CLAY COUNTY

This county, established March 8, 1862, and organized April 14, 1872, was named for the greatly admired statesman, Henry Clay, of Lexington, Kentucky. He was born in Hanover county, Virginia, April 12, 1777; died in Washington, D. C., June 29, 1852. He began to study law in 1796, and in the next year, being admitted to practice, he removed to Kentucky; was U. S. senator, 1806-7 and 1810-11; was a member of Congress, 1811-21 and 1823-25, serving as speaker in 1811-14, 1815-20, and 1823-25; was peace commissioner at Ghent in 1814; was candidate for the presidency in 1824; secretary of state, 1825-29; again U. S. senator, 1831-42 and 1849-52; was Whig candidate for the presidency in 1832 and 1844; was the chief designer of the "Missouri Compromise," 1820, and of the compromise of 1850; was the author of the compromise tariff of 1833; said in a speech in 1850, "I would rather be right than be President."

Among the numerous biographies of Henry Clay, the most extended is by Rev. Calvin Colton, six volumes, containing speeches and correspondence, published in 1846-57; its revised edition, 1864; and its republication in 1904, ten volumes, with an introduction by Thomas B. Reed, and a History of Tariff Legislation, 1812-1896, by William McKinley.

Carl Schurz, on the final page of his "Life of Henry Clay," published in 1887 (two volumes, in the "American Statesmen" series), pointed to his greatest political motive: "It was a just judgment which he pronounced upon himself when he wrote, 'If any one desires to know the leading and paramount object of my public life, the preservation of this Union will furnish the key.'" Near the end of the dark first year of our civil war, and nearly ten years after Clay had died, this county was named. Minnesota had then raised four regiments for the defence of the Union.

Townships and Villages.

Information of the origins and meanings of names in this county has been received from "History of the Red River Valley," two volumes, 1909, pages 798-830; from Hon. Solomon G. Comstock, of Moorhead, and Andrew O. Houglum, county auditor, interviewed during my visit in Moorhead in September, 1916; and from Nathan Butler, of Minneapolis, who was formerly a resident in Barnesville during twenty years, 1883-1903.

ALLIANCE township was named for the Farmers' Alliance, a political party of considerable prominence in Minnesota during the campaign of 1890. Hon. George N. Lamphere, in a paper entitled "History of Wheat Raising in the Red River Valley" (Minn. Hist. Soc. Collections,

vol. X, 1905, pages 1-33), stated that the agitation for lower railroad freight rates, which was the cause of the formation of the Farmers' Alliance, began in 1883-4 in Clay county, spread thence throughout the wheat-raising districts of this state, and developed into the People's or Populist party.

AVERILL, a railway village on the boundary line of Moland and Spring Prairie, was named in honor of Gen. John Thomas Averill, who was born in Alma, Maine, March 1, 1825, and died in St. Paul, Minn., October 3, 1889. He was graduated at Wesleyan College; settled in Lake City, Minn., 1857; served during the civil war in the Sixth Minnesota regiment, becoming its colonel in 1864, and was brevetted a brigadier general in 1865. After the war he founded and conducted a wholesale paper house in St. Paul, under the name of Averill, Carpenter and Co. In 1858-60 he was a state senator; and in 1872-5 represented his district in Congress.

BAKER, a railway village in section 1, Alliance, was named for Lester H. Baker, a farmer there, who removed to the State of Washington.

BARNESVILLE township was named after its railway village, which was established in 1874 by George S. Barnes, a farmer and wheat merchant, who owned and managed a very large farm near Glyndon and died there about the year 1910. The village was incorporated November 4, 1881, and received its charter as a city April 4, 1889.

COMSTOCK, the railway village of Holy Cross township, was named in honor of Solomon Gilman Comstock, of Moorhead, for whom also a township in Marshall county was named. He was born in Argyle, Maine, May 9, 1842; came to Minnesota in 1869, settling in Moorhead; was admitted to the bar in 1871; was a representative in the state legislature, 1876-7 and 1879-81; a state senator, 1883-7; and a representative in Congress, 1889-91.

CROMWELL township, settled partly by immigrants from England, was named, in accordance with the petition of its citizens, for Oliver Cromwell (born 1599, died 1658).

DILWORTH, a village and division point of the Northern Pacific railway, three miles east of Moorhead, was named by officers of that railway company.

