CHAPTER XIV.
HISTORY OF AGRICULTURE IN POLK COUNTY.

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Polk County, Minnesota, is located in the heart of the Red River Valley of the North. When first established, it extended from the Red River on the west to Lake Itasca and the Mississippi River on the east. In 1866, all east of the line between ranges 38 and 39 was taken to form part of the new county of Beltrami. In 1881, Norman County was created by taking the four southern tiers of townships from the county of Polk, and, in 1897, the county of Red Lake was organized by taking twenty-four full and seven fractional townships in a somewhat irregular form from its northeastern part. Polk County, as it is today, is forty-six miles from east to west in its main part, and about thirty miles from north to south. It has several streams and in the eastern part there are innumerable lakes. The average elevation of the western half of the county is between 750 and 1,000 feet. The south half has an elevation of between 1,000 and 1,200 feet, while in the south-eastern corner, the elevation is between 1,250 and 1,500 feet.

EARLY GEOLOGICAL HISTORY.

The Kewatin ice sheet, advancing from the northwest and entering Minnesota through the Red River Valley, spread a gray drift over most of the western and southern parts of the State. This gray drift, derived in larger part from shale and limestone, has proved to be intensely fertile. Polk County is located on this gray drift area, and in that part of it that was covered by the ancient glacial Lake Agassiz. This lake was formed during the recession of the ice sheet. At its maximum development, it exceeded in size the five Great Lakes of today. The finest parts of the soil carried by the ice, or carried from the surrounding land were deposited towards the center of the lake where the water was deepest. This was the origin of the heavy clay soils which have made the Red River Valley one of the greatest grain growing regions in the world.

There are patches of sand and gravel in this area where glacial streams formerly reached the lake, and long ridges of sand, flanked on either side by sandy loam, which mark its early shore lines. In Polk County these shore lines cross through the center from north to south.

This glacial formation of the Red River Valley created a problem in securing adequate drainage, but a