

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH

“A WINDING JOURNEY TO HISTORY”



Headwaters at Breckenridge, Minnesota, U.S.A.

By NEOMA A. LAKEN
2010

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WELCOME...

Breckenridge, Wilkin County, Minnesota, United States of America, and Wahpeton, Richland County, North Dakota, United States of America, welcome you to the Red River of the North.

Some of the information contained comes from the records in the office of the County Recorder, in the Wilkin County Courthouse, Breckenridge MN. Some is local historical lore passed on to generations throughout the years and told to the author. While yet other information is a meshing of historical facts.

As with the telling of any history, sagas differ slightly with the various perspectives of the authors.

I hope you will find your visit to the Red River of the North a pleasant one. Enjoy your visit . . . and come back soon!

Neoma A. Laken, Author
108 North 15th Street
Breckenridge, Minnesota 56520
United States of America

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FOREWORD

When many people hear the name Red River they frequently think of flooding issues. I suppose that's understandable since flooding seasonally disrupts our daily lives and is all too frequently making headlines in the newspaper. If the subject isn't flooding it may be water supply when we are reminded that the river can run deep but it also can stop flowing. The good press that the river receives is usually reserved for those that follow water sports such as canoeing, kayaking, hydrobiking or perhaps catfishing.

Overall most people know little of the Red. Some people drink it everyday but probably know more about the local sports team than the water that sustains their life. Our experiences indicate that we still have youth and yes, even adults, that think their water comes from a tap or bottle. River Keepers has been trying to change that lack of general knowledge.

We use the S.S. Ruby (the only tour boat on the Red in the U.S.), the youth water festival, service learning opportunities, presentations, advocacy and lots of other tools to get the word out. Once in awhile, we are fortunate to meet other folks who feel the same way we do and together we are able to combine forces and do good stuff. Twelve years ago River Keepers hosted a lunch meeting in Moorhead. Neoma Laken was one of the attendees. That first meeting led to an opportunity to work with Neoma on many projects. She shares our passion for the Red and its watershed.

Neoma has lots of talents but the one that's really special is her skill for "story telling". No, not the kind of story telling that I do...a long drawn out discussion of an event or happening, with frequent wanderings onto subjects other than the original. She is a true **story teller**, combining an expressive voice and her study of Red River history in to a visual and oral experience. According to Wikipedia, *storytelling is the conveying of events in [words](#), [images](#), and [sounds](#) often by [improvisation](#) or [embellishment](#)*. As you read this document "listen" to Neoma as she weaves the story of the Red River of the North.

Robert Backman
Executive Director
River Keepers 235 7th St S
Fargo, ND
March 19, 2010

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH

INTRODUCTION

I am a Storyteller,
And I have a tale to spin,
It's about the Red River of the North
And the people thereon and therein.

So, listen to my story,
And the history it spews forth,
About the waters of a special river:
Red River of the North!

The Headwaters of the Red River of the North is located in Breckenridge, Wilkin County, Minnesota, United States of America. The Otter Tail River snakes its way, east to west, through the city and converges with the sluggish Bois de Sioux River from the south. The mingling of the waters form the Red River.

At this historic site, the Red River begins its unique northward flow to its mouth in Lake Winnipeg, in the Province of Manitoba, Canada and joins the family of waters. When its waters get to Hudson's Bay, the river is home at last!

As the Red River of the North follows a sinuous course to the north to the international boundary between the United States and Canada, known as the 49th parallel, it forms the dividing border between Minnesota and North Dakota. And between Breckenridge and its sister city of Wahpeton, Richland County, North Dakota, United States of America.

From the Treaty of Paris in 1763 until 1849 when Minnesota became a Territory, the drainage basin of the Red River of the North, along with the Mississippi River, were the two most important "boundary lines" of the ever changing political subdivision we now call the State of Minnesota.

The Red River is the longest north flowing river in North America. It runs a course of 550 miles. The course is extremely crooked for most of its length, with many loops, ox bows, bends and side channels. The channel often doubles back upon its course and flows a considerable distance without gain in the general direction of the flow.

There are several theories as to the naming of the river. One is that the river took its name from the red willows growing along its banks. Another because waters run red from vegetation that gets into the waters during flood stages.

However, the theory I, personally, like comes from the Chippewa Indian Nation. They said another world existed under the waters of the Red. At one time a great many people lived there. They lost brave warriors in battles which caused the river to run red. French people called it the "Rouge" River. Italian explorer called it "Bloody" river.

Early fur traders used the Red River for transportation of furs and supplies. Later, steamboats, flatboats and barges hauled goods and settlers to northern destinations in the United States and Canada.

By the way, I'm speaking to you from the bottom of a lake! Yes, that's correct. From the bottom of former Glacial Lake Agassiz which covered this region thousands of years ago.

Red River of the North is a remnant of that glacial lake along with Upper and Lower Red Lakes in Minnesota; Lake of the Woods, shared by Minnesota and Canada. And Canadian Lakes of Winnipeg, Winnipegosis, Manitoba and Nipigon.



In the beginning . . . A photo of Melles Memorial Park, sometimes called the Island Park. The picture also shows where the Bois de Sioux and the Otter Tail Rivers meet and form the source of the Red River of the North. This picture was taken about the time the old wooden bridge was replaced by one of steel. A small foot bridge was then in use. The present concrete bridge was built later. The old wooden bridge to the Park can also be seen.

CHAPTER 1

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- General Information

At the Headwaters of the Red River of the North, Breckenridge, Wilkin County, Minnesota U.S.A. is 963.495 feet above sea level. The fall from Breckenridge to Fargo, Cass County, North Dakota, U.S.A. (900 feet) is about 1.5 foot a mile. From Fargo to the Canadian border (789 feet) the fall is from 0.6 feet to 0.3 foot per mile.

The descent of the river from Breckenridge to Lake Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, is 233 feet. From Breckenridge, going north, there is a continuous increase in size of the channel and a decrease in the general slope of the channel, broken by short stretches of greater fall.

It is assumed the Headwaters was discovered by white men in 1734 when they became acquainted with the country in connection with the activities of the fur companies. The fur traders included Scots, English and French—Canadians who established a number of trading posts on the river banks.

Breckenridge and its sister river city of Wahpeton are the mouth of the Bois de Sioux River. Breckenridge is also mouth of the Otter Tail River and headwaters of the Red River of the North. Wahpeton is sister river city on the Red River, also.

When the Red River Valley became somewhat settled, supplies were hauled by ox carts from St. Paul MN USA, to the Red River and then by flatboat to their northern designations.

In 1823 Giacomo C. Beltrami, the Italian explorer, traveled east from the Red River of the North and named Lake Julia (headwaters of the Turtle River in Minnesota) as the source of both the Red River of the North and the Mississippi River. He was, of course, **wrong** on both counts. He called the Red River, the “Bloody River”.

From the Treaty of Paris in 1763 until 1849 when Minnesota became a Territory, the drainage basin of the Red River of the North and the Mississippi River were the two most important “boundary lines” of the ever changing political subdivision we now call “Minnesota”.

Minnesota was the only Northwest Territory state that also included lands acquired by the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Breckenridge is located in that Purchase.

Most of the course of this northward flowing river runs through a level plain that was formerly the bed of Lake Agassiz, a glacial lake that formed thousands of years ago. Red River of the North is a remnant of that glacial lake.

