

FRONTIER FOOD¹

The influx of settlers into Minnesota Territory in the fifties led to a significant increase in the consumption of food products, and a problem that demanded the consideration of both the father and the mother in a pioneer home was that of providing food for the family. Before leaving their old homes, many of the settlers had read letters from lumbermen, fur traders, and earlier settlers who gave encouraging descriptions of the bountiful providence of nature in the Minnesota country. "Pigeons can be had for the shooting," wrote one pioneer woman, "and fish swim ashore to be caught."² Nevertheless, some cautious housewives whose resources permitted the purchase of groceries took with them to their new homes some staple supplies to tide them over the first few months on the frontier. By using these sparingly and supplementing them with wild fruit and game, the pioneer family had enough food to last until the first harvest.

The demands of the new settlers in the Minnesota region opened a profitable trade for local grocers, and dealers in river towns farther south negotiated for the shipment of food into the territory. The *Galena Advertiser* in 1851 comments upon the river traffic as follows: "While in the Eastern counties of this State [*Illinois*] and Wisconsin, the farmers send the surplus of their stock East; in this neighborhood, and South along the river, they are forwarded northward to supply the Lumberman, Indians, Garrisons,

¹ This article is based upon a chapter in a master's thesis on "Frontier Homes and Home Management," which was submitted at the University of Minnesota in 1933. The account of frontier housekeeping that appeared in the September issue of the magazine was taken from the same thesis. *Ed.*

² Abby Fuller Abbe to Elizabeth Fuller, December 30, 1860, Fuller Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

and settlers with meat in the newly occupied lands." The departure from Galena of a steamboat carrying "forty-two cows and about twenty calves" for a Minnesota dealer is noted.³

The suffering experienced by many settlers when trade connections were cut off during the winter shows the extent to which they depended upon previously developed farming country for food in the early years of settlement. When Charlotte Van Cleve and her family removed from Michigan to Long Prairie in 1856, they purchased their first year's supplies on the way, in Dubuque. The groceries were delayed in shipment, and for a short period during the winter months the family had to exist on unground wheat, which was boiled and eaten with salt. One family living in Martin County in 1859 consumed its store of flour and meal before February. The small supply of grain that remained was ground sparingly and used to make bread, which was served twice a day. The noon meal for three weeks consisted of potatoes and salt, and for another four weeks of potatoes alone, before the father could get provisions from Mankato. The arrival of the "Nominee" in St. Paul in the spring of 1853 was joyfully hailed by the citizens, who hastened down to the landing. Barrels of eggs and of ham and boxes of crackers were rolled out and sold at once, every man carrying home his prize. St. Paul was the chief landing place for supplies for the whole region, and at this point foodstuffs were transferred from steamboats to wagons for distribution in the interior.⁴

The variety of products advertised in St. Paul and St. Anthony papers shows that the resources of the housewife

³ *Galena Advertiser*, July 11, 1851, reprinted in the *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), July 17, 1851. The newspapers used in the preparation of this article are in the collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴ Charlotte O. Van Cleve, *Three Score Years and Ten*, 135 (Minneapolis, 1888); Lucy L. W. Morris, *Old Rail Fence Corners*, 165 (Austin, Minnesota, 1914).

in these communities were not so restricted as those of her rural sisters. In April, 1849, the firm of Freeman, Larpenteur Company included in its spring merchandise apples, sugar, ham, lard, cheese, molasses, and dried peaches. The H. W. Tracy Company carried sugar, coffee, tea, cinnamon, mackerel, saleratus, peppermint, catsup, and pepper sauce. The Nathaniel E. Tyson Company offered, at Galena prices, a stock of lemon syrup, ginger, ground spice, nutmeg, cloves, peanuts, rice, dried currants, assorted pickles, and choice preserves, including peach, pear, quince, and other varieties. Even figs, prunes, pickled lobsters, tapioca, macaroni, oysters, candies, almonds, and raisins were made available to St. Paul housekeepers through their grocers. Wines and liquors were not lacking from the list, which included Holstetter bitters, Schiedam schnapps, London porter, Scotch ale, dry catawba, claret, Madeira, mint cordial, Scotch whisky, old Bourbon, Jamaica rum, Baltimore gin, New York brandy, and old Monongahela.⁵

