

MYTHICAL CITIES OF SOUTHWESTERN MINNESOTA

When the history student seeking material relating to extreme southwestern Minnesota first turns to the census of 1857 he must invariably be astonished. Any investigations he may have made previously have led him to believe that the area was little more than an uninhabited wilderness at that time. And yet, in the census he finds statistics of flourishing towns with established industries spread evenly across that section of the state. Census figures, usually prosaic, at once become intriguing. There is a hasty search for further information. Then follow disillusion and disappointment. Figures *do lie*—even United States government statistics. The pioneer inhabitants of the southwestern Minnesota counties are fiction. They lived in mythical cities. The census schedules are a result of over-zealousness in Minnesota's first election of state officials.

A special session of the territorial legislature called in the spring of 1857 to dispose of a Congressional land grant for railroad building found time to create counties from the raw and unsurveyed lands in southwestern Minnesota. Land speculation, at dizzy heights at the time, was responsible for the establishing of these counties. It had increased by leaps and bounds in Minnesota Territory since 1854, with St. Paul as the headquarters of the speculators. A pet scheme was to sell town lots in cities that existed only on paper. Easterners and gullible immigrants were buyers. It was a highly profitable business, since for a few dollars of land scrip a speculator could claim a section of land and, after giving the location an attractive name, he might sell town lots at such prices as unfortunate victims could be induced to pay. Because land speculation was profitable, it attracted many of the leading men in the ter-

ritory. If the speculators' consciences hurt them, they were able to put up with that inconvenience.

The land schemers possessed sufficient influence to bring about the passage of desired legislation in the territorial legislature. Indeed, many of the biggest promoters were legislators. By memorializing Congress to establish mail service to certain named points in Minnesota, the legislators subtly advertised cities that existed only on the plat books in the speculators' offices. Paper cities were established by legislative acts.

And so it was that promoters, anxious to give wild southwestern Minnesota a civilized appearance, had counties established by the legislature. Martin, Jackson, Nobles, Cottonwood, Murray, Rock, and Pipestone counties were established on May 23, 1857.¹ County seats for the first three were named in the legislative act. A group of Democrats, organized as the Dakota Land Company, expected to profit by the sale of town lots in proposed county seats in the remaining four counties. Other and more audacious plans were laid by this company.² The bubble of speculation burst in the autumn of 1857 close on the heels of a money panic in the East. Town lots could not be disposed of at any price. The Minnesota speculators were unable to transmit their enthusiasm to prospective purchasers.

Not often, if ever, in the history of Minnesota has partisan politics been so active as it was in 1857. Minnesota was about to be born as a state and the rivalry of Democratic and Republican leaders for control of the new state government was hot and bitter. The constitutional convention, which opened in mid-July, was marked by skirmishes between the parties and tended to strengthen party

¹ *Laws*, 1857, extra session, p. 66.

² Samuel J. Albright, "The First Organized Government of Dakota," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:135. See also a group of documents relating to the "Settlement of Sioux Falls," one of the Dakota Land Company's projects, in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 6:133-180 (1912).

lines. Party conventions followed the constitutional convention.

At the Democratic convention held in St. Paul there was surprise for some of the delegates in the appearance of men representing counties in southwestern Minnesota that had been established just a few weeks before. From Murray there was F. J. DeWitt; N. R. Brown hailed from Cottonwood; W. E. Brown was from Nobles; S. Lester represented Jackson; and George Reed was the delegate from Martin. N. R. Brown was able to present credentials to the convention and thus avoid the scrutiny of the delegates, but the others from southwest counties were promptly challenged. Delegates from the older counties protested the seating of the southwestern representatives. They pointed out that the four men—at least three of whom were members of the Dakota Land Company—lacked credentials.³

Then William Pitt Murray, party leader and one of the largest land speculators, took the floor. It was true, he agreed, that no conventions had been held in these counties, but this was only because word of the state convention had reached the frontier settlements too late. All the challenged delegates, declared Murray, were *bona fide* residents of the counties which they claimed to represent. Hearing of the convention at a late date, the delegates from the southwest had at once volunteered their services and had immediately set out for the seat of convention. Following his eloquent plea, Murray moved that the southwest delegates be seated. Francis Baasen of Brown County, hailing from the edge of the frontier and qualified to speak with authority, arose in the convention to support Murray's statements and seconded the motion. J. S. Norris of Washington County also seconded it. Among the convention delegates unaffected by Murray's plea was William

³*Pioneer and Democrat* (St. Paul), September 16, 1857. N. R. Brown probably is Nathaniel R. Brown, a brother of Joseph R. Brown, the well-known Minnesota pioneer. See *ante*, 2:497 n.