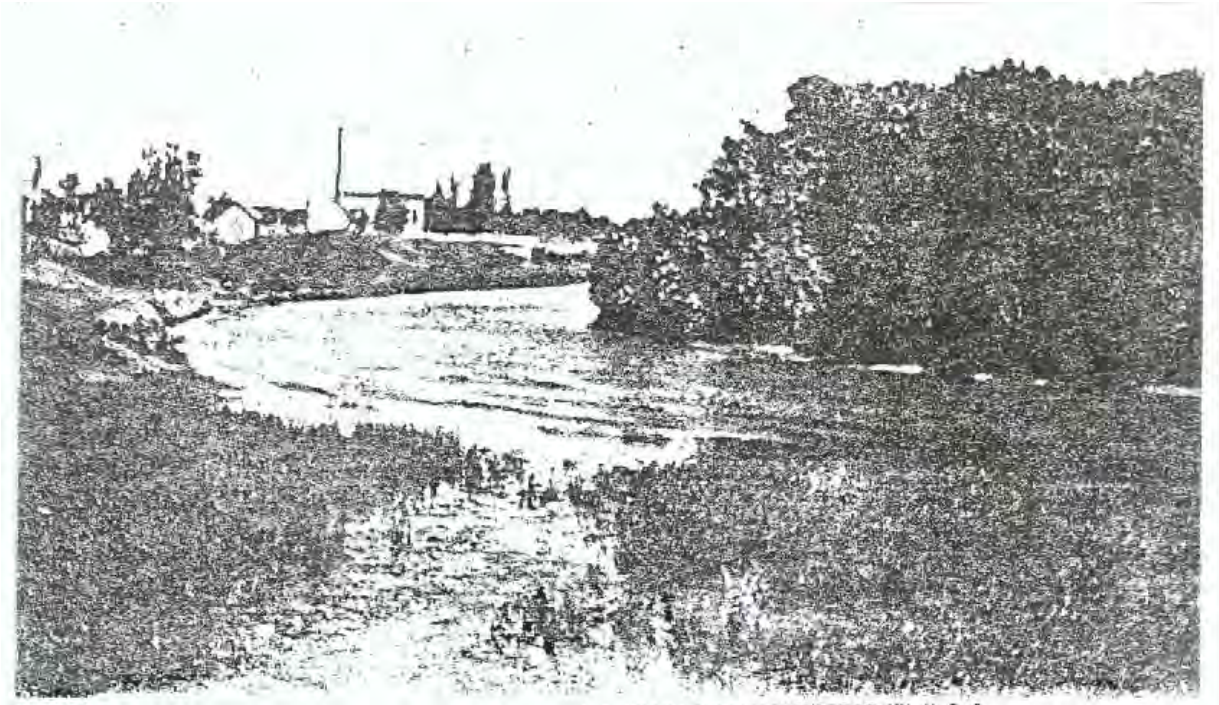
Drainage of the Red River Valley is carried entirely by the Red River and its tributaries. Many tributary streams enter the Red River of the North as it winds its way to Lake Winnipeg. In many cases they parallel the river for some distance before finding outlets. The channels are more or less obstructed by vegetation. Some of these streams have been improved by the construction of drainage ditches.

The Red River watershed includes large areas of land that originally were sloughs, marshes and swamps, also.

Some of the tributaries of the Red River are: Wild Rice River, Sheyenne River, Buffalo River, Goose River, Sandhill River, Red Lake River, Thief River, Clearwater River, Turtle River, Forest River, Snake River, Park River, Tamarac River, Two Rivers, Pembina River, other small streams and creeks.

The Red River of the North has a fascinating history! As we know, history happens every day. We are currently living a new vision for the Red River. We think you will enjoy the new vision dedicated to recreation, just as you enjoy the old vision of commercial trade. In any event, we invite you to find out.

Let the story begin...



HEADWATERS OF THE RED RIVER OF THE NORTH AT BRECKENRIDGE MN U.S.A.
Sluggish Bois de Sioux River (in foreground), Otter Tail River (to the right), forming the Red River of the North in the early days (year not known).

CHAPTER 2

Red River of the North -- Prehistoric Heritage

GLACIAL LAKE AGASSIZ... a lot of melting!

Most of Minnesota lies in a region once invaded by the glaciers of the Great Ice Age. Geologists say that during the glacial period, the entire central portion of the Red River Valley of the North was covered by glaciers. They were deepest near the center of the Valley.

As the glaciers melted, a barrier of earth, sand, gravel and boulders formed to the south of Lake Traverse, U.S.A. Water from the melting glaciers accumulated behind the barrier and formed this lake geologists call Lake Agassiz, which existed approximately about 4500 years.

Almost all of Wilkin County lies within the bed of the original huge glacial Lake Agassiz. Levels taken along the beaches of the glacial lake show that the lake could have been 150 feet deep at Breckenridge, Minnesota, U.S.A, some 10,000 years ago. The length of the lake is estimated to have been 700 miles long at its greatest extent with a maximum area of 135,000 square miles. The largest portion, however, was in Canada.

Canadian lakes Winnipeg, Winnipegosis, Manitoba and Nipigon are all remnants of glacial Lake Agassiz. Lake of the Woods is also a remnant and is shared by Canada and Minnesota. The Red River of the North is also a remnant, along with Upper and Lower Red Lakes in Minnesota.

However, as the glacier melted, its weight is believed to have caused the land to tilt or lift from south to north. So the drainage reversed and became northward through the Red River of the North. Water from the melting glaciers, and that which flowed off since the glacial period, eroded and formed the channel of the Bois de Sioux, Otter Tail and Red Rivers.

The glaciers eroded the hills that existed back then and filled the valleys. Rocks were ground into gravel and sand. The streams brought silt down and it was deposited in the lake. This is how the topographical features and soils now found in the Red River Valley were formed.

Soils throughout the former glacial lake bed are deep, heavy, finely divided mixtures of clay, loam and small proportions of very fine sand. For the first foot or more this mixture is deeply blackened by decayed organic matter. The Red River Valley has rich black soil that grows wonderful crops because of this process.

Wilkin County MN, U.S.A. doesn't have many stones or boulders, but there are a few small areas where stones are prevalent. We do have many gravel ridges, however, with large deposits of gravel, here and there in the county, such as Sections 15—22—23 in Akron Township. Another unusual deposit is right on the Red River in Section 16 in Connelly Township, just north of Breckenridge MN.

Old time local residents are familiar with many of Lake Agassiz beaches. Many original homes have been built on one of the ridges that were formed because this was the high point of land on the farm.

The beaches of Lake Agassiz were formed as the outlet to the south became deeper and deeper near Browns Valley, MN, U.S.A The beaches were named for towns they are located near such as Herman, Norcross, Tintah, Campbell and McCauleyville beaches.

Sometimes the ghost of old glacial Lake Agassiz seems to rise again when it threatens our Red River Valley of the North with flooding by times. There are those who say “what can you expect when you live in an old lake bed’?

But the spirit of the people always seems to triumph over the lake as they reclaim the land!

A prehistoric... heritage. responsible for the north flowage of the Red River of the North.



CHAPTER 3

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Converging Rivers

The mingling of the waters of the Bois de Sioux River and the Otter Tail River forms the Red River of the North at Breckenridge MN USA. I will now relate some of the history information concerning each of these rivers.

