

The City of Hugo Namesake Controversy A Minnesota Mystery 1920-2020



The City of Hugo struggles with the identity of its true namesake. Now, in the hundredth year of this dilemma, the Hugo Historical Commission decided to research this problem and solve the mystery.

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From this writer

You may not be aware that there are two totally different theories of who is the namesake for the City of Hugo. For many whose family roots can be traced back to the original French Canadian settlers, the namesake is Victor Hugo, the famous French author. For others, however, the official namesake credit held by the Minnesota Historical Society, by fiat, the Washington County Historical Society, and by default, the City of Hugo, is Trevanion Hugo. The County Historical Society does recognize this is controversial. This controversy has been ongoing for the past 100 years. So who was the City named after?

This project may well be the highlight of a lifetime interest in history. I am no stranger to historical research. I found the gravesite and placed a stone for a great uncle that died in 1909. His final resting place was unknown to my mother's generation. I have traced my surname from 1668. I know my pedigree for twelve generations. I know the route that my Great Great Uncle followed from Iowa as a Union soldier and joined Sherman's March to the Sea. I walked the same ground that he did in North Carolina before he died in March of 1865. That research was very fulfilling, but this project is different.

It pleases me to think that someday somebody with an interest in local history, and perhaps not even born yet, will read what you're about to read. I should add that the top two of the Hugo City staff, my colleagues on the History Commission, and the Historical Commission Intern Olivia Shiffman, who is now a Historic Preservation Consultant, have read this paper and provided feedback. Any additions or corrections will be made before publication. You will never know my mistakes.

In the interest of full disclosure, I will admit I began this project with a preconceived notion of who was the namesake. I had read of a railroad connection with the namesake and believed it to be so. That will be examined in the course of this project. Only the complete history nerd enjoys reading regurgitated facts and dates. I have intentionally tried to write in storybook fashion and even inject a sense of humor so that history enthusiasts of all backgrounds might enjoy this read.

Unfortunately there is no historical document that I found which irrevocably proves the correct namesake for the City of Hugo. If you wanted something chiseled in stone, you won't find it here. We must turn instead to other methods for determining Hugo's namesake. This I believe has been accomplished. I believe the true conclusion can be reached by considering and documenting three separate historical considerations.

First of all, we will look at family testimony of direct descendants of our principal player. Second, we will examine "place name recognition" written in publications printed years before the City of Hugo incorporated. And last, we will look at circumstantial evidence attached to the false namesake credit.

A word on that...

Around 450 B.C. the Greek Herodotus, credited as the world's first historian, recognized the validity of circumstance as a legitimate source of discovery. Wikipedia gives us this quote credited to Herodotus. "Circumstances rule men. Men do not rule circumstance." Circumstantial evidence was first used as a legitimate testimony in English law in 1736 and was accepted in American law as the United States evolved as a democracy.

So testimony, name recognition, and circumstantial evidence will help us discover Hugo's true namesake.

*Craig J. Moen
Member of the Hugo Historical Commission*

Acknowledgements -

This report will begin as most research projects end. Although this paper is a position paper written by me, I would like to acknowledge the following people for their feedback. But first, something needs to be said. In the course of this research and discovery, I have gone to where the clues and facts have led me. This place may be uncomfortable for some people. We have all seen the middle of the night commercials which end with the disclaimer "views and opinions expressed within do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the staff and management." And so it is here. I, however, stand by my conclusions as evidentiary of the facts presented here. With that out of the way, I thank and acknowledge the people that helped in the width and breadth of these pages.

Members of the Hugo History Commission, Cynthia, Kathy, Trina, and Scott. Their feedback and input helped guide the initial direction of the research.

Ray and Linda Cummings, both born and raised in Hugo, their interest in local history and early research was the inspiration for this project.

Justin Brink, founder and Administrator of the Facebook website "*Old Forest Lake*" and known to this writer as a tenacious researcher. His knowledge on searching the internet was invaluable.

Joe Houle, 5th Great Nephew of Mitchel Houle and a member of Hugo's Economic Development Authority (EDA), helped navigate the Houle family genealogy.

Wayne Houle, 4th Great Nephew of Mitchel Houle, who's conversations on family genealogy spurred my curiosity.

W. Bruce Houle, 4th Great Grandchild of Mitchel Houle and principle author of the Houle genealogy "*Michel Houle Family of Centerville*".

Father Greg Esty and his staff Kathy and Susie, St. Genevieve's Catholic Church in Centerville.

Brent Peterson, Director of Washington County Historical Society, who assured that we research to discover and confirm without cause to status or position.

Michele Lindau, Hugo City Clerk, keeper of the early records for Oneka Township and the City of Hugo and chief architect for this paper's layout and questioned everything.

Bryan Bear, City of Hugo Administrator and resident expert on Minnesota forms of government.

Don Marier, the inspiration and host for the Family History Group, which is an association of descendants from Oneka Township, Centerville, and the City of Hugo's earliest settlers.

Brad LeTourneau, local expert on all things Oneka.

Mary Gibbs, retired Project and Administrative Coordinator for Office of Communication for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Allison Spies, MLIS, Archives Program Manager, Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

Mary E Hugo Burnell, a Trevanion Hugo descendent.

Debbie Nelson, an early Trevanion Hugo researcher.

References

Background historical information was taken from the following books and websites.

Robert Goodman (2008) *The History of Washington County—Gateway to Minnesota History* Published by Washington County Historical Society.

Anna Engquist, Louise Johnson, Sue Collens, Gail Seifert , Betty Rorey (1977) *Washington; A County in Minnesota*, a project of the Washington County Historical Society.

Rev. Edward Neil (1881) *The History of Washington County and St. Croix Valley*.

Warren Upham (1920) *Minnesota Geographic Names*, Minnesota Historical Society.

James Gits (???) *St. John the Baptist Church Hugo, Minnesota 1902-1992*.

W. Bruce Houle (1977) *The Michel Houle Family of Centerville*

Most websites are identified where they are quoted. Included are the websites for the City of Hugo, City of Centerville, Washington County Historical Society, Zenith City.com (Duluth), the 1900 U.S. Census, Wikipedia, and Minnesota Postal History.



Circumstances for this Undertaking-

Since this paper too will be archived and may be of interest to some future student of local history, here explains the circumstance for undertaking this project. As credited in the acknowledgements, Ray and Linda Cummings initiated early research. Without pressing the point, they donated their research to the Hugo Historical Commission. Their research was filed and stored for several years before being re-discovered by the Commission's Chair-person, Cynthia Schoonover. Cynthia asked the Commission members if one of us would like to follow up on the research. This writer had long been curious why there could be two theories about the City's namesake. With the chance to discover which theory was true, research for this project began in January, 2020, and concluded in November, 2020.

Before we can examine the issue, certain facts need to be understood.

Discovering the true namesake is about researching two different events separated in time by a quarter century. **This is very important and cannot be stressed enough.** The first event is the application and establishment of a post office in Hugo in 1882. The second event is the petition for and establishment of the City of Hugo in 1906.

Now read that paragraph again so it is firmly implanted and understood that these are two separate events

Application for New Post Office -

Mail to this area was originally brought by stagecoach to Centerville, on to Columbus and points beyond. The railroad was to follow the same route. At the time, farmers in the area free-ranged their cattle. There were no fences to limit roaming cattle. These farmers objected to the railroad using the stagecoach route fearing the train would hit and kill their cattle. They did get the route changed because the train route was moved three miles east to what is now the Hardwood Creek Trail passing through Oneka Township. Mail delivery was changed from stagecoach to train in 1871. Because the local post office remained in Centerville, the train's mail stop in Oneka Township, three miles to the east, was called Centerville Station. This was the closest that the railroad came to the Centerville Post Office. That was eleven years before the name "Hugo" appeared anywhere. Centerville Station did eventually become the center for the new community of Hugo.



The first document to be examined is the most central to a conclusion of fact. It was obtained from the United States Postal Service for a request of information on the establishment of a local Post Office. The request was made by Ray Cummings. (Exhibit 1)

Parts of the application have been enlarged here so they can be seen more clearly.

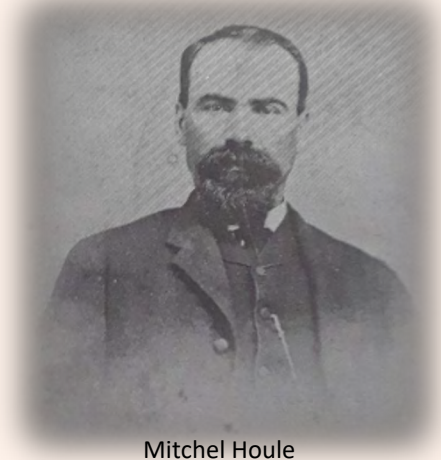
On this document, several things are learned:

1. The Post Office's name would become "Hugo" located at Centerville Station.
2. The name "Hugo" was not the first name considered as claimed in the Houle genealogy book, but it was the name submitted for the new post office.

The proposed office to be called STATEMENT. ~~Centerville~~ Hugo

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the United States.

3. The person requesting the establishment of a post office would also be the first postmaster.
4. The application was signed and submitted by Mitchel Houle.
5. The document is dated February 23, 1882, and was accepted by the United States Postal Service on March 30, 1882.



Mitchel Houle

ALL WHICH I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this 23 day of February, 18 82

(Sign full name.) Mitch Houle, Proposed P. M.

I CERTIFY that I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

A. Indeap P. M.
Postmaster at Centerville

Exhibit 1

(No. 1004.)

Post Office Department

OFFICE OF THE FIRST ASSISTANT P. M. GENERAL

WASHINGTON, D. C., 188

Sir, Before the Postmaster General decides upon the application for a new post office at which you are recommended for postmaster, he requires that the blanks in the following statement be filled, and the questions carefully and correctly answered, verified by your signature, certified by a neighboring postmaster, and returned to this Department, addressed to me. The contractor should be informed of this application; and if the site of the proposed office be off the mail route, you will forward his certificate as to the practicability of supplying it, and also as to the increase of distance. If the proposed office is not on any route now under contract, it can only be established as a "Special Office," to be supplied without expense to the Department other than net proceeds.

Be careful to designate the post offices by their true official names; and answer the subjoined queries fully and accurately, or the case will not be acted upon.

Very respectfully,

Frank H. Teller
JAMES N. TYNER
First Assistant Postmaster General.

To Mr. [Name], care of the Postmaster of [Name], who will please forward to him.

The proposed office to be called

STATEMENT.

Select a short name for the proposed office, which, when written, will not resemble the name of any other post office in the United States

It will be situated in the [Name] quarter of Section [Name], Township [Name], (North [Name]) Range [Name], (East [Name]) in the County of [Name], State of [Name].
It will be on or near route No. [Name], being the route from [Name] to [Name], on which the mail is now carried [Name].

The contractor's name is [Name].

Will it be directly on this route?—Ans. [Name].

If not, how far from, and on which side of [Name]—Ans. [Name].

How much will it increase the travel of the mail one way each trip?—Ans. [Name].

Where will the mail leave the present route to supply the proposed office?—Ans. [Name].

Where intersect the route again?—Ans. [Name].

What post office will be left out by this change?—Ans. [Name].

If not on any route, is a "Special Office" wanted?—Ans. [Name]. To be supplied from [Name].

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, on the same route, is [Name].

its distance is [Name] miles, in a [Name] direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office on the same route, on the other side, is [Name].

its distance is [Name] miles, in a [Name] direction from the proposed office.

The name of the nearest office to the proposed one, not on this route, is [Name].

distance by the most direct road [Name] miles, in a [Name] direction from the proposed office.

The name of the most prominent river near it is [Name].

The name of the nearest creek is [Name].

The proposed office will be [Name] miles from said [Name], on the [Name] side of it, and will be [Name] miles from said nearest creek, on the [Name] side of it.

If near a railroad, state on which side the office will be located, how far from, and the name of [Name] station or depot.

Ans. [Name].