Lochren of Hennepin, who moved that the motion be tabled. Though he found some support, Murray's motion carried and the southwest delegates were seated.⁴

It should be explained that in Minnesota the Democratic party of the late fifties was dominated by a faction popularly known as "Moccasin Democrats." Fur-traders and their henchmen formed the nucleus of the group—hence the name. Dependent as they were for their very existence upon political dispensations, it is natural that Indian traders should align themselves with the party consistently in power. From experience the traders had come to look upon political position as an opportunity to exploit. Others with the same viewpoint joined the Moccasin faction. Federal appointees gave the group support and the Dakota Land Company was an ally. Many a rank and file Democrat protested the domination of the Moccasin group, but the reformers lacked leadership. Brave, vigorous, and hard-fisted, with dominance an essential quality, the traders furnished the brains of the party. Eventually, however, the Democrats overthrew the Moccasin faction.

At the Democratic convention Henry H. Sibley gained the nomination for governor and became the party's standard bearer. Baasen, who had aided in the seating of the southwest delegates, won the nomination for secretary of state. The choice of the Republicans for the governorship was Alexander Ramsey, an ex-Whig and the first territorial governor. The fight to elect Minnesota's first state officials was on! Party leaders assumed that a victory for either party in the first election might mean that party's control of state politics for some years to come. Nothing that might bring victory was left undone. Every candidate faced a barrage of vituperation from the opposition. It was admitted by leaders of both parties that the vote would be close.

Following the election, held on October 13, 1857, the

⁴ *Pioneer and Democrat*, September 16, 1857.

returns trickled in slowly. First one party assumed the lead, then the other. A week went by, two weeks, and still it was not certain who had won. The Democrats, who had celebrated Sibley's victory upon the strength of early returns, became less confident as time went on. Ramsey was overtaking Sibley. With almost complete returns from the older counties of the territory tabulated, the *Minnesotian* of St. Paul, unofficial Republican spokesman, on October 26 gleefully announced that Ramsey had been elected. Following the custom of the day, the headlines were conservative. A plentiful supply of exclamation marks was considered sufficient to give the emphasis required for any occasion. The *Pioneer and Democrat*, to which the Democrats looked for leadership, reluctantly admitted the probable defeat of Sibley, yet found solace in the indicated election of other Democratic nominees.

But the battle was not yet over. At the top of the first column on the editorial page of the *Pioneer and Democrat* on October 28 there appeared the following special correspondence, signed "B.":

NEW ULM, BROWN CO. Oct. 25

I have just received news from the Southern part of our former County which was divided by the last Legislature into different counties. The votes reported to me are as follows:

	Ramsey	Sibley
Murray County		75
Rock County		37
Cottonwood County,		
Cottonwood Precinct	2	52
Sulphur Springs Precinct		26
Martin County		31
	2	221

Sibley's Majority, 219

Other counties yet remain to be heard from, which will increase the Democratic Majority.

Republicans were inclined to scoff at the returns reported in the New Ulm dispatch. The *Minnesotian* indulged in sarcasm and incidentally jibed Charles E. Flandrau, Demo-

cratic candidate for justice of the supreme court. Earlier in the year Inkipaduta and his renegade band had murdered settlers at Spirit Lake in Iowa and in Jackson County. Flandrau, who was Indian agent at the time, had sought to capture Inkipaduta with the aid of annuity Sioux, but had failed. The murderers had gone unpunished. "The *Pioneer* . . . publishes some returns from what it calls Murray, Rock, Martin and Cottonwood Counties," jeered the *Minnesotian* on October 30. In commenting on the preponderance of Democratic votes it published the following remarks: "Since the exploits of Inkipaduta last spring, we did not expect to find many Republicans in that locality, but we are greatly surprised to find his band able to cast so many votes, especially since it was reported that a number of them had been killed during the summer by Flandrau's annuity Indians."

