

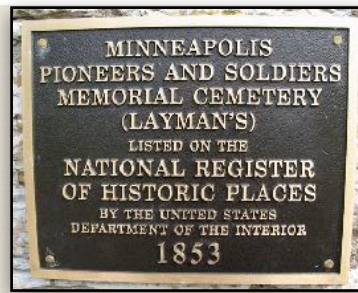
The Griffin's made a claim on the shores of Lake Mary, on the outside of Buffalo.

When he was older and retired from the stagerline James Griffin became the first janitor at the new Wright County Courthouse.



1877 Courthouse

Part of stone foundation came from near Buffalo Lake  
 It was occupied January 1, 1878 and demolished in 1959.



James Griffin died on June 26, 1891 in Host Springs, Arkansas of tuberculosis. According to the Wright County Heritage Herald, Winter 1999, "...after several years of employment at the courthouse, he gave it up because of failing health and sometime after that he sold his farm." He then moved to Host Springs, and died there.

James was buried at the Minneapolis Pioneers and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery.



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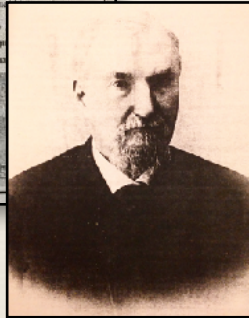
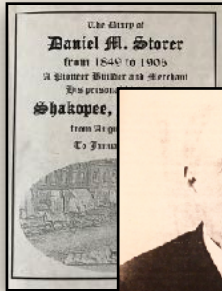
# James Griffin

(Not a picture of James)

ca. 1824-1891

In Sha K' Pay, M.T.  
 1854-1856

Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2020



1<sup>o</sup> 2<sup>o</sup> + 3<sup>o</sup> May 1854. Cool. Worked part of the time on the Home  
4<sup>o</sup> + 5<sup>o</sup> The S. B. Minnesota Belle, come up here from  
Pittsburgh, and went on above, but could not get over  
the Rapids above here, so she come back and left  
the most of her load here. She is a large fine Boat. A  
good many passengers stoped here.

"The S.B. Minnesota Belle came up here from Pittsburgh, and went on above, but could not get over the Rapids about here...so she came back and left the most of her boat here. She is a large, fine boat. A good many passengers stopped here." — Daniel M. Storer Diary

6<sup>o</sup> 7<sup>o</sup> + 9<sup>o</sup> May 1854. Cool. A black man by the name of Griffin  
commenced work for me the 9<sup>th</sup>. Was out after timber the 9<sup>th</sup>

Daniel M. Storer, a builder and merchant in Sha K' Pay, Minnesota Territory, wrote in his journal on May 9, 1854, "A black man by the name of Griffin commenced working for me the 9th."

James Griffin was born an enslaved person in Prince George's County, Maryland around 1824. His master did not want to be in the U.S. Navy, so instead, he forced James, who was enslaved, to serve in his place.

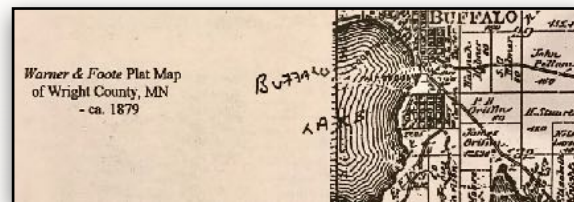
So James Griffin was forced into the Navy for five years. While in the Navy, James learned the carpenter's trade.

In 1849, James married Mary Brown in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Because of his service in the U.S. Navy, James was given his freedom. He moved to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania with his wife, and he worked as a steamboat builder.

One of the steamboats that James helped build was the Minnesota Belle. When it was ready, James and Mary and their family moved to Minnesota on the Minnesota Belle, and from there, to Sha K' Pay, Minnesota Territory.

In the winter of 1853, Captain Samuel Humberston built, probably with James Griffin's help, a fine new boat, christened the steamboat the Minnesota Belle. It was loaded full with immigrants, intended mostly for his new town and headed up the Minnesota River on May 3rd, 1854. A few of the people on the Minnesota Belle during the first voyage were James and Mary Brown Griffin, along with their three children, Richard, Martin, and Estella. To the Captain's great chagrin, Humbertson's new boat failed to climb the Little Rapids, near Carver, and he abandoned the river, townsite, and all, in disgust.

The Minnesota Belle landing in Sha K' Pay after they failed to get over the Carver rapids. "The boat was from Pittsburg, bound for the upper part of the valley, and its being obliged to discharged its large



"...Daniel Gray pre-empted (his original claim) for him (he not being eligible on account of color or race, under the constitution as it was then, to acquire land directly from the government."  
Delano Eagle, July 2, 1891

cargo of freight and passengers here established Shakopee's reputation as the head of navigation. This incident was used to good advantage by citizens to secure new settlers."

James worked as a carpenter with Daniel Storer, and then was a teamster by 1856. He had wagons and teams in Sha K' Pay, and he helped immigrant families to settle in the territory. Including to Buffalo, MN.

"Mr. Griffin (who is an intelligent colored man, much respected by the neighbors) had the honor of bringing the first team into Buffalo; and for a year or two afterwards, 'Griffin's team' was in great demand among all the settlers."

By the 1860s, James started a stagecoach line. He had daily stage route between Buffalo and Monticello, and three times a week from Monticello to Minneapolis.

ing in the interest of his Company.  
— All of Mr. Griffin's many friends will be sorry to learn that he has been taken from St. Barabas Hospital to the insane asylum.  
— Judge Tarbox, Elmer Hamlet, E. F. and W. G. Mern, were among the Monticello visitors at

Buffalo Journal, Buffalo, Minnesota, May 3, 1899