

Robert Kennedy returned to St. Paul in 1857, and kept a boarding house for a time, then ran Moffett's Castle for three years. He was also landlord of the old Snelling House on West Seventh Street for two years, then kept a boarding house, and then ran the Burnand House on Fourth Street for several years. All together, he spent thirty years of his life as a landlord and boarding house keeper, in Shakopee and St. Paul.

Many rough characters contacted Robert Kennedy in the early days in Minnesota. In one instance, he was informed that a bad man was about the streets armed with a knife, seeking Robert's life. Kennedy confronted him, took the knife out of his belt, and actually forced him to go and deliver it up where he got it.

At another time, an ugly fellow threatened to shoot him. Kennedy boldly met him and got the man to give up the gun.

In 1853, Robert Kennedy was appointed Collector of Customs for the port of St. Paul, which he held until 1856. During his term of office, he received \$46.42 as custom house fees. He was also inspector of steamboats, and did a lively business when the boats arrived, though in the early days the steamboats didn't arrive that often.

In 1864, Robert Kennedy joined Thomas A. Holmes as they started over the plains for the gold mines of Montana. He remained there for a year. He made a gold claim near where Helena is now a prosperous city. Robert took enough gold to pay off all of his debts. When Robert Kennedy headed back to Minnesota, his son sold out his gold claim in Montana for \$370. Today it would be worth thousands more.



By 1886, Robert Kennedy was incapacitated from an injury to his knees. Frances B Jones Koons Kennedy, Robert Kennedy's wife, was a kind, genial, worthy lady, who was worn out with hard work, according to Thomas McLean Newson in the 1886 book ***Pen Pictures of St. Paul, Minnesota and Biographical Sketches of Old Settlers.***

In ***Daniel M. Storer's Diary*** on June 23, 1887, "Robert Kennedy was buried today. He was 88 years old, and was a prominent man in St. Paul and Shakopee."

Frances B Jones Koons Kennedy died two years later in St. Paul. The ***Shakopee Courier***, December 3, 1891 wrote: "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Kennedy were of the old settlers of Shakopee, Mr. Kennedy having built the National hotel, afterwards burned down."



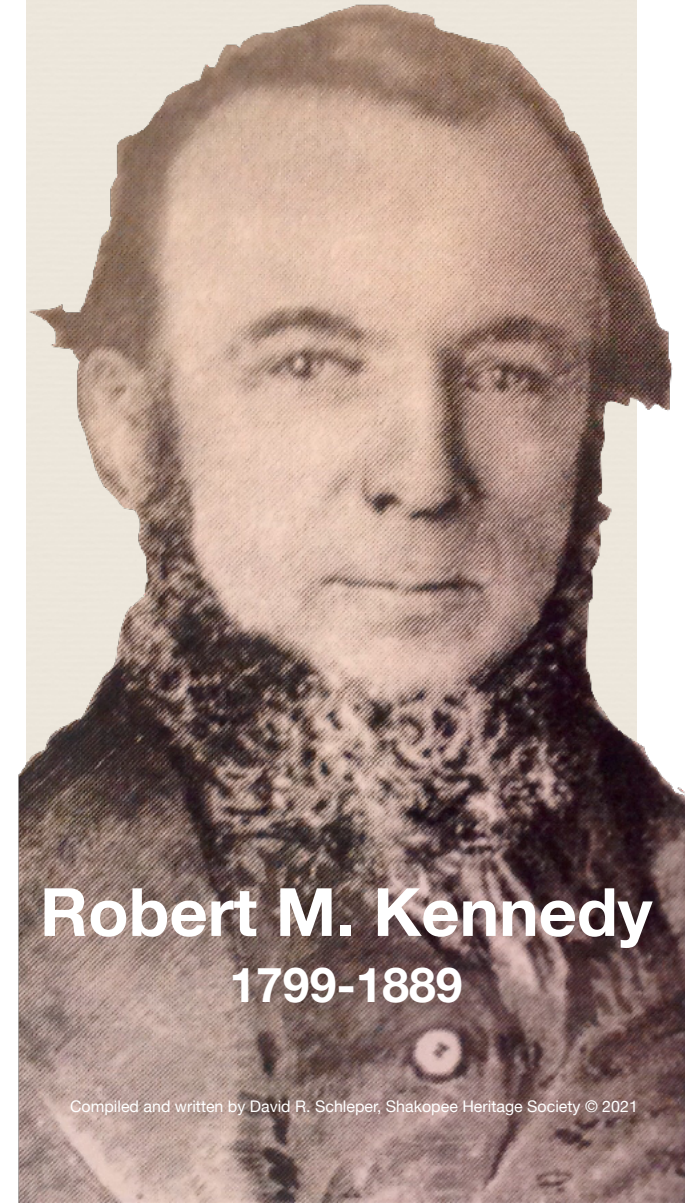
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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