The news dispatch from New Ulm—as if the last sentence thereof was an omen—seemed to provoke a flood of returns from wilderness precincts. From far-off Pembina, the domain of the untameable Joseph Rolette, came hundreds of votes for Sibley and Democracy. Later a few precincts in the wilds reported overwhelming Republican majorities, but the Democrats quickly outdistanced the Republicans.⁵

On November 3, the *Pioneer and Democrat* was able to shout: "Henry H. Sibley Elected Governor!!!!" With the announcement was published an abstract of the official vote as compiled by the secretary of the territory. Included in the tabulation were:

	SIBLEY	RAMSEY
Cottonwood	78	2
Murray	75	0
Martin	31	0
Rock	37	0

⁵ *Minnesotian* (St. Paul), October 31, November 3, 9, 11, 16, 19; *Pioneer and Democrat*, October 31, November 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22.

At this turn of events Republicans set up a cry of fraud. With their charges of fraud came counter charges from the Democrats, who declared that many of the returns with large Republican majorities were illegal. Throughout November and into December the verbal war raged.

A special canvassing board composed of territorial Governor Samuel A. Medary and Joseph R. Brown, Democrats, and Thomas J. Galbraith, Republican, sought to name the winning candidates by passing on the vote cast, and before the end of the year the entire Democratic ticket was found to be elected. Among the hundreds of votes thrown out by the board were those reported from Murray, Cottonwood, Rock, and Martin. Sibley's final majority over Ramsey was just 240.⁶

The votes from the southwestern counties were counted, however, in the compilation that resulted in the election of the Democrat, W. W. Kingsbury, as territorial delegate over Charles McClure, Republican. Under territorial law, December 2 was the last day the votes cast for territorial delegates could be canvassed. Accordingly on that date Charles L. Chase, secretary of the territory, scanned the official vote and certified the election of Kingsbury. The secretary included the following returns in the reckoning:

	KINGSBURY	McCLURE
Murray	59	0
Cottonwood	46	0
Rock	30	0
Martin	27	0 ⁷

During November, when the party leaders were shouting fraud at one another, the Republicans made a discovery. By proclamation, on September 21, Governor Medary had established some two score election precincts. A few of the precincts were actual voting places, but by far the greater number of them were names of proposed towns and

⁶ *Pioneer and Democrat*, December 19, 1857.

⁷ *Pioneer and Democrat*, December 3, 1857.

precincts never heard of before or since. Among the precincts named in the proclamation were: Watonwan, Sulphur Springs, and Bad Track in Cottonwood County; Council City and Oasis in Murray County; Pipestone in Pipestone County; Wakeeta in Rock County; Fairmont in Martin County; Jackson in Jackson County; and Gretchtown in Nobles County.⁸ Though Governor Medary actually proclaimed these places to be voting precincts, he did so in a manner that would scarcely fit the dictionary definition of the word "proclamation." The newspapers, the only medium for the dissemination of news, in all likelihood were not informed of the proclamation.

It is plain that the person requesting the establishment of these precincts had knowledge of the region and of proposed town sites therein, even though his geography was somewhat hazy and his spelling faulty. Fairmont, Jackson, and Gretchtown were the names of the county seats established by legislative act for the counties of Martin, Jackson, and Nobles, respectively. "Wakeeta" in Rock County is a puzzle unless it was the name of an Indian village. It is a Sioux word meaning "to seek for." Pipestone, like the county, was named for the red stone.⁹ Oasis in Murray County received its name from the town site of Great Oasis, projected by the Dakota Land Company. Council City is a misspelling of Conwell City, a paper town established by legislative act near the present Currie. In a dense growth of timber on the Redwood River, now the site of Lynd in Lyon County, was what was known as "Bad Track's Indian village." Sulphur Springs was intended to be Saratoga Springs, a Dakota Land Company town site on the Cottonwood River south of the present Amiret in

⁸ Executive Journal, September 21, 1857, in the Governor's Archives in the custody of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁹ Medary's proclamation antedated the naming and platting of Pipestone City, as the present city of Pipestone was originally called, by nearly a score of years. A careful search of available historical material fails to reveal that the naming of Pipestone City in 1876 was influenced by the name given to the election precinct.

