1849–1999
DAKOTA COUNTY
150 YEARS OF HISTORY

Dakota County, Official Highway Map 1999 - 2000

Dakota COUNTY *1849*

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Cantonment New Hope Site
A stockade fort built in 1819 by Col. Leavenworth near Mendota, today's Picnic Island, to assemble materials for Fort Snelling.

Sibley House
Built in 1835 by Henry Hastings Sibley in Mendota. Sibley hosted many famous Indians, explorers, and makers of Minnesota. Now a centerpiece of today's historic Sibley properties. NR, MHS marker

Faribault House
Jean Baptiste Faribault, fur trader, farmer for Fort Snelling, and in 1820 first settler of Mendota and Dakota County. NR

PK Pilot Knob
Sacred Indian site selected by Dakotas for signing the Treaty of 1851 which opened Dakota County to settlement. Name refers to landmark for river navigation.

St. Peter's Church
Minnesota's oldest church in continuous use. Founded by Father Galtier in 1842 in a log cabin. Current stone church built in 1853 by Father Ravoux. NR, MHS marker.

Mendota Bridge
When opened in 1926 it was hailed as the world's longest concrete bridge, 4,119 feet. NR

Black Dog Village Site
Dakota village near Cedar Bridge crossing. When Louis Martin arrived to teach farming in 1837, the village moved to his farm at Highway 13 and Blackhawk Road.

MR Military Reservation Line
Lt. Zebulon Pike's land purchase in 1805 for Fort Snelling included a portion of Dakota County.

Orchard Gardens Station
Built in 1910 to serve the "Dan Patch Line" railroad. NR
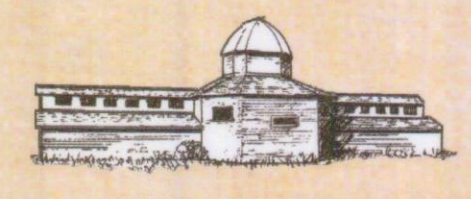
Dakota County Fair
Ignatius Donnelly is credited with the first Dakota County Fair held in Nininger in 1858. After several sites, today's location in Castle Rock, on Farmington's border, was selected in 1918. The fair's National Register horticulture building was lost to the elements but the dome was preserved atop a gazebo at fair's entrance.

Castle Rock
The Castle Rock sandstone formation appeared as a medieval castle to explorers and travelers before erosion took its toll.

Antlers Park and Dan Patch Line
Lakeville's Antlers Park opened July 4, 1910, at Lake Marion offering amusements, bathing, boating, and a dance pavilion. The "Dan Patch" gas electric rail line scheduled 12 runs daily from the Twin Cities. Property became a city park in 1974.

Missile Site
One of four "Cold War" 1950s defensive sites around Twin Cities armed with Nike missiles.
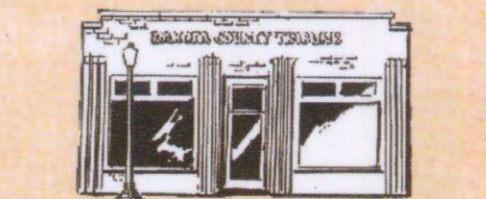
Dakota County Tribune
Since its first edition in 1884 the paper has been an ardent reporter, supporter, and preserver of county history.

Waterford School Dist. 72
Beautiful example of a one room school house, built in 1882. Now serves as Waterford Community Center. NR

Exchange Bank Building
Opened as Bank of Farmington in 1880, the building housed a hardware store, post office, and second floor music hall seating 500 people. NR

Kaposia Village Site
Chief Little Crow's village in northern South St. Paul. Served by missionaries and government farmers. Site of first Dakota County seat in 1853. MHS marker.

South St. Paul Stockyards and Stockyards Exchange
The stockyards founded by A. B. Stickney in 1886 built a city and became world's largest yards in 1974. The Exchange building opened in 1887 for livestock commission firms. At times it also housed a post office, bank, radio studio, and city hall. Renovated in 1998 as a hotel. NR, DCHSC markers

Inver Grove Swing Bridge
Built in 1894 to serve South St. Paul Stockyards. The 250 foot swing section carried rail tracks above toll roadway. Closed in 1980 and reopened in 1982 as Minnesota's only privately owned toll bridge.