DOUGLAS, a Great Northern railway station two miles south of Georgetown, was named in honor of James Douglas, one of the first settlers of Moorhead. He was born in Scotland, March 13, 1821; came with his parents to the United States in 1832; came to Minnesota in 1871, settling in Moorhead, where he was a merchant, built the steamboats Manitoba and Minnesota in 1875 for the Red river trade, and secured the building of a flouring mill.

DOWNER, the railway village of Elkton township, was named by officers of the Great Northern railway company.

EGLON township bears the name of a city of ancient Palestine, also of postoffices in West Virginia, Kentucky, and Washington.

ELKTON township refers to the elk formerly common or frequent here and in many parts of Minnesota.

ELMWOOD township received this euphonious name in accordance with its petition for organization, alluding to its abundant elm trees along the South fork of Buffalo river.

FELTON township was named, after its railway station, in honor of S. M. Felton, by the officers of the Great Northern railway company.

FINKLE, a railway station four miles south of Moorhead, was named in honor of Henry G. Finkle, an early pioneer, of the firm of Bruns and Finkle, merchants in Moorhead.

FLOWING township has chiefly Scandinavian settlers, by whom this name was adopted, but its significance remains to be ascertained, unless it refers to artesian or flowing wells. The many flowing wells in the Red river valley, of which Clay county and this township have a good number, are the subject of a chapter in "The Glacial Lake Agassiz," (Monograph XXV, U. S. Geological Survey, 1896, pages 523-581, with a map).

GEORGETOWN was established as a trading post of the Hudson Bay Company in 1859; was abandoned in September, 1862, during the Sioux outbreak; and was reëstablished in 1864. The township received its name from the trading post.

GLYNDON was platted as a railway village in the spring of 1872, being named by officers of the Northern Pacific railroad company, and thence the township was named. It is also the name of small villages in Pennsylvania and Maryland.

GOOSE PRAIRIE township was named for the wild geese formerly plentiful in its lakes and sloughs.

HAGEN township commemorates an early Norwegian settler of this surname. A large manufacturing city in western Germany bears this name.

HAWLEY, a railway village settled by an English colony in 1871, incorporated February 5, 1884, and its township, at first called Bethel, were renamed in honor of Gen. Joseph Roswell Hawley, of Connecticut, one of the original stockholders of the Northern Pacific railroad company. He was born in Stewartsville, N. C., October 31, 1826; died in Washington, D. C., March 17, 1905. He was graduated at Hamilton College, 1847; was admitted to practice law, 1850; became editor of the Evening Press, Hartford, Conn., 1857; served as a brigade and division commander in the Union army during the civil war, and was brevetted major general in 1865; was president of the U. S. Centennial Commission, 1873-77; was member of Congress, 1872-75 and 1879-81; was U. S. senator, 1881-1905.

HIGHLAND GROVE township received its name for its location on the high ascent eastward from the Red river valley, and for the groves beside its lakes and on the Buffalo river, the surface all about being mainly prairie.

HITTERDAL, a railway village on the line between Goose Prairie and Highland Grove, is named for a valley and lake in southern Norway.

HOLY CROSS township was named for a conspicuous wooden cross set on the prairie at a cemetery about a half mile west of the Red river, in North Dakota, amid a Catholic community of French Canadian farmers. This township on the Minnesota side was settled by Norwegian farmers, Lutherans, and both sides of the river were comprised in the "Holy Cross neighborhood."

HUMBOLDT township, settled by a German colony, is named in honor of the celebrated German scientist, traveler, and author, Alexander von Humboldt, who was born in 1769 and died in 1859. In the years 1799 to 1804 he traveled in South America and Mexico, and later he published many books on his observations of natural sciences, history, and political affairs of this continent.

KEENE township was named for a homesteader there, who was a veteran of the civil war.

KRAGNES was named in honor of A. O. Kragnes, a prominent Norwegian farmer, one of the first settlers of that township, who came from Houston county in 1872. He was born in Norway and came to the United states in 1852, with his parents, who two years later settled in Houston county.

KURTZ township was named for Thomas C. Kurtz, formerly cashier of the Merchants' Bank, Moorhead, who removed to Portland, Oregon. He is a son of Colonel John D. Kurtz, of the United States Engineer Corps, who served with distinction during the civil war, and later was superintendent of the engineering works of Delaware bay and river.