If it be a village, state the number of inhabitants—Ans. [Name].

Also, the population to be supplied by proposed office—Ans. [Name].

A diagram, or sketch from a map, showing the position of the proposed new office, with neighboring river or creek, roads, and other post offices, towns, or villages near it, will be useful, and is therefore desired.

A correct map of the locality might be furnished by the county surveyor, but this must be without expense to the Post Office Department.

ATTEST I CERTIFY to be correct and true, according to the best of my knowledge and belief, this [Name] day of [Name], 188 [Name].

(Sign full name.) [Name], Proposed P. M.

I CERTIFY that I have examined the foregoing statement, and that it is correct and true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

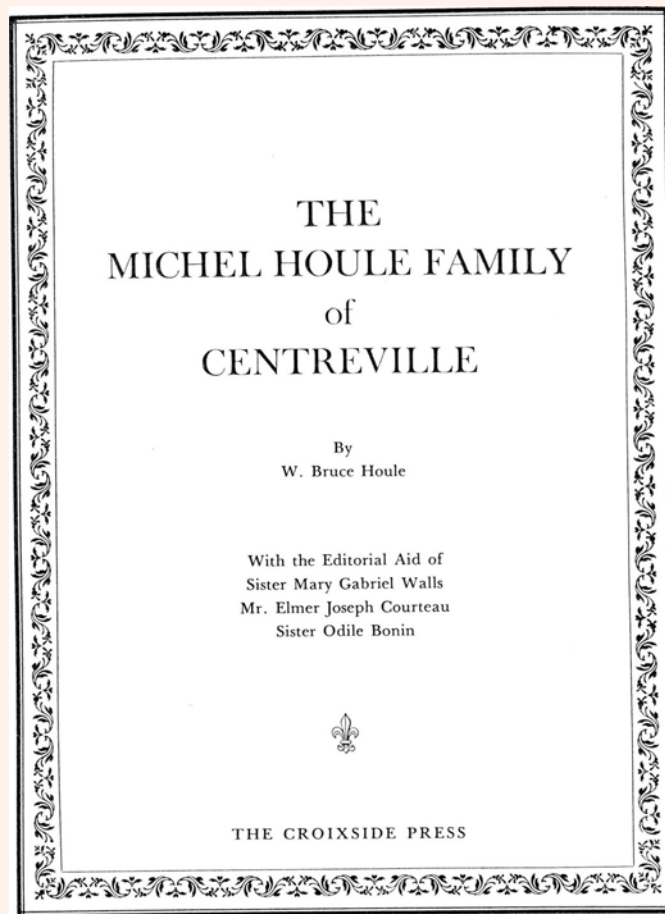
Postmaster at [Name]

(OVER.)

Mitchel Houle, First Postmaster -

From the Houle family genealogy book (Exhibit 2) we learn that Mitchel Houle was born in Quebec, Canada on June 5, 1832. At seventeen he left Quebec to work in the copper mines near Georgian Bay, which is a large bay in Lake Huron located within the borders of Ontario, Canada. That summer he went with an exploring party to the Michigan Peninsula and worked the mines for the next four years. In 1864, he moved to Duluth. There he enlisted in the Union Army, Company B, Independent Cavalry. He was discharged in April 1866 and returned to Duluth. In 1870, Mitchel and his wife Marie Pelletier moved to Oneka Township and settled on a 160 acre farm and raised nine children. Perhaps the move to Oneka was to be close to Mitchel's father and brother who had settled in Centerville. On March 11, 1873 he was elected to the Oneka Town Board and served as a Supervisor for the next five years. The application for the Post Office has shown that he submitted it in February 1882 and he did, in fact, become Hugo's first Postmaster on April 3, 1882. He remained Postmaster until his death. One source says he was struck by lightning and another says he died fighting a fire in a hay meadow. They both agree on the date of August 14, 1886. Mitchel Houle is buried in St. Genevieve's cemetery in Centerville, Minnesota.

Exhibit 2



Next to be examined is the entry in the Houle genealogy book on page 250 (Exhibit 3). The Houle family tradition credits Mitchel Houle with choosing the namesake as Victor Hugo. This page states that the Hugo name was chosen for the city. This needs to be qualified because the City of Hugo did not exist for another 25 years. That is 20 years after Mitchel Houle died. The name "Hugo" was chosen for the post office which is verified by the application. At the same time, the statement is not incorrect because it will be shown next that this area surrounding the post office was referred to as "Hugo" long before the village was incorporated.

Exhibit 3

The City of Hugo Name by Early Settler

The following was taken from the book entitled *The History of Washington County and St. Croix Valley* by Rev. Edward Neill, published in 1881, and other information from Genevieve Belair, daughter of Mitchell Houle and Marie Pelletier, submitted by his granddaughter, Sister Louise Joseph.

The City of Hugo was named in honor of the French writer, Victor Hugo. The first two names suggested for the growing community were Franklin and Houle Town, both of which were rejected by the community.

Mitchell Houle, an early settler, was the spokesman for the community and selected the name of Hugo. He also was given credit for selecting the name of Egg Lake, which is located in the western part of Hugo.

Mitchell Houle was born 6-5-1832 At St. Michael d'Yamaska, Quebec, Canada. At the age of 17 he left Canada and worked in the copper mines near Georgian Bay. After working in the mines for a few months, he spent a summer with an exploring party and moved onto the Michigan Peninsula where, for the next four years, he worked in the mines.

In 1864 he moved to Duluth and enlisted in Company B Independent Cavalry and for two years fought in the Civil War. He was discharged from the Cavalry at Fort Snelling in April of 1866. After his release from the service he returned to Duluth. He became the first marshall and mayor of Duluth.

In 1870 Mitchell and his wife, Marie Pelletier, moved to then Oneka township and settled on a 160-acre farm. They had nine children: Alice, Adele, Adeline, Frank, Elizabeth, Mary, Lyda, Louise and Genevieve. Three years later, on 3-11-1873, he was elected to the board of supervisors for Oneka township. He served on the board until 1879.

On 4-3-1882 Mitchell Houle was appointed as the first postmaster of the community. He served in this capacity for six years. At the age of 54, on 8-14-1886, Mitchell was killed by lightning while making hay in a meadow on their farm. He is buried at St. Genevieve's Cemetery in Centerville, Minnesota. At the time of his death, unknown to his wife, he owned the northern point of Minnesota which extends east and north of Lake Superior, known as Minnesota Point. Because of this unknown fact to his wife or family, no taxes or claim was made at the time of his death, and the property was taken back for taxes by the state.



Victor Hugo, French writer

Victor Hugo, French Author –



Victor Hugo (1802-1885) was a French poet, novelist, and dramatist of the Romantic Era. He produced an enormous output of work and is considered the greatest and best of the French writers. The "Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "Les Misérables" are two of his best known. In addition, he produced more than 4,000 drawings between 1848 and 1851.

In honor of his 80th birthday, a celebration in Paris began on June 25th, 1881, where he was presented with a SEVRES VASE which was a traditional gift for Sovereigns. On June 27th, the largest parade in French history was held in his honor. Also, the City of Paris changed the name of the Avenue

d'Eylau to Avenue Victor Hugo. Such a celebrated Frenchman would be well known in the French Canadian settlement of Oneka. Note these celebrations occurred seven months before the Hugo Post Office application.

A quick recap of what we know so far: The train stop for the Centerville Post Office was three miles east of Centerville and was called Centerville Station. When Mitchel Houle made application for a separate post office at Centerville Station, the United States Postal Service requested a new name to avoid confusion with the post office in the City of Centerville. Mitchel Houle eventually chose the name "Hugo" for the new post office. Family testimony tells us the name Hugo was chosen in Honor of Victor Hugo, the famous author of Mitchel Houle's hereditary fatherland.

Difference between Township, Village, City –

A township is a geographical subdivision of a county. A township manages itself but is subject to the county in matters such as zoning authority. The difference between a village and a city is more a matter of governance. A village elects the village president and council from the population at large within the borders of the village. A city elects its mayor from the population at large, but it elects its council members from districts. In practice, the terms “village” and “city” are used interchangeably. Whichever term is used it is, in fact, the same piece of geography.

In Minnesota at the present time, the term “village” is no longer used. Today's version of governance is actually a hybrid of the two forms of representation. The mayor and one council person are elected as at-large candidates and three council members are elected by the district in which they reside.



Oneka Township (1870's). The word "Oneka" is derived from the Dakota word "onakan" or to strike or knock off rice into a canoe.

Bruce Houle – Principle Author of “The Michel Houle Family of Centreville”

The main author of "*The Michel Houle Family of Centreville*" is Bruce Houle. He is known to this writer having graduated high school in the same class, Forest Lake, MN in 1964. Bruce now lives in Montana. He was contacted for verification and his specific source for the Victor Hugo namesake. His reply is included as Exhibit 4 on the next page. It verifies that Mitchel Houle's granddaughter, Sister Louise Joseph, always maintained that the name “Hugo” was chosen in honor of the French writer Victor Hugo.

It will be shown later that at 33 years old, Trevanion William Hugo had moved to the United States less than a year before the post office application and two decades before he became well known. He most certainly was unknown to Mitchel Houle. The reader might think “that's it”, but that would be incorrect. That is not “it”. Where Trevanion lived at the time the post office was established is not core to the naming of the city. It is only mentioned here to show that there is no possible argument that Trevanion Hugo was ever considered as a namesake for the post office. When and where he lived will be examined later.

Exhibit 4

Page 1 of 3

Re: Hugo

OUTLOOK TEAM
Sun 10/13/2019 7:27 AM
To: craig moen
Cc: OUTLOOK TEAM

Craig,

You have spent a large amount of time on this project for Hugo, Mn. When I wrote the book, this subject came up a few times, and the response given each time, was the same. Hugo was named after Victor Hugo, French writer.

On page 250 of my book, I gave the entire page to "The City of Hugo Name by Early Settler". In reading this article now, it states, 'The following was taken from the book entitled 'The History of Washington County and The St. Croix Valley, by Rev. Edward Neill, published in 1881, and other information from Genevieve Belair, daughter of Michel 'Mitchell' Houle and Maria Pelletier, submitted by his granddaughter, Sister Louise Joseph.

What Sister Louise Joseph stated:

The City of Hugo was named in honor of the French writer, Victor Hugo. The first two names suggested for the growing community were Franklin and Houle Town, both of which were rejected by the community.

Mitchell Houle, an early settle, was the spokesman for the community and selected the name of Hugo. He also was given credit for selecting the name of Egg Lake. Mitchel Houle was born 5 June 1832 at St. Michael d'Yamaska, Quebec, Canada. At the age of 17 he left his home and traveled the migration path that most French Canadians followed in the years to follow.

I will photo the rest of page 250 from my book, and mail to you along with my new article on the French Canadian ancestors migration from Quebec towards the US. The article will address issues of the great migration from 1830-1860 out of Canada, and why Houghton County, Lake Linden, Michigan came to be known as 'Little Canada' of Michigan.

Please send me your mailing address and I will forward these papers for you to read.

Thanks
W Bruce Houle
PO Box 539
Culbertson, Montana 59218

<https://outlook.live.com/mail/inbox/id/AQQkADAwATY3ZmYAZS1iMTVjLWRiNjgtM...> 10/13/2019

For more verification of Victor Hugo as namesake, a very unscientific poll was taken at the July, 2020, meeting of the Family History Group. About 15 people were in attendance. They were asked about family stories concerning Hugo's namesake. All of those that responded credited Victor Hugo as the namesake. A few in the group asked "Who's Trevanion Hugo?". This poll led to an exchange of emails with Linda Cummings from another branch of the Houle tree. Her email is shown here below. Linda's Great Great Grandfather was Mitchel Houle's Nephew. So now we have two branches of the Houle family verifying Victor Hugo as the namesake.

