

Martin County's Twin Cities

The Twin Cities of Minneapolis/St. Paul together are a well known metropolitan area in Minnesota. However, Minneapolis and St. Paul are not the only Twin Cities of prominence in Minnesota. Martin County at one time also had Twin Cities, formerly known as Triumph and Monterey.

Trimont, located in northwest Martin County, was at one time comprised of the two communities of Triumph and Monterey. Minnesota State Highway 4 marked the boundary between the twin towns.

Triumph was platted in 1899 by the Western Town Lot Company and was initially to be called "Lamholt," but that name was rejected. Consequently, it was given its name, Triumph, by John Steen, one of the owners of the Triumph Creamery Company. However, another account stated that the village's first post office, named Triumph, was a result of a spirited discussion deciding upon its name. Bertram H. Wetzel pounded on the table and said, "We'll triumph yet!" Another said, "Triumph, that's the name." And so, Triumph was approved, Wetzel was appointed its first postmaster, and the village grew up around the post office.

Triumph was the home to the *Progress*, the local newspaper, in the early years. Monterey also had a newspaper called the *Memorandum*. The two newspapers were often at odds, and the *Memorandum* eventually ended closed. By 1906, the *Monterey News* came into existence and later the *Cedar Gleanings*, both of which also eventually closed. Ultimately, the *Progress* then became the newspaper of all of Trimont.

Monterey, also founded in 1899, was named for the city of Monterey, Mexico, by a railroad employee who seemed to have a keen interest in Spanish names. At that time, railroads were an important means of transportation in the United States and played a significant role in the development of this area.

The twin communities experienced a number of interesting events as they grew. Unlikely as it might seem, Monterey experienced two bank robberies, one in 1908 and another in 1939. One stormy night in April of 1908, John H. Arthur and Ralph "Sheeney" Holmes took some crowbars from the railroad in Monterey and used them to gain entrance to the Peoples State Bank in Monterey. Once inside the bank, they blew the door off the safe and made off with \$1,485.00 in gold and bills. They went back to the railroad, took the depot agent's handcar and headed south. At some point on their escape, they tore up some letters from Sheeney's girlfriend who lived in St. Paul dropping them near Sherburn. Consequently, Martin County Sheriff Ward found the

pieces of the letter that included the name “Mack” and a St. Paul address. Sheriff Ward and a Pinkerton Detective arrived in Mendota five minutes before Arthur got off the train and apprehended him. He was transported to the Martin County Jail, tried and pled guilty, and spent five years in Stillwater. A \$200.00 reward was posted for Sheeney, but he was never captured.

In December of 1939 a lone bandit entered Farmers State Bank in Monterey showing a note demanding money. After the robber was convinced he had all the money available, he escorted the two cashiers, Elmer F. Peterson and Robert Rippel, into the bank vault and slammed the door. However, a built-in safety device prevented the door from locking. They remained in the vault until they were certain the robber had left the bank. Alfred Peterson, the bank’s vice-president, was unaware of the robbery as he was in the back room. The bandit made off with \$696.50. With the identifications made by the two cashiers, the robber was eventually captured in 1940 in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

The twin cities of Triumph and Monterey have evolved over the years enduring many of the same hardships and obstacles faced by other small communities during the early development of Martin County. Uniquely for these twin communities, however, for years they had two city councils, two mayors, and two separate business districts. Although there was undoubtedly some competitive spirit between the two communities over the years, that was put aside in 1959 when the twin towns merged. Triumph and Monterey became one city known as Trimont on January 1, 1959.

Thus, with the merger of Triumph and Monterey in 1959, Minneapolis and St. Paul could give sole claim as “the” Twin Cities of Minnesota, no longer challenged by the Twin Cities of Martin County, Triumph and Monterey.

I would like to acknowledge the *Trimont, Minnesota Centennial* book © 1999 published by the Trimont, Minnesota Centennial Committee a major resource for this article.

For more information, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



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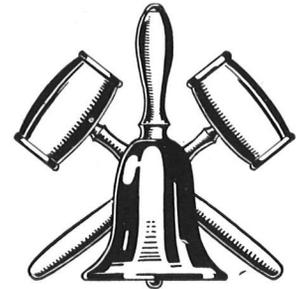
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