

# The Eden of the

**H**arriet E. Bishop, a young schoolteacher, moved from New England to St. Paul in 1847, two years before Minnesota Territory was formed. Despite the frontier village's crude accommodations, she was so delighted with her new home that several years later she could enthuse, "If earth has a Paradise, it is here." Another native New Englander, Ephraim S. Seymour, who toured parts of Minnesota in 1849, thought that with cultivation it would become "a perfect Eden." Later in the territorial period, the editor of the *St. Peter Courier* extolled the advantages of his Minnesota River Valley town, which he saw as "our western Eden home."<sup>1</sup>

Hyperbole typified the territory's boosters, who were determined to attract settlers and counteract the prevailing negative impression that their adopted home was an American



# West

WILLIAM E. LASS

Siberia. Many prospective settlers perceived Minnesota as a remote, cold, desolate wilderness beyond the nation's agricultural pale. This reputation, along with the territory's vastness and sparse population, troubled Alexander Ramsey, the first territorial governor, when he presented his inaugural message to the legislature on September 4, 1849.<sup>2</sup>

Ramsey recognized that the extensive territory, bounded by Wisconsin on the east, Iowa on the south, the Missouri and White Earth Rivers on the west, and British possessions on the north, desperately needed settlers. A census taken in the summer of 1849 showed only 4,535 whites and mixed-bloods living in the territory of about 166,000 square miles (nearly twice the size of the later state). Other than the capital, St. Paul, the only settlements of note were



Passenger-carrying paddle-wheelers a few miles below Red Wing grace  
Ferdinand Reichardt's scenic *View of the Mississippi*, 1857

*View of the Mississippi, 1857*

Stillwater, Little Canada, St. Anthony, and the mixed-blood community of Pembina in the Red River Valley. Ramsey's address emphasized the common belief that Minnesota's future lay in agriculture. Since only about three percent of the land within its official boundaries had been acquired from the indigenous Dakota and Ojibwe who lived there, Ramsey and other promoters believed that major Indian land cessions and heavy promotional advertising were vital to the territory's rapid development.

A variety of groups and individuals—newspaper editors, guidebook authors, excursionists, organized colonies of settlers, government officials, and speculators—promoted Minnesota's acclaimed advantages. Newspapers, because of their regular distribution and relatively wide circulation outside the territory, spearheaded the promotional offensive. Setting the stage was James Madison Goodhue, the energetic editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, the territory's first newspaper. Launching his paper, Goodhue proclaimed that "the interests of Minnesota require an able and efficient press, to represent abroad our wants and to set forth our situation, our resources and our advantages."<sup>3</sup>

Until his death in August 1852, Goodhue was Minnesota's best salesman. His zealous passion for the territory's superiority was evident in his witty, colorful editorials and stories. He sometimes printed extra copies to respond to inquiries and to enable Minnesotans to mail them to acquaintances back east. He also regularly sent copies to newspapers serving areas where the most likely future Minnesotans lived—the New England, Middle Atlantic, and Old Northwest states. Oftentimes, these papers reprinted his comments verbatim, providing free advertising for Minnesota.<sup>4</sup>

Most other territorial newspapers used Goodhue's tactics to boast about Minnesota. John P. Owens, who successively edited three St. Paul newspapers—the *Minnesota Register*, the *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, and the *Minnesotian*—most closely resembled Goodhue in style, dedication, and methods. Probably the single most ambitious promotion was conducted by Charles G. Ames, the editor of St. Anthony's *Minnesota Republican*. In a series of 13 articles titled "Minnesota as It Is," Ames advertised the territory's climate, natural resources, agriculture, and lumbering.<sup>5</sup>

NEWSPAPER BOOSTERISM was at least matched by guidebook authors John Wesley Bond, Ephraim S. Seymour, Henry W. Hamilton, Charles Emerson, A. D. Munson, and Christopher C. Andrews. Bond, a young Pennsylvanian who moved to St. Paul in 1849 and accompanied Governor Ramsey on an 1851 expedition through the

Red River Valley, wrote *Minnesota and Its Resources* in 1853 and produced updated editions in 1854, 1856, and 1857.<sup>6</sup> Bond masterfully mixed fact and fiction by including accurate information on such things as population and land sales along with outlandish claims for the area's uniquely salubrious climate and the superiority of its people in morality, virtue, thrift, industriousness, enterprise, and intellect.

