his having stolen her stocking which contained a purse holding \$13 and a note for \$800 against an eastern party. Burns was arrested and when the officer examined the culprit, a garter was found in his coat pocket; this was the only incriminating evidence found. It became known, during the examination, that Burns and two friends were celebrating and wound up at Mrs. O’Neil’s, at which place they stayed no longer than ten minutes, but had been the only parties near the room from which the money had been stolen and the complainant swore she saw Burns come out of her room while she was in the hall. Since Burns could provide no reason for the garter being found in his possession, and as the woman identified it as her property by exhibiting the mate to it, which she was wearing at the time, and testifying that a garter was on the stocking which was stolen, the judge fined Burns \$10 and costs.

On the morning of May 31st, 1898, at about one thirty, thirty-eight-year-old Susan Deiter, an inmate of Mollie O’Neill’s house of ill-repute on Third Street, met with an accident that cost her life. During the early part



*Galena 'Mollie' O'Neil and Mattie Winters' houses of ill-fame on South Third Street.
1892 Sanborn Map*

of the evening, Susan suffered an epileptic seizure and was placed on a bed in her room where she partially recovered and fell asleep. A lighted lamp had been left in the room, on a sewing machine, standing by the door. It was supposed she partially awakened and tried to leave the room; in doing so, she knocked the lamp off the machine onto the floor. The broken lamp sprayed oil over her clothes, which were then ignited by the flame of the lamp; when first seen by others residing in the house, she was a mass of flames. While attempting to assist Susan, Mrs. O'Neill's clothing also caught fire but the flames were quickly extinguished, not, however, without serious burns to her hands and arms. Mrs. O'Neill then directed that a large rug be thrown around the burning woman and the flames were extinguished. By that time, nearly every piece of Susan's clothing had been consumed except her shoes. A doctor was called and provided medical aid, but nothing could be done for her except to administer opiates to relieve the pain. She was burned to a crisp from the top of her head to the tops of her shoes and died about 5 a. m. The house also caught fire, the fire department was called, and the flames were extinguished. The unfortunate woman was buried the next day. She had been an inmate of houses of ill-fame in Brainerd for more than twenty years and was known as "Pie-Faced Kate." Mrs. 'Mollie' O'Neill, for many years one of the best known denizens of the "shady West End resorts," died in her house on Third Street on March 18th, 1899 of cancer, she was fifty-nine years old; 'Mollie' was buried in Evergreen Cemetery in an unmarked grave near her husband, Jack.

Cole Younger

In June 1887, Jennie Sawyer, an old offender, was brought before the municipal court and charged with assault and disturbing the peace. According to the *Brainerd Dispatch*: "The trouble occurred at the Last Turn Saloon and the victim was Cole Younger, a one-eyed siren whose hair was originally black but which has been turned yellow by use of acids. Cole has got a record and she was not at all backward about her pedigree in the court room. After letting the women run out the length of their rope Judge Fleming announced that the matinee would close with one more act, that of the frail Jennie paying \$8.00 into the city treasury. Producing a large gold watch and a 38-calibre self-cocking revolver she asked the court to allow an officer to escort her to some three-ball [pawm shop] institution where she could 'put them up' and keep out of jail."

In August of 1888, Cole Younger tried to commit suicide by taking an overdose of morphine, but was unsuccessful. On a Saturday evening, in July of 1889, Ms. Younger went on a tear and smashed the glass and mirror in the Last Turn Saloon, she paid \$10 plus costs and swore out a warrant against William Crommett, owner of the saloon, for threatening to kill her but she failed to show up for the hearing and the charges against Crommett were dropped. In late July, Cole Younger, also known as May Crommett, wife of William, again had him arrested; this time for assault. William was convicted and assessed \$10 and costs. The next day he was arrested on a charge of robbery, again filed by his wife, for forcibly taking \$50 from her; he was allowed out on \$300 bail while waiting for trial; in mid-September, Crommett withdrew his plea of not guilty to the charge of robbery and plead guilty to grand larceny in the second degree and was sentenced to pay a fine of \$200 or be confined one hundred days in the county jail; he paid the fine and was released. Cole Younger was arrested and held on \$300 bail in mid-August; she was accused of rolling Phillip O'Neil, who had come to town and got himself "paralyzed drunk," in the alley behind the Last Turn. When he came to his senses, he found he had been robbed of \$90, the largest portion of which belonged to the school district of which he was treasurer. Part of the money was found on Cole Younger who claimed that she only got her share of the money and that it was divided among the gang at the Last Turn.

On January 24th, 1873 the common council, a forerunner of the city council of Brainerd, passed Ordinance Number 6 which attempted to suppress disorderly houses and houses of ill-fame and to provide for the arrest and punishment of the keepers thereof in order to prevent prostitution. Anyone convicted of keeping such houses by permitting lewd and lascivious conduct and prostitution, were, upon conviction, to be punished

by a fine of not less than twenty-five dollars, nor more than fifty dollars, or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than sixty days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. A person who became an occupant of any such aforementioned house, who indulged in lewd and lascivious conduct or prostitution, upon conviction, was to be punished by a fine not exceeding fifty dollars, or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding thirty days, or by both such fine and imprisonment. Whenever the owner of any house or building situated within the city of Brainerd, leased or rented it to any person as an assignation house, or house of prostitution, or ill-fame, would, upon conviction, be fined an amount not to exceed one hundred dollars, or less than twenty-five dollars.

In February of 1874 the following account of the inmates of one of the many brothels still in existence was presented by the *Brainerd Tribune*, “We are credibly informed by various persons acquainted with all the sickening circumstances, that there is a being in the shape of woman in this town who has for a long time been the keeper of a low brothel of infamy, which is frequented by the filthiest scum of low-lived humanity. The pasty den is said to be a blight on the worst of earthly hellholes, and its mistress, not content with plunging herself to the lowest strata of human depravity, has dragged her little children down with her; the oldest is but a child of twelve or thirteen years, and today she stands by the side of her mother, a shameless, brazen prostitute of the lowest order, whose diseased condition would be contamination to her own touch. Some persons, we believe, have offered to take her children, and raise them; but no, she haughtily refuses to let her children go, as she “has use for them as fast as they are big enough.”

According to the *Brainerd Tribune*, in June of 1877 the citizens of Brainerd were roused from their beds, and no small disturbance created, by a good deal of foul language, promiscuous shooting and drunken shouting of the feminine variety indulged in by a party of the demimonde out on a ‘time.’ They shot out a number of window panes in the O’Neil saloon (Last Turn), put a bullet through the window in Martin’s grocery store on Fifth street, and committed other depredations upon property and the ‘peace and dignity of the State of Minnesota.’ The next day they received a call from the sheriff, and were informed that they had but twenty-four hours in which to get out of town, and they ‘got.’

In January 1880, William Cook, a lumberman about thirty-two years of age, mistakenly took an overdose of morphine at “Mother Vinton’s” place and died. The *Tribune* remarked, “Medical assistance was soon called, but it was too late to be of any aid, and the soul of the poor, weak William Cook, from a sinful couch in a brothel, took its weary flight.”

At a house of ill-repute kept by a notorious and quarrelsome character known as ‘Fakir’ George, one Harry Burgess and wife had taken lodging; during the evening Burgess entered the room and began to beat his wife. ‘Fakir’ George’s wife then arrived and told Burgess to stop, whereupon he turned and began beating her. ‘Fakir’ George then put in an appearance and drew a revolver, firing three shots at Burgess but none of them took effect. Two of the balls passed through Burgess’ hat, one of them grazing his head. ‘Fakir’ George then hit him on the head with his revolver, inflicting a severe wound. A doctor was called and dressed the unconscious man’s wounds. ‘Fakir’ George was arrested but was soon released on bail. In May of 1881, Jack O’Neil, owner of the Last Turn Saloon, shot and killed ‘Fakir’ George at the Last Turn. After being arrested and charged with murder for the shooting, from his jail cell, O’Neil was quite willing to answer any questions that were asked. He said that ‘Fakir’ George had, at many different times, threatened to kill him. But the night before the shooting they had been “out” together and had parted as friends, shaking hands, etc. On the night of the killing, about six o’clock, ‘Fakir’ George came in, quarreling with another person. After ‘Fakir’ George hit his opponent on the head with his revolver, Jack O’Neil told ‘Fakir’ to go away and not create any disturbance. This seemed to irritate ‘Fakir’ George and he said to O’Neil, “Here you are, you son of a b—h go and heel [*sic*] yourself.” In other words, defend yourself. O’Neil, upon this invitation, went into the back room and returned with his rifle. He walked up to within ten feet of ‘Fakir’, who stood just in the door way, his rifle in his hands. ‘Fakir’ fired one shot which passed near O’Neil’s head tipping his hat to one side. O’Neil then returned the fire just as ‘Fakir’ turned and ran up the sidewalk, the ball entered his back. After the first shot, O’Neil fired again without

any effect, except the scare it gave to people on the sidewalk, one of whom felt the effect of it on the end of his nose, as it whistled by. Bleeding profusely, 'Fakir' ran about fifty feet west into a store, groaning, "My God! My God!" He still held his revolver in his hand, dropping it when he was nearly dead. There was some difference of opinion regarding O'Neil's position when he fired the fatal shot. Some thought he was outside of the building and that the last shot was the one that killed 'Fakir.' At the time of his death, 'Fakir' George was out on bail waiting to be tried on the charge of assault with intent to kill Harry Burgess in April. The general feeling existing among the best citizens was that 'Fakir' George was a dangerous character. A preliminary hearing, on the charge of murder, was held in front of Judge Chauncey B. Sleeper on May 30th. On May 31st Judge Sleeper rendered the verdict that Mr. O'Neill was not guilty of murder and discharged him from custody. The decision was considered a just one and was received with general satisfaction by everyone, under the circumstances and from the evidence elicited during the hearing.

On June 25th, 1881, the following notice appeared in the *Brainerd Tribune*, "Warning is hereby given that I have given special notice to all houses of ill-fame (the Tiff's house especially included), located on Front street, in the town of Brainerd, State of Minnesota, that they are required to remove from their present location on said street within ten days from the date of this order, and that unless the tenor and substance of this notice be carried into effect within and during that period, the specific requirements of the statutes to abate nuisances, in such cases made and provided, shall be carried into rigid execution, and a refusal to obey the command hereby given, shall subject the persons so refusing to obey, to a prompt and forcible ejection from such premises. My reasons for giving this order are evident. Front street is the principal thoroughfare of traffic in Brainerd, and a general pleasure route to the river as well, and respectable people are loth to travel thereon. Patience and lenience are no longer virtues to be entertained in this matter, and I propose to fulfill and enforce this, my official order, to the word and letter. A word to the wise is sufficient."

Signed, P. MERTZ, Sheriff,
Crow Wing County.

By July 2nd, the Tiff house of ill-repute had been removed from Front Street. As of July 22nd by virtue of the order issued previously by him, Sheriff Mertz proceeded to inaugurate more stringent measures relative to certain houses of ill-fame on Front Street. All but J. S. Burkhardt, Sarah Vinton, Kittie O'Hara, Pat Clifford and Tiny Clifford had obeyed the official mandate and vacated the above named street. These five, however, decided to stand pat, and awaited developments which, contrary to their anticipations, came sooner than expected. They were all brought before a justice of the peace, and bound over, on their own recognizance, for payment of one hundred dollars each. The sheriff stated that should his attention be called to their loose conduct on the street in the future, as in the past, matters would be made interesting for all offenders. Driving, promenading, etc., as these pleasures had been indulged in, was prohibited in the future, and it was to the advantage of all concerned to heed the timely admonition, "A word to the wise is sufficient." In April of 1882, Sheriff Mertz seized the property on Front Street previously owned by Sarah Vinton to be sold at auction. On July 30th, Sheriff Mertz issued the following notice to Alex Hardwick and Kittie Nixon, "You are hereby warned that it is an express and unreserved order, by virtue of my official duties as Sheriff of Crow Wing county, that if you desire to keep and maintain a house of prostitution within the limit of this community, you remove to the banks of the river, or across into Cass county, as a further toleration will not be allowed at your present location. You are hereby allowed the period of ten days to obey the tenor and command of this, my official mandate."

Mayor James S. Gardner issued an order for all houses of ill-fame in the city to be closed by May 17th, 1884. Any person found keeping or frequenting such a place after that date, would be prosecuted according to the provisions of Ordinance No. 2, which read as follows:

"SECTION 1. No person or persons shall keep within the limits of the city of Brainerd a disorderly or ill-governed house or place, or a house of ill-fame, or place resorted to for the purpose of prostitution, assignation, fornication, or for the resort of persons of ill-name, ill-fame or dishonest conversation, or common

prostitutes, and no person shall procure or suffer to come together at such house or place any of the above described persons; nor commit nor suffer to be committed in such house or place any immoral, lewd, lascivious, immodest or other improper conduct or behavior, or any reveling, rioting or disturbance. Any person violating the provisions or any provision of this section, shall, upon conviction thereof before the city justice, be punished by a fine not exceeding \$100, and not less than \$25, and the cost of prosecution, or imprisonment in the county jail for a period not exceeding ninety days, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

“SECTION 2. Any person who shall within the limits of the city of Brainerd visit, resort to, or frequent or be found in a disorderly house or place, or a house of ill-fame, or place resorted to for purposes of prostitution, assignation, fornication, or for the resort of persons of ill-name, or ill-fame, or dishonest conversation or common prostitutes, shall, upon conviction thereof before the city justice of said city, be punished by a fine of not less than five nor more than ten dollars and the costs of prosecution, or by imprisonment in the county jail for a period not exceeding thirty days, or both such fine and imprisonment.

“SECTION 3. No person or persons shall knowingly let, hire, lease or demise any room, house, building or premises within the limits of the city of Brainerd to any person or person of ill-name or ill-fame, or who are known by common reputation to be common prostitutes, or the keepers or proprietors of houses of ill-fame, or places resorted to for purposes of immodest or immoral conduct or behavior. Any person or persons violating any of the provisions of this section shall, upon conviction thereof before the city justice of said city, be punished by a fine not exceeding one hundred dollars nor less than fifty dollars and the cost of prosecution, or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding ninety days, or by both such fine and imprisonment.”

In early July of 1884, a general raid was made by the police on the houses of ill-repute and the result was, eleven females of easy virtue and two male companions being brought to the cooler. They were up before His Honor, Judge Douglas, and were very loud in their denunciation of the mayor and the police officers. The names of the first batch were Mary Collins, Jennie Covington, Frankie Cook, Fannie Bennett and Nellie Stuart, who were found in Jennie Clark's house on Third Street, and all refused to plead guilty. But after being taken to jail they relented and three or four paid their fine, which was \$12.85 in each case with the exception of the landlady, whose fine was fixed at \$27.40, and who deserved a trial which was to be held at a later date. Rather than stand trial, Jennie Clark plead guilty to keeping a house of ill-fame and was fined \$25 and costs amounting to \$29. Jennie Gray, the cook, was brought up and told such a straight story about being the widowed mother of three small children, and that she did not know the reputation of the house when she hired out to do the culinary work for the proprietor, that she was dismissed without fine. In Annie Ball's house were found Lou Peterson, Nellie St. Claire and Mate Baldwin, who all plead guilty, with an emphasis that meant business. Their ardor cooled down a little when the judge said, “\$10 and costs” amounting to \$12.40 to each of the inmates, and \$27.40 for the mistress of the house, making \$64.60 for the four, which she paid, and the girls departed to their haunts of iniquity and sin. Among the last batch was found two male specimens, giving their names as T. Summers and Andy Henderson; they were fined \$7.40 each.

In January of 1885, three houses of ill-repute were operating in the city and contributing some \$90 a month to the city treasury. In April, twenty ‘soiled doves’ replenished the treasury to the tune of \$120; in May twenty ‘doves’ contributed \$130. In May, the city council objected to the “females of easy virtue” being on the streets between the hours of eleven p. m. and five a. m. During the last week in May, Police Chief Shontell said that there were “dire proceedings” being carried on in Gregory Park and that no less than three “working” girls had been escorted to their abode, by the police, with the admonition that, if found there again under such circumstances, they would be locked up. In July, eighteen ‘soiled doves’ contributed \$151 to the city treasury. In September, sixteen ‘doves’ paid their monthly fine to the municipal judge; in December nineteen paid fines amounting to \$158.25; the landladies paid \$11.75 each and the inmates \$6.75 each.

In early July, a brute by the name of Elias Flynn, also known as Ed Kennedy, entered the room of Maggie Steel, which was located in a house of ill-fame at the corner of Third and Laurel streets, by means of a

ladder, and when inside the room he picked up a piece of an iron bar and commenced hammering the woman over the head with it. She was asleep at the time and he pounded her until he thought she was dead and then skipped out the same way he came in. She aroused enough to call for help and the inmates of the house broke open the door, Flynn having locked it on the inside when he went in, and they immediately called a policeman and sent for a physician. The injuries were very severe, her head was terribly wounded. She recovered, although it was at first thought she could not survive the dreadful attack. The officers finally found Flynn, three days later, hiding at J. J. Howe & Company's sawmill and immediately arrested him. When caught, he was in his stocking feet, having taken his shoes off when he entered the room so as not to awaken the woman, and when he ran away he did not have time to get them. It was said that he told the officers that the reason he did not leave town after committing the dastardly act was because he heard she was not dead and he intended to remain and kill her. He was brought up on charges with a continuance in order to allow him employ a lawyer and get money to defray expenses.

In January of 1886, the police raided the houses of ill-fame and succeeded in capturing five male bums, who were brought up before Judge Fleming. One man paid his fine, "another proved himself to be the knight of the culinary department of one of the houses," and the other three agreed to leave the city before six o'clock. The authorities were hard at work trying to rid the city of the large number of thieves and bums, and it was hoped their efforts would not be in vain. In early June, twenty-four 'doves' paid \$330 in fines, in July sixteen paid their monthly fines. At the end of July, Bell Wagner and Matilda Gilbert, two 'doves', were caught fighting on Third Street and were fined \$20 each or thirty days in the city jail; they paid their fines. In early December, the 'soiled doves' made their monthly pilgrimage to the municipal court and reimbursed the city treasury to the extent of over two hundred dollars. John Coakley was brought up before the municipal court, in December on a charge of threatening to inflict great bodily harm on Cora Bruder, a 'soiled dove'; he was placed under \$200 bond to keep the peace for three months.

In January of 1887, Maud Fleming, soiled female well known in Brainerd, sued the Northern Pacific Railroad for \$10,000 in damages caused by falling through a defective platform at Crow Wing. One of the cruelest and most inhumane cases occurred in April. Clara McDonald was allegedly the wife of one John McDonald and they had been staying at a house of ill-repute. Mrs. McDonald was pregnant and had been saving up what little money she could get for use, when the time came, for the birth of her child. Her savage husband found out she had this money and endeavored to take it away from her; in the melee that followed, he kicked and pounded her until she was forced to give it up. This brought on a premature birth and the woman was taken to the rear of the old Last Turn Saloon building and left without proper care, and where there was no fire or other comforts. Clara died there from exposure. Her father arrived from Clitherall and took her remains there for burial. It was an extremely sad case and her father seemed grief-stricken, but expressed himself as glad that his daughter was dead and out of her sin and troubles. James Malloy, also in April, was arrested for keeping a house of ill-fame on Laurel Street. He plead guilty and paid \$10 and costs to the city. In May, Georgie Sutherland, "an auburn-haired female of 35 summers and as many winters," was arrested and charged with keeping a place resorted to for immoral conduct, and Charles Vanasse and Peter Chouinard for frequenting her place, having been caught occupying the same apartments with her. Georgie, who was the mother of six small children, didn't see anything so very naughty about the transaction and admitted to having been caught at it. She, therefore, begged for the mercy of the court; in consideration of that, she agreed to go and sin no more and her case was dismissed. The men, who were caught with her, were each fined \$10 and costs and, in default thereof, were boarded at the city jail. In June, the 'soiled doves' were up before the municipal court and paid their monthly fines, fourteen paying \$10 each and six \$25 each. Mabel Smith, an inmate of Jennie Clark's house who had been assaulted in May by William Cassion, was also arrested in July, for indecent language and dancing the can-can in the street. When brought up before the court, she denied the latter charge and demanded that the chief of police arrest Jennie Clark who was as much of an offender as she. Based upon the facts, it was

thought best by the court to dismiss the case unless both parties could be tried. In July, twenty-four “fast females” paid their monthly fines amounting to \$372. A *Daily News* reporter sarcastically remarked that he would like to see some movement inaugurated that would increase the number of ‘doves’, “soiled” ones, in Brainerd so that the city could build sewers from the revenue obtained. In September, \$310 was collected from the ‘soiled doves’ as their regular monthly fine; in November \$351.75 was collected.

In February of 1888, the police were notified that there was a girl, fifteen years of age, in one of the bawdy houses on Third Street, and they proceeded to the place, took the “deluded creature” out and sent her to her people on the morning train. The girl claimed that she had gone there to see a friend and was induced to stay. The ‘doves’ paid \$348 into the city treasury as their monthly fines. In March, prior to the mayoral election in November, the *Brainerd Dispatch* noted, “The moral rottenness of certain portions of the city has become a matter of common notoriety, and it is today a stench in the nostrils of all decent people. Drunkenness, gambling and prostitution exist and to say that they have not been tolerated by the mayor, with the aid of the “court,” carefully guarded is saying what is not true. The lame and limping excuse given that they have always been allowed to exist and therefore should be continued is an insult to decency and honesty.” Shortly after the note above was published, the police issued new regulations instructing the gamblers that their places must be closed, as no gambling would be allowed. The saloon keepers would be allowed to run their places during the weekdays but must close them up promptly at midnight Saturday and keep them closed until Sunday at midnight. The ‘doves’ would be allowed to remain in the city as long as they kept off the streets and out of the way of respectable people; the monthly fine system was to be continued. Male habitués of the houses would be obliged to leave or take the consequences—four men were arrested, paying a total of \$19.40 in fines. In the month of June, nearly \$390 was collected in fines from the ‘doves.’

