CHAPTER VIII.

HISTORICAL ARTICLES OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT.


REMINISCENCES OF THE SETTLEMENT OF POLK COUNTY, BY ELIAS STEENERSON.

If the history of Polk County begins at the time when it became first occupied by actual and permanent settlers, it can be said to begin in June, 1871. It is true that W. C. Nash settled at East Grand Forks in 1870, but he belongs to the earliest pioneers of the Valley, having come here as a military man and mail carrier, contractor, and Indian trader, and, while we crown him as the oldest and earliest settler of Polk County, we shall date the real settlement of Polk County one year later.

It is also proper here to mention another name, that of the really celebrated French mixed blood, Pierre Bottineau, who was born in the Red River Valley, and as early as 1830 traveled over Polk County as trapper, scout, and messenger. After residing at various other points in Minnesota, he finally settled near Red Lake Falls, Polk County, in 1876. He was instrumental in bringing to Polk County a large number of French settlers, who established what was then known as the French Colony.

SOME FIRST ACTUAL SETTLERS.

Barring the exceptions stated, the first settlers of Polk County are, in the order named, the following: Levi Steenerson, Ole Estenson and family, Ole O. Estenson, Peter O. Estenson, Esten O. Estenson, Peter O. Setermoe, Ole Jevning, Tollif Ose, Knut Steenerson, Henry Simon, Paul Simon, Guilek Spokley, Salve Spokley, Tollef Tollefon, Jorgen Knutson, John Bremseth, Peter Jacobon, and John Sundet. This was in June, 1871; all were "squatters" on lands along the Red River, extending for a stretch of about twelve miles, and on both sides of Sand Hill River. The land was not surveyed, and each of the settlers had plenty of elbow room. They agreed among themselves as to boundaries, and each sought to secure a large proportion of timber, which stood in abundance along the river bank, the sheltered bends forming ideal building places.

TELEMARKEN AND OSTERDALEN.

These settlers constituted two groups or parties. Those settling south of Sand Hill River were acquaintances from Houston County, Minnesota; but most of them came originally from Telemarken, Norway. Those to the north of the Sand Hill were acquaintances from Freeborn County, Minnesota, and originally came from Osterdal, in Norway. The settlements became known among the Norwegians as Telemarken and Osterdal.

These settlers' chief occupation, for a number of years, was stock raising, both on their own account and on shares, or for pay from the Hudson's Bay Company. Agriculture was conducted on a compar-