PB Pine Bend
Site of Chief Medicine Bottle's Dakota village. Plans for a town earned place on maps but few settlers. Monument can be seen on Highway 55/52. MHS marker

Lock and Dam No. 2
The 1930 Mississippi River Lock and Dam flooded 10,000 acres from Hastings to St. Paul and established a nine foot channel.

The Spiral Bridge Site
Built in 1895, the bridge spiraled down to Hastings business streets serving horse and engine powered vehicles for 50 years. Many people went out of their way to cross it.

Dakota County Courthouse and Hastings City Hall
The second oldest courthouse in Minnesota. Built in 1871, remodeled in 1912. It continued to serve the court system until 1989. Following a beautiful restoration it became the Hastings City Hall in 1993. NR

Vermillion River and Falls
Named for red clay banks, the Vermillion crosses the County before descending in falls and rapids to the Mississippi. Its waters powered three Hastings flour mills at the end of the "Pioneer Wheat Trail."

Ramsey Mill
Flour mill built by Alexander Ramsey and Thomas Foster at the lower Vermillion Falls in 1857. Destroyed by fire. NR, MHS marker.

Gopher Ordnance Plant
In 1942 Rosemount was selected for a wartime powder plant resulting in the displacement of over 100 farm families. In May, 1943, Du Pont, the plant operator, hired 3,000 construction workers. This number increased to 19,428 by September. The plant, occupying over 11,000 acres, was transferred to the University of Minnesota after the war.

St. Mary's Church
New Trier's German Catholic church. The congregation organized in 1856 followed by a stone church in 1864. Today's beautiful Beaux Arts Church was built atop Mary Hill in 1909.

Chimney Rock
The Chimney Rock sandstone formation northeast of New Trier served as a travelers guide post.

Byllesby Dam
The dam built at the Big Falls of the Cannon River in 1910 provided electrical power and created Lake Byllesby. Map maker Joseph Nicollet mapped the Cannon River in 1838.

Good Templar's Hall
Originally a two story Nininger meeting hall in 1858 and school in 1859. Decay resulted in removal of the first floor. Now Nininger's town hall. NR

Moments and Monuments from Dakota County History

Our 150th Anniversary Map offers a sampling of the historical treasures among the 20 cities and 13 townships of Dakota County.
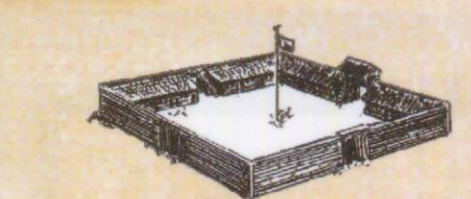
The Dakota County Historical Society and Museum in South St. Paul offers publications and exhibitions, a research library, and resources of the Dakota County Genealogical Society. **Dakota County Historical Society, 130 Third Avenue North, South St. Paul, MN 55075, 651-451-6260.**