Sixteen ‘doves’ paid fines amounting to \$281 in January of 1889. In May, the ‘doves’ paid \$285 in fines. In early May, a lumberman found the body of a woman floating in the river some four miles below the city among the logs. He tied one end of a rope around the body and the other to a tree, and came back to Brainerd to notify the coroner, who went to the place with the police chief and an undertaker, to bring the remains to the city. Upon viewing the body, it was recognized to be that of Pauline Bell, so-called, a prostitute known to police circles for many years. A note had been found on the west side of the river by some boys about the 18th of April, signed “Bell Nelson,” the woman’s correct name, which read as follows: “To friends I have known in earlier days: I have led a fast and sinful life, have tried hard to reform, but its of no use. Seems hard to die so young. To those who find this I wish to say, search for my body below the Brainerd dam. Good-bye.” She had lived with a saloon hanger-on for some time and when told of the circumstances he broke down and cried like a baby. He said she had been gone for four weeks and he supposed she was with her boy in Wisconsin. The county buried her. In June, the city council declared it had done everything it could, via the passage of city ordinances, to curb gambling houses and houses of ill-fame and it was now up to the mayor to have the ordinances enforced. Later in June, after the city council had been told that Dr. Werner Hemstead, mayor, had told a ‘dove’ that since he was “running the city” it would be alright for her to open a house of ill-fame; a vote was taken, by the city council, on the passage of Ordinance 82, over the mayor’s veto; there were six votes in favor of so doing and one against, the measure was ordered enforced. The city treasury was replenished in July by the women of ill-repute who paid fines amounting to \$457. Once again, the city ordered all of the ‘doves’ to leave town by August 1st; in addition, they were ordered to pay their regular monthly fine before departing. Twelve objected and were jailed, but later the majority paid up and were released. In September, the city council decided it would consent to allowing the houses of ill-repute to remain in the city, if they were moved off Laurel Street and confined to a certain area of the city; few had moved by the middle of September and the *Brainerd Dispatch* remarked, “If we remember rightly the gilded palaces of sin were allowed to remain in this city if they would move off Laurel street to a certain locality. They haven’t moved to any great extent.” The chief of police

reported that thirty-six arrests were made in September, twenty-four for frequenting houses of ill-fame and six for being proprietors of the same; the 'doves' paid their monthly fines amounting to \$350.

In June of 1891, Claude Crowley, mistress of one of the houses of ill-fame on Third Street, got into a drunken brawl with Fannie Grant, an inmate of her house, which resulted in Crowley striking her opponent over the head with a stove poker with such force as to fracture her skull and inflict a dangerous scalp wound. A doctor was called, who sewed up the wound; however, not until the woman was very weak from the loss of blood. Speculation had it that Grant would recover. Crowley was charged with assault and found guilty; she was fined \$30 or forty days in jail. Having the necessary cash, she deposited \$30 and went merrily on her way. The fines for June amounted to \$684, and of that amount \$550 was paid by the "creatures of easy virtue who inhabit that part of the city near the bridge." The *Dispatch* further noted, "Mrs. Mattie Winters was one of the unfortunate human beings which the police swooped down upon on Tuesday night, and she occupied a reserved seat in the police court on Wednesday morning. The charge against her was for keeping a house of ill-fame, and her fine was fixed at \$25 and costs or forty days in jail. Her bank account being overdrawn she was committed and will celebrate her 4th of July behind the bars.

"Flossie Eldridge, a member of the frail sisterhood from Hillsboro, N. Dakota, was fined \$10 and costs yesterday afternoon for being a frequenter. The woman managed to get roaring drunk during the night by means of whiskey passed in through the grates [at the jail] and her case could not be considered until afternoon on account of her condition.

"John Kinney, for paying a visit to the red-curtain dives on Tuesday night, was fined \$11.75 on Wednesday morning.

"John Flynn, better known as 'Blinky,' was given a sentence of 40 days in jail or a \$50 fine for assaulting a man on Wednesday. Owing to a deficiency in his savings bank account he lies in jail.

"J. McHenry, John Smith and Frank Hurdy are three more who will celebrate the national holiday behind the bars, the two former for looking upon the wine in its roseate hue, and the latter for frequenting a house of ill-fame." The municipal court fines for the month of November were \$538.40, of which amount the women of ill-repute contributed \$452.25. In December, the municipal court was a very busy place. Jennie Winters was fined \$12.40 for being drunk and disorderly, while her companion in sin, Mary Tiffit, was fined \$15 for frequenting a house of ill-fame; both were sent to jail in default of the fine. John McCormick and A. H. Reid each went up for thirty days for being found in a house of ill-fame. Claude Crowley, for keeping a house of ill-fame, was given ninety days, which she decided to serve rather than put up one hundred silver dollars.

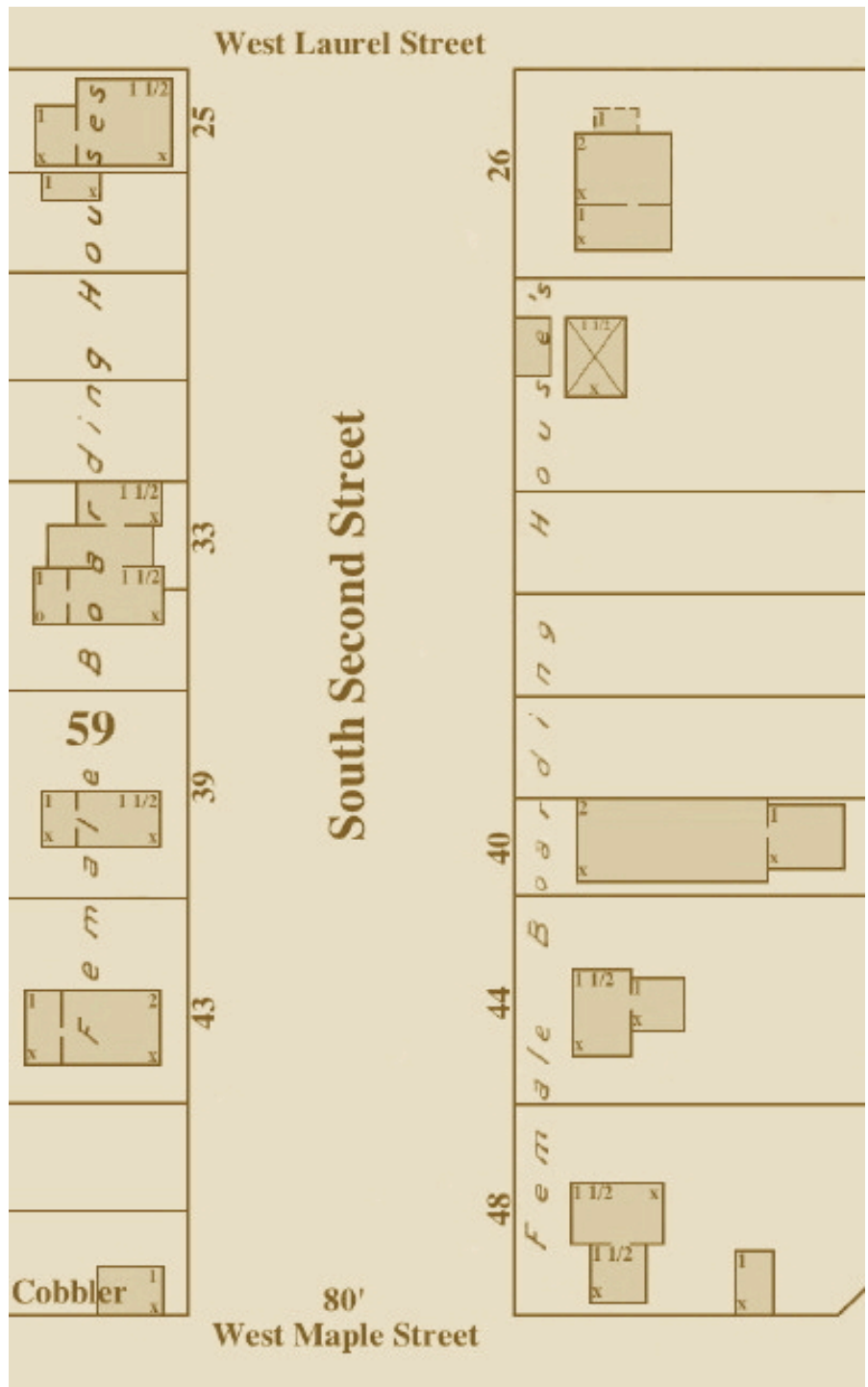
Forty-two members of the 'soiled doves' paid \$1,140.75 into the city treasury in March of 1892. In June, three 'doves' were arrested for disorderly conduct and lodged in the city lock-up, where they assisted in a concert led by the Salvation Army captain; the 'doves' each paid a \$7.40 fine and were released. A satchel belonging to Deputy United States Marshal Robert Beaulieu was found in the vacant lot at the corner of Third and Laurel Streets in September, it contained a revolver, handcuffs and a number of warrants for people in the Brainerd area. The satchel had been cut open with a knife and the contents searched. Just beyond the satchel, Beaulieu's pocket-book containing passes on every railroad in the state, was found. It looked, for a time, as though Mr. Beaulieu had met with foul play and the articles were taken to the county attorney's office, but later in the day the gentleman's whereabouts were located, and it was ascertained that the articles were stolen from him while he was enjoying the sociability of the city. It would seem that he was not a very reliable man to be retained in the position which he occupied—he had been in a state of insensibility, produced by over indulgence, at the Stratton House for the greater part of the time since his arrival in the city. Conjecture had it that this was probably his last trip in an official capacity. The occupants of the houses of ill-fame paid fines of \$862 in November.

The fines collected by the city for April of 1893 made quite a showing. The fines collected amounted to \$952.95, of which, nearly \$700 was paid by the houses of ill-fame.

In March of 1895, the police rounded up a gang of “young East Brainerd toughs” in a house of ill-fame and they were fined \$10. The *Dispatch* refrained from publishing their names because their families, were “highly respected.” Hannah Paulson, an inmate of Stella Brown’s Third Street resort, committed suicide in December by taking a dose of carbolic acid. Before she died, she made the statement that her “lover” had disavowed her and she did not want to live any longer.

In December of 1896, the city council adopted another ordinance to restrain and punish prostitutes.

The girls of easy virtue went on strike in February of 1897. They objected to the amount of fines imposed by the municipal court and wanted them reduced by one-half. The judge refused to be dictated to, as to what fines he should impose, and fined them the usual \$11.40. The women refused to pay and their houses were closed. One house put up a large sign “Furnished Rooms to Rent.” In March, Jessie Harris, “a sporting lady of ebony hue,” was before the court, charged with keeping a house of ill-fame. She admitted the charge and was fined \$100 or 90 days in jail; since Jessie was unable to pay the one hundred dollar fine, she was confined in the jail. Also in March, Stella Brown and Nellie Tyson, were before the municipal court for keeping houses of ill-fame. The arrest was made under the state law, which made the offense a felony. They waived examination and were bound over to await the action of the grand jury, bail being fixed at \$250. They were arrested on complaint of Ella Connors, “a lady of ebony hue,” who had been forbidden by the police to open a house of this character, and she didn’t intend to allow white women to run a house if she could not. Bessie Winters was arrested on complaint of Jessie Harris for assault in October, and the “colored” woman’s face was evidence that an assault had been committed. The Winters girl plead guilty on and was fined \$10.



*Female Boarding Houses, aka houses of ill-fame, lined up on South Second Street.
1892 Sanborn Fire Map*

One afternoon in late March of 1900, a husky Norwegian by the name of Andrew Paulson, for a short time, created a lively scene at the corner of Fifth and Laurel Streets. Evidently Andrew had consumed too much fire-water, and longing for some rich, red gore, purchased a revolver from Ed White and started down the street prepared to bestow mayhem on everything he met. Quite a number of men were on the street, but when they saw Andrew flourishing his gun they had business elsewhere, and disappeared like magic. After turning the corner at Fifth and Laurel he encountered a horse tied to a post, which he proceeded to use as a target, putting a bullet through the horse's neck. At this point, a dog advanced to the attack; Andrew sent a .32 calibre bullet spinning after the audacious animal, who retired with howls of pain. Paulson then proceeded to a house of ill-repute on Third Street, and was taking a deliberate aim through the window at one of the girls, his revolver cocked ready for use, when a policeman, who had followed him, landed on him, pinning his arms to his side, and by the force of the jump forced Paulson to the ground, where he was speedily disarmed and handcuffed. The policeman's timely jump undoubtedly saved the girl's life, as she stood directly in front of the window, not three feet distant from the muzzle of the revolver. Paulson was brought before the municipal court, by which time he had recovered from his desire for blood, and plead guilty to a charge of discharging fire arms in the city limits. The judge fined him \$25 or fifteen days in jail. A civil suit was then brought against Paulson for injury to the horse, by its owner, which was settled with the payment of \$18. Having paid for the horse, Paulson had no money to pay his fine, hence he was boarded at the city's expense. In July, Mrs. Edward Kief, an inmate of a house of ill-fame on Third Street became very ill and was taken to the Lumbermen's Hospital for treatment. She recovered from her illness, but became violently insane. Since she had lived in town only a month, and was a non-resident of the state, Crow Wing county officials did not have the authority to take charge of her, hence Judge McFadden wrote to the secretary of the state board of correction for authority to send her to an asylum. She was to be held in jail until the state board was heard from. The woman claimed her home was in Topeka, Kansas. The police arrested two women, Mrs. Ella Kirkpatrick and Tina English in December, for visiting immoral houses. They plead guilty to the charge in municipal court and were fined \$35 each, or thirty days confinement in the city jail. Mrs. Kirkpatrick's sister, Mrs. Morrison, interfered with the police while making the arrest, and she was arrested for the offense, plead guilty and was given seven days. Myrtle Madden, an inmate of a Third Street house of ill-fame, tried to commit suicide by taking twenty-one grains of corrosive sublimate (chloride of mercury). Her action was soon discovered and medical aid summoned; through substantial efforts, she was rescued from the clutch of the grim reaper and she fully recovered. The cause of her action was said to be due to the fact that a certain young man of the city, of whom she had become enamored, had passed her up and had not visited her for a couple of weeks. Hence she thought life was not worth living.

Mrs. Ella Kirkpatrick was again arrested in March of 1901 and charged with immoral conduct. She plead not guilty and her case was continued with bail fixed at \$100. She had been given a thirty day sentence in December, on the same charge, but was released after fifteen days when her fine was paid. Mrs. Kirkpatrick, whose arrest for immoral conduct was previously mentioned, had her trial in the municipal court and was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine of forty dollars or serve forty days in jail. Her friends tried to get the money to secure her release.

Near the end of March, Mayor A. J Halsted came up with a plan to move the houses of ill-repute in the city, located on and adjacent to Laurel street near the bridge, which had long been considered a great disgrace and scandal; he said it seemed a shame that the inmates of these places should be allowed to flaunt their disreputable business in the faces of respectable people, whose business or pleasure required them to travel that street. The mayor recommended that, as the houses seemed a necessary evil that could not be entirely abolished, they be compelled to move to some isolated place. It was with this end in view that he devised a plan to move these people, finding a suitable place where they would be totally unobserved by the traveling public. He did not want to disclose the place, since arrangements were not entirely completed, but would be in a short time and

the removal made. Apparently the mayor ran into some resistance because the houses were not closed and no further mention was made of his plan.

Mrs. Minnie Sullivan and Mrs. Mary Bakke, were arrested in early May for conducting a disorderly house. The police had suspected for some time that they were conducting a place of this character, but they did not have sufficient evidence to warrant an arrest. Both plead guilty and were assessed the usual amount of \$26.75. Nellie Johnson, familiarly known as "Irish Nell," contributed \$5.00 to the city treasury on a charge of drunkenness, and \$8.75 for frequenting a disreputable house. Mrs. Minnie Sullivan was again brought before the judge in June to answer to the charge of unwomanly conduct. She did not think that she had been guilty of any offense and her case was continued to a later date. The 'doves' paid \$154 in fines in July.

On November 21st, 1903, Mary Tiffit Nash, age 26, wife of Sam Nash, committed suicide at her home in Tenstrike by swallowing a large dose of carbolic acid. Mary Tiffit was well known to many residents of Brainerd; she had been quite a notorious character and was a frequent caller at the police court on various charges. She was indicted in district court in 1902 on the charge of robbery, but was acquitted. While in Brainerd, she was commonly known as "Topsy" Tiffit and was one of at least seven children of Joseph Tiffit who ran a well-known house of ill-fame in Brainerd for many years beginning in about 1881.

In June of 1907, Mrs. Mary Sylvester drew seventy days in jail, in default of \$75, in municipal court for conducting an immoral resort.

In October of 1909, a petition, signed by Alderman Gardner and twenty-five citizens, most from the First and Fifth Wards, called on the mayor and police to enforce state laws, as a house of ill-fame on Water Street was selling liquor without a license and to minors.

In May of 1910, the *Dispatch* printed this account of a city council meeting, "A petition was presented asking the mayor and city council to rid the city of houses of ill-fame and then the fun began. Alderman Gardner, who was one of the signers of the petition, spoke in favor of enforcing the law and declared it was up to the mayor and police force to do their sworn duty.

"Mayor Ousdahl declared that he did not know that any such place existed. That if the petitioners should furnish evidence that there was such a place he would see that the charges were prosecuted. Alderman Gardner insisted that not only the mayor but everyone in Brainerd knew that such a place existed and that it was up to the mayor to do his duty.

"Alderman Paine defended the course of the mayor and thought that the parties kicking should take the initiative to enforce the laws.

"Alderman Drexler, here asked the city clerk if it was not a fact that the proprietor of the house, or someone, came up voluntarily the first day of each month and plead guilty to the charge of keeping a house of ill-fame. The clerk replied that such was the case and asked Mayor Ousdahl, if that was not good evidence that the place existed.

"Mayor Ousdahl insisted that he wanted to have the law enforced as badly as anyone, but that he was powerless unless the complainants furnished the evidence.

"Alderman Drexler said the whole sum and substance of the matter was that some of the aldermen were afraid of the loss of that \$1,200 a year from the monthly fines. For his part he did not want to be in partnership with joints of that kind and that the city was in partnership as long as it let them run under the tacit understanding now existing.

"A motion was made that the petition be referred to the mayor. The president was unable to determine the result of a *viva voce* vote and ordered a roll call, which resulted in the motion being carried, by the following vote: Ayes—Robertson, Zakariasen, Gardner, Kjellquist and Drexler. Nays—Henning, Cardle, Paine and Dieckhaus." A week following the above meeting, the grand jury reported the lax manner in which the laws of the state and city ordinances had been enforced in regard to houses of ill-fame. After being informed of their existence the mayor and his officers had still not closed them down."

In July of 1911, unable to endure the noise and drunken hilarity any longer, residents of the south side called the police who arrested Charles Harmon, Joe Harmon and Georgia Ball, who were carrying on a kind of bacchanalian orgy while frolicking around a house on South Third Street in very abbreviated night clothes. They were arraigned on a charge of being drunk and disorderly and each in turn plead guilty and was fined \$10 and costs or ten days in the city jail. None of the trio had any money and so they spent a quiet period of repentance in the city's cooler.

Legend has it that Brainerd, in its early days, was known far and wide as “the whorehouse on the Mississippi.”

Bridges

Currently there are five bridges in operation over the Mississippi. Through the years, there have been a number of bridges built to carry trains, horses, wagons, pedestrians and now truck and automobile traffic over the river at Brainerd, the first was completed in 1870, the most recent, completed in 1979 and dedicated in 1980.

Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge—First

The *Duluth Minnesotian* noted, “At about the time long before set, on Monday night, March 6th, [1871] the track layers arrived with the iron road within the town precincts of Brainerd, amidst the bonfires and rejoicings of the people, who improvised, also, an informal celebration of the event by a little champagne excitement offered to the Engineer corps at the storehouse of merchant Hill; where all went off joyfully, but soberly and in order; every one seeming to feel that a great stride in progress had been achieved. During Thursday a deep fill detained the track layers from reaching the bridge across the Mississippi; but by Tuesday night all was ready for the train to move forward; and on Wednesday morning tracks being down and the bridge across the Mississippi, seeking the farther beyond where sunset reposes. The Bridge is a handsome and substantial result of the skill of Engineers and Contractors combined. It consists of three spans of the Howe-Truss pattern of 140 feet each, with approaches of about 100 feet on the East side and sixty feet on the West—the centre span being a “through” bridge; its floor being sixty feet above the water, capable of allowing the passage of steamers under it without the necessity of a ‘draw.’”

On March 11, 1871 a special train with Brainerd resident, Adam Brown as the engineer, left the NP Junction, near Carlton, bound for Brainerd 114 miles away. The special carried a number of Northern Pacific officials including J. Cooke, financier of the railroad from New York. In later years Brown recalled the very cold weather and the fact that the engine cab was open with no curtains to block the wind and that he and the fireman suffered from the cold the entire length of the roundtrip. Since there was only a single track and no turntable, the train had to be backed-up all the way on its return trip, which took four hours.