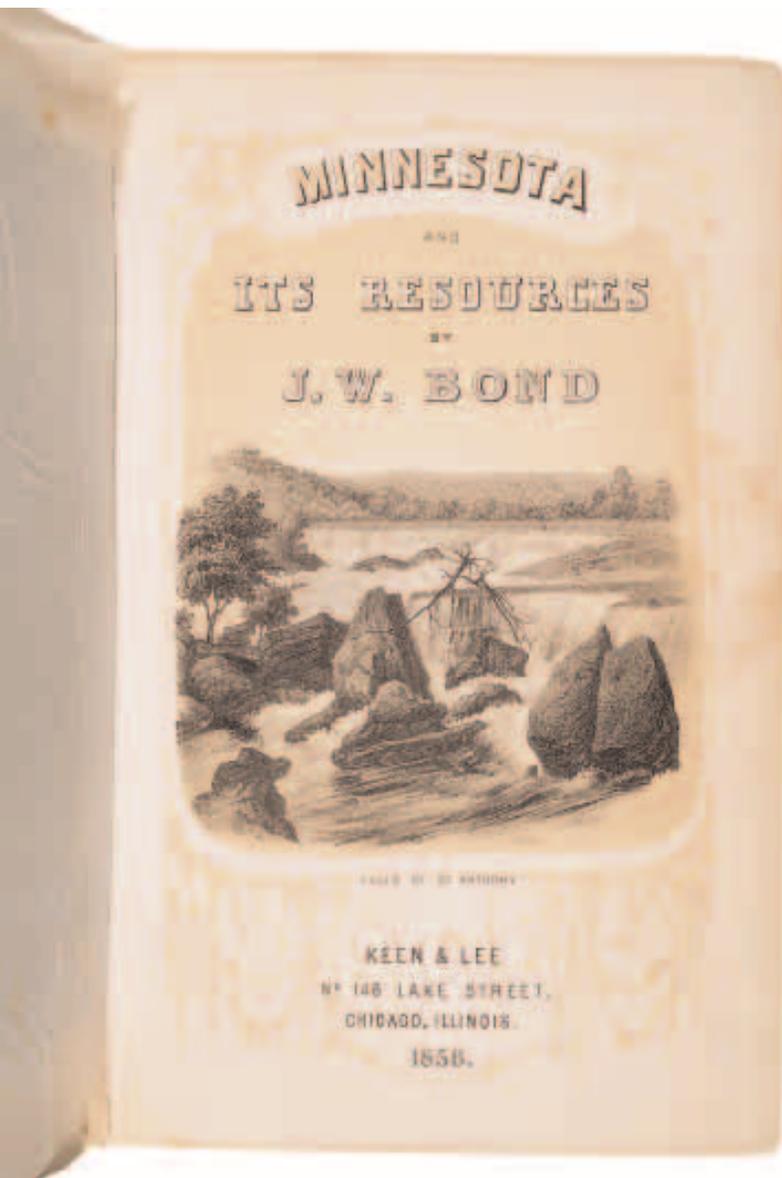
When Seymour toured the St. Paul–St. Anthony–Stillwater area in 1849, he had already published a directory to the lead-mining region of Galena, Illinois, where he lived, and an emigrants' guide to the California gold mines.<sup>7</sup> By giving his book the propagandistic title *Sketches of Minnesota, the New England of the West*, Seymour suggested that the territory was a verdant, scenic area destined to be transformed into another great center of civilization. Subsequently, promoters often paid Minnesota their highest compliment by predicting it would be the country's next New England.

Bond's book, published in Chicago and Philadelphia, and Seymour's text, published in New York City, were often quoted by Minnesota and out-of-territory newspapers, and both enjoyed a wide readership. Leaders in Northampton, Massachusetts, who were organizing a colony in Minnesota specifically recommended Seymour's book to members and likely recruits.<sup>8</sup>

Although Henry W. Hamilton's *Rural Sketches of Minnesota, The El Dorado of the North-west*, published in Milan, Ohio, in 1850, was less widely circulated, it presented Minnesota even more favorably as a land akin to the fabled place of precious minerals sought by Spanish explorers. To Hamilton, Minnesota was a preferred alternative to California, which was being grandly promoted as the "New El Dorado" after the 1849 gold rush.

A. D. Munson's *The Minnesota Messenger Containing Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Minnesota* and Charles L. Emerson's *Rise and Progress of Minnesota Territory* were both published in St. Paul in 1855 while the city and territory were experiencing unprecedented growth. Munson reiterated the standard claims that Minnesota was a haven for health seekers, and Emerson's booklet, originally issued in October 1854 in the *Minnesota Democrat* when Emerson was its editor, emphasized St. Paul's vibrant economy.

Christopher C. Andrews's *Minnesota and Dacotah*, published in Washington, D.C., in 1857, was the territory's last promotional book. Based on a series of popular letters Andrews sent to the *Boston Post* while touring Minnesota in 1856, it was not as overdone as some of the other books, but it nonetheless could have caused eager land seekers to imagine Minnesota as the Garden of Eden.



Title page of the 1856 edition of John Wesley Bond's early book promoting Minnesota

THOUSANDS OF TOURISTS also helped publicize the territory. Typically they booked steamboat tours from St. Louis or Galena to St. Paul, the base for visiting sites such as the Falls of St. Anthony, Minnehaha Falls, and Fort Snelling. The "Fashionable Tour," as it came to be known, was first proposed in 1835 by artist George Catlin, who aptly sensed the appeal of the Mississippi River's scenic attractions to well-to-do American and foreign travelers. By the late 1830s excursion tours originating in St. Louis had become popular, and the number of these fashionable excursions increased after accommodations in St. Paul improved.<sup>9</sup>

Two of the best-known steamboat excursionists in the early territorial years were women. The Swedish novelist Fredrika Bremer, her international reputation already well established, visited St. Paul and its environs in October 1850, a year after beginning her lengthy tour of the United States.<sup>10</sup>