In Mendota you can visit homes of the earliest settler and our state's first governor. Hastings offers 33 National Register historic homes and buildings and the city's Pioneer Room. At the County Fairgrounds you can visit a turn
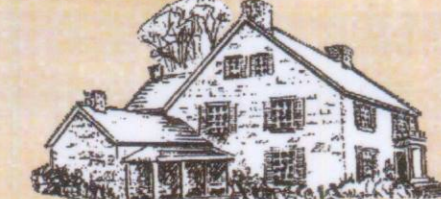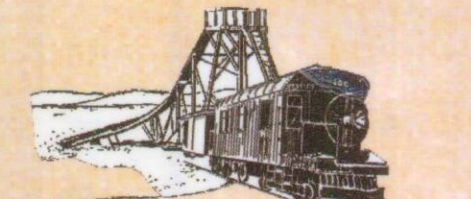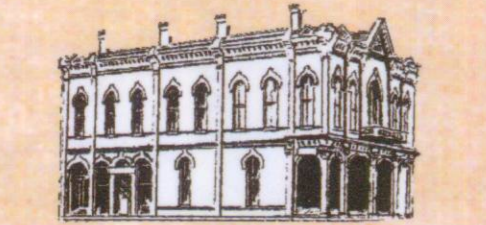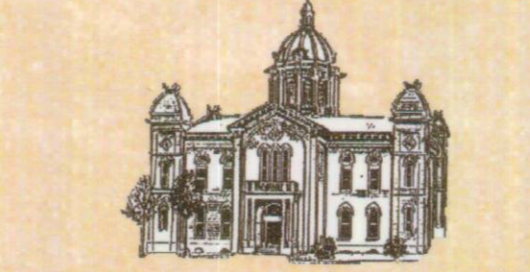