

FRANK B. MAYER AND THE TREATIES OF 1851

MORE THAN FOUR YEARS after the Minnesota Historical Society published Frank B. Mayer's diary and sketches in 1932 under the title *With Pen and Pencil on the Frontier in 1851*, a news release called attention to a manuscript diary in the possession of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. According to this release, which was issued by "Science Service," the diary had been "pronounced one of the most valuable records written about American Indians, by no less an authority than Dr. Clark Wissler," curator of the museum's department of anthropology. The writer of the record, who told of "Minnesota Indians living in wild and unsettled territory," was none other than Mayer. Here, obviously, was another version of the diary published by the society from the original in the Ayer Collection of the Newberry Library in Chicago.

Correspondence with Dr. Wissler brought not only information about the diary, but a generous loan of the original manuscript. Its three volumes have been badly damaged by fire, the first being charred to such an extent that short extracts only can be deciphered. The manuscript passed through the Baltimore fire in 1904, when it was among the papers of the late Henry Walters. After his death in 1931, the contents of his office, including the diary, were purchased by Mr. Morgan Marshall, administrator of the Walters Art Gallery of Baltimore, who presented the Mayer manuscript to the American Museum in the spring of 1936.¹

¹ Dr. Clark Wissler to the writer, October 21, November 2, 1936; interview with Dr. Wissler, February 10, 1937; Miss Dorothy Miner, librarian of the Walters Art Gallery, to the writer, September 16, 1937.

This new version of the Mayer diary proved to be a copy made by the artist himself, evidently with a view to publication. That Walters had owned such a copy was known in 1932, but at the time it could not be located.² The original journal in the Newberry Library is incomplete, ending abruptly with the entry for July 18, 1851, the day that the treaty negotiations opened at Traverse des Sioux. The copy now for the first time available continues to October 22, and includes accounts of the treaty negotiations at Traverse des Sioux and Mendota and of the author's return journey via Chicago, the Great Lakes, and the Hudson River to New York and Baltimore. Since these sections could not be included in the volume published in 1932, it seems appropriate to publish the portions relating to the treaties this year, for the ninetieth anniversary of the Indian land cessions of 1851 will be marked in the summer of 1941.

A careful comparison of the American Museum's copy with the published version reveals that the earlier sections are in most respects identical. These are the parts that were most seriously damaged, but enough of the text remains to establish the resemblance between the two versions. Certain sections of the newly discovered copy, which seems to have been prepared many years after the journey that it describes, have been expanded, and the author has added bits of information that are of interest and value.³

Probably with an eye to attracting readers in Minnesota, or even a publisher for his manuscript, Mayer worked into the narrative some comments on the climate, soil, and scenery of the state. He writes:

² Bertha L. Heilbron, ed., *With Pen and Pencil on the Frontier in 1851: The Diary and Sketches of Frank Blackwell Mayer*, 20-22 (St. Paul, 1932). For a detailed description of the diary in the Newberry Library, see p. 24-26.

³ Facing the entry for July 24, 1851, is a clipping about Riggs's *Dictionary of the Dakota Language*, from a newspaper of February 24, 1894. This may indicate that the American Museum's copy of the diary dates from the 1890's.

Th[e] soil and climate of Minnesota a[re] said to be well adapted to the production of [*MS. burned*] cereal grains an[d] [par]ticula[rly vege]tables. The climate is as healthy as any in America and this will always be a[n] attraction to the emigrant. The winters ar[e] long and dry, the temperature being low but equable. Moccasins are worn the whole winter, the snow soon becoming frozen and hard and dry. The summers are short and at midday very warm.

The *praries*, constitute a class of scenery peculiar to America, the term denotin[g] a large tract of country devoid of tim[ber] and covered with long wild grass, not necessarily level, yet, as a gener[al] rule, approaching that condition. Th[e] idea of *space*, an important elem[ent] of the sublime, is the poetic attrib[ute] of the prarie. That peculiar cha[rm] which the ocean exerts over th[e] mind is likewise felt on thes[e] land-seas. (If I may so speak) [of] the [end]less fields of waving grass. Her[e are] all the atmospheric "effects" of dista[nce] and the gorgeous tints of the settin[g] sun are exhibited in perfection. . . . The shadows of the passing clouds and gathering of the future stor[m] gives a variety to the colour of the praries which greatly redeems the monotony of perfectly equable colour.*

A substantial addition to the entry for June 21 deals with the Sioux medicine man and his method of administering to a patient. Mayer relates that he "was a witness" to the incident that he describes. "Hearing noise in a teepee which was pitched near the house [of] the interpreter at Fort Snelling, I cr[awled] cautiously to the spot, and protecte[d] by the darkness, lay quietly agains[t] the side of the tent and applying [an] eye to a small orifice, which exis[ted] opportunely in the old skins, I h[ad] full view of the transactions of t[he] interior unobserved," Mayer writes. There he saw several natives "grouped aro[und] a smouldering fire," with the "octogenarian mother-in[-law] of my host stretched on a few s[kins] and covered by a blanket." Attending the patient were her daughter, a granddaughter, and "Hoosaneree, (Grey leg) the uncle

* From the entry for June 27, 1851.

of 'Little Crow.'” The latter’s “hair was dishevelled and his blanket was thrown over his shoulders, for he was divested of his shirt and leggins and the night was not warm. A rattle, m[ade] of a gourd with a few beads within and a bowl apparently containing water were near him.” Soon “he began his incantations” with a long series of strange sounds that Mayer attempts to record, “all the time using the rattle to a certain extent in harmony with the measure and sentiment of his song, now fast, now slow, now shakin[g] it and then giving it a rotary m[otion].”⁵ At times he raised the cup to his lips and by “blowing into it, or by some other m[ans] produced a gurgling sound, nev[er] ceasing however to use the rattle.” Once the medicine man “pronounced a short speech . . . addressed to the intruding spirit.” He “applied his mouth and then his ear to her ear and temple and, as tho’ endeavoring to scare away the animal within, he imitated the bark and grunt of a dog or some animal in pursuit.” Mayer “never lear[ned] whether D’ Hoosaneree’s treatment w[as] successful in curing” the patient.

