

June 2 - 58  
**Observations**

Ms W L R

## 300 Oxen Shod At Ottertail City

Questions from those interested in the history of Otter Tail County lead us to believe there is an avid interest in the early days of Otter Tail City. The other day we came across an article written by E. H. Pelton and published years ago in the Journal. Mr. Pelton wrote the article after talking with a teacher who had never heard of Ottertail City. Mr. Pelton was very familiar with Ottertail City having been in charge of numerous log drives from the Pine Lakes country to Winnipeg and felt that everyone should know something about this historical spot. Thus, while living in St. Claud in the closing years of his life, he wrote the following:

### ON LAKE 100 FEET DEEP—

"Ottertail City is located 12 miles south of Perham on one of the most charming lakes in Minnesota. The lake was not formed by icebergs, but it is a natural lake. In places it is more than a hundred feet deep. The lake is 13 miles long and about six miles wide. It is surrounded by different kinds of hardwood.

"In 1825 the government built a wagon road through St. Cloud to Fort Gary, now via Leaf Mountains, on to Otter Tail Lake. Little trading posts sprang up later and in 1859 the government established a U.S. land office and Major J. B. Herald of Alabama was the first receiver or registrar. In 1860 the census showed that the population of Otter Tail county was 250. The trail at that time was called the Wood trail and Ottertail City was the most important post between St. Cloud and Winnipeg.

"Being the county seat of Otter Tail county and surrounded by hardwood country it became a busy place. Some times as high as 300 carts stopped there to shoe their oxen and repair their wagons, on their way to St. Paul. Some trips would have a cargo worth \$30,000 in furs and hides. They were mostly one oxen wagons and generally made one trip a season.

"In 1860 the Northern Pacific surveyed through this village, which had become a village of some importance, having several hotels, a brewery, a saw mill and many blacksmith shops. At one time the population was 1,200.

"What a pity it would have been a great city, with its natural gifts. But, the railroad moved its survey 12 miles north. Soon buildings were moved with long strings of oxen. Even the first hotel was hauled from Ottertail City. It had been operated there by Judge Reynolds. It was operated in Perham by Edd Curo, my wife's father.

"On the beautiful sandy beach of Otter Tail Lake, surrounded by oak trees, stands a stone monument, only one house, the old St. Paul Hotel, all that is left to mark the site of the city.

This is a brief history of the great lake and village with the swift waters of the Red River of the north flowing on to Hudson Bay. The ghost town can rest in silence."

OTTER TAIL CITY FILE

ELKS FALLS DAILY JOURNAL