BOIS de SIOUX RIVER ... “Islands of wood”

This is the river with the French sounding name. In the olden days it was also called “Sioux Wood River”. On the map of explorers Lewis & Clark, it’s shown as the “Swan River” and sometimes called the “Swan Creek”.

The Bois de Sioux Valley had no trees, except the occasional “isle de bois” translated “islands of wood” which gave the river its name.

A Red River oxcart driver said when he passed this way in an 1837 caravan, “Nothing but one continuous stretch of wild and barren plains. Not a tree of the most solitary or diminutive kind could be discerned throughout the vast extent of this beautiful prairie; and nothing but a little brush or scrub gave variety to the almost universal sameness of scenery”.

The Bois de Sioux River was born in Lake Traverse eons ago and follows a winding course through the center of a flat valley. The general direction of flow being almost due north. It is extremely crooked and has always been badly obstructed by trees and brush.

The upper part of the stream has practically no channel. Further down, the channel gradually develops until at a point approximately 10 miles upstream from Breckenridge MN USA, it attains a greater capacity.

At Breckenridge MN the banks were about 20 to 25 feet high and from approximately 100 to 300 feet apart.

The Bois de Sioux River has never been a navigable stream like the Red River of the North. Oh, Lake Traverse was navigable for a distance of about 12 miles between the grain elevators of Diamond, South Dakota, USA, and Browns Valley MN USA. Boats did operate between those points in the olden days. But the river was never used for water transportation, Oh, people tried, but they always got stranded by low water.

The Bois de Sioux River could be forded by ox carts almost anywhere along its length. In some years the water was little more than a trench on the prairie with a muddy bottom and steep banks, at other times the river could reach swimming depth for horses.

The river, however, provided important historical advantages for fur traders and explorers. They came by way of the Minnesota River and Big Stone Lake. They could then traverse the Bois de Sioux by canoe to reach the Red River of the North. So the Bois de Sioux was an important link in a long river chain.

Major Stephen Long was an Army officer who led expeditions into the unexplored American West. On July 27, 1823, he arrived in Breckenridge MN USA, after having camped 5 miles south on the Bois de Sioux River the night before. He says in his journal that it was a clear day when he awoke, with 62° temperature at sunrise. The Bois de Sioux River served history well.

OTTER TAIL RIVER. . . or “River with the otter’s tail”

The waters of the Otter Tail River have snaked through Breckenridge MN U.S.A. for time eternal.

The source of the Otter Tail River is in the White Earth Indian Reservation, in Clearwater County, MN U.S.A. It is in a lake called Elbow Lake which is the most northern of the lakes in the Otter Tail River chain. The lake is less than a mile wide and twelve miles long, and very deep. It has an elbow shape.

The total length is 157 miles from source to its mouth in Breckenridge MN U.S.A. It flows through many lakes, unlike the Bois de Sioux and Red River of the North Rivers. The first 100 miles of the river have minor rapids and a steeper drop but when it reaches the prairie, the river flattens out and the flow lessens.

Many of the lakes the river flows through originally had Indian names which one of our former local historians translated in an article written by him many, many years ago. His name was Chester A. Gewalt.

Other lakes were: Round Lake, also originally Indian, so called for the roundish contour of its shore line. Big Rush Lake, because Indian gitchigamiwashk rushes grew extensively on this lake. They used them to make mats.

Another lake was Otter Tail Lake, received its name because of the long narrow strip of land at the upper end of the lake at a point where the Otter Tail River enters the lake. This long strip of land is shaped like an otter’s tail. Old Chief Otter Tail, with about 1500 Indians in his tribe made their home near that end of the lake in the early days. For years Indian burial mounds could plainly be seen just to the right of the highway as you pass through one of the old cities.

In the long ago, the Otter Tail River was considered part of the Red River of the North and shared the Red River name. Around 1900, the portion of the river from Clearwater County to Breckenridge was renamed the Otter Tail River. However, as I have read history, there are old postcards (and I have one) that shows the Red River or “Little Red River” designation before it became the Otter Tail River.

Quite often, historians and map makers of the past, saw history different than historian do today. That’s normal. Today there is more accurate equipment and ways to determine facts than in the olden days.

This same explanation holds true for the designation of the Headwaters of the Red River (at Breckenridge). In the days of old, some people thought the Red began in Lake Traverse south of Breckenridge. Others held that the Otter Tail River was, indeed, the Red River (as explained above). However, I have at least four books written by historians and the State of MN that have put to rest that old myth.

Also, because the Otter Tail River does not touch Wahpeton, ND, rather joins the Bois de Sioux before forming the Red River, Breckenridge holds the “Headwaters” title. History says you need both rivers to form the third (and new one).

There are only three cities along the Otter Tail River: Frazee MN, Fergus Falls MN and Breckenridge MN.

Beginning in 1857 timber was logged at various northern locations. Logs were floated down the Otter Tail River to Breckenridge MN and into a Boom for Holding Logs at the site of the Old Mill & Lumber Yard (shown on the original plat of Breckenridge MN).

The logs were sawed into lumber for building homes on this treeless prairie and for providing ties for the construction of the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad.

Logs that weren't needed by Breckenridge MN were floated into a canal, dug across what was the old St. Francis Medical Center parking lot on Oak Street, Breckenridge MN and into the Red River. They floated northward to McCauleyville MN, to be used for construction of river flatboats and barges for commercial navigation on the Red River of the North.

The Otter Tail River, as well as the other two rivers, could all be forded at certain locations.

At one such site, the Otter Tail River in dry seasons was only two or three feet deep with a rocky bottom and solid banks. When waters were high, it was a different story. It could be transformed into a large, formidable river with a rapid current and a channel some 40 ft. below the level of the prairie. This place was called "Old Crossing" and near the town of Foxhome MN, USA today.

The Otter Tail River has been very useful to Breckenridge MN in the days of long ago and also succeeding generations. I ask you to remember the history of this old friend, in particular the logs it provided to this treeless prairie, and the limitless opportunities it can again provide, recreation—wise.

The Otter Tail River was inventoried and surveyed in 2009 and a new, official map prepared. This was the first time in history. The job had been started once but never completed. So this was a pioneer project. I suggest you secure a copy of the map, so you can see the wonders of this river for yourself and perhaps take a canoe ride on, at least, a portion of it.



Otter Tail River (2010), Wilkin Co. MN USA

CHAPTER 4

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Steamboats, Flatboats & Barges

PLYING THE WATERS OF THE RED RIVER

Breckenridge MN U.S.A. was head of steam navigation on the Red River of the North for many years, beginning in 1859. Low water forced it to move to McCauleyville, Moorhead and other places in northern Minnesota.

Interest in steamboat traffic on the Red River was created by the St. Paul Chamber of Commerce. Many of its members apparently sold supplies to the trappers in the Red River Valley in exchange for buffalo hides and furs. This trade was carried on by the famous Red River Ox Carts.

In 1858 the Chamber offered \$2000.00 to the first person or company who could put a steamboat into operation on the Red River of the North. Two men vied for the honor, each by a means we today would consider utterly fantastic.

Anson Northrup of St. Paul MN U.S.A. was the winner. He and his men hauled steamboat machinery from his old Mississippi steamer, the NORTH STAR over land in the dead of winter to put into a hull built on the Red River. Northrup got it up on the Crow Wing River as far as it would go. He dismantled it there during midwinter and loaded it on sleds, pulled by oxen and horses, and headed west. There was no trail to follow so they got lost. A searching party found them several weeks later in deep snow in the Detroit Lakes MN U.S.A. area. Northrup finally somehow reached the Red River.

