

Sherburn – A Bit of History

The city of Sherburn is typical of many small communities throughout the Midwest and America, yet its history is unique in its own right. Sherburn celebrated its centennial in 1979, and since its early development in the mid to late 1800s; it has evolved over time as a result of a multitude of factors that have influenced communities of all sizes.

Sherburn's geographic location in all probability dates back to the mid 1860s. At that time, George Archer had a sod tavern on the north banks of what was then Lake Manyaska located just south of Sherburn. Marked by a lone Cedar tree, pioneer travelers used it as a rest stop as they traveled from Fairmont to Jackson. Soon there were pioneer settlers and a post office. As stage coaches from Fairmont to Jackson and St. James to Estherville crossed the area, it was concluded that there was a definite need for a settlement.

The mid to late 1870s witnessed the arrival of many settlers to Martin County, primarily resulting from the growth of the railroad involving Winnebago City and Fairmont. A company called Cargill, Bassett, and Hunting from La Crosse, Wisconsin, anticipated the railroad expanding west of Fairmont and, consequently, bought land in the area. Since railroad engineers were at that time limited to a maximum of from twelve to fifteen miles between water stops, that was apparently the determining factor for the location of the Sherburn railroad station.

Several names were originally considered for the town site. Those suggested included Lone Cedar, Huntington, and Vestal. However, when the Southern Minnesota Railroad came through in October of 1878, the name Sherburne was accepted in honor of Sherburne S. Merrill, General Manager of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. Incidentally, the town of Merrill, Wisconsin, was also named for Sherburne S. Merrill. With the railroad's influence on the area, Sherburn's growth by 1879 had grown to fifteen buildings with a total value of approximately \$8,000.00.

Sherburn was not without its share of excitement in its formative years. It was the site of one of the first, and deadliest, bank robberies in Martin County's history. The Bank of Sherburn was robbed in October of 1896 by two brothers. They entered the bank and without warning shot and killed two people in the bank, one being an employee. The robbers made off on bicycles with cash estimated to be between \$1,000.00 and \$2,000.00. Apparently not particularly observant, they failed to notice \$2,000.00 in gold and silver that remained in the till. Following their escape on bicycles, they were quickly pursued by Martin County Sheriff Hill, his deputies, and a posse of local citizens. One of the robbers was soon located at a farmhouse fourteen miles east of Elmore. Although surprised by the posse, he managed to fatally shoot Bancroft, Iowa, Sheriff William Gallion. The robber, in spite of being wounded, once more attempted an escape on his bicycle. However, as his escape appeared fruitless, and surrendering was apparently not in the cards, he put his weapon to

his head and killed himself. The second robber was soon captured without incident in Lake Mills, Iowa. He confessed to the crime of robbery, but placed the blame for the murders of the two people in the Bank of Sherburn on his brother.

In 1920 several Sherburn businessmen organized the Fox Lake Park Company issuing and selling stock to those interested in the development of the area. Much of the land along the lake was platted into lots, a dance pavilion was built, and playground equipment and picnic tables were purchased. In addition, a bath house, a diving tower a toboggan slide, and fishing piers were also constructed. Later, a tennis court and a baseball diamond, including grandstands, were added.

Then, in 1932, the Fox Lake Golf Club was organized by ten businessmen. It started as a three hole course, expanded to six holes, and finally became a nine hole course. However, the Fox Lake Park Company was eventually liquidated in 1944, and the dance pavilion and park area not owned by individuals was sold. The Fox Lake Golf Club purchased the land where the golf course was located.

Sherburn's history includes a dream that all communities share, but most fail to accomplish. That dream, winning a Minnesota state high school basketball championship, was accomplished by the 1970 Sherburn Raiders high school basketball team during a time when only one state basketball champion was crowned. That team, coached by Dennis Christopherson, breezed through the regular season undefeated. Selected as the number one seed in District V, they defeated Fairmont, Delavan, and finally Wells for the championship. They then defeated Luverne and Jackson in Region II to reach the state tournament. In the state tournament, they first defeated Melrose 65-54, and then Marshall 71-60 to advance to the championship game. They would face heavily favored South St. Paul, a team that had been rated number one throughout most of the season. The Raiders, although much maligned by the Twin Cities media as being "hicks," went on to defeat the South St. Paul Packers by a convincing score of 78-62. This David and Goliath chapter in Sherburn's history was culminated by a humbled Governor Harold Levander, ironically a South St. Paul resident, presenting the state championship trophy to the entire Sherburn team. What followed were parades and praise for the champs as they returned to their jubilant hometown of Sherburn.

I would like to acknowledge the 1979 Sherburn centennial book, "*A Centennial History of Sherburn*" as the primary resource for this article.

