CHAPTER XI.
THE SCHOOLS OF POLK COUNTY.

By N. A. THORSON.

MATERIAL BASIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLS.

The State school system embraces the schools of each individual county, and one cannot be considered without the other. In order to understand better why the schools in Polk County have developed thus, we need to call to mind some of the factors in education in Minnesota.

The Federal Government gave to the people of Minnesota certain tracts of land, the benefits from which were to go to the common schools, the University and other public institutions. No grants were made to normal schools. The people were given these lands in trust, and, as trustees of a great wealth, it was their duty to increase the same for the benefit of themselves and the generations yet unborn. No restrictions were placed upon the State as to the disposition and use of school lands, and as a result, through the wise planning of our early law-makers, we own a permanent school fund excelling that of every other state. Amounting to $3,191,042 in 1875, shortly after Polk County was organized, it had grown to $24,668,248 in 1914, and is now increasing at the rate of nearly a million dollars yearly. Sections 16 and 36 in every congressional township were designated as “school lands,” as the result of an act of Congress of 1849, when Minnesota was formed into a Territory. In 1851, by a similar act, grants for the State University were made. These were doubled in 1857.

To one man more than to any other perhaps, must be given credit for the satisfactory condition of our permanent school fund, and that man was Governor Alexander Ramsey. In Minnesota history he is styled, “the Father of the School Fund,” which title he justly earned in bringing before the people the question as to whether the school fund should be one with deferred other public institutions. No grants were made to blessings and administered along the sanest and safest normal schools. The people were given these lands lines, or if we should look for immediate benefits which in trust, and, as trustees of a great wealth, it was their duty to increase the same for the benefit of themselves and the generations yet unborn. No restrictions were placed upon the State as to the disposition and use of school lands, and as a result, through the wise planning of our early law-makers, we own a permanent school fund excelling that of every other state. Amounting to $3,191,042 in 1875, shortly after Polk County was organized, it had grown to $24,668,248 in 1914, and is now increasing at the rate of nearly a million dollars yearly. Sections 16 and 36 in every congressional township were designated as “school lands,” as the result of an act of Congress of 1849, when Minnesota was formed into a Territory. In 1851, by a similar act, grants for the State University were made. These were doubled in 1857.

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