

EARLY HISTORY OF GALESVILLE

Excerpted from 1917 'History of Trempealeau County'

(After 1856) the village experienced a quick growth, enjoying a heyday of prosperity until the close of the Civil War. The panic of 1857 apparently did not retard the progress. In 1859 an attempt was made to transfer some of the business from the lower to the upper table. J M Dodge built a store on Ridge Street and soon sold to R A Odell, who conducted it for several years. This was the only store ever started on the upper table.

Work on Gale College, on the upper table, was started in 1858, the preparatory department opened in the courthouse in the summer of 1859 and the collegiate department opened in the fall of 1861. The first county fair was held in the fall of 1859. The Galesville Transcript was established in 1860.

During this period of prosperity many houses were erected, several church societies perfected their organizations and the Rev John Frothingham, first Presbyterian minister to be settled in the county, took charge of his work.

On June 2, 1866, the dam went out, and destruction and desolation marked the rush of water. The hotel on the flat, put up in 1857, the saw and grist mills and other improvements were swept away in an hour, entailing a loss of not less than \$10,000. The next spring Webster Davis purchased the water power privileges and the debris left by the flood and began the construction of a new dam and mill on the present site several rods above the old location.

Of Galesville, in the fall of 1870, Stephen Richmond has said:

'It was a beautiful, thriving and famed little city, nestling in the shade of the mighty cliff, which then as now forms the east bank of Beaver Creek under the shadow of which towered the granite walls of the Davis Flouring Mill, the whirl and busy trundle of which bespoke an active industry. Galesville University stood near the western boundary or outskirts of the village after the fashion of southern colleges and was then a flourishing school under the presidency of Professor Gilliland and a corps of strong, active teachers. The public square in the center of the business part of the village on the lower table was also a reminder of southern cities and villages, on the north side of which stood the courthouse, the remainder of the square being built about by business places, all active with bustle and an air of successful local commerce, presenting a scene and fixing in my memory a very pleasant remembrance of that day, then bespeaking the intelligence, business ability and financial foresight of a community of people able to cope successfully with all municipal problems. It was a sight not to be in all the years since effaced from my memory.

'On the day of which I try to sketch my mental picture, the public square, the streets and along the banks of the creek were many teams from the country and many of the active, hardy, intelligent farmers, their wives and children, who were tributary to Galesville, as their market place, were present. Good order was manifest everywhere and the democracy of which so many have spoken and written was surely there. Away to the north spread in a sheen of golden ripple lay the Davis mill pond looking in

all respects, like a lake. To the southwest could be seen the mighty bluffs and rugged hills in Minnesota, ranged along the western side of the Mississippi river. Every line of local municipal activity now present in and the boast of modern days appeared to be actively and intelligently represented. The ragged edge of the frontier town and the far western outpost were absent and there was an air of permanency, tradition, and stability usually lacking in new towns.'