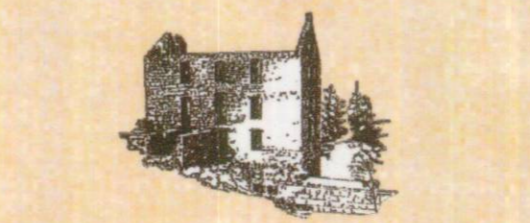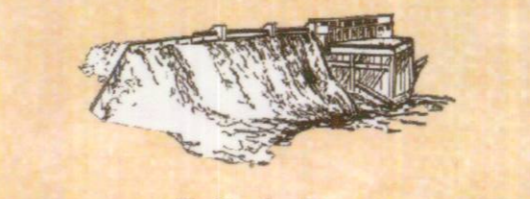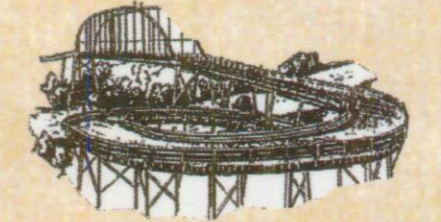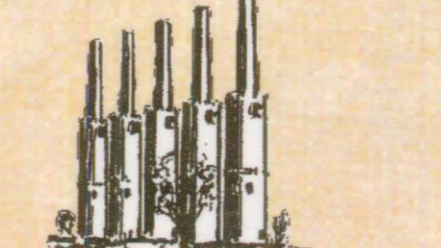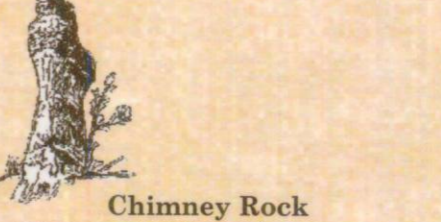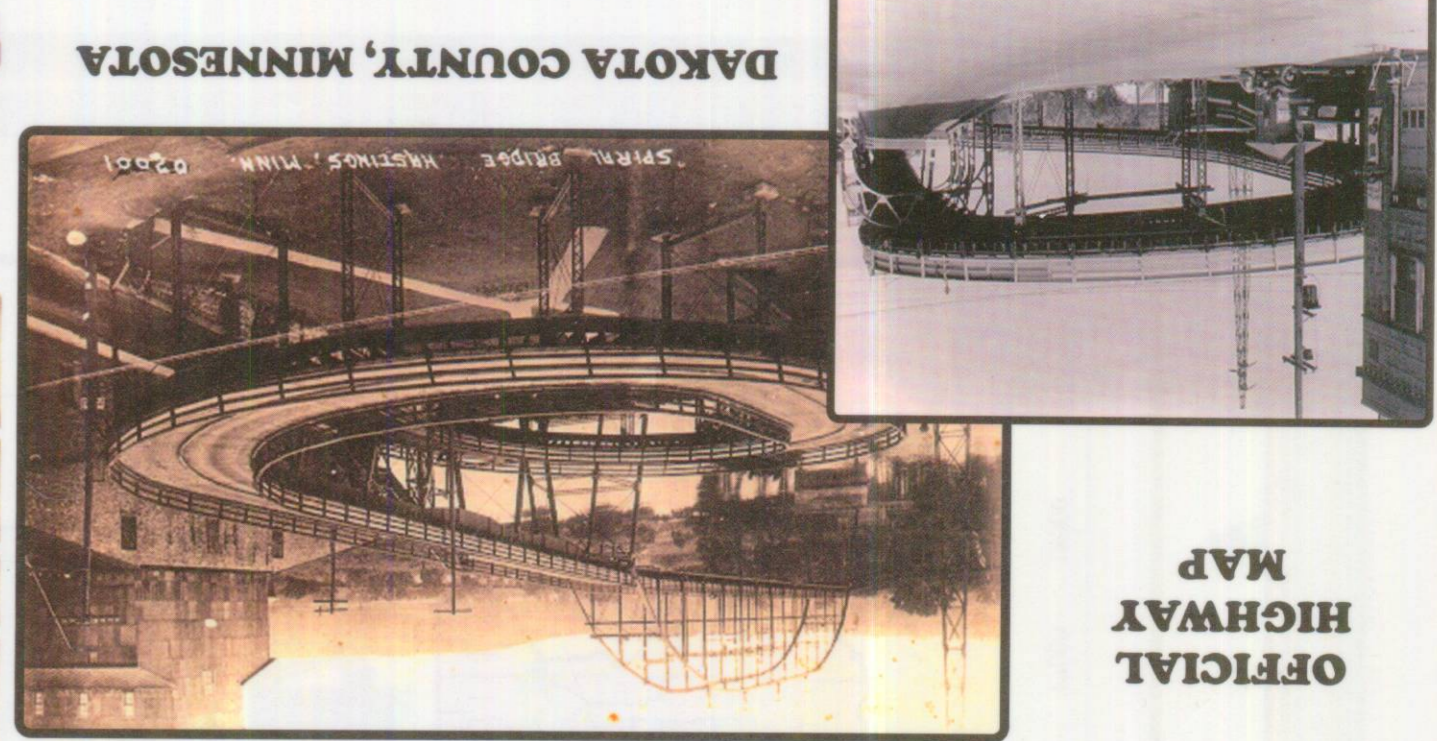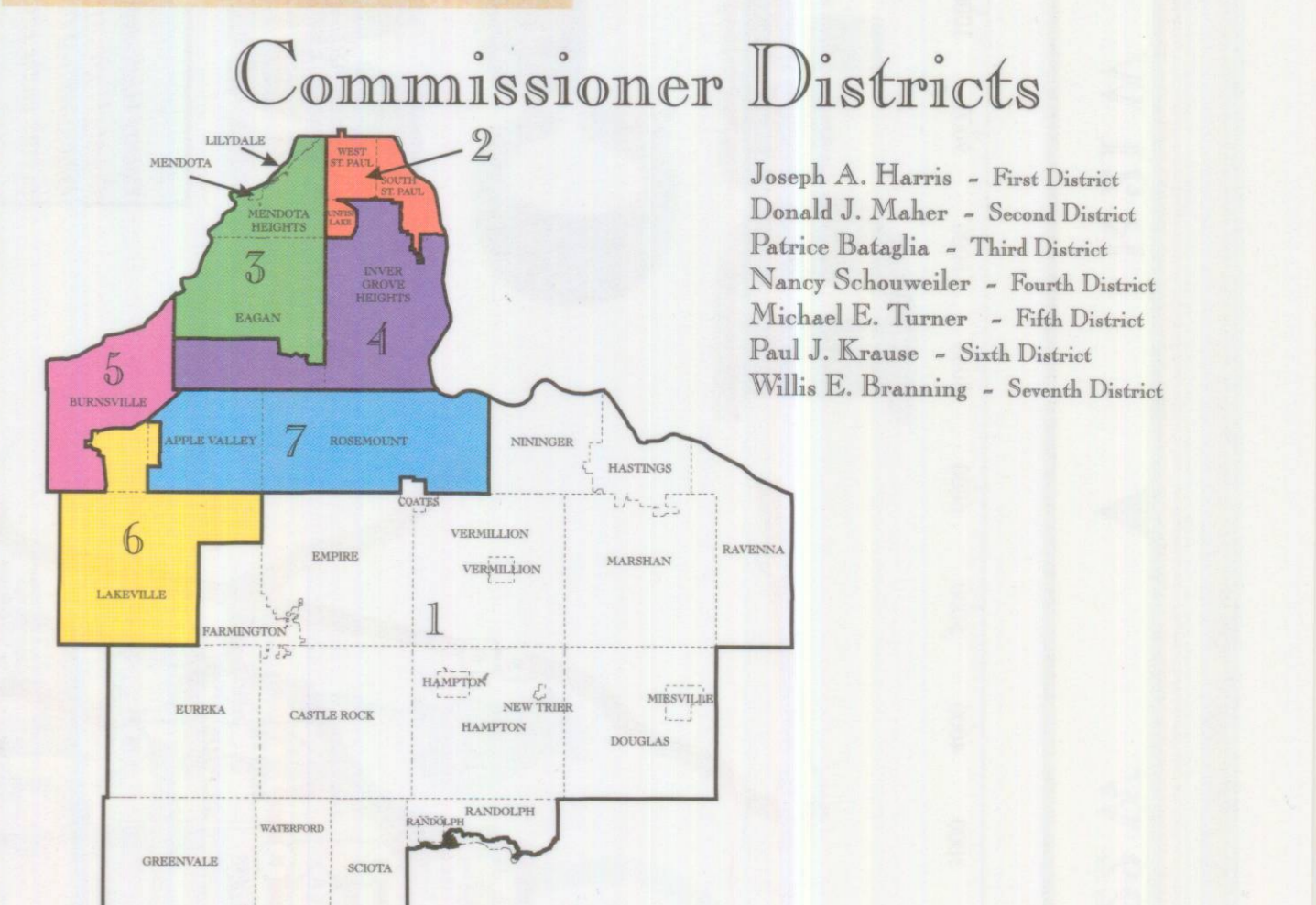
of the century village with restored buildings and activities at the Dakota City Heritage Village.