Thrifty housekeepers often planned their menus to include wild fruits and game. Some of the native products of Minnesota were very palatable and added a regional charm to a dinner. Among the vegetables that grew wild in the district were the sweet potato, the turnip, and the artichoke. The swamp potato was found stored in muskrat lodges. The wild bean of the Minnesota Valley grew on a slender vine two or three feet high with pods several inches long. Hazelnuts, walnuts, hickory nuts, huckleberries, strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, wild plums, grapes, chokecherries, gooseberries, crab apples, and blueberries were found in various sections of the country. "Not in the garden; not in the old stone-fenced fields of timothy and clover," ran an article in the *New Era* of Sauk Rapids in 1860, "but out . . . on our prairies the strawberries are ripening . . . with all the sweetness and flavor we

⁵*Pioneer*, April 28, August 30, 1849; April 13, May 11, 1854; January 1, 1857.

used to so much love when we picked them on the hill-side in good old New England." ⁶ Several pioneer women speak of wild tea or prairie tea which grew on a small bush.

Among the most abundant native plants were wild rice and the cranberry. The first of these furnished an important part of the winter diet of the Chippewa Indians. Many bands visited the rice regions toward the end of August to gather their winter supply. While the grain was in the milk, the Indians went out in canoes and tied it into bunches, covering each bunch with a bark shield to protect it from blackbirds. When the grain had matured, the Indians bent the stalks over their canoes and beat them with sticks to shake off the kernels of rice. Some families gathered about fifty bushels of rice in this manner for their year's supply.

Methods of curing wild rice varied among the Indians. The Chippewa in the St. Croix region heated it on a scaffold over a fire. Then the squaws put some rice in a hole in the ground and covered it with a deerskin. The grain was then threshed by a primitive method, the men assisting the squaws by jumping on the heap until the hulls were removed from the kernels. The task of winnowing was left to the squaws, who used birch-bark fans to blow away the chaff. While the bulk of the wild rice crop was fire cured on racks covered with rush matting, a portion was sometimes cured by parching the kernels in a large kettle over a slow fire.⁷ Visitors among the Indians at Mille Lacs in recent years report that this method is still used.

Mrs. William T. Boutwell, the wife of a missionary among the Chippewa, served her guests with wild rice in her home at Stillwater. They proclaimed it very palatable, much like the rice of commerce, but modified in flavor by the

⁶*New Era*, June 28, 1860; John Stevens, *Personal Recollections of Minnesota*, 61 (Minneapolis, 1890).

⁷Albert E. Jenks, "The Wild Rice Gatherers of the Upper Lakes," in Bureau of American Ethnology, *Annual Reports*, 1897-98, vol. 2, p. 1066 (Washington, 1900).

smoke employed in the curing process.⁸ A traveler estimated that an acre of rice provided the equivalent of an acre of wheat in food value. The fields covered many thousands of acres and "yielded all that is essential for breadstuff," according to one observer, who complained of "the waste of breadstuff in this region, from indolence and improvidence of the Indians."⁹

The triangle between the St. Croix and Mississippi rivers, bounded on the north by the St. Louis and Prairie rivers, was estimated as containing 256,000 acres of cranberry marshes. The first white woman who settled at Eden Prairie testified that she and her husband sold cranberries that grew in a bog on their land for a dollar a bushel and paid for their farm with the proceeds. A visitor to a farm near Stillwater in 1849 relates that the owner was planning to experiment with the cultivation of cranberries. The writer remarks that since the estimated yield was about 350 bushels an acre and the berry is a "species of fruit which will always be held in high estimation, it is not unreasonable to presume that its culture may . . . render it a prominent article among the staples of Minnesota."¹⁰ Cranberries figured among the exports of Minnesota throughout the fifties and were ranked as a product of first importance by James J. Hill at the time of his arrival in the territory in 1856. A scarcity of cranberries in 1860 led one writer to remark that this fruit needed systematic culture or "it will become too great a luxury to be used in most families. This state of things should not exist," he continues, "for nature has furnished us with almost an unlimited number of

⁸ E. S. Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota, the New England of the West*, 183 (New York, 1850).

⁹ Joseph G. Norwood, "Geological Report of Wisconsin and Minnesota," in David D. Owen, *Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota*, 324 (Philadelphia, 1852).

