

9-20-1887  
1887-1888

LORE OF OLD.

Interesting Things That Few Persons Know.

**CHIPPEWA COUNTY WAS A WHOLE.**

It Took in St. Paul, Minneapolis and a Vast Section.

**FIXING NATIONAL BOUNDARIES.**

Prolonged Disagreement About Sugar Island and Nebish Island-C.H. Chapman Delves in the Dust at Lansing and Finds Much of Rare Interest Which He Tells Well.

(Special Correspondence of THE NEWS)

LANSING, Mich., Feb. 23, 1893,-To an historical student the secretary of state's office contains much that is of great interest. A search through the vaults and dustcovered documents has revealed some of the early history of Chippewa county and an insight to the complications which arose in determining the boundary line in the St. Mary's river and Lake Superior. The organization of Chippewa county was legalized many years before the boundary questions were settled. The county was laid out by the legislative council, of the territory of Michigan, on the 22d day of December, 1826, to consist of the following territory: All the tract of country to which the Indian title had been extinguished, beginning on the north side of Lake Huron, at Isle St. Vital, a small island due south and nearly 18 miles east of Sault Ste. Marie; running thence due north until it strikes a river which falls into the northwest part of Muddy Lake of the River Sainte Marie; thence up said river to its source, thence west to the Meristic river of Lake Michigan; thence up said river to the parallel of north latitude 46 degrees 32'; thence due west to the Mississippi river; thence up said river to its source, thence north to the boundary line of the United States, and with that line returning through Lake Superior to the mouth of the River Sainte Marie and thence southwest to the place of beginning.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1843, the boundaries of the county were established as follows: Beginning at a point on a line between ranges twelve and thirteen west where such line is intersected by the north boundary of township forty-five, thence north to Lake Superior, thence east and south along the margin of said lake and the west banks of St. Mary's river to Lake Huron, thence west to the point in said lake south of the line between ranges two and three east, thence north and west along the boundary of Michilemackinac county to the place of beginning: together with the islands in the St. Mary's river including Drummond and Sugar Islands. This last clause was added owing to the settlement about this time of the boundary question in St. Mary's River.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 1875, the boundary lines between Chippewa and Mackinac counties were established as they exist at the present time.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> day of March, 1887, Chippewa was reduced by the organization of Luce county.

## TOWNSHIP ORGANIZATIONS

The next in line of local interest is the organization of the various townships. The documents here disclose the history of Ste. Marie township to be nearly as old as that of the county itself, with less than four months intervening between the organizations. Ste. Marie township did not cover all of the territory then contained within the county of Chippewa, as is commonly supposed, and the exact date of its organization by the legislative council of Michigan, was April 12, 1827?, and its boundary limits were all that district of country within the county of Chippewa, to which the Indian title had been extinguished and contained within the following lines: Commencing at the Nebish rapids and a due west course until it would intersect a line drawn due south from Point Iroquois, of Lake Superior, thence due north with that line until it would intersect the national boundary, and returning with said line down the Ste. Marie's river. The east boundary line, of this township, from the head of the Little Rapids to the Nebish was unknown for many years after the township was created, owing to the claims of England that St. George, now Sugar Island, belonged to British possessions.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> day of March, 1847, four years after the reorganization of Chippewa, St. Mary's township was organized and covered the entire county of Chippewa. Again on the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, 1848, the township was reorganized under the name Ste. Marie, embracing the entire county. The legal name of this township has remained unchanged to the present time, although its territory has been greatly reduced; the organization of all the townships in Chippewa county with but three exceptions has reduced the territory of Ste. Marie township. The next township to be organized in the county was that of Warner, now Detour, the date of which is March 28, 1850. The name was changed from Warner to Detour April 10, 1877. Sugar Island township was organized at the same time as Warner township, March 28, 1850. The organizations of all the other townships in the county are of more recent dates. Superior township was born January 4, 1881; Pickford township, December 29, 1882; Bruce township, July 2, 1888, Whitefish and Trout Lake townships, October 1888; and Raber township organized October, 1892.

The township of Ste. Marie was also reduced by the organization of McMillan township now in Luce county, March 21, 1883, again in 1887 by the organization of Luce county. The territory was also reduced June 22, 1887, by the organization of the city of Sault Ste. Marie.

## THE VILLAGE AND CITY ORGANIZATIONS

Another local interesting historical point is our village and city organizations. While the history of the organization and chartering of the city of Sault Ste. Marie is familiar to nearly all of its present inhabitants, it is not so with the village organizations. The first village organization at the beautiful falls of the St. Mary's was incorporated by the legislature on the 2d day of April, 1849, and its corporate name was the "Village of St. Mary." The following were the boundary lines described in the first charter: Commencing at the northeast corner of the military reserve, held by the United States, at a point where it touches the St. Mary; thence south one mile; thence due west two miles, thence due north one mile to said river St. Mary; and thence easterly following the meanderings of the same to the place of

beginning. This village organization remained in force and effect for nearly two years, but the charter was repealed by the legislature March 11, 1851. From this date down to May 29, 1879, the local affairs were administered and controlled as a township organization only. On the last named date the legislature incorporated the village of Sault Ste. Marie which embraced all of fractional sections 4, 5, and 6 and the north half of sections 7 and 8 and the northwest quarter of section 9, in township 47 north of range 1 east; also all of fractional section 1 in town 47 north range 1 west. April 9, 1877, the village charter was amended by enlarging the powers of the village council. There were no changes in the boundary lines.