Lyon County, which, because of the copious springs at that point, was named for the springs in New York state. Government surveys had made little progress in the southwest corner of the state in the late fifties and a lack of maps, perhaps, accounts for placing Saratoga Springs and Bad Track in Cottonwood County. The Dakota Land Company considered Saratoga Springs in Cottonwood and had proposed that town-site speculation for the county seat.¹⁰ The Watonwan precinct in Cottonwood may have been named for the stream of that name.

When, on December 18, 1857, the *Minnesotian* and Republicans charged Joseph R. Brown, erstwhile fur-trader and then a Democratic leader, with having forged the vote of Murray, Cottonwood, Martin, and Rock counties, they were able to produce some circumstantial, though convincing, evidence. The day after Medary's precinct proclamation, September 22, 1857, the following letter was dispatched to Brown by the governor's private secretary, Edward M. McCosh:

Enclosed please find proclamations establishing some election precincts, in accordance with the request of the residents of the different Counties in which they are situated.

By direction of the Governor I forward them to you in order that they may reach their destinations more speedily.¹¹

The Republicans charged that Brown had dispatched the infamous message signed "B" from New Ulm, and this was not denied. The irrepressible Brown had gone from Henderson to New Ulm shortly before the election and had there acted as a judge of election. The election returns from the four southwest counties, and from Renville as well, were not certified by judges of election. They had merely been indorsed as correct by the register of Brown County. The same Brown, sitting as a member of the

¹⁰ "Report" to the stockholders of the Dakota Land Company, 1859, in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 6: 175, 176; *Laws*, 1857, extra session, p. 36.

¹¹ Executive Journal, September 22, 1857.

board canvassing the votes cast at the election, objected when the southwest vote was thrown out by the two other members on the board.¹² If one disregards Medary's action in not making public his precincts proclamation, there is little to connect him with the southwest vote. New to the territory and sympathetic to requests of Democratic leaders, the governor may have regarded the proclamation as routine business.

The fact that the general public lacked knowledge of the southwest area might have given Brown the idea of producing a Democratic vote there in 1857. He was himself familiar with the region, for during his many years as a fur company employee he had traversed every part of it. Many travelers in the southwest counties, however, knew that the area had only a sprinkling of trappers and traders for residents, and some of these travelers presented the Republicans with their testimony. A letter from Henderson, signed "F," appeared in the *Minnesotian* for November 4, 1857, and helped the Republicans in their protests. The letter-writer stated that there were only four men in Cottonwood County and he knew them all.

A trader's cabin or two on the east shore of Lake Shetek housed the population of Murray County in 1857 and the two or three inhabitants lived in blissful ignorance of the near-by Conwell City.¹³ Nobles County, though declared organized by the legislature, was not organized, and the few trappers living there were insufficient for a full set of county officials, even if they had been willing to serve.¹⁴ Rock

¹² *Pioneer and Democrat*, December 19, 1857.

¹³ There is no published history of Murray County, but many of the survivors of the Sioux War of 1862 wrote accounts of their experiences which were collected by Dr. H. M. Workman of Tracy in a manuscript "History of the Early Settlers near Tepeeotah and Surrounding Country." A copy is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. Many of these accounts throw light on the beginnings of settlement in Murray County. See especially the statements of Hoel Parmlee, p. 28, 126-128.

¹⁴ Arthur P. Rose, *Illustrated History of Nobles County*, 43 (Worthington, 1908). B. W. Woolstencroft, a Nobles County pioneer, states that the earliest settlers arrived in 1867 and that the only earlier white inhabitants of the county were a few trappers.