Sent from my T-Mobile 4G LTE Device

----- Original message -----

From: Linda Cummings
Date: 8/11/20 10:21 AM (GMT-06:00)
To: [c.moen](#)
Subject: Naming of Hugo

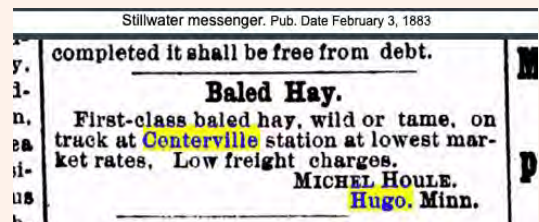
Craig, in my family we always heard that the City of Hugo was named after Victor Hugo. Also in our family is the lore that my great, great-grandfather, Phillip Houle, suggested Hugo as the name of the city. Philip was a great reader and loved Victor Hugo's works including *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Misérables*.

Some History of Oneka Township –

Now we must look at this area in Oneka Township. How was it identified post 1882 and pre 1906? It has already been shown that the mail stop in Oneka Township was called Centerville Station. Centerville Station became a wooding stop for the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad in 1868. Many local farmers earned extra income by selling wood for fuel to the railroad. When trains were stopped here, locals and the train crews would throw wood into the tender car. In 1872, two French natives, Louis and Francoise Kuchli, opened a store, hotel, and sample room, which was the first business in the new village. The new Hugo Post Office was established in 1882. In 1883, the Piette family of eight settled here and set up the first blacksmith shop. With these new businesses, Hugo Post Office and the train station, the area was fast becoming a center of activity.

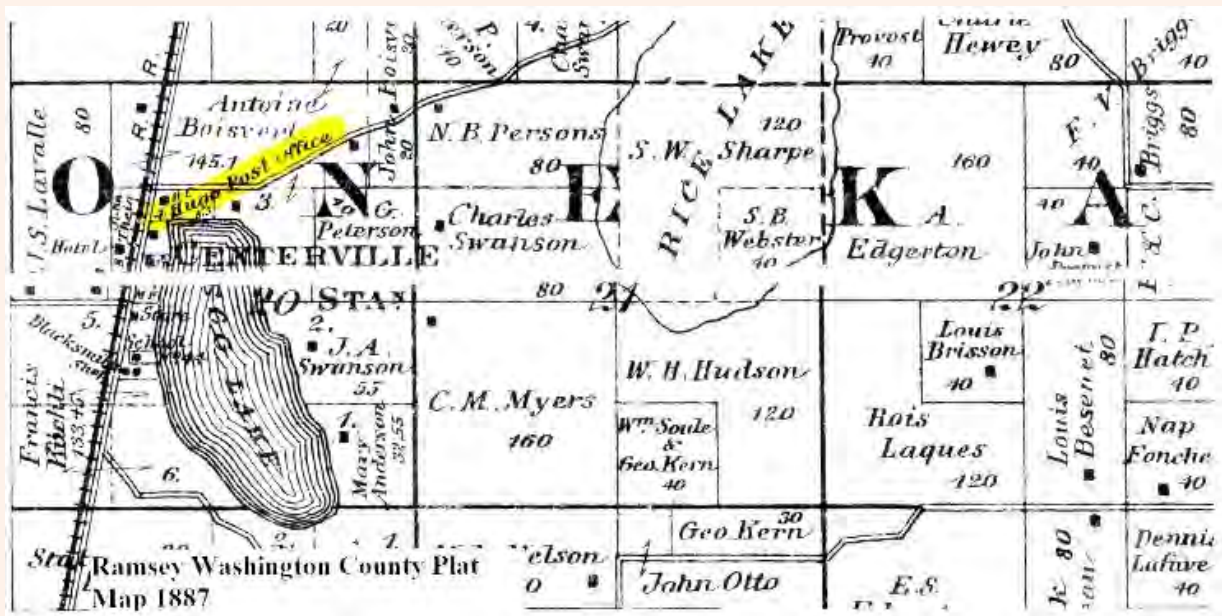
Exhibit 5

So how was this center of activity identified to non-residents? The answer can be found in newspapers published many years before the city was incorporated.



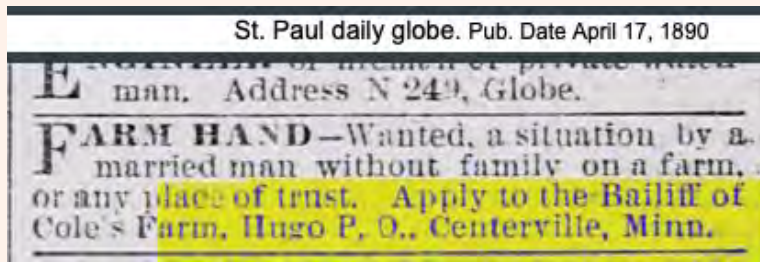
- In 1883, 23 years before the village was incorporated, Michel Houle placed an ad for baled hay which could be picked up at the railroad station in Hugo (Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 6



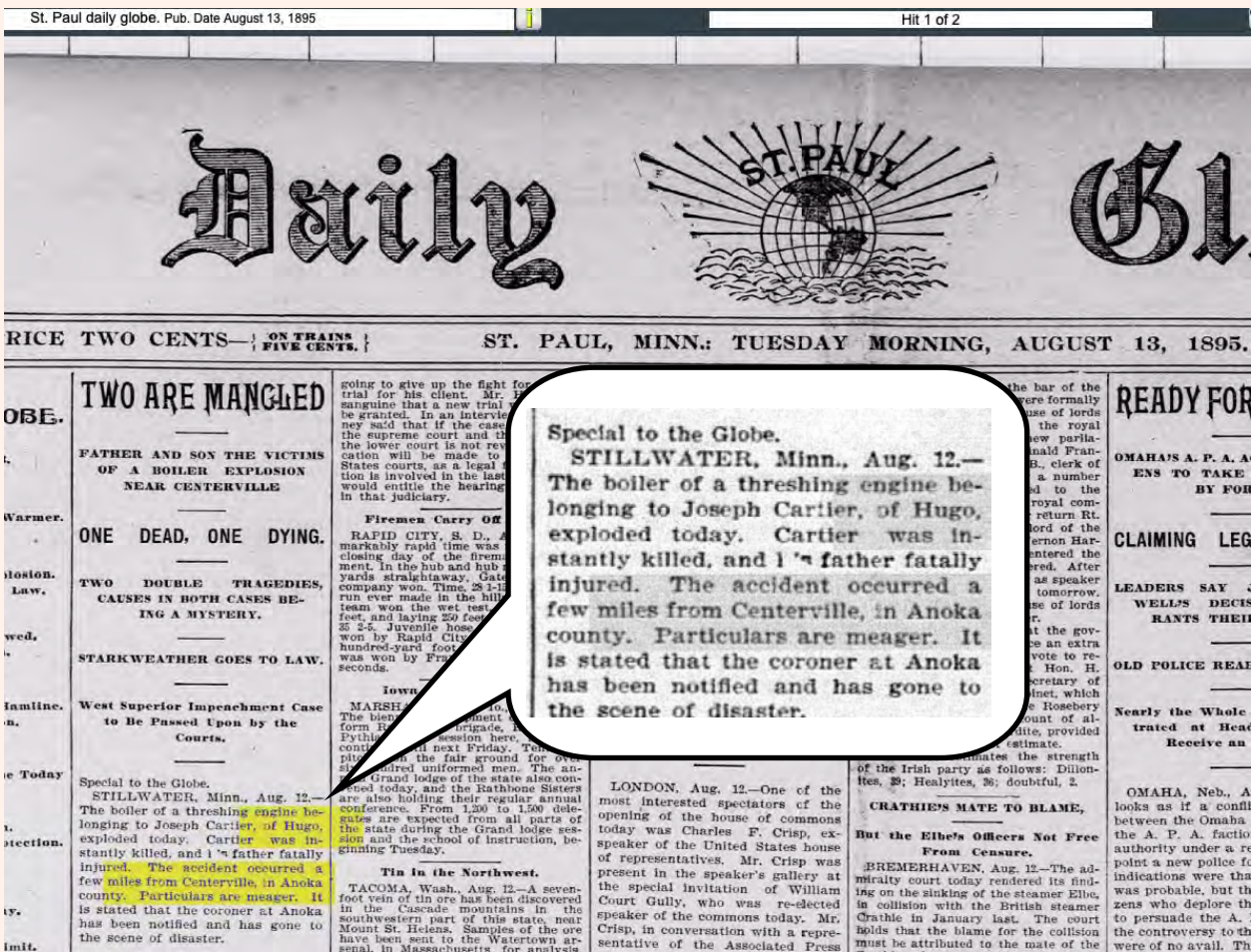
- In 1887, 19 years before incorporation, the plat map for Ramsey and Washington counties (Exhibit 6) clearly shows the Hugo post office at Centerville station--the railroad depot.

Exhibit 7



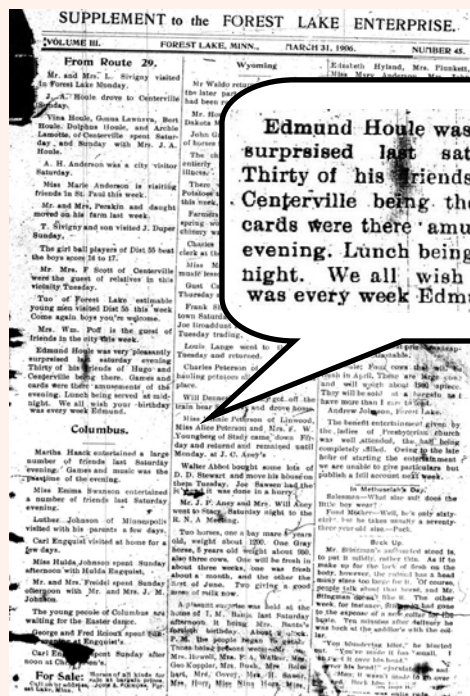
- In 1890, 16 years before the village filed for incorporation, the St. Paul Daily Globe ran a help wanted ad for a farm hand (Exhibit 7) "Apply at Hugo P.O. Centerville [station] Minn".

Exhibit 8



- In 1895, 11 years before incorporation the St. Paul Daily Globe reports on a terrible accident in Hugo (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 11



- In 1906, the March issue of *The Forest Lake Enterprise* (Exhibit 11) reports that Edmund Houle was surprised with a birthday party by friends from Centerville and Hugo.

Exhibit 12

- In 1906, the *Stillwater Messenger* (Exhibit 12), in two separate articles, announces that a petition is filed to incorporate the Village of Hugo. Both of these news items mention the Village of Hugo as if it was an established community, which it was.

Stillwater messenger, Pub. Date March 10, 1906

Just and fair system of dealing with each other, and the public generally, and to encourage the establishment of manufacturing industries in this city. A hall will be secured where those interested can meet and talk matters over.

A New Village.

The residents of the village of **Hugo** in the northern part of this county are ambitious to be incorporated and a number of citizens, including Joseph, George and Edward Carpenter, have petitioned the board of county commissioners to provide for a special election there to incorporate the village.

The petitioners represent that it is proposed to incorporate in the limits 2,560 acres of platted lots. The population numbers 201, and incorporation, they claim, would be advantageous.

Lyceum Attactions.

The Stillwater Lyceum board of directors have arranged for a series of entertainments for next season. In the past the entertainments furnished by the Lyceum management, at a nominal price, gave great satisfaction and furnished instruction and amusement to an appreciation. This entire community

Soothing Syrups. It is Pleasant. It contains neither Opium, Morphine nor other Narcotic substance. Its age is its guarantee. It destroys Worms and allays Feverishness. It cures Diarrhoea and Wind Colic. It relieves Teething Troubles, cures Constipation and Flatulency. It assimilates the Food, regulates the Stomach and Bowels, giving healthy and natural sleep. The Children's Panacea—The Mother's Friend.

The Kind You Have Always Bought Bears the Signature of

Chas. H. Fletcher

In Use For Over 30 Years.

THE CENTAUR COMPANY, NEW YORK CITY.

County Commissioners Meeting.

The annual March meeting of the County Commissioners occurred last Tuesday.

