

## The Jackson Road

Today's travelers, whether for business or pleasure, have countless options in terms of routes to consider in reaching their destinations. Travel decisions can be based upon the quickest, the shortest, the least congested, or the most scenic, and those decisions are frequently determined by GPS navigation devices. However, in the 1850s travel options were not that abundant and were determined by considerably different aspects, and GPS was not an option.

The 1850s in Martin County saw the development of a highway that at that time could arguably rival today's Interstate-90 in terms of importance to the region. That highway was called the "Jackson Road," however, it in no way physically resembled I-90. It was established and marked by the government as the official route to the settlement on the Des Moines River called Springfield, whose name was later changed to Jackson. The "Jackson Road" stretched from Winnebago near the Blue Earth River to Jackson near the Des Moines River. Although perhaps similar to today's I-90 in terms of regional importance, it was very definitely a much different kind of thoroughfare than what the modern highway systems offer today.

The "Jackson Road" served many purposes. It was used by stagecoaches to carry mail to the post offices along the way in making their weekly trips. Those post offices being served at one time included Waverly, Westford, Horicon, North Star, Monroe, and Cedarville in Martin County. This route was also used by soldiers carrying supplies on wagon trains, settlers with ox drawn wagons, trappers, fur traders, and even Native Americans.

The exact course of the "Jackson Road" was out of necessity quite fluid as it ran without regard to section lines or borders and was influenced by other factors as well. It would generally follow the path of least resistance in terms of circumstances encountered such as terrain, rainfall, and mode of travel being utilized. Low lying areas were frequently avoided due to flooding and the exact path would also change as a result of rural post offices relocating.

This "self-styled" highway of the 1850s undoubtedly saw thousands of hardy pioneers traveling west in search of a better tomorrow. Although called the "Jackson Road," as indicated on the map from *"Martin County Postmasters and Post Offices"* authored by Judge Julius E. Haycraft, there was more than one account as to its actual path. Its exact path undoubtedly varied greatly as a result of many diverse changes throughout the course of its existence. However, even though the exact path may have changed

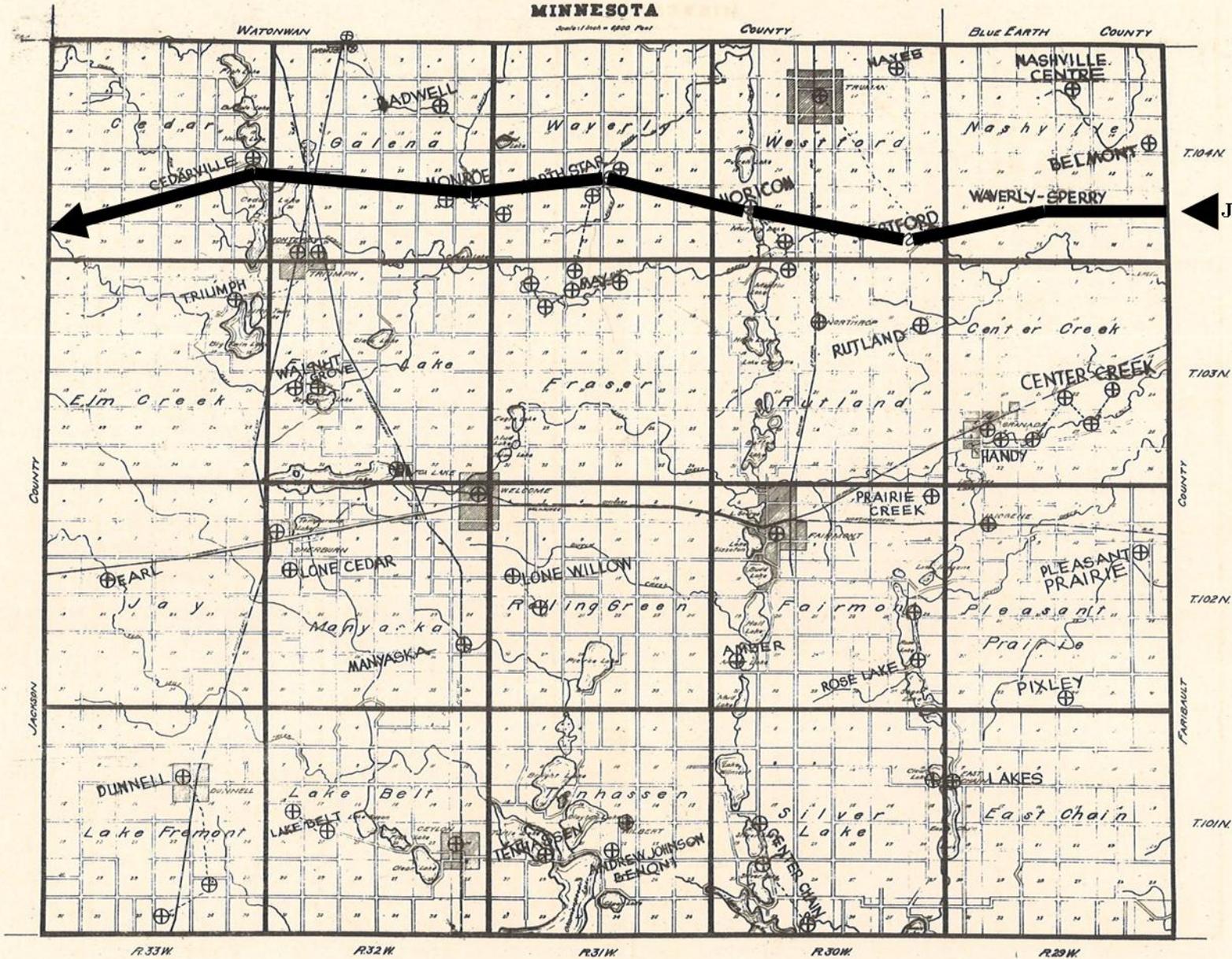
from time to time, it served many pioneers of that era in their journey west whether they were travelers, trappers, or soldiers.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

# MARTIN COUNTY

MINNESOTA

Scale 1 inch = 6000 Feet



← Jackson Road

STATE OF IOWA