Steamboats were mostly used to carry passengers and settlers. However, flatboats or barges carried cargoes or produce and supplies to Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada (formerly Ft. Garry).

The first steamboat to actually steam through the water on the Red River of the North was the ANSON NORTHROP, accomplishing this feat May 26, 1859, when it left Breckenridge MN for Ft. Garry (Winnipeg) Canada. This steamboat later became known as the PIONEER.

The other man trying for the money tried to take a steamboat, the FREIGHTER up through the Minnesota River, through Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse at flood stage, then through the Bois de Sioux River and into the Red River. However, this did not work because the original high water went down.

In 1860 the materials and boilers from the FREIGHTER were hauled to Georgetown MN U.S.A. In 1861 they were rebuilt into the INTERNATIONAL. As the INTERNATIONAL steamed down the river, historical lore says the banks were lined with Indians, who thought it was a manifestation of the Great Spirit! The INTERNATIONAL was 137 feet long and had a beam of 36 feet. Capacity was 133 tons.

Other steamboats built at Breckenridge included the DAKOTA (1871—1872); the ALPHA (1873—1874). It took the DAKOTA eight days to get to Moorhead MN U.S.A. on her maiden voyage.

The SELKIRK was built in 1871 at McCauleyville MN USA by Alexander Griggs. It was 137 feet long. During 1870 no less than 40 flatboats were also built at McCauleyville. Other steamboats were built in other places, also.

Flatboats were capable of carrying from 10 to 40 tons of merchandise. Flatboats were also constructed at Breckenridge MN USA in the boat yard which was located approximately where the railroad roundhouse now stands (south of the Depot), and also along the banks of the Otter Tail River in Breckenridge MN.

In order to complete the building of the flatboats, they were inverted on the river bank. These flatboats were about 16 by 20 feet wide, 24 by 30 feet long and three and a half feet deep. The sides were straight with flaring ends. They were tightly caulked with something called oakum, and sheeted with inch boards. A second sheeting and caulking was followed by launching the boat right side up in the river, then a double layer of boards and side ribs were inserted.

Freight was loaded by means of a chute. The deck was rooted and made water tight. The deck was slightly slanted for shedding of rain; the flatboats were lashed together in groups, end to end, with a long sweep used for steering purposes. The cabin for the crew was on one of the boats in the group.

Trading via flatboats was reported to have been very profitable for the area. Steamboats and flatboats carried tremendous tonnage of grain, flour, lumber, rails, general freight and thousands of passengers, including immigrants. Rail cargoes of all sorts were loaded on the boats and taken downstream to other river ports and on to Canada.

At the end of the line the flatboats were dismantled and sold for lumber to build homes on this prairie land where there were no trees. Steamboats, however, made return trips with grain which was then taken by rail to Minneapolis & St. Paul MN U.S.A.

In May, 1871, when the rivers were in full banks, the owner of a side-wheel steam scow, the MAX LOU, tried to paddle up the Bois de Sioux River to its source in Lake Traverse and its length, from there drop into Big Stone Lake and the head of the Minnesota River which would take the boats to the Mississippi River and then down to St. Louis MO USA with a load of furs.

He never made it. No rain fell and the rapidly receding river forced him to turn about near the end of June. He landed near the mouth of the Bois de Sioux River at the end of July (near Breckenridge MN) there being only four or five feet of water at that time at the point where he turned. The MAX LOU is the boat pictured in a portrait in the rotunda of the Wilkin County Courthouse in Breckenridge MN USA.

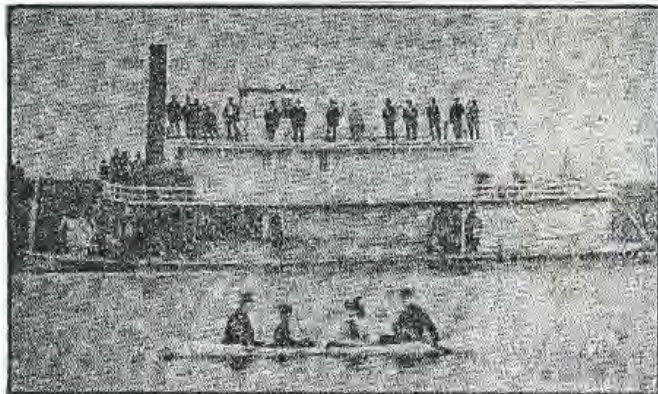
The MAX LOU was about 50 feet in length and 18 or 20 feet wide. The hold below the deck was 4 feet and she drew from 2 to 2 1/2 feet of water when loaded as she was. Its cabin was 20 to 25 feet in length, 8 feet wide and 6 feet above the deck. The deck was railed about 3 feet high and loaded to capacity as was the hold.

In 1872 the Hudson's Bay Company and Hill-Griggs (James J. Hill and Alexander Griggs) interests merged into a company called the Red River Transportation Co. The merger raised the freight rates and Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, petitioned the Red River Transportation Co. for lower rates, but received no satisfaction.

As the Valley became settled, all bridges on the Red River of the North were built with movable spans over the deepest portion of the channel to accommodate the passage of boats. At McCauleyville MN USA a unique revolving bridge was built.

It would seem the head of steam navigation on the Red River of the North kept moving downstream. First located at Breckenridge MN, then at McCauleyville MN, on to Moorhead MN, then Georgetown MN. Steamboating was hindered at all ports by the seasonal fluctuation of the river level.

Along with the coming of the railroad, the low water years of 1911 and 1912 on the Red River of the North stopped commercial navigation and it never revived.



Pictured above is one of the early vessels which piloted the Red River of the North in pioneer days. The photography was taken on the Bois de Sioux River near where it joins Otter Tall River to form the Red River and at about the spot where the Wahpeton- Breckenridge bridge is now located.

CHAPTER 5

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Pre-1819 Trading Post

Before the building of ferries and bridges across the Red River of the North, the river was forded at two places in the southern portion: Graham's Crossing and near the mouth of the Sheyenne River, about nine miles north of current Fargo, Cass County, North Dakota, U.S.A.

Off and on for several years long past now, both local historian, Oscar Karlgaard, and I, as Wilkin County Recorder, had been asked by various individuals if we could locate the site of Graham's Point. We (wrongly) assumed from the description given that it was on the Minnesota side of the river. We got a little history from the MN Historical Society and other resources. But the exact location remained a mystery.

One local historical lore person thought it was at the later Ft. Abercrombie location in Dakota Territory. However, this was later proven incorrect, also. Much about Graham's Point had been lost in the many years elapsing.

One day, Mr. Karlgaard called me. He'd gotten a "clue" and was going out to check! The very next week someone gave me a 1922 atlas of both Wilkin and Richland counties and there it was - Graham's Point, also called Graham's Crossing! Another "history mystery" solved.

Karlgaard came to relate the story to me. Graham's Point was a 65 to 70 acre wooded area in sections 14 & 15 in Abercrombie Township, Richland County, North Dakota, about two miles southeast of Ft. Abercrombie, North Dakota. No wonder he and I couldn't find it in Minnesota! However, at that point the north flowing Red River makes a huge loop eastward into Minnesota and then north and west back almost to the beginning of the loop with about a twenty rod opening into the Point. The 1922 plat book indicated it was owned by Fritz Schneider in 1922.

