



Monday was laundry day. Filthy clothes were washed, and mended, and bed linens were cleaned. Bundles and baskets of wash was taken outside. The dirty water from the day before had to be hauled out of the kettles, bucket by bucket, and dumped outside in the yard, though not too close to the house. Then came the refilling of the kettles with water pulled up, bucket by bucket, from the well, or down at the bank of the Minnesota River. Then clean water had been poured into the kettles, Proper laundering required boiling-hot water and lot of it.

To loosen the dirt, the clothes were first boiled in a massive copper cauldron outside. Then they were scrubbed with lye soup made from ashes and pig's fat. Sometimes Alice would use a brush, and other times against an old scrubbing board that liked to take the skin off of Alice's knuckles. Stains —and nearly every piece of cloth had some —were treated with lye or pipe clay, and then soaked in soapy water.

People who lived in this house in Shakopee remembers a spirit, an African American, who was doing laundry over and over.

Was it the spirit of Alice Briggs?

Research on Alice Briggs was not in the next census, and so people don't know what happened to Alice, who lived and worked in Shakopee.



This house, at 519 First Avenue East in downtown Shakopee, was the home where Alice Briggs lived and worked at in 1880. The people who have lived here in the 21st century often feel that a spirit lives in this house. The spirit is an African American young adult who is doing laundry.



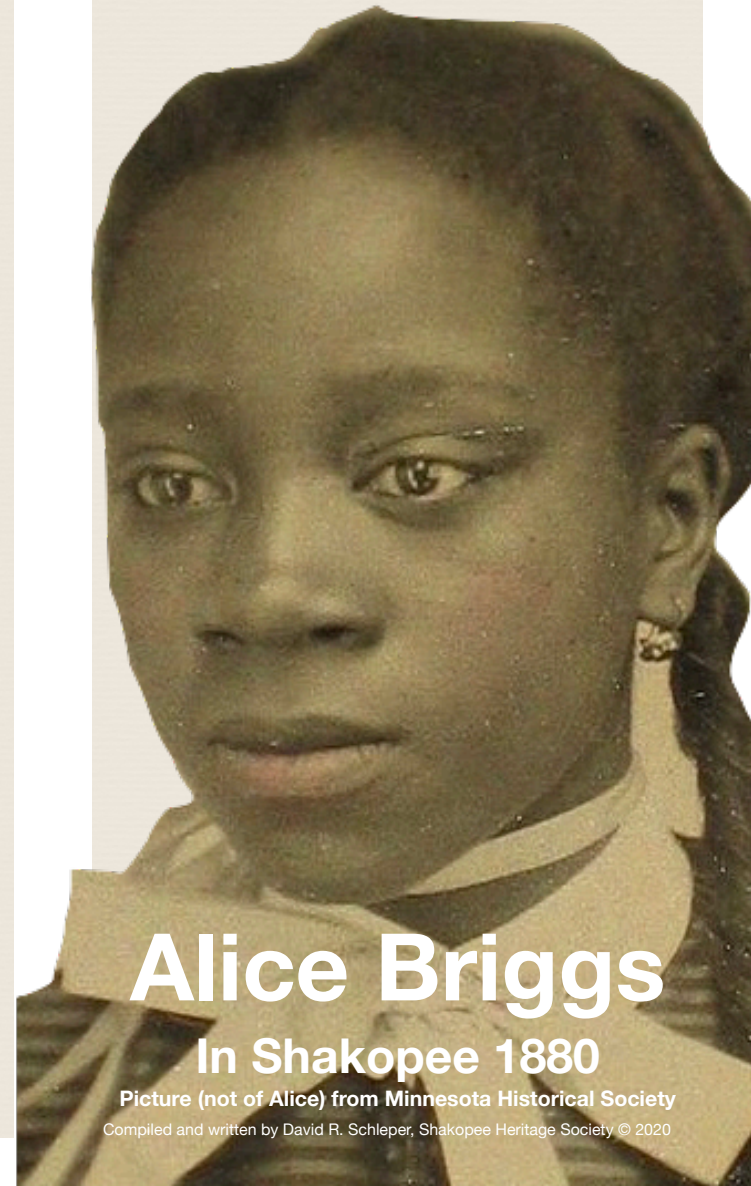
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Alice Briggs
In Shakopee 1880

Picture (not of Alice) from Minnesota Historical Society
Compiled and written by David R. Schleper, Shakopee Heritage Society © 2020



Orestus S. Brown was born in New York in 1831. They moved to Shakopee in 1869 when their son, Frederick Van Ness Brown was 7 years old.

