Early History of Martin County and Fairmont

Martin County was part of the Louisiana, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota Territories between 1805 and 1858. It was actually established before Minnesota became a state on May 23, 1857, taking portions of Brown County and Faribault County.

According to William Budd, the county was most likely named for Henry Martin of Wallingford, Connecticut.

The first settlers in the county were Calvin Tuttle and one Mr. Rickey. They came in March of 1856, and built the first house on Center Chain of Lakes. The first post office opened in 1858 with William Budd as postmaster. Lorraine Swearingen taught the first school in 1860. Dr. Orville Chubb built his home at 209 Lake Avenue in Fairmont, now known as the Chubb House, and Frank Day founded the Martin County Sentinel in 1874.

The early settlers in Martin County were primarily of English origin. In 1872, H. F. Shearman, a Connecticut lawyer, went on a hunting trip to Martin County. Being very impressed with the economic potential of the area, he purchased land near Fairmont and developed it into a model farm. He then went back to England and influenced many Englishmen, some quite wealthy, to invest in Martin County. This became the "English Colony," or "Bean Colony," as they planned to become wealthy raising beans. They arrived in the spring of 1873 and planted approximately 1,000 to 1,200 acres of beans around Fairmont in Tenhassen and Rolling Green Townships.

The city of Fairmont was platted in October of 1857 by the Des Moines and Watertown Land Company, who also named the town for the rolling hills surrounding the adjacent lakes. The original name was Fair Mount, but this was later changed to Fairmont.

The first permanent settlers, in what is now the City of Fairmont, were E. Banks Hall and William H. Budd. In June of 1857, Budd and Hall built their homes on the lakes that still bear their names. Mr. Budd recorded the fact that in January of 1857, twenty men, nine women, and twenty-three children lived in the Fairmont area.

Fort Fairmount was established in 1862, shortly after the start of the Dakota (Sioux) Indian uprising which terrified settlers throughout southern Minnesota. With the end of the Civil war and the subsiding of Indian troubles, Fort Fairmount was abandoned. The site is now marked by a plaque attached to a large native stone near the present court house.

The railroads initially brought prosperity to the area in those early days. Fairmont and Martin County enjoy a broad trade area and have experienced prosperity over the years and into the present time. Fairmont and Martin County celebrated their Sesquicentennial in 2007.