Karlgaard said he was still the owner (and I cannot remember what year this was) and Fritz Schneider and Carl Affield and himself wandered around Graham's Point that day. Supposedly, by 1862, there had been 13 buildings at the point. Most of them were dugouts in the river bank over a two block length. Karlgaard said many were still visible. Most were on the south bank of the westward flowing Red River. A few were on the north bank of the Red as it flowed eastward on its way to enclose the Point.

Schneider pointed out the dugouts and trees which consisted of elm, hackberry, boxelder, ironwood, basswood, ash, oak and cottonwood.

Graham's point was one of the most known campsites on the Red River. It was named for Duncan Graham, a frontier trader, who was an early employee of Hudson's Bay Co. He was born in 1772 in Scotland and had been in Minnesota as early as 1802. He was a British subject and fought for them in the War of 1812. As a result, the British gave him land in Canada as a reward for driving back Major Zachary Taylor in a battle in 1814 near Davenport on the Mississippi River.

However, because of the distance involved, the land was worthless to him. Also because of his activity against the United States, he was an outcast. Later on he was permitted to join his family in Indian Country in present day Minnesota.

He was married to a mixed blood Dakota woman and apparently, has four daughters and a son. In 1839 baptismal records of a Bishop Loras we find an Alexander Graham born 1821 and a Sara Marie Graham, age 28, listed as children of Don Etienne Graham and his wife. Graham traveled among the Indians for about 50 years.

Graham later joined the American Fur Co. and established a trading post on Graham's Point prior to 1819. At this Point the Red River had a gravel and boulder bottom which made a good ford. The actual trading post was probably on higher ground to the west. Of course, this ford caused problems for steamboats getting grounded.

At Graham's Point a business of building flatboats and shipping goods to Fort Garry (Winnipeg) Canada was conducted. At Fort Garry the boats were dismantled and used to construct buildings on the treeless prairie.

In 1936-1937 timber was harvested from the Point and used for the northeast block house during the restoration of Ft. Abercrombie, ND. Stumps were three and four feet in diameter. They must have been some huge trees!

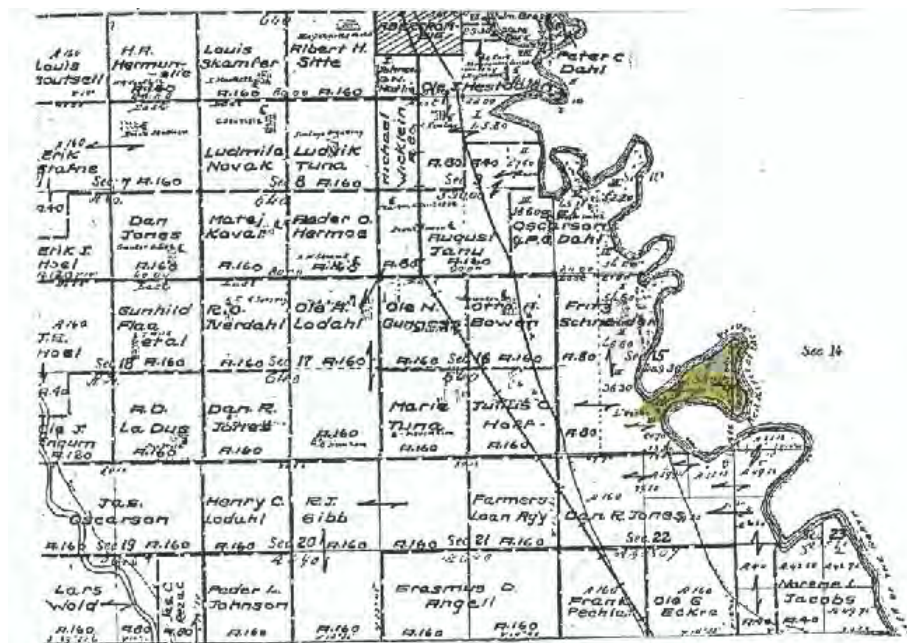
After Breckenridge was surveyed in early 1857, some of the men went down river to Graham's Point (about 12 miles north). A second town site was laid out and held against speculators.

Later a number of others built warehouses and engaged in freighting by flatboat to Fort Garry, Canada. Prior to the Indian uprising of 1862, there was much activity at Graham's Point and Breckenridge MN. However, the site was eventually abandoned. The buildings were burned in Dakota (Sioux) uprising in the fall of 1862.

Graham also had a trading point on an island in Devil's Lake ND around 1815, named for him. Graham died in Mendota MN in 1847.

Some early Wilkin County MN settlers had claims across the river from the Point. According to the original U.S. Govt. Survey in the Wilkin County Recorder's Office, Courthouse, Breckenridge MN the names of J. R. Harris and Lewis IL Bentley, hay and wood suppliers, are shown on the Minnesota side of the river.

I have been told, supposedly, a picture or drawing existed of Graham's Point...I would really enjoy seeing it! Another "history mystery". Maybe the U. S. Govt. Survey for Richland Co. ND would show its location???



CHAPTER 6

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Red River Ox carts

ACROSS THE PRAIRIE . . . A Screeching Journey

Often times, history and transportation intermingle. Nowhere is that more evident than in our part of the country in days of yore.

The American Fur Co. and the Hudson's Bay Co. were rivals in the fur trading business. A fur trading post was established at Pembina, Dakota Territory, U.S.A. in the early 1800's and soon became a thriving business.

From this fur trading business arose one of the most curious transportation systems ever to grace our country. This mode of travel was the famous Red River Ox carts which ran across this prairie and through Indian territory from 1820 - 1870, from Pembina to St. Paul MN U.S.A.

These carts looked like a shaky construction, but they were really a marvel of workmanship. A crude wooden box fastened on cross members and an axle, put together without iron or nails, were fastened at the joints with wooden pegs. Between the two 6 foot high wheels was a box, approximately 3 feet in width by 7 feet in length. Into this box furs and supplies were loaded. The hub of the wheel was large and encircled by a strip of rawhide which was put on when wet, then shrunk tight.

One of the residents in Breckenridge MN built one for a historical pageant we put on for Minnesota's Sesquicentennial. It was built pretty much to the instructions given and looked very authentic. However, this ox cart really was a "shaky" construction and later fell apart!

The wheels of these original ox carts were not lubricated with axle grease because they would get gummed up going across the prairie. So the screeching of wood upon wood, as they moved across the long grass of the prairie, was ear splitting for many miles.

The carts were made by the Métis (people of French-Indian descent). They could carry from 600 to 1000 pounds.

Each cart was drawn by one ox. Each driver had charge of five or six carts. The animals were held by a strap tied to the cart next in front. When the driver cracked his whip over the back of the leader, the rest followed suit.

The drivers of the carts were also Métis. They were an extremely colorful people. Their costume was richly ornate. They had flashy belts and wore small jaunty hats of all colors.

Antoine Blanc Gingras, a Métis, dominated the area around St. Joseph (renamed Wahalla in 1871). His post was established in 1843. Your author had an opportunity to visit the original house and trading post. The house was painted in the original colors of purple and red and other colors mixed in! These two buildings on the site are among the oldest standing structures built by Euro-Americans in North Dakota. Listed on the National Register of Historic places in 1975.

There were from 150 to 300 carts in a caravan. They'd leave Pembina, Dakota Territory, USA, and the Red River settlements in early spring, as soon as the prairie grass was tall enough to provide feed for the oxen. It would be fall before they returned to Pembina. The building of St. Paul MN was enhanced by the ox cart fur trade carried on via the ox carts.

