

Land Organization

The Newfolden area was traversed by American Indians, trappers and explorers prior to European settlement. England claimed the area from 1763 until 1818 when the United States established the international boundary at the 49th parallel assigning the Red River Valley to the Missouri Territory. The territory reverted to unorganized status in 1821 until it became a part of the Michigan Territory in 1834. Twenty four years later, in 1858, Minnesota became the 32nd state. It was 21 years (February 25, 1879) before Marshall County, named in honor of Governor William Rainey Marshall (1866 to 1870), was established.



The first homesteaders filed land claims at the federal land office in Crookston. Above: Harry Miners Land Office in Newfolden. Circa 1905.

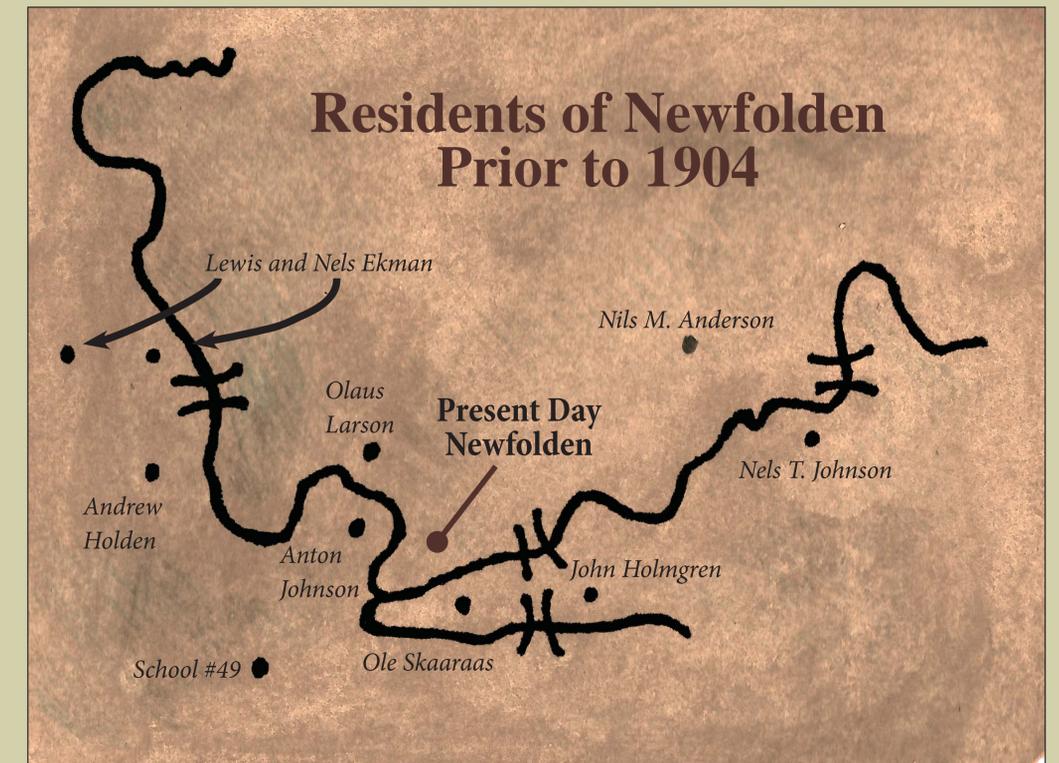
Finding the Way

Without discernible landmarks the pioneers also had difficulties finding their way back home. In Spring 1883, Ole Lee hired Charles Westman to purchase goods in Argyle and deliver them back to the Lee homestead. Mr. Westman was unable to locate the Lee farm, so he unloaded the supplies two miles north of the Lee homestead. Ole Lee found the items, and brought them home one by one on a homemade hand sled.

Most of the early pathways followed the sand ridges that had been used by wandering Indian bands. Early settlers

often stabled their farms near the sand ridges making those areas more densely populated than the lower prairies. While traveling on sand ridges was easy, crossing the prairie between the ridges was confusing and hazardous. It was covered in brush and small trees and dense vegetation. Since there were no drainage ditches at the time, the prairie was often wet even through the summer. Settlers often covered the known wet areas with straw, gravel and wood, and lightened their loads when it was easy to become mired in mud.

During the winter it was much easier to travel, except during snowstorms. Horses or oxen were used to pulled sleighs over wetland trails that would have been impossible to navigate in the summer.



Marshall County and New Opportunity

An 1874 atlas shows Crookston as the only settlement between Georgetown and Pembina. At that time the Newfolden area was still not surveyed, however, the 1878 completion of the St. Vincent extension of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad that ran across the western part of Pembina County was a major factor in preparing the area for development.



Soon after, the Minnesota state legislature divided Pembina County and formed Marshall County on February 25, 1879. The development of the railroads and free land attracted homesteaders and businesses. In 1880 there were 992 residents in Marshall County and many more were on their way.