On July 27th, 1875 at about eight o'clock in the morning, the bridge collapsed killing five people including James Peterkin, engineer and Richard Grandon, fireman; Buk-quan-ja, Mrs. Magdaline Aitkin and Abbie Johnson, who died of her injuries the next day, all passengers. Five other passengers were injured but survived. The conductor and brakeman were able to jump from the train and run across the bridge as it was



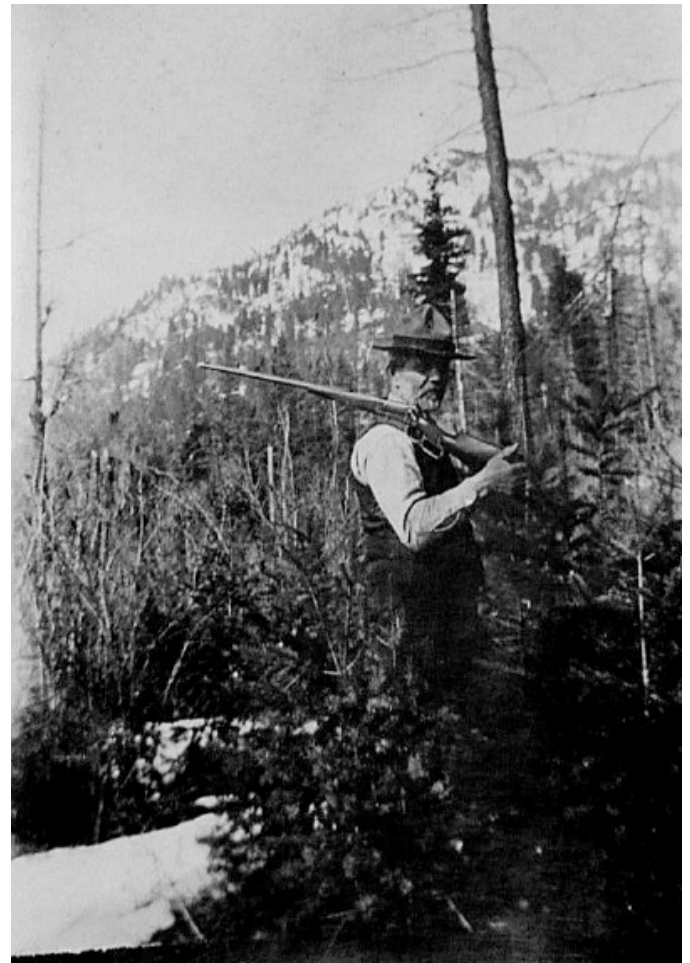
*Northern Pacific Bridge, ca. 1872.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

collapsing behind them. The central span of the bridge broke down under the weight of the cars loaded with iron, and both ends of the train were drawn into the wreck, the engine and several cars were drawn backward and the remainder of the train forward. The central span and the two western spans of the bridge went down; the engine, tender, and two cars that were pulled backward fell on the west shore, and the remainder went into the river, which was six to eight feet deep. The crash made by the wreck was heard for a distance of three-quarters of a mile.



*Northern Pacific Bridge Collapse, July 27th, 1875.
Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society*

On July 28, Dr. John C. Rosser, the only doctor in town, called a coroner's jury to determine the cause of death of Peterkin and Grandon. Then the finger pointing, as to the cause of the collapse, began. According to the *New York Times*, "...it appears that the bridge has been in an unsafe condition since May last, its condition being a subject of common talk among citizens and having been reported to Kimberley, resident engineer of the Northern



*Dr. John C. Rosser
Courtesy of University of Virginia Library*

Pacific, and Wallace, the bridge foreman, who examined the bridge. Wallace said in June he was going to repair the bridge, and was told by Edward White, bridge-builder by occupation, that it was time; if he didn't soon he would have a train through it. White and other witnesses swore that on account of the centre piers being low, the bridge sagged down in the centre; that one of the lower cords was dangerously rotten; that some of the braces were rotten; that the bolts needed tightening; that the foot-braces and step-iron to the braces were broken; that one of the side-braces was two inches out of place, and that the west span had swayed two inches from its place. One witness saw the bridge swinging sideways as trains went over, and cautioned the company employees, saying it was likely to be displaced by such swinging, so that it would break down under the next following train. One passenger thought the cars were off the track when the bridge went down. All the others thought none went off the track till after the bridge broke. The company's officers and employees hold the theory that the bridge was broken by a car-brake falling down and throwing some car off the track and against the side of the bridge. The jury's verdict, however, is as follows:

“That the above-named persons, Peterkin and Grandon, came to their deaths on the 27th of July, 1875, by the falling of the railroad bridge over the Mississippi River at or near Brainerd, Minn., while freight train No. 5, drawn by engine No. 45, of which they were engineer and fireman respectively, was passing over; and we further find that the above train No. 5, was passing the bridge at the usual speed, about four miles per hour; that the west span of the bridge broke first, caused by its being constructed of unsuitable and unsound timber; that it broke by the actual weight of the train, and that the whole bridge was considered unsafe by persons not connected with the Northern Pacific Railroad, and several who were—men who were competent to judge of its condition; and we further find that several officials of the Northern Pacific Railroad, whose duty it was to make examination of the bridge as to its safety, were either incompetent to judge of its condition or were guilty of gross neglect in not making the necessary repairs; and we further find that the conductor of said train did not warn the passengers of their danger when he had ample time to have done so.

“The above censure of the conductor was based on his own evidence, that, after looking out from the caboose and discovering what had happened, he jumped from the car without saying anything to his passengers, who, if they had been then warned, could have easily escaped.”

The *Brainerd Tribune* reported the results of the verdict commissioned by C. W. Mead, General Manager of the Northern Pacific, dated August 3, “Dear Sir:—The undersigned have to-day, in response to your request made an examination of the wreck of the Northern Pacific railway bridge at Brainerd as it lies, and of the remaining east span of the said bridge as it now stands, with the view of accounting, if possible, for the casualty. We find nothing in the appearance of the debris of the wrecked span to justify us in attributing the wreck to defective or improper materials or workmanship, or design in the original construction or to the want of proper attention and repairs since it was built. We find the east truss yet in place, and in good and safe condition. This truss was constructed at the same time and as the others were, and we are informed that it has received the same care and attention from the officers of the road. If we may judge of the condition of the other trusses from our examination of this one, they could not have been broken by the weight of any ordinary train. While we find ourselves unable to definitely describe the manner of the wreck, we are unanimously of the opinion that it was caused by some accident to one of the flat cars loaded with rails, crossing the bridge at the time by which a part of the car or a rail became entangled in the truss, thereby displacing some of the timbers nearly or immediately over the west channel pier.



*Northern Pacific locomotive lying on the west bank of the river after the bridge collapse, July 27, 1875.
Courtesy of Minnesota Historical Society*

“Most of us are acquainted with Mr. S. J. Wallace, the foreman of bridge repairs on the Northern Pacific road, and know him to be a competent and faithful man in the discharge of such duties.

We are, very respectfully, etc.

(Signed)

J. W. Bishop [*sic*], General Manager and Chief Engineer St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad

F. R. Delano, Civil Engineer St. Paul & Pacific Railroad

Chas. A. F. Morris, Chief Engineer St. Paul & Pacific Railroad

J. S. Sewall, Civil Engineer and Builder.

C. H. Prior, Superintendent Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad”

No one was ever held accountable for the disaster.

Immediately after the collapse of the bridge on July 27th, plans were readied for a temporary replacement and it was reported that the temporary bridge would be up and ready for trains on August 11th.

The *Brainerd Tribune* reported this account of the raising of the locomotive on September 11th, 1875 after the bridge collapse, “Yesterday evening the locomotive that went down in the wreck of the bridge was finally drawn out of the river and up the steep bluff to the track, and taken to the machine shops. It was a very tedious process; a force of men have been working at it for a week or two. The bluff on the west side of the river was graded to an inclined plane, and a track laid down to the rusty and battered monster, and after getting her jacked up on to her feet again and squared about on the temporary track, a couple of powerful locomotives on top of the hill slowly and sadly drew her up to a proper level once more. She was a sad looking sight, and as she was slowly drawn across the fearful chasm on the new bridge, and up through the city, everyone stopped and gazed on her remains, but spoke not a word as it were. She was enabled to proceed on her own wheels, by the use of care, but the boiler, the heavy frame, and the skeleton of the cab, (wherein stood the noble Peterkin and his gallant fireman, Grandon) were all that remained and they were covered with mud and rust. The sight, on that quiet Sabbath evening, as she proceeded through the town at funereal gait, was indeed a sad reminder to those who still hear that crash ringing in their ears, and whose eyes still behold the awful wreck and the remains of their noble friends, who exchanged worlds in the twinkling of an eye.” Shortly after the locomotive was hauled up the west bank of the river, the temporary track was extended out into the river and pilings were driven as a base for supporting a platform from which a steam crane was used to haul the wreckage of the cars and remaining debris from the river to be placed on waiting flat cars.

Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge—Second

Eight months after the bridge had collapsed a newly built permanent bridge was ready to carry all the



*The new Northern Pacific Bridge, completed on
March 31st, 1877.
Frank Jay Haynes*

west-bound traffic of the Northern Pacific. The new bridge, completed on March 31st, 1876, was immediately subjected to the most stringent stress test possible. The test consisted of a single heavy locomotive stopping in the middle of each of the five spans while deflection was measured by the foreman of the construction crew; after which, a second heavy locomotive was coupled to the first, running over the track as before, then a third heavy engine and the N. P. tool car—the heaviest car on the line—were coupled to the first two locomotives and driven over and back as was the first, making a total weight of about one hundred forty tons. The following was the result of the measurement: greatest deflection with one engine, three-fourths of an inch—return, five-eighths; greatest deflection with two engines, one inch and one-fourth—return, one inch and one-eighth; greatest deflection with three engines, one and one half inches—return, one inch and three-eighths, from which could be seen that the whole returned, after the weight of the three engines and tool car was removed, to within one-eighth

of an inch of its original position, which (in a structure of that length, the longest span was one hundred forty-three feet) is a very small allowance for the uniting of the joints of the timbers in finding their positive bearings; so that it was quite evident there was no permanent

deflection whatever beyond that, and after the rods had been tightened up and the second test applied the deflection did not exceed three-fourths of an inch with that weight. Several “courageous” citizens, including the *Tribune* reporter, were among those who had the honor of riding over on the first engine; however, when the test of the two and three locomotives coupled together was applied, some of the faint hearted wanted to go home, but two women remained on board until the test was completed.

Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge-Third

This Warren deck truss bridge was completed at the end of June 1901 after a year of work and during that time not a single train was delayed. During the course of construction the old bridge was removed piece-by-piece until the new one was in place. The bridge was tested for the first time on July 1st and was pronounced perfect.

Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge (BNSF)-Fourth

This eighty-three year old steel plate girder bridge was rebuilt from the foundation up beginning sometime in 1982 with completion in the fall of 1983. In mid-January 1984, the bridge’s three ninety-five-ton truss spans were replaced by one hundred-ton girder spans as part of the \$3,000,000 repair project. In order to replace the trusses a work road, to be used by the massive cranes, which lifted the new girders into place, was built across the river. Roberts Sand and Gravel of Brainerd hauled seven thousand cubic yards of rock, ranging in size up to fourteen inches, to construct the road. To allow for water flow past the road, two forty foot work bridges were constructed and sixteen pipes ranging from twenty-one to forty-eight inches in diameter were installed. Johnson Brothers, of Litchfield, was the contractor. The bridge was closed to rail traffic for a week as the crews worked night and day to replace the trusses.

Laurel Street Bridge—First

Finally, in 1879, the need for a wagon bridge became apparent and the push began, led by the *Brainerd*



*Building the Laurel Street Wagon Bridge, ca. 1883.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

Tribune, “Now is the accepted time. Brainerd businessmen should neglect no opportunity to push this enterprise. With a good bridge and road leading northward to the pineries Brainerd would get a much larger trade and reap the benefit of a large and thriving center for outfitting and supplying lumbermen. Can’t you see it? or won’t you see it? Here we are the northernmost point, contiguous to the great lumbering area, and sit down waiting for business and prosperity to come to us. If it will not come we must go bring it. We cannot expect success unless we work for it.”

By early August 1883, the piers for the new bridge on Laurel Street were in and the timbers and stays had been installed half way across the river. The bridge, when completed, would do away with the ferry and would be a great convenience, as the delay caused by the running of logs during certain seasons of the year was very annoying to those having business on the other side. Based on the

piles of timber and iron that were being accumulated on the banks of the river to be used in construction, it was thought the bridge would be a substantial structure. The new bridge was accepted, by the county commissioners, on October 3rd and formally opened to the public the next day. It spanned the river banks at fifty feet above low

water stage, and was seven hundred fifty feet long, in three spans, including the roadway and pedestrian walkway. The bridge was a combination Howe truss, and was built by the King Bridge Company of Cleveland, Ohio, at a cost of a little under \$20,000. The state paid \$7,500, under an appropriation secured the year before.

No one was allowed to ride or drive a wagon across the bridge faster than a walk and the bridge watchman proposed to see that the law in regard to driving was enforced; accordingly, he issued warrants for the arrest of the scofflaws who dared to allow their horses to trot across the bridge. In 1884, one of Brainerd's leading citizens was arrested by the watchman, brought before the police court, plead not guilty and demanded a jury trial. The citizen, Guilford G. Hartley, plead his own case before the jury and George Holland appeared for the county. Three or four witnesses for the county testified that the defendant had driven faster than a walk on the bridge on the day in question. Hartley's only witness was the contractor who had built the bridge, whose purpose was to prove it would not damage the bridge to trot across it, but the court would not



Laurel Street Wagon Bridge with the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge and Hospital in the background, 1886.

Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society



A boom on the Mississippi with the Laurel Street Wagon Bridge and the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge in the background, 1894.

F. J. Trost

admit the evidence, claiming it was not pertinent. Hartley then delivered his speech to the jury in which he admitted that he had driven faster than a walk and claimed that trotting on the bridge would not harm it one cent's worth. He also thought it was a disgrace to be arrested by a man whose grocery bill had not been paid, which, of course, had no bearing on the case. Holland then addressed the jury and told them that inasmuch as Hartley had confessed to breaking the law there should be no

question of his guilt and he should be dealt with accordingly. The jury was out for two or three hours but could not agree. A second trial was called and the proceedings were repeated, but that jury could not agree, so a third

trial was called and that jury declared Hartley not guilty. After the verdict, the *Dispatch* opined, “There can be no doubt in regard to the offense having been committed, as the law is very precise in its legal definition of a bridge, the stick seeming to be mainly that, in the opinion of the defendant, it does not damage the bridge to trot across it, and that C. Cross the bridge man owes grocery bills and does not have the respect of several of the citizens but this should have nothing to do with the question as to the guilt of the party. If we violate the law we expect to abide by the results, and if G. G. Hartley, General Grant or George Washington drives over the bridge in opposition to laws that have been made by the state, they should be dealt with accordingly.” A week later, Agnes A. Gillis was arrested for trotting her horse on the bridge and was brought up for a jury trial. She did not deny that she had trotted on the bridge, plead her own case, and was acquitted by the jury.

The bridge over the river was declared unsafe, in July 1890, and all traffic over it was halted. Some of the timbers in the arch on the east end were so rotten, two-thirds of the way through, they could be torn apart with one’s fingers. The piers of the bridge were also found to be crumbling and giving away. The county commissioners decided to replace the rotten timbers and otherwise repair the bridge to last until winter, when they expected to place it in first-class condition. The bridge was repaired so that teams hauling wagons were allowed to cross, although the work was not completed. Closing the bridge meant that all travel to the west had to go by way of the dam, which made a four mile drive to get across the river. The only wonder was that the bridge did not fall into the river.

In September 1892, the grand jury visited the bridge and reported it to be in a dangerous condition and recommended the commissioners employ an expert bridge builder to more thoroughly inspect the bridge and fix it; in September of 1893, the commissioners finally agreed to re-plank the bridge deck. The bridge caught on fire in August of 1894 but not much damage was done before the fire was extinguished; it was speculated that a carelessly tossed lighted cigar was the probable cause.

Laurel Street Bridge—Second

From January to July 1897, the county commissioners dithered about building a new bridge on Laurel Street and whether they were responsible for keeping the bridge safe. The city attorney told them the city council was not responsible and the county attorney told them they were indeed responsible for the safety of the bridge. Once that question had been answered, the commissioners argued about how a new bridge should be paid for, one commissioner thought it should be a toll bridge; all of the others thought it should be paid for out of public funds and be free. Rumors began to fly around town that the commissioners were going to close the bridge and the citizens on the west side became “very much exercised.” In March, the bridge was condemned and travelers were advised that they crossed the bridge at their own peril. The *Dispatch* said it was odd that the commissioners were fooling around and neglecting the interests of the whole community. The commissioners claimed they had no money and the *Dispatch* asked, “Then why in the name of common reason don’t they take steps to issue bonds to get the money. Surely no one with a just appreciation of the necessity of a bridge will object to the issuance of bonds for this purpose. If the county can issue bonds to build useless dams and help railroad companies, there certainly can be no objection to bonds for roads or bridges, for without these this county or city will never amount to anything. Roads and bridges we have got to have, and in this case a new bridge must be built within the next few months or the old one will go down, with loss of life, perhaps. The commissioners are going to put up a sign on the bridge in a



*Laurel Street Bridge, looking east, ca. 1898.
Courtesy of Carl Faust*

few days that it is condemned, and anyone crossing must do so at his own risk. This is a nice state of affairs, a

splendid advertisement for this community.” In April, Charles B. Rowley, a local contractor, was hired to fix the bridge so that it could be used until a new one was built. Once again, the *Dispatch* weighed in, “One thing ought to be impressed on the commissioner’s minds, and that is that a new structure must be built, and it must be built of steel, so that it will not have to be repaired continually and renewed again in a few years. A



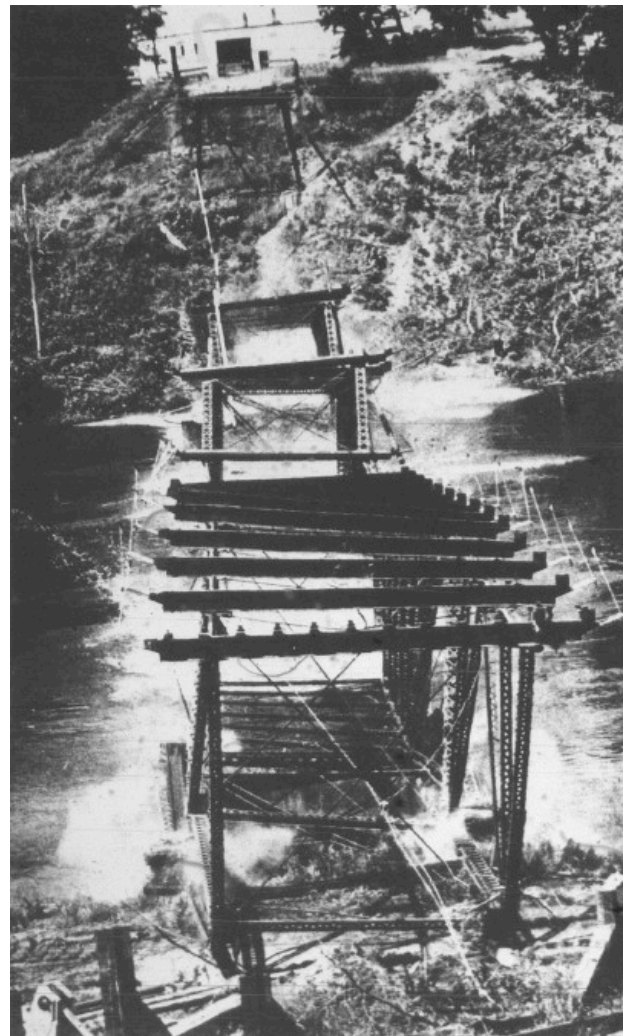
*Laurel Street Bridge dedication, 1898.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

wooden bridge is a poor investment at any cost. A good iron bridge will last indefinitely.” It was finally decided

to build an iron bridge and the auditor was instructed to advertise for bids. The specifications for the new bridge were issued and the bids were opened on July 27th in the county auditor’s office; all of the bids were rejected. In August the commissioners hired Charles F. Loweth, of St. Paul, a bridge expert, at a salary of \$600 to draw new plans and superintend the bridge construction when the time came. On September 23rd, the contract for the construction of the new bridge was awarded to the Clinton Bridge and Iron Works for the building of the superstructure including the three river piers for \$18,995 and to the Canney Brothers of Minneapolis, the substructure for \$1,830. It was to be an all steel deck bridge and was to be built using the plans drawn by C. F. Loweth, the expert employed by the commissioners. The bridge was to be raised level with Laurel Street and the hill on the west end was to be graded down. The contract called for the completion of the work by February 15th. The structure, when completed, would cost about \$21,000. There were twelve bidders present and the highest bid was \$28,000. The men in charge of building the new bridge arrived in town in early December and construction was to commence on December 12th.

The bridge was reported open for travel on April 8th, 1898. The commissioners were expected to make some needed improvements in the way of macadamizing the banks at each end of the bridge in order to prevent the sand from washing down and to give it a finished appearance.

The superintendent of electric lights was instructed to place six incandescent lights on the bridge in October 1900 and in August of 1913 bids were opened for a new decking of creosote blocks on the bridge. The bridge was reinforced and painted, three-inch thick wood planking was laid, swabbed with tar, then covered with felt and creosote blocks.



On July 5, 1978, the 1898 Laurel Street Bridge is pulled down.

Courtesy of Brainerd Daily Dispatch, Steve Kohls

The surface was then covered with sand and gravel. The state highway department repainted the bridge at an approximate cost of \$2,000 in June 1923; the piers and trimmings were to be dark orange, the body a deep green.