In the early years the caravans moved on what was known as the “Plains Trail” from Pembina, Dakota Territory USA, across Dakota Territory. The caravans then turned eastward on the “Minnesota Valley Trail”. This route, however, passed through Indian territory and was sometimes dangerous to travel.

The caravans traveled from dawn until dusk and averaged from 8 to 15 miles a day. They had definite camping sites along the way. One of the regular tie-up points was in Breckenridge MN USA. The carts had to tie up along the banks of a river or shore of a lake. Also, Breckenridge was considered to be half way point on the long journey. It was also thought Breckenridge would be a central point in the future settlement of the country.

This area, however, was also the most dangerous part of the journey. The junction of the Otter Tail and Bois de Sioux Rivers (Headwaters of the Red River of the North) was considered “debatable” land between the Ojibway (Chippewa) and Dakota (Sioux) Indian Nations during the 1830’s and the travelers were never sure just who was in charge on any given day!

A safer “Middle Trail” ran across the country from Breckenridge to the present St. Cloud MN USA. So this was frequently used. Four and a half miles south of Foxhome, in Wilkin County, MN USA, on County Road #19, and three-fourths mile upstream, at a place called “Old Crossing”, the Red River Ox Carts forded the Otter Tail River on their way back and forth between Pembina and St. Paul. Ruts made by the ox carts were visible at Old Crossing until about 1970. A marker has been placed on County Road #19 at the Otter Tail River bridge identifying this historical site.

A heavily used trail hugged the east bank of the Red River of the North from Georgetown MN USA south to Breckenridge. It went through the sites of present Moorhead, Comstock, Wolverton and McCauleyville MN USA. At Brushvale (now abandoned) a trail branched off to the east providing a short cut to the Otter Tail River fords.

In June of 1858 a new trail was charted. It followed the present route of Interstate #94 and shortened the trip to Breckenridge by nearly 30 miles.

One of the ox cart crossings on the Red River of the North is still visible. It’s about 2 miles north of the bridge at the former town of Brushvale.

The names of the trails were: MANITOBA, NORTH DAKOTA, MINNESOTA VALLEY, WOODS, MIDDLE and METROPOLITAN. All trails crossed rivers and river crossings were difficult and sometimes dangerous.

During the harsh winters, however, ox carts couldn’t travel. So mail, passengers and freight were transported by dog sled. Rate of speed was 75 to 90 miles per day.

Modes of transportation, long extinct now, but vital to the settlement of our Red River of the North settlements and the Valley in general. The screeching of the ox carts was silenced only by the coming of the railroad.

CHAPTER 7

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Fort Abercrombie

Years before the order was issued for the establishment of a military Fort on the Red River of the North, an expedition was sent from Ft. Snelling to Pembina, Dakota Territory for the purpose of selecting a suitable site for said Fort.

The expedition was under Major Samuel Woods. They left in the summer of 1849 and their intention was to found a military post on the Red River of the North 200 miles or less from Fort Gaines (later Fort Ripley) as a protection against the fur-trading and Indian troubles which were the outgrowth of the indefinite Canadian-American boundary across the valley of the river. The Fort would protect the interests of the United States.

On March 3, 1857, Congress authorized the establishment of a Fort on the Red River. It was established on August 10, 1858, on the west bank of the river at the site recommended by Woods' expedition.

It became a link in a chain of military posts which extended along the route from St. Paul MN to the Montana gold fields. More importantly, it guarded the traffic along the Red River of the North all the way to Canada.

It was named for Col. John J. Abercrombie, United States Army and he was to erect it. Mostly details were left to him. This act did, however, provide that the fort be built on the Red River of the North in Minnesota Territory.

The military reservation that surrounded the Fort, comprised an area of 2.5 square miles with Ft. Abercrombie being almost in the exact center of this reservation. Approximately the same amount of the reservation being on the Minnesota side of the Red River as was on the North Dakota side.

Construction was commenced Aug. 28, 1857; buildings were completed a year later. However, the spring of 1858 brought a flood on the Red River and the site of Ft. Abercrombie was flooded. Buildings were filled with water and the post was evacuated. However, the fort was again occupied by 1860 on the current site - on the North Dakota side.

Nine acres of land were cut off from ND and became part of MN because the legal boundary is the Red River. However, those nine acres of land were donated to the ND Historical Society in 1972. The old channel oxbow, is clearly visible today (north of the road). The course of the river remained forever changed.

There are other sources of historical lore that give a different reason for the water situation and moving of the Fort buildings, also. Probably no one really knows "how come".

The most dramatic role for Fort Abercrombie, however, was during the Sioux Indian Uprising of 1862 when it was besieged for almost six weeks by the Sioux (Dakota) Indian Nation.

As white settlements pushed westward Fort Abercrombie eventually outlived its purpose. It was abandoned October 23, 1877.

CHAPTER 8

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Sister River Cities

Breckenridge MN and Wahpeton ND, United States of America, are sister river cities on the Bois de Sioux River and the Red River of the North. I think the history of these cities is so closely tied to the Red River of the North so I am including a brief history of each.

BRECKENRIDGE MN. . . . Headwaters of the Red River of the North

The land now occupied as Breckenridge MN was originally the happy hunting ground of the Dakota (Sioux) and Ojibway (Chippewa) Indian Nations. The Indian tribes located their villages on the banks of the river. Also a village existed where Welles Memorial Park is located. Countless herds of buffalo roamed this area. In 1851 Indian treaties opened up this land for settlement by the white man.

On January 30, 1857, an expedition of ten men reached the future site of Breckenridge, Minnesota Territory. Speculators focused on this site because earlier explorations had shown a river began here (Red River) which was the only river in the whole territory flowing north for such a great distance.

This waterway reached lands where fur traders had established trading posts. It held promise of enormous wealth. Speculators talked about the “millions” they would make. It was also the route to the far west. So here they would build “another Chicago” in the west.

On January 31, 1857, in one of the worst winters Minnesota Territory had even known, the platting of Breckenridge began with a hand compass and a tape line chain. A huge city, containing 2500 acres, 18 full blocks ran east and west, 36 blocks north and south and several parks. The speculators held the town by occupation against other speculators.

The town was named for John C. Breckinridge, Vice President of the United States. The “i” in his name became an “e” for an unexplained reason. On the original plat however, it is spelled correctly with the ‘i’.

In 1880 portions of the town were vacated and went back to country property. However, years later additions have been platted where positions of the original town had been located.

Most of the land was originally owned by three French-Dakota women (Métis): Angelique Martin, Mary R. Marlow and Angeline Lagree. A small portion was owned by Thomas Provencelle.

On August 23, 1862, Breckenridge was destroyed and burned by Dakota Indians who were intent on capturing a government wagon train passing through the area. If the Indian uprising and the Civil War had not intervened, Breckenridge might today well be another Chicago on the prairie, as the speculators envisioned.

The town was more or less abandoned in 1862. Only a few people remained. The speculators terminated the venture and departed.

October 25, 1871, however, brought the St. Paul & Pacific Railroad to Breckenridge and real development of the town began. The coming of the railroad completely changed the life of this prairie river town.

Breckenridge had been essentially a river town from its founding in 1857. Now it became a railroad village.