The excitement occasioned by the arrival of the Sisseton Sioux at Traverse des Sioux on the afternoon of July 4 is vividly pictured by Mayer.

They had come from the neighborhood of “Lake Travers[e]” and “Lac-qui-parle” and were buffalo-hunters. The buffalo still vis[its] their country and they are there[fore] in a much better condition th[an] the Indians at this place who are probably the most degraded of the Dakota. These Indians of the plains possess more of their origi[nal] character and appearance than a[ny] I have yet seen. They are talle[r] more muscular and wilder in expression of their countenance [and] in their dress and habits. . . . They brought with them their wives, children, dogs, horses and lodges.

The picturesque costumes of these plains Indians, both men and women, and the trappings of their horses, with

⁵ Mayer’s sketch of this scene, which is in his Sketchbooks, 45:34, is reproduced herewith.

their elaborately ornamented saddles, are described. "On one of these horses the fringes of the saddle reached to the ground and concealed entirely the hindquarters and legs of the animal," writes Mayer.⁶ Soon after their arrival, there was a "fine display of the costumes and appearance" of the Sisseton, for "they came in a body, mounted, and on foot, men, women, and children to be presented to the Commissioners by their trader *Laframboise*."⁷ At their head was their young chief, the Male Raven, in full regalia. Among his followers "were several Indians of giant stature over six feet, muscular, robust, and straight. One of these" Mayer considered the "grandest Indian I have ever seen or expect to see. There were others who were nearly equal to him, and a large crowd but little inferior, who alighted i[n] our camp and in dignified silen[ce] shook hands with the commissioner[s]." They then "passed the pipe," listened to a speech of welcome, and were presented with "an ox that they might stay their voracious appetites, which they represented to be greatly aggrava[ted] by a long fast and tedious journey."

On the following day the Sisseton again visited the camp of the treaty makers. Mayer describes their arrival as follows:

They were preceded by a rank of horsemen who advanced abreast beating their drums and singing a wild war-song as they approached our camp at a stately walk, the horses seeming nowise annoyed by the din which beset their ears. The effect was very wild, this cavalcade of savage musicians, in their wild dress and paint, mou[nted] on spir-

⁶ Sisseton horsemen are pictured by Mayer in a water color reproduced herewith. The Minnesota Historical Society has photographic copies of a collection made in the late 1890's and now owned by Goucher College, Baltimore. It is described *ante*, 13: 408-414.

⁷ At the time of the treaty, Joseph Laframboise had been trading among the Sioux of southwestern Minnesota for almost thirty years. In the 1850's, his post was at Little Rock on the Minnesota River near Fort Ridgely. See Willoughby M. Babcock, "Up the Minnesota Valley to Fort Ridgely in 1853," *ante*, 11: 175. For an explanation of the role of the traders at Traverse des Sioux, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1: 282-284 (St. Paul, 1921).

ited horses and singing [a] loud shrill monotonous chaunt [as] they advanced abreast . . . appearing and then almost concealed as they rose and fell with the undulations of the surface.

When they reached the camp the musicians seated themselves on the ground and the others "joined in a grand 'hop-dance' or begging dance." After they had danced for some time, "the Governor presented a blanket to the chief's brother, who throwing it over his shoulder and holding it aloft, marched aroun[d] the camp singing the praises of [the] donor and his thanks for the g[ift.]"⁸ Tobacco was also distributed and they returned to camp apparently plea[sed.]"

Camp life at Traverse des Sioux is the subject of some of Mayer's comments. "Our meals were prepared and eaten in a deserted trading house," he relates in the entry for June 30, "a few boards on tressels and rude benches covered with buffalo robes serving as table and chairs. Our fare, beef, pilot bread, and occasionally vegetables, i.e. potatoe[s] and cabbage." He expands the entry for July 1 as follows:

Many picturesque incidents occur during the evenings of our camp life. Our supper usually takes place about six o'clock but by no means at dark for in this northern latitude the day lasts from three in the morning to nine at night. . . . Later as the twilight sinks into night and the prarie becomes alive with myriads of *fireflies*, the plaintive sounds of the flute are heard as some love-sick swain seeks to soften the heart of an obdurate maiden. (This is the only Indian instrument of music which has the least pretension to melody, all the others being as harsh and rude as can be imagined.)

Then also the fires are lighted that the smoke may prevent a too near approach of the multiudes of musquitoes who wage a war agains[t] us, especially at night, tho' th[ey] never cease their attacks. . . . The fires scattered here and there ove[r] the prarie amidst the teepees and tents, surrounded by the picturesqu[e] figures of In-

⁸ This scene probably is the one pictured in Mayer's water color entitled "Singing a present' Sisseton Camp."

dians and frontier life, presents examples of the striking in "chiaro oscuro" and "effects" which so delighted the minds of Rembrandt and his compeers. The "sharp" and massive effects of the centralization of light are here seen in perfection. A peculiar effect is presented by the transparency of the skins of the teepees, the fire within rendering them luminous and the shadows of the inmates are seen as they sit aroun[d] the interior. . . . The same eff[ect is se]en in our own camp where the . . . tents are illuminated by the candl[es] that Mr So and So uses to write his wife by.

Songs, especially those of the French-Canadian voyageurs, resounded through the camp of an evening. "I was unsuccessful in procuring any comple[te] records of these musical rarities," writes Mayer, "the politeness of many of my French friends consisting rather in smiling promises than a conscientious fulfillment." A few snatches of a "Canadian Voyageur song" do, however, appear in one of Mayer's sketchbooks; it is followed by some bars of what he calls the "Chanson du Nord." Mayer comments that the "French is admirably adapted to songs of this class and indeed offe[red] a strong contrast to our sturdier tho harsher English."

