

History of Rush City

1903

Bill Schneider

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Many thanks to all who helped in the making of this book!

**Bill Schneider - Rush City, MN 55069
1998**

*to Chicago Collectors
from Bill Schneider*

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(Mrs. Lee is the daughter of H. P. Robie, founder of R. C. Post)	

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HISTORY OF RUSH CITY

Every town of any importance in the United States has a history, but in the case of many it is unwritten, and only exists in the traditional tales of the oldest inhabitants. But in the case of Rush City, some of those who were the sturdy pioneers, that carved it out of the wilderness, still live and possess the vigor of mind and body that backed their early energy.

A comparatively few years ago Rush City was a primeval forest; it was a favorite Indian hunting ground, game was abundant, the streams and lakes were teeming with every variety of fish, and the gigantic maple forest was the ideal spot for the "sugar camp." While the Indian villages were in a great measure confined to the borders of a lake, their domain extended from tribe to tribe and their real estate rights were as jealously guarded as if they owned the land in fee. That portion of the Chippewa or Ojibway tribe whose coat of arms or totem was the skunk, were the original and according to Indian custom, the lawful possessors in common of the lands in the vicinity of Rush City. Representative men of the tribe still shun the reservation and eke out a precarious existence as squatters on the shores of Pogema Lake in Pine County. The story of their decline and Fall is pitifully pathetic, but the civilization built upon their ruin, which to them is the irony of fate, seems to us a full and complete atonement for their real or fancied wrongs.

The rapacious greed of the lumber men, coming in the first instance to steal lumber from the public domain, gave them the first cause for apprehension and complaint. Before that, the religious explorers had established missions and schools and were received and entertained in a peaceful and favorable manner. The Indians, however, were exceedingly jealous of their rights and mistrustful of the emotions of the men who came among them to reform their customs, cultivate their minds and give them a new religion. The success of their enterprise, although promising much at first, fell flat in the end, and poor Lo, in fragmentary tribes and families still clings to the Great Manitou of his early faith and training. The Ojibways were naturally friendly to the white settlers, except when influenced by renegade Indians from other tribes or insulted and wronged by ruffians of lighter hue. Back in the thirties there resided at or near the mouth of Goose Creek, an Indian trader named Connors, he and one Samuels, whose place of business was near the St. Croix Falls had Indian wives. Aside from calicoes and trinkets, they kept a supply of whiskey and to the traffic in that may be traced all the Indian troubles. The name of Chisago County is a corruption of the euphonious title of one of the most beautiful lakes in the state. Gitehe-saga, which, meaning, in the Indian tongue, a large lovely lake, was the term from which the name Chisago was derived. The lake abounded with "Kego"" and the forests were one great sylvan stretch of maple, from which the tribe drew its annual supply of Sis-e-ha-quet, or sugar.

In the Fall of 1862, while the horrors of the Sioux uprising in Southern Minnesota were still fresh in the minds of the people, the settlers in Chisago County became alarmed, and a company of soldiers were stationed at Sunrise, through the following winter; they built a log fort, ate their regular rations, and enjoyed the situation without a hostile shot.

The Government road from Point Douglas to Superior was built, or begun in 1849 and was the means of bringing the valuable agricultural lands of Northern Chisago County to the notice of the public. Relay stations were established and the natural hay meadows, with their luxuriant crops furnished an abundance of food for the horses and other stock necessary for their maintenance.

Small clearings were made and the soil was found to be rich and easy to cultivate, bearing phenomenal crops of the finest quality. Lumbering, however, was the chief industry, and little attention was given to farming while easy and ready money was to be made out of the standing pine. Crops were raised on a small scale for home consumption and to furnish supplies to the camp. Outside of that, there was no market to stimulate the business.

They cultivated among the stumps, used the Indian trail for a road and lived as near economy as civilization generally gets. Their houses were built of logs, cozy and warm, and they enjoyed a prosperity that the hoofs of fashion could not assail, nor the style of society drag down.

On many farms there was neither team nor plough, the grub hoe and mattock wielded with the strength and ambition of early manhood did all the breaking. Potatoes, garden vegetables, and oats were the principal crops, and soil at that time being thought not adapted to raising corn. Homespun fabrics furnished the chief articles of clothing and the Indian tanned buckskin, much of the foot wear; occasionally a buckskin coat and a pair of breeches, fashioned after the aboriginal custom would be worn in place of the more modern garment. Store clothes were out of the question. Wood was plenty enough to burn, and the old-fashioned fire place, crane and pot hooks, supplied the exclusive facilities for cooking. It is a remarkable fact that the people of those days lived longer and died happier than the over-fed, half stifled sufferers in our modern homes. "Man wants but little here below, but wants that little long" - applied well to the early settlers of Chisago county, for they were contented with what they had and that contentment with their frugal economy gave them wealth and long happy lives. Their belongings in the early days, while of little value at that time have kept pace with prosperity and some of the original inhabitants are alive and in the enjoyment of the affluent fruit of their early labor and privation.

Their habits of industry, public spirit and indomitable will, have stamped their citizenship with the honor and reverence of the present generation.

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