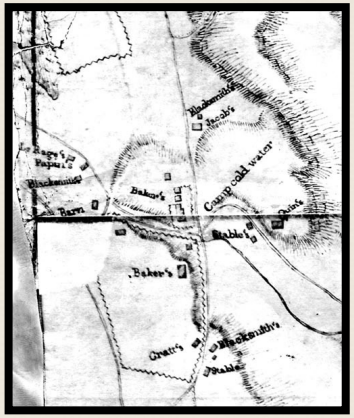




On left is Lt. E.K. Smith's 1837 map of Coldwater Springs including the Quin(n)s' cabin.

On right is Coldwater Springs area, with Fort Snelling in the background.



William L. "Bill" Quinn was born near Coldwater Springs near Fort Snelling, Minnesota on November 4, 1828. His father was Peter Patrick Quinn, who was an Irish immigrant who married Ineyahwin, also known as Mary Louisa Finley, who was a mixed-blood Christeneauz (Cree) Indian. Therefore, William was half Cree by blood.

William received an extraordinarily strong education for the time, including schooling at Fort Snelling, and three years' boarding and study at a school in Fort Garry, British North America (now Canada).

When Bill was twenty years old, he married a half-blood Dakota woman, Angelique Jeffries, of the Mdewakanton band in 1848. By 1856, the couple had three children, all of which were one-quarter Dakota.

Bill was the only one of seven siblings to reach maturity. He was fluent in Anishinaabe, Dakota, English, and perhaps other languages. At various times he was a clerk, a scout for the army, and an interpreter. Bill was employed as a clerk in the Indian trade for many years.

In the spring of 1851, Thomas A. Holmes employed Bill as a guide. They ascended the Minnesota River and cooked a meal in a hollow near the Dakota village of Tínta Otuŋwe. They decided to continue up the river to Le Sueur. But soon Holmes and Bill returned, however, to the first landing, and deemed it the most favorable place to locate. And that is how the town of Holmes Landing, later called Sha 'K Pay, Minnesota Territory, started (though 600 Dakota had been living here for many years).

In 1862, Bill and his family were at the Yellow Medicine Agency, where he worked in William Forbes's store. From 1862-1865 he was a scout, guide, and messenger. For thirty years, starting in 1870, Bill was immersed in learning, documenting, and providing testimony about the genealogy of Dakota mixed-bloods.

In an article written in 1901 in the *Minnesota History* magazine, Knute Steenerson discussed his experience being a pioneer. He had a saloon in the village of Lac qui Parle. "I sold whiskey by the drink, pint, quart, and gallon.

"In the winter came a man from St. Paul. He had driven up by team – there was no railroad at that time, and he was here to buy scrip from the Indians." Scrip allowed the holder to appropriate about 480 acres of land not already occupied for people who were half Dakota.

"His name was Bill Quinn. He had seventeen hundred dollars in cash in his pocketbook.

"He came into my saloon often and treated the crowd, no matter how many there were or how few. He would throw a five-dollar bill on the counter and did not want any change. When I gave him change back, he would throw it on the dirty floor and tramp on it. So, I learned after a while to please him and never gave him change but slipped the bill into the money drawer and set up the drinks. This pleased him entirely.

"One day he started to drive to Big Stone Lake. He drove along on the ice of Lac qui Parle Lake. Some miles out he came to a lot of fishermen, who were fishing through

the ice. He had a good time there for a while, drinking whiskey and talking. And there he lost his pocketbook with the seventeen hundred dollars in it. But luckily, one of the fishermen found it in the snow and gave it back to the owner," noted Steenerson.

"So, he proceeded on to Big Stone Lake and in about a week or ten days he was back again. He brought his son and his son's sweetheart with him. They were pretty good-looking half-breed Indians.

"He said he had caught them wild on an island in Big Stone Lake and wanted to 'buckle them up' and marry them. So, he bought ten gallons of whiskey and ten gallons of cherry brandy."

Knute was invited to the wedding, which was held at the house down the river a few miles. The next thing was to send for a justice of the peace to "buckle them up," as Bill Quinn said.

Knute continued, "A New England Yankee was sent for. His name was Mr. Stowell, and he performed the ceremony.

"But Mr. Quinn was in such a hurry that he sang out between drinks, 'buckle them up, buckle them up,' and then again he would jig and laugh. Well, after it was done Quinn said he was so glad that they were 'buckled up.'

"We had a good time at the wedding. Some were drinking, some dancing, and others talking. It was a sort of cosmopolitan gathering. There were Dakota Indians talking with the lady of the house around the cook stove. There were the squaw man and old Bushma talking French. There were Fritz and Rosenbaum talking German. There were Ole Olson and John Johnson talking Norwegian. They were all enjoying a trot sling and conversation between themselves, while Bill Quinn was dancing with a glass in his hand, to the music of the violin played by the half-breed, Joe Laframboise. A more pleasant and jolly time I have never enjoyed."

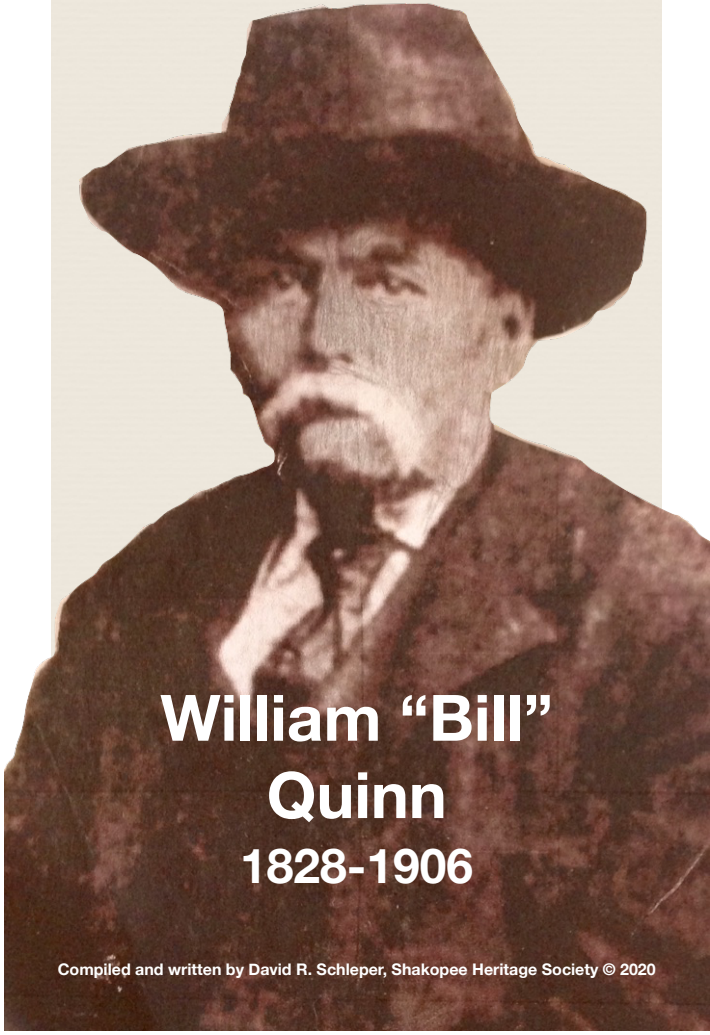
Bill moved to St. Paul in 1875 and lived there the remainder of his life. He died on March 5, 1906, in West St. Paul.



Coldwater Springs near Fort Snelling.

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William "Bill" Quinn
1828-1906

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