The usual request for the abatement of taxes was heard and referred to the proper committees.

A petition to incorporate the village of **Hugo** was presented. The board was asked to submit the proposition to a vote of the residents of the village.

Exhibits 5-12 show that after Mitchel Houle named the post office in honor of the famous French author, Victor Hugo, the area was forever after known as "Hugo". It is hard to understand why, a quarter century later when the village was incorporated, a different namesake was credited. At this point, there are two more documents that need to be examined: first, minutes from the last Town of Oneka meeting before separation with the village, and second, minutes from the first Village of Hugo meeting. (Exhibit 13 and 14).

Exhibit 13

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

The annual town meeting was held at the town hall, in Hugo Station, in the town of Onaka, County of Washington, and State of Minnesota, on the 13th day of March 1906.

The meeting was called to order by D. R. Kellogg, clerk of said town, and O. L. Kinyon was chosen moderator of said meeting.

The clerk read the report of John Slawa Jr., treasurer, which was accepted.

On motion it was ordered that the following sums of money be raised upon the tax, upon taxable property in said town, for the following purposes of the current year:

For general township purposes,

Four Hundred Dollars (\$400.00)

For road and bridge purposes,

Six Hundred Dollars (\$600.00)

At five o'clock the polls were declared closed, and counting of votes began, there were 139 votes cast, according to the Register and ballot box.

The counting of votes resulted as follows.

Mike Steiner, for Supervisor, received 138 votes, for the term of 3 years.

D. R. Kellogg received 139 votes for Town Clerk.

John Slawa received 138 votes for Treasurer.

O. L. Kinyon received 76 votes for Assessor.

" " " " " 139 votes for Justice of Peace.

John Lambert received 139 votes for Constable.

E. P. Jenkins of District number one was elected for road overseer.

Emile Marien was elected road overseer for District number two.

John Flasher was elected road overseer for District number three.

Joseph Lambert was elected road overseer for District number four.

Attest
D. R. Kellogg
Town Clerk

Exhibit 14

MINUTES of the Proceedings of the Village Council of the Village of Hugo
in the County of Washington and State of Minnesota, including all accounts audited
by said Council.

Special Meeting Sept. 15-1906.
Meeting called to order by Pres.
Hiney at 7.30 P.m.

Roll call by recorder.

All members present.

The business to be considered was
the adopting of a set of ordinances
and by-laws for the village.

The following ordinances were
adopted.

no. I. Standing rules for govt of the
Council. Pages 1 to 3 Book of Ordinances

no. II. Rules governing sale of
intoxicating liquors. Pages 3 to 7.

no. III. Marshal's duties and fees Pages 7 to 8

no. IV. For punishment of persons
disturbing the peace. Pages 8 to 11.

no. V. To prevent fast driving and
horse racing. Pages 11 to 12.

no. VI. For licensing shows, peddlers
and circuses. Pages 12 to 13.

no. VII. To regulate proceedings before
village justices. Page 13

no. VIII. To restrain the running at Pages
large of horses, cattle and sheep & swine. 13 to 14

no. IX. Relating to the obstructing
streets or side walks. Pages 14 to 15.

no. X. To prevent picketing of cattle
in the streets. To prevent cruelty to
horses or mules. Page 15

The following Committees were appointed.

On lights. J. Carpenter and L. Patrin.

On location for lamp posts. F. Hiney, F. Miller
and Thos. Fursman.

Meeting adjourned at 9.45 P.m. to
meet Saturday, Sept. 22 at 7.30 P.m.

(Signed). Thomas A. Fursman.
Recorder.

Minutes from the last and first meetings-

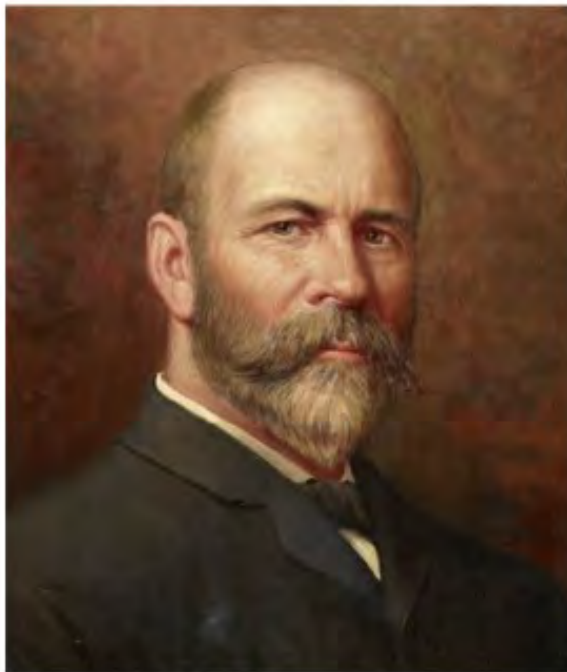
Exhibit 13 is the minutes from Oneka Township's last annual meeting held on March 18, 1906, before the Village of Hugo separated from the Township. Exhibit 14 is the minutes from the first council meeting of the Village of Hugo held on September 13, 1906. The first sentence of the annual township meeting says it was held at "Hugo Station". The first sentence of the village meeting says the minutes are "the proceedings of the Village of Hugo in the County of Washington."

Conspicuous in its absence is any discussion in either set of minutes of what the name of the village should be or will be. This lack of discussion tells its own story. In all probability, the name of the village was not debatable and not in need of discussion. The community had a name. It had a name for the last twenty-five years. It was the name that Mitchel Houle gave to the Post Office in honor of Victor Hugo. So, as stated before, the argument can be made that Mitchel Houle did, in effect, name the City, but it was done indirectly, unofficially, and not during his lifetime.

Who is Trevanion William Hugo?

The evidence for Victor Hugo is established and documented. So now, several pages into this research project, it begs the question - "Who is Trevanion Hugo?" and how did this second namesake myth get started and eventually become published as fact? A great deal is to be learned from a story found at ZenithCity.com published at his time of death. (Exhibit 15).

TREVANION HUGO



Trevanion Hugo. (Duluth Public Library)

Exhibit 15

February 26, 1923: Death of former Duluth Mayor Trevanion Hugo

On this day in Duluth in 1923, former Duluth mayor Trevanion Hugo died of the flu. He was 75 years old. Hugo was born at Bodinnoc, Cornwall, England, and grew up in Kingston, Ontario, where he studied to be an engineer. He became a marine engineer on the great lakes, work that brought him to Duluth by 1878. He moved his family to the Zenith City in 1881 to take a job as the chief engineer of Grain Elevator B (also called elevator Q). He served as Duluth mayor from 1900 to 1905 and again in 1921 to finish out the term of Clarence Magney (<http://zenithcity.com/archive/people-biography/clarence-r-magney/>), who had resigned to become a district court judge. Despite Hugo's work as an engineer, politician, and civic leader (including school board and library board president) the *Duluth Herald's* story on his death focused on his involvement with fraternal organizations. By the time of his death Hugo had "attained one of the highest seats in Masonry in the world" and ranked "fourth in the Southern jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite [and] was in line for sovereign grand commander, the highest position in the rite." Hugo was credited for organizing the Mason's Scottish Rite in Duluth in 1887 and the Aad Temple, Mystic Shrine, Duluth (aka Duluth Shriners) in 1896. He would serve as vice president for the Shrine Hospital for crippled children in St. Paul. As if that wasn't enough, he also found time to belong to the Independent Order of Odd Fellows and had served as the group's grand master of the grand lodge of Minnesota. He also belonged to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Duluth Engineers Club, the Duluth Chamber of Commerce, the Duluth Boat Club (<http://zenithcity.com/archive/lost-architecture/duluth-boat-club/>), and the Kitchi Gammi Club (<http://zenithcity.com/archive/historic-architecture/kitchi-gammi-club/>).

The Life of Trevanion Hugo

From Exhibit 15, which is an article about the life and death of Trevanion Hugo, a great deal is learned relevant to this namesake discussion. Born in 1848 in Bodinnoc, Cornwall, England he immigrated to Canada and grew up in Kingston, Ontario, where he studied engineering. He became a marine engineer for ships that worked the waters of Lake Superior. This brought him to Duluth where at 33 years old he moved his family to take a job as chief engineer of Grain Elevator B in 1881. It needs to be underscored here that it was just a matter of a few months before Mitchel Houle made application for the post office and many years before Trevanion would be known as Duluth's mayor. And most important, no connection is given to the City of Hugo, Minnesota. Both Trevanion Hugo and Mitchel Houle emigrated from Canada and both men were of French heritage. Is it possible that they knew each other? The timeline does not support this. Mitchel Houle left his home to work at 17 years old in 1849. Trevanion Hugo would have been a one year old at the time."

It is safe to say that Trevanion was unknown in 1882 beyond his engineering circles. The 1900 US Census confirms the likelihood of when Trevanion moved to Duluth. This census shows date of birth and place of birth. Trevanion is listed with his wife and two sons. The birthdate for Trevanion R. junior is given as August, 1881, and shows he was born in Canada. It is unknown what month in 1881 that the family arrived in Duluth, but we do know that the post office application was in February, 1882. It is likely, therefore, that he arrived no more than a few months before Mitchel Houle made application for the post office. Also, note that there is no mention made of Hugo, Minnesota in the news article of his death. The news story lists his accomplishments as a "Mason" and how he rose to that organizations' highest office. This will become more important as this project proceeds.

One version of how the City of Hugo got its name from Trevanion says that he was an engineer for the railroad. It is documented that the government gave tracks of land to the railroad as incentive for building their routes. The railroad would then plot this land and sell it to commercial and residential interests. Towns would be born out of these transactions. It is not much of a stretch to believe that one of these towns would be named after the engineer that drove the train. We know that Trevanion was not an engineer for the railroad. The source for that version might well be a misunderstanding of what is said in the book *A History of Washington County* published in 2008 by the Washington County Historical Society. This book does present both versions for Hugo's namesake.

The Trevanion theory is shown here, word for word. (Exhibit 16). "Trevanion William Hugo, who was the chief engineer of the Consolidated Elevator Company in Duluth and former Mayor (1900-1904) and who likely had ties to the railroad."

Most of that statement is true. To the casual reader, however, the words "engineer" and "railroad" in the same paragraph might lead to a false conclusion. Furthermore, the part of that statement that is objected to is **"...with likely ties to the railroad."**

Below is from the online collection of Community Histories from the Washington County Historical Society's Website and references Trevanion William Hugo as "likely" having ties to the railroad. The entire entry is shown here.

Exhibit 16

In 1856 land on Oneka Lake was surveyed and platted and given the name of Washington. Like many paper towns of those days, Washington never developed. The Village of Hugo was originally called Centerville Station. It arose when the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad (later the Northern Pacific) bypassed the village of Centerville, three miles west in Anoka County. Centerville Station Post Office was established in 1874.

Early entrepreneurs were French natives Louis and Françoise Kuchli. They came to the area in 1872 and built a store, hotel, and "sample room," the first businesses in the village. The 258 people in the area decided to incorporate in 1906. However, the Post Office requested the village be incorporated under a different name to avoid the confusion between Centerville in Anoka County and Centerville Station in Washington County. The name Hugo was said to have been proposed by Michael Houle after the name "Houle" was rejected by the village.

Why Hugo? Some say it was named after the famous French author Victor Hugo; others that it was named after Trevanion William Hugo, who was chief engineer of the Consolidated Elevator Company in Duluth and former Duluth mayor (1900-1904) and who likely had ties to the railroad.

Note: The first paragraph is not exactly accurate and needs to be clarified. It has been shown that the post office remained in Centerville. Centerville Station is where the mail was dropped and then brought to Centerville. The separate post office established at Centerville Station was named "Hugo" in 1882, not 1874 as stated above. This is proved by the application (Exhibit 1)

Exhibit 17

For the railroad connection, we look at the publication *The Locomotive* which is a trade newsletter for mechanical engineers.