Recognizing Bremer's promotional potential, Governor Ramsey and his wife Anna hosted the celebrity during her eight-day stay, and they must have felt gratified when her *Homes of the New World*, published in 1853, praised Minnesota's agricultural potential and prophetically observed,

This Minnesota is a glorious country, and just the country for Northern emigrants. . . . It is four times as large as England; its soil is of the richest description, with extensive wooded tracts; great numbers of rivers and lakes abounding in fish, and a healthy, invigorating climate. . . . What a glorious new Scandinavia might not Minnesota become!<sup>11</sup>

American writer Elizabeth Ellet made a trip in 1852 that became even more widely known than Bremer's. A frequent contributor to national magazines such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, Ellet gloried in Minnesota's scenery and described Minnehaha Falls as a "vision of beauty" that formed "a scene of such enchanting loveliness as to take the senses captive, and steep the soul in the purest enjoyment this earth can afford." Her travelogue, first printed serially in the New York *Daily Tribune* in August and September 1852, was excerpted by other newspapers including the *St. Anthony Express*. Her book *Summer Rambles in the West*, published the next year, included extensive coverage of Minnesota's scenic attractions and promoted fashionable tours.<sup>12</sup>

The single greatest promotional act of the territorial period was the Rock Island Railroad Excursion of 1854. Upon reaching the Mississippi at Rock Island, Illinois, on February 22, the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad celebrated by organizing an excursion to the head of navigation. Invited were hundreds of celebrities including politicians such as former president Millard Fillmore, businessmen, academicians, and journalists from most major eastern newspapers and cities such as Chicago and Cincinnati.<sup>13</sup>

The three-day tour proved so popular that its organizers had to employ five very crowded steamboats to carry the 1,200 excursionists to St. Paul that June. During their one very long day in Minnesota, coaches and every other conceivable vehicle whisked them to the Falls of St. Anthony, Lake Calhoun, Minnehaha Falls, and Fort Snelling. After a grand reception at the St. Paul capitol hosted by Governor Willis A. Gorman,



Fashionable visitors admiring Minnehaha Falls, front and back

the visitors departed just before midnight. Speaking at the reception, Fillmore lauded in terms of just praise the scenery and prospects of the country and expatiated at length on its beauty and resources. A newspaper account continued, “He spoke of the adaptation of St. Paul as a summer place of fashionable resort, and believed it would eventually be connected in an unbroken chain of railway with the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He should go home with enlarged ideas of the future greatness of Minnesota.” Quite likely he had been made aware that local boosters were predicting greatness for the city because of its central location in the continent.

Perhaps the most widely circulated article about the trip, “The Great Excursion to the Falls of St. Anthony”

by nationally known writer Catherine M. Sedgwick, was published in *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine* of September 1854. But dozens of other stories about the scenic upper Mississippi appeared in newspapers. While river tourists did not have an opportunity to become well acquainted with the interior of Minnesota, they did see the verdant river valley during the summer, which stimulated comparisons to New England. For example, Charles F. Babcock, editor of the New Haven *Palladium*, thought that the scenery at St. Paul and St. Anthony was “not unlike that observed in some of the drives around New Haven.” As a result of the great excursion, Christopher C. Andrews reported, a remarkable 28,000 people visited St. Paul during the 1856 navigation season.<sup>14</sup>

LEADERS OF ORGANIZED settlement colonies became some of Minnesota’s most enthusiastic promoters. They typically formed organizations with a formal name, by-laws, and membership dues. Colonies were touted as superior to individual settlement because advance agents could preselect land claims and often handle the legal requirements of obtaining titles. Once established, the group could cooperatively build homes, schools, and churches.

Members of each colony often shared a unifying trait. The Minnesota Claim Association, for example, was usually called the Northampton Colony after the Massachusetts city where it was organized. Headed by Methodist clergymen Freeman Nutting and Henry Martyn Nichols and extensively publicized for several months in the *Northampton Courier* and by exchanges with other eastern newspapers, the organization sent settlers to Chanhassen, Faribault, and St. Peter in 1853. The Minnesota Settlement Association of New York City concentrated on city folk in its 1855 advertising blitz in the *New York Daily Tribune*, and by spring 1856 it had garnered an impressive 250 members who prepared to move.<sup>15</sup>

A territorial official played a strong hand in Minnesota’s most unique colony and definitely its greatest failure. The Western Farm and Village Association of New York City represented a group of urban, working-class members. Inspired by the physiocratic tradition of the naturalness of the yeoman farmer and, apparently, various utopian settlements, the association disparaged the wage system in favor of agriculture. The decision to move to Winona County in 1852 was in part a response to Henry H. Sibley, territorial delegate to Congress.<sup>16</sup>

Through his pamphlet, *Minnesota Territory: Its Present Condition and Prospects*, and in correspondence with the association, Sibley glorified the prospects of living the good life in rural Minnesota. He even introduced a proposal in the House of Representatives to grant 160 acres

of federal land to each association member. Despite the failure of this private homestead bill, about 175 colony members moved to Rolling Stone in Winona County in 1852. While their cause seemed noble, they were stunningly naive about the realities of frontier life. Disease, a high death rate, poor land selection, bad roads, and lack of supplies forced most of the colonists, including the chief organizer, to leave Rolling Stone within a few months.