LAMBS, the railway station in Oakport, was named for John and Patrick H. Lamb, brothers from Ireland, who were early settlers and engaged extensively in farming, brick-making, railroad construction, and banking.

MOLAND township was named by its Norwegian settlers.

MOORHEAD, first settled in 1871, when the building of the Northern Pacific railroad reached its site, was named in honor of William G. Moorhead, of Pennsylvania, who was a director of that railroad company. He was a partner of Jay Cooke, the Northern Pacific financial agent, and his first wife was a sister of Cooke. He was president of the Philadelphia and Erie railroad, and his brother, Gen. James Kennedy Moorhead, was likewise much interested in railway development, especially in the Northern Pacific finances. Moorhead was incorporated as a city February 24, 1881, and the township also bears this name.

The adjoining city of Fargo, in North Dakota, was named for William George Fargo, (b. 1818, d. 1881), of Buffalo, N. Y., founder of the Wells, Fargo Express Company and prominent as a Northern Pacific director.

Cass county, North Dakota, adjoining Clay county, and also its city of Casselton, are named for Gen. George W. Cass, of Pennsylvania,

who was president of the Northern Pacific railroad company in 1872-75. He was born in Ohio, and was a nephew of Governor Lewis Cass, of Michigan; was graduated at the U. S. Military Academy, West Point, in 1832; was president during twenty-five years of the Pittsburg, Fort Wayne and Chicago railroad company; purchased a large tract adjoining the Northern Pacific line between fifteen and twenty miles west of Fargo, and, employing Oliver Dalrymple as farm superintendent, was the first to demonstrate in 1876 the high agricultural value of the Red river valley lands for wheat raising on a large scale.

Morken township was named in honor of T. O. Morken, its first homesteader, who came here from Houston county in 1875.

Muskoda, a former station of the Northern Pacific railway in the east edge of section 7, Hawley, had an Ojibway name, meaning a meadow or tract of grass land, a large prairie. It is spelled Muskoday in Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha," with accent on the first syllable. In Baraga's Dictionary it is spelled mashkode, to be pronounced in three syllables nearly as by Longfellow. A few miles east of Clay county, the traveler on the Northern Pacific line passes out from the northeast forest region, and thence crosses an expanse of prairie and plain, mainly treeless, for eight hundred miles to the Rocky mountains. (By a relocation of the railroad to secure an easier grade in the next seven miles west of Hawley, the site of Muskoda is left now about two-thirds of a mile distant at the north.)

Oakport township has many oaks in the narrow fringe of timber along the navigable Red river.

Parke township was named probably in honor of a pioneer settler. A county in western Indiana bears this name.

Riverton township has reference to Buffalo river, which flows across its northern part.

Rustad, a railway village in Kurtz, was named in honor of Samuel Rustad, a Norwegian merchant there.

Ruthruff, a railway station in section 36, Moorhead, was named for an adjoining settler.

Sabin, a railway village in Elmwood, is in honor of Dwight May Sabin, who was born in Manlius, Ill., April 25, 1844, and died in Chicago, December 23, 1902. He came to Minnesota in 1867, and the next year settled in Stillwater, where he engaged in the lumber business, and in the manufacture of machinery, engines, and cars. He was a state senator, 1871-3, and a United States senator, 1883-9.

Skree was named for Mikkel Skree, a Norwegian farmer, who was the first settler of this township.

Spring Prairie township, a euphonious name selected in the petition for organization, refers to its springs and rivulets.

Tansem township was named for John O. Tansem, one of its pioneer farmers, a highly respected citizen. He was born in Eidsvold, Norway,

in 1842; came to the United States in 1861; settled here, in the most southeastern township of this county, in 1862.

ULEN township was named in honor of Ole Ulen, its first settler. He was born in Norway, April 18, 1818, and died in Ulen village January 19, 1891. He came to the United States in 1851, and to Minnesota in 1853, settling in Houston county; was a farmer there until 1867; removed to this county in 1872.

VIDING township was named for a Swedish settler there.

LAKES AND STREAMS.

