CHAPTER X.
THE NEWSPAPERS OF POLK COUNTY.

By W. E. McKenzie, Crookston Times.


The history of Polk County newspapers is largely within the period of the personal experience and observation of the writer. It is the period of the greatest evolution of the newspaper and publishing business of any similar lapse of time in the history of the world—the period of the perfecting press, and the linotype machine, of the big penny paper, and the rural free delivery, which has put the daily newspaper into the hands of the farmers and people living in outlying country villages all over the United States. It is a period coincident with the period of accomplishment in all lines of human endeavor in all climes and countries.

To go back to the early history of Polk County newspaperdom—not the earliest history by a few years—is to go back to my boyhood, and, with the aid of a halting memory, to recapture, so far as possible from the dim storehouse of things, half forgotten, the incidents connected with the propitious birth, the illustrious or inglorious career, and in many cases the untimely death, of Polk County newspapers.

Thirty years ago Polk County supported twenty-one newspapers. To-day there are but nine in the county, and twelve in the territory composing Polk County at that time, but now divided into the counties of Polk, Red Lake, and part of Pennington. The falling off in the number of papers is due to two main causes—the establishment of rural mail routes, and the loss of patronage derived from the publication of final proof and contest notices on Government Land.

LAND NOTICES PAID THE PIONEER PRINTERS.

In the early history of Polk County newspapers the final proof and contest notices were the chief, and in some cases practically the entire, support upon which the pioneer publisher leaned. Wherever there was a postoffice, and considerable quantities of Government land being proved up, there the intrepid editor, with a big case of nonpareil type for setting land notices, and a cigarbox full of long primer for setting the two or three inches of news and the editorial, pitched his tent, and began to accumulate a fortune.

Three dollars for final proof notices and five dollars for contest notices was the rate allowed by the Government. The notices had to be published in the paper nearest the land, so as to make no slashing of rates or dividing up with "the attorney in the case," which has taken many thousands of dollars in money which belonged to the newspapers and distributed the sum among the "poor and needy" in the legal profession.