Its April issue of 1923 reports on the passing of Trevanion Hugo. His obituary profiles his education, his work, and his civic and political accomplishments. Nowhere to be found is any mention of ties to the railroad. From this we can conclude that the sentence "with probable ties to the railroad" is not probable at all.

The only railroad connection that will be conceded is that perhaps he was a passenger on a train that passed through the City of Hugo.

182	THE LOCOMOTIVE.	[April,
<hr/>		
Obituary.		
<p>ON February 27th, 1923, there passed away at his home in Duluth, Minn., a man whose strong character, keen intellect and public spirit had made him an outstanding figure in that community. This man was Trevanion W. Hugo, who had been a member of the HARTFORD'S organization since 1888 and its resident agent at Duluth for many years. Those of our Com-</p>		
1923.]	THE LOCOMOTIVE.	183
<hr/>		
<p>pany who knew him and many of us who never had the privilege of making his acquaintance but knew of him, feel deep sorrow and regret at the termination of this long association with one who so ably and devotedly served our company and so firmly established its reputation among the boiler-users of his district. We have always felt proud of the confidence in which our Duluth representative was held by his fellow citizens and of the honors which he received at their hands. We now sincerely share in the sorrow and sense of loss which his death brings to that city.</p>		
<p>Mr. Hugo was a Cornishman by birth. He came with his parents to America at an early age and received his education here. Leaving school, his aptitude for mechanical pursuits led him to go in for steam engineering as a profession. After an experience of several years on lake steamers, he went to Duluth in 1881, and as an engineer began to take his part in the up-building and developing of that industrial center. He was consulting engineer for many of its largest elevator plants and made his initial connection with The Hartford Steam Boiler Inspection & Insurance Company largely because he realized that it could render through him great service to the steam-users in his growing community.</p>		
<p>But it was not as an engineer alone that Mr. Hugo's life is distinguished. He had pre-eminently the spirit of loyal service. He was a man of keen intellect and sound judgment. These qualities were recognized by his fellow citizens and in succession he was elected alderman, president of the City Council, member of the Public Library Board and in the year 1900 was honored with the mayoralty of the city, serving in that position for four years. On his retirement from that position, he continued a member of the School Board of which he was president for many years. In 1920 he received the distinguished compliment of a unanimous call from the Commissioners of Duluth to act as Mayor in filling out the unexpired term of Mayor Hagney, who had resigned.</p>		
<p>Mr. Hugo was nationally prominent in the Masonic fraternity. He became a Mason early in his career and his interest in and devotion to Masonry continued all his life and was rewarded by signal honors at the hands of his fellows. The degrees conferred on him were numerous and at the time of his death he was Grand Chancellor of the Supreme Council Scottish Rite of Freemasonry and Sovereign Grand Inspector General of Minnesota.</p>		
184	THE LOCOMOTIVE.	[April,
<hr/>		
<p>In private life Mr. Hugo was a man of warm affections and of deep culture. Courteous and kindly, he won and held the respect and affections of those with whom he came in contact. In an editorial on his death, the Duluth News-Tribune sums up his character and qualities in the following tribute: "A cultured gentleman in the best American meaning of the word, a public-spirited citizen of the highest type, and a kindly courteous acquaintance and friend, Trevanion W. Hugo will be keenly missed in Duluth. Few men better deserved the title of useful citizen."</p>		

A year before his death, a story appears in the Duluth Herald on March 28, 1922, (Exhibit 18) celebrating his 50th anniversary in Masonry. This story says that shortly after his arrival in Duluth (1881) he organized the present Scottish Rite, and for 23 years he was the presiding officer in all four lodges. Next, see the notice from January 13, 1906, in *The Stillwater Messenger*. (Exhibit 19) It appears nine months before the City of Hugo held its first council meeting and says that T.W. Hugo presided over a ceremony for the local Odd Fellows, another Mason affiliate. Trevanion's involvement with the Masons is pointed out here because it plays relevant to the likelihood of how he was falsely credited as a namesake.

Exhibit 18

THE DULUTH HERALD, TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 1922.

Hugo Fifty Years a Mason; Scottish Rite Guards to Celebrate Anniversary

Noted Duluthian to Be Guest of Honor Thursday; Holds Exalted Degrees.

T. W. Hugo, one of the best known figures in Masonry in the United States, will be guest of honor Thursday evening at a reception and smoker to be given under the direction of the Scottish Rite guards at the Duluth Masonic temple. The affair is in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the raising of Mr. Hugo to the third degree of Masonry.

An elaborate program is being arranged. This will include a carnival of games, songs, music and speeches. Among the speakers will be Judge Cant, Rev. T. D. Whittles and County Attorney Greene. Luncheon will be served.

Mr. Hugo is the most prominent figure in Masonry in Minnesota. He is the present sovereign inspector general of the Scottish Rite for Minnesota and an active member of the supreme council of thirty-third degree, southern jurisdiction, of which he is the grand chancellor.


Mr. Hugo was raised in a Kingston, Ont., lodge on April 8, 1872. With him, in the same class, was Sir John A. McDonald, who later was Canada's famous premier for many years.

Shortly after Mr. Hugo's arrival in Duluth he organized the present Scottish Rite bodies and for twenty-three years was the presiding officer of all four lodges.

Mr. Hugo is a past grand sovereign of the Red Cross of Constantine; a past chief adept of the Rosicrucian society. He is an honorary grand chancellor of the supreme council of Scottish Rite of Italy, and an honorary member of the high council, Scottish Rite of England.

Besides being active in the Scottish Rite, Mr. Hugo is active in York Rite Masonry. He is a past high priest of Keystone lodge, No. 20, R. A. M., and a past grand high priest of the state grand chapter. He was the third commander of the Duluth commandery, Knights Templar, and is a past grand commander of the state.

Mr. Hugo is vice president of the Minnesota Masonic Home association.



TREVANION W. HUGO.

Exhibit 19

Stillwater messenger, Pub. Date January 13, 1906

Time during the summer.

The old coffer dam at the power house is entirely submerged, and the boilers and engines on it are several feet in water.

The inside basin is filled with water, on a level with the river.

Back water reaches up on the rapids to the temporary dam at the crossing, and delays any attempt to build the remaining two hundred feet of the dam.

plant in the whole Northwest and not only in this state.

Odd Fellows Install.

The local lodge of Odd Fellows and Daughters of Rebekah had a joint installation of officers Monday night followed by a social session with lunch. The ceremonies were conducted by T. W. Hugo, former mayor of Duluth, as grand master, assisted by A. L. Bolton and Mr. Curtis, both of St. Paul.

Hugo Residents Predominately Catholics -

The next discussion makes no attempt to be politically correct. It does, however, demand to be historically accurate.

Nowhere is it disputed that Oneka Township was settled by French Canadians. Early territorial census read like a Paris phonebook. It is said that conversations in French were commonly overheard in the first half of the last century. It is also undisputed that the religion of these French Canadians was Catholic. The *History of Saint John's* written by James Gits tells us that at least one mass was given in French until 1949. No church of any other religion was built in Hugo until 1975.

Wikipedia, the internet encyclopedia, says it best what needs to be said here:

"The Catholic Church first prohibited Catholics from membership in masonic Organizations in 1738. Since then, at least eleven popes have made pronouncements about the incompatibility of Catholic doctrine and Freemasonry. From 1738 until 1983 Catholics, who publicly associated with or publicly supported Masonic organizations were censured with excommunication." Yes, you read that correctly. In 1906, if a Catholic publicly supported a Mason, he would be excommunicated from his church.

In some academic circles, Wikipedia is considered a weak source. The previous paragraph was verified by the website "*Catholic Education Research Center*", which is the online resource for the Catholic faith and culture. CERC goes a step further and explains it was Pope Clement XII, and his encyclical was "IN EMINENTI" in 1738.

Exhibit 20

Thank you so much for your call a couple of weeks ago, and for your patience! I was able to track down some parish statistical reports back to 1902, so below are the numbers the parish of St. John the Baptist, Hugo reported for each year up to January 1, 1910.

Year (January 1- December 31)	Estimated # of Families	Estimated # of Souls (Individuals)
1902	100	500
1903	100	550
1904	110	590
1905	120	600
1906	130	600
1907	130	600
1908	130	600
1909	135	620

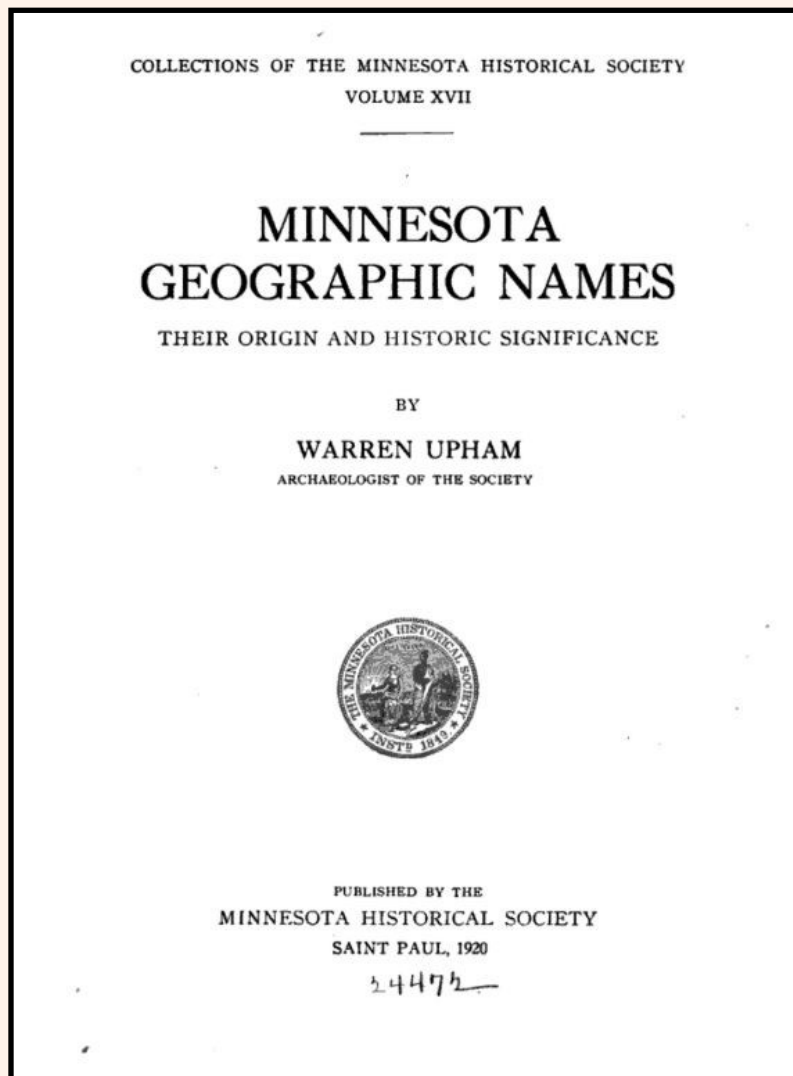
If we look at the Hugo website under "History" we find that in 1906, a petition was filed for incorporation. A copy of this petition is held in the Hugo Historical Commission's archives. This petition is signed by 37 male citizens. It gives a physical description of the boundaries of the proposed City of Hugo. It also shows that the population of the proposed city is 258 people.

Supplied by Allison Spies, Archivist for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, are found the number of parishioners from St. John's in that same year (Exhibit 20). It shows 600 souls claiming membership from 130 families. From this we can conclude that the Catholic religion was dominate in the city and much of the surrounding township. And again in 1906, any Catholic that publicly supported anything associated with Free Masonry would be excommunicated. That does cast dispersions on the likelihood that the Catholics of Hugo would choose a well-known Mason as a name-sake.

How did Trevanion Hugo Become Part of the Story?

Mitchel Houle's granddaughter, Sister Louise Joseph, and Linda Cummings, from another branch of the Houle family tree, confirmed that Victor Hugo was the namesake for the post office, which would become the center for the City of Hugo. Therefore, Trevanion Hugo could not be the namesake. Now we must turn another corner and try to discover how the Trevanion version became part of the story.

