A Tribute to John Foley
1842 – 1907

John Foley, our most prominent citizen, died at St. Paul Sunday morning. Three full columns of the Sunday Independent are devoted to the story of his life and work. We select only a few of the outstanding sentences.

He was 64 years old and had been a resident of this vicinity for the past 27 years. In the commercial field, John Foley was a man of resolute integrity and possessed business methods which won him renown throughout the entire country. It was largely through his influence that the county seat was transferred here from Sauk Rapids several years ago; he was the most liberal donor of funds for the erection of the courthouse. He built the town of Foley.

When he disposed of a lot or tract of land in the village, he sold it or gave it with the understanding that a residence of certain dimensions and presentable appearance should be erected upon it, and through this foresight, the town is possessed of the most beautiful residences of any town of its size in the country, and the credit for this is given where it rightly belongs – to John Foley.

It was by the sweat of his brow that John Foley accumulated a fortune; many is the day in his early career as a lumberman that he worked for the small pittance of 50¢ a day, a much smaller sum than he ever offered a man to work for him.

John Foley was one of the kindest-hearted men in the world. Many is the time some poor man has come to the village and asked for his aid, and he would immediately communicate with the store to let them have what was wanted and charge it to his account. He was never known to crowd a man in money matters, and always ready to beg forgiveness if he thought he had injured a person's feelings. His name will go down in the history of Foley as the most generous, whole-souled man who ever set foot in Benton County.

Early Benton County Courthouse

Benton County Courthouse Today

From Scrapbook History of Foley. August 16, 1907, p. 25. Courtesy Joe Hall.