

THE BUILDING OF THE ROCK COUNTY COURT HOUSE

The building of Rock county's court house was also an occurrence of 1888, agitation for its construction having been begun in early in 1887. For years the little shack that had served as a county building had been unsuited for the purpose and an eyesore,¹ but the sentiment of the country precincts had been uniformly against the expenditure of money to remedy conditions.

The initiative was taken by residents of the county seat at a meeting held at Kniss Brothers' office February 19, 1887 [in Luverne]. At that meeting it was decided to draft a bill to be introduced in the legislature asking for authority to issue bonds to an amount of \$75,000. For the purpose of drawing up the bill a committee composed of A. M. Crosby, A. Barck and R. B. Hinkly was appointed, and for the purpose of placing the matter before the voters a committee composed of J. B. Shawver, W. P. Preston, J. C. Kelley, R. B. Moreland and George B. Brace. At once it became apparent that the people of Rock county would not ratify the proposition to expend so great a sum, and another meeting was held February 21, at which the amount of bonds to be incorporated in the bill was placed at \$50,000. Even at the lower figure, opposition developed, which, however, did not extend to fighting the bill in the legislature, and the act was passed.

The failure of the county seat removal scheme the year before still rankled in the breasts of the people of Beaver Creek and vicinity,²

¹ "The county building is full of business these days. Almost every available foot of space is occupied with desks and tables and with all the county officials crowded into one room and people coming in and going out constantly one can easily imagine what a pleasant place it is to do business. The county officials manage to get along and do their work under the present disadvantages, but the time is not far distant when it will be absolutely impossible to do the county business in the old rookery now used or county offices."—Rock County Herald. January 28, 1887.

² At a mass meeting held at White's hall, in Beaver Creek, March 5, 1887, the following resolution was adopted:

and it became known that bonds to the amount of \$50,000 would not be authorized by the voters. Therefore it was decided to again reduce the amount asked. A mass meeting of Rock county citizens, attended by more than 300 taxpayers, was held at Luverne May 7, when the following petition form was adopted without a dissenting vote:

To the Board of County Commissioners of Rock County, Minnesota:

We, the citizens of Rock county, each village and township therein being represented, assembled in mass convention, do this May 7, 1887, resolve as follows:

First: That we are in favor of building a court house at the county seat of said county at the earliest time possible.

Second: That the structure be built of Rock county granite.

Third: That the expense thereof shall not exceed thirty thousand dollars.

Fourth: That the board of county commissioners shall take all necessary steps at once to bring the matter to a vote of the people.

The petition, quite liberally signed, was presented to the board of county commissioners, and on May 16 that body passed a resolution, calling a special election for June 18 to vote on the question of issuing \$30,000 bonds for the erection of a court house, jail and sheriff's residence. At the election bonds were voted, the result by precincts being as follows:

“WHEREAS: The benefits accruing to the citizens of Luverne by the building by the county at large, of such court house and jail, would, in our opinion, be such that they could well afford to stand the larger portion of such expense incurred thereby, therefore be it

“RESOLVED: That we will use our best efforts to secure a vote to bond the county for \$20,000, upon the condition that the village of Luverne will donate \$20,000 more and build a court house worth \$40,000.”

PRECINTS	For Bonds	Against Bonds
Battle Plain	7	13
Beaver Creek Township	10	47
Beaver Creek Village	15	27
Clinton	22	14
Denver	14	8
Kanaranzi	9	10
Luverne Township	55	1
Luverne Village	319	0
Magnolia	21	8
Martin	5	61
Mound	27	1
Rose Dell	12	15
Springwater	17	19
Vienna	23	1
TOTAL	556	225

The county commissioners took prompt action to carry out the expressed will of the people. On June 24 the bonds were advertised for sale. T. D. Allen was selected as the architect, and the plans he submitted were accepted June 12. The contract for the erection of the building, of Luverne granite, was let to A. Tollefson on a bid of \$23,500 on August 11, 1887. P. H. Gillham was appointed superintendent of construction August 23, and two days later ground was broken for the new building. The structure was turned over to the county August 4, 1888, and accepted by the commissioners on that date, conditional upon the performance of certain specified work,³ and early in October the building was occupied by the county officers. The old court house was sold on a bid of \$75, in cash!

³ A final settlement was made in the district court in March, 1890. The contractor brought suit for nearly \$4000, alleged to be due for extras, changes in plans and delays caused by the county board; the county set up a counter claim of \$6000 for alleged defects in the work. The case was dismissed without recovery by either party to the suit. ■

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[This account of the building of the Rock County courthouse is taken from Arthur P. Rose's *An Illustrated History of the Counties of Rock and Pipestone, Minnesota* 111-12 (1911). It is complete, though reformatted. The footnotes are renumbered.]