Our history map is presented to honor all who added warmth and luster to Dakota County's image and to those who seek to keep that image bright.

Note: Bold type following the illustration text, above, stands for: NR - National Register; **MHS marker** -marker installed by Minnesota Historical Society; **DCHSC marker**- marker by a Dakota County Historical Society chapter.

Title and adapted from 1898 Plat Book of Dakota County

Commissioner Districts

Joseph A. Harris - First District
Donald J. Maher - Second District
Patrice Bataglia - Third District
Nancy Schouweiler - Fourth District
Michael E. Turner - Fifth District
Paul J. Krause - Sixth District
Willis E. Branning - Seventh District

A Two-Stage County Startup

When Dakota County was created on October 27, 1849 it was still Indian territory with a total population of 148. Ramsey County provided administrative services until March 1855 when the County was open to settlement. On March 5, 1855 the territorial legislature declared Dakota County fully organized.

First Appointment and Board Meeting
On April 26, 1855 Governor Alexander Ramsey made appointments to serve until the next general election. Appointed were James McClellan Boal, O. B. Bromley, and John Blakely, County Commissioners; A. R. French, Sheriff; Andrew Robertson, Register of Deeds; E. F. Parker, Probate Judge; H. L. Moers, Clerk; Sylvester M. Cook, Treasurer; (on July 2) James C. Dow, County District Attorney.

The first meeting of the appointed officers was held July 4, 1855 at John F. Aiton's home at Kaposia. Aiten, a Presbyterian missionary at Kaposia, had taken a land claim upon the departure of the Indians. He also became Assistant Register of Deeds, Clerk of the Board of Commissioners, and Justice of the Peace. At the meeting Sylvester Cook was also made County Surveyor and Horace Bromley was appointed Road Overseer. The meeting divided the County into three election precincts and three school districts.

First Elected Officers
An election was held in October, 1855. County Officers were elected: Hypolite DuPuis, Treasurer; F. J. Bartlett, Sheriff; A. R. McLeod, Register of Deeds; J. Locke, Judge of Probate; E. F. Parker, Attorney; James Thompson, Surveyor; Thomas Odell, Coroner; J. J. Noah, Clerk of District Court. While the record says Commissioners were elected, it does not give their names. It seems likely they were the Commissioners of record at the April 2, 1854 County Board meeting: Alexander M. Ramsey, J. J. Benson, and Henry G. Bailly.

Index to Dakota County Facilities

Information for all departments call (651) 437-3191. For directions to County offices, or other recorded messages about County government, call the Dakota County InfoLine, (651) 438-INFO (4636).

GOVERNMENT COMPLEX

Administration Center, 1590 Hwy 55, Hastings 55033-2372	(651) 437-3191
Judicial Center, 1560 Hwy 55, Hastings 55033-2392	(651) 437-3191
Law Enforcement, 1580 Hwy 55, Hastings 55033-2380	(651) 438-4700
Juvenile Detention Center, 1600 Hwy 55, Hastings 55033-2368	(651) 438-4950
Corrections, New Chance & Start Programs	
1600 Hwy 55, Hastings 55033-2369	(651) 438-8288
Western Service Center, 14955 Galaxie Avenue, Apple Valley 55124-8579	(612) 891-7570
Northern Service Center, 33 E. Wentworth Avenue, West St Paul 55118-3406	(651) 450-2611
Extension Service, 4100 220th Street West, Farmington 55024-9539	(651) 480-7700
Housing and Redevelopment Authority, 2496 145th Street West, PO Box 550, Rosemount 55068-0520	(651) 423-4800
Soil & Water Conservation, 4100 220th Street West, Suite 102, Farmington 55024-8087	(651) 480-7777