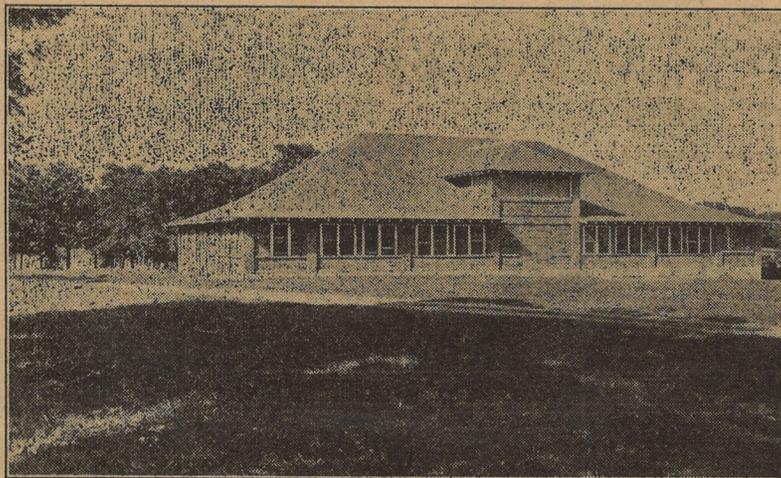
Visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont to learn more about the history of Martin County.

JULY 4th. CELEBRATION Fox Lake Park

SHERBURN - - - MINNESOTA

FREE ADMISSION TO PARK
MOUNTAIN LAKE CONCERT BAND AFTERNOON AND EVENING

DANCING---Afternoon and Evening



Today's Most Popular Pavilion.

BALL GAME

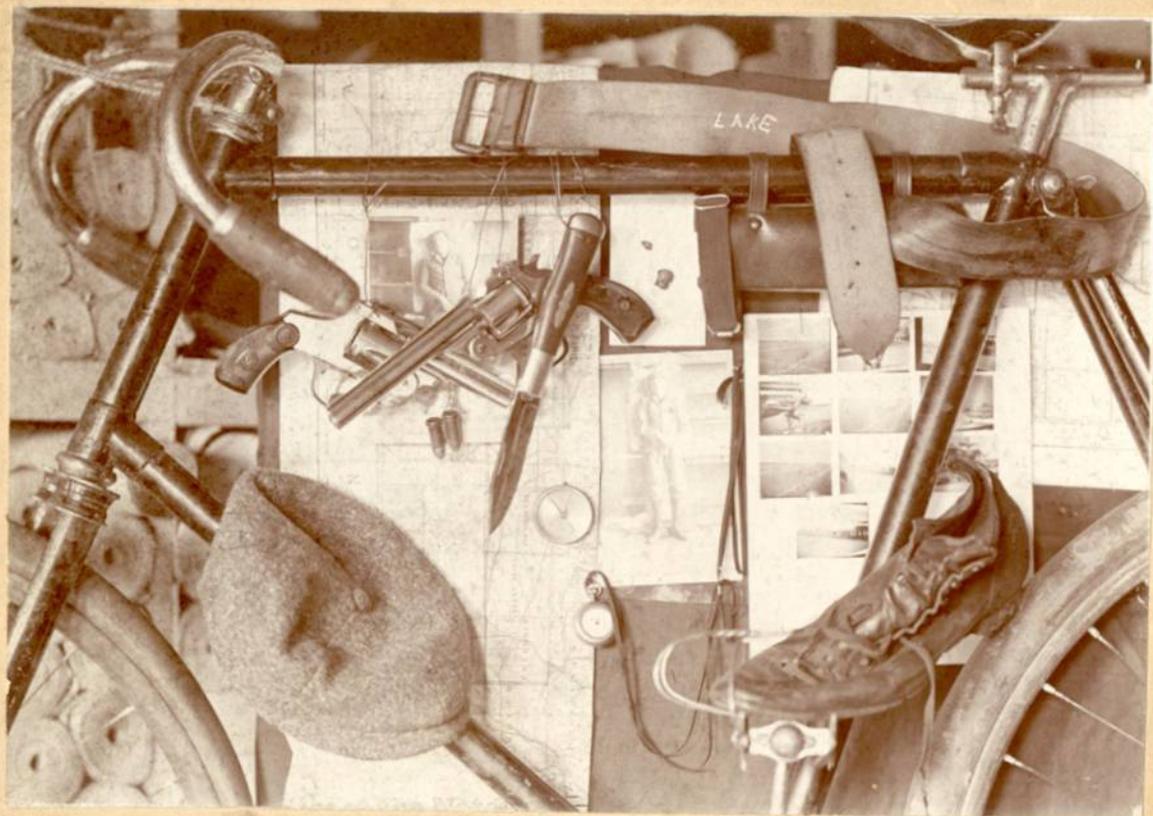
SHERBURN vs. ST. PAUL ATHLETICS

GAMES - RIDES - SHOWS - BATHING - BOATING - FISHING

BRING YOUR LUNCH AND SPEND THE DAY

FIREWORKS IN THE EVENING

1924



Relics of the Notorious Sherburn Bank Robbers.



SHERBURNE MINN SENIOR CLASS 1929-1930