OTHER OFFICIALS who actively promoted Minnesota included Alexander Ramsey and Willis A. Gorman. Ramsey skillfully used his annual messages to the legislature to praise Minnesota's climate, healthfulness, agricultural potential, and future greatness. His words were

**Splendid cabin of the steamboat *Milwaukee* (right) and the steamers *Grey Eagle*, *Frank Steele*, *Jeannette Roberts*, and *Time and Tide* at St. Paul's lower levee, 1859**



distributed generously by Minnesota newspapers and such national business magazines as *De Bow's Review*.

Ramsey also promoted the territory officially in order to more effectively compete with Wisconsin and other states that were using public funds and government employees to advertise for settlers. Ramsey and the legislature were persuaded by William G. Le Duc to sponsor a Minnesota exhibit at the 1853 Crystal Palace world's fair in New York City. As the appointed fair commissioner, Le Duc, an irregular correspondent for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* and the publisher of the somewhat promotional annual titled *The Minnesota Year Book*, was granted \$300 to display Minnesota products.<sup>17</sup>

As a result of his New York experience, Le Duc recommended that Minnesota should officially begin recruiting foreigners for settlement. The 1854 legislature considered that possibility but did not act. Ramsey's successor, however, Willis A. Gorman, strongly urged official promotion. Responding to his call, the 1855 legislature created the position of Commissioner of Emigration, and Gorman then named Eugene Burnand, a Swiss immigrant who had recruited Europeans in New York, to the position.<sup>18</sup>

As specified in the authorizing legislation, Burnand established his headquarters in New York City where he could best meet European immigrants and interest them in Minnesota. During his two-year tenure, he also advertised the territory in European newspapers and corresponded with groups of immigrants who had recently moved to other American cities. Concentrating on Germans, Burnand successfully persuaded many of them, including the Cincinnati German Association, which played a key role in founding New Ulm, to move to Minnesota.

While serving as territorial delegate, Sibley made his first promotional effort in a February 15, 1850, letter to U.S. Senator Henry S. Foote of Mississippi. Portraying Minnesota in glowing terms, the letter, first printed in the Washington, D.C., *Union*,

became the core of Sibley's promotional pamphlet *Minnesota Territory: Its Present Condition and Prospects*, printed by the Washington *Globe* on February 20, 1852. With slight changes it was again published in the *Daily National Intelligencer* (Washington) on November 5, 1852, and in some Minnesota newspapers.<sup>19</sup>

LAND SPECULATORS REPRESENTED a last important source of territorial promotion. Although the press regularly vilified them as greedy vultures who preyed on a vulnerable populace, speculators were not solely big-monied investors. In truth, during the heady boom times before the devastating Panic of 1857, speculation permeated all segments of Minnesota society. Johann Georg Kohl, a German geographer who visited Minnesota in 1855, observed that "in St. Paul, every shoemaker, every laborer, every maid, and every stableboy, whoever has saved money, dreams and fantasizes about a hole, a rock, a swamp, a thornbush, a piece of land or (as they say here) a *lot* outside the city somewhere."<sup>20</sup>

Speculators and their allies came in many guises, including colonists, land-company agents, townsite promoters, community boosters, and ordinary citizens. Using a pseudonym such as "Northwest," "Benton," or



**A hand-crafted wooden immigrant's trunk from Norway, 1850s**

“T.” to send letters to Minnesota and out-of-state newspapers about the special qualities of their communities, they praised the territory’s farmland, crops, timber, mill sites, and destiny of becoming a regional metropolis. Quite likely these authors were disguised agents for land companies, but some may have been nothing more than another “Mr. Everyman,” whose own investment depended on the success of his town. Interestingly, by the mid-1850s boom, the existence of speculation was itself promoted as one of Minnesota’s great attractions, and stories of land values doubling or tripling in a few months became commonplace.<sup>21</sup>

MINNESOTA’S SUPPOSEDLY UNIQUE climate represented a challenge for promoters. Collectively defensive, they resented any critical comments or inferences that Minnesota was a Siberia, a second Lapland, a polar region, or too far north for productive agriculture. Gorman complained, for instance, that “during the past year I have received almost innumerable letters from the middle states propounding a variety of questions about our territory, especially desiring to know if our winters are not very long, and so exceedingly cold that stock freezes to death, and man hardly dare venture out of his domicile.” Likewise, Burnand complained about agents from some states, whom he claimed frightened emigrants from risking their lives “among the alledged [*sic*] mountains of ice in this Territory.”<sup>22</sup>

Minnesota’s spokesmen went to the opposite extreme by presenting its climate as the world’s best. Like their critics, they assumed the ridiculous posture that climate conformed to political boundaries and, thus, that Minnesota somehow had a climate distinctive even from neighboring Iowa and Wisconsin. Most of their verbiage was devoted to the winter season because it was Minnesota’s bugbear. They described winters as dry, clear, calm, devoid of sharp temperature fluctuations, and invigorating. While newspaper editors and other boosters sometimes presented winter-weather statistics, promoters preferred “bracing” as their favorite synonym for cold. Summaries of winter weather usually included commentary that a really cold day was not really cold because people did not feel it to the extent they did in more humid climates to the east and south.<sup>23</sup>