County was without a white man and Sioux Indians congregated there only upon occasions.¹⁵

Under the enabling act, which set up qualifications for Minnesota's admission to statehood, a census of the territory in 1857 was mandatory. Unless the census returns from the southwest counties showed voting inhabitants in numbers, the Democrats who had made fraudulent election returns would be greatly embarrassed. Since the Democrats were in power nationally and the census-taking was in charge of Moccasin Democrat appointees, the problem was easily solved.

Census-taking in the older counties went forward rapidly in October, and at intervals during the autumn many communities were given an opportunity to boast of the population growth since the census of 1850. Not until February, 1858, was there indication that a census had been taken in the southwest counties. Congress at the time was seeking to determine the number of representatives to which Minnesota's population entitled it. Three had been elected, but the total of the state's population was found by the census of 1857 to be but 150,037 — disappointingly small to enterprising residents.¹⁶ The secretary of the interior,

¹⁵ Arthur P. Rose, *Illustrated History of the Counties of Rock and Pipestone*, 43 (Luverne, 1911). The Rock County here considered is the area known today as Pipestone County. When the southwest counties were established in 1857 Pipestone County was given the boundaries of the present Rock County and Rock County the boundaries of the present Pipestone. The legislature of 1862 reversed this and interchanged the names so that the Pipestone Quarry would be located in Pipestone County and the rock mound, for which Rock County is said to have been named, in that county. See *Laws*, 1862, p. 269. There is some evidence that the latter county was named for Augustin Rock, or Rocque, the trader. *Glencoe Register*, quoted in *Henderson Democrat*, December 3, 1858.

¹⁶ This figure, which is found in the *First Annual Report of the Minnesota bureau of statistics* published in 1860, is accepted by William W. Folwell in his *History of Minnesota*, 1: 359 (St. Paul, 1921). Gere reported a total of 150,322 inhabitants in the territory, including an estimated population of 1,800 for Pembina County. After the secretary of the interior had received the returns from Minnesota he reported a total population of 150,360, including the estimated 1,800 from Pembina. Later the secretary of the interior announced the official count as 150,092.

in charge of the census, upon the request of Congress submitted a report that included the following:

COUNTY	INHABITANTS
Murray	81
Cottonwood	173
Nobles	16
Rock	52
Jackson	50
Martin	55
Pipestone	24 ¹⁷

Late in May, 1858, William B. Gere, United States marshal in Minnesota Territory during the taking of the census of the previous fall, received a report from the secretary of the interior and for the first time announced the complete official returns. Not in alphabetical order, but grouped together at the foot of the county lists, were the following figures:

COUNTY	INHABITANTS	SQUARE MILES	DWELLINGS
Murray	91	720	16
Cottonwood	173	720	42
Nobles	16	720	6
Rock	52	720	17
Jackson	50	720	17
Martin	56	720	19
Pipestone	24	864	5 ¹⁸

Rock and Pipestone counties were larger than they are at present because the western state line was not yet established and these counties had their territorial limits, extending into the present state of South Dakota.

See 35 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 110, p. 2, 3 (serial 958); 35 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 1, p. 93 (serial 974). Congress decided that Minnesota's population was too small to entitle it to three representatives, and allowed it only two. To determine who should fill these places the three representatives elected drew lots. William W. Phelps and James M. Cavanaugh were the winners; George L. Becker, the loser. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2: 18.

¹⁷ *Pioneer and Democrat*, February 9, 1858.

¹⁸ *Pioneer and Democrat*, May 25, 1858.

The population schedules of the 1857 census are truly interesting. The original schedules are preserved by the census bureau of the department of commerce in Washington, and from these copies have been made for the Minnesota Historical Society. They include the names of the towns where inhabitants of southwest counties are declared to have resided and, even more interesting, the names of residents with ages, places of birth, and, for adult males, information about occupations and citizenship.