LIBRARIES

LIBRARY ADMINISTRATION, 1340 Wescott Road, Eagan 55123-1099 .... (651) 688-1540

Burnsville Library, 11101 West County Road 42, Burnsville 55306-4494	(612) 435-7177
Farmington Library, 508 Third Street, Farmington 55024-1357	(651) 463-7990
Galaxie Library, 14955 Galaxie Avenue, Apple Valley 55124-8579	(651) 891-7045
Pleasant Hill Library, 1490 South Frontage Road, Hastings 55033-2498	(651) 438-0200
Wentworth Library, 199 East Wentworth Avenue, West St. Paul 55118-3536	(651) 457-8497
Wescott Library, 1340 Wescott Road, Eagan 55123-1099	(651) 688-1500

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE COLLECTION CENTER
Eagan
Dakota County EcoSite
3365 South Highway 149, Eagan
For directions and hours, call (651) 438-INFO (4636), message #2042, or call (612) 891-7011

COUNTY PARKS

Parks & Other Information Line (Recorded Message)	(651) 438-4660
Park Reservations	(651) 438-4671

Parks & Open Space Department
Lake Byllesby Regional Park – Randolph Township
Lebanon Hills Regional Park – Eagan, Apple Valley
Spring Lake Park Reserve – Nininger Township
Thompson County Park – West St. Paul
Big Rivers Regional Trail – Mendota, Mendota Heights, Lilydale

Before the First 50 Years
1800 to October 27, 1849

President Thomas Jefferson's 1803 purchase of Louisiana from France set the stage for the future Dakota County. Two years later Lt. Zebulon Pike arrived at Mendota and purchased the site for the future Fort Snelling from the Dakota Indians. The military reservation included Mendota, Lilydale, and portions of Eagan, Mendota Heights, and West St. Paul.

Col. Leavenworth and 200 soldiers arrived in 1819 to build Cantonment New Hope at Mendota to assemble material to construct the fort. Soon Josiah Snelling arrived to oversee the fort's construction and to command the garrison.

Jean Baptiste Faribault became Dakota County's first white settler when an 1822 flood destroyed his home on Pike Island.

The fort adopted the British fur trade in the area. Alexis Bailly established a Mendota trading post for the American Fur Company. In 1834 Henry Hastings Sibley arrived to manage the fur company.

At the time the west side of the Mississippi River was Iowa Territory and the east side was Wisconsin. When Wisconsin was opened to settlement in 1837 the Kaposia village of Little Crow moved with missionaries and government farmers to South St. Paul.

Wisconsin's statehood in 1848 created a no-man's land between the St. Croix and Mississippi Rivers. Sibley was selected by local settlers to seek Territory status for Minnesota. He was successful.

On May 11, 1849 President Millard Fillmore signed the bill creating the Territory of Minnesota and Dakota lands east of the Missouri. Alexander Ramsey was appointed the governor.

On October 27, 1849 Minnesota's legislature organized nine counties: Washington, Ramsey, Benton, Itasca, Wabashaw, Dahkotah, Wahnahta, Mahkahta, and Pembina. The first three were fully organized. Dahkotah and others, all in Indian territory, were unorganized except for law and order officers. (Dahkotah was changed to Dakota by 1858.)

The First 50 Years
October 27, 1849 to 1899

When Dakota County was created in 1849 the white population totaled only 148: Mendota-122, Black Dog-18, Kaposia-8. However, it measured 45 miles north to south and spanned over 300 miles from the Mississippi to the Missouri River. The County's borders changed often until 1858.

In 1851 the Treaty of Mendota, ratified by Congress in 1853, authorized settlement in 1854. On March 5, 1853, Dakota County became fully organized and Kaposia became the first county seat. The seat moved to Mendota in 1854 and to Hastings in 1857, today's location.

On April 6, 1858 Dakota County was divided into 17 townships. The City of Hastings had been incorporated in 1857. The 17 townships were:

Union (Burnsville)	Castle Rock	Douglas
Berlin (Eureka)	Greenvale	Hampton
Inver Grove	Lakeville	Marshan
Nininger	Rosemount	Sciota
West St. Paul		

Empire City
Hastings Twp.
Ravenna
Vermillion

Richmond (Randolph), Waterford, and Lebanon (Apple Valley) formed in May; Ravenna and Eagan in 1860. Hastings Twp. dissolved in 1860.