The artist seems to have been on friendly terms with both Indians and whites in the camp. On one occasion, he notes, "an Indian came to me and led me to a group of his companions near by who directed my attention to the outline of a figure cut with a tomakawk [*sic*] in the sod of the prairie. It was intended as a representation of myself and a few tufts of grass were placed to represent my beard. They all enjoyed my surprise amazingly and consider'd it a capital joke. There were four occasions on which I found myself the subject of their pencils it seem'd a rataliation [*sic*] for my treatment of them, and a mode of expressing the similar power which they possessed." Mayer was among the "especial favourites" on whom the Indians conferred "Dakota names." He reports that "our Kaposia friends arranged feathers in the ha[t] of A. S. H. White and my-

self a[nd] named us respectively 'Tiukatah' 'the crooked horn' from the crooked plume he sported, and myself 'Tahay-o-wotana' or the 'young b[uck]' my feathers resembling the direct[ion] of the sprouting horns of the young deer. I had previously received t[he] name of 'Ishtamaza' or 'm[any] eyes' from wearing spectacles, bu[t] I am now universally known as 'Tahayowotana'."⁹

Mayer makes no attempt to present a detailed report on the treaty proceedings — his interest is in the red men and their habits, rather than in their relations with the whites who wanted their lands. That he felt the need for some report of the proceedings is apparent, however, for to his entry for July 18 he adds a statement that the "speeches of the commissioners . . . are appended, correctly reported by the Editor of the Pioneer." It will be recalled that James M. Goodhue, who established the first Minnesota newspaper at St. Paul in April, 1849, attended the negotiations and reported them for his paper. His account appears in the *Minnesota Pioneer* from July 10 to August 7. Mayer must have obtained and preserved a file of the paper, for clippings of the report of the treaty negotiations published therein are pasted on pages facing his own manuscript narrative, beginning with the entry for June 30. It is followed by a report, also from the *Pioneer*, of the proceedings at Mendota. Mayer describes Goodhue as "our Fallstaff e[ditor] of the Pioneer" and speaks of his "enlive[ning] influence" in the camp at Traverse des Sioux.¹⁰

Mayer followed the account of the treaties and of his sojourn at Fort Snelling with a detailed description of the return journey to Baltimore. The end of his travels must have found him in a philosophical frame of mind, for he concludes his narrative as follows:

⁹ These comments have been added to the entries for July 1 and 5.

¹⁰ This is in the entry for July 11. Unfortunately this portion of the diary is almost completely obliterated, and most of Mayer's comments on the picturesque editor are lost.

In completing the memoranda of a journey which, I trust, has added to my experience of life, fostered a taste for the beautiful, and developed a stronger feeling of nationality, I have endeavoured to give an unexaggerated statement of the scenes I have witnessed and I hope I shall not be accused of having told "A Traveller's tale."

The spelling, punctuation, and capitalization used by the artist in his original manuscript have been followed. An effort has been made to supply within brackets words or parts of words that are missing in the burned pages. No attempt has been made to reproduce the many numerical notations that appear in the margins; they refer to volumes and pages in Mayer's sketchbooks, which he numbered with methodical care.¹¹ At the beginning of the third volume of the American Museum's manuscript, Mayer gives a list of seventy cuts to be used in illustrating his journal. It is gratifying to note that a large number of the drawings selected by the artist himself were reproduced in the volume published by the Minnesota Historical Society in 1932; others appear herewith.

The importance of the treaties of 1851 to the pioneer settlers of eastern Minnesota can hardly be overestimated. After their ratification in the following year, a vast empire embracing most of the present state south and west of the Mississippi River was thrown open to settlement. The treaties served as a prelude to the hordes of land seekers, town-site promoters, lumbermen, millers, homemakers, and the like, whose arrival on the upper Mississippi made possible Minnesota's admission to statehood before the end of the decade. One man who appreciated the significance of the acquisition of the Sioux lands was Goodhue. "The news of the Treaty exhilarates our town," he announced in the *Pioneer* after the conclusion of the negotiations at

¹¹ For a description of the Mayer sketchbooks in the Newberry Library, see the published *Diary*, 23. Volume 45, which was in private hands in 1932, has since been added to the Newberry Library's collection.

Traverse des Sioux. He then went on to predict what the treaty would mean to Minnesota and St. Paul in the future :

It is the greatest event by far in the history of the Territory, since it was organized. It is the pillar of fire that lights us into a broad Canaan of fertile lands. We behold now, clearly, in no remote perspective, like an exhibition of dissolving views, the red savages, with their tepees, their horses, and their famished dogs, fading, vanishing, dissolving away; and in their places, a thousand farms, with their fences and white cottages, and waving wheat fields, and vast jungles of rustling maize, and villages and cities crowned with spires, and railroads with trains of cars rumbling afar off—and now nearer and nearer, the train comes thundering across the bridge into St. Paul, fifteen hours from St. Louis, on the way to Lake Superior.¹²

Mayer's interest in the negotiations of 1851 was of an entirely different kind; unlike Goodhue, he did not expect his own future to be identified with the great northern empire acquired on those summer days of 1851. He was an Easterner, an outsider who could take a purely objective view of the epoch-making events he was witnessing. How he reacted to those events and what he thought of the proceedings at Traverse des Sioux and Mendota are revealed in the pages that follow.

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL

MAYER'S DIARY, July 23–August 23, 1851

July 23. *The Treaty signed.* This event was conducted with much dignity both on the part of the Indians and the commissioners. The commissioners having first signed the treaty, the chiefs stepped forward in rotation, and touched the pen which the secretary used to indite their names. This being their form of oath and acquiescence. Some few, who had been instructed by the missionaries, wrote their names, and many prefaced their signature with a short speech.

As they stood at the treaty table, their tall figures e[n]veloped in

¹² *Pioneer*, July 31, 1851.

their buffalo robes, and conducting themselves with becoming dignity, they recalled the cope-clad presence of the functionaries of the Roman [c]hurch, or they reminded me of the classic creations of Raphael or [John] Flaxman as their blankets fell in massive or graceful drapery when they knelt to write their names, or awaited the withdrawal of their predecessors. One of the greatest advantages I have derived from my observation of the Indian costume is the power it has given me to realize or fully imagine the appearance and prevailing *sentiment* of costume among the Greeks and Romans, the costume best adapted to the highest class of art and susceptible of the most harmonious adaptation to any required circumstances. The ease and grace with which the Indian wears his blanket or robe is a constant study for the artist, often suggesting and realizing the most beautiful combinations of form and drapery.