Exhibit 21



In 1920, the Minnesota Historical Society published a book titled *Minnesota Geographic Names* written by Warren Upham. (Exhibit 21) The background and accomplishments for Dr. Upham can be found on the Minnesota Historical Society website.

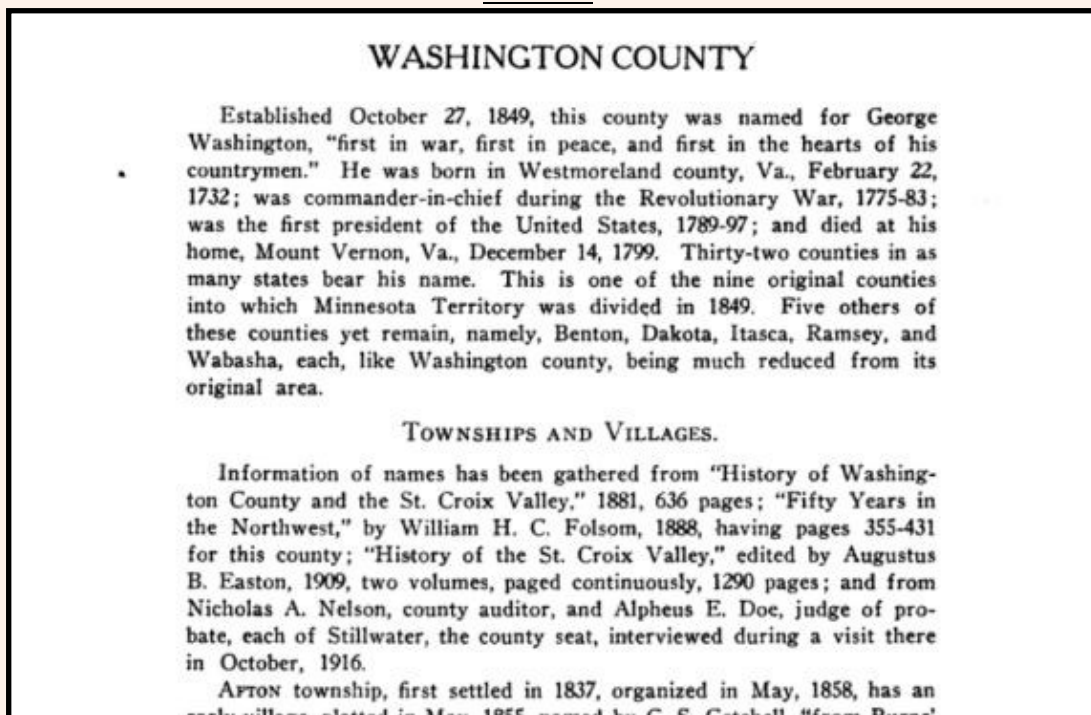
Warren Upham, an archeologist, geologist, and librarian, acquired an extensive knowledge of Minnesota. He worked on the state geological survey from 1879 to 1885. In 1896 he became superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, which he served until his death in 1934. Further, the website states that his book has become the classic reference for place name information on Minnesota's cities, towns, townships, lakes, and streams.

Sources in Upham's Book "Minnesota Geographic Names"

In the preface of his book, Upham states that "personal interviews have been the chief sources of information for most parts of this work, except for the considerable list of counties having published histories". He goes on to state that "published and personal sources consulted for each county are stated at the beginning of its catalogue of townships." With that information, we must look at the sources for Dr. Upham's book. Town names are listed by county. Each county has its own section. In the first paragraph under Washington County (Exhibit 22), the sources are so noted here:

- *"History of Washington County and the St. Croix Valley"*, 1881
- *"Fifty years in the Northwest"* by William H.C. Folsom, 1888
- *"History of the St. Croix Valley"*, edited by Augustis B. Easton, 1909
- Nicholas A. Nelson, County Auditor and Alpheus E. Doe, Judge of Probate, each of Stillwater, interviewed in October, 1916.

Exhibit 22



The first two publications are too old for what happened in 1906. A review of the third publication shows no entry for the Village/City of Hugo. Therefore, the process of elimination tells us that Upham's source for naming the City of Hugo was Nelson and Doe. The research shows that these two gentleman had it wrong. Now we look at these two to try and determine how that could happen.

The first clue to how Trevanion was falsely credited as the namesake can be found in a newspaper article written by Brent Peterson, Director of the Washington County Historical Society, and published in *The Lowdown* on December 26, 2008. The article profiles one of Upham's sources---Alpheus E. Doe. It contains his birth, education, business achievements, and his public service record. Some of his civic accomplishments are noted here:

He was a member of the Masons, Elks, M.W.A.

Judge Doe was a Mason and would obviously know of Trevanion's leadership in the Masons.

A second clue on how the false namesake was credited is found on the website "*Little Sketches of Big Folks in Minnesota*". That is where the profile is found for Upham's Nicholas Nelson.

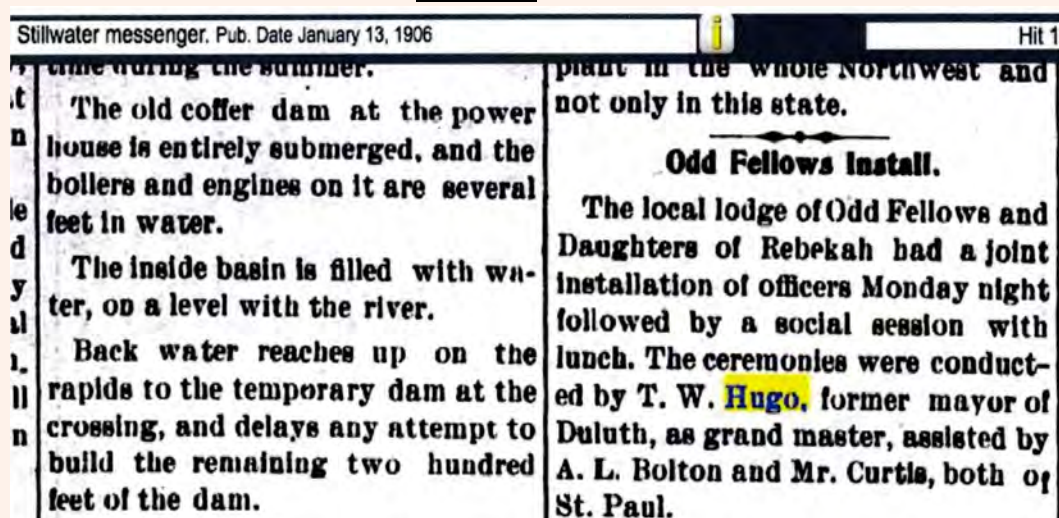
Excerpts from "*Little Sketches of Big Folks in Minnesota*"

- Nicholas A. Nelson was elected Auditor in 1906. Term expires in 1909.
- He was a member of the first regiment MNG 1888-97.
- He was city assessor 1899-1900 and 1903-1904.
- He was an alderman 1904-1906
- He was a member BPOE, Masonic fraternity, etc., etc.

Nicholas Nelson was also a Mason and would surely know of Trevanion Hugo and his office in the Masons. Please look again at Exhibit 19 which shows Trevanion presiding over a ceremony in Stillwater.

It is likely that both Doe and Nelson would have attended the same ceremony and met Trevanion in person. If they weren't in attendance, a visit by the renowned Mason leader would have been the "talk of the town" in Masonic circles. In lieu of a point by point recap of the facts learned in this research project, suffice it to say that there is only one conclusion likely.

Exhibit 19



This would be a good place to stop and take another look at Upham's book "*Minnesota Geographic Names*". In the most recent edition published in 2001, the entry for Hugo begins with the statement that the City of Hugo was formerly named Centerville. This is very wrong and easily proven to be wrong. The proof is found already in this research project. Please look again at page 8, which is the application for the Hugo Post Office. On the last typed line it says "I certify that I have examined the foregoing statement and it is true and correct". It is signed by the postmaster at Centerville. A timeline for the Centerville Post Office can be pieced together with information from the website www.WoodsnLake.com, which uses the Minnesota Historical Society as a source and from the February 9, 2016 issue of the *Quad Community Press*, which uses the Post Offices of Minnesota as a source. Centerville was settled 1850-1852. it was platted in 1854 and organized in 1857. The Centerville Post Office opened September 17, 1863, and closed two years later only to reopen in 1866. The former Columbus location consolidated with Centerville in 1893. In that same year, the name was changed to the current spelling, Centerville, and operated there until 1905. After that, a "mail-to" location of Hugo was used.

This undated photo is of the old Northern Pacific railway depot in Hugo. The depot sat just off of Hwy 61 and MN 8 before it was moved. The station was built around 1870 and was originally part of the Lake Superior & Mississippi Railway. The depot was first named "Centerville Station".



It has been shown here on Page 3 of this report that when mail delivery switched from stagecoach to train, the closest the train got to the established Centerville Post Office was in Oneka Township. As was the common practice, when a town was not near the tracks, the stop for the mail drop was the town's name plus station, in this case, Centerville Station. Also, it has been shown that Centerville Station is where the Hugo Post Office was established when Mitchel Houle was granted application for a separate post office. The entry in Upham's 2001 edition goes on to repeat the 1920 version of who the city was named after and does not acknowledge the city taking its name from the post office, which has been shown to be named in honor of Victor Hugo.

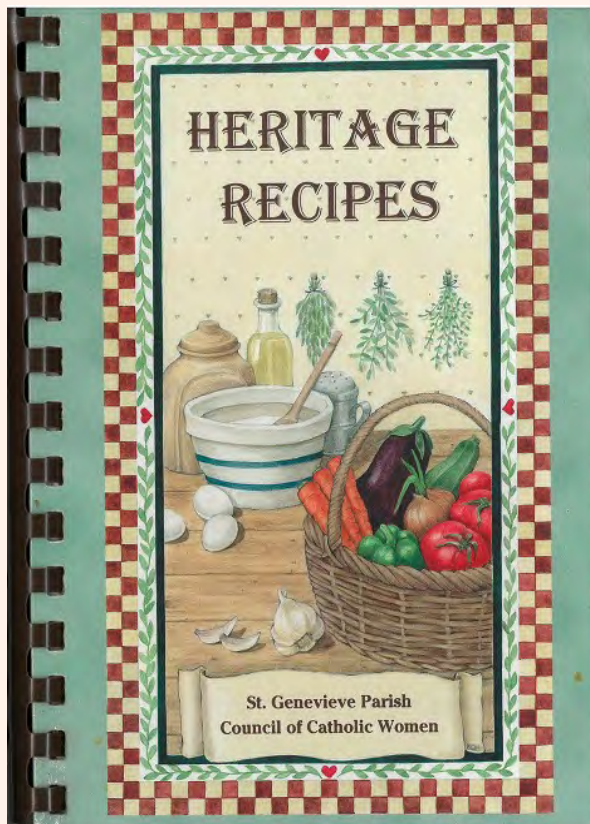
The 1920 original version of Upham's book had many entries that needed to be corrected. Well, here are two more. In fairness, it must be said that at the very least this book provided the initial catalog of place names throughout Minnesota. At the same time, using nonresident sources with no known connection to a place tells a flawed story which is at best hearsay.

Now, a hundred years later, there are still families living in Hugo that can trace their families to the original settlers. Certainly a century ago locals would have been present that would have had firsthand information, if only they would have been asked.

Wouldn't you just know it...

Just as the final proofreading of this report was coming to an end, more published news stories were discovered concerning Hugo's namesake. The first was found tucked away in the History Commission's archives. This inspired a Google search and a more thorough search of archived material just to see if anything else was "out there". Two more newspaper stories were found and the "*St. Genevieve's History and Cookbook*" (Exhibit 24) has an entry on Hugo's namesake.