¹⁰ J. W. McClung, *Minnesota as It Is in 1870*, 150 (St. Paul, 1870); Morris, *Old Rail Fence Corners*, 91; Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 182.

marshes, that may be easily converted into cranberry plantations."¹¹

Honey and maple sugar were two delicacies that were often found on the pioneer dinner table. A settler at Belle Plaine in 1860 gathered the honey from a hundred swarms of bees. He sold eight hundred pounds at sixteen to twenty cents a pound. In his hives, he arranged a special ventilating system to prevent the accumulation of frost "generated during the coldest weather from the breath of the bees." Maple sugar afforded the Chippewa an important article of diet. They tapped trees along the St. Croix and allowed the sap to run into birch-bark troughs made by the Indian women. The sugar-making process was carried on out-of-doors, where the sap was first boiled down to a syrup and then reduced to sugar in kettles swung from poles supported by forked sticks. Farmers also made maple sugar, which was a welcome addition to their larders. The quantity obtained by some settlers far exceeded the amount needed for use in their homes. One man in 1862 secured five hundred pounds of sugar out of one night's run of sap from nine hundred trees.¹² The production of maple sugar in Minnesota increased from 2,950 pounds in 1849 to 370,669 in 1859, and the amount of maple molasses produced in the state in 1860 was estimated at 23,038 gallons.¹³

The abundance of fish in Minnesota lakes and streams was noted by many writers during the fifties. Pickerel were brought into St. Paul on carts and sleds in December, 1851,

¹¹ J. J. Hill, "History of Agriculture," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:276 (St. Paul, 1898); *Minnesota Farmer and Gardener*, 1:28 (November, 1860). The *Farmer and Gardener* is an agricultural journal that was published monthly from November, 1860, to April, 1862, in St. Paul; it reprinted crop reports from newspapers throughout the state and encouraged experimentation among farmers. The Minnesota Historical Society has a file of this periodical.

¹² *Farmer and Gardener*, 1:123 (February, 1861); Return I. Holcombe and William H. Bingham, eds., *History and Biography of Minneapolis and Hennepin County, Minnesota*, 63 (Chicago, 1914).

¹³ *United States Census*, 1850, *Compendium*, 336; 1860, *Agriculture*, xcix.

and sold at twenty to twenty-five cents a pair.¹⁴ The demand for fish in St. Paul led to commercial enterprises and experiments. In 1852 members of a small party using a fishing seine near Red Wing found that they could more than supply local needs. They procured salt and barrels and in a short time delivered in St. Paul forty barrels of fish, which were sold for six dollars a barrel. Although large quantities of pike, pickerel, bass, sturgeon, and dogfish were included in the net, only the choice catfish, buffalo fish, and carp were selected, according to one of the fishermen, who commented on the comparative food value of the different varieties. "These pioneers wanted fish which would repay in nutriment. Pike, pickerel, bass, and trout, as salt fish are about as nutrient as floating island, puffs, pastry and gimcracks, and are measurably worthless as food for strong working men."¹⁵ The fisheries on Lake Superior carried on an active trade with St. Paul. About forty sailing vessels were engaged in fishing along the Minnesota shore of the lake in 1860.¹⁶

The activities of fishermen in the vicinity of the Twin Cities led pioneer legislators to provide protection for fish in that region. Fishing in Lake Como was forbidden for two years after 1858. Trout fishing in Winona, Wabasha, Washington, and Fillmore counties was prohibited from November through March. In 1863 fishing in the outlets or inlets of Lakes Calhoun and Harriet was forbidden. The pioneer fisherman profited by his skill as a hunter, for methods of obtaining fish approved by law in 1864 included shooting them with a gun. Spearing and fishing with hook and line were also permitted.¹⁷

¹⁴*Pioneer*, December 25, 1851.

¹⁵ Joseph W. Hancock, *Goodhue County*, 45 (Red Wing, 1893).

¹⁶A memorial of the state legislature to the president of the United States about lighthouses on Lake Superior gives this estimate. See *Laws*, 1860, p. 314.

¹⁷*Laws*, 1858, p. 105, 285, 312; 1861, p. 180; 1864, p. 112; *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 152.