**Robert M. Kennedy**

**1799-1889**



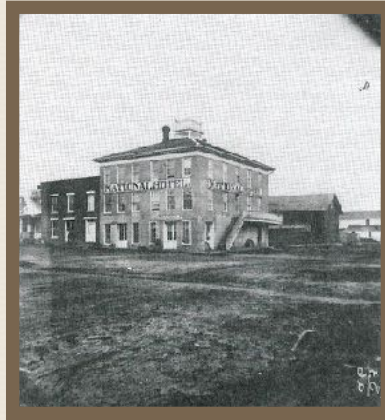


Robert M. Kennedy was born in 1799 in Harper's Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia). His parents were Edward Kennedy and Susannah Gordon, according to David H. Egger in May of 2020. In 1826, the family, which also included Robert's sister, Ursula, moved to Marion Township, Ohio where Edward kept a tavern.

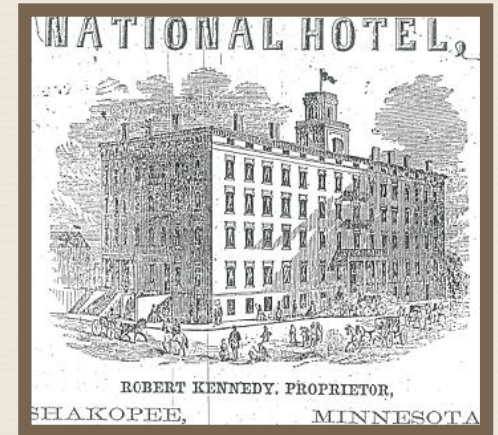
In Marion Township, Ohio, the family met Judge William and Rachel Day Holmes, from Pennsylvania. Their son, Thomas A. Holmes, married Ursula Kennedy in 1829.

At some point, the two families moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin Territory, where Robert Kennedy married Frances B. Jones Kool on August 1, 1837. The Kennedy and Koons family decided to join Thomas Holmes and Ursula in their Western expedition. The 13 people headed to St. Anthony Falls (present day St. Paul), but the early freeze caused the Mississippi River to freeze, and so they ended up near the mouth of the Wau-me-dee Creek.

Though they tried, they were not allowed to establish themselves on the prairie in Winona. Dakota leader Wapahaša refused to allow it to happen. So, according to Dr. L.H. Bunnell in the *History of Wabasha*, they built dugout shelters, and Thomas and



Robert M. Kennedy built the National Hotel in 1867 in downtown Shakopee. It was located on the westside of Holmes Street and First Avenue, in which is now Valley Sports in Shakopee. On October 2, 1879, the Great Fire of Shakopee caused the hotel, along with other buildings on the west side of Holmes Street, to burn down.



Robert and families opened a trading post at the Wah-ma-dee, or Eagle Bluffs in 1839. It was soon named Holmes' Landing, and later was called Fountain City. It was called that because of the numerous fountain-like springs that supplied the inhabitants of the area. Robert M. Kennedy, along with Thomas A. Holmes and a man in their employ, Mr. Smother, built the trading post.

Thomas A. Holmes headed to trade with the Indians, while Ursula Kennedy Holmes stayed in Dubuque with some previous friends for treatment periodical attacks that made her frantic with pain. Without help from a competent doctor, she resulted in the use of opiates, which finally enslaved her.

Thomas returned from his trip up the river with lumber, and had built a comfortable house at Holmes' Landing (later Reed's Landing), across from Wabasha. Ursula, who returned in 1841, had rooms assigned by her brother, Robert Kennedy and his wife, who kept the house for Holmes as a hotel. Ursula seldom appeared, but stayed in her room.

Robert Kennedy, Ursula's brother, had not sympathy for, or appreciation of Ursula's condition, according to Bunnell. Robert Kennedy would call Ursula's pain "tantrums." It was clear that Robert Kennedy, who was much older than his sister, did not sympathize with her. Ursula died in 1841.

In 1849, Robert and family, and Thomas Holmes and family moved to Minnesota Territory.

Robert Kennedy moved to Shakopee in 1854.

According to *The Diary of Daniel M. Storer from 1849 to 1905: A Pioneer Builder and Merchant, His Personal History of Shakopee, Minnesota from August 1853 to January 1905* (Shakopee Heritage Society, 2003), Robert M. Kennedy had a house which stood on the north side of First Avenue, across from what was recently the , in 1853. The house later became Matt, and then Benny Huth's house. It was raised to make room for the downtown bypass.

Robert M. Kennedy operated a hotel/boarding house called the Florence Hotel, across from the Argus block on First and Lewis Street, in 1854 according to *Daniel M. Storer's Diary*. His ads ran the statement "Hay, Oats and Corn constantly on hand, with good accommodations for team." Daniel M. Storer worked with Kennedy during those first years in Shakopee. According to Thomas McLean Newson, he ran the hotel there for thirteen years.