election of 1894. The proposed divisions of the county with pro­
posed county names and county seats were: west, Nash with
East Grand Forks as county seat; north central, Red Lake with
Red Lake Falls as county seat; east, the group favoring McIntosh
as county seat submitted the name Columbia — those designating
Fosston as the county seat submitted Nelson as the county name.
This first attempt to slice up the county into three parts failed.

The following session of the legislature amended the County
Division Law to permit voters to vote on only one division pro­
posal at any one election. Similar petitions for county division
were again placed before the voters in the general election of
1896. This election carried for Red Lake County. The last im­
portant county division election occurred in 1902 when petitioners
sought to separate the eastern part from the parent county.

The late Charles Conger, a friend who then resided in Mc­
Intosh, gave an excellent report of the county division fight in
the 1916 HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY OF POLK COUNTY,
entitled “The Rise and Fall of Columbia County”. The four
petitions voted on in the 1902 election were in agreement on land
area, fixing the line of separation on the western boundaries of
Garden, Woodside and Grove Park Townships. The groups were
in disagreement, however, on county names and county seat towns.
The proposed county names and county seats were: Nelson with
Fosston, Columbia with McIntosh, North Star with Erskine, and
Valley with Mentor. The petition for Columbia County carried
the most yes votes and Governor Van Sant issued his proclama­
tion declaring the proposition for the creation and organization
of the Columbia County carried.

The new Columbia County proceeded to organize with the
commissioners named in the petition as the organizing agency.
The legality of the election was questioned, inasmuch as all peti­
tions included the same land area. Polk County contested the
election before the State Supreme Court. The Supreme Court
handed down its decision on April 16, 1903, stating “That the
pretended organization of the new county was invalid and of no
effect and its pretended officials were ousted from the offices
they claimed to hold”. Considerable business had been transacted
by the new county officials before the Supreme Court decision
was handed down. The 1907 legislature however legalized in part
many of the acts of the temporary organization pertaining pri­
marily to estates, tax payments, marriage licenses and other minor
matters. The final attempt to divide the county by the Nelson
County advocates was decisively defeated in the 1908 election.

One interesting sidelight of legal significance was brought out
in the final division of the county. The issue in controversy, be­
tween Polk and Red Lake counties, was whether or not Red Lake
County should bear its share of the bonded indebtedness incurred
while it was still a part of Polk County. The State Supreme
Court reversed the decision of District Judge William Watts and
ruled that Red Lake County should pay its share.