Flocks of wild ducks and geese which frequented the lakes in the wild rice region were noted by St. Paul papers in 1853. A letter written from that city in October, 1854, tells of the popularity of wild fowl for the table: "We have had duck and grouse every day for about a week. Amanda is very much afraid she will not be able to get them in plenty when Father is here."¹⁸ The widespread popularity of hunting in the early fifties is suggested by an editorial in the *Pioneer*. "Everyone who has leisure, and can beg, borrow, or steal a gun and pointer, will be off for the prairies," reads the comment. The marksman was spurred on by a "Vive la chasse," and the optimistic slogan "Every pop a pigeon" was coined. "Now that the Indians are vamosed," wrote the editor, "Deer will be more plenty, and killed with less labor than heretofore." Venison was often sold on the St. Paul market during the fifties, but it was more expensive than one might suppose it to have been. Beef sold at six or eight cents a pound in 1852, pork at eight or ten cents, and venison at twelve and a half cents. Unfriendly relations between the traders and the Indian hunters were suggested as an explanation for the high retail price.¹⁹

The buffaloes withdrew to the northern and western limits of the Minnesota country with the coming of farmers in the early fifties. Henry H. Sibley, in his speeches supporting the Indian treaties of 1851, stressed the lack of food for the Indians resulting from the scarcity of buffaloes, elk, and antelopes. According to one early settler, two very large herds of buffaloes came down from the northwest in the fall of 1856 and in January appeared about fifty miles west of St. Cloud and grazed near the Sauk River. The Red River half-breeds from Pembina

¹⁸ *Pioneer*, March 24, 1853; Mrs. Alexis Bailly to her parents, October 20, 1854, in Cory-Forbes Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁹ *Pioneer*, December 18, 1851; January 1, 1852; July 20, 1854.

hunted the buffalo in the Red River Valley and much buffalo meat in the form of pemmican reached the St. Paul market, where, in 1850, it was sold for ten cents a pound. Buffalo tongues, which were considered a great delicacy, brought five dollars a dozen in the same year.²⁰

In the early forties a small agricultural colony was founded at Cottage Grove near the junction of the Mississippi and the St. Croix, and north of St. Paul the farming community of Little Canada was established. When the land west of the river was opened to settlers in 1851, the St. Paul market was supplied with fresh vegetables, but the amount of produce on the market was by no means equal to the demand. Vegetables raised in the vicinity of St. Paul were sent from time to time to the editor of the *Pioneer*, who published comments about them. In July, 1852, for example, "Friend Larpenteur sent in excellent new potatoes," and "a peck of fresh cucumbers," causing the editor to remark that "for raising vegetables, Minnesota can't be beat." Tomatoes, muskmelons, onions, and pink-eye potatoes also were received. A visitor to a farm near Lake Pepin reported seeing a field of corn that he estimated would yield a hundred bushels per acre. In the same field he saw "an incredible number of pumpkins, large and ripe." The need for a market house in St. Paul became apparent in 1852, as the farmers disliked the task of selling their produce at individual homes.²¹

City dwellers were not entirely dependent upon truck gardens, however, for neat fences inclosed flourishing vegetable gardens in many yards. The mayor of St. Paul on April 24, 1855, ate asparagus raised in his own garden. According to the *Pioneer* of August 18, 1859, "Farmers come

²⁰ *Pioneer*, August 5, 1852; Stevens, *Personal Recollections*, 282; "Isaac I. Stevens and the Pacific Railroad Survey of 1853," *ante*, 7: 147; Theodore C. Blegen, "Minnesota Pioneer Life as Revealed in Newspaper Advertisements," *ante*, 7: 120.

²¹ *Pioneer*, July 15, 22, August 12, September 23, 30, November 18, 1852.

into town with loads of the finest vegetables . . . and pass along the streets vainly seeking for buyers. . . . Almost every family in town is well supplied with vegetables from their own gardens." Prevailing notions on food values may have affected the sales also. It was said that vegetables eaten in moderation were a blessing, but people must "beware yet awhile of too free a use of esculents."²²

The cultivation of grains made possible both flour production and stock raising. Alexis Bailly found the soil of Minnesota favorable for the production of wheat. His fields near Lake Pepin on the Minnesota side of the river yielded more than forty bushels to the acre in 1853.²³ Wheat exportation occurred first in 1857. Crop failures interrupted shipments in 1858, but in 1859 excellent harvests permitted Minnesota farmers to resume the exportation of grains down the river. The wheat production area was located in the southeastern part of the territory along the Mississippi adjacent to older wheat-growing districts. Winona ranked first for wheat shipments in 1859, with Hastings, Brownsville, and Red Wing also listed as important depôts for the movement of grain.²⁴

Corn was really the chief crop in 1859, for 2,941,952 bushels were produced, an increase from 16,725 bushels in 1849. In the same decade the amount of wheat produced in Minnesota increased from 1,401 bushels to 2,186,993 bushels. Oats, the leading crop in 1849, ranked third ten years later, with 2,176,002 bushels, as against the estimate of 30,582 bushels for 1849. Rye, barley, and buckwheat all show significant increases in the amount of production. Statistics on other farm products indicate that butter and

²² *Pioneer*, April 25, May 8, 1855.