As each chief signed the treaty, a medal, bearing the head of the president of the U. S., was placed around his neck by the commissioner[r] and when all had signed, the commissioner addressed them in a valedictory of some length, and in the course of the afternoon a large amount of presents were distributed to them, consisting of blankets, cloth, powder, lead, tobacco, vermilion, beads[,] looking glasses, knives, trinkets &c.¹³

July 24. All were up "bright and early" to prepare for our departure and we were scarcely out before a large crowd of Indians made their appearance attired for the buffalo-dance. Large buffalo masks covered their heads and shoulders, giving them the wildest appearance imaginable, and they carried shields, spears, guns and fans. A number of old men and girls accompanied them, as musicians, and arranged themselves in two rows, while the others danced.

This dance was very similar to their former performance in the same character, except that their number were greater, and they confined their motions to a circl[e,] following one another around, and

¹³ The United States acquired from the Sisseton and Wahpeton Indians all their lands east of the Bois des Sioux and Big Sioux rivers. On the east the boundary was the Mississippi north of Fort Snelling, the Minnesota, and the Blue Earth rivers. A tract "stretching from Lake Traverse down the Minnesota River to the Yellow Medicine and extending ten miles on each side of the former stream" was reserved for the use and occupation of the Indians. For this vast area in Minnesota and Iowa the government agreed to pay the Indians \$1,665,000. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 281, and map, p. 324.

then dancing opposite to each other, occasionally resting themselves on their haunches, when they plied their *fans* vigorously. Whether this was an imitation of the natural habits of buffalos, my knowledge of natural history does not permit me to say, the effect of a buffalo fanning himself was, at least, peculiar. Many of the performers had shields of a circular form made of buffalo hide, very white, and ornamented with pendant feathers and paint. They were highly prized and "unpurchaseable". Having received presents, they departed. Our last breakfast in the old house having been hastily despatched all hands were soon engaged in striking the tents, securing our baggage, packing up Indian curiosities, and making all the arrangements necessary for our speedy departure. By twelve o'clock the last waggon load of "traps" had arrived from the camp and was stowed aboard the "keel-boat" which was to convey us to Mendota, (the meeting of the waters), at the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota.¹⁴

The passengers, numbering fifty and including the commissioners, traders[,] tourists, French voyageurs and halfbreeds, and an educated Indian and his wife, having collected aboard, we took a last look at Traverse des Sioux, the remains of our camp, and the distant tepees, and with three good cheers pushed into the stream, with light hearts for we were "homeward bound" yet almost regretting the termination of our novel camp life of four weeks,¹⁵ confident we should seldom if ever again encounter such scenes as had delighted us during our sojourn together. As we "got under way" four lusty voyageurs tugged at the oars, Belland, that voyag[eur] of voyageurs took the helm or stern oar, Mr [Henry H.] Sibley was our captain, and all united in the full chorus of a voyageur boat song, "their oars kept time and their voices kept tune", as we floated down the glassy river, the air clear and bracing, the day bright and joyous. As "Belland" threw all his strength and skill into the guidance of the ponderous oar and ever and anon expanded his manly chest to the chorus of the boat song, his face full of animation and his form a model of manly beauty, he was the ideal of a voyageur. "Henry Belland" is the son of Canadian parents who reside in Montreal, but for years he has

¹⁴ "The commissioners came down from Traverse des Sioux, in a Durham boat, every man working the oars," according to the *Pioneer* for July 31. "They made the run down, of more than 100 miles, in 24 hours."

¹⁵ The treaty party arrived at Traverse des Sioux on June 30. See Mayer's *Diary*, 148.

roved the praries and woods of the Northwest, through the wilds of Canada, th[e] lake country of Minnesota, the frozen regions of Pembina, and the trackless plains of Nebraska. He had visited the mouth of the Yellowstone, and on horseback, on foot, in the canoe, in winter or summer, he was at home in all situations of frontier life.¹⁶

The native politeness and good feeling of the Frenchman had never forsaken him, but by his wild and adventurous life had acquired a fascinating frankness, cheerfulness and generosity. The energy which distinguishes the American pioneer, was engrafted on the *elegance* of his French nature and that roughness which generally accompanies the backwoodsman of American birth was replaced by the ease, grace and animation of the French *gentleman*[,] for *gentleman* applies not only to the man of education and rank, but is rather the attribute of "nature's own nobleman, friendly and frank, the man with his heart in his hand". Such was Belland, and I shall long remember him as [one] of the few *ideals* I have me[t in] actual life. I do not say he was without faults, but they were such as were incident to his character, the energetic, gay "voyageur". His form was of the most manly beauty, a tall, lithe active, graceful figure, in which strength had not produced heaviness. His face was oval and not fat, but yet sufficiently thin to render expression delicate. A clear blue eye, open brow, aquiline nose of *elegant* size, not too large, light yet decided, a mouth, determined yet amiable, a chin of that massive form and decided character, without which his face would have been too delicate and almost feminine. His hair was light golden colour and in clusters of flaxen curls was played with by every passing breeze. He was in the prime of life and full enjoyment of physical health. He was always ready with a kind word, a joke, and an act of generosity.

Among the passengers was "Enoch" or "Hanoch" as he was generally called by the Sioux, an intelligent Indian who had been educated by the missionaries, having been sent to Ohio where he received a good English education. He still wears the Indian dress and is mostly engaged in teaching his countrymen. His pronunciation of English,

¹⁶ This probably was Henry Belland, Sr., who was killed at the lower Sioux agency on August 18, 1862, the day that the Sioux Outbreak began. See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 2: 109. Evidence that Belland was at Lake Traverse in the late 1830's is to be found in a manuscript article by John H. Case, among the latter's papers in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society. For a portrait of Belland, see the published *Diary*, 94.

which he speaks fluently, is remarkably sweet and soft, more so than in any *foreigner* I've heard.

He was a valuable companion of my rambles among the Teepees.

At intervals during the day the boat-songs were renewed and as we collected in groups on the deck various amusements sufficed to while away the time — conversation, recitation and songs.

The day closed with one of those beautiful sunsets peculiar to this northern latitude. So *holy* was its hue and so *pure* its sentiment of colour, it recalled that sky with which Raphael, in the "Madonna of St Sixtus", has surrounded the holy mother, which at a casual glance, seems but the blue ether, but seen nearer, resolves itself into innumerable angelic countenances. The long vista of prairie was a fitting foreground to this lovely sunset, and a deer, which was startled by the splash of our paddles and bounded far off into the distance, seemed a harmonious incident to the *poem*.

