

History of Zumbrota

The Zumbrota Story

It seems certain that the driving force for the exploration and settlement of the area which is now Zumbrota originated in Stafford, Connecticut in 1855 at the suggestion of Reverend H.N. Gates. At his urging a company, or "commission", was formed in Lowell, Massachusetts whose mission was to travel westward and "locate a township site near the center where a village might be built and the business of the colony carried on, with farms and gardens adjacent thereto." Although this original effort was abandoned in Dubuque, a number of the company persisted westward and divided into smaller groups for more efficient exploration of the vast area known as The Minnesota Territory.

"How did Zumbrota get its name?" is often asked and has been the topic of much speculation. We know the word, Zumbrota, came from the common name of the Zumbro river which flows through the village and appears to be a corruption of its French name, Embarrass, which means "obstruction". This descriptive French word apparently came into being because the early French were frustrated in their attempts to navigate the river due to fallen timber, shoals, and rapids. The native Dakotas who heard this word pronounced rapidly by the French traders thought the word sounded like "Umbro." The first settlers tacked on a "Z" and there we have Zumbrota!

There is much more that can be told about the early and current history of Zumbrota. For those interested in further reading three references are recommended: *

- The First One-Hundred Years: 1856-1956
- Zumbrota Minnesota Bridging Past and Future, a Pictorial History
- Zumbrota: The Next Fifty Years, 1956-2006

* Each book can be ordered by sending \$ 25.00 to Zumbrota Historical Society, 55 East Third Street, Zumbrota, MN. 55992 . Include \$4.00 Shipping and Handling.