²³ Isaac Atwater, *History of the City of Minneapolis*, 70 (New York, 1893); J. W. Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 167 (New York, 1853).

²⁴ Hill, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:276; Edward Van Dyke Robinson, *Early Economic Conditions and the Development of Agriculture in Minnesota*, 45 (Minneapolis, 1915).

cheese were produced chiefly for local needs. Although 2,957,673 pounds of butter were produced in 1859, only 3,386 pounds were sold outside the territory.²⁵

Until after 1860 most of the live stock used in the Northwest was imported, but the expansion in farming made it possible for the farmers to raise their own herds. Merchants in St. Peter purchased about 282,000 pounds of pork from local farmers in 1860, according to estimates given in the *St. Peter Statesman*. These computations were viewed triumphantly with the comment "Only two years ago we were purchasing most of our pork from neighboring States."²⁶

Experiments in raising fruits were made during the territorial period and in the early years of statehood. A visitor near Stillwater in 1849 reports that the apple trees of a small orchard recently planted were bearing leaves. Peach trees had also been planted, but these were killed by the severe winter. In 1859 grapes were planted at St. Paul in a structure with walls and roof made entirely of glass. A dozen choice varieties, which bore a few clusters by December, 1860, were raised. In the horticultural department at the state fair of 1860 crab apples, strawberries, and Isabella and catawba grapes, all produced in Minnesota, were displayed.²⁷

To the pioneer housewife fell the task of appeasing the appetites of frontiersmen. Quantity was emphasized more than variety, although the enterprising cook often added tasty delicacies to the main fare. Johnny cake baked on a smooth board in front of the fireplace was popular in many cabins. The supply of corn generally lasted longer than that of wheat, and white bread and biscuits were con-

²⁵ *United States Census, 1860, Agriculture*, xxix, xxxiii, xlix, lxxix.

²⁶ *St. Peter Statesman*, quoted in *Farmer and Gardener*, 1:73 (January, 1861).

²⁷ *Farmer and Gardener*, 1:47 (December, 1860).

sidered delicacies. The preparation of hominy required some skill on the part of the cook. Shelled corn was put in a large kettle and soaked in lye until the hulls were loosened and removed. Many changes of water were required in the process. The laborious process of home preparation was made unnecessary for St. Paul women when a special machine for preparing hominy was installed at a local mill. "Many a housekeeper will thank Mr. Nobles for his enterprise," declared a writer for the *Pioneer*, in praising the mill owner.²⁸

Oysters were a delicacy that many settlers, especially those from New England, enjoyed. Canned cove oysters and occasionally fresh oysters that had been frozen were shipped to the territory. Artificial oysters were prepared by mixing a pint of grated green corn with a well-beaten egg, a cup of flour, a half cup of butter, and some salt and pepper. The resulting batter was dropped in tiny spoonfuls into a pan filled with hot fat and fried. Several substitutes for coffee were devised by ingenious cooks. A settler in Fillmore County recalls that "Mother made coffee from corn meal crusts that would skin Postum three ways for Sunday." Another housekeeper made coffee from potato chips sliced thin and browned in the oven. Parched rye was also used in place of coffee.²⁹

Pastry was an important item on the frontier menu; many settlers from New England were accustomed to eating pie at every meal. Dried fruit and berries made excellent fillings. Genuine mince meat was a special treat. A local imitation of it consisted of pumpkin soaked in vinegar with dried wild grapes serving for raisins. Apple pie melon was grown on some farms near St. Cloud and, according to Jane Grey Swisshelm, it gave the appearance if not the flavor of the apple. Potatoes soaked in vinegar

²⁸*Pioneer*, August 6, 1855.