We observed a peculiar appearance produced by a swarm of insects which was poised, in pyramidal form, from the top of a tall tree, rising in a cloudy cone some feet to the apex.

As night fell we heard the bark of the prairie-wolves, and passed some encampments of Indians who had stopped for the night in the woods which bordered the stream. The evening was spent in listening to song and recital. [L. J.] Boury gave us Ingoldsby's "Lord Tom Noddy" with great spirit. [A. S. H.] White, Sibley and others united in "Sparkling and bright" "Health dear woman", "Down East" "Farewell to Moore" "Star-spangled banner" "Landlord fill &c", while throughout the night the greatest variety of voyageur songs inspired the oarsmen, who were unremitting in their labours.¹⁷ They were determined to be awake themselves, and permitted no one to be otherwise, for, at the end of every song, they varied the monotony of the chorus with an Indian yell which fully succeeded in destroying the slumber which we were seeking on the deck, wrapped in our buffalo robes. Three Canoes, filled with Indians, accompanied us until late in the night, their presence evinced by their wild war songs and the dipping of their paddles, while, in the intervals of song, the glimmer of the flint and steel, as they lighted their pipes, now and then revealed them through the starlight.

¹⁷A picture of the interior of the keelboat crowded with singers appears in Mayer's Sketchbooks, 43: 30. It is reproduced herewith.

The occasional bark of a wolf and the indistinct foliage which concealed the winding river, added to the *poetry* of the scene, and formed an appropriate finale to our Treaty trip. The next day, at noon, we arrived safely at the fort, our flag floating from the bow and all uniting in a full chorus of the "Chanson du Nord", (and the "beau porte de S^t Malo").¹⁸

I shall long remember with pleasure my residence among the two thousand Dakotas assembled at Traverse des Sioux. Every day produced some novelty and enabled me to fill my sketch-book with many beautiful and interesting *hints* of savage life and appearance.

The great variety of *picturesque* subject rendered a choice difficult, and, for the first time in my life, I was nigh to be surfeited with the picturesque. Beside what my pen and pencil have preserved, my memory will long retain a deal which neither can represent. The delay which tired others was most fortunate for me and yet gave me no leisure moments. The treaty was concluded favourably to both parties, and is the first [since Penn's, it is said,]¹⁹ where no armed force has been in attendance. I have thus seen nearly as great a variety of Indian character as a journey of many hundred miles into the Indian country would have afforded me, and from what I have seen I can realize what *can* or *might* be seen. . . .

July 26. At Prescott's. Had an agreeable meeting with [George A.] Richmond, the Boston man I met on the Excelsior, a gentleman and talented. A parley with an old soldier of the garrison gave me many hints of frontier life — Texas and Mexico.

July 27. Attended drill of the troops in the morning. Two thirds of them are foreigners [and mere animals.]²⁰ In the afternoon walked with B to S^t Paul. B is a very small man and a *Frenchman*, in its most peculiar signification. He cut a comical figure in trying to get through a swamp on the prairie. He was attired in sky-blue Paris pants and mocassin[s] and was very desirous to reach S^t Paul without wetting the last or soiling the first. In his perplexity he finally became transfix[ed] in the midst of the mire, (the prospect as discourag-

¹⁸ For a detailed discussion of voyageur songs, see Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur*, 103-155 (New York, 1931).

¹⁹ The words enclosed in brackets are written in pencil.

²⁰ The words enclosed in brackets have been crossed out with pencil in the original manuscript.

ing as the retrospect), resting like a pair of three legged compasses on his pedestals and a large cane which he grasped in both hands, a perplexed brow and expanded eyes peering from among a long beard and a profusion of hair. Having got safely through, tho' with wet feet, I turned & beheld B in this attitude when I immediately lay on the prairie in a fit of immoderate laughter — my sense of compassion being destroyed by that of the ridiculous. B, however, at last made a desperate effort and emerged from the grass and mire.

July 29. Returned from St Paul, whither I went chiefly to see the "Red-rivermen", a caravan of whom had arrived with their skins and peltries. They were under the charge of Mr [Norman W.] Kittson, the trader at Pembina.²¹ The Red-river half-breeds are descendants of the French, Scotch, and English who constituted Lord Selkirk's settlement on the Red river, and who took to themselves wives of the neighboring Indians, Chippewas and Crees. A portion of these half-breeds have settled within the boundary of the U. S. at Pembina, a point on the "Red river of the North" a few miles south of our boundary. They are tall, fine looking men, generally, presenting a mingled resemblance to their ancestors. They are almost exclusively employed as hunters and trappers, the buffalo being the favourite object of their pursuit. The women produce the most beautiful garnished work of beads, porcupine quills and silk, with which they adorn leathern coats, mocassins, pouches, saddles &c. Until within a few years they have been entirely dependant on the "Hudson's bay Company" for their supplies and trade, but of late they have directed their attention to intercourse with the settlements here, and have found it greatly to

²¹ Opposite this point in the manuscript, Mayer gives the following reference: "vide. Congressional doc^t Ex. Doc. No 42. Senate. 31 congress. 1st Sessⁿ." The document is Captain John Pope's *Report of an Exploration of the Territory of Minnesota* (serial 558). Pope, a member of an expedition under Major Samuel Woods that explored the region between Fort Snelling and Pembina in the summer of 1849, includes in his report descriptions of a Red River train and of the half-breeds and their settlements. For a detailed account of "Norman W. Kittson, A Fur-trader at Pembina" by Clarence W. Rife, see *ante*, 6: 225-252. Kittson, who was associated with Sibley in the fur trade, established a post at Pembina in 1844. "The annual caravan from the Selkirk Settlement arrived" at St. Paul about July 18, according to the *Pioneer* of July 24, 1851. Abundant evidence of Mayer's interest in the Red River train is to be found in his sketchbooks. Three sketches obviously made at the Red River camp in St. Paul are reproduced with his *Diary*, 57, 58; another appears herewith.

their advantage to do so, for their caravans or trains have annually increased in number, and now two hundred carts make the yearly pilgrimage across the praries, six hundred and fifty miles, to St Paul.²² Their carts are rudely made of wood, no iron being used in their construction, the fastenings and clamps being of raw-hide or pegs of wood. They are drawn by a single ox, or horse, in shafts and carry from eight hundred to a thousand pounds.