Ninety-one people living in sixteen dwellings are listed as inhabitants of "Cornwall City," Murray County, in the census of 1857. The chameleon-like changes that the name of this Murray County town site underwent are worthy of mention. At the outset the name of the project was "Conwell City" for the family name of Mrs. William Pitt Murray; but nowhere in contemporary sources is the name correctly spelled. The land speculators, seeking a free "puff" for the town site in Murray County, succeeded in enlisting the help of the territorial legislature of 1857. Congress was memorialized to extend a mail route from New Ulm to Sioux Falls City via "Cornwell City." During the extra session of 1857 "Canwell City" was incorporated and, according to the act, embraced a section of land at the outlet of Lake Shetek. When Governor Medary proclaimed the location an election precinct, it got a long way from home in being called "Council City." A map published in 1859 showing the route of the proposed Transit Railroad Company, one of four to receive a Congressional land grant in 1857, gives the name "Caldwell."¹⁹ The census of 1857 came close to the mark with "Cornwall City."

The 173 inhabitants living in forty-two dwellings enumerated in the census as residents of Cottonwood County were all huddled together, according to the manuscript

¹⁹ *Slayton Gazette*, September 6, 1907; *Laws*, 1857, p. 291; *Laws*, 1857, extra session, p. 36; *St. Peter Free Press*, October 19, 1859.

schedule, in Oasis. The name was not original. It had been designated as an election precinct in Murray County by Medary's proclamation. The space provided on the printed census form for the name of a town is left blank in the returns for Nobles County. Wakeeta is given as the name of the village where the fifty-two inhabitants of Rock County lived. Here again the influence of precinct names in Medary's proclamation is evident. The census schedules show the population of Jackson County to be divided between four villages. Fifteen inhabitants living in six dwellings made up Pelicans Nest; Sylvan Lake had eight residents and two dwellings; Oak Lake, thirteen inhabitants and four dwellings; and Desmoin Lake, fourteen inhabitants and five dwellings.

Fairmont, the name authorized by legislative act for the county seat of Martin County when it was established, and Fairfield are listed as having inhabitants in Martin County. Thirty-nine inhabitants and fourteen dwellings are listed in the first, and sixteen inhabitants and five dwellings are counted in the last mentioned. The total of fifty-five inhabitants falls one short of the official total. Fifty-six probably had been incorrectly set down on the census sheets by the clerk filling in the total and this error was not caught by those later handling the lists. "Forks of the Big Rock River" is the name given to the place of residence of the twenty-four inhabitants listed in Pipestone County. This name is such as Indians and traders might have used.

Even though the schedules of the 1857 census are official government records and are a part of statistics still accepted as authentic, at least for the seven southwestern counties they were forgeries. All these counties, with the exception of Murray, have printed histories and these contain no mention of the inhabitants enumerated in 1857. Fairmont, alone of the towns included, became an actual settlement. This name had been authorized for the county seat of Martin County by legislative act.

In statements made by early settlers of Murray County neither Cornwall City nor its inhabitants are mentioned. Notes of government surveys made in this county in 1858 and 1861 make no mention of dwellings or ruins of dwellings other than those which early settlers note in their statements. Since some of these settlers lived on the supposed site of Cornwall City on Lake Shetek, they must have known of the city and its inhabitants had they existed.

Though authors of the printed histories of the remaining six southwest counties relied upon the earliest settlers for their information concerning first settlement, it might nevertheless be suggested that settlements such as those found in the census schedules were overlooked. But here it is possible to give evidence that the historians were not careless. Minnesota in 1857 was well supplied with excellent newspapers and they eagerly sought news concerning every part of the territory. Accounts of travelers returning from out-of-the-way parts of the territory found a place in their columns and descriptions of visits to southwestern Minnesota are not rare. In these accounts there is nothing to substantiate the census lists. It must be remembered, too, that not a few travelers made their way across the southwestern counties on their way to the Big Sioux, James, and Missouri rivers, and, so far as is known, they fail to note these communities.

In March, 1857, Inkpaduta and his renegade Indians murdered settlers first at Spirit Lake and later in Jackson County. An expedition of United States troops was dispatched in pursuit of the murderers. The accounts of the massacre and the official reports of the fruitless chase after the Indians give a picture of the population in the counties of Jackson and Nobles, and they do not mention the towns listed in the census.

