

**A RANDOM HISTORICAL SKETCH  
OF MEEKER COUNTY,  
MINNESOTA: FROM ITS FIRST  
SETTLEMENT, TO JULY 4TH, 1876**

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A Random Historical Sketch of Meeker County, Minnesota: From Its First Settlement, to July 4th, 1876 by Abner Comstock Smith

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**ABNER COMSTOCK SMITH**

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ROY W. B.  
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RESPECTFULLY  
DEDICATED  
TO THE  
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,  
UNDER WHOSE ADVICE IT WAS PREPARED  
BY THE  
AUTHOR.

July 4th, 1878.



PREFACE.

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WHEREAS, A joint resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives was duly approved on the 13th day of March last, which resolution is as follows :

*Be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled :*

That it be, and is hereby recommended by the Senate and House of Representatives to the people of the several States, that they assemble in their several counties or towns, on the approaching Centennial anniversary of our national independence, and that they cause to have delivered on such day an historical sketch of said county or town from its formation, and that a copy of such sketch may be filed, in print or manuscript, in the clerk's office of said county, and an additional copy, in print

PREFACE.

or manuscript, be filed in the office of the Librarian of Congress, to the intent that a complete record may thus be obtained of the progress of our institutions during the first century of their existence.

And whereas, It is deemed proper that such recommendation be brought to the notice and knowledge of the people of the United States—

Now, therefore, I, Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States, do hereby declare and make known the same, in the hope that the object of the resolution may meet the approval of the people of the United States, and that proper steps may be taken to carry the same into effect.

Given under my hand at the city of Washington this 25th day of May, in the year of our Lord 1876, and of the Independence of the United States, the 100th.

U. S. GRANT.

By the President,  
HAMILTON FISH,  
Secretary of State.

## CHAPTER I.

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The region known as the "Big Prairie" west of the "Big Woods" has been known to white settlers but 21 years, and yet the twilight of uncertainty has already thrown its shadows, and the night of forgetfulness seems about to descend and forever obscure many little incidents which, although in detail seem of little consequence, yet all go to make up a readable history of any community.

The Centennial year of our great Republic seems to open up an opportunity, which the President of the United States recommended to our people to improve and place in permanent shape for preservation, the historical data of the various counties and towns of the Republic.



In a little while the venerable gentlemen who composed our first settlers will all be gathered to their fathers—"their children engrossed by the empty pleasures or insignificant transactions of the present age (or in the greedy pursuit of the almighty dollar,) will neglect to treasure up the recollections of the past and posterity will search in vain for memorials of the days of the Patriarchs" (Knickerbocker's History of New York.) Our history will be but a shadow, and the names of Ripley, Hall, Whitney, DeCoster, Campbell, Fitzgerald, Weymer, Salisbury, Dougherty, Atkinson, VanNess, Mitchell, Dorman, Taylor, Evans, Skinner, Jewett, Kennedy, Stevens, Harvey, Piper, Caswell, Angier, Willis, Dart, Whitcomb, King, Greenleaf, Branham, Fitch, Ball, Hoyt, Griswold, Grayson, Stanton, Robson, Richards, Gorton, Wakefield, Heath, Warren, Willie, Kruger, Ralston, Schultz and a score of others will soon be enveloped in doubt and fiction, like those of "Romulus and Remus of Charlemagne."

Prior to 1855 the country now embraced within the boundaries of Meeker and Kandiyohi counties, in the State of Minnesota, was occupied by those denizens of the forest known as the Sioux Indians. This is their old stamping ground. The Mississippi River was the dividing line between the Sioux and

Chippewas, and for centuries they are said to have nursed a deadly feud. The former heroes of this territory, the Sioux, were and still are, perhaps among the most powerful of the Indian tribes in the northwest. These, like all other tribes are gradually losing their prestige and compelled to leave their reservations granted at some prior period, in apparent good faith. Their fate is inevitable. The only practical law of what we call civilization is, that the inferior in prowess, yield to the superior race. The doctrine is cruel and inhuman, not to say "savage," but unavoidable and imperative. Crowd the Indian to the wall—wait a time for further decimation, then drive them into still narrower limits and so on, till the Indian canoe with its solitary occupant, disappears toward the setting sun, and is finally lost to sight and sense, and the life of one race, whose glory was to hunt and fish, gives place to another more powerful, but with as little regard to moral and intellectual attainment except so far as it is enforced by law falsely denominated the law of civilization. Statistics of the Indian war in Meeker county alone will justify what we say. The course and policy of the United States toward the Indian tribes, has ever resulted in peculation to the operators and death to the Indian, with no more prospect of civil-

ization or christianization to-day, than one hundred years ago. Government might quite as well enforce the practice of the "Oneida Institute" on the American people, as to drive christianity or civilization into the Indian in the manner it has sought to do for more than a century past.

The war-like Sioux—driven to the Rocky Mountains, are compelled to make their last fight (and no insignificant one at that,) for tribal existence.— In just one hundred years after the Declaration of our National Independence, the Government is engaged in the expensive, perplexing and perilous effort to drive the last nail in the coffin of American Pagan existence. It will ultimately succeed but at what cost time alone can determine.

We are beginning to realize the enormous contract we are pledged to fill. The strength, as well as the bravery of the Sioux, has been greatly misrepresented. They can certainly bring into the field 20,000 warriors, and twice as many troops will be required to thoroughly and quickly subdue them. With homes in the wilderness of the mountains and forests, strange to say they are better mounted for this country and purpose than the United States' Army backed with 500 millions of annual revenue and 40 millions of people. They are equally well armed and superior shots. Finally,