



Why *Blaine*? Who decided?

Moses Ripley—the man who named the City

By Karen Klinkenberg

Moses Harrison Ripley was born on August 24, 1840 in Franklin County Maine, to Charles Ripley and Martha Dunsmoor Ripley. They had 6 children, born between 1838 and 1859—Moses was second-born. At age 15, his family moved to Dakota County, Minnesota and a few months later to Minneapolis. He married Ophelia M. Lightbourn, of the West Indies, on June 2, 1859. They had ten children between about 1861 and 1883, seven of whom survived them.¹

On August 4, 1863 Moses Ripley enlisted in Hatch's Independent Battalion, formed in response to the 1862 Sioux Uprising. The battalion was dispatched to Pembina near the Red River on the Canadian border on October 5, 1863 and arrived on November 13, 1863, the men having marched the entire distance. After enduring a harsh Dakota winter, food shortage and the loss of most of their horses, the battalion received orders to dispatch to Fort Abercrombie in Dakota Territory. Ripley was discharged on January 27, 1866 and returned to Minneapolis.

Census records for the years 1860 and 1870 list Moses Ripley as residing in various towns around the St. Paul and Minneapolis area. His occupations included carpentry and farming.

In November, 1875 he settled on a farm in Anoka County. In 1877, Blaine Township was established and at the suggestion of Moses Ripley, was named in honor of James Gillespie Blaine, a politician from Ripley's home state of Maine. At the first township election Ripley was named chairman of the Board of Supervisors. He served in subsequent township offices before moving to Fridley sometime later.

Moses Ripley died in Rochester, Minnesota of influenza and pneumonia at the age of 51 on January 19, 1892 and was buried at Layman's Cemetery in Minneapolis.² In 1896, his grave was relocated to Hillside Cemetery. Ophelia died on December 12, 1893, also from

pneumonia, in Minneapolis. She was buried at Hillside Cemetery along with Moses and his parents.

Notes on Moses Ripley

¹ Moses and Ophelia Ripley's surviving children were Martha E. Lillie, Almira L. Peterson, Lila M. Fortier, William A. Ripley, Edward G. Ripley, Walter C. Ripley and George H. Ripley. Children who preceded them in death were Charles H. (in 1881), Minnie Mabel and Walter Fred Ripley.

² Layman's Cemetery was founded in 1853 on land adjacent to the farmstead of Martin Layman. It was later renamed Pioneer and Soldiers Memorial Cemetery and is located in the East Phillips Neighborhood. It is the oldest surviving cemetery in Minneapolis and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

³ While four graves are recorded at Hillside Cemetery as belonging to the Ripley family, only two were found; that of Charles and Martha Ripley who are believed to be buried in the same grave (this marker was only partially readable) and that of Moses Ripley. No grave marker was found for Ophelia Ripley although the cemetery has a record for her. The fourth grave, that of George Ripley, was moved to St. Anthony Cemetery in Minneapolis. Moses Ripley's grave marker is still readable. A tracing was made of this marker by the Blaine Historical Society.

Background for this article

Anoka Union, January 27, 1892. Anoka County Historical Society. (Obituary for Moses Ripley.)

Anoka Union, June 30, 1881; Anoka County Historical Society. (Obituary for Charles H. Ripley, son of Moses Ripley.)

Probate records, Anoka County Historical Society.

History of the Upper Mississippi Valley, Minnesota Historical Company, 1881, p. 262. Anoka County Historical Society.

Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars, 1861-1865, prepared and published by the Act of the Legislature of Minnesota April 16, 1889, 1890, Vol. 1, pp. 594-601, 605. Anoka County Library.

"The Sioux Uprising: A Problem in International Relations," by Alvin C. Gluek Jr. *Minnesota History*, Minnesota Historical Society, Winter, 1955, pp. 317-324.

United States Federal Census records, 1850-1880; *Davison's Minneapolis City Directory*, 1894-95. Ancestry.com.

Ripley Family Genealogy, 1867.



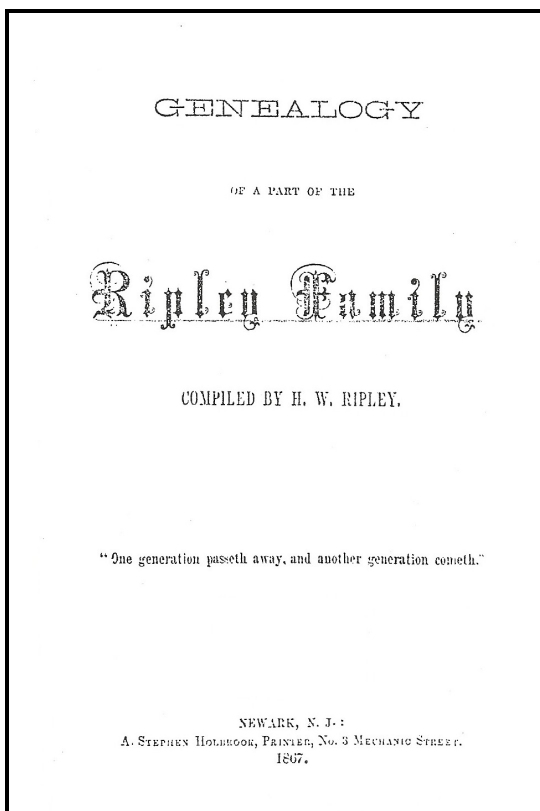
Gravesite of Moses Ripley in Hillside Cemetery



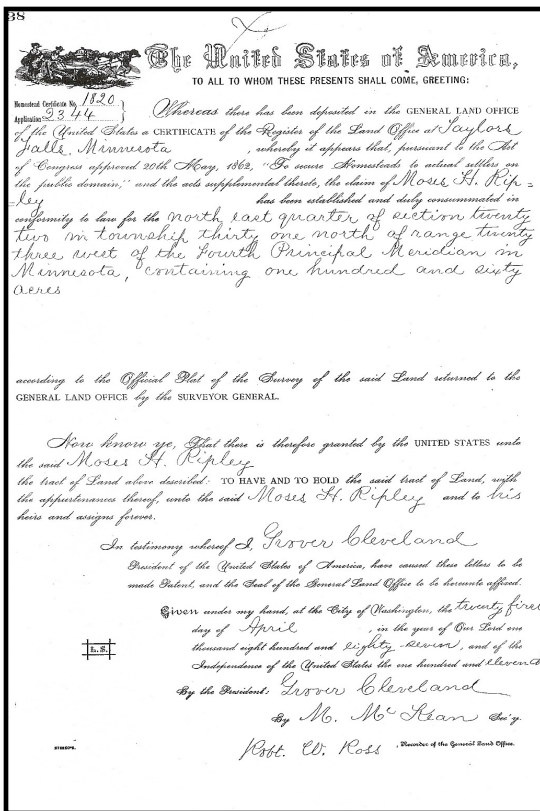
Moses Harrison Ripley
1840—1892



Ophelia Lightbourn Ripley
1840—1893



Ripley Family Genealogy Book
(covering 7 generations)



Land Office Record for the Ripley's
160 acres in Blaine, April, 1887

Ripley Photos courtesy of Debra Jean Trocke Betters (descendent of Moses & Ophelia Ripley)

Blaine Historical Society
www.blainehistory.org