#### THE CITY OF SAULT STE. MARIE

was incorporated on the 22d day of June 1887, and its excellent charter was the result of several months study on the part of Attorney H.M. Oren, who was, at that time the village attorney and the first city attorney under the new charter. The territorial limits remain the same as were first established. All of the islands of the Little Rapids are within the city boundary, with a single exception, viz: Pleasant Park Island is without the limits of the city. April 18, 1889, the charter was amended, but no change was made in the boundary line.

#### THE BOUNDARY LINE CONTROVERSY.

For 31 years before the treaty of Ghent, the treaty of 1783 had been a subject of contemplation and discussion, particularly that part of it relating to the northern boundary. The treaty of Ghent was concluded on the 24<sup>th</sup> day of December, 1814; and the sixth and seventh articles of this treaty provided for a joint commission of the United States and of his Britannic Majesty, to ascertain and fix a certain portion of the boundary line between the dominions of the two contracting parties lying in North America, and to decide upon the possession of the several islands situated in the lakes, rivers and water communications, through which the said boundary passed, in conformity with the intent of the treaty of 1783. Peter B. Porter, of New York, was appointed commissioner on the part of the United States, and Anthony Barclay, of England, was appointed commissioner for his Britannic Majesty. The commissioners completed the work for which they were appointed with but two exceptions. At a meeting of the commissioners in the city of New York October 23, 1826, they agreed to disagree relative to the establishment of the boundary line in a portion of the St. Mary's river, and a portion of the boundary line in Lake Superior and for some distance west of the lake. In the treaty of 1783 the subject of islands is not mentioned, and the treaty of Ghent merely provided that the commissioners should decide and declare to which of the parties the islands respectively belonged. The Manitoulin Islands went to England, Drummond Island to the United States, St. Joseph Island to Great Britain and Island St. Tammany (now Nebish Island) was awarded without dispute to the United States. But when the commissioners reached the diverging channels at the head of Nebish Island, the American commissioner claimed that St. Tammany or Nebish and St. George or Sugar Islands should be counted as one island, giving his reasons therefor that the navigable channel ran to the east of Sugar Island and the water course between Nebish and Sugar Islands was so shallow that nothing but canoes and bateaux could

pass through. The English commissioner was determined that the boundary line should pass up through Hay Lake, or to the west of Sugar Island, giving this island to his Britannic Majesty. Several days were spent in trying to arrive at an agreement. Drummond and Manitoulin Islands having been disposed of by the commissioners and were considered by them to be in Lake Huron, the American commissioner contended that St. Joseph's Island, having 141 9-16 square miles or 90, 816 acres, was already much greater in extent than St. George and St. Tammany combined. St. George or Sugar Island, containing 40 5-10 square miles or 25,920 acres, and Isle St. Tammany or Nebish 15 8-10 square miles or 10,164 acres, still left a balance of 50,732 acres in favor of Great Britain after awarding St. George or Sugar Island to the United States. No argument could move the English commissioner. After a number of days of fruitless efforts to agree, a witness monument or monuments were erected, one on the U.S. main shore, opposite the northern point of Island Tammany, marked A. on the chart and two monuments were erected on the extreme lower end of St. George or Sugar Island marked B. and C. and the fourth monument was erected on the opposite Canadian main shore, and marked D. The commissioners then proceeded to Little Rapids, where three more monuments were erected: One on the extreme easterly point of land on the U.S. main shore; one due east on Sugar Island and one on the Canadian main shore due north from that point. These three monuments were designated as E. F. and G. and the survey was continued up midstream from this point. Thus Sugar Island was left as disputed territory until after the treaty of Washington in 1840, when Daniel Webster, acting for this government, and Lord Ashburton for England, settled the dispute with very little argument. Mr. Webster soon convinced his lordship that England already had more than she was entitled to.

The second instance of the disagreement of the commissioners is not of as much local importance historically, but makes interesting reading. The American commissioner contending for the line as finally established by Webster and Ashburton, while the British commissioner was determined to take a southwesterly course from the north of Isle Royale and enter the mouth of the St. Louis river, where Duluth now stands. This line would have been in direct violation of the treaty of Paris. All of the early maps exhibited in connection with this testimony, show the existence of Isle Royale to be near its proper location but an island equally as large in extent is shown, as it was at that time supposed to exist, near the center of Lake Superior or about 40 miles southeast of Isle Royale. This large mythical island was designated as Isle Phillipeaux on many of the maps; on others as Isle St. Phillips and upon others as Minong Island. The maps shown are all of dates from 1755 to 1791.

Very Truly Yours,

C.H. CHAPMAN.