Exhibit 24



On Page 9 of this book, the naming of the City and post office of Hugo is discussed. The timeline is not quite right on how it is presented but the credit is given correctly. "The name Hugo was said to have been proposed by Michael [Mitchel] Houle. Michael [Mitchel] Houle was inspired by French author Victor Hugo (1803-1885)". Sources for the cookbook are: Minnesota Historical Society, Washington County Historical Society, History of the Houle Family by W. Bruce Houle, History of St. John's of Hugo by James Gits, and oral histories shared by Melvin Dupre and Joseph Peloquin in the early 1990's. Most likely, the source for the Hugo entry is Sister Louise Joseph, a Catholic nun and granddaughter of Mitchel Houle.

These next two newspaper stories are the precise reason why this research project was undertaken. Both stories are presented as the final word of who is Hugo's namesake, and they both credit a different namesake. Since it is the goal to settle the argument once and for all, both stories need to be examined.

The first article appears in the September 28, 1978, edition of *The Forest Lake Times*. This lengthy story chronicles the basic history of Hugo. The paragraph relevant to this study is reproduced here: "At the urging of Michael [Mitchel] Houle, then the leader of the community, the town was named after Victor Hugo, a French statesman and author who had never reached the shores of America." The source is not identified, but is most likely the Houle genealogy book which was published the previous year. This research paper has looked at the claim and determined that Mitchel did not directly name the city but did name the post office twenty five years earlier. It has been shown that the area around the post office was called "Hugo" and the name became official when the city incorporated many years later.

The date and place of publication of the second newspaper story has not been determined, so it is presented here as Exhibit 25. This article quotes three sources to support the claim that Hugo was not named after the famous French author.

Exhibit 25

Did you know...?

We hate to disappoint the French Canadian descendants of Hugo and dispel the long held myth that Hugo is named after the famous poet Victor Hugo, but all evidence collected so far indicates it isn't true. Thanks to Joe Marier, who gave us a copy of the Minnesota Postal History from a philatelic collector. The Minnesota Historical society was able to verify the source of the information.

The information appears to come from the *Minnesota Geographic Names: Their Origin and Historic Significance*, a time and place directory. The directory was first published in 1920. It took author Warren Upham 17 years to gather the data contained in the directory. The information about towns and villages in Washington County came from three different sources. Alison Purgiel, reference librarian at the Minnesota Historical Society said the directory has proven the test of time. Over the years they've found it to be very accurate, she said. The directory has only been revised once.

According to the directory,

Hugo was named after Trevanion William Hugo of Duluth. At the time Hugo was considered "a village of the St. Paul and Duluth railroad." The rail bed, now known as the Hardwood Creek Trail, later became a branch of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Upham wrote "Oneka township was formerly called Centerville, for the adjacent township and village of Anoka County; but was renamed in honor of Trevanion William Hugo of Duluth."

"It doesn't make any sense that the town would have been named after Victor Hugo," said Marier. That is because Hugo was a predominately Canadian French, Catholic community. Much of Hugo's work was frowned on by the church. Hugo wrote such classics as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Miserables*, novels which vividly describe and denounce the social injustice of 19th-century France.

MINNESOTA POSTAL HISTORY

Hugo, Washington County, Mn. 55038

The Village of Hugo was located on the St. Paul & Duluth Railroad (now a branch of the Northern Pacific). It was named in honor of TREVANION WILLIAM HUGO of Duluth. He was born in Cornwall, England in 1848 and came to America in 1852 and was a marine engineer on the Great Lakes 1869-1881.

Hugo was the Chief Engineer of the Consolidated Elevator Company of Duluth, the largest such company in the United States.

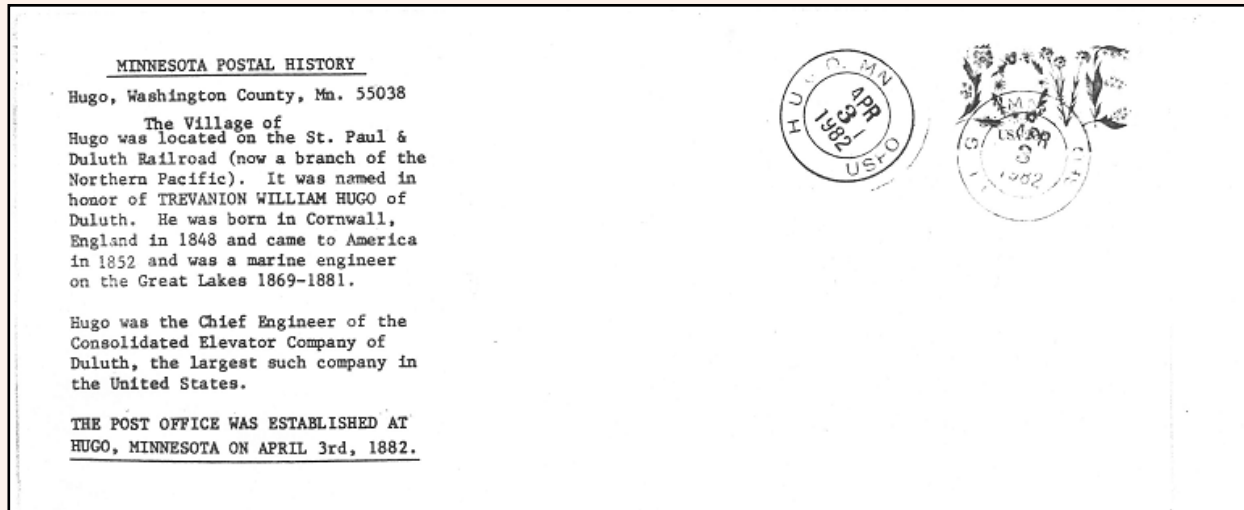
THE POST OFFICE WAS ESTABLISHED AT HUGO, MINNESOTA ON APRIL 3rd, 1882.

The first source quoted is the book "*Minnesota Geographic Names*" which states the namesake is Trevanion Hugo. Simply put, this paper has clearly shown that this book is questionable and may have ulterior motives.

Second is the Minnesota Postal History from a Philatelic collector. This document remained a mystery until Joe Marier's family donated to the Hugo Historical Commission several boxes of documents and memorabilia collected during a lifetime of community service. This document is shown here as Exhibit 26.

2005.3.2

EXHIBIT 26

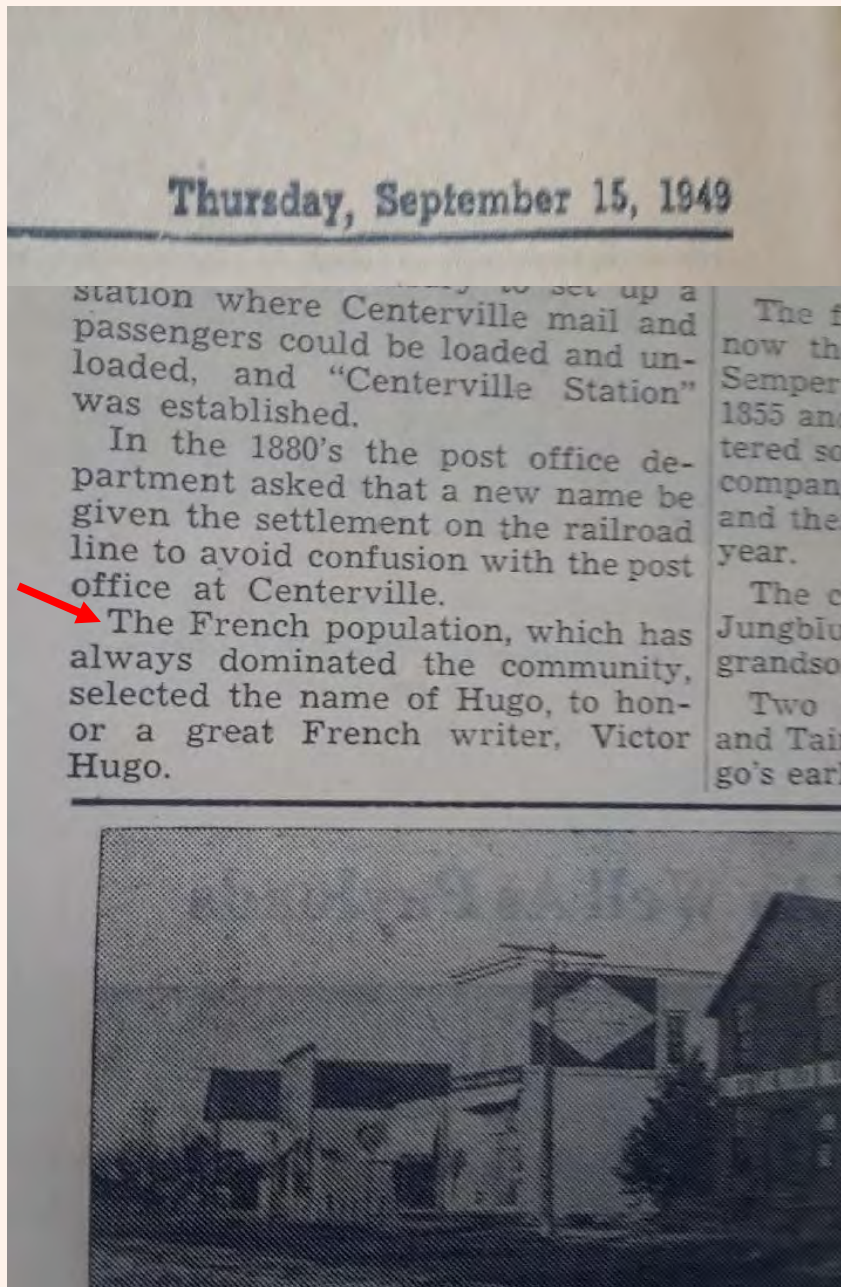


Unfamiliarity with this documents origin prompted an internet search of “Minnesota Postal History”. The first entry to appear is the site called “Minnesota Covers and Postal History”. Postal covers are the envelopes that letters are mailed in. To collectors, more important than the stamp on the envelope, is the date and place of cancellation. Included on the cover is a very brief history of the town named on the cancellation. The source for the town history is also given on this website. It is *Minnesota Geographic Names* by Upham. Rather than finding an independent source for the Trevanion claim, we find it is a repetition of Upham’s book already discussed at length, making two of this article’s sources the same thing.

Third, the article quotes Joe Marier, a local businessman, who says that this Catholic community would not have chosen Victor Hugo because much of his work was frowned on by the Catholic Church. It is true that “*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*” and “*Les Miserables*” were placed on the Catholic Index, but it is a small part of the story. Consider this statement by John C. Hathaway, OCDS. OCDS is a religious association of the Roman Catholic Church composed of lay persons and also accepted secular clergy. He says: “Now there is a common misconception about the index. The index was not, as many surmise, a list of banned books. The notion was not that under no circumstances should a Catholic read such books, but rather that they should be read under guidance from a spiritual director or in an academic setting.”

More telling is this explanation found in Wikipedia under the heading “Index Liborum Prohibitorum”. The index was forcible within the Papal States, but elsewhere only adopted by the civil powers as happened in several Italian states. In France, it was French officials who decided what books were banned and the church’s index was not recognized. At this time, the reader should revisit the section on Victor Hugo (page 10) and see again his awards, his birthday celebration, and his being honored with a street named after him. Also remember that Mitchel Houle’s granddaughter was a Catholic nun. And last, it is unlikely that Mr. Marier knew about Trevanion Hugo’s Masonic accomplishments.

EXHIBIT 27



A publication, which is even more telling, is the 1949 *Jubilee Edition of the Forest Lake Times* celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Township of Forest Lake. This Jubilee Edition has two stories about the neighboring City of Hugo. One of the stories tells of early history and gives the namesake as Victor Hugo. See Exhibit 27. Important to note that this is about 30 years before the Houle Genealogy Book was published. A source is not identified; however, a second story is an interview with Joe Peltier, Exhibit 28 below.