Dakota County's Henry Sibley became Minnesota's first state governor in 1858. He commanded troops during the 1862 Dakota Conflict and was promoted to General by President Lincoln. During the Civil War 1,350 County men joined the Union Army, 15% of the population.

Hastings became a major river port and mill city at the end of the "Wheat Trail" from Northfield. The Dodd and Mendota-Wabashaw roads connected farm communities. Railroads started crossing the County in 1865. Some towns thrived around depots. Truck farmers sold their produce in the St. Paul market, and livestock went to South St. Paul stockyards. Hastings, Farmington, and South St. Paul became business hubs. One room school houses, churches, and cemeteries dotted the County.

Dakota County's population was 148 in 1849; 8,556 in 1860; 16,312 in 1870; 17,391 in 1880; 20,240 in 1890; and 21,733 in 1900.

The Second 50 Years
1900 to 1949

Hastings now boasted major flour mills and industrial plants. South St. Paul asserted regional leadership in livestock trading and meat packing. Farmington was the County's western business center. A new Mendota Bridge brought the County and Twin Cities closer together. Randolph incorporated as a village in 1904 at the intersection of three rail lines and Inver Grove became a rail hub for South St. Paul in 1909.

In 1900 over 50% of the population lived in rural areas, by 1920 it was less than 40%. Dairies and truck farms served St. Paul, West St. Paul, South St. Paul, and Hastings. Sons and daughters left farms for jobs in plants and offices. The 1920s was the era of amusement parks, the phonograph, the radio, the Model T, and prohibition. In 1920 Lock and Dam No. 2 changed the County's eastern profile by flooding 10,000 acres.

The 1930s depression tested stamina and compassion. Youth joined the Civilian Conservation Corps for bed, board, and money to send home. Federal Works Progress Administration projects kept many families going. These were the days of the first cash hamburger, penny candy, door to door salesmen, barn dances, and sing-a-longs in the park.

By 1939 European war clouds sparked American production lines. County farm markets recovered. Soon men and women joined the military or wartime industries. Now there was a worker shortage, gas shortage, and meat rationing. By 1943 South St. Paul's airport was under Navy command. Trainee pilots were landing on eight practice fields around the County. The County suffered a lasting war-time imprint when over 100 farms and 11,000 acres were lost to the Gopher Ordnance powder plant in Rosemount.

With the war over in 1945 service men and women were returning home. Their return would soon start a major change in Dakota County. Dakota County's population was 25,171 in 1910; 28,967 in 1920; 34,592 in 1930; 39,660 in 1940; and 49,019 in 1950. South St. Paul and West St. Paul accounted for 70% of the increase between 1910 and 1950.

The Third 50 Years
1950 to 1999

From 1950 to 1960 Dakota County's population increased by 29,284, a 50% increase, exceeding the County's total growth during its first 70 years. Following the war the demand for housing, cars, and consumer products escalated and industry and business were eager to meet the demand. The federal government helped with a GI Bill offering low cost home and business loans and a major road and highway construction program. Suburbia was on its way.

Initially farmers sold lots along roads. Then builders bought acreage, added a street, and offered custom building. Major developers followed buying entire farms and offering a choice of model homes. All would soon require community services. Local government had to change.

Five villages incorporated in 1950s. Miesville, Lilydale, Coates, and Sunfish Lake formed to preserve what they had; Mendota Heights formed to control growth. In 1964 Burnsville incorporated preventing loss of the Black Dog plant to Bloomington. By 1972 Inver Grove Heights, Apple Valley (formerly Lebanon), Lakeville, Rosemount, and Eagan incorporated including their townships. In 1974 legislative action designated all incorporated villages as cities classified by size.

By the time Interstates 494 and 35E were completed in the mid 1980s traffic moved into Dakota County as much as it moved out. Industrial parks, service centers, and retailers provided jobs as well as products. County and cities worked together providing needed human and economic support services. And the state added a prized asset, the Minnesota Zoo.

Since the initial Comprehensive Plan adopted in 1982, Dakota County has passed Anoka and St. Louis Counties to become the third most populous county in Minnesota.

Dakota County is fortunate that growth came in the last 50 years. Much of its natural beauty is still intact and preserved by city, county and regional parks. Our Dakota County community continues to develop a rich heritage for tomorrow's generations.