

Legends of Freeborn County

Second in a monthly series of Freeborn County Legends - May 2000

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Freeborn County's First Settlement (and Freeborn County's first white birth)

The first History of Freeborn County was written in 1882 and then reprinted by the Freeborn County Historical Society in 1996. It carries a wonderful description of the first settlement by a white man and his family on this prairie in 1853. The following is that description.

"EARLY SETTLEMENT

Up to the spring of 1853, as far as known, no white man had planted a home in this county, now so well filled with a thriving population. The expansive prairies and beautiful groves bordering the placid lakes and beautiful streams, up to that time were in a state of repose, and only occupied by animal life and perhaps a few aboriginal race, which was in a condition of senility, ready to depart and give place to a superior race.□

At the time above mentioned, Ole Gulbrandson, whose name reveals his nationality, with his family, entered in and took possession of a moderate portion of this goodly land in section thirty-three in the township of Shell Rock, and rolled up some logs in the form of a cabin, which still stands on the farm of P.J. Miller, who is a well known old settler. Mr. Gulbrandson went to work, and when the next settler came along, two years afterwards, he had provided for himself and family, and could also supply his neighbors with the necessities of life. A passing notice should be made of the courage of this man, to thus plant himself so far beyond the confines of civilization, where, for aught he knew, they were liable to be devoured by wild beasts, and where the savages might have blotted him and his family from the face of the earth, with no one to follow on the avenging trail. And some credit is also due the Indians themselves, that they did not molest him as they certainly were aware of his presence. In the fall of 1854, a daughter was born in their little log house, which must have been the very first, whatever rival claims may be put in."

This description is only the beginning of development as within the next few years, settlers came from Norway, Denmark, Germany, Czechoslovakia, England, and many of the eastern states in the United States.

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