On a philosophical plane, promoters contended that Minnesota’s climate in fact assured its future greatness. Their proof was the geopolitical notion that the world’s great civilizations had developed in temperate climatic zones. Editor Goodhue, for example, informed his readers that “the human family, never has accomplished anything worthy of note, beside the erection of pyramids, those milestones of ancient centuries, south



A horse-drawn sleigh waits in front of a busy St. Anthony land office in this 1/4-plate daguerreotype, about 1857.

of latitude 40 degrees north. The history of the world, is written chiefly above that parallel.”<sup>24</sup>

Specifically relating that concept to Minnesota, an expansive writer for *De Bow’s Review* claimed:

There seems to be a certain zone of climate within which humanity reaches the highest degree of physical and mental power. . . . That zone, rizing northward by some immutable law of nature, brought out from the Saxon family all its decided features of character. . . . That zone struck this country where the pilgrim and the Quaker landed, and has ever since been streaming across the continent in one unbroken path of progress and glory. . . . It is the good fortune of this Territory to lie not only within that zone, but within its very apex.<sup>25</sup>

Such observations, which later seemed quaint, if not ludicrous, were perfectly reasonable to those smitten with the nationalistic fervor of Manifest Destiny. Ramsey expressed the same sentiment when he declared that there was no movement of people

recorded in the annals of the world, that does not sink in comparison by side of that marvellous American progress, that astonishing growth and development of our triumphant, irresistible civilization, which in its

march to the uttermost extremities of the West, has passed the barrier of the Alleghanies [*sic*], peopled the valley of the Mississippi, crossed the Rocky Mountains, and planted our glorious liberty and benign institutions by the shores of the Pacific.<sup>26</sup>

Promoters found a strong correlation between Minnesota's winters and the sterling character of its people. They held that the long winters stimulated industriousness, frugality, inquisitiveness, enterprise, and intellect. Their reasoning was that Minnesotans had to work hard during the growing season to prepare for winter, which in turn was a time of contemplation, winter sports, and socializing to share ideas. In assessing the nature of Minnesotans, Bond observed:

I speak in no boastful or vainglorious theme when I say there is largely more *character* in Minnesota than was found at the same age in any of the older western members of our republican family. I know the fact from the experience of candid men, who have lived on other frontiers, and now bear testimony in favor of Minnesota. Croakers and grumblers we may ever expect to find among us—drones and loafers; but the great family of the hive works together steadily and harmoniously. They, and those who are to come after them, will reap their reward in a glorious, happy, and enviable future.<sup>27</sup>

The most extravagant claim about Minnesota's climate was that it was salubrious. In addressing the first territorial legislature, Ramsey stated that the "Northern latitude saves us from the malaria and death, which in other climes are so often attendant upon a liberal soil." Sibley boldly proclaimed that in Minnesota "sickness has no dwelling place," and in the same vein Goodhue declared that "never has a case of fever and ague originated here." Such claims prompted some Minnesotans to joke that in order to die they would have to leave the territory.<sup>28</sup>

In territorial years there was a certain plausibility to these extreme assertions. Until the mid-1870s the American public, including the medical profession, believed that climatic features were primary causes of disease, and, hence, they accepted the premise of healthy and unhealthy climates. Americans also knew that newly opened areas often were ravaged by diseases.<sup>29</sup> Naturally preoccupied with their own health, it is not too surprising that some might have believed that somewhere on the globe there was a magnificent, salubrious climate. Coincidentally, the formation of Minnesota Territory and a great cholera epidemic occurred within several months of each other.

Introduced from western Europe, a strain of Asiatic cholera had devastated settled areas of the United States in 1832. Abating for 17 years, it resurfaced in 1849, causing a national health crisis. New York City had 5,017 cholera fatalities in a three-month period, and the disease killed a tenth of the people in St. Louis. The calamity moved President Zachary Taylor to proclaim Friday, August 3, 1849, a national day of "fasting, humiliation and prayer" to implore the Almighty to lift the pestilence from the land.<sup>30</sup>

Since cholera was especially prevalent in filthy, crowded cities with garbage heaps, uncollected animal waste, and contaminated water, Minnesota escaped it in 1849. This absence, which was errantly attributed to the salubrious climate, gave credence to the territory's promotional claims. But when cholera reappeared nationally in 1854 and 1855, Minnesota was not so fortunate. At least a dozen St. Paulites died from it in 1854, but city promoters took steps to preserve the territory's reputation for healthiness. Receiving a report from the board of health about the cholera outbreak, the city council squelched the information. Council minutes did not mention the report, and city newspapers ignored it. Although cases probably increased in 1855, St. Paul's newspapers only mentioned it twice.<sup>31</sup>

Malaria or ague was perhaps the most dreaded disease in much of the nation. Especially prevalent in hot regions, it was believed to be caused by miasma, a vapor arising from warm-water swamps. Without knowledge that malaria (a word contracted from the Italian *mala aria* or bad air) was transmitted by only certain types of mosquitoes, Minnesota's promoters bragged that its absence was attributable to the territory's good air. For example, Bond assured his readers that after several years' residency in Minnesota, "I can safely say that the atmosphere is more pure, pleasant, and healthful, than that of any other I have ever breathed on the continent of North or South America."<sup>32</sup>

From time to time during the territorial period, Minnesota's promoters changed the emphasis of their health claims. References to cholera became uncommon after the 1849 epidemic, and comments on malaria were expanded to include any ailments associated with fevers. By later territorial years consumption had become the disease for which Minnesota's cool climate frequently was claimed to be an elixir.