Laurel Street Bridge—Three

On July 5th, 1978, the Laurel Street bridge completed in 1898, was pulled down with some difficulty, the task requiring three attempts to get the job done. The new bridge was opened to public traffic at one p. m. on December 6th, 1979. Mayor C. Elmer Anderson presided over a brief ceremony. The \$2.2 million bridge had been under construction since May 1978. The new bridge was dedicated, on May 28th, 1980, to James Ronald Johnson, a twenty-eight year city employee and former Assistant City Engineer who had been supervising the bridge work when he died in November 1979. The bridge contractor was Lunda Construction Company, Incorporated. The engineers were Toltz, King, Duvall, Anderson and Associates.



Laurel Street Bridge

Mill Avenue Bridge



Mill Avenue Bridge

This was originally an iron trestle railroad bridge, built in 1892, for the Brainerd & Northern Minnesota Railroad, which later became the Minnesota and International Railroad (M & I). In 1913, the bridge was abandoned and turned over to Crow Wing County as a highway bridge. The current bridge is a steel girder bridge three hundred seventy-three feet long with the longest span being one hundred eight feet. The width of the bridge is twenty-nine feet with two lanes of traffic. It is eleven feet above the water and was begun in 1950 and completed in September 1951. This bridge was rebuilt in 1981.

Washington Street Bridge

This is a concrete arch bridge built beginning in the spring of 1931, by the McKenzie-Hague Company, of Minneapolis and completed near the end of October of 1932. At the end of September, the trestle holding the tracks for the narrow gauge railway onto the bridge was torn down. In early October, three small sections of the railing on the bridge and the pouring of less than half of the surface remained. Workmen had begun to install the ornamental lamp posts. Where once there had been more than a hundred men working on the bridge, only a few remained on the scene. The bridge is six hundred thirty-one feet long and seventy-nine feet wide, the longest span is one hundred twenty-four feet. On March 28th, 1973 plans were approved to rehabilitate the deck. The bridge



Washington Street Bridge

was rebuilt from the arches up in 1984-85 at which time, the original art deco concrete railings, lamp post standards and other art deco details were removed and replaced by nondescript railings and lamp posts.

College Drive Bridge

On April 22nd, 1974, the city council awarded a \$900,000 contract to Hardrives, Incorporated, of Minneapolis, to build this bridge. At the same time, the sale of \$620,000 in bonds in order to finance the project was approved. The low bid of \$904,485.64 from Hardrives, Incorporated included alternate bids for sidewalks.



College Drive Bridge

The total cost of the project was to be \$1,060,000. The original completion date was set for November 1st, 1974, but several obstacles arose including high water in the Mississippi, difficulty obtaining building materials and a construction strike, all of which extended the completion date. The bridge was formally dedicated on August 23rd, 1975. During the months of construction, 1,700 cubic yards of concrete and 193,000 pounds of steel and reinforcement bars were used, along with 1,700 cubic yards of rock for rip-rap. The bridge contains 6,670

feet of steel "H" pilings for support. 55,000 cubic yards of dirt were excavated and moved at the site and another 18,400 cubic yards moved in from other areas. The bridge itself is a concrete girder bridge two hundred fifty-one feet, seven inches long and sixty-six feet, four inches wide, the longest span is eighty-four feet and is twenty feet above the water. The width includes a fifty-two-foot two-lane roadway and two six-foot sidewalks. Seven contractors were involved in the construction, with the over-all design by Toltz, King, Duvall, Anderson and Associates, of St. Paul.

Ferries

Until the new Laurel Street bridge was built in 1883, a ferry was used to transport people, horses, goods and wagons across the Mississippi river. From March of 1871 to October of 1883, the only way the citizens of Brainerd could cross the Mississippi was via ferry. The Northern Pacific Railroad bridge was occasionally used, mostly in emergencies, and only by the most intrepid, to pass from one side of the river to the other.



Ferry crossing, fall of 1870, before the Northern Pacific Railroad Bridge was built.

Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society

The first mention of a ferry across the Mississippi in Brainerd appeared in the *Brainerd Tribune* in May of 1872, when it was announced that the county commissioners had set the rates at twenty-five cents for each double team, twenty cents for each single team, ten cents for each loose horse, ox, cow, or mule, and ten cents for each foot passenger. It is thought this was a rope ferry located just north of the Northern Pacific bridge.

In March of 1873, the Minnesota State Legislature granted a ferry charter across the river to William Murphy and C. D. Knappen. About ten o'clock one night, in May of 1873, the ferry, with the ferryman, W. W. Hartley and his team, were swept down the river until they were able to rescue themselves near Boom lake. By this time, the ferry was using a wire to guide it across and the mishap occurred when the wire broke.

In July of 1875, after the Northern Pacific bridge collapsed, in order to complete their journey, train passengers were transported across the river via a ferry until the temporary bridge was completed sometime in August.

River crossings via the ferry were often perilous, even more so when animals were involved, which they often were. Chronicled here are just two of the exploits of Peter Mertz, undoubtedly the most colorful, daring and enterprising sheriff Crow Wing County has ever elected to office. In April 1879, Mertz, who operated a livery service at the time, nearly lost two of his horses and a carriage when the ferry landed several feet above its usual landing spot and stood cornerwise to the shore with the upper corner some distance from land. Without waiting for the ferryman to tie it up, which he was then endeavoring to do, Mertz started to drive the carriage, containing his woman passenger, off the ferry. One of the horses, who was young and skittish and not used to crossing on the ferry, jumped sideways, pushing his teammate off the boat and was thereby, himself, also dragged into the river. Rather than fastening the rope; the ferryman ran to the team, permitting the boat to drift from the shore. Seeing this, Mertz jumped on shore and tied the boat, telling the ferryman to cut the harness, which he did, leaving the horses floundering in the river and the carriage, with a broken axle, on the ferry. Meanwhile, the woman had jumped out of the carriage to the ferry. The horses were able to right themselves; however, instead of swimming to the nearby shore, they began swimming to the opposite shore, upon which they would have landed but for some men on that shore who excitedly tried to entice them out of the water. Instead, they drove the horses back into the river, and they began swimming against the current, finally landing some distance above the Northern Pacific bridge, exhausted, but without a scratch. The inventory of damage included only a broken carriage axle and a cut harness. Mertz said the accident was entirely his fault, caused by being too quick to drive off the ferry.

In the spring, the river was filled with cakes of floating ice and this is what contributed to now Sheriff Mertz' near demise. In April of 1880, Mertz and his wife, along with a valuable team of horses, were crossing the river on the ferry; when near the middle of the stream, the ferry was struck by a large cake of floating ice, which lodged against it rapidly accumulating a jam that finally succeeded in breaking the wire cable and setting the boat adrift. Surrounded by the ice jam, the ferry was carried down to the railroad bridge where Mr. Mertz succeed in anchoring it to the western pier between which and the west bank, the ice formed a jam. He then unharnessed his horses and tried to lead them to the shore across the jam when they broke through, carrying Mertz with them, under the ice. Miraculously, however, Mertz succeeded in coming up on one of the horses' backs, and crawling thence upon the ice and with the aid of the bystanders and some planks and ropes succeeded in rescuing the animals from a watery grave, though nearly perishing from cold and exhaustion. Mrs. Mertz, with the carriage and harness, were then safely conveyed to the shore, but the boat was so badly damaged and so old and rotten that a new one needed to be built. On July 6th, 1880 the county commissioners adopted the following resolution:

“Whereas: Peter Mertz has made application, according to law, for a license to run the ferry between the town of Brainerd in Crow Wing county, Minnesota and West Brainerd in Cass county, Minnesota, for the term of five years, from this date, and offers to take possession of the ferry boat, wire rope and all other property



*Waiting for the ferry, ca. Unknown.
Frank Jay Haynes
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

connected with the ferry and keep it in as good condition as the same now is, and to pay a tax of five (5) dollars per year to said Crow Wing county for and during said five years and in addition thereto to pay as rent for said ferry and the use of the same the sum of twenty-five dollars before the license shall issue, fifty-two (52) dollars and thirty-three cents on the first day of November 1880, and twenty-two (22) dollars on the first day of November 1881, said money to be paid into the hands of the county treasurer for the use and benefit of said Crow Wing county, and to collect the rate of ferriage established by this board and no more, therefore:

“Resolved: That as the bond required by law and approved by this board has been given the above proposition of said Mertz to run said ferry between the town of Brainerd in Crow Wing county and West Brainerd in said Cass county is accepted by this board, and license is hereby granted to the said Peter Mertz to run said ferry for and during the full term of five years from and after this date which said license is ordered to be issued forthwith, and the rates of ferriage during said five years are fixed and established as follows, *to-wit*: Twenty-five (25) cents for teams (single and double) and ten (10) cents for foot passengers.

“The bond of Peter Mertz was approved.”

Mertz was born in Ohio in 1851 and arrived in Brainerd in 1877, becoming sheriff in 1880. Sometime after 1886 he moved to Spokane, Washington and was Chief of Police in Spokane from 1891-1895. Peter Mertz died in Spokane on September 22nd, 1938.

From May of 1884 through at least June of 1893, Gilbert Lake Park was opened to the public. Customers had the use of a commodious summer house containing chairs and tables enclosed with wire screen, protecting those patrons seeking refuge from the ravages of the flies and mosquitos. Ice cream, lemonade, blueberries, cigars and other refreshments were offered for sale. A boathouse had also been built and supplied with fine row boats for rent. A ferry operated from the end of North Seventh Street to the other side of the Mississippi river from which a road was cut leading to the resort, making it convenient and handy for people who wished to visit from Brainerd, as there was a sidewalk the entire distance to the boathouse.

On September 17th 1897, during the removal and building of the new steel Laurel Street bridge, Charles B. Rowley announced the opening of his ferry across the river charging fifteen cents for one-way trips, twenty-five cents for roundtrips, ten cents for single passengers, with special rates for those using the ferry on a daily basis. The ferry was open from seven a. m. to nine thirty p. m. and was located at the end of Main Street (Washington) just north of the railroad bridge. In December, the farmers on the west side of the river succeeded in freezing an ice road across the Mississippi at the place where the ferry had been operated during the summer. The road ice was pronounced sufficiently strong enough to hold the heaviest loads and did away with paying ferriage or going by way of the dam to reach the city. The ferry was opened again, in March 1898, with special rates for draymen and milkmen. The public ferry business came to an end when the bridge was completed.

White's / Wright's Park / Brainerd Tourist Camp

In July 1920, arrangements were made by the Chamber of Commerce, through its committee on Parks and Playgrounds for a tourists' free camp site, with facilities for the making of coffee, etc. Signs were placed at the chief entrances to the city and at the site itself, also at suitable corners throughout the city.

In May 1921, Almond A. White, a former resident of Brainerd and son of Lyman P. White, who had platted the original townsite of Brainerd in 1870, donated the site, which was a beautiful park consisting of four and three-quarters acres overlooking the Mississippi river. The property was located about a block and a half south of Laurel Street, near First Street. The parcel of land included many magnificent trees and provided an unobstructed view of the Mississippi with four hundred to five hundred feet on the river. About a week after the donation, five tourist families had already set up their tents for an overnight stay.

In April 1923, funds were being solicited to create and equip a modern tourist camp. Carl Wright was put in charge of White's Park in May 1923 and, by the first week of June, seventy parties of tourists had been

accommodated at the newly named Brainerd Tourist Camp. By the end of the season, four thousand cars had registered at the camp.

In 1924, improvements included a fence and gate at the entrance to the grounds, four new tables with permanent canopies and the placement of six or seven groups of trees, four or five trees in each group, between the entrance to the grounds and the timber that was already there. The park board recommended that a charge not to exceed twenty-five cents per day be collected from each car entering the camp. Two four-burner gas stoves, with ovens, were added to the equipment in July. These stoves were placed in a large open space at the north end of the campsite and the park board placed two large tables including a canopy over both the stoves and tables. The camp was open from April to September and, during that time, nine thousand six hundred tourists had registered there.



*Table and gas stove at the tourist camp, ca. 1920s.
Postcard*

One unique car registered at the Brainerd Tourist Camp in June 1927, was a big Pullman touring, a complete home on wheels. The body was built of aluminum and contained a living room, bedroom and bathroom. The camp hosted over twenty thousand tourists in 1928.

Carl Wright, member of the Brainerd Park Board since 1922, tendered his resignation to Mayor Frank E. Little in June 1930. Wright explained that he tendered his resignation so he could secure an option to purchase land

from Mrs. Almond A. White for the construction of tourist cottages near the Brainerd Tourist Camp. Part of the property included in the option was land used by the Brainerd Park Board for the tourist camp. The land, which Mr. Wright intended to purchase, covered eight and three quarters acres. He planned to build six cottages, costing a total of \$1,000, on the property at the summit of the hill near the Mississippi river and rent them to the traveling public. The land would include the road leading to the tourist camp but Wright said he would not restrict travel through his property. Mr. Wright said he planned to pay fifty cents a cottage to the park board for every cottage rented by the caretaker of the camp. Wright announced that he did not intend to ask the removal of park board property from his land. He stated he intended to place an ornamental fence to the north of his property, but that this fence would not block off the road.

Wright said it was his intention to help the park board in making the camp a bigger and better camp by furnishing them all the land they might want to use. An arrangement whereby the Brainerd Park Board had absolute control of the tourist camp and the property of Carl Wright was agreed upon by the board and Mr. Wright and sanctioned by the city council. The park board was granted permission, by the city council, to collect fifty cents from each car entering the tourist camp whether for camping or cottage lodging purposes. The plan was said to increase the income of the tourist camp for the city and to provide better accommodations; it meant the doubling of the size of the camp. The park board had the power to rent the cottages proposed for construction by Mr. Wright, the rental to be given to Mr. Wright. Tourists could camp on any part of land owned by the city or Mr. Wright should they wish, the camping rental of the entire



*Cabins and tables at the tourist camp, ca. 1920s.
Courtesy of Carl Faust*

land to go to the park board. This arrangement allowed many tourists who desired cabin accommodations to be taken care of. The park board estimated that approximately four thousand tourist cars were turned away from the camp, in 1929, because of lack of cabins. Mr. Wright was to derive his income from the cabins and the rental of bedding for the cabins; he hired and paid for the help to care for his own cottages.

On March 24th, 1974, a committee of the Brainerd school board approved bidding for the removal of Wright Park hill for use as dirt fill for the lower site project connected with the new Brainerd High School. It was estimated that it would cover about half of the 500,000 cubic yards of fill needed for the entire project.

Woodland Park

Woodland Park was an area on the banks of the Mississippi just north of Boom lake, covering about twenty acres of land, commonly referred to as meadow or bottom land. It was located near the steamboat landing on the east side of the river and was accessible by row boat or canoe. The park was described as possessing a beautiful pine grove, interspersed with oak and birch providing dense shade and a splendidly carpeted lawn. One could ride along shrubbery-lined avenues and picturesque paths aromatic with the pungent evergreen and delicious blueberry. The park was opened on the Fourth of July 1880 and was operated by Ed French and Peter Ort (Builder of the Brainerd Brewery near Boom lake in 1882.)



*Steamboat landing and ferry, ca. 1872.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

A three foot high 30x30 foot dance floor with a bandstand had been built and suspended overhead in the trees and was staffed with musicians. Three booths, in various parts of the park, served lunch, ice-cream, lemonade, ginger beer, buck beer, candy, peanuts, gingerbread, sandwiches, chewing gum for the ladies and cigars for the men. Benches, swings, chairs and tables had been constructed and placed throughout the grounds in places where splendid views were to be found. The grounds had been cleared of underbrush, paths and drives were cut among the trees, and they were to be properly policed, so that no rowdyism or any unbecoming noises or language would be permitted. The police, waiters and musicians and other employees would be properly designated by badges. Hence, everyone could come—the old, young, men, women and children. Peter Mertz ran omnibuses to and from the city, delivering visitors to the grounds, for only a small fee. The park was opened on the morning of the Fourth and proved eminently successful for its proprietors. A large number of citizens were in attendance all day and on the afternoon of the fifth, good music and

dancing were among the principal features and a general good time was enjoyed. The expenses incurred for the development and opening of the park were: Employee wages, \$81.55; lumber, \$57.75; music, \$36.00; printing, \$13.50; painting, \$15.50; hardware, \$10.15; livery hire and teaming, \$29.00; groceries, \$40.50, and labor, \$69.10; total, \$353.05.

Another Fourth of July celebration was held by Peter Ort in 1885. The occasion was advertised as eclipsing all former celebrations held at the popular park. Busses were running between the park and the city, every ten minutes, carrying people who desired to visit the celebration and who did not want to walk about a mile to get there. Several prominent citizens had been engaged to speak and together with the games, foot races,

sack races, climbing the greased pole and catching the greased pig, there was enjoyment for all. Lunches were served at the park and the hungry could obtain pies, cakes, quail on toast, strawberries, ice cream, etc. On the evenings of the fourth and fifth, the grounds were to be lighted by 1,000 Chinese lanterns; there were several hot air balloon ascensions along with music and dancing. The fire department was invited to participate, and a special invitation was extended to families to spend the day at the park and enjoy a social time in the cool shade. Admission to the grounds was free.

Boom Lake

As the city of Brainerd grew, and the need for lumber increased, logs were needed to supply the demand. They were delivered to and stored in a little lake which could hold only about two million feet. A small channel connected the lake with the Mississippi river. Additional booms were built in order to contain the logs being held for the sawmills located near the lake. Pilings were driven in the Mississippi river about one hundred feet from the east shore extending north almost as far as the present Laurel Street bridge. Behind these piles, a line of logs was chained together, end-to-end, forming booms capable of holding at least ten million feet. Thus, the little lake became "Boom" lake.

Ice Skating Rinks

Through the years several skating rinks were opened on Boom lake; the first one was established, in December 1872, by a group of young men. They planned to supply all the necessities for the comfort of skaters; it would have facilities for flooding the ice, renting skates and would charge a reasonable fee for skating.

After the demise of the J. J. Howe & Company Mill, Boom lake was consistently used for ice skating from 1894 to at least 1917. Otto J. Olson and Frank Howe opened their rink, in December 1894, it was surrounded by a fence and protected from the wind by the bluffs on the east and north. They also built a four-lap speed skating track. Frank Howe was a jumper and in February 1895, a jumping contest, billed as the "championship contest of the world," was held on the rink. The single competitor was unable to exceed Howe's jump of nineteen feet, nine inches and he was awarded the gold championship medal. Frank's longest jump ever was twenty-four feet, eight and one-half inches.

In December of 1899, a benefit ball was held at Gardner Hall in order to raise funds to build a warming house at the Boom lake rink. In December of 1912, five hundred people enjoyed skating on a Sunday afternoon and evening. An ad in the *Dispatch* on January 2nd, 1913 read, "Enjoy the Season's Sports Best! On Boom lake at the end of 5th Street — Where the Skating is Fine! We take excellent care of the ice. . .clean and smooth always with a large warming house and splendid music on the ice. Children: 5 cents. Adults: 10 cents."

On January 9th, 1917 a masquerade was held at Boom lake and only masked skaters were allowed on the ice; the rink, by this time, possessed not only a warming house and benches, but electric lights for skating at night. The masquerade drew at least five hundred skaters who wore many fine costumes and had the time of their lives.

In 1936, the city cleared a 200x400 foot rink and plowed the road so cars could drive to the edge of the ice rink.

Parkway

It was announced, on January 18, 1938, that the WPA (The Works Progress Administration was created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in April 1935 and was closed down June 30, 1943.) had approved the construction of approximately 2,600 feet of parkway road along the east bank of the Mississippi, rock walls to be built along the road next to the river, the removal of a large hill along the river, the dredging of Boom lake and the dredged material used to fill in a swampy area. The rock walls were built to protect the road from the

flooding of the river and the road was to end at the Sewage Disposal Plant, which had also been constructed with funds from the WPA. This road building, rock walls, etc. project appears to have been completed sometime near the end of July 1938; the cost to the city of Brainerd was \$1,924.84.

Ski Jump

In early November 1938, a ski jump, approved by the WPA and using WPA labor, was built on a natural, made-to-order slope furnishing a perfect spot for the slide. Ski jumpers would “take off” to the northwest, directly facing Boom lake. Very little dirt fill or excavation was necessary to provide the proper slope on the hill. Workers poured cement for the footings and soon began constructing the wooden framework; work was rushed so that it could be completed before the snow fell. Meanwhile, members of the Ski Club were engaged in raising approximately \$250 for material and engineering. When completed, the slide was open to anyone, who was proved capable of using it, at no charge whatsoever. Electric lights were installed in November 1939.

Toboggan Slides

Two toboggan slides were constructed in November 1941 by the NYA (National Youth Administration) which was part of the WPA (Works Progress Administration).

Sawmills

In 1872, Barrows, Philander Prescott and Joel B. Bassett built a steam-powered sawmill south of the east end of the railroad bridge. They sold it in 1874 to George W. LeDuc who, shortly afterward, sold it to Eber H. Bly. In 1878, Bly sold it to the Jones Brothers, and, in 1880, the Jones Brothers conveyed it to J. A. Davis & Company. By this time, it had become a plant making 50,000 feet of lumber, 80,000 shingles and 25,000 lath per day and employing seventy-five men. In 1887, the White & Davis mill was located north of the Northern Pacific track on the west side of the river; it had a small boomage in the Mississippi, sawing about a half-car of lumber a day.