EXHIBIT 28



Joe Peltier was born in Centerville in 1857. He would have been 25 years old when Mitchel Houle named the post office and in his 50's when the City of Hugo was incorporated. Even if he is not quoted directly as the namesake source, it is very unlikely the paper would name Victor Hugo as namesake if Mr. Peltier had a different opinion. This story tells of the first train that came through Hugo in 1869.

Regardless of the results presented here, both factual and circumstantial, there will always be people who will insist their opinion is correct and these findings can not be true. With that in mind, an exercise in “devils advocate” is in order. We will do that by taking known facts and weave them with contrived possibilities for an alternate reality.

We know that Trevanion moved to Duluth to become chief engineer with Consolidated Elevator, and we know that the farmers in Oneka Township had grain to buy and sell. Somehow, the elevator company sent Trevanion here to buy and store grain. This made the locals so thankful that they thought they would name their town after him and risk excommunication from their church. Sounds crazy but this is an alternate reality.



First, remember that the post office was named Hugo in 1882 giving this area the Hugo name in newspaper ads and stories twenty-plus years before incorporation. Second, remember according to “*Washington—a History of Minnesota County*” on page 223 is found “in the early years, farmers drove to St. Paul by team or oxen to get their supplies and sell any produce they may have”. Furthermore, the timeline does not work. It is an established fact that the Hugo Feedmill was open for

business by Edmund Gregoire in 1917, and according to their website, the mill did not grind and blend grains until the 1930’s. That would be many years after the City of Hugo took the name of the post office and incorporated. The timeline for grain handling in Hugo does not support this contrived scenario.



Painting by Hugo Resident Len Shimota

The last newspaper article to be examined was printed in the October, 2004, edition of *The Hugonian*, which was

Hugo’s local newspaper at the time. This story is written about, and during, the preparation for *The 100th anniversary of incorporation of the City of Hugo*. The story was written by the editor of the *Hugonian*, Bryan Ludvik. The article tells the story of Debbie and Jeff Nelson, local residents, who were convinced that the City of Hugo was named after Trevanion Hugo and their effort to prove it. For the purpose of this project, Debbie Nelson was interviewed by phone. When asked why she was so convinced that the namesake was Trevanion, she responded that she had read Upham’s book, *Minnesota Geographical Names* and believed it to be so. She read also that Trevanion had connections to the railroad and believed that to be so. Both of these possible reasons have been examined in this project, and it has been shown that Upham’s sources are suspect. The trade publication for mechanical engineers makes no mention of Trevanion’s connection to the railroad when it published his obituary casting doubt that there was any real connection to the railroad.

In any event, the Nelson's research was still ongoing. She says in the article that "she still hasn't found her holy grail", a document that definitely states, in her words, "somebody stood on a hill and said I hereby proclaim that from this day forward, the town shall be known as Hugo." In the phone interview she said she never did find her proof, and this project concurs that no such document exists.

Also in that article, it is found that Debbie did contact a living relative of Trevanion Hugo's, a great, great, grandniece. This led the research down another path and added a few more pages to this project. If Debbie was able to locate a descendent sixteen years ago, in today's world with social media and genealogical sites, descendants should be even easier to contact. A search on *Ansestory.com* found Trevanion Hugo's family tree. Examining this tree showed living descendants. A message was sent to a few descendants. At about the same time, discovered in some of the Hugo Centennial papers held by the Historical Commission, was a letter to the editor sent to *The Hugonian* from Virginia Hegseth after she received the October issue sent to her by Debbie Nelson. The letter said "thanks" to the newspaper and said she enjoyed it very much. It was signed by Virginia Hegseth, now living in Arizona. With the name of this descendant revealed, a Facebook search was initiated. Her Facebook page was found. Unfortunately, there were no current posts. One of the last entries was posted in 2013. In that post, she stated how happy she was that her book on her family's genealogy was complete and sent in for printing. At the same time, responses on *Ancestry.com* from two other Trevanion descendants were received. The first was from Sandra Wright, whose father was the youngest son of Trevanion's sister, Mary Emma Hugo's granddaughter. She said there was no real family recollections on the namesake.

The other response was from Mary E. Hugo Burnell. Trevanion was her father's great-great uncle. "I learned about the town of Hugo when I was searching Trevanion on the internet". She also knew of no family stories relating to Trevanion having a town in Minnesota named after him. Mary B. was asked if she knew of Virginia Hegseth. She emailed Virginia's contact information, address and phone number, and also noted that there was no new Facebook posts. The phone number was called and the "not in service" recording was heard. This was relayed to Mary B. and she responded with this email:

Hi Craig,
there may yet be an answer. Virginia wrote a book upon the Hugo family in Canada, Cornwall and the USA - unknown to me until the other day. I have ordered a copy but as I live in New Zealand it might take 3 or 4 weeks before it arrives. Perhaps she will mention it.....

Kind regards, Mary

A much shorter time than expected, Mary B. sent this email:

Hi Craig,

...

The book I ordered by Virginia Hegseth about the Hugo family has arrived, I was not expecting it for a couple of weeks.

However it is no help at all, as it says this about Trevanion...

" It is believed that the town of Hugo, Minnesota was named after him"

and no more about the town.

so, unfortunately another dead end.

I feel for your frustration.

Kind regards, Mary

So, unlike the two descendants of Mitchel Houle, the three descendants of Trevanion Hugo knew only of the namesake claim through the words in Upham's book.

This in itself proves nothing. After all, Victor Hugo's descendants probably never heard of Hugo, Minnesota either. But it does show that in 1906, while Trevanion Hugo was alive and when the City was incorporated, there were no family stories pertaining to a city named after him.



Houle family, 1927 "Five generations of Houle's" pictured (L to R): Top: Mayme Arcand Vail, Leah Houle Arcand, Philip Houle Bottom: Viola Vail Brisson, Virginia Tourville Houle, Jean Baptise Houle

Mitchel Houle and wife Marie Pelletier



Conclusion-

It was stated early in this project that there is no official evidence of Hugo's namesake chiseled in stone. However, it was found in Exhibit 1, the application for a post office dated 1882, that the name "Hugo" was chosen for the new post office and the document was signed by Mitchel Houle.

Exhibit 2 and 3 tells us that this post office was named in honor of Victor Hugo, which is the testimony of Sister Louise Joseph as told to her by her mother and grandmother, Mitchel Houle's wife and daughter, and corroborated by Linda Cummings from a different branch of the family tree.

Exhibits 5-12 show that in newspapers and train schedules the emerging community was called "Hugo" after Mitchel Houle opened the post office 25 years before the city incorporated.

Exhibit 15 shows that Trevanion Hugo at 33 years old arrived in the U.S., at best, just six months before the Hugo post office application.

Exhibit 17 shows us that Trevanion Hugo had no real connection to the railroad.

Exhibit 18 shows us that Trevanion Hugo was a renowned Mason.

Exhibit 20 shows us that the Village of Hugo was predominately Catholic. Wikipedia tell us that in 1906, a Catholic associating or supporting a Mason was subject to excommunication.

No historical connection can be found between Trevanion Hugo and Mitchel Houle or with Trevanion Hugo and the City of Hugo. There is, however, a Masonic connection between Trevanion Hugo and the sources for Warren Upham's Book. It is obvious how Trevanion became part of the namesake discussion because sometimes two plus two does equal four. In the last couple of decades there have been two other investigations into the namesake matter. There has been at least one common finding in the other two and then again in this research. Neither Ray and Linda Cummings, nor Jeff and Debra Nelson and again in this research has there been found any written document from the Village or City, the Township or County or the State that irrevocably proves the true namesake. What we do have is the oral tradition that has survived through the Houle family. Mitchel Houle's granddaughter has told us who the post office and thereby the City was named after, and this is echoed by Linda Cummings. There is no reason not to believe them.

On the other hand, this project has shown that the timeline in favor of Trevanion Hugo does not work as a consideration for the name of the post office. It has been shown through newspaper stories and classified ads that this area was forever called Hugo after the post office opened in 1882. And most conclusively, the Catholics of Hugo would never name their city after a well known and celebrated Mason.

Anyone would be proud to have Trevanion William Hugo in their family tree. His intellect and accomplishments are storied. Credit as the namesake for the City of Hugo should not be one of them.

In the best of light, the sources for Upham's book felt a need to pay homage to Trevanion Hugo by crediting him as a namesake. In the worst light, it was a practical joke played on a bunch of Catholics by a couple of Masons. In any event, the joke is over. It is time to correct the record.

These final words are written with my firm belief that Victor Hugo is our city's true namesake.

Afterwords -

Writer's note—This paper, as you just read it, was sent via email to some of the people on the Page 3 Acknowledgements. It was also sent to the Family History Group for comments and questions. It was not the original intent to include any of these comments, but some are very interesting and others add prospective and affirmation to the findings presented here.

Don Marier— *I just read your "City of Hugo Namesake Controversy" book and am impressed with your arguments. This should end the controversy.*

Bruce Houle— *I have read your Mystery Namesake project paper, I am very pleased to have a copy of your final report, and very pleased you have given so much of your time to the Town of Hugo. Your work will be on display for years, great job.*

Linda Cummings— *Ray always wondered if anything would be done with his research about who the City of Hugo was named after - Victor Hugo or Trevanion Hugo. He would be very proud to have his work included in your document. You did an excellent job presenting all the research on this topic. It is logically laid out and the exhibits you included support all your work. Congratulations on a well-written and supported document. I hope this puts rest to the controversy that Hugo was named for Victor Hugo and not Trevanion Hugo. Thank you for all your hard work on this project.*

Justin Brink— *Justin revisited the 1900 US Census and pointed out something that was missed in this paper. Trevanion told the Census Taker that he immigrated in 1882, not 1881, as was printed in the Duluth Herald at the time of his death. (Page 21, Exhibit 15). Justin went further to nail down the timeline and found an article in "The Inter Ocean" printed in Chisago, which shows that TW Hugo was First Engineer on the steamer Campana. The ship left Port Dalhousie, which is south of Toronto on November 10, 1881. The Campana sailed through the Great Lakes to Duluth arriving May 9, 1882. This shows Trevanion was on a ship in the Great Lakes and didn't arrive in Minnesota until two months after Mitchell Houle made application for the Hugo Post Office.*

Writer's note— *This mistake was not corrected before this paper was publicized because it underlines how a mistake in this project, and like the one in Upham's book, can happen. Besides, it reinforces this paper's conclusion.*

Brad LeTourneau— *Hands down you made the case for Victor. I think your evidence is clear and well put together. As the reader it was very easy to follow your commentary on the exhibits as they were presented. The fact that Trevanion was only just getting started with his life in Duluth at the time the application was being made for a post office name clearly suggests he is not the name sake. He has yet to accomplish the things that would want you to name your town in his honor. Very well done.*

David Trudeau— *I agree with Craig Moen that whatever the origin of the name Hugo for the settlement that grew up around Centreville Station, that Mr. Hugo the prominent Mason and businessman and later mayor from Duluth was probably not it. Congratulations to Craig for a nice piece of work. The "Centreville PM" who signed the 1882 application by Mitchel Houle is "A. Trudeau" - my great grandfather Alexis Trudeau (1841-1910), who was appointed Postmaster for Centerville about 1878. It would have been interesting to be a fly on the wall in the Centerville post office in 1882, when the crossing outs of other proposed names were discussed by Alexis and Mitchel, with the final choice of "Hugo."*

Writer's note—*early in the process of writing this paper, it was suggested that maybe after a night at the local watering hole, the boys decided to name their city after Hugo the bartender. This notion was frankly dismissed; however, in the email from David he infers and then eliminated this possibility by pointing out that the 1880 Census shows no Hugo either given or surname.*

Mary B—*What an impressive piece of research. I hope you feel proud of it. I much appreciated being sent a copy. I don't think Trevanion would mind losing the accolade as he succeeded in so many other facets of his life.*

Writer's final note— *At their meeting on March 16, 2021, the Hugo Historical Commission voted unanimously to endorse this paper.*

Ok... this time, really, it's THE END.