²⁹*Pioneer*, March 20, 1850; Morris, *Old Rail Fence Corners*, 71, 115, 117, 244.

were also said to produce an imitation of apple filling. Preserves were made from melons, cucumbers, tomatoes, and the various fruits.³⁰ A curious recipe for a substitute for honey that would almost "cheat the bees themselves" included four pounds of loaf sugar, one and a fourth pounds of wax honey, a quart of water, a large spoonful of gum arabic, and a teaspoonful of cream of tartar. These ingredients were boiled fifteen minutes.³¹

The food upon which poor families subsisted was often limited to corn bread, pork, and a small amount of coffee or tea. The editor of the *Pioneer* investigated conditions among the laboring classes in 1857 to determine whether they were prepared for the winter. He found many dwellings supplied with flour, potatoes, and other provisions.³² Conditions were less favorable in the following years, as "hard times" caused by the nation-wide panic of 1857 spread to the frontier. The overseer of the poor for Ramsey County in 1859 recorded an increased number of applications for relief in the spring of that year. "We have passed through more than 18 months of unparalle[led] financial difficulties and are now at the end of the second winter of great distress," he wrote in his report to the board of commissioners for Ramsey County. "Labor has been almost entirely suspended and the resources of the working man have been completely exhausted." Flour, pork, and wood were distributed to sixty-five families. One family alone received three hundred and fifty pounds of flour and seventy pounds of pork. The expense for the support of a family of six, including the purchase of wood for fuel, was estimated at about \$1.70 a week.³³

³⁰ Marion D. Shutter, ed., *History of Minneapolis*, 1:665 (Chicago, 1923); Morris, *Old Rail Fence Corners*, 37; Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 68, 72.

³¹ *Minnesota Beacon* (Wasioja), August 1, 1860.

³² *Pioneer*, October 27, 1857.

³³ Board of Commissioners of Ramsey County, "Minutes," 1858-1860, p. 203. These manuscript records are in the auditor's office, in the Ramsey County Courthouse.

Simple fare was abandoned for holiday festivities. The first Thanksgiving in the territory was celebrated in 1850. On that occasion a settler in Minneapolis enjoyed a dinner that included stewed cove oysters, boiled vegetables, baked pork and beans, cranberries, mince and cranberry pies, cheese, and nuts. In 1851 turkeys were purchased for Christmas dinners in St. Paul at \$1.50 and \$2.00 each. Much of the poultry served at this time was brought up from Iowa and Illinois on sleighs.³⁴

A meal served in "sumptuous elegance" by the ladies of the St. Paul Presbyterian Church in 1851 was said to provide "all the substantial of a good supper." The menu included chickens, frosted hams, turkeys, lobsters, oysters, sardines, pastries, jellies, pecans, buffalo tongues, and ice cream "made without freezing." St. Paul housekeepers did not have to depend entirely on their own culinary skill, for in February, 1850, the Eagle Bakery of St. Paul advertised fruit, pound, and fancy cakes baked in New York and eastern styles. A few months later another St. Paul bakery offered for sale bread, butter crackers, Boston crackers, and all kinds of cakes and candies. In 1854 a restaurant in that city advertised that it would serve refreshments for cotillion parties. Thus the burden of housekeeping was lightened for city dwellers.³⁵

Two roast pigs, eggs, and beefsteak were served for a breakfast in the home of Pierre Bottineau at St. Anthony in 1853. Many kinds of meat, including boiled ham, beef, elk, duck, swan, and buffalo with prairie turnip sauce, were served on the Fourth of July in 1851 at Traverse des Sioux to the white officials who were gathered there for the treaty negotiations then under way. Wild potatoes, wild beans, wild peas, and a French dessert completed the meal.³⁶

³⁴Atwater, *History of Minneapolis*, 68; *Pioneer*, December 25, 1851.

³⁵*Pioneer*, February 20, May 9, 1850; December 25, 1851; August 10, 1854; *St. Anthony Express*, May 31, 1851.

³⁶Hazard Stevens, *Life of Isaac Stevens*, 311 (Boston, 1900); William G. Le Duc, *Minnesota Yearbook for 1852*, 28 (St. Paul, 1853).

The women who moved into the Minnesota country probably found the preparation of wild foods and game a difficult task. Many of them already knew how to make preserves, pickles, and jam. If one type of provisions on the pantry shelf was exhausted, the cook was often compelled to wait until spring for a new supply. Sometimes a crisis was met by appealing to friends and neighbors. An ambitious young woman in St. Paul, while preparing for a party in early spring, canvassed the neighborhood looking for white sugar with which to make a cake. By working under such handicaps, Minnesota pioneer women adapted their culinary skill to frontier conditions.

EVADENE A. BURRIS

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
MINNEAPOLIS



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