The proof for claims of bringing good health was only anecdotal. Sometimes individuals testified that the climate had improved or even cured them. Promoter Hamilton cited the case of an acquaintance from Ohio who "was thought to be consumptive and having heard much about this bracing and invigorating climate, he

thought he would try it, and see what effect it would have upon his lungs. His health gradually improved, and before the following spring he was well and hearty, with an appetite like a Turk.” John H. Stevens, later famed as a founder of Minneapolis, was consumptive when he moved west in 1848. He wrote that his small Wisconsin party included a doctor, but after they arrived in Minnesota, “There were no sick—the doctor left in disgust.” In describing the area north of Stillwater, Seymour observed: “The healthiness of this place can not be questioned. A single death by sickness has not occurred among the white population within the last year. The only death was that of a young man, killed by the falling of a tree.”<sup>33</sup>

MINNESOTA PUBLICISTS also promoted the territory’s potential for agriculture, playing on the popular American metaphor of the frontier as a future garden—a paradise created without travail by yeoman farmers. Waxing enthusiastic about the St. Paul–Stillwater area, Seymour predicted that “it will, ere long, be dotted with farmhouses, and enlivened with the songs of multitudes of cheerful and thriving husbandmen.” After the Dakota cession treaties of 1851, promoters turned to the region along the Minnesota River and its tributaries. Ramsey himself declared it to be “the garden spot of Minnesota.”<sup>34</sup>

Much agricultural promotion sought to convince farmers that the territory was not too far north to raise the usual eastern crops. Consequently, a favorite ploy was to emphasize Minnesota’s centrality—not its northness. Promoters accurately pointed out that St. Paul was on the same latitude as southern France and northern Italy and well to the south of Great Britain and Germany. Ramsey told of successful farming north of even northernmost Minnesota. After seeing extensive cultivated fields at the juncture of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers (present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba), he pronounced that area “a picture of rural affluence and comfort.”<sup>35</sup> Ramsey’s inferential

proof that all of Minnesota was potentially farmland was often repeated by other promoters.

Although only a small portion of Minnesota was cultivated during the territorial years, promoters did not hesitate to boast about the productivity of its rich soils. Other advantages such as cheap land, nearby markets for farm produce at lumbering camps and Indian agencies, and accessibility to timber and water were also held out as inducements to prospective settlers.<sup>36</sup>

Emphasizing climate, health, and agriculture, promoters also praised Minnesota’s water transportation, waterpower, lumbering, scenery, and outdoor sports. In the prerailroad age, navigable waterways were a major concern, and Minnesota’s growth seemed assured because of its location at the head of the Mississippi River and Great Lakes commercial arteries. During the early territorial period, the Missouri River was prominently mentioned, but this stopped as the boundaries of the future state became evident. Promoters had a knack for making all of the Mississippi’s northern

**Daguerreotype showing St. Anthony Falls, whose waterpower was quickly harnessed for milling lumber, and the new businesses on St. Anthony’s Main Street, about 1855**



tributaries appear to be navigable, conveying the message that steamboats could service the farming frontier.

Comments on waterpower elicited the usual comparisons to New England's industrial cities, and, thus, the Falls of St. Anthony reinforced the contention that Minnesota was the New England of the West. Promoters only vaguely sensed the extent of Minnesota's pineries and had absolutely no perspective on their future exploitation, so they simply called them "inexhaustible."<sup>37</sup> Descriptions of the beautiful scenery concentrated on the Mississippi River and on lakes in timbered areas.

Booming settlement in 1855–56 prompted promoters to stress rapid development as one of Minnesota's greatest attractions. Well aware of the common assumption that frontiers were backward, they advertised Minnesota's growth to show that it was indeed "civilized." In noting rapid change in St. Paul, which had an estimated population of 10,000 in 1856, Andrews observed:

As I stood looking at the city, I recalled the picture in Mr. Bond's work, and contrasted its present with the

appearance it had three or four years ago. What a change! Three or four steamers were lying at the levee; steam and smoke were shooting forth from the chimneys of numerous manufactories; a ferry was plying the Mississippi, transporting teams and people; church steeples and domes and great warehouses stood in places which were vacant as if but yesterday; busy streets had been built and peopled; rows of splendid dwellings and villas, adorned with delightful terraces and gardens, had been erected.<sup>38</sup>

Promoters proved no exception to the principle that those who love one place tend to disparage others. In portraying Minnesota as exceptionally desirable, they derided New England's soil as rocky, churlish, and exhausted. They found the climates of the Middle Atlantic states and Ohio River valley too damp and unhealthy, the southern slave states enervating, sickly, and unproductive. The routine, caustic lambasting of the South evidenced the spirit of self-assumed Yankee superiority, reflecting many of the promoters' Yankee ancestry and