Just three years after the special census of 1857, the census of 1860 was taken. Naturally one would expect that, though many of the settlers might move away in so

short a period, at least a few would remain. A comparison of the population schedules for 1857 with those for 1860, however, reveals the striking fact that no names for the counties in question in the 1857 census appear in the lists of 1860!

The totals listed in the 1860 census for the southwestern counties are as follows:

COUNTY	INHABITANTS
Murray	29
Cottonwood	12
Nobles	35
Rock	0
Jackson	181
Martin	151
Pipestone	23 ²⁰

An examination of the lists of inhabitants in the 1857 census reveals many points that help to prove they were forgeries. Farmers and trappers, who almost exclusively made up a new prairie settlement, are in too small a percentage. An amusing error creeps into the census of the mythical Oasis. The first ten houses counted, according to the lists, were visited on October 10, dwellings numbered 11 to 28 have October 8 as the date visited, and dwellings numbered 29 to 42 are listed under the date of October 7. Time was reversed! On each sheet of the Oasis list, families are grouped so that they end on the last line of a page. There is no carry-over. Able as the clerk was to suit his fancy, he could list the proper number of children for each family with a view to filling his spaces exactly.

Although the schedules for Murray and Jackson counties are in a different handwriting from those of the other five southwestern counties, all seven are signed by N. R. Brown, assistant marshal. The lists for five are in Brown's handwriting. It is more than a coincidence that these seven

²⁰A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Minnesota*, 328 (Chicago, 1874).

counties, and seven only, should be Brown's share in the census-taking.

According to the population schedules Assistant Marshal Brown made his enumerations in the southwestern counties on the following dates: Cottonwood, on October 7, 8, and 10; Jackson, on the twelfth and thirteenth; Pipestone and Rock on the twenty-first; Martin on the twenty-second; Nobles on the twenty-third; and Murray on the twenty-seventh. If one looks at a map of southwestern Minnesota and traces the ground that Brown represents himself as having covered on October 21, 22, and 23, it will be apparent that he considered himself a very agile man.

An oath appended to each of the southwestern county schedules indicates that N. R. Brown, "being duly sworn deposes and says that he took the census" of the county in question and made the returns, which he swears "are correct and according to the instructions of the oath." Each schedule is signed by William B. Gere, United States marshal for Minnesota, and, with one exception, by Samuel S. Selby, notary public. The Jackson County schedule bears the signature of A. C. Jones, judge of probate for Ramsey County. Gere certifies that he "carefully examined and compared the returns" and found that the "same are correct." The signatures are dated from November 19 to 24, 1857.

Accepting the dates of the notary's seals as correct, it is plain that the census schedules were prepared when the election fraud battle was at its hottest. They were intended, perhaps, to authenticate the fraudulent vote from the southwest, but the writer has found nothing to indicate that they were ever so used. The N. R. Brown who swore that he lawfully took the census of the two counties is the same man who slipped into the Democratic convention in 1857 as delegate from Cottonwood County. He was an organizer of the Dakota Land Company. Considering the

apparent errors in the lists, it is doubtful that Marshal Gere did "carefully" compare, as he certifies.

For all that they are fiction, there is some charm about the census lists. According to the schedules, the inhabitants claimed a wide variety of places of birth, including Maryland, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Ohio, Kentucky, Virginia, Massachusetts, Vermont, Louisiana, Maine, Delaware, New York, New Hampshire, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, South Carolina, North Carolina, New Jersey, the District of Columbia, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. Some had sailed across the ocean from Ireland, Italy, Germany, Bavaria, Sweden, England, Scotland, France, and Switzerland. A few were natives of Nova Scotia and Upper and Lower Canada. Yes, and one child is listed as having been born on the Atlantic ocean. Male voters make up half the total on the lists. They were the voting Democrats. It is noteworthy that almost without exception the foreign-born males over twenty-one years are naturalized citizens.