Bly's Mill

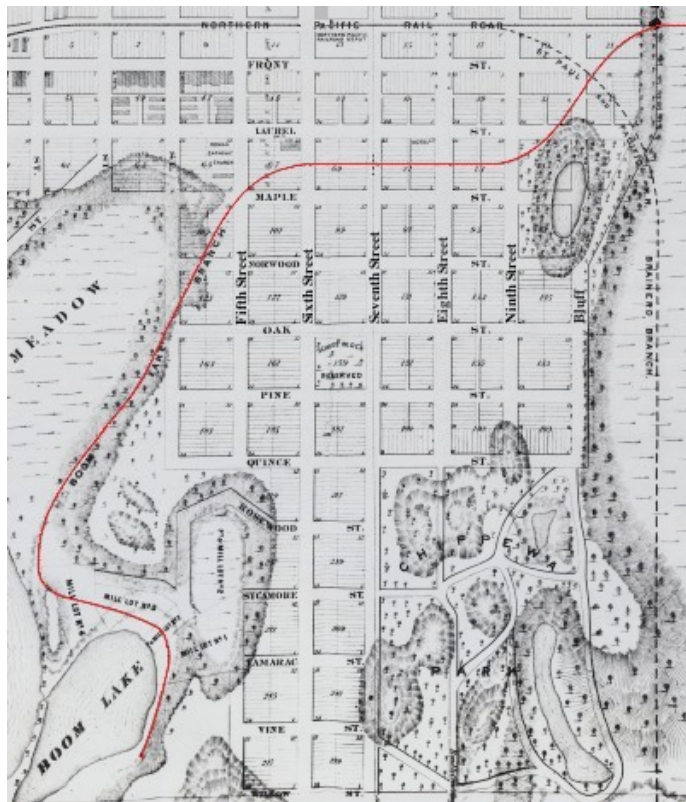
In January of 1874, E. H. Bly purchased a mill site near Boom lake from the Northern Pacific. On the evening of June 21st, 1875, Bly brought his mill machinery to the city from Bismarck and began erecting his sawmill on Boom lake; at the same time, he asked the railroad to build a spur to the site of his mill. In the meantime, he built a large frame building strong enough to carry the heavier machinery. The first log was sawed at the new mill on September 25th, 1875.

In January of 1876, Morris C. Russell, owner and publisher of the *Brainerd Tribune*, was invited to take a tour of Bly's mill and this is what he saw, “In response to an invitation the other day, the writer piled himself into a vehicle, with two or three other gentlemen of elegant leisure, and went on a voyage of pleasure and discovery, with Bly's steam sawmill at Boom Lake as the objective point in our travels. After a fine ride of half a mile from the town pump, we hauled up “furninst” the north-east end of the new mill and a busy scene. Upon arriving, the mill, just for the moment, was enjoying a panicked condition—occasioned, as we learned, by the band getting off the fly-wheel, or the bull-wheel slipping an eccentric, or the saw-dust conductor getting its mouth too full for utterance, or something of the sort. We only had time, however, to play brave, and go round feeling of this thing and that, and to carry the idea among the workmen about the mammoth “sawery” that we knew all about such matters, and had just got along to that part of the thing where the most business was done in a given period, when the score of workmen suddenly distributed themselves, and then something “broke loose,” like. Everything that was circular commenced revolving, everything that was round commenced rolling; straight things commenced going endwise, square things commenced bobbing, and every thing that could, commenced

howling. About this time we commenced getting scared, and were afraid to move or even wink, for fear we should, in the twinkling of an eye, be transformed into a thousand feet of common boards; as the thought of such an *ultimatum* flashed through our mind, we didn't care half so much about being ground up into that kind of a "bill of lumber," as we did about being sold afterwards at the insignificant sum of thirteen dollars. One of the generous workmen, seeing that we didn't seem to hanker after a steam sawmill—not till we became a "little user to it"—kindly took us by the slack of the pants and deposited us in a place of safety, just in time so that we didn't obstruct the passage of the log that slid along on a long sliding thing. This act of kindness also prevented the mill being clogged up by an ordinary newspaper correspondent, and a waste of time on the part of the workmen—we felt extremely thankful for this, because, where a mill is engaged in sawing out all the mammoth timber for the new railroad bridge across the Mississippi river at this point, to take the place of the old one that broke down last summer, it would have been a ridiculous thing for us to do, to interfere in the grand work. And this just reminds us that the new mill is not only a proud



*Bly's Mill on Boom Lake, 1877.
Frank Jay Haynes
Crow Wing County Historical Society*



*Route of the "Mill Spur" to Bly's Mill at Boom Lake.
1871 Turner Map*

monument to the enterprise and energy of Mr. E. H. Bly, in the way of a general lumber producer, but that the contract of immense-sized timber for the structure above referred to, is being handsomely carried forward, notwithstanding the difficulties naturally attendant upon an undertaking of the kind at this season of the year. The monster Norway pines—from twenty to sixty feet in length and squaring from ten to twenty inches—are being put through with but slight delays, notwithstanding they are frozen hard as a stone, and more difficult to manufacture in this condition than oak itself. The mill has been placed in the finest condition for winter work, the crew selected with care, so that everything moves off grandly within, though it may blow ever so cold without. All the modern appliances have been put in, and it is interesting in the extreme to watch the systematic manufacture of lumber and timber going on. Aside from the main saws, there are board edgers, adjustable rip-saws—to saw the boards into any desired width—slab-saws, to transform the slabs into stove wood, sawdust conductors, a log-hauling bull wheel, a railroad to take the products from the mill to the yard, and dear knows what all. In short, it is a good thing—a big thing—and an

institution that is as much of a pride to our young city as it is a credit to the indomitable owner. Bly is a brick! and that is all there is about it.

“We feel called upon, however, to give him a piece of our mind about permitting our ice dealers to cut ice from the bosom of Boom Lake. The lake is his asylum for storing the immense supply of logs he is getting out this winter, for the use of the mill next summer; and, as the ice is two feet thick, you see after a layer is taken off, it must necessarily ensmall the area of the lake and enshallow it as well—hence, it will decrease the booming capacity thereof. Eh, Mr. B.? At all events we charge nothing for this timely warning, shrink or no shrink.

“After a thorough look at the elephant, we returned homeward, well satisfied with ourself, with Bly’s steam mill, the world and everybody in it, and—the balance of poor fallen humanity.”

In early April 1876, the Northern Pacific officials in New York rejected Bly’s 1875 proposition to have a track laid on the Boom lake branch to his mill. Mr. Bly had proposed to the company that he would rebuild the entire grade, which had become badly demolished and washed out in places, furnish the ties and build the culverts and trestle work necessary to reach his mill, and that he would enlarge his mill, put in larger boilers and engine and build a dryer and planing mill in addition thereto at a total cost of over \$12,000, provided the company would furnish the iron and lay the track. Two weeks later, Vice President Stark, of the Northern Pacific, while in the city, personally inspected the matter of Mr. Bly’s application to have a track laid to his mill on Boom lake; Stark re-considered the previous action rejecting the application, and gave instructions to have it built at once; grading was commenced immediately. The spur began at South Tenth and Front streets and followed the alley between Laurel and Maple to South Fifth, then southwardly down the river bank to the mill site. It became known as the “Mill Spur.” The track extending from the west side of South Sixth to South Fifth and to Boom lake was torn up in 1896. The track from South Tenth to the east side of South Sixth was used for many years to serve the businesses along the alleys.

Because the building of the railroad spur had been delayed and due to the lateness of the season, Bly could not make the improvements he had proposed, but planned to run his mill as it was during the summer and add them the next spring. In May 1876, Bly purchased the engine and other machinery residing in George W. LeDuc’s mill, installing it in his mill at Boom lake. In July 1878 Leonard Day & Son, of Minneapolis, leased Bly’s mill in order to cut up their log drive that was approaching the city because it was cheaper than having it done in Minneapolis. In August, Bly decided to install a first-class gang-sawmill on his Boom lake site, and in September, he sold his sawmill and site to the Jones Brothers, of Minneapolis.

Jones Brothers’ Mill

The new Jones Brothers’ sawmill steamed up for the first time in May 1879; four large new boilers and a ponderous engine furnished the motive power; Boom lake was jammed with logs awaiting the manufacturing process and fifty customers to every thousand feet of lumber were impatiently waiting for the opportunity to buy it as fast as it left the mill and could be loaded on rail cars. Working in a sawmill was dangerous, and a frightful accident occurred at the mill in early September, when a man named Brooks lost his life in a horrible accident. He was engaged in putting a belt on a pulley in the shingle mill when his clothing somehow caught on the shaft jerking him off his feet and jamming him between the shaft and a post, mangling his body in a dreadful manner. Medical aid was promptly called, but the man only gasped a few times and was dead before the doctor reached him. Brooks left a wife and two children residing in Minneapolis.

J. A Davis & Company’s Mill

In April 1880, the Jones Brothers sold their sawmill to J. A. Davis & Company, of Minneapolis, for about \$25,000. The new firm consisted of J. A. Davis, Sumner W. Farnham, James A. Lovejoy, and E. Remick. The mill was greatly improved and the capacity increased by the introduction of new and improved machinery. The products of the mill consisted of pine and hardwood lumber of every description, shingles, lath, etc. The manufacture of bill, and dimension lumber, bridge and builders’ material was also an important feature. The mill

was provided with one double circular saw and one steam fed sider, besides jointer saws, having a capacity for



A log drive on the Mississippi.

the manufacture of sixty thousand feet of lumber per year, not including shingles or lath of which they had facilities for making respectively 30,000 and 20,000. The mill contained two planers and they were prepared to furnish bills of dressed lumber as well as all kinds of rough material. The motive power of the establishment was supplied by a Milwaukee Allis steam engine of one hundred twenty-five-horsepower. About seventy-five men were employed in the various departments and nearly \$2,500 was disbursed monthly in wages. The near proximity of this mill to the base of supplies—the pine forests—the excellent facilities for the shipment of lumber, the wide range of products, covering everything pertaining to the lumber trade, the excellent and well-known reputation of the proprietors, were all elements in favor of the mill.

In September of 1880, Davis & Company built a new steam planing and shingle mill on the curve in the railroad track about six hundred feet northwest of their sawmill, between the track and the river. The motive power was to be the seventy-five horsepower engine formerly in use in the sawmill. This mill was fired up in May 1881. On June 4th, 1881, the *Brainerd Tribune* paid the sawmill a visit, “Yesterday afternoon, desiring a little fresh air, and wishing to ascertain what was going on about the country and town, we donned coat, hat and editorial expression, and, armed with pencil and note-book, sauntered down toward the extensive mills of J. A. Davis & Co., and upon arriving at the location, were at first somewhat bewildered by what could be seen about us. We had been informed that the business was conducted on a large scale, but had no idea of its vastness. We called at the office, and were exceedingly lucky in finding Mr. Davis at his desk. Upon informing him the nature of our errand, and asking a few questions, we were given a little insight into matters pertinent to what was going

on. We found Mr. Davis to be an affable and courteous gentleman and ready to impart whatever information might be desired. In Boom Lake they have now some 10,000,000 feet, all of which they expect to manufacture during the season, and have recently fitted up their mills in the best possible manner, so that to find anything in



A wanigan is a floating kitchen, which followed the log drives down the river, serving the drivers their daily meals.

their line which might excel them, one would be compelled to travel a long distance. The new planing mill, which first meets the view on coming in from town, includes servicer, re-saw, siding-saw and planing apparatus, and the way timber flies about in this department is a caution. The lath machine is in the general a sawing mill. The shingle mill is in a separate building to the right of the planing mill, and has a capacity of about 80,000 feet per day. The planing mill will turn out over 40,000 feet per day, while the sawmill will score nearly 75,000 feet per day. The planing and shingle mills are entirely new this spring, while the sawmill has been refitted and

remodeled throughout, with new engine, and new boiler and smoke-stack, new patent trimmer, new log canter, a Stearn's new double circular carriage, and in fact everything found in first-class establishments of this nature. Mr. Davis informed us that he now had orders in for more work than could be turned out during the next two months. Their booming capacity, which has been recently increased considerably, is now about 70,000,000 feet. They ship from three to eight car loads of lumber per day, the bulk of which goes west, although orders are frequently in from St. Paul, and other points east. The town trade amounts to a great deal also, owing to the great amount of building now in progress. The estimated shipments per month will reach 1,000,000 feet. Did space permit, we should like to add a great deal more, as there is a great deal more to say concerning this mammoth enterprise, but want of space forbids, and we will only add, if you want to see what they are doing, go and look for yourself."

The *Tribune* announced in August 1881 that "ladies are now employed at the shingle mill of J. A. Davis & Company." It was announced, in March 1882, that Davis & Company would build a large dry kiln at the mill. J. A. Davis & Company sold their mill at Boom lake to J. J. Howe & Company sometime between March 1882 and November 1883.

J. J. Howe & Company's Mill

In the late 1880s, J. J. Howe & Company was second only to the Northern Pacific Railroad Shops as the most important business in Brainerd. They had booms for 2,500,000 feet of logs. The mill had two rotary saws, shingle and lath saws and a separate shingle mill, which cut shingles from the logs as taken from the river. The capacity of the sawmill running ten hours a day, was 90,000 feet of lumber, 150,000 shingle and 30,000 lath. A planing mill with three planers, a siding and splitting machine and a dry kiln with two stalls and a capacity for drying at the rate of 25,000 feet per day, were located at the upper end of the yard. The company also had a machine shop containing an iron planer, drill and lathe. The mill had a 250-horsepower engine and a 150-horsepower engine to operate the planer. A dynamo provided power for the electric light plant so that a night force could be used anywhere in the mills, yard or boom. The company manufactured from 15,000,000 to 25,000,000 feet of lumber per year which was piled in the yard and shipped by rail. During 1887, 1,200 rail cars of product was shipped. They employed some 150 men year round.



*Jeremiah J. Howe, owner J. J. Howe
Lumber Company.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County
Historical Society*

On December 31st of 1892, at about 9 o'clock in the evening, a fire broke out in the stacks of the dry kiln; in a few moments, almost before the alarm could be given, the fire had made such headway in the dry timbers of the stack that it was impossible to save the building. The fire department was on the scene in a short time, but were delayed in getting to work by the bursting of two lengths of hose. The firemen were assisted by the pump in the planing mill, which operated constantly spraying a stream of water on the mill. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the planing mill, which stood barely fifteen feet from the kiln, was saved. The flames, fanned by the wind, at times seemed to roll right over the mill, but the firemen, holding a large sliding door between themselves and the flames to protect themselves against the intense heat, held their ground and continued to spray a stream of water against the

end of the mill keeping it thoroughly drenched, while another crew on the roof kept a stream playing on the top of the building. It was a tough fire to fight, and the firemen deserved great credit; their labor was rewarded by saving the mill, dry sheds and many thousand feet of lumber worth several thousand dollars. As it was, the kiln

and the connected lumber shed were destroyed; the kiln contained 100,000 and the shed over 250,000 feet of lumber, valued at \$40 a thousand. The dry kiln cost over \$6,000, which made the total loss over \$18,000. There was \$4,500 insurance on the kiln, and only \$500 on the lumber, which made the company's net loss very heavy. In appreciation for their efforts, J. J. Howe presented \$70 to the three hose companies involved in fighting the fire.

A little before 6 o'clock in the morning on August 28, 1896, fire was discovered in the dry house at the J. J. Howe Lumber Company's plant. By the time the fire department arrived at the scene, the fire had gained such headway that little could be done except to stop the progress of the blaze among the buildings which had not already been ignited. The dry shed, containing 40,000 feet of finishing lumber, the office building, warehouse and blacksmith shop were entirely consumed. Sash and doors were stored in the warehouse, and the blacksmith shop held valuable machinery and patterns. The origin of the fire was a mystery, but it was thought that tramps in the upper part of the dry shed, where blankets and bedding were stored, might have been responsible. A strong wind from the south was blowing and it did not take long to wrap the buildings in flames so that it was impossible to get the contents out. A Northern Pacific box car standing on the track, filled with wood, was partially burned. The loss was estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$5,000-\$8,000, and was only partially insured. At the time of this fire, the property was owned by A. B. Barton, of Minneapolis, and the buildings had been boarded up.

The old sawmill of the J. J. Howe Lumber Company was completely destroyed by fire on the morning of March 5th, 1899. The fire occurred about 7 o'clock, and had made such headway when discovered that it was impossible to subdue the flames, the entire plant was a fiery mass before the fire department arrived on the scene. The mill had not been operated for at least five years, but contained all the expensive machinery that made up a large sawmill, and all of it was consumed. The building was an old dilapidated affair and was of very little value, but the mill machinery, including the mammoth engine and boilers, was very expensive, and was a total loss. The contents of the mill had cost more than \$30,000, and was estimated to be worth fully \$20,000 when burned. It was still the property of A. B. Barton, of Minneapolis and had no insurance whatever. How the fire originated was a mystery, as the plant had been locked and nailed up since the mill was shut down. By the time of this fire, Jeremiah J. Howe had been gone from Brainerd for several years; he died in Paynesville, at the age of seventy-five, on August 29th, 1917 and was buried in Minneapolis.



*J. J. Howe Lumber Company on Boom Lake, 1896.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

Brainerd Brewery

John Hoffmann opened the Brainerd Brewery on Fifth Street in March of 1872, but it was not until the summer of 1882 that Peter Ort began building his brewery on the east shore of Boom lake. Ort was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin in 1849, arriving in Brainerd in 1870. He was employed as a carpenter for five years, and from 1875 to January 1880, Mr. Ort was the most popular clerk the Headquarters Hotel ever had. In January 1880, he opened a saloon and billiard hall on the corner of Fifth and Laurel Streets.

Four men were excavating the foundations of Orts' brewery, near the east bank of Boom lake in July 1882, they had dug some distance into the bank, when a large mass of earth fell, covering all of them. Two, who

were nearest the outer edge of the mass of dirt, managed to crawl out with slight injuries. Workmen were soon on the spot, but it was several hours before the remains of the other two men were reached. They were both dead when taken out.

Two years later, Mr. Ort had opened a bottling department in connection with his brewery and in October of 1885 he was in Milwaukee looking for a first-class brewer.

The Brainerd Brewery was discovered to be on fire on July 12th, 1886 at 1:30 in the morning; three men who were staying there were aroused by the crackling of the fire and did what they could to save the property but saw it was of no use. They then gave the alarm to the sawmill people, and the shrill blasts of the mill whistle soon brought out the fire department, but they could do nothing as there was no hydrant near the brewery, and there was not enough hose to reach from the top of the hill, and even if they had been able to spray water upon it, it was a question as to whether they could have stopped the flames as they had gained such headway. The brewery and all its contents were consumed. There was about \$2,000 worth of beer stored there, which was not burned. The brewery was completed in 1882 and since that time, Mr. Ort had invested \$22,000 in the business. There was only \$5,200 insurance on the building and it was doubtful that the building would be rebuilt. The brewery stood idle until December 1888 when Ort again began operations, doing a very prosperous business, but he lost the business due to financial difficulties he could not overcome.



Brainerd Brewery at Boom Lake. ca. 1890.

Fire was discovered in the Brainerd Brewery, on March 24th, 1892, by the night watchman and an alarm was turned in from J. J. Howe & Company's mill. The fire department responded immediately, but arriving on the scene they were powerless to do anything to stop the progress of the flames, as the nearest hydrant to the brewery was in Howe's lumber yard, the only thing that could be done was to save the property in the outstanding buildings. The fire originated from the fire under the kettle and gained headway while the watchman was out of the building. The property was completely destroyed,

but Mr. Kemper, the superintendent, stated that the manufactured beer on hand was saved. The loss was estimated at \$5,000, with insurance of \$4,000. The property destroyed was owned and operated by Jacob Dobmeier, of Grand Forks, North Dakota. Dobmeier was doing a good business and succeeding so well that he was contemplating the erection of a new brick building. It was reported that Mr. Dobmeier was busily trying to raise money from the saloonkeepers in Brainerd in April 1892 in order to build a new brewery.

In January 1894, two men from Little Falls, one of whom was George Donant expressed interest in building a new brewery at the old site on Boom lake. In February, they applied for a permit to cut ice on the lake to be used for cooling purposes at the new brewery being constructed by Peter Ort.

Fred Hoffman and Edward Boppel, brewers, of Little Falls, purchased the brewery effective May 1st, 1897. Mr. Hoffman had five years experience in the brewing business at Red Wing, before going to Little Falls. Hoffman reported the Brainerd brewery in good condition, supplied with good machinery for making beer, but in need of a few additions to increase its capacity and add to the convenience of operating.

The institution changed ownership again on the 1st of May 1906, with Edward Boppel and Dr. Werner Hemstead as owners. Reportedly, Hemstead purchased the interest of Fred Hoffman for \$20,000. In 1908, additional buildings were planned including a wash house 50x28 feet, one story high, and a racking room 14x25, two stories high. Both buildings were to be of solid brick and equipped with first-class, up-to-date machinery. The business continued to grow, having a capacity of 10,000 barrels a year in 1910; it was selling its product in adjacent towns in Crow Wing County, as well as in Aitkin, Cass and Todd counties. Only the purest

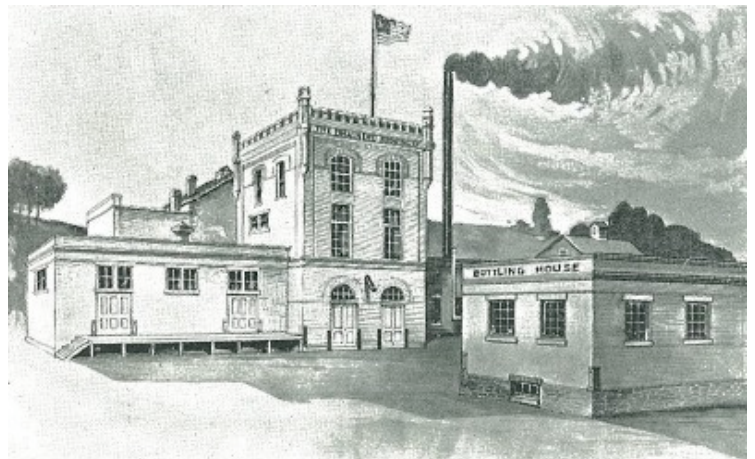
and best ingredients were used. The malt was produced in Minnesota and the best domestic hops were obtained from the Pacific coast, while a considerable quantity of German hops was also imported each season. A supply of the purest water, essential to the production of the best beer, was obtained from an artesian well extending a number of feet below the bed of the Mississippi river. The ice used was cut from Boom lake, which adjoined the premises and was fed by springs.