Buffalo river is translated from the Ojibway name of its southern tributary flowing from lakes in and near Audubon, in Becker county, of which Rev. Joseph A. Gilfillan wrote that it "is called Pijikiwi-zibi, or Buffalo river, from the fact that buffaloes were always found wintering there." Hence the white people have erroneously called the whole river Buffalo river. On Nicollet's map it is named "Pijihi or Buffalo R." The name used by the Ojibways for our Buffalo lake in Becker county, and for the Buffalo river, flowing thence to the Red river, would be correctly translated as Beaver lake and Beaver river.

Near the middle of west side of Kragnes township, on the Red river opposite to the mouth of the Sheyenne, a townsite named LaFayette was surveyed in March, 1859; and there in April of that year, "the first steamboat on the Red river was built . . . the materials for which were transported across the country from Crow Wing on the Mississippi, where the steamer North Star was broken up for that purpose. The new boat was named the Anson Northup." (Lamphere, M. H. S. Collections, vol. X, 1905, pages 16, 17; History of the Red River Valley, 1909, pages 569-572.)

The Sheyenne river (here spelled unlike the Cheyenne river of South Dakota and the city Cheyenne, capital of Wyoming), flowing into the Red river from North Dakota, received this name, given by Nicollet as "Shayenn-oju R.," from the Sioux, designating it as the river of the Cheyenne tribe, meaning "people who speak a strange language." Rev. T. S. Williamson wrote (M. H. S. Collections, vol. I, pages 295-301) that when the Sioux first came to the Falls of St. Anthony, the Iowas occupied the country about the mouth of the Minnesota river, and the Cheyennes had their villages and cultivated fields "on the Minnesota between Blue Earth and Lac qui Parle, whence they moved to a western branch of Red river of the North, which still bears their name." Thompson recorded the narration in 1798 by an Ojibway chief, of an Ojibway war party who attacked and destroyed the Cheyenne village west of the Red river, probably about 1775 or 1780, but perhaps five or ten years later. (Thompson's Narrative, edited by Tyrrell, 1916, pages 236, 261-3). Next this tribe removed to a second Cheyenne river, west of the Missouri in South Dakota, and yet later they migrated farther across the plains to the west and south.

Wild Rice river, whose South branch runs through Ulen and Hagen, and the river of the same name in North Dakota, tributary to the Red river nine miles south of Fargo and Moorhead, are translated from the Ojibway names, referring to their valued native grain, the wild rice, much harvested by the Indian women for food. It also gave the name of Mahnomen county, and is more fully noticed in the chapter for that county.

No explanations seem needed for the names of Hay creek, tributary to the Buffalo river in section 33, Highland Grove, and a second Hay creek in Skree and Elkton; Spring creek, tributary to the last and joining it two miles southeast of Downer; and Stony and Willow creeks, flowing through Barnesville township to the South branch of Buffalo river. Each of the two creeks last named has been sometimes called Whiskey creek, in allusion to a great spree of the railway graders when the former railway line from Breckenridge to Barnesville was completed. Another name for Stony creek, crossed by the railway two miles north of the city of Barnesville, is Sieber's creek, for Rudolph Sieber, who had a milk farm at its north side.

Deerhorn creek, in Alliance township, flowing northwestward from Wilkin county to the South branch of Buffalo river, received its name from antlers shed by deer and found by the pioneer settlers.

The east margin of Clay county, above the Glacial Lake Agassiz, has numerous small lakes, but only a few have received names on maps. These bearing names are Silver lake, in section 26, Hawley, in allusion to its placid and shining surface; Moe lake, in sections 2, 11, and 12, Eglon, for Nels R. Moe, the farmer on its west side; Sand lake, in the east half of section 12, Eglon, for its sandy shore; Solum lake, in the southwest quarter of the same section, for H. H. Solum, whose farm adjoins it; Lee lake, in sections 9 and 16, and Perch lake in section 17, Eglon; Turtle lake, crossed by the east line of section 12, Parke; and Grove lake, partly in section 36, Tansem, lying mostly in Otter Tail county.

Buffalo Delta of Lake Agassiz.

Where the Buffalo river enters the area of the Glacial Lake Agassiz, a delta of stratified gravel and sand was deposited during the earliest and highest stage of the ancient lake. The Herman or first beach and the east edge of the delta were crossed by the Northern Pacific railroad at Muskoda, and the extent of the delta from north to south, on both sides of the river, is seven miles, with a width from two to three and a half miles. (U. S. Geological Survey, Monograph XXV, 1896, pages 290-292, with map and section.)