

properly notes this as "distinctly corroborative of Boutwell's statements," but he adds the caution that Porter, at the time he penned his letter to Brower, "was a man in whose case advanced age may have added something to the normal fallibility of memory." In the light of Porter's corroboration, the case at present seems to lean toward the Boutwell explanation, though the episode of the Latin words may possibly have occurred on the return journey rather than on the trip west. It is obvious that something is lacking in the evidence, however. It is an intriguing little problem and it is to be hoped that from some source will come the key that will unlock the mystery.

THEODORE C. BLEGEN

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL

AN OPTIMISTIC PIONEER IN A PERIOD OF DEPRESSION

The panic of 1857 struck Minnesota a severe blow. Pioneers had been developing the territory largely on credit and when the financial collapse occurred in the East, loans were called and failures and disaster resulted. The strain and stress on business were still felt acutely in 1858, but at least one pioneer was inclined to view the situation optimistically. He was John N. Treadwell, who on July 30, 1858, wrote the following letter to a friend in the East. Instead of bemoaning conditions in Minnesota, he gave his reasons for preferring to live in the place to which he had removed from Franklin, New York, three years earlier. Although just beginning his career as a clerk and a bookkeeper, Treadwell was interested in the opportunities for farming in Minnesota and he had a good understanding of its natural resources. By nature too wary to be seized by the "gold fever" of the day, he rose to the position of vice president of the First National Bank of St. Peter. In 1874-75 he served as a representative in the Minnesota

legislature. He died in 1913 at the ripe age of seventy-five. As a young man in 1858, though optimistic, he viewed life in Minnesota without rose-colored glasses, noting its interesting and varied possibilities.

GERTRUDE W. ACKERMANN

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL

JOHN N. TREADWELL to J. CLARK BUSH, July 30, 1858¹

ST. PAUL MINNESOTA July 30th 1858.

FRIEND BUSH,

I am sadly behind with Franklin news and desire some information and so I will write you, hoping in due time through your favor to get somewhat "posted"

I have now been in St Paul over 3 years and have been highly favored with good health & kind friends & a degree of prosperity for which I desire to be truly thankful.

St Paul has grown since I came here from 5,500 population to 11,000 & Minnesota from a Territory of 50,000 or 60,000 to a State of 140,000.

I am well pleased with this Country & I think I would rather live here than in any other section east of the Rocky Mountains. what I might like west of the mountains I cannot well say.

Business is dull this season and money matters "tight." Spectulation [*sic*] is "suspended" and building & other improvements are much less than for the last three years. quite considerable building is going on however, though mostly in trade, for Lumber, Merchandise & Real Estate.

The farming interests are the most promising of any thing in Min^a this season. The farmers put in a large crop & the early rains (in May) did but very little damage & the crops have done finely. The late rains have damaged Grain considerably. but I think the damage is less here than in the Central States. Probably we will have a supply of Grain & Provisions this year of our own production, which has not been done heretofore, the emigration having been

¹ The Minnesota Historical Society has a photostat of this letter. The original is in the possession of Treadwell's daughter, Mrs. Mary R. Beecher of New Ulm.

large. Minnesota will be unsurpassed as an agricultural state; the soil, timber, water, & climate all favor such pursuits & the resources will be developed in due time.

We have had heavy rains here this season & the rivers are higher than are often known at this season of the year. The Boats on the Minnesota continue their regular trips to Mankato (150 miles by river). They usually have to stop in June on account of low water. some of the best farms in the State are in the Counties of Scott, LeS[u]jeur, Blue Earth & Brown through which the Minnesota runs. Burr Beebe preempted a claim last year in Blue Earth Co. 12 miles west from Mankato. The more Southern Counties are thickly settled and are fine farming lands. Timber is more scarce than a little more north. Mr Morgan is at Point Douglas or Prescott 25 miles south from here at the mouth of the St Croix. He preached here a few weeks ago to the Congregational church just organized.

The Red River Trains have been here to the number of about 500 Carts: each cart is drawn by an Ox or Pony — the carts are entirely of wood, the felloes 3 inches thick or wide so that [they] can cross marshes without miring & cross rivers without sinking. They bring down Furs & take back, Merchandise & "Whiskey". They are an uncouth crowd — mostly half breed French & Chippeway Indian. It is an interesting and amusing sight when seen the first time by a "down-easter" Their trade is a profitable item to St. Paul.²

The Minnesota Gold Mines are being examined pretty thoroughly: The results seems to show that though there is some "dust," yet a man may as well or better "dig" at any thing else as after it.³

²The number of carts that arrived in St. Paul in 1858 from the Red River settlements near what is now Pembina, North Dakota, is given by one historian as six hundred. The estimated value of the furs handled in St. Paul was \$40,000 in 1855 and \$186,000 in 1860. Christopher C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minn.*, 407 (Syracuse, 1890).