They are laden with buffalo hides[,] *pem[m]ican*, (which is the dried buffalo meat chopped fine and consolidated by putting it in a skin bag and pouring melted tallow over it, so that it constitutes a very compact and nutritious food to the hunter and traveller in these northern regions), peltries, fur, embroidered leather coats[,] mocassins, saddles, &c. These they sell or exchange at St Paul²³ and return again to their secluded home where, nine months of the twelve, they experience the intense cold of a northern winter. The thermometer sinking often to 40° below 0. Pembina is the most northern settlement of any consequence in the United States.

They are a wild, picturesque race, and they are hardy and athletic. Their costume partakes of the character of their genealogy — *mixed*. The Scotch bonnet, adorned with plaid and ribbons, is much worn and the rest of the costume differs but little from the voyageur dress. Mr Belcour[t], the Catholic priest who resides among them, is an intelligent and affable gentleman.²⁴

The Governor of Minnesota and suite, accompanied by the dragoons from Ft Snelling, will leave here soon after the treaty, at present being negotiated at Mendota, is concluded, and proceed to Pembina for the

²² The *Pioneer* of July 24 estimates that the Red River train of 1851 consisted of only about a hundred carts. Mayer also exaggerates the distance from St. Paul to Pembina, which according to Pope, was 446½ miles. The latter gives a table of distances in his *Report*, 42.

²³ The carts that arrived in 1851 were "not all heavy loaded," according to the *Pioneer* of July 24. The newspaper reports, however, "that a considerable sum of money came with the train, which is intended for the purchase of goods."

²⁴ For a sketch of the Reverend Georges A. Belcourt, see *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 1:240-244 (1872). Belcourt went to the Red River country in 1831 and he established the Pembina mission in 1849. Two letters by Father Belcourt are included in Major Samuel Woods's report on the *Pembina Settlement*, which is published as 31 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 51 (serial 577). Both deal with the Red River settlements and the people who lived there.

purpose of effecting the purchase of the lands adjoining Pembina, and inducing the halfbreeds to become citizens of the United States.²⁵

While at S^t Paul I made the acquaintance of Jno. W. Quinney and two other chiefs or *sachems* of the Stockbridge Indians.²⁶ The Stockbridge Indians are the last remnant of the once powerful tribe of the *Muh-he-con-new* or Mohicans²⁷ who occupied the whole territory between the²⁸ Hudson and the Connecticut at the time of the discovery by Europeans of this country. A portion of this tribe congregated at Stockbridge [?Conn^t],²⁹ about the year 1720 for the purpose of missionary instruction, and it is the descendants of those alone who embraced Christianity and civilization who endure to the present day. At the close of the Revolutionary war, they were removed to lands in Western New York, provided for them by Government, they having assisted the colonists in their struggle for independence. In 1820 they were again removed to "Green-bay" and now are seeking a last resting place in Minnesota, the government having promised them a *permanent* home. I understand that a dispute having arisen among them, a portion have determined to remove hither, while the remainder retain a portion of their possessions in Green-bay.³⁰ Those who are coming here will become citizens of the U. S, the others refusing to join with them in such a move, & hence the dispute

²⁵ The treaty that Ramsey negotiated with the Chippewa at Pembina was signed on September 20, 1851. The Senate, however, failed to ratify it in June, 1852, when the Sioux treaties of 1851 were approved. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 288, 291.

²⁶ An obituary sketch of John W. Quinney, who died at Stockbridge, Wisconsin, on July 21, 1855, appears in the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 4: 309-311 (1859). A reference to "Cong¹ Doc. 1830," appearing on a page that faces this point in the original manuscript has not been located.

²⁷ Muheconew — i e good canoemen [*author's note*].

²⁸ Quinney said "southern New York and New [Eng]land" [*author's note.*]

²⁹ The word enclosed in brackets has been added in pencil. It is, however, incorrect, for the original Stockbridge mission was in Berkshire County, Massachusetts. The Indians went there in 1736 and left in 1785. Frederick W. Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians*, 2: 637 (Washington, 1912).

³⁰ The removal to Green Bay took place in 1833. The plan for a settlement in Minnesota does not seem to have materialized. Some of the Stockbridge Indians were removed in 1856 to a reservation in Shawano County, Wisconsin; those who desired to become citizens settled in the town of Stockbridge. Quinney was among the latter. Hodge, *Handbook of American Indians*, 2: 638; *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 4: 309.

They are perfectly civilized, adopting civilized dress and habits, and governed by a code of Laws and Sachems of their own choosing. Their numbers do not exceed one thousand. The Sachem, Quinney is an intelligent, gentle and somewhat reserved man, with features strongly Indian, tho mild in expression.³¹

29 July. The Treaty with the lower bands of the Sioux at Mendota, progresses but slowly. A faithful report of the proceedings is appended.³²

July 30. To day the Indians celebrated a "*brave-dance*" before the commissioner None but Warriors can participate. They were all divested of clothing, with the exception of the usual covering of the loins which is never laid aside, except in young children. Their he[a]ddresses and ornaments were similar to those used in the ball-play, tho' richer and more profuse probably more picturesque than on any other occasion. Each one carried a weapon or bow & arrows in one hand, and in the other, a rattle. They formed a large ring, listened to speeches and danced. It was a more symmetrical arrangement than any I have seen. All stood in a ring for some time singing in chorus and rattling and then, at a signal, all began to dance in a mingled confusion, and then again returned to the ring, listened to a speech, sang, &c. They received presents of tobacco &c as usual.

The view from Pilot Knob, once a favourite burial place of the Sioux, is very extensive, commanding the valley of the St^t Peters, the Mississipp[i] Fort Snelling, St^t Paul and St^t Ant[h]ony.

Sketch'd the view, and an Elk belonging to M^r Sibley³³ and saw a *black sq[u]irrel*, a quadruped peculiar to the West. Attended Treaty, virgin-feast, & sketched Odell's wife — a very handsome graceful half-breed.³⁴

³¹ On a page facing this point in the manuscript, Mayer notes a "Sketch-portrait" of Quinney.