The occupations of the adult males range through the trades and professions. Farmers, laborers, bakers, shoemakers, merchants, plasterers, carpenters, joiners, sawyers, teamsters, clerks, wagon-makers, hotel-keepers, physicians, grocers, saddlers, bricklayers, millers, millwrights, bankers, engineers, ship carpenters, blacksmiths, mineralogists, bookkeepers, architects, surveyors, tailors, butchers, cooks, lawyers, marble-cutters, and lumbermen are listed.

The source of the names and occupations must be left to speculation. Perhaps they are the product of a fertile mind. It is easy to picture a satisfied smile on the face of the clerk as he concocts the fictitious schedules for the southwest counties. Such names as Parker K. Anderson, Orson Rodgers, Patrick Coulter, Cantwell Cobb, Thomas Carter, Abraham Hains, Mark Hammond, and L. James Parness sound plausible. There is an especially honest ring in the homely name of Cantwell Cobb.

The census returns from the southwest served to bolster

up the discounted election returns for 1857. They also furnished the Dakota Land Company and others in the languishing land-speculation business with advertising that had the appearance of authenticity. Incidentally the returns proved lucrative to N. R. Brown, who was paid two cents a name and ten cents a mile traveling expenses by the government for taking the count. He received \$288.68 for his work.²¹ Since the pay of Marshal Gere was computed on a count basis, he, too, benefited.

That the census figures of 1857 were generally accepted as authentic is indicated in the printed *Annual Report* of the adjutant general for January 1, 1860. The list of males available for military service includes: Murray, 32; Cottonwood, 68; Nobles, 8; Rock, 22; Pipestone, 14; Jackson, 30; and Martin, 41. The proposed fourth brigade of the second division of the state militia is shown to be entirely composed of men living in the seven southwest counties.

The census figures were not without results. When the Democrats assembled in convention in St. Paul in August, 1859, among the delegates were A. S. Coleman of Murray, A. Fraigger of Cottonwood, J. O. Whitney of Jackson, J. S. Demmon of Nobles, and F. B. Peck of Rock counties. Many of the delegates from the older counties did not look kindly upon the men from the southwest. Following the unpleasant aftermath of the election two years before, the respectable party leaders sought to do a little house-cleaning. Ambiguous wording of the convention call defeated the efforts of the reformers. After mentioning specifically the organized counties, the call closed with the statement that "Counties not enumerated in the above list will be entitled to one delegate each."²² The *Pioneer and Democrat* on August 17, 1859, pointed out the unfairness of the plan. Southwestern Minnesota, with a population

²¹ 35 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 110, p. 5 (serial 958).

²² *Henderson Democrat*, May 18, August 24, 1859.

of 5,528, had the same number of delegates as Ramsey and Washington with a population of 18,930. Brown County, aided by Murray, Martin, Jackson, Nobles, Pipestone, Cottonwood, Rock, and Redwood, controlled thirteen votes.

A movement led by W. A. Caruthers of Stearns County would have blocked the "loading" of the convention. He offered a resolution to keep out all delegates not residents of the counties they claimed to represent. This would have kept out bogus delegates, most of whom were federal appointees in the Indian and other services and land company employees. None other than Joseph R. Brown rose to protest the resolution, and before he had finished it was tabled.²³ The victory was an empty one for Brown and his followers. Repudiated by many members of the party, the Democrats lost the state elections, and with the election of Lincoln to the presidency the Moccasin faction passed from the political picture.

The split in the Democratic ranks had occurred weeks before the 1859 convention. Plans of the party leaders in the Moccasin faction to carry the 1859 election for the party had included the forging of returns from precincts found in the 1857 census returns of southwest counties. This scheme became an open secret among voting Democrats, many of whom resented the use of such tactics. On May 25, 1859, James W. Lynd, editor of the *Henderson Democrat*, exposed in his newspaper a scheme to forge returns from the southwest counties in the coming fall campaign. The exposé ended Lynd's connection with Brown's newspaper and the Democratic party lost a trusted and respected spokesman. The light of publicity thrown upon the projected plan was sufficient to discourage the Moccasin leaders and no returns were made in 1859 from the southwest counties.

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²³ *Henderson Democrat*, August 24, 1859.



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