³Parties began seeking for gold along the banks of the Zumbro River in 1856 and by the summer of 1858 some two hundred men were engaged in digging in that region. A gold rush also seems to have been in progress in the vicinity of Lake Vermilion at this time. It is uncertain to which of these occurrences Treadwell has reference, although the former was better known. William H. Mitchell, *Geographical and Statistical History of the County of Olmsted*, 93 (Rochester, 1866);

The Distance from St Paul to Frazer's River is about 1700 Miles and if those should prove to be rich diggings there will no doubt be established an overland route next spring. one party has gone this month although it is late to start this season. There has been several meetings held here to decide on measures & means to explore and establish a route across and it is determined to send out a party early next spring under the leadership of some old Pioneer Trader, of whom there are plenty in Minnesota. Young Ferris of Croton is here. He thinks they would like to go [to] the "diggings" next spring. I think there will be a good many here anxious to go and not willing to wait for the "*Northern Pacific R. R.*"⁴

3 to 5 Steam Boats arrive here every day. they are not crowded with Fr[eigh]t or Passengers. A pleasure party arrived here yesterday from Milwaukee Madison Prairie Du Chein &c by the Steamer "Milwaukee," there were between 100 & 200 — after visiting St. Anthony Minne-ha-ha Falls & Fort Snelling, and seeing the sights in this village they will start back this evening.

Samuel has been here since the latter part of May and through him I have got well posted on Croton news. He expects to return in Sept. He has been House painting. Last fall I went to Des Moines Iowa & had a rather pleasant time. I saw D. Carr & wife

Daily Pioneer and Democrat (St. Paul), July 28, 31, 1858; Ethel A. Collins, "Pioneer Experiences of Horatio H. Larned," in *North Dakota Historical Collections*, 7: 4 (1925).

⁴Gold was discovered on the Fraser River in the spring of 1858. Word of the discovery soon reached Minnesota, and early in June a public meeting, at which a committee was appointed to gather information on possible routes to the gold fields, was held in St. Paul. The delay that was experienced while various routes were being investigated and arrangements were being made caused some to grow impatient. A party of four men from Faribault formed the nucleus of a band that left St. Paul on July 24, 1858. Colonel William H. Nobles was appointed by the city council of St. Paul to organize and lead an expedition that left for Fraser River the first week in June, 1859, and planned to follow a route covering 1,575 miles. A survey for a northern railroad route to the Pacific was authorized by Congress and conducted by Isaac I. Stevens in 1853; the road, however, was not completed until 1883. *Faribault Central Republican*, August 11, 1858; Donald E. Read, "The Development of a Northern Route to the Pacific," 18, 54, 57. The latter is a master's thesis prepared at the University of Minnesota in 1931. The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy.

there. My brother who is living there wrote me that Mrs Carr had gone east this summer.

I took the [*Franklin*] Visitor untill a few weeks ago but now I don't, so if it is convenient to send me a copy occasionally it will be quite acceptable. I see Miss M. J. Edgerton occasionally. She likes living at St Paul first rate she says.⁵ Is Hi Flint at Franklin? A Bridge is being built across the Mississippi here estimated to cost \$150,000⁰⁰.⁶ Please give my regards to Mr Douglas & family, and any *anxious* inquirers.

Hoping you will write to me at your earliest leisure — I remain as ever

Truly Your Friend

J. N. TREADWELL

J C BUSH ESQ

⁵ Mary J. Edgerton was a sister of Erastus S. Edgerton, who went to St. Paul in 1853 to engage in banking. Edgerton was from Franklin and probably knew Treadwell. *History of Delaware County, N. Y.*, 359 (New York, 1880).

⁶ The bridge mentioned is probably the Wabasha Street bridge, the construction of which was begun as a private enterprise in 1856, but was discontinued for want of funds. In the fall of 1857 the city council of St. Paul voted \$50,000 toward the completion of the bridge, and it was eventually turned over to the city. It was expected that the bridge would cost not more than \$140,000 and that it would be completed during the summer of 1858. Thomas M. Newson, *Pen Pictures of St. Paul*, 644 (St. Paul, 1886); *Pioneer and Democrat*, March 24, 1858.



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