³² On the left-hand pages throughout this portion of the diary are pasted clippings of the detailed report of the negotiations at Mendota that appears in the *Pioneer* for August 7 and 14, 1851.

³³ Mayer's sketch of the view from Pilot Knob is reproduced in his *Diary*, 35. In the *Pioneer* for August 7, 1851, Sibley's captive elk is described as a "very large fine animal, with a terrible weight of antlers upon his head." It was "kept in a high enclosure, and tied with a halter."

³⁴ Mrs. Thomas S. Odell was the daughter of an army officer and a native woman. Her husband went to Fort Snelling as a soldier in 1841, settled in St. Paul in 1846, and built a trading store and house in West St. Paul in 1850. See T. M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul*, 51 (St. Paul, 1886). Mayer's sketch of Mrs. Odell is in his Sketchbooks, 44:44.

The "half-breed" women are almost invariably comely, tall, and graceful.

August 5th The treaty was to day signed.³⁵

Sketched Teepees at Mendota in company with Mr Geo. W. Woodward of New York, a gentlemanly fellow and fond of Art.

What was my surp[r]ise on examining a fine buffalo robe I had purchased of an Indian and left in the dingy office at the interpreter's, to find that the rats had made sad inroads in it. Several large holes now marred it's former beauty . . .

July 6-7. The two last days have been occupied in paying the Indians a large amount due to them, by the stipulations of the late treaty.³⁶ The amounts were distributed to heads of families in proportion to the number of persons in each. The distribution is made by the Indian agent, interpreter, and clerks, who sit at the long table in Prescott's hall, and the Indians and half-breeds crowd around. The house [in]side and out is swarming wit[h] red-men, squaws and papooses, who smoke, talk, sleep and squawl in every posture and tone.

In the evening I saw a fine display of that inexplicable phenomenon, the "Aurora Borealis". The rays shot upwards in sprays of vivid light and were distinct. This phenomenon and that of the "double suns" are witnessed here in great perfection during the winter.

July 7. Rode to St Anthony. As we crossed the prairie a large wolf was seen sitting in the road immediately before us. As we approached, he walked deliberately to one side of the road and seated himself at a convenient distance, where he watched us complacently, as we stopped to look at him. Having no arms, we could not attack him. He is a well known prowler and his impudence is noted.

³⁵ "The Treaty with the lower bands of Sioux, was signed at Mendota, last Tuesday afternoon," according to the *Pioneer* of Thursday, August 7, 1851. "Little Crow, who writes his own name, led off," the account continues. He was followed by Wabasha. In all, sixty-four chiefs and warriors signed the treaty. A detailed report of the speeches and proceedings of August 5 appears in the *Pioneer* for August 14.

³⁶ The terms of the Mendota treaty are given in Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:284, and in the *Pioneer* of August 7. Much of the area west of the Mississippi and east of the Minnesota and Blue Earth rivers was ceded by the lower Sioux. The newspaper notes that on the day following the treaty, the "Indians were paid in cash \$30,000, being part of the funds unpaid to them, and remaining due, as arrearages, by the terms of their treaty of 1837." Dr. Folwell relates that "not many days passed before substantially the whole amount was in the hands of the traders and the merchants of St. Paul." *Minnesota*, 1:287.

The falls of St Anthony extend, in a nearly strait line, across the Mississippi, being divided by an island which extends about a mile and a half up the stream. The beauty of one portion of the fall has been almost entirely destroyed by the saw mill which has been built immediately above, and the other portion has lost much of its wildness & beauty by the lodgement of numbers of logs (upon the rocks and between the crevices) which have come over the falls during freshets, having escaped from the dam where they are collected to supply the Saw mills.⁸⁷

The height of the fall is not over twenty feet and the entire width of the river about half a mile.

The waters pour over in a flood of amber colour graduating into a snowy whiteness as it approaches the rocks beneath. The islands in the vicinity are covered with pine and other foliage, and below the falls their rocky sides present a picturesque appearance. The west-er[n] side of the river has few trees and the country is prairie. To the East is the village of St Anthony with an elevated country at the back of it. It is destined to become a great manufacturing point, the water power being one of the finest in the world. This will be applied, however, at the expense of the beauty of the scenery of the Falls which, when first viewed by the whites, must have presented a beautiful appearance. The presence of saw mills, dams, races, and logs, will soon destroy its beauty entirely, I fear. The falls are over ledges of sand stone, the channel is level and of solid rock. The falls seem to have been gradually receding from the junction of the Minnesota to their present position.

Another fall called the Little Falls, formed by the descent of a small creek into the Mississippi, a few miles below St Antony, & near the [latter?] tho' of small size, is very beautiful. The stream is precipitated from the level of the prairie to the bottom of a ravine the distance of over fifty feet. Thence it flows through foliage and rock to the Mississippi. This beautiful fall is destined to meet the fate of its

⁸⁷ Franklin Steele built a dam across the east channel of the Mississippi at the Falls of St. Anthony in 1847, and in the next year he began operating a sawmill on the east bank. Settlement followed, and the village of St. Anthony, now a part of Minneapolis, developed. See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 229. On a page facing this part of his manuscript, Mayer gives a reference to "Ex. Doc. 42 Senate, 1850." He doubtless had turned to Pope's *Report*, 14 (serial 558) for a description of the falls and an account of lumbering operations there.

"big sister", the falls of St Antony (which the Indians call *Minneha-ha* "the laughing waters"),³⁸ for its advantages as a motive power will not permit it long to remain in idleness after our Government disposes of the military reserve on which it is situated. I regret that sickness prevented me from making a careful sketch of this beautiful spot before such a change takes place.

The inhabitants of the village of St Antony present marked features and character which at once indicate their origin to be New England and especially "down East from the state of Maine", raftsmen & woodmen from the Kennebeck and Penobscot.³⁹

I must surely be getting very *shabby*, for the hotel keeper told the servant to inform B that this "fellow" wanted to see him.

