

What is the “Day Farm?”

What is today commonly referred to as the “Day Farm,” located on the west side of Lake Sisseton, dates back in local history to the time when Indians roamed the land and prairie fires were all too common. The “Day Farm” is the parcel of land where the bike trail and Heritage Acres are located; however, it is noteworthy to be aware of the fact that it was originally homesteaded by Reuben Ward, brother of Albert Ward, in 1867. It was eventually passed on to his daughter, Emma B. Day, when Ward passed away, so that her future might be secured. Apparently, his other children, Bertha and Beecher, were financially secure at that time.

The original Reuben Ward homestead extended as far north as the Lakeside Cemetery. However, eventually the railroad and highway took the northern portion of the farm. The Reuben Ward’s first home was a combination sod and log cabin located near the northeast corner of the farm. Ward also kept a boat on the lakeshore nearby so that his wife and children could row across Lake Sisseton to seek shelter at Fort Fairmount in the event of Indian uprisings or prairie fires.

Ward came to Martin County from New York State traveling by water, train, and covered wagon. After establishing his homestead, his wife and children arrived meeting Reuben at Winnebago City. They then proceeded to the homestead in Fairmont by horse and wagon. The family faced many hardships in those early days in Martin County. There were the harsh winters, the scorching summer heat, the fear of Indians, and the prairie fires.

Reuben, and his brother Albert, were both interested in acquiring land and worked together for a period of time. Albert was an attorney and became affiliated with the Martin County Bank, and Reuben was in the mercantile business. Eventually, however, it appears that their friendship wavered and each went his separate way.

Ward’s parents followed Reuben, and his brother Albert, from New York State to Martin County. They lived at the home of Mr. & Mrs. Charles Gamble, Mrs. Gamble being a sister of Reuben and Albert.

Reuben Ward was truly an entrepreneur in the early history of our county, and eventually became quite wealthy. He initially started a small store, which was later occupied in part by Dr. Fred Hunt. In a short time, Ward built a one room home in the back of the store. He then started what was to become the very well known “Ward & Cadwell Store.” Shortly thereafter, he built a larger home for his family. This was subsequently purchased by Dr. Roscoe Hunt, who then built the Lakeview Clinic and Hospital nearby and to the south. On a philanthropic note, he also gave the Congregational Church the necessary land so that they could build a church.

How did the Reuben Ward homestead become widely known as the “Day Farm?” An article in the January 6, 1965, edition of the *Sentinel*, gives an account of the city of Fairmont purchasing the 168 acres on the west side of Lake Sisseton from Mrs. Majel

Habberstad of Minneapolis and Miss Doris Day of Los Angeles, the two daughters of Burt and Emma Day. In attempting to trace the lineage, it appears that Burt Day was the brother of Sentinel Founder Frank Day, and Emma Day was the daughter of Reuben and Mary Ward. Majel Habberstad and Doris Day were the daughters of Burt and Emma Day, and the granddaughters of Reuben and Mary Ward. Consequently, although this parcel of land was originally the Reuben Ward homestead, the Day name was apparently applied through marriage and has subsequently remained ever since.

Reuben Ward passed away in 1891 at the age of 55. In his obituary, printed in the April 17, 1891, edition of the *Martin County Sentinel*, the column read: "Martin County's Greatest Loss." Ward was obviously a well respected citizen of the early days of Martin County. He was known not only as a successful businessman, but also a former state senator, a man of integrity, a civic minded citizen, and a man loved and cherished by his family.

Although widely known and today most commonly referred to as the "Day Farm," local history notes that it was originally homesteaded in the name of Reuben Ward. Does it matter that this land is known as the "Day Farm" and not, shall we say, the "Ward Farm?" To most people, it is probably of little or no significance. However, in fairness to those concerned from the past, it should probably be remembered that the "Day Farm" was originally homesteaded by Reuben Ward in the 1860's.

For more information on this topic, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont which served as the source for this article.

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