A fire on the morning of October 19th, 1914, causing a loss of \$6,000, gutted the bottling plant of the Brainerd Brewing company, destroying the entire interior of the two-story brick building, the bottling machinery and the case goods on hand. The building was partially insured. Dr. Werner Hemstead, secretary and treasurer of the brewing company, said it would take a month to rebuild and to install new machinery. The origin of the fire was unknown. A teamster employed by the company had gone to the plant to load up, opened the door and was almost suffocated by a rush of smoke from the interior. He promptly gave the alarm and the fire department responded quickly. The bottling plant was two stories high and measured 25x40 feet, it had a heavy cement floor and the building was practically fireproof with the exception of the wood finishings in the interior and the composition roof. The building was not in use the day before the fire. There was no fire there as the machinery was run by electricity. The wreck in the interior was smoking and piles of glass bottles lay melted in heaps. The building was allowed to cool slowly so as not to crack the cement floor. The walls remained practically intact.

By 1911, the activities of the Prohibitionists throughout the nation had begun to rise to a fever pitch. The Federal Department of Indian Service had in its employ a man named William Eugene "Pussyfoot" Johnson. He came to Minnesota to stop the sale of liquor to Indians and the introduction of liquor into those lands which the federal government had acquired by treaty with Indians. Brainerd was in an area so covered by a treaty made in 1855. In 1914 the United States Supreme Court also rendered a decision on the matter and the prohibition lid was clamped on tight. Saloons were raided, and in some cities, beer and liquor was dumped into the gutters in the campaign of destruction waged by the federal agents in pursuit of their enforcement of the edict.

In Brainerd, the court decision closed twenty-six saloons, which was a very heavy loss of revenue for the city, as the license fee was \$750. The money so collected had been put into the general revenue fund prescribed by the charter of 1908. That charter did not prescribe a special fund for the payment of street lighting, hydrant rental and use of water in public buildings and parks. Being deprived of license fees, the council began not paying the bills it had contracted to pay the Water and Light Board; whereupon the board turned off the lights in the city.

The Brainerd Brewing Company had been ordered closed on July 30th, 1915 but secured an extension of 30 days, which would enable the brewing company to dispose of most of its manufactured product. In the meantime, the brewing company had developed quite a trade in non-alcohol, a temperance beverage. Using nitroglycerin, robbers blew open the safe at the brewery and stole \$200 on August 2nd. A window was forced open to gain entrance and a buggy pulled by a "large horse" was used for the escape shortly after midnight. As of November, the brewery was continuing the fight to remain open. The gist of their case was that beer could not be banned by the 1855 Indian Treaty because there was none in Brainerd in that year.



*Brainerd Brewing Company, illustration of new building to be built in 1910, located at Boom Lake.
Courtesy of Brainerd Tribune*

Sewage Disposal Plant

In early September 1937, the city council voted to hire a consulting firm to draw up plans for a sewage disposal plant at a cost of \$300,000. A federal PWA (Public Works Administration) grant would pay forty-five percent of the cost, with the city issuing bonds for the rest. The city council took steps, in early January 1938, toward the construction of a new sewage disposal plant and complete storm sewer system for the city. The city's share of the \$338,000 project would be \$195,000. The project would employ two hundred ninety-three people, virtually ending the city's unemployment. By mid-February, full approval had been given for \$145,000 in federal aid for the proposed sewage disposal plant and storm sewer project; meaning that work on the \$350,000 project could begin as soon as the city completed its financial arrangements and plans were drawn up. On April 5th, the city council called for bids for the sale of \$150,000 in bonds to finance the sewage disposal plant. J. W. Estabrook, consulting engineer, was in charge of the project. The building of the disposal plant was part of the city's biggest public improvement project in the recent history of the city.

NOTE: The Public Works Administration (PWA), part of the New Deal of 1933, was a large-scale public works construction agency. It was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933 in response to the Great Depression. It built large-scale public works such as dams, bridges, hospitals and schools. Most of the spending came in two waves in 1933-35, and again in 1938. It was shut down in June 1941.

West Brainerd

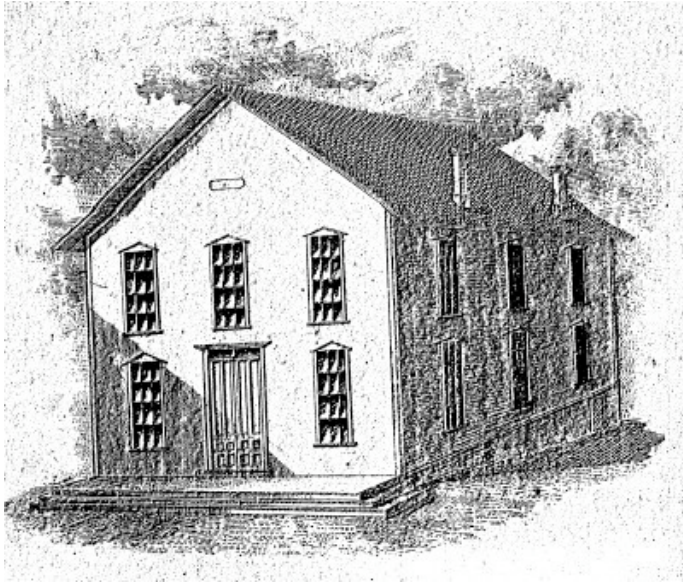
In September or October of 1870, shortly after the death of Lawrence Brainerd, father of Eliza Brainerd Smith who was the wife of J. Gregory Smith, president of the Northern Pacific Railroad; the land on the west bank of the Mississippi was named Lawrence, and the land on the east, Brainerd. This was done so that trains arriving from the west would pass adjoining station stops reproducing the complete name of Lawrence Brainerd. The name Lawrence remained for a year or more and then disappeared because the Lake Superior and Puget Sound Company was unable to gain title to the land, allegedly because of numerous claim-jumpers. At some point, Richard and Charles Ahrens gained control of the land and named it Ogden. The Ahrens brothers promoted Ogden's development, hoping it would replace Brainerd as the main city of the dual location, but this didn't work and by the time the brothers published their map in 1875, both sides of the river were shown with the west bank called West Brainerd.

Cass County Courthouse

Cass county was created through an act of the Minnesota territorial legislature in 1851; it was organized by order of Governor Horace Austin in July of 1872, his agents were George A. Morrison, George N. Bardwell and Charles Ahrens; West Brainerd became the county seat. Cass County originally included a portion of modern-day Crow Wing County west of the Mississippi river. By an act of the state legislature in February 1887 this portion, including West Brainerd, was annexed to Crow Wing County, which had been established in May of 1857, almost doubling its size. Sometime in 1876, Cass County as organized in 1872, was abandoned and the county was not reorganized until 1897 with Walker as the county seat.

In the fall of 1872 the building originally used as the Cass County courthouse burned and the Northern Pacific Railroad allowed the county to temporarily use its Colonists' Reception House for county offices. In March of 1874 a new Cass County courthouse was built in what is now known as Tyrol Hills in West Brainerd; the new two-story building, costing about \$4,008, was a much more imposing, substantial and commodious structure than might have been expected; it was 38x40 feet with a good basement to be used as a jail. The first

floor contained a hall running from front to rear, on either side of which were the offices of the various county officers—auditor, clerk, sheriff, treasurer, etc. These rooms were spacious and lighted by large, cheerful windows; at the rear of the hallway was a flight of stairs leading to the second floor encompassing two jury rooms and the large open court room containing no posts to block spectators' views of the proceedings. The *Brainerd Tribune* declared the building “a splendid courthouse [built] at a VERY REASONABLE COST.”



*Cass County Courthouse
Halsted Map 1875*

According to the *Brainerd Dispatch*, the building was briefly used as a barn or sat empty until about June of 1893 when P. & E. Waite established a factory making all kinds of lumbermen's tools and equipment including sleds, snow plows, cant hooks, etc. This industry provided work for seven or eight men at good wages and was constantly growing until November 26th, 1894 when it was destroyed by a fire in which about \$2,000 worth of goods, including ten sets of logging sleds, two snow plows, forty tote sleds and all the tools and machinery owned by the company was destroyed. Although there

was no fire hydrant within a usable distance of the building, a fire alarm was given, but the fire department had to stand by while the building and all of contents burned.

Northern Pacific Colonists' Reception House

The Northern Pacific opened several immigrant reception houses along the line to provide free temporary lodging for newly arrived immigrants intending to purchase lands from the railroad. Numerous people traveled along the line in search of lands for themselves or for future colonies. In late June of 1872, a celebration was held at the Headquarters Hotel commemorating the opening of the Colonists' Reception House located in West Brainerd near the Mississippi river just north of the Northern Pacific tracks crossing the railroad bridge.

Sometime in the fall of 1872 the Ahrens brothers gained temporary charge of the reception house and in January of 1873 at seven thirty p. m., Brainerd's citizens decided to hold a surprise party for them in the building. The *Brainerd Tribune* reported, “...somewhere near one hundred and fifty of our best citizens, old and young, were seen gathering near Main Street [Washington Street]. Every group had in transit, baskets, bundles, buckets, and parcels of various kinds, and at a given moment the bundled-up assemblage commenced stringing out in a southerly direction led by someone with a brilliant lantern. Silently, that immense concourse of youth and beauty, steadied in its proceedings by gray hairs, old in wisdom but young in spirit, followed on, many scarcely knowing whither they were going, nor what for, only sure that fun was ahead. Southerly for a time and then westward down Main Street [Washington Street], that ‘head-light’ wended its way, until the river was reached; then across its frigid bosom down its



*Northern Pacific Colonists' Reception House, ca. 1870s.
Courtesy of Carl Faust*

western shore, then up the precipitous bank, wended that long troop, 'neath the pale beams of the Goddess of Night—except that there was 'no moon, no how.' The snow banks of Cass County proved no obstacle, whatever, but the invincible column of pioneers and pioneeresses waded, scrambled, went out of sight in the beautiful snow, ever and anon but when one was lost a score of willing hands commenced the work of excavating, in a manner that would put a snow plow to the blush. The victim of the treacherous snow once above board, the column would proceed, with a few remarks apropos to the condition of things, until the head of the procession entered the capacious apartments of the magnificent Northern Pacific Reception House in West Brainerd, where the weary found rest, and refreshments mountains high. The Ahrens brothers found themselves suddenly in possession of so formidable an army, and all they could do was just what they did do—surrender with grace, and, comprehending the situation in a moment, made every effort to put all at perfect ease by a warm welcome, accompanied by every sign of true, genuine hospitality.

“After all had doffed their outer garments, the supplies had all been stored in the capacious larder, and committees had been appointed in the various departments, the great company gave themselves up to enjoyment appropriate to the occasion. In a few minutes Fretwell, Conant & Stearns’ String Band appeared on the scene, and this ends the description of what all this thing meant—it meant ‘business’ nothing more, nothing less. A most bountiful supper, including delicious coffee was served at 12 o’clock; the dance continued until 2 a. m., and then all went home again, pronouncing the whole affair the grandest success, and happiest event that ever occurred in this New Northwest.”

Northern Pacific Hospital

The Northern Pacific Railroad organized a medical department, on February 2nd, 1871, with Dr. S. W.



*Dr. Samuel W. Thayer, first medical director of the Northern Pacific Railroad.
Courtesy of Tim Cooper*

Thayer, of Burlington, Vermont as medical director. In order to fund it, fifty cents a month was deducted from the pay of its employees; this deduction was regularly paid into a fund set up by the company. In the beginning, this deduction was unpopular and was opposed by many employees but the company persisted; as employees began to receive medical aid, often benefitting them far more than the amount of money they had paid for coverage, its benefits and advantages were sought after and acknowledged by all. During the summer of 1871 a hospital car was fitted up with beds, bathing facilities and dispensary; it was accompanied by a nurse and under the constant care of a competent physician. On the mainline of the Northern Pacific, Dr. C. P. Thayer, of Brainerd, presided over the section between Carlton and Oak lake, including the medical dispensary located in Brainerd. Dr. J. C. Rosser, of Fargo, took care of the section between Oak lake and Cheyenne, Dakota Territory; in case of illness or accident medical aid could be procured at once. By early July of 1872 the railroad had made known its intention to erect a hospital at some point along the line where employees could obtain essential care in case of sickness or accident.

In early August of 1872, it became known that the Colonists’ Reception House, opened in West Brainerd in June of 1872 and located just north of the railroad tracks crossing the Northern Pacific bridge, was to be converted by the Northern

Pacific, into a hospital for all its employees, where the sick or wounded of the entire road could be properly cared for medically and in every other way. This institution was to be under the immediate supervision of the Drs. Thayer—Dr. Samuel Thayer, Medical Director, who was assisted by his son, Dr. C. P. Thayer. In late July of 1873 Dr. Samuel Thayer returned to Vermont.

In early March of 1880, General Manager, Herman Haupt, of the Northern Pacific, sent a sixteen-page prospectus to all employees outlining, among other things, the organization of an association, which became known as the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA).

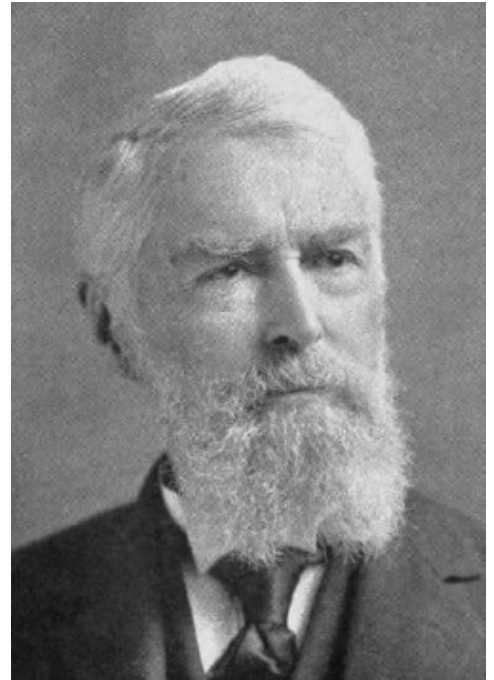


Dr. David Proudfoot Bigger, first chief surgeon of the Northern Pacific Hospital in Brainerd.

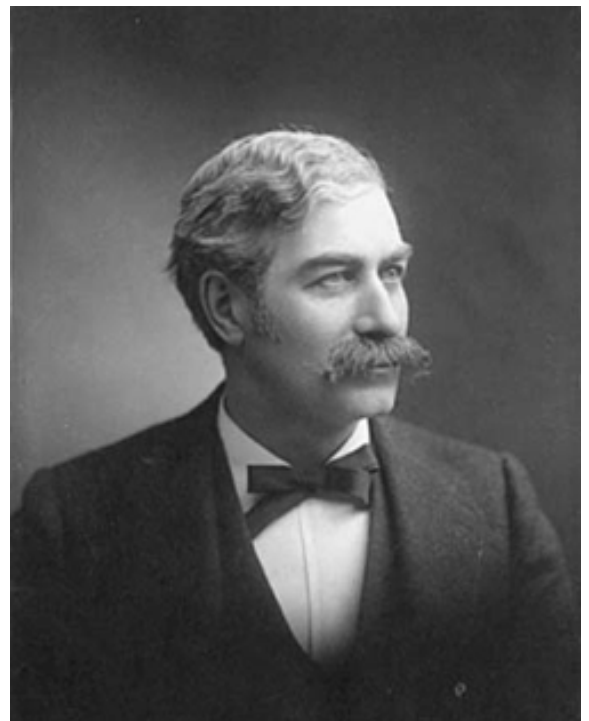
All officers and employees of the Northern Pacific railroad were to become members; the original amount of dues was to be two cents a day or fifty cents a month; but any member, by paying an increased amount of dues, would have a proportionate amount of benefits in case of accident or illness. The amount of benefits to be paid in case of sickness or disability was to be determined by a board of managers who supervised the association, a majority of whom were to be elected by the contributors themselves; dues were to be deducted from monthly wages, but no

payment was required when wages were not earned. Monetary relief was to be provided in case of temporary disability caused by accident; permanent disability caused by accident; death by accident; injuries or sickness from causes other than accident while on duty; and death from causes other than by accident while on duty. The compensation in these and in other cases was to be set by the board of managers.

On September 13th, 1882, Dr. David Proudfoot Bigger of Omaha, Nebraska, former Civil War surgeon, was appointed Chief Surgeon in charge of the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA) Hospital in West Brainerd, owned jointly by the company and its employees; at that time, the hospital was providing medical and surgical care for the entire line of the road. Dr. Bigger arrived in Brainerd on September 23rd, 1882 along with his assistant, Dr. Werner Hemstead, also of Omaha.



Herman Haupt, General Manager of the Northern Pacific Railroad.



Dr. Werner Hemstead, assistant to Dr. Bigger at the Northern Pacific Hospital in Brainerd.

About midnight on January 22nd, 1883, the original Northern Pacific Hospital, housed in the old Colonists' Reception House, burned to the ground. According to Dr. Hemstead's eyewitness account, "The fire started in a wainscoted partition behind a coal heating stove in a lean-to-wing used as an office and examination room, besides the office it contained two small rooms, one used as a pharmacy and the other was my sleeping room. The night watchman pulled me out of bed, I was dazed and suffocated by the smoke. We at once aroused everyone in the building and phoned for help. Soon one of the N. P. switching crews with two baggage cars and men from the Brainerd Fire Department arrived and gave us effective and efficient assistance. By this time the fire had made such headway that efforts to save the building were abandoned. In the meantime we had carried our twenty-one patients, in their beds, to the front entrance on the first floor and began loading them into the baggage cars for transportation to an empty shop building which had hurriedly been cleaned and made ready for use, the patients remained in the cars until morning. The night was very cold, the temperature way below zero [-40°].

"The stoves in this shop building gave off some heat, but within a few days water and steam pipes were conducted into the building from the company's water and steam plants, after that the wards were warm and comfortable. All but one of the patients made a good recovery, a pneumonia patient died, the exposure and disturbance caused by the fire was too much for him. Arrangements were made with the Mahlum House, located south of the shop yard, for meals, food from there was carried in heated containers for bed patients but the ambulatory patients walked to the hotel for meals.



*Chief surgeon's office
in the Northern Pacific Hospital in Brainerd.*

"Of course we were handicapped to give proper medical and surgical service, all our medical supplies and equipment had been consumed in the fire. The Officers of the N. P. B. A., with the supervision of the Chief Surgeon, arranged to take care of the sick and injured employees in their homes and in local hospitals along the line as much as possible, however, our wards were filled to capacity most of the time. Plans for building a new

hospital were immediately begun and before the end of the year a new building had been erected on that previous site, equipped and we moved in."

In his annual report for the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA), covering the eight months ending June 30th, 1883, Dr. D. P. Bigger reported, "The number of patients admitted during the eight months was 952, of whom 284 required surgical treatment and 668 were sick. Of this number, 207 were 'hospital' patients, 89 'at-home' patients, and 656 'office' patients. The total number discharged cured was 870, of which number 257 were from the surgical department and 613 were sick. The number discharged improved was eighteen and the number who died was twelve. Six died in the surgical department and six died of sickness. The youngest patient receiving treatment was sixteen years of age and the oldest was seventy-one. The nativity summary, not including office patients, was as follows: Americans 125, Irish 34, Swedes 33, Finlanders 23, Germans 22, Canadians 17, English 15, Norwegians 13, Scotch 8, Danes 5, French 1.

"The report makes a remarkably good showing of the efficiency of the service, and the reader can only wonder that notwithstanding the serious disadvantages that Dr. Bigger and his assistants have contended with, there is a such a wonderfully small number of deaths. During a portion of the time there were reasonably good accommodations at the old hospital, but that building was consumed by fire in mid-winter, and since then the comfort of the patients has only been secured by the close attention given and interest taken by those in charge."

By August 1883 the new hospital building, designed by twenty-four-year-old Cass Gilbert who designed the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul in 1895, was underway; it was located in the same place as the first. The cost of the building and equipment was between \$25,000-\$30,000. The new hospital was described as magnificent and visitors were agreeably surprised to see the ample accommodations, the elegance of the building and surroundings, and the neat and tidy appearance of every detail in and about the premises. It consisted of two buildings—the two-and-one-half story wood frame shingle-style hospital building with decorative shingle work, towers and a roof that did not project beyond the shingle-covered exterior walls of the upper floors. This building was 35x120 feet, costing \$11,500. The second bare bones and smaller, two-story hospital ward building cost \$4,800. The plumbing contract was separate and cost \$6,000 for both buildings. The hospital was one of the best of its kind, being new, having plenty of light and air, and supplied with every modern convenience. Besides taking care of railroad employees who were injured or ill, private patients were admitted for treatment at a reasonable cost, and the superior advantages offered, made it a very desirable resort for those in need of medical aid.



*Visitors' room in the Northern Pacific Hospital, ca. 1900s.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

In late September of 1885, Dr. Bigger's grizzly bear, which had been confined in an enclosure on the hospital grounds, succeeded in escaping by digging his way out and was never heard from again. The bear was a gift brought from Yellowstone National Park and was highly prized by him.