His wife Evelyn Bortle Brown died on March 8, 1871. The family and servants lived on a farm between Hamilton (Savage) and Shakopee in Glendale.

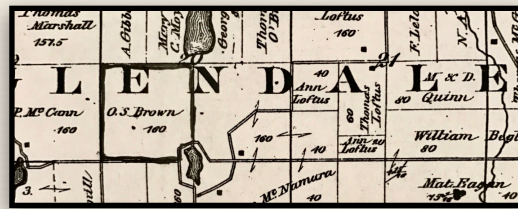
In 1880 they moved to a house in downtown Shakopee. Orestus and his second wife, Carrie, along with their two children, Frederick and Gertrude, moved to their new home.

And along with the family was Alice Briggs, who was listed as an indentured servant.

The house is at 519 First Avenue East One of the oldest structures in Shakopee.

The house was built in 1856 as a 24' x 24' limestone, one of the oldest structures in Shakopee. In 1880 it sold to David and Julia Brown, and in 1888 to O.S. Brown. The house is across the street from the First Presbyterian Church, now the Iglesia la Luz Mundo Casa de Oracion.

Some people in Minnesota were rich. But this wealth was not shared by all. People on the top, mostly businessmen made lots



The farm house where the Brown families lived in Glendale Township, near Shakopee.

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|------------------|-------|----|----------|--|--------------|
| Orestus S. Brown | W. M. | 49 | | | farmer |
| Carrie | W. F. | 30 | inf. | | keeping home |
| Frederick | W. M. | 21 | serv. | | farm laborer |
| Gertrude | W. F. | 17 | daughter | | at home |
| Alice Briggs | W. F. | 15 | servant | | at home |
| Frieda Long | W. F. | 20 | servant | | at home |
| Charles Long | W. M. | 23 | servant | | at home |
| Columbus Mullen | W. M. | 27 | boarder | | farm hand |

| | | | |
|--|------------------|----|---------------|
| 1880 Census in Shakopee showing Alice Briggs, two other servants, and a boarder. | Orestus S. Brown | 49 | Farmer |
| | Cary (Carrie) | 30 | Keeping house |
| | Frederick | 21 | Farm laborer |
| | Gertrude | 17 | At home |
| | Alice Briggs | 15 | Servant |
| | Frieda Long | 20 | Servant |
| | Charles Long | 23 | Servant |
| | Columbus Mullen | 27 | Boarder |

of money. The middle-class people, such as doctors and lawyers, lived very comfortable. But, like most of the ordinary working people, Alice's family was poor. Alice was 15 years old. Her father was from Tennessee, and her mother was from New York. But the family had other brothers and sisters, and though they were living in a small, cramped home, Alice decided to get a job.

There were not a lot of jobs in rural Minnesota except for farmhands, factory workers (which were mostly for men) and servants. The pay is bad, the hours were long, and there was not a lot of personal freedom, but Alice decided to work for a rich family in Shakopee. Once Alice got the job, she needed to be neat and pleasant around their home. She needed to be obedient and to show the right attitude.

O.S. and Carrie wanted a servant who did the work. Alice needed to get up at dawn to light the fires, and boil water for washing. She would have to help cook and serve breakfast (and then, afterwards, she could eat her own breakfast!) Alice had to clean the home, wash the floors, and help with the

laundry. Alice had to sweep, dusty, clean glass windows, and shake and beat the carpets. She had to polish the heavy wooden furniture, wipe down walls, and clean the pavement and steps outside the front door. She had to work all day, from 5 a.m. until 11 p.m., where she could retire to her cold and damp room and into the hard and lumpy bed to sleep quickly (and hope the bed bugs don't bite) before being up again at the crack of dawn.

Luckily for Alice, Freda Long and Charles Long were also servants of the Browns in 1880. Freda probably did the cooking, and Charles helped chopping wood and help with the farm. Freda Long, a white female, was age 20, and Charles Long, who was white and male, age 23. Charles was also a farmhand. Both Freda and Charles were from Michigan, but their parents were from Prussia. Alice was born in Minnesota, and her parents were from Tennessee and New York.

A boarder, Columbus McMullen, also lived at this home, and he was bedridden and probably disabled. He was 27 years old, and probably needed to be helped by the 3 servants.