*H*astings was founded in 1833 when Joseph R. Brown built a trading post at what had been known as Oliver's Grove. Lt. William G. Oliver camped at the site along the Mississippi during the winter of 1819-20 while traveling upriver to Fort Snelling, and in 1850, trader Henry G. Bailly built a log cabin near present-day Vermillion Street.

Hastings in 1874. The Vermillion River enters the Mississippi south of Lake Isabel. (J.T. Andreas Atlas)
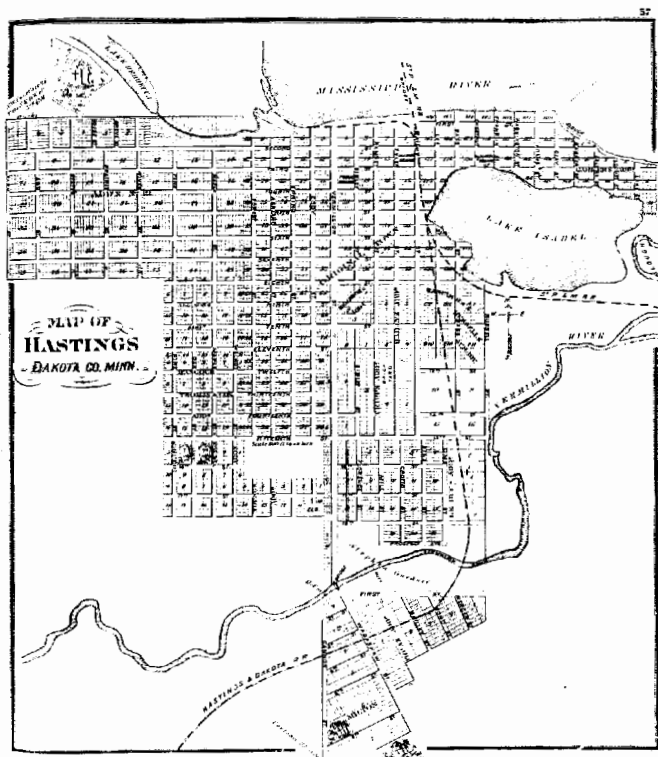
Permanent Euro-American settlement began after the Treaty of 1851, which opened Dakota lands in southeastern Minnesota. A townsite company was created in 1853, and a plan was laid out by surveyor John Blakely. Henry Hastings Sibley, Alexander Faribault, and Alexis and Henry G. Bailly were partners in the company; the town took Sibley's middle name. Faribault's quarter share was sold to William G. LeDuc in 1854. Of the partners, LeDuc was the only one to become a permanent resident of the new town. The townsite was incorporated as a city in 1857 and the seat of Dakota County was moved to Hastings from Mendota.

Surrounded by a productive wheat growing region, Hastings was well situated for success as a steamboat landing and grain shipping point. The levee at the river's edge provided sites for sawmills and a business district, but much of the area's early housing was sited on the terraces that rise well above flood level.

Through the 1850s and 1860s, Hastings was a center of a wide trade area and supplied goods and services for many just-developing communities. Stephen Gardner was a leader in developing the grain business in Hastings, beginning with the Gardner Mill and Elevator, and the Hastings Malting Company and other businesses. The Gardner Mill on the Vermillion River formed the nucleus of today's Con Agra plant.

1853
Graham Mill at Vermillion Falls. (Photo 1869; MHS.)

1859
Hastings Foundry/Star Iron Works, First and Chestnut streets. (Photo 1979; MHS)

1870-71
Hastings and Dakota Railroad (Photo 1870; MHS.)

In 1870-71, the Hastings and Dakota Railroad—with William G. LeDuc as company president—linked the city with wider markets and seemed to ensure a booming future. Just upriver, however, St. Paul was well established at the head of river navigation and as a railroad and shipping center.

E. Sixth Street, Hastings in 2002. This block is part of the Old Hastings Historic District and is typical of many streets in the city. Houses date from the 1860s to the 1920s, and some show the layering of several architectural styles.

Through the late nineteenth century, a dense district of two- and three-story brick and stone commercial buildings was developed near the steamboat landing, as well as breweries, hotels, an opera house, churches, schools and the handsome Dakota County Courthouse (1871). Today, many of these buildings are included in the E. Second Street Historic District.

*Dakota County Courthouse (1906 photo; MHS.)*

Hastings' population rose from 3,458 in 1870 to 4,571 in 1920 and reached 6,546 in 1950. With the decline of grain and lumber, new industries were introduced after 1900, including the manufacture of feed baskets and

Hudson Manufacturing Company, W. Second Street. (Photo 1935, MHS.)

horsecollars at the Ralph Brownson Company. The Smead Manufacturing Company, an office supply manufacturer, and the Hudson Manufacturing Company, producers of compression sprayers, were also founded and continue to be important to the city's economy.

1921

Hastings High School (1899). Herman Kretz, architect. (Photo MHS; razed)
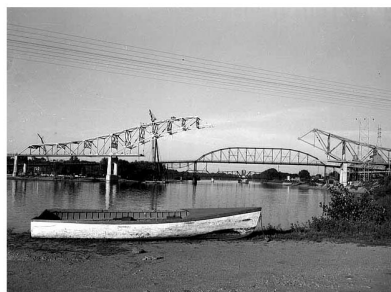
Old and new landmarks: in 1950, the Spiral Bridge (now razed) was shown in the background during the construction of the new bridge. (Photo MHS)