

William Hampton Budd - - Pioneer, Soldier and Community Builder

William H. Budd was one of the original settlers in Martin County and Fairmont. Mr. Budd was known as a community builder who not only made his home here, but also persuaded others to do the same. His home was located near the corner of Albion Avenue and Woodland Avenue, referred to as Budd hill. Budd Lake, Budd Street, and Budd School were eventually named in his honor.

William Hampton Budd was born March 28, 1829, in Mt. Olive, New Jersey. Having merely attended what was then known as common school, he enhanced his education with a great deal of reading and study whenever possible.

At the age of 21, he moved to Dodge County, Wisconsin. As early as 1851, he visited much of the new state of western Wisconsin, as well as northern Iowa. At that time there were very few settlers and houses were spread as far as ten to twenty miles apart. Prior to becoming a permanent resident of Martin County in 1856, he also traveled over much of Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, and Illinois.

He initially located in Mankato when there were but seven primitive houses there and did carpenter work. Later, in the early part of 1856, Mr. Budd served as the assistant overseer of the Winnebago Indian Agency which was near Mankato. In July of that year, he came to Martin County to assist families in securing locations in the county. He traveled the entire distance to Martin County on foot. Upon arriving, he also decided to purchase a squatter's right for \$50.00 to a claim that was to be in the city of Fairmont. He built his cabin at 705 Albion Avenue, located near the intersection of Woodland and Albion Avenues. In addition, he acted as a scout or guide to various groups who arrived in the area looking for a place to settle. At that time, Martin County was a part of Brown County and Minnesota was not yet a state.

When Martin County was organized in 1857, Mr. Budd was appointed as one of the first County Commissioners. He was also the first postmaster of Fairmont, which was designated as the county seat, and also served as clerk

of court. He was very prominent in social, civic, and political affairs as the city of Fairmont developed.

In 1862, the great Indian massacre concerned many early Minnesota settlers and settlements. Mr. Budd, who had previously taken part in the defense of settlements in Jackson and Martin Counties during the time of the Spirit Lake massacre, enlisted in the Winnebago City Home Guards. However, they never came into conflict with the hostile tribe.

In early 1864, when troops were still stationed at Fort Fairmount, a call came for men to enlist in the Union Army. Mr. Budd enlisted in Company C, Sixth Minnesota Infantry. However, before leaving, he married Lydia Jane Swearingen-Allen, a widow. The wedding was a large military celebration that was attended by more military than civilian guests. At the conclusion of the wedding, the soldiers fired a military salute. Budd felt it an honor that this was evidently the first and only wedding in the county to be attended by a military parade accompanied with the good will of the soldiers as well as a military salute. Mrs. Budd had two daughters from her previous marriage, and she and Mr. Budd also had two daughters.

In 1897, Mr. Budd compiled and published a book, *Martin County Before 1880*, about the early history of Martin County based upon his personal experiences. This is no doubt one of his greatest contributions to our county. In addition, the many positions of trust in which he served Martin County in the formative years of its development are a testimony to his honesty and integrity. He passed away on November 3, 1915, in Santa Ana, California, at the age of 86.

For more information about W. H. Budd, visit the Pioneer Museum.

By
Lenny Tvedten
Executive Director
Martin County Historical Society

SOURCES:

1. Fairmont History 1850-1900
2. Martin County Before 1880 9HF 191)
3. July-December 1915 Martin Co. Sentinel, Nov. 19, 1915, obituary.