*Operating Room, Northern Pacific Hospital, ca. 1900s.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

Dr. Bigger assumed control of the hospital culinary department in October of 1886 and the *Brainerd Dispatch* noted, "If the medical and surgical staff at the [hospital] raise the standard of the culinary department to a par with the balance of the institution it will as a whole indeed be a grand success." By early July of 1888, the hospital was treating all patients east of Helena, Montana and during 1887, 1,050 patients were treated with thirteen deaths and of those five did not reach the hospital and three were mortally wounded.

After serving six years as Chief Surgeon at Brainerd, Dr. Bigger was transferred to St. Paul on September 25th, 1888 and was replaced by Dr. Walter Courtney. The *Dispatch* reported in early March 1889 that Dr. Bigger had been residing in St.

Paul in "needy circumstances for several months" and that he had raised \$1,000 against his life insurance policy; the *Dispatch* stated further, "consequently the genial doctor and his affectionate son, will be in clover for some time." In failing health, Dr. Bigger died in Kansas City, Kansas on June 23rd, 1889, he was 75 years old. One of his three sons was taken to the Fergus Falls State Hospital by the Crow Wing County Sheriff in September of 1891, pronounced hopelessly insane in December of 1893 and died there in February 1901.

After the departure of Dr. Bigger, a *Dispatch* writer had occasion to call at the N. P. Hospital near the end of March 1889 to visit one of the patients and, “While there, Dr. Courtney, the chief surgeon in charge, kindly showed us through the various wards and departments of the building, and we were deeply impressed with the excellent manner in which the institution is conducted. The entire building from basement to garret has been recently renovated and repainted, and a great many convenient and necessary articles of furniture have been added. The entire building from the laundry and kitchen in the basement, to the upper wards is at all times kept scrupulously neat and clean, and in perfect order. Everything seems to have a place, and is always to be found in that place. There are now about thirty patients in the hospital, all of whom are getting along nicely. This, we were informed by the doctor, is about the average number of patients on hand. The hospital is capable easily of accommodating seventy-five patients, and on a pinch room could be made for at least a hundred.



*Laundry, Northern Pacific Hospital, ca. 1900s.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

All employees of the company east of Helena are brought here for treatment in case of sickness or injury. Private individuals, that is, persons not employed by the company, desiring treatment can enter, the charge being only one dollar a day for nursing and lodging, and a doctor’s fee of fifty cents per day. Employees of the company having homes in the city and who do not care to go to the hospital are attended by the physician in charge at their homes and all the medicine and drugs necessary for their treatment can be obtained at the hospital dispensary without additional cost. As one passes through this institution and observes the model manner in which it is conducted, and notes the air of cleanliness and order that pervades the whole institution, he cannot help but be impressed with the wisdom of such an institution and the manner in which it is sustained.”



*Northern Pacific nurses on duty in the
hospital ward, ca. 1890s.
Courtesy Crow Wing County Historical Society*

Sometime in 1898 a new operating room and laundry were added to the hospital; and as of January 1st, 1900, the employees of the Brainerd & Northern Minnesota Railway [Minnesota & International Railroad] became members of the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA), thereby gaining admission to the N. P. Hospital

services for fifty cents a month. The N. P. Hospital treated patients, other than railroad workers and in May of 1900 little four-year-old Charley Wintersteen, who had swallowed a tin whistle two weeks before, was brought to the hospital where the recently acquired x-ray “apparatus” was used to locate the whistle. Unfortunately, Charley died on the morning of the day his surgery was scheduled.

In September 1901, the Northern Pacific engaged architects Read & Stern, of St. Paul, the firm that designed the Grand Central Terminal in New York City, to design the quarters of the nurses who would enroll in its new three-year nurses' training program to be conducted in conjunction with the hospital; Charles B. White, of Brainerd, was the contractor. The first class of young women who entered in 1902, graduated in 1905 and the last graduated in 1921. Although neither the exact number of classes nor the total number of graduates is known, it is believed that by the time of the last graduation, well over over one hundred young women had received their diplomas from this nursing school. Those known to have received diplomas were: Mary Strickler, Nellie Aqina Caulfield, Bessie Irene Koyl, Martha Bradley Perry, Florence Emily Miller, Bessie Marie Borgers, Mary Lulu Armstrong, Ruth Muriel Armstrong, Georgiana Marie Messier, Alice May Lyddon, Dorothy Harriet Burrell, Esther Marie Zakariasen all of Brainerd; Harriet G. Bradley, Osage, Minnesota; Anna Pearl Wright, Hubbard, Minnesota; Edith Blanche Fraser, Margaret Cudahy, Laura Maud Watson, all of Aitkin, Minnesota; Edith Mable Pederson, Duluth, Minnesota; Olga Pauline Landahl, Lila Mae Heath, both of Little Falls; Katherine Helen McCarville, Deerwood, Minnesota; Anna E. Rundquist, Winnipeg Junction, Minnesota; Vorine Annabelle Taylor, Bertha Alice Todd, both of Glendive, Montana; Dora Lorraine Reller, Grand Forks, North Dakota; Evelyn Rose Tougas, Cooperstown, North Dakota; Louise Welbanks Case, Toronto, Canada; Katherine Letitia MacFarlane, Peterboro, Ontario, Canada; Margaret Louise Buchanan, Susan Vivian Miles, Mary Agnes Gavin, Elinor Elizabeth Rose, Nellie Amelia Kling, Mollie Blanche Matheson, Ethel Marion Dodd, Marie Clary, Margaret E. Brady, from whence they came is unknown.



*Nurses' relax in the music room at their residence, ca. 1900s.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

When one thinks of the horrific accidents that have involved railroad employees, seldom if ever does one think of women; however, on December 27th, 1905, twenty-four-year-old Emma Peterson, head cook, was kneeling in front of the oven in the hospital kitchen checking on some bread she was baking when the stove exploded. She was blown across the room by the violent explosion and her back and extremities were badly burned. Before anyone could reach her, she ran outdoors in flames. Tablecloths were thrown over her to extinguish the flames, but it was too late; Emma died two days later. The cause of the explosion was thought to have been from the excessive accumulation of coal gas in the stove.



*Cooking in the hospital kitchen, ca. 1890s.
Courtesy Crow Wing County Historical Society*

The annual report of the Northern Pacific Beneficial Association (NPBA) for the fiscal year ending in 1911 showed that 2,106 cases of illness or accident had been

treated at Brainerd.

In 1914, after 25 years as Chief Surgeon of the N. P. Hospital in Brainerd, Dr. Walter Courtney retired and was replaced by Dr. Arthur W. Ide. Dr. Courtney died in St. Paul on June 23rd, 1924 at the age of sixty-nine.

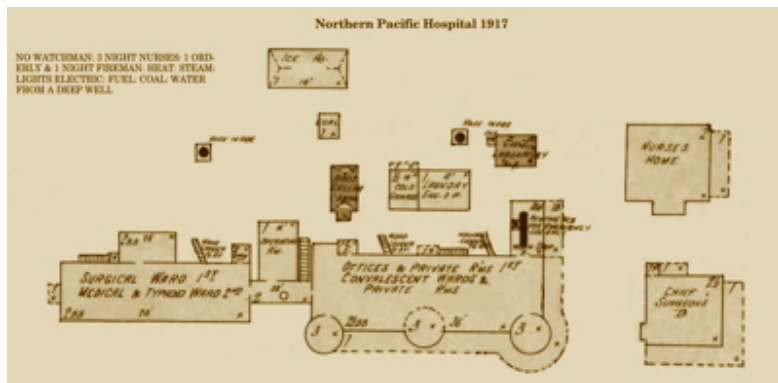
In January of 1916, Brainerd citizens became very agitated when rumors began to circulate that the Northern Pacific Hospital at Brainerd, the largest on the line, was to be moved to the Midway district in St. Paul; however, at the NPBA board meeting held in February, it was decided to build a new \$100,000 hospital at Missoula, thus there would not be money to build the new hospital in St. Paul for at least four more years. In August of 1921 the Northern Pacific announced that its new, 225 bed hospital, costing \$600,000 and located at Charles Street and Simpson Avenue in St. Paul, would be open for patients on September 1st. It was a three-and-four-story structure occupying an entire block. When the hospital was opened for public viewing, August 26th to 28th, 10,000 visitors registered at the desk and inspected the institution. This new hospital became the base hospital for the entire Northern Pacific railway system.



*Northern Pacific Hospital, chief surgeon's residence and nurses' residence, 1900s.
Courtesy of Carl Faust*

The company had branch hospitals at Glendive and Missoula, Montana; Tacoma, Washington; and Brainerd and Staples, Minnesota. The hospital at Brainerd had been the base, and with its removal to St. Paul, Dr. Arthur W. Ide became the Chief Surgeon in charge there.

A special train of six coaches including two sleeping cars and a baggage car left Brainerd at 8:50 on the morning of August 31st, 1921 bound for St. Paul. It carried the Northern Pacific railway hospital staff of doctors and nurses, a number of employees and sixty patients. It marked the closing of a wonderful hospital which, for half a century, had flourished in Brainerd, had established a national reputation in cases successfully handled and which, during that period, had three chief surgeons, Drs. David Proudfoot Bigger, Walter A. Courtney and Arthur Wheaton Ide. So long had this hospital been an institution in Brainerd that it was difficult for its citizens to become accustomed to the loss.



*Northern Pacific Hospital and grounds, 1917.
1917 Sanborn Fire Map*

Brainerd people stood on the depot platform and tears were shed as the train sped out. On board were Dr. Ide, chief surgeon, Dr. J. A. Evert and one other doctor whose name is unknown. Also on board was the nursing staff led by Miss Irene English, superintendent of nurses; Miss Bessie Borgers, night supervisor; Miss Ethel Howard, x-ray technician, and Miss Margaret Brady, supervisor. The nurses in training included the Misses Alice Anderson, Germaine Emerson, Ida

Mattson, Mabel Ordahl, Mayme Northridge, Frances Brown, Kathleen Wise and Selma Krogstad. Eight other nurses-in-training had preceded the train to St. Paul several days before. Nurses and other employees on the train numbered forty-five. The special's engineer was George Johnson, fireman John Smith, conductor George Patterson. At the deserted hospital in Brainerd two employees remained, a day and a night watchman. Arrangements were made in Brainerd for handling emergency cases and those were taken care of by local hospitals. Surgeons in Brainerd hitherto having charge of emergency eye and other cases continued to do so. "Our organization goes to the new general hospital at St. Paul complete," said Dr. Ide. "Not a maid, orderly or doctor of the Brainerd staff has been left in Brainerd."

Upon their arrival at one p. m. in St. Paul, the train was stopped at Snelling Avenue, near the new Northern Pacific Hospital, and was met with ambulances and vans. When the patients arrived at the new

hospital, they were greeted by bouquets of flowers which had been placed at the head of every bed in the wards and in every private room. The flowers were the gift of employees of the general office of the Northern Pacific railroad there.

The exact date the Brainerd Northern Pacific Hospital buildings were torn down is not known; however, a handwritten notation appearing on the 1917 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map* alleges the buildings were torn down in 1922. The only two buildings that remained were the nurses' residence and the residence of the chief surgeon. On March 7th, 1923 a fire of unknown origin started in the roof of the former residence of the chief surgeon, either from sparks from the chimney or a passing train, or perhaps from defective wiring in the attic. It burned through the second and first floors, leaving only a shell of the first story standing. The fire department was much hampered in its work, due to the fact that there was no water service in West Brainerd. Two thousand feet of hose was required to reach from the nearest hydrant at the corner of Second and Laurel Streets across the Laurel Street bridge to the scene of the fire. Since only fifteen hundred feet was carried on the fire truck, an extra trip back to the station for more hose was necessary. The hydrant used was at the end of the mains, where water pressure was always very poor, and by the time the water had been carried through two thousand feet of hose, no pressure remained with which to fight the flames. Chemicals were also pressed into service, but little could be done with them in a fire that had gained the headway that this one had attained.



New Northern Pacific Hospital built in 1921 in St. Paul led to the demise of the Northern Pacific Hospital in Brainerd, ca. 1925.

On April 16th, 1923 the Alumni Association of the Northern Pacific Hospital's Nurses' Training School held its annual meeting in Brainerd; at the time, the membership exceeded one hundred. The only building currently remaining of the Northern Pacific Hospital complex is the nurses' residence located south of the Riverside School.

Northern Pacific Tie Plant

It is thought that the work of building the tie plant in West Brainerd commenced sometime in early 1907. In April a warehouse and temporary office 20x30 feet was under construction at the site in West Brainerd, near the corner of Florence and Tenth Streets Southwest. Apparently the tie plant was having difficulty hiring and retaining employees so in July they installed boarding cars to accommodate the men employed at the tie plant working at unloading and peeling ties. The men had been complaining for some time about the distance they needed to go for food, many made that an excuse for quitting the job. Yet, when boarding cars were installed and preparations made to serve supper not a single man stayed, all came to town. The railroad also shipped men in for work at the plant, but soon discovered the men were not interested in working there for more than a couple of days—they were only interested in a free ride to Brainerd. The plant was built for the Northern Pacific by the Columbia Creosoting Company, C. A. Ackerman superintended the work. Andrew Gibson, of Missoula, Montana was to be in charge of both of the N. P. tie plants. The second plant was built at Paradise, Montana at about the same time as the Brainerd plant. Gibson stated that the crew for both plants would average about one hundred twenty-five and the plant at Brainerd would run nearly the entire year. He thought it might be necessary to shut the plant down for the three coldest months of the year, but, if it was possible to keep the material used in processing the ties from freezing, the plant would remain open the year around. Even before the plant

opened, the railroad was looking to purchase more land to store the ties. By the end of September, the company had about fifteen men boarding there with space for about one hundred. The Columbia Creosoting Company, was to furnish a man to run the plant for six days before it was accepted and paid for by the railroad company.



*Tie plant, ca. 1912.
Postcard*

The railroad company provided its own electrician, who was in charge of the electric railroad at the plant. It was said there were over 140,000 peeled and piled ties west of the plant and there were a large number, probably 50,000, unloaded west of the plant awaiting peeling and a yard nearly as large east of the plant was well filled. The work of unloading ties went on all the time. There were two or three crews working by the day while a number of men were working by the piece. The company paid \$1.75 per hundred for unloading birch ties and two men working together unloaded eight hundred in one day. It was hard work, but paid well for the times. The men engaged in unloading wore heavy pads, usually horse

collar sweat pads, double, on their shoulders to protect them. The trolley line, which would handle the ties in the plant was complete and the motor cars were on the premises. The track was a narrow gauge and the cars were of iron built especially for tie plant work. A train of sixteen cars was pushed into each retort (Retorts are like long horizontal boilers with a door on one end that bolts closed. Rails run into that end and the raw ties are delivered on narrow gauge cars.) for treatment at one time. All the buildings were of corrugated steel or steel framework and were as nearly fireproof as possible. The big storage tank had been filled with creosote—ten tank cars of it had been received. It was pumped by steam pumps, from the tank cars, into the storage tanks and from the storage tanks, by the same method, into the retorts.

A representative of the *DISPATCH* was present at the tie preserving plant when the first train load of treated ties was hauled from the retort on October 14th, “The retorts in which the ties are treated, to which the rest of the plant is auxiliary, are immense cylinders of boiler steel about eight feet in diameter and over one hundred thirty feet long. They rest horizontally on cement foundations, one end being closed while the other is fitted with an immense circular door held in place by a large number of two-inch bolts carrying heavy nuts, by which the door is hermetically sealed. The ties are loaded on cars each capable of carrying fifty ties. These cars are of steel and iron and are fitted with racks so shaped that the outlines of the load closely follow the shape of the retort.



*Loading ties, ca. 1925.
Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society*

The capacity of each retort is sixteen cars, or eight hundred ties to the retort and two retorts are used, making 1600 ties treated at one time.

“The process consists in forcing a liquid creosote into the pores of the ties, which should be well seasoned, under a heavy pressure, after which the creosote is drawn off into tanks below the retorts and a vacuum created, which draws the surplus creosote from the ties. They are then hauled from the retort and the work repeated with another bath. The actual time for treatment is about four hours.

“The cars, which are narrow gauge, are hauled or pushed, as may be necessary by an electric motor having a draw bar power of fifty tons and capable of easily handling 16 cars with their load of 800 ties. The

current is supplied by a volt dynamo geared direct to a 50-horse-power engine, and making 300 revolutions per minute.

“The ties when they enter the retort are clean looking and sweet smelling, but when they emerge, they are black as an old hat and the odor, faugh! The entire place smells as if all the women in Christendom had stored their furs there and liberally supplied them with moth balls.

“In addition to, or rather auxiliary to the retorts, are the big steam pumps which force the liquid into the ties under heavy pressure, and the immense air pumps for use in creating a vacuum. There is also an immense storage tank outside, and two smaller ones which stand on their ends over the center of the retorts. The creosote, after being drawn into the tanks below the retorts, is again pumped into the upper tanks to be used again.

“...the local plant is under the charge of Lowry Smith, formerly with the Columbia Creosoting Co., the owners of the patents covering the process, and builders of the plant. There is also an electrician and engineer and a time keeper employed at the plant, besides the large number of men required to unload, peel, handle and reload the ties.

“The institution is one that will mean no small thing for the upbuilding of Brainerd and its starting is of much more significance than many think.”

The first shipment of ties from the tie preserving plant was made on October 21st and the ties were to be shipped as fast as possible from then on. The fact that they were very flammable after treatment made it inadvisable to keep them stored in large quantities, especially in close proximity to the tie plant.



*Dinky engine used to handle ties at the Tie Plant, now located at the fairgrounds.
Courtesy of Crow Wing County Historical Society*

By early January 1908, the old log landing dock on the west side of the Mississippi river below the M. & I. bridge had been removed and logs were unloaded directly from the tie plant spur. The C. A. Smith Lumber Company expected to land about two million feet there during that winter.

In early October 1921, a crew of from forty to fifty men were employed at the tie plant. The daily output of ties treated with creosote was 3,000. Material on hand to be treated, including ties, switch ties, bridge material, the plugs, etc., insured a steady run of eight months. Levi Johnson was the superintendent of the plant, G. H. Stone was foreman, Carl Anderson engineer and electrician, Bert Edwards treating engineer, Frank Roberts

motorman, Seymour Clark, boiling and adzing machine operator, C. D. Clark helper. Other workers were the firemen, laborers, the handlers, etc.

In November 1935 fifty men were at work at the Northern Pacific tie treating plant. It was thought seventy-five or eighty men would be employed when the operations reached their peak. The payroll was estimated to be between \$6,000-\$8,000 per month. Approximately 500,000 ties would be run through the local plant. Raw stock, estimated at 572,000 ties, had been contracted for and was arriving daily.

In May 1971, about fifty men were employed at the tie plant. In 1982 it was estimated that the tie plant spent about a thousand dollars a month in Brainerd.

It was announced on January 23rd, 1986 that the tie plant, then owned by the Burlington Northern Railroad, would close by the end of the year. The closure would result in the layoff of fourteen of the plant's twenty-four workers. The reason given was that the railroad no longer replaced as many ties as it had in the past and that the railroad preferred hardwood ties rather than softwood ties. The tie plant closed on September 19th, 1986. The dismantling of the plant began on October 2nd, and was to continue for six weeks. Cleanup of the area was to continue for six years, after which grass and trees were to be planted. The cleanup was necessitated

by the plant's use of creosote, a liquid preservative used to treat the railroad ties. Because this is a Superfund site, the EPA and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency have conducted several five-year reviews of the site's remedy. The most recent review, completed in 2016, concluded that response actions as implemented at the site are protective of human health and the environment in the short term. However, the review recommended additional investigation and evaluating remedial alternatives for contaminated groundwater and source areas, updating the remedy for the site, and adding institutional controls to ensure that future land use is protective. These actions are underway. At its peak, the stockyard contained up to a million ties and produced 700,000 treated ties annually.

Evergreen Cemetery Walk World War I Veterans, Gold Star Mothers and Victims of the 1918 Influenza Epidemic

This year we are commemorating the 100th Anniversary of World War I by remembering the four hundred one veterans buried in Evergreen Cemetery, the Gold Star Mothers, as well as the victims of the Spanish Influenza Pandemic.

Established on July 5th, 1917, under the command of General John J. Pershing, the American Expeditionary Forces were the fighting men of the United States Army during World War I. The principal battles, in which they fought, were those at Chateau-Thierry in July of 1918; the Battle of Belleau Wood, June 1st through the 26th of 1918; the Battle of Saint-Mihiel, September 12th through the 15th of 1918 and the Meuse-Argonne offensive from September 26th until the Armistice was signed on November 11th, 1918. The Meuse-Argonne was the largest offensive in United States military history and the second deadliest battle in American history; it involved 1.2 million American soldiers for forty-seven days. Of the 320,000 total casualties sustained by the American Expeditionary Forces during the war, 53,402 died in battle, 63,114 were noncombat deaths and 204,000 were wounded. During the fall of 1918, the influenza pandemic killed more than 25,000 men and another 360,000 became gravely ill.

At the time the United States entered World War I on April 6th, 1917, the Army Nurse Corps, which had been established in 1901, had only four hundred three active duty nurses. By the end of the war on November 11th, 1918, more than 21,000 American women had volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps and more than 10,000 had sailed to European ports through U-boat-infested waters. They slept in hammocks, slogged through knee-deep mud, endured rain, snow, disease and danger from bombardment. Some worked in base hospitals fifty miles behind the front lines or in field hospitals closer to combat zones; others worked in tents and bombed-out churches, their patients lying on beds of hay. In mobile surgical units a mile or two from the advancing soldiers, nurses worked with doctors providing emergency treatment to the critically wounded. In the beginning, American nurses worked twelve-hour shifts; by the war's end, as the casualties multiplied, they often worked round the clock treating more than 320,000 American soldiers with gunshot and shrapnel wounds, gangrene, blood poisoning, poison gas burns, infections such as trench foot, exposure and "shell shock," which is now referred to as PTSD. Many nurses died of pneumonia, ear infections and Spanish influenza. Others died in car accidents and air raids; however, none died of combat related injuries. For these services, the nurses held no rank and received half the pay of an Army private. More than two hundred nurses gave the ultimate sacrifice and many remain buried in foreign soil beneath white marble crosses next to the men they fought to save.