**Bustling St. Paul, a detail of B. F. Upton's panorama taken just before the panic of 1857 slowed growth; in the foreground are workmen laying bricks for a new county jail at Cedar and Fifth Streets; in the background is the Methodist-Episcopal church at Jackson and Ninth Streets.**



the certitude of their Puritan forefathers. Even those of non-Yankee genesis adopted the Yankee value system. Often, the slaveholding South was expanded conceptually into a Greater South, including even Illinois and southern Iowa, that was then criticized for its “ague producing” lands. By 1856 the slavery conflict in “Bleeding Kansas” and Indian troubles in Oregon and Washington territories provided another opportunity to show Minnesota’s superiority. California, growing rampantly because of its gold rush, was an object of particular scorn. Promoters derided it as a lawless, immoral Sodom and Gomorrah lacking the elements that assured future greatness.<sup>39</sup>

Minnesota’s publicists made contributions in addition to attracting settlers to the territory. They set the stage for the revival of state-sponsored promotion and the continuation of private promotion throughout the frontier farming period. Their emphasis on salubrious Minnesota was continued until the 1880s, and by

attracting thousands of sick people to Minnesota, they planted the seeds of the state’s vigorous public-health program. Their predictions about Minnesota’s future greatness not only seemed to provide moral justification for Indian land cessions, but stimulated Minnesota’s later Manifest Destiny demands for annexing central Canada. The elitist promotional descriptions of the moral and intellectual superiority of Minnesotans was a precursor of Social Darwinism, which, among other things, emphasized the superiority of white people.<sup>40</sup>

Lastly, by defining the nature of Minnesota they provided a common identity to the new people called Minnesotans. As portrayed by promoters, Minnesotans were industrious, frugal, practical, intelligent, moral, very defensive about their climate and cultural attainments, and proud of their new home. Present-day Minnesotans should have no difficulty recognizing familiar elements of their image that date to these territorial years. ❁

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Weekly Minnesotian* (St. Paul), Nov. 5, 1853; E. S. Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota, the New England of the West* (New York: Harper, 1850), 118; *St. Peter Courier*, Aug. 20, 1856.

<sup>2</sup> Here and below, William E. Lass, “Minnesota: An American Siberia?” *Minnesota History* 49 (Winter 1984): 149; Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1849, p. 95–97; William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota* (St. Paul, Minnesota Historical Society [MHS], 1956), 1: 253, 352.

<sup>3</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), Apr. 28, 1849.

<sup>4</sup> Mary W. Berthel, *Horns of Thunder: The Life and Times of James M. Goodhue including Selections from His Writings* (St. Paul: MHS, 1948), 76, 260.

<sup>5</sup> George S. Hage, *Newspapers on the Minnesota Frontier, 1849–1860* (St. Paul: MHS, 1967), 16; Daniel S. B. Johnston, “Minnesota Journalism in the Territorial Period,” in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 10 (St. Paul, 1905): 255; *Minnesota Republican* (St. Anthony), Feb. 22–July 26, 1855.

<sup>6</sup> *National Union Catalog: Pre-1956 Imprints* (London: Mansell, 1970), 65: 427.

<sup>7</sup> *Union Catalog*, 540: 244.

<sup>8</sup> *Weekly Minnesotian*, Feb. 5, 1853.

<sup>9</sup> Theodore C. Blegen, “The ‘Fashionable Tour’ on the Upper Mississippi,” *Minnesota History* 20 (Dec. 1939): 379, 383.

<sup>10</sup> John T. Flanagan, “Fredrika Bremer: Traveler and Prophet,” *Minnesota History* 20 (June 1939): 130–37.

<sup>11</sup> Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, trans. by Mary Howitt (New York: Harper, 1853), 2: 55–56.

<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Ellet, *Summer Rambles in the West* (New York: J. C. Riker, 1853), 101; [Henry A. Bright], *Happy Country This America: The Travel Diary of Henry Arthur Bright* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978), 276n; *St. Anthony Express*, Aug. 20, 1852.

<sup>13</sup> Here and below, William J. Petersen, “The Rock Island Railroad Excursion of 1854,” *Minnesota History* 15 (Dec. 1934): 405–15; *Daily Pioneer*, June 10, 1854.

<sup>14</sup> Sedgwick reprinted as Bertha L. Heilbron, ed., “By Rail and River to Minnesota in 1854,” *Minnesota History* 25 (June 1944): 103–16; Charles F. Babcock, “Rails West: The Rock Island Excursion of 1854,” *Minnesota History* 34 (Winter 1954): 140; C. C. Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah* (Washington: R. Farnham, 1857), 38.

<sup>15</sup> See *Northampton Courier*, Sept. 28, Oct. 26, Nov. 30, 1852, Apr. 26, 1853, in *Northampton Courier* extracts of Minnesota-interest collection, MHS, and these articles by Charles W. Nichols: “Henry Martyn Nichols and the Northampton Colony,” “The Northampton Colony and Chanhassen,” and “New Light on the Northampton Colony,” in *Minnesota History* 19 (June 1938): 129–47, 20 (June 1939): 140–45, and 22 (June 1941): 169–73. See also *New York Daily Tribune*, Sept. 26, 1855, Apr. 9, 1856, in *New York Tribune* extracts of Minnesota-interest collection, MHS.

<sup>16</sup> Here and below, Christopher M. Johnson, “The Rolling Stone Colony: Labor Rhetoric in Action,” *Minnesota History* 49 (Winter 1984): 140–48.

