

— History of the Red Jacket Valley —

The Red Jacket Valley encompasses an area south of Mankato at the border where the townships of Mankato and South Bend meet in the center. Blue Earth County has more rivers running through it than any other county in Minnesota. The two rivers that flow through the Red Jacket Valley are the LeSueur and the Blue Earth. The LeSueur River joins the Blue Earth River, which flows into the Minnesota River at the great bend in Mankato.

The Blue Earth River was called the Mahkato River by the Dakotah (Sioux) tribe that once inhabited the area. “Mahka” is the Dakotah (Sioux) word for “earth” and “to” means “blue or green.” This name was given to the river because of the bed of blue-green clay found in its banks about four miles from its mouth.

The name “Minnesota” is an Indian word for the river derived from two Dakotah words – “Minne” meaning water and “sotah” meaning sky-tinted, bleared or cloudy. The word refers to the appearance of the river, caused by small particles of blue-green clay mingling with the water. The water does not appear clear or muddy, but rather hazy or bleared.

From the east, the main tributary of the Blue Earth River is the LeSueur. The LeSueur flows westerly until it empties into the Blue Earth about two and a half miles above its mouth. This river was given its name by early map makers in honor of the French explorer Pierre Charles Le Sueur, who built a fort at the river’s mouth in 1700. Early French maps indicate the river as the “St. Henry River.”