

HISTORY OF SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

The Seventh Judicial District today consists of the counties of Becker, Benton, Clay, Douglas, Mille Lacs, Morrison, Otter Tail, Stearns, Todd, and Wadena. But it has not always been that way.

When the legislature divided the state into seven judicial districts in 1866, the Seventh District was a large twenty-four county district which included the present ten counties.

During the next few decades, as the legislature expanded the number of judicial districts, the majority of the counties in the Seventh District, including Becker and Clay, were realigned into other newly created judicial districts. In 1898, Becker and Clay counties were returned to the Seventh District.

In 1905, the legislature divided the state into eighteen judicial districts and established the Seventh Judicial District as it exists today.

A look at the 1905 realignment reveals two unique characteristics of the Seventh District at that time: (1) its ten counties make it substantially larger in number than the other districts. Only the then existing Twelfth and Fifteenth Districts with seven counties each even begin to approach it in size; and (2) except for the then existing First District, the other seventeen districts are made up of relatively cohesive geographic units. The Seventh District, however, rambles across most of Central Minnesota from Mille Lacs in the east central part of the state to Clay on the North Dakota border.

These characteristics support the locally accepted understanding that the Seventh District was designed to follow the railway line from Duluth to St. Cloud and from St. Cloud up to Moorhead/Fargo. Because these were major routes, it was easy to travel almost non-stop throughout the district by train.

Compliments of the Honorable Steven P. Ruble, Judge of District Court