Before the coming of the railroad there was no market for grain, except at Ft. Abercrombie, ND, USA. Most of the crops in the county were raised simply to feed animals until the advent of the railroad. It is doubtful whether more than a few hundred acres were in crops before the railroad came.

The first wheat was planted in the spring of 1872 because the railroad had reached Breckenridge. The increase of this crop was rapid because now it could be exported.

Breckenridge became the distribution point for the entire area and the town grew rapidly. Grain and merchandise came via railroad to Breckenridge where it was shipped downstream on the riverboats.

From happy hunting grounds to wood-burning steamboats to railroad locomotives, to ultra-modern homes and businesses, Breckenridge continues to stand for adventure and growth. Where Indian Nations once hunted, a modern city stands. Vast acres of sugar beets, fields of wheat, barley, sunflowers, soybeans, corn and other grain stand as evidence of people's faith in the land and in the future.

Breckenridge: River port, railroad village, agricultural city. Prairie home with a very proud heritage!



Old wooden bridge between Breckenridge & Wahpeton built by Peter Hanson in 1873-1874

WAHPETON ND...Sister City on the Red River of the North

With exception of the old and established Selkirk settlement near Pembina, Dakota Territory U.S.A. the present site of Wahpeton, Richland County, U.S.A. was the first white settlement in what we now know as North Dakota.

The Red River of the North forms one of the most fertile river valleys in the world. As it flows north to Canada, it forms the state boundary between North Dakota and Minnesota.

The first explorer in the area appears to be Jonathan Carver who came on an expedition trip into the Northwest at the request of Maj. Robert Rogers, Commandant of Fort Machinac (Michigan), in 1767.

From 1767-1856 hunters, trappers and explorers blaze trails through Richland County which then became the highways of the district before roads were surveyed or built.

The first settler was Morgan T. Rich. The town was founded by him in 1869. Rich's first home was a dugout near the entrance of present Chahinkapa Park, Wahpeton, ND.

When other settlers arrived, they formed a tiny community and naturally named it "Richville" after Mr. Rich. It was an apt name considering its founder and the fertile quality of the soil.

In 1871 the name of the town was changed to "Chahinkapa", an Indian name meaning "the end of the woods". Two years later the county was organized and called Chahinkapa County. Later that year the county was renamed Richland County, and the town of Chahinkapa was renamed "Wahpeton". Credit for suggesting the name of Wahpeton is given to an early settler named William Cooper. Wahpeton is a contraction of the Indian name "Warpeotonwe", meaning "dwellers among leaves" or "leaf village".

Mr. Rich secured a franchise to operate a ferry across the Bois de Sioux River between Wahpeton and Breckenridge which made its first run July 4, 1871. Three months later the railroad reached Breckenridge MN and with it came an influx of settlers.

The St. Paul & Pacific Railway reached Breckenridge in October 1871. However, it did not cross over to Wahpeton for 9 more years. In 1880 the railway extended a branch west through Wahpeton and northwest through the county. A period of rapid settlement began.

In 1876 the ferry was replaced by the first bridge across the Bois de Sioux River. In 1882 the Wadena-Oakes branch of Northern Pacific Railway was built through Wahpeton. And in 1883 the Fargo & Southern Railway was also built through Wahpeton. In 1883 the population of Wahpeton was estimated to be 1400 people.

During these days the Red River of the North was navigable and the river trade flourished. Many river steamers were operating on the river and some of them came right to the foot of Dakota Avenue in Wahpeton ND to take on cargo. Perhaps even more important was the flatboat business carried on between Wahpeton and Breckenridge and Ft. Garry (Winnipeg) Canada. Flatboats were built by the hundreds locally in the 1870's and 1880's and carried most of the cargo used at the settlements.

In 1889 the Red River Valley University was established. Now known as the North Dakota State College of Science.

In 1904 the United States Government established the Wahpeton Indian School for the education of Indian children from northern Minnesota, North Dakota and northern South Dakota. Now known as Circle of Nations.

Recreation is important to the citizens of Wahpeton ND. A facility important to both the sister river cities is the Bois de Sioux Golf Course. It is the only golf course in the United States where half the course is in one state and the other half in another. The front side is in Wahpeton ND and back side in Breckenridge MN. Course measures approximately 6700 yards.

The Chahinkapa Park and Zoo is located on the banks of the Red River by the first 9-holes of the golf course. It's home to over 50 species of animals and birds. Also home to the Rodger Ehnstrom Nature Center, an outstanding wildlife museum.

In 1930 a new concrete bridge was constructed across the Bois de Sioux River between Wahpeton and Breckenridge.

The Red River of the North is exceptionally noted for its catfishing. People come from many places to fish. The Kidder Recreation Area in Wahpeton quickly became a popular park. It is here that the "WAHPPER" world's largest catfish is located!

Wahpeton is more than just a community with a history. It is a community with a future. From the Bonanza Farms of long ago to the fields of waving wheat and other crops today, Wahpeton is an agricultural city in one of the richest agricultural belts in the United States.

CHAPTER 9

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- Flooding

SOMETIMES OLD GLACIAL LAKE AGASSIZ... Rises Up Again

Serious floods, caused by rapid melting of snow and rain occur in early spring at intervals of from 1 to 15 years (and more often in recent years) on the Red River of the North. These floods affect land and property in Minnesota, North Dakota USA and in Manitoba, Canada.

Local floods may be caused by very heavy rainfall in local areas from May to October and other times.

A feature of the Red River which has an important bearing on spring floods is its northward flow through a region of low winter temperatures and heavy ice. Spring thaws begin in the upper portions of the watershed and move gradually downstream causing run off from large areas to reach lower portions of the river when the winter ice is breaking up and beginning to move along the lower channel. The ice lodges against trees and other obstructions which partially fill the high-water channel of the river.

The year Breckenridge was founded, 1857, the area which comprises the city today was flooded. The weather suddenly turned warm on Sunday, March 15, 1857, and the snow began to melt.

On April 3, the water from the river began to come into the shanty of the speculators the level of the house foundation being only about 4 feet above the summer stage of water in the river. It rose about 8 inches more and then stopped.

April 5, 1857, was clear and intensely cold. During the night ice had frozen thick enough to support an ox inside the shanty. On April 12 their beds drifted over with fine snow that sifted through the roof in a blizzard during the night.

This all happened in 1857 and it happened in April (the same month) of 1997 and 2001 floods in Breckenridge. So the original speculators knew full well the flood potential. They lived it. But - they also needed a route to travel in order to trade and there were no other roads in those days. No Interstate 94, no Hwy. 75 and Hwy. 210. The rivers were the roads.

Records indicate that major flooding prevailed throughout the basin, sometimes in the southern portion, sometimes northern and often the entire route. We know years 1882, 1883, 1893, 1897 (in particular), 1916, 1943, 1947, 1948, 1950, 1952, 1969, 1975, 1979, 1989, 1997 (spectacular), 2001 and 2009. I'm sure records of other people will show some additional years, also.

There are also some years when the Red River has been almost dry. Years when you would walk across it as local lore has revealed to me. Often I've heard people say the Red River always has a water problem . . . either too much or too little!

The speculators knew that that the Red River of the North was to be the coming steamboat avenue of travel between the United States and Manitoba, Canada, even if one man did say "The river was so crooked that its chief ambition seemed to be to tie itself into all kinds of bow knots".