<sup>17</sup> William G. Le Duc, “Minnesota at the Crystal Palace Exhibition, New York, 1853,” *Minnesota History Bulletin* 1 (Aug. 1916): 352, 364. Wisconsin had a commissioner of emigration from 1852 to 1854 and resumed official promotion in 1867. Iowa did not have full-fledged official promotion until 1870. See Theodore C. Blegen, “The Competition of the Northwestern States for Immigrants,” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 3 (Sept. 1919): 4–11.

<sup>18</sup> Here and below, Livia Appel and Theodore C. Blegen,

eds., "Official Encouragement of Immigration to Minnesota during the Territorial Period," *Minnesota History Bulletin* 5 (Aug. 1923): 170, 172, 193, 201.

<sup>19</sup> For letter to Foote, see Sibley, "Description of Minnesota," in *Minnesota Historical Society Collections* 1 (St. Paul, 1872): 37–42; copies of Sibley's pamphlet and the *Intelligencer* article are in MHS. Sibley's letter to Foote and his circular were also published in the *St. Anthony Express*, Feb. 7, Apr. 3, 1852, respectively.

<sup>20</sup> "Johann Georg Kohl: A German Traveler in Minnesota Territory," trans. and ed. by Frederic Trautmann, *Minnesota History* 49 (Winter 1984): 131.

<sup>21</sup> For examples of community promotion and the beneficial effects of speculation, see Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah*, 131; *Minnesota Republican*, June 28, 1855; *Minnesota Weekly Times* (St. Paul), July 26, Aug. 23, 1856; *St. Anthony Express*, Aug. 27, 1852; *St. Peter Courier*, Aug. 20, 1856; *Weekly Minnesotian*, Dec. 13, 1851, July 30, Nov. 26, 1853, June 28, 1856; *Winona Republican*, Aug. 12, 1856.

<sup>22</sup> Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1855, p. 32; Appel and Blegen, "Official Encouragement of Immigration," 194.

<sup>23</sup> See especially J. Wesley Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources* (Philadelphia: Charles Desilver, 1857), 63–69; Charles L. Emerson, *Rise and Progress of Minnesota Territory* (St. Paul: C. L. Emerson, 1855), 2; A. D. Munson, ed., *The Minnesota Messenger Containing Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Minnesota* (St. Paul: A. D. Munson, 1855), 13; *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, Feb. 23, 1850; *Minnesota Republican*, Mar. 1, 1855.

<sup>24</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer*, Sept. 26, 1850.

<sup>25</sup> *De Bow's Review* (Washington, D.C.), 21 (July 1856): 72.

<sup>26</sup> Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1851, p. 11.

<sup>27</sup> Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 24.

<sup>28</sup> Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1849, p. 7; Sibley, "Description of Minnesota," 42; *Minnesota Pioneer*, June 5, 1851; *Northampton Courier*, July 1, 1856.

<sup>29</sup> Philip D. Jordan, *The People's Health: A History of Public Health in Minnesota* (St. Paul: MHS, 1953), 1–4; Madge E. Pickard and R. Carlyle Buley, *The Midwest Pioneer: His Ills, Cures & Doctors* (New York: R. E. Banta, 1945), 9–14.

<sup>30</sup> Charles E. Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 36–39, 114–15, 121–22, 145. For all of Taylor's proclamation, see *Minnesota Pioneer*, Aug. 2, 1849.

<sup>31</sup> John M. Armstrong, "The Asiatic Cholera in St. Paul," *Minnesota History* 14 (Sept. 1933): 288, 292, 295.

<sup>32</sup> Lass, "Minnesota: An American Siberia?" 152; Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 64.

<sup>33</sup> H. S. Hamilton, *Rural Sketches of Minnesota, the El Dorado of the North-west* (Milan, Oh.: Waggoner, 1850), 10; Munson, *Minnesota Messenger*, 53; Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 179; Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1852, p. 25. For extensive discussion of the garden image, see Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1950).

<sup>35</sup> Minnesota Territory, *Journal of the Council*, 1852, p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Here and below, Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 103; *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, Feb. 23, 1850; *Minnesota Democrat*, Apr. 20, 1853; *Minnesota Republican*, Mar. 22, 1855; Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 125, 205, 265.

<sup>37</sup> Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah*, 87; Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 20; *Minnesota Pioneer*, Apr. 8, 1852.

<sup>38</sup> Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah*, 36–37.

<sup>39</sup> *Winona Republican*, Aug. 12, 1856; Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah*, 87, 116; Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 22, 162; *Minnesota Pioneer*, June 7, 1849, June 5, 1851.

<sup>40</sup> For promotion efforts after statehood, see Peter J. Ristuben, *Minnesota and the Competition for Immigrants* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1964). For Minnesota's appeal to health seekers, see Helen Clapesattle, "When Minnesota Was Florida's Rival," *Minnesota History* 35 (Mar. 1957): 214–21. For the long-range effects of Minnesota's recruitment of consumptives, see J. Arthur Myers, *Invited and Conquered: Historical Sketch of Tuberculosis in Minnesota* (St. Paul: Minnesota Public Health Association, 1949). On Minnesota's manifest-destiny campaign, see Alvin C. Glueck Jr., *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965).



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