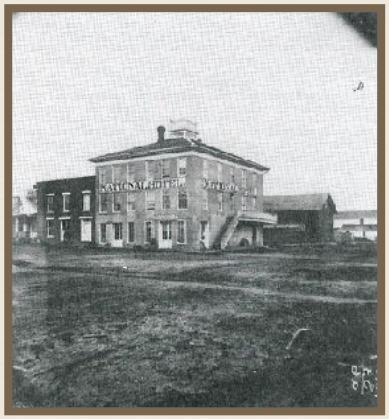
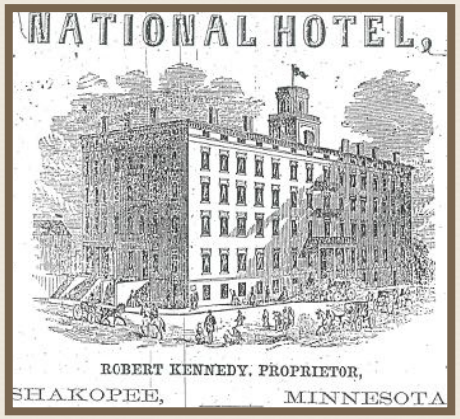




Robert M. Kennedy built the National Hotel in 1867 in downtown Shakopee. It was located on the west side of Holmes Street and First Avenue, which is now Valley Sports. On October 2, 1879, the Great Fire of Shakopee caused the hotel, along with other buildings on the west side of Holmes Street, to burn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



Robert 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. Eggler. In 1826, the family, which also included Robert's sister, Ursula, moved to Marion Township, Ohio, where Edward kept a tavern.

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

At some point, the two families moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin Territory, where Robert married Frances B. Jones Koons on August 1, 1837. The Kennedy and Koons families decided to join Thomas and Ursula in their western expedition. The 13 people headed to St. Anthony Falls (present day Minneapolis), but the Mississippi River froze early, 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 Wapahaśa refused to allow it. So, according to Dr. L.H. Bunnell in the *History of Wabasha*, they built dugout shelters, and Thomas, Robert, and families opened a trading post at Wah-ma-dee, or Eagle Bluffs, in 1839. It was soon named Holmes' Landing and later called Fountain City. It was called that because of the numerous fountain-like springs that supplied the inhabitants of the area. Robert, along with Thomas and a man in their employ, Mr. Smother, built the trading post.

Holmes headed to trade with the Indians, while Ursula stayed in Dubuque with some friends to treat periodic attacks that made her frantic with pain. Without help from a competent doctor, she used opiates, which finally enslaved her.

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

Robert had no sympathy for, or appreciation of Ursula's condition, according to Bunnell. Robert would call Ursula's pain "tantrums." It was clear that Robert, who was much older than his sister, did not sympathize with her. Ursula died in 1841. In 1849, Robert and family, and Thomas and family moved to Minnesota Territory.

Robert moved to Shakopee in 1854.

According to *The Diary of Daniel M. Storer*, Robert had a house which stood on the north side of First Avenue, across from what was recently Perfect Occasions Bridal, in 1853. The house later became Matt, and then Benny Huth's house. It was razed to make room for the downtown mini-bypass.

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

Robert 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. Altogether, he spent thirty years as landlord and boarding housekeeper, in Shakopee and St. Paul.

Many rough characters contacted Robert 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 forced him to go and deliver it up where he got it.

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 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 boats arrived, though in the early days steamboats didn't arrive often.

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

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

In *The Diary of Daniel M. Storer* 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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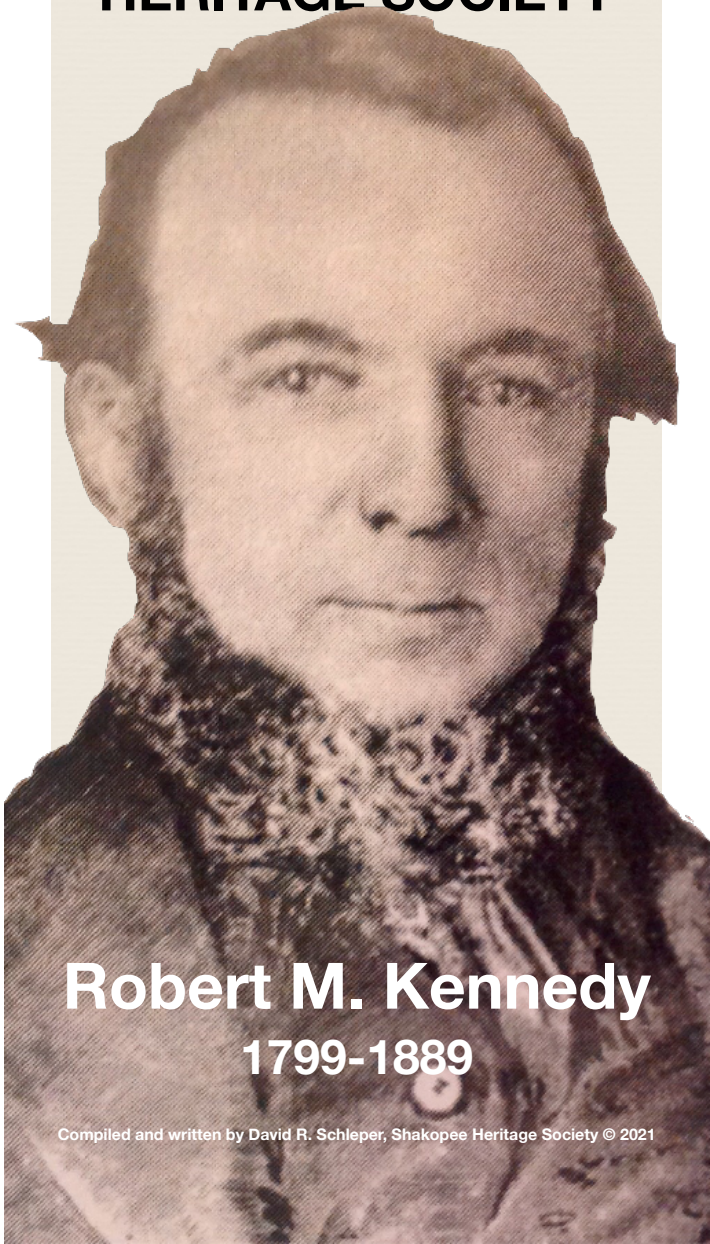
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Robert M. Kennedy

1799-1889

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