Great Northern tracks under water 1897-1898
Breckenridge, MN

CHAPTER 10

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- FLORA AND FAUNA

FISHING and RECREATION

The Red River of the North provides a scenic backdrop for a variety of recreational activities... bicycling, walking, canoeing, bird watching, boating, fishing, in-line skating and much more.

The Red has more than 50 species of fish. They include: Northern pike, muskellunge, walleye, sauger, smallmouth bass, channel catfish, black and brown bullhead, lake sturgeon, mooneye, goldeye and carp.

Fishing the Red River requires a license and catch and release is always encouraged.

Birdwatchers will enjoy sighting bald eagles, wood ducks, great blue herons, Canadian geese, pileated woodpeckers, hawks and owls, robins and others.

Yellow warblers, redstarts, Baltimore orioles, and indigo buntings can provide a flash of color. During seasonal migrations the corridor can be a noisy place with bird sounds.

Other wildlife, such as beavers, raccoon, mink, squirrel, skunk, and woodchuck can be found along the river. Occasionally bear and moose also visit the river for a refreshing drink of water. Some canoeists have reported seeing more than 100 white-tailed deer in a single day.

Many plant species can be found along the river bank. Look for willows, cottonwood, box elders, oak, ash, elm, lilacs, wild prairie roses and other species.

CHAPTER 11

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- FUTURE

PRESENTING... A Renewed Vision

Today's facts are tomorrow's history, so we must continue the fascinating history of the Red River of the North, for generations to come.

In 1998 River Keepers of Fargo-Moorhead held meetings in the lower Red River Valley to discuss a "renewed vision" for the Red River of the North. As a result about 75 people and organizations from Minnesota and North Dakota U.S.A. attended at various places and at various times.

As a result of great interest, River Keepers hosted a Millennium Canoe Tour from the Headwaters at Breckenridge MN USA to Selkirk, Manitoba, Canada, and thence to Lake Winnipeg to open the Red River as a recreational trail in the 2000's as it had been for commercial trade in the 1800's.

Canoes left Breckenridge MN on May 20, 2000, and paddled into Selkirk, Canada, on June 22, 2000. As a result of this excursion, the Red River of the North was named an official white House Millennium Trail. The official certificate hangs in Breckenridge City Hall.

In the meantime, the original group of approximately 75 people was narrowed to a 7-member committee for the purpose of preparing a grant application to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources ~LCMR) in order to obtain funding to proceed with the new vision. The persons named to this committee were:

Robert Backman, Exec. Dir. River Keepers, Fargo-Moorhead
Wayne Beyer, Park & Recreation Dir. Wahpeton ND
Michael McKibben, Park Dept. Foreman, Breckenridge MN
Ed Janzen, Canoeist, Fargo ND
Robert Stein, Fargo City Planner, Wolverton MN
Dan Koper, Friends of Ft. Abercrombie, Abercrombie ND
Neoma Laken, Project Breckenridge, Breckenridge MN

The grant was not funded because many more applications were received than the LCMR had money to grant.

However, the group was not about to give up. Neoma Laken and Michael McKibben started to think about official Minnesota Legislative designation and then, perhaps funding would come later. And it would be "designated" money so it couldn't be removed once received. So they contacted Rep. Paul Marquart who wrote a bill for an act. Sen. Keith Langseth suggested adding an undesignated amount of money to the bill and said they could argue the amount in committee at the Capitol.

Within two weeks, Rep. Marquart called Laken, asking if she could come to St. Paul MN to testify in committee on behalf of the bill for an act. Laken and McKibben were off to the Capitol within three days.

Their testimony was taken seriously, especially when the committee learned how much effort had been done by individual volunteers on their own nickel. One of the representatives commented: "You can just see the love these two people have for the Red River and the potential it presents".

As a result, the 2001 Minnesota Legislature passed the bill designating the Red River of the North as an official canoe and boating route and adding \$100,000 funding for the project.

The funding would: (1) Inventory the Red River from Breckenridge to the Canadian border, which had never been done. This is a pioneer project. (2) This would become the Master Plan for the Red. It determined access site, existing, places where access sites would be needed, hazards and many other things. (3) It also provided for mapping from Breckenridge MN to Georgetown MN because the Red River had never been mapped. (4) It provided for signage and kiosks at Breckenridge, Moorhead and Georgetown MN.

General Manager of the project would be the Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources. They placed it under the auspicious of River Keepers, Fargo-Moorhead. The 7-member committee was then named as the Red River of the North/South Advisory Board to provide advice as the project proceeded.

The Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources stated they wanted to make this first segment the “model” for the entire Red River.

REASONS for a renewed vision for the Red River of the North:

Provide a beautiful water recreational trail where serenity begins and the earth holds peace for mankind away from today’s turmoil;

Emphasize healthy activity by getting back to nature;

Economic development for all the cities along the Red River ravaged by the numerous floods;

To make “Ole Red” a resource, not just a renegade.

SEGMENT ONE has been completed. We are truly pioneers because the things that were accomplished had never been done previously on the Red River of the North.

When rivers were the only roads in the early days of this country, the Indian Nations canoed the Red River. In the 1800’s steamboats and flatboats plied its waters for commercial purposes. Then the Red River was ignored for a long while. Now, we’re back to canoes . . . what goes around, comes around it would seem.

SEGMENT TWO: Sen. Keith Langseth inserted \$300,000.00 into the MN Legislative Bonding Bill in 2004 for continued work on the Red River Project and it passed. This funding will be for portages around dams, campsites and canoe and boat accesses and development of same. We can now go all the way to the Canadian border. Segment Two is still being worked on.

So - pick up a Red River of the North map (there are 3) and start canoeing. Remember: The Red River runs north, so start at Breckenridge MN and paddle downstream. You don’t want to go against the current!

RED RIVER OF THE NORTH -- EPILOG

As author I have tried to include the basic historical information concerning the Red River of the North in this book.

Hundreds of additional stories could also be contained. Also many towns and cities were pertinent in the history of the Red River, such as: Wolverton, Moorhead, Georgetown, Hendrun, Halstad, Shelly, Nielsville, East Grand Forks, and Oslo in the state of Minnesota. Also Fargo, Grand Forks, Drayton, Joliette and Pembina in the state of North Dakota. And in Manitoba, Canada: Emerson, St. Jean Baptiste, Morris, Ste. Agathe, St. Adolphe, Winnipeg and Selkirk. However, an author has to pen the final sentence at some point.

Perhaps this historical version will whet your appetite for reading more of the Red River of the North sagas. I encourage you to delve further into its history. It is more fascinating than any mini-series you could watch on television.

People endured hardships beyond telling as they held towns by speculation on the Red River of the North. Or, as they fought off the Indian Nations who were the original (and perhaps rightful) owners of the land on both sides of the Red River.

I was the elected Wilkin County Recorder for many years. It was like being in a gigantic history book with the U.S. Original Government Survey, original plats, U.S. & State Patents, deeds and many other historical documents. It increased my original interest in history even more.

It is my opinion that those who do not read history are perhaps doomed to failure. The past gives vision for the future.

Each individual city along the Red River has its very own story to relate. Exciting, brawling, humorous, interesting and dramatic stories. The cities on the Red River all tie their own history to the river. For in the early days of this area, the Red River was everything to the people. It was the only way to travel, to receive goods, to transport settlers to new places, to fish for food and supply water.

The people of today are working diligently to provide a "Renewed Vision for the Red River of the North". It is our hope that 100 years from now, the generation of that day will find what we did today as interesting and helpful as what the past generations left us.

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