Fine clothes, I presume, are here considered indicative of gentility. Head ache at night, and next room very fond of the accordeon — trying — very. Saw the first specimen I have met of "Bloomerism". A very pretty girl with gipsy hat, short skirts and Turkish pants.⁴⁰ Can't fancy it.

The best writers on the "North West" are said to be M^cKenzie, Lewis & Clarke, Simpson (overland journey round the world) Fremont, Cha^s A. Murray, Long's Exped^{ns} Lanman & Catlin are considered *exceedingly* questionable authority.⁴¹

³⁸ It was, of course, the Little Falls, not the Falls of St. Anthony, that the Indians called Minnehaha, the name that they still retain. Notwithstanding the remarks that follow, Mayer did sketch the Little Falls, for a view of them is included in his Sketchbooks, 44:27. He refers to it in the margin near this point in the manuscript.

³⁹ The lumber industry attracted to St. Anthony and to the St. Croix Valley a number of New Englanders. The role of the Mainite in the Minnesota lumber industry is discussed by Agnes M. Larson in an article entitled "On the Trail of the Woodsman in Minnesota," *ante*, 13:350, and by Richard G. Wood in a chapter on the "Emigration of Maine Lumbermen," appearing in his *History of Lumbering in Maine*, 233 (Orono, Maine, 1935).

⁴⁰ The bloomer costume for women was the subject of frequent comment in the *Pioneer* in the summer of 1851. "This is the prevailing costume for females at Traverse des Sioux," writes Goodhue in the *Pioneer* of July 24. "The costume may be seen daily in our streets worn by the natives. It is what Mrs. Bloomer claims for it . . . 'pre-eminently American.'" In the issue for July 31, the editor complains that "Every paper is filled with comments upon the Bloomer costume," adding that the "subject is worn to tatters."

⁴¹ On a left-hand page facing this point in the manuscript Mayer wrote in pencil: "Artist-work on the Indians — Rindisbacher, * Bodmer, *A. J. Miller, Catlin, Stanley." Peter Rindisbacher, one of the earliest artists

July 20. Having visited S^t Paul and transacted business there I returned to the Fort, my headache having increased and fever being thereunto added. The Doctor, M^cLaren, ascribes it to the miasmatic influence of the S^t Peters and exposure to the Sun, which is intens[ely] hot at midday.⁴² Twelve days sickn[ess in] such a place as Prescotts wa[s] calculated to induce a condition of "blueness" and "homesickness" unparalleled in my previous experience.⁴³ Without comfort, without sympathy, without friends, without amusement, with fever, with cold, with dirt, with disgust and with comparisons with home — I determined to stand it no longer, and as soon a[s] strength

to picture the Minnesota country and its natives, is the subject of a sketch by Grace Lee Nute, *ante*, 20:54–57. Karl Bodmer was the artist who accompanied Maximilian, Prince of Wied, on his American travels and illustrated the latter's *Travels in the Interior of North America, 1832–1834*. Mayer studied with Alfred J. Miller; his work is discussed in the introduction to the published *Diary*, 6. George Catlin made two visits to the Minnesota country in the 1830's; he wrote and illustrated an extensive work entitled *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*. More than a hundred and fifty pictures of western scenes and Indians were exhibited in various eastern cities by John M. Stanley in 1850 and 1851. In 1853 he accompanied I. I. Stevens on his Pacific railroad survey from St. Paul to Puget Sound. The writers mentioned in the text include Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Sir George Simpson, and John C. Frémont. The narrative of the Long expedition of 1823 was written by William H. Keating. This work and Charles Lanman's *Summer in the Wilderness* deal specifically with Minnesota. Mayer seems to have read widely in the field of western travel.

⁴² In 1873 the Minnesota state board of health published a paper on the causes of "miasmatic diseases." "In marshy or miasmatic districts," according to this statement, "the disease cause . . . is liberated and disseminated by the heat of the sun in the spring." Ralph H. Brown, "Fact and Fancy in Early Accounts of Minnesota's Climate," *ante*, 17:257–259.

⁴³ For a description of Philander Prescott's house at Fort Snelling, where Mayer lived both before and after going to Traverse des Sioux, see his *Diary*, 136–141. In the unpublished version of the diary, under date of June 24, 1851, the artist gives a more detailed description of his quarters. "In harmony with the apartmen[t] was its furniture," writes Mayer. His own bed was very unsteady; beside it were a "chair, minus a back, and an adjoining bedstead, occupied by an individual who was subject to frequent attacks of lunacy & who talked in his sleep of incoherent horrors." The rafters were hung with "herbs, cast-away garme[nts,] old furs, and skins deserted by the moths for lack of nutriment. . . . The floor was of unplan[ed] boards and were not secured to the joists, so that many a trap was laid for the stranger's legs which might easily have pierced the ceiling beneath. The eaves were stowed with old boxes, trunks, &c which I never looked into; and the huge stack of two chimneys filled the centre of the loft."

permitted me bid adieu to the worst quarters I ever occupied and took passage aboard the "Doctor Franklin N^o 2" for St^t Louis.⁴⁴

One of the last objects I saw as I left the Fort was "Gubbo", the half breed, mounted on a swift horse, with his blanket and buffalo robe on the saddle, his rifle across his knees, and waving me good bye, as he scampered over the prairie on his way to overtake the Governor and suite, who had left a few days before for Pembina and the Red river of the North.⁴⁵ Had I felt well I should have envied him the pleasure but as it was, I did not.

At St^t Paul we took on board a large number of furs which had been brought by the Red river men, and were the property of "Pierre Chouteau J^r & C^o," who constitute the American Fur C^o, & to whom almost all the Traders in our Indian country are more or less subordinates.⁴⁶

August 23. left St^t Paul and on the 27th arrived in St^t Louis . . .

⁴⁴ The "Dr. Franklin No. 2" arrived in St. Paul on the morning of August 23 and left the same evening. *Pioneer*, August 28, 1851.

⁴⁵ Governor Ramsey left for Pembina on August 18. His party was accompanied by an escort of cavalry from Fort Snelling. *Pioneer*, August 21, 1851.

⁴⁶ Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company of St. Louis took over the business of the American Fur Company in the Northwest in 1843. The furs that Kittson and the Red River train carried to St. Paul were destined for the St. Louis market. Rife, *ante*, 6:234.



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