

BUILDING A COURTHOUSE
IN
YELLOW MEDICINE COUNTY,
MINNESOTA

The following is taken from Carl and Amy Narvestad's *A History of Yellow Medicine County, Minnesota, 1872-1972* 49 (Yellow Medicine County Historical Society, 1972). The legislature established the county on March 6, 1871. The Sixteenth Legislature changed the county seat from Yellow Medicine City to Granite Falls, subject to approval of the voters. 1874 Sp. Laws, ch. 72, at pp. 293-94 (effective March 9, 1874).

Building a Court House

In November 1872 the first elected officials of the county were chosen: J. A. White, H. S. Berg and Ole J. Dahly commissioners; N. T. Hoxsie auditor, C. Bordewick treasurer, Ole Joel sheriff and P. J. Smoot clerk court.

The county seat was still in Yellow Medicine City, but no courthouse had been built by the spring of 1873. John Winter, owner of the townsite, had offered a block of land for the grounds, and Gorham Powers and others had agreed to erect a courthouse. The population of the city was only about 40, and no doubt it was difficult to raise money for the construction. The time for building was extended to November 15, 1873, and still no move had been made to construct the building.

That winter Henry Hill, proprietor of the Granite Falls townsite and member of the Minnesota legislature from Chippewa county, called a meeting of a few prominent Granite Falls men revealing his plan to introduce a bill in the legislature for the removal of the county seat from Yellow Medicine City to Granite Falls. He further agreed to donate a courthouse site and requested his fellow townsmen to raise money to erect a courthouse to present to the county.

A stock company was organized to finance the construction and after some pressuring enough money was obtained to erect the building. The lumber was purchased at Willmar for \$29 per thousand feet; hauling cost an additional \$9 per thousand board feet. The necessary labor was donated and before the spring of 1874 a building housing a courtroom and three small offices was completed on the site of the present jail at 395 Ninth Avenue.

Henry Hill's bill to effect the county seat change from Yellow Medicine City to Granite Falls passed the legislature in February and was signed by governor C. K. Davis on March 9, 1874. Had Horace Austin still been governor it is questionable if he would have signed the bill for he was co-owner of the Minnesota Falls townsite which was still interested in being county seat. ■