Gold Star Mothers is an organization of American mothers who lost sons or daughters in military service. It was originally formed in 1928 for mothers of those lost in World War I. Its name came from the custom of families of servicemen hanging a banner called a service flag in the windows of their homes. The service flag had a star for each family member in the military. Living servicemen were represented by a blue star, and those who had lost their lives in combat were represented by a gold star; they have continued to be used in reference to all American military engagements since that time.

The Spanish Influenza Pandemic, the deadliest in history, is believed to have begun among World War I soldiers sometime during the fall of 1918 and was carried back to the towns and cities of the United States after the war. Between 1918-1919, in the United States, approximately 500,000-675,000 people died as a result of the flu. Victims died within hours or days of developing symptoms, their skin turning blue and their lungs filling with fluid that caused them to suffocate. October 1918 was the deadliest month for flu deaths in the United States. People were ordered to wear masks; schools, theaters and businesses were closed and citizens were advised to avoid shaking hands and to stay indoors. Libraries put a halt on lending books and regulations were passed banning spitting. In some cities, bodies piled up in makeshift morgues before the virus ended its deadly

global march. Most influenza outbreaks disproportionately kill juvenile, elderly, or already weakened patients; in contrast, the 1918 pandemic predominantly killed previously healthy young adults. Many died from pneumonia, brought on by their weakened condition while suffering from the flu. In Brainerd, the three deadliest months for flu deaths were October 1918—twenty-six burials (three flu, nine pneumonia), November 1918—forty-four burials (six flu, thirty pneumonia), and December 1919—eighteen burials (four flu, eight pneumonia). Twelve of the thirty-five people buried in Block 9, Lot 45 in October, November and December of 1918 are likely flu victims.

Emelia Anderson (1893-1956)

A teacher for several years, Emelia Anderson gave that up to become a registered nurse studying at Swedish Hospital in Minneapolis, Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D. C. and volunteering for service in the Army Nurse Corps during World War I. (The date of birth on the marker is incorrect.)

Walter Benjamin Brown (1897-1918)

Private Walter Benjamin Brown was born at Holdingford, Minnesota. He volunteered for the army of the United States on July 17th, 1917, which was shortly after his twentieth birthday, choosing the infantry. He was assigned to Company K, 125th Infantry Regiment, 32nd 'Red Arrow' Division and, at the age of twenty-one, was killed in action during the Meuse-Argonne Offensive on October 10th, 1918 while performing his duties as a message carrier. Being fleet of foot, keen of eye and quick minded, he was particularly qualified for the duty assigned him, and by his gallant conduct under fire was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the second highest decoration for heroism; second only to the Medal of Honor. General John J. Pershing, Commander in Chief of the United States Army, stated, "Private Walter B. Brown, Company K, 125th Infantry, distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy of the United States at Gesnes, France on October 9th and in recognition of his gallant conduct I have awarded him in the name of the President the Distinguished Service Cross." The citation reads as follows, "The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9th, 1918, takes pride in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Private Walter B. Brown, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in action while serving with Company K, 125th Infantry Regiment, 32nd Division, A.E.F., near Gesnes, France, 9 October 1918. Exposing himself to the greatest danger, Private Brown constantly carried messages from the company to the platoons occupying the front lines. The journey necessitated his crossing an area swept by intense artillery and withering machine-gun fire, but he successfully maintained liaison during a very critical period of the attack." Private Brown was temporarily buried in France; his remains were buried in Evergreen Cemetery on October 19th, 1921.

Leonard Ambrose Bushey (1890-1918)

Private Bushey died on October 5th, 1918 at Camp Rockford, Illinois; his death was most likely caused by the Spanish influenza. A memorial service was held on October 16th, 1918 for **Leonard Bushey**, Oscar W. Nelson, Sidney Carl Hanson, Gunnard Erickson, and John Witkouski at the First Lutheran Church in Brainerd.

NOTE: John Witkouski (1894-1918) France

Private First Class John Witkouski was born in Cloquet, Minnesota and was a papermaker at the Northwest Paper Company in Brainerd at the time he filled out his Draft Registration Card on June 5th, 1917. He died on June 26th, 1918 in France and lies buried in the Oise-Aisne American Cemetery in France. A memorial service was held on October 16, 1918 for Leonard Bushey, Oscar W. Nelson, Sidney Carl Hanson, Gunnard Erickson, and **John Witkouski** at the First Lutheran Church in Brainerd.

John Elmer “Jack” Chalberg (1909-1974)

No history of Central Lakes College would be complete without mentioning John Chalberg who was born in Bovey, Minnesota. Graduating from Macalester College in St. Paul with a Bachelor’s Degree and from the University of Minnesota with a Master’s Degree, he arrived in Brainerd in 1933 and began his career in education by teaching social studies at the Washington High School where he met and married Mildred Mary O’Brien, a fellow faculty member and daughter of Con O’Brien, on August 22nd, 1936. With twelve students in 1938, the Brainerd State Junior College opened its doors on the third floor of Washington High School under the auspices of the Brainerd School Board. Mr. Chalberg associated himself with the college, first as director of dramatic productions and then as dean in 1944, when the enrollment was twenty-seven students; the college was moved to the Lincoln grade school in 1957. Prior to the state of Minnesota taking control of the junior college system in 1963, the Brainerd School Board had decided to build the first junior college building in Minnesota, designed especially for that purpose, on one hundred twenty-five wooded acres on the west side of the Mississippi river; the building was completed in 1964. While Mr. Chalberg was president, the college added a \$500,000 gymnasium in 1969, a \$500,000 Fine Arts Center in 1971 and he was involved in the preliminary planning of the half million dollar student center completed in 1974. During his twenty-eight-year tenure, first as dean, then as president from 1944 to 1972, enrollment at the Brainerd State Junior College was increased from twenty-seven to six hundred twenty students. One of Mr. Chalberg’s last efforts was toward establishing more scholarships and grants at the college.

Benjamin F. Clark (1888-1918)

Benjamin F. Clark was the Clark’s eldest son; he was thirty-one years of age, and unmarried. He entered the army at Ellendale, North Dakota, in July 1917, and was sent to Camp Dodge, Iowa; later, he was transferred to Camp Pike, Arkansas. In September of 1918, his regiment, the 28th Infantry, went to France. A printer by trade, he was a member of the 23rd Infantry, Machine Gun Company. The following telegram was received on January 2nd, 1919 by Private Clark’s parents:

WASHINGTON, D. C., December 30, 1918.

Deeply regret to inform you that Private Benjamin F. Clark, infantry, previously reported as missing in action since October 3d, is now reported killed in action, same date.

HARRIS, Adjutant General.

Private Clark’s remains were returned for burial in Evergreen Cemetery in September 1921.

Fred Cossette (1893-1948)

Fred registered for the draft in June 1917 in Seattle, Washington where he was working as a boilermaker at the Seattle Boiler Works. On May 28th, 1919, while he was a member of the 168th Company Transport Corps, United States Army, stationed at Syren, North Russia, Fred wrote a letter describing the suffering and privation experienced by American soldiers stationed there. A fellow soldier, in order to avoid the censors, smuggled the letter out and mailed it to Brainerd:

“We do not get any potatoes or vegetables of any kind nor bread and if I have to stay here for the winter I am going to dig my own grave, providing some Bolshevik does not bump me off and that will save me the trouble. We came to this country to open up the railroads to get American troops out of Archangel. We are fighting for our lives, as the Russians do not want us here. We are on our way to Petrograd. When we came to this country we had 720 men and now we have 240 left, so you can imagine how the Bolsheviks are bumping us off. They have got us outnumbered 50 to 1 and they have good guns and plenty of ammunition. We are using Russian guns and what we captured from the Bolsheviks. We are trying to fight two battles at once, that is, trying to keep from starving to death and dodging bullets. We did pretty well a week ago when we held up a train and got a carload of jam, cigarettes, tobacco, sugar, hardtack, coffee and also a carload of rum and we sure

had a good time. We are living worse than a bunch of hogs. We are full of cooties, dirty, ragged, no hair cut, no shave. I have been a bum in the states, but that was a paradise compared with the life I am putting up with in this dump.”

Ingolf Dillan (1896-1973)

Ingolf Dillan was a graduate of the Brainerd high school in 1914, a graduate of the University of Minnesota in 1921 and a graduate of the Minnesota College of Law in 1926. He was a Civics and Business Law teacher at Central High School, Minneapolis, from 1923-1925. In 1923 he wrote and published, *Brainerd's Half Century*, the first book chronicling the first fifty years of Brainerd history, dedicating it to his mother and father. 1600 numbered copies of the one hundred forty-four page book were printed. He was a Second Lieutenant, United States Marine Corps Reserve during World War I.

Edward Monroe Elder (1894-1918)

Sergeant Edward Monroe Elder, born in Brainerd, was killed in France, October 21st, 1918, as his truck collided at night with a train. Sergeant Elder belonged to the 313th Supply Train, Company B, of the United States Quartermaster Corps, which was part of the American Expeditionary Forces. In a letter to a friend, dated just three days before his death, Sergeant Elder wrote, “Our job, is to feed our division, and that means handling the supplies from the freight cars to the different regiments of the division. Each morning details of men are put to work to issue rations, forage and clothing. These articles are packed on trucks and are delivered to the different regimental dumps, then wagons with two or four horses haul the supplies to the different companies. You may think that is a care-free life, but trucking along a road at night with no light on the truck is not easy as one might think, especially when you consider the possibility of shell torn roads. Our work must be done if it takes twenty-four hours a day to accomplish the work, which it usually does.”

Robert Leonard Erickson (1887-1928)

Robert Erickson registered for the World War I draft on June 5th, 1917. He was said to have lived through some of the most severe skirmishes in France but failed to ever recover totally from them. He was twice wounded, once by a machine gun and his health was further impaired by shell shock, now known as PTSD. The cause of his death was given as influenza with the recurrence of shell shock as contributory. He was forty-one years old. Before and after the war, he worked with his father as a florist.

Helen Regina O'Connell Gerber (1894-1924)

Helen Regina O'Connell was born in Duluth in 1894. She grew to young womanhood in that city, attended the local schools and graduated as a nurse and dietician from St. Mary's Hospital. She served two and one-half years as a nurse in World War I, most of that time was spent in hospitals in Texas. After she was discharged from army service, she held the position of dietician at St. Mary's hospital, Duluth, for several years.

Marie Boe Hanson (1873-1952)

Mrs. Hanson, the first Gold Star Mother in Crow Wing County, was the mother of Private Sidney Carl Hanson who was reported killed in action in France on May 4th, 1918, he was eighteen years old. In June of 1918 she received sympathy cards from King George of England and the Governor-General of Canada, but the most important came from the fellow soldiers of her son. Private Hanson was drafted by the United States Army but failed to pass the physical; whereupon, he went to Winnipeg, Canada where he enlisted in the 8th Infantry Battalion (90th Winnipeg Rifles) of the Canadian Expeditionary Forces on June 30th, 1917; upon passing the physical, he was sent to England for training. In February 1918 he was sent to France. Sidney Carl Hanson was the first soldier from Crow Wing County to die in the war; the American Legion Post in Brainerd was named in

his honor. He lies buried in the Roclincourt Military Cemetery in France. A memorial service was held on October 16th, 1918 for Leonard Bushey, Oscar W. Nelson, **Sidney Carl Hanson**, Gunnard Erickson, and John Witkouski at the First Lutheran Church in Brainerd.

NOTE: Even though Sidney Carl Hanson was his given name, the American Legion Post in Brainerd is named the Carl Sidney Hanson Post.

Rebecca Frederickson Hanson (1847-1940)

Mrs. Hanson lost a son, Henry, in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War and on December 20th, 1918 she received word that a second son, Nick, had been killed in action on September 13th, 1918 at the battle of St. Mihiel in France. Nick was twenty-seven years old and a member of the 23rd Infantry, 2nd Division when he died and lies buried in the St. Mihiel Cemetery in France. The Mahlum-Hanson VFW Post was named in Nick's honor and in honor of John Mons Mahlum, who also died in World War I. Upon the death of Nick, Mrs. Hanson became a Gold Star Mother.

Louis John Hill (1893-1918)

Private Hill enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1917, was sent directly to the Mare Islands, Virginia for training and was sent to France in 1918. Born in Garrison Township, twenty-four-year-old Private Louis John Hill, 18th Company, 5th Marine Corps, 2nd Division, died from wounds received in action September 15th, 1918 in France. For the heroism displayed by this gallant young fighter, the French government awarded his next of kin, a sister, Mrs. Carrie Hill McKay of Libby, Minnesota, the Croix de Guerre and a second citation, the French fourragère. On November 15th, he was cited by General Pétain of the French Army as follows: "During the night of June 9-10, 1918, he displayed bravery and zeal in traversing the front of three sections under violent bombardment; volunteering to act as stretcher bearer and to carry the wounded to the rear." On November 21st, 1918, he was again cited by the French: "After having marched at the head of the assaulting wave, he and some comrades became separated from it in Belleau Wood. They attacked a German point of resistance June 13th, and due to their energy, courage and coolness, they surrounded it and captured one officer and twenty-one German soldiers."

Fannie M. Larson Jelacie (1892-1989)

Fannie M. Larson Jelacie served as a nurse in the United States Army Nurse Corps during World War I. She trained at St. John's Hospital, Helena, Montana and was part of the St. John's Training School Unit, first sent to Letterman General Hospital at the Presidio of San Francisco. An unusually interesting event took place on June 7th, 1918 at St. John's Hospital, when the service flag containing eleven stars, each star representing a nurse from the hospital training school, was dedicated. The nurses, represented by the service flag, who left Sunday, June 2nd, 1918, for the Presidio and who are known as the St. John's Training School Unit are: Fannie Larson and ten others. Nurse Larson was sent overseas to Base Hospital 61 at Beaune, France, then to Evacuation Hospital 24 at Mesves, France. Her overseas service was completed at Camp Hospital 111 at Solesmes-Sarthe, France and she was honorably discharged from service in 1919.

John Sherman Levis (1894-1961)

John Sherman Levis was born in Phillips, Wisconsin and registered for the World War I draft on June 5th, 1917 in Little Falls. He was eventually drafted; however, the date is unknown. In 1930, Levis opened the Levis Soda Grill in the Iron Exchange building at the corner of South Sixth and Laurel Streets and operated it for many years; it later became known as the Korner Kut Rate Drug Store. As part of a corporation, he was responsible for building and operating the Diner on Washington Street and in 1937 he and a partner founded the Spotlight

dance hall in Nisswa, which they operated for about six years. In 1949 he purchased the giant mechanized figure of Paul Bunyan, which was featured at the Railroad Fair in Chicago and opened the Paul Bunyan Center at the junction of Highways 210 and 371.

John Mons “Moxie” Mahlum (1891-1918)

Twenty-seven-year-old Sergeant-Major John Mahlum died in France of bronchial pneumonia on December 22nd, 1918; his remains were returned to Brainerd on June 24th, 1921. He was a graduate of the Brainerd High School, Georgetown University in Washington, D. C. and was captain of the Georgetown football team in 1916. Enlisting in August of 1917, he was transferred from Fort Snelling to Camp Kearney, California and went overseas in June of 1918 eventually being stationed at First Army Headquarters at Souilly, France, from whence the Meuse-Argonne offensive was directed from September 26th until the Armistice was signed on November 11th, 1918. His brother, Milton, in the ordnance department, ammunition supply company, was forty miles away and just previous to John's death the two brothers had visited Southern France and Paris while on two weeks leave. Milton Mahlum died in 1944 of a heart attack at the Veterans hospital in Minneapolis.

Malon Hall Mayo (1874-1963)

No history of the Mississippi river would be complete without a mention of Malon Mayo, born in 1874, who spent nearly all his working life in various enterprises connected with the river and in the building and operation of boats used in the logging and excursion industry. The *Ranger*, *Theodora* and *Myrtis*, named for two of his daughters, were known as three of his boats. According to Mr. Mayo, one of the most profitable features of Mississippi river navigation was the suing of boom companies; the steamboat operators soon found out that, if the river was blocked so as to make navigation impossible, the steamboat operator could sue the boom company. Some of the most profitable seasons the boats had were those, when they were tied up by logs most of the season. Sometime around 1908 a new chapter in river boating opened with the arrival of coal-burning steam launches. These boats were nearly all homemade and many were beautiful boats built by real craftsmen. A number of the engines and boilers, used in these launches, were also homemade and months were spent on their construction. The *Myrtis*, built by Malon Mayo, was one of these; she was a forty-four-foot steam launch running excursion and supply trips to Riverton and other points on the river.

Oscar Wilhelm Nelson (1897-1918)

Oscar Nelson served as a Fireman, 3rd class in the United States Naval Reserve Force (USNRF); he enlisted at Cincinnati, Ohio on June 3rd, 1918 and died at the Naval Hospital, Norfolk, Virginia on October 5th, 1918 of respiratory disease, most likely the flu. A memorial service was held on October 16th, 1918 for Leonard Bushey, **Oscar W. Nelson**, Sidney Carl Hanson, Gunnard Erickson, and John Witkouski at the First Lutheran Church in Brainerd.

Mary Dorothea “Mae” Jones Oldfield (1892-1925)

Mae joined the World War I Army Nurse Corps and worked at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D. C. as a Nurse Reconstruction Aide; she died at Thomas Hospital, a tuberculosis sanatorium located in Minneapolis after a lingering illness.

Edward A. Olson (1889-1918)

Edward A. Olson was born in Brainerd and died in France on December 9th, 1918, at the age of twenty-nine of bronchial pneumonia, most likely Spanish influenza. He was called to service April 27th, 1918 and trained at Camp Dodge, Iowa in Company B, 313 Engineers, 88th Division. Private Olson left for France in August of 1918 where he served as a cook until he was called to the fighting line, where he died.

NOTE: The funeral services for both Edward Olson and Frederick Roll were held at the same time and in the same church.

Frederick Christian Peter Roll (1894-1918)

Frederick Christian Peter Roll died of Spanish influenza in France on October 30th, 1918 at the age of twenty-four and was buried at Hericourt, France. His remains were buried in Evergreen on June 3rd, 1921. He enlisted in June of 1918, trained at Camp Dodge, Iowa and was a member of Ambulance Company 352, Sanitary Train 313, of the 88th Division. Sanitary Train 313 arrived at LeHavre, France on September 5th, 1918. The role of the Sanitary Train was to provide medical care for the entire division through its ambulance and field hospital. The Ambulance Section consisted of a headquarters, one horse drawn and three motor ambulance companies. Their purpose was to transport men from the Battalion Aid Stations to the Field Hospital Section. If the travel time from collection points to the hospital was too long, leaving a man unattended, the Ambulance Sections set up intermediate points that allowed for a continuance of emergency medical care called Dressing Stations.

NOTE: The funeral services for both Frederick Roll and Edward Olson were held at the same time and in the same church.

Sylvester Washington Tomberlin (1890-1918)

Corporal Sylvester Washington Tomberlin was born near Eden Valley, Minnesota. He was inducted into the service at Deer River, Minnesota, on September 21st, 1917 and assigned to Company M, 47th Infantry Regiment. He was reported missing in action on July 30th, 1918. While in the front line trenches in France, he was wounded at Saone at Loire, France on July 31st, 1918. On September 21, 1918, Corporal Tomberlin wrote a letter to his father stating that he had been wounded and, at the date of the letter, was in a hospital and was recovering. On September 25th, 1918, Corporal Tomberlin returned to duty and was killed in action on September 26th, 1918 during the Meuse-Argonne offensive. He was temporarily buried in the American Cemetery at the Argonne in France. On October 19th, 1921 his remains were buried in Evergreen Cemetery.

Notes

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More Information About Brainerd History Can be Found Here

Crow Wing County Historical Society Website

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org>

- A Brief History of Early Northeast Brainerd**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/downloads/BriefHistoryOfEarlyNortheastBrainerd.pdf>

- A History of the Northern Pacific Railroad in Brainerd**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/npr.html>

- Brainerd City Bands**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_bands.html

- Brainerd: City of Fire**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_fires.html

- Brainerd Newspapers**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_newspapers.html

- Brainerd Papermills**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/paper_mill.html

- Brainerd Street Views**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_street_views.html

- Brainerd Utilities**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_utilities.html

- Bridges, Dam, Jumps, Steamboats and Ferries**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_stuff.html

- Buildings & Parks of Some Historical Significance to Brainerd**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/buildings.html>

- Downtown Brainerd: Then and Now**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/brainerd_downtown_buildings.html

•**Early Accounts of Brainerd and its Surrounds**

http://www.crowwinghistory.org/early_accounts.html

•**Northside History Walk Booklet**

<http://www.crowwinghistory.org/downloads/NorthsideHistoryWalk2015.pdf>

•**Evergreen Cemetery Burial Records**

<http://www.evergreencemeterybrainerd.com/dotd.html>

•**Crow Wing County USGenWeb**

<http://crowwing.mngenweb.net>

•**City of Brainerd Historic Newspapers, Maps, etc.**

<http://www.ci.brainerd.mn.us/documentcenter>

•**Brainerd History Group**

<http://fertfaust.wixsite.com/brainerd-history>

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Administrator/Executive Director
Crow Wing County Historical Society
P. O. Box 722
Brainerd, Minnesota 56401

Along the Mississippi from Rice Lake to Boom Lake

