

## THE TOURIST TRAFFIC OF PIONEER MINNESOTA

Minnesota's popularity as a pleasure resort dates back to the thirties, when boatloads of visitors journeyed up the river to Fort Snelling. By the middle fifties the reputation of several upper river towns was established. It is recorded that the four principal hostelries of St. Paul, the Fuller House, the Merchants' Hotel, the American House, and the Winslow House, provided accommodations for a thousand visitors in one week in the autumn of 1856. The total number of persons registered during the season of that year is said to have been twenty-eight thousand, a figure which, while undoubtedly too high, nevertheless indicates a large tourist traffic.<sup>1</sup> The following letters, published in the *Congregationalist* of Boston for September 12 and 19, 1856, were written by a New Englander recently returned from a visit to St. Paul. They are highly illuminating, not only in their description of points of interest in Minnesota, but in their contrast of eastern dignity and stability with the restless hustle and hurry of the frontier towns just before the panic of 1857.

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### A TRIP TO ST. PAUL'S

MESSRS. EDITORS:—Having recently returned from an excursion to St. Paul's, and the upper Mississippi, it has occurred to me that a few notes of travel through a region of so much interest, may possibly not be unwelcome to your readers.

<sup>1</sup> J. Fletcher Williams, *History of the City of Saint Paul, and of the County of Ramsey, Minnesota*, 365 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 4).

Never was the tide of travel greater in our country, perhaps, than it has been this season, and of this travel a full share has set towards the magnificent territories of the Northwest. Every car, every steamer, every hotel, has been full, crowded, and running over. I refer not now to the emigration which is constantly going on, but to the pleasure travel. A trip to Minnesota has become quite fashionable this season, with those who seek diversion, and change of place in the summer months. Many Southern people who formerly resorted to Saratoga, or Newport, now take the excursion up the Mississippi, as far as St. Paul's, and there pass the hot months of July and August.

A tour to St. Paul's would once have been thought a great undertaking; now it is only an affair of a few days. From the Atlantic to the Mississippi, from Boston to Dubuque, or Davenport, one may pass now in forty-eight hours of continuous travel; and in as many more he may reach the head waters of present steam navigation on that mighty river, at St. Paul's. There, fifteen hundred miles from home, he finds himself just on the borders of that vast region of which he has heard so much—the great West. The great West is still beyond him. He is only half way to the Pacific. He is in the very center of the country, and not at its extremity. To his surprise he finds himself in the midst of the busy life and movement that is setting with irresistible tide onward to the regions that lie still beyond.

Nothing strikes an observer with more astonishment, as he comes from the Eastern States to the Western, than the *tremendous energy* with which all the enterprises of life and business are conducted, in these newer settlements. Everything is on the high pressure system. Men move as if the Prince of evil was after them. There is no appearance of leisure, quiet, or comfort about anybody. Society presses on like a herd of mad buffaloes, intent only on progress, and it is impossible for an individual in the mass to resist this impetuosity of the general rush, and set up for calmness and consideration on his own hook. Onward is the law. And it is astonishing to one who goes from the quiet and staid streets and manners of some very proper and respectable New England town, where everything moves on with the regularity of the planets, and the steadiness of the old church clock, to observe the difference. As he looks along the busy streets of some of the more rapidly growing cities, he hardly knows whether

to think that everybody is mad, or crazy, or rushing to put out a fire. He soon catches the general spirit and enthusiasm, rushes here and there with all the energy of a man bent on great enterprises, and comes back to his quiet New England home, if he comes back at all, only to be astonished in turn at the absolute deadness of everything and everybody that he sees.

This life and energy is the secret of the rapid growth of the Western cities. It explains what would otherwise be unaccountable. We have all heard much of this growth, but a few facts will make it more evident and tangible than any general statement. It is scarcely five years, for instance, since the first settlement of St. Paul's. It is now a large and spacious city, with its busy streets, and capacious warehouses, its little fleet of steamers at its wharves, its large and elegant public buildings, its schools, churches, and public institutions, its female academy of the highest order, and its college. Back of all this, and animating it all, is a population of some ten thousand inhabitants. A gentleman residing at St. Paul's, but who had been absent some five or six weeks, pointed out to me as we walked up from the landing to the Hotel, not less than ten or fifteen new buildings that had gone up entirely during those few weeks, on that single street, and some of them were large and fine buildings.<sup>2</sup> The same thing, he assured me, was going on in all parts of the city. Edifices of brick and stone rise, as by magic, almost in a day. A gentleman whom I met, residing, I think, in Iowa, told me that on returning to his home, in one of the little towns, sprung up in that State, he found that during the four weeks of his absence, forty new dwelling-houses had been erected, and most of them were already completed and occupied.

<sup>2</sup> The author speaks with some exaggeration of the youthfulness of St. Paul. Permanent settlement began in 1840, and in 1849 the population of the town was between two hundred and fifty and three hundred. The estimate of the number of inhabitants in 1856 is probably high, since the census of the following year, a generous report, records only slightly more than ten thousand persons as living in St. Paul. Among the buildings which were in the process of construction in 1856 were the city hall, the cathedral, the Assumption Church, and the Jackson Street Methodist Episcopal Church. Cornerstones of a building for the Minnesota Historical Society and of a projected Masonic Hall were laid with great ceremony, but neither building was ever raised above its foundation. The writer explains below that the female academy referred to was the Baldwin School, founded by the Reverend Edward D. Neill in 1853. Edward D. Neill, *History of Minnesota*, 494 (Minneapolis, 1882); Williams, *Saint Paul*, 363.

It is interesting to observe the character of the population that is crowding to these new territories. Wisconsin seems to be settled largely by New England people. Minnesota is, thus far, mainly so, I should judge. Iowa is, perhaps, almost equally indebted to New England. These people have come from their early homes, among the hills and valleys of the North, bringing with them to their new home, all their associations and attainments, their love of order, their correct moral principles, their regard for religious institutions, their industry and sound sense, all that has made New England what she is to-day. These qualifications they have brought with them, and with these as the basis, animated and pervaded by the life and energy of Western enterprise, they are sure to prosper. Such a people cannot fail of success.

It is pleasant to notice the attention paid in these newer States and Territories of the Northwest, both to education and to religion. In the larger and more flourishing towns and cities, the principal religious denominations are represented by large and often elegant church edifices, in the smaller settlements by ruder and less costly structures; but wherever you find a place of any considerable size, there you find, in some form, the church and the school-house. The high school, the academy, the college, are not usually far behind in the progress and growth of the place. I have seen nowhere in New England larger and more flourishing schools of the higher grade, or larger, and more convenient and costly buildings for their accommodation, than I saw in not a few of these Western cities. In St. Paul's, for example, though of recent origin, as I have said, there is a female school of the highest grade, called the Baldwin school, which is hardly second to any in Massachusetts in the course of study, the character of teaching and scholarship, or the convenience of its appointments and fixtures. A little way from this stands, on a commanding elevation, overlooking the broad river to a great distance in each direction, a large and elegant building of lime-stone, just approaching completion, designed as a college edifice. In Davenport, Iowa, also, a large and handsome college building has been recently erected, of stone, at once capacious, convenient and elegant, superior, in these respects, to any college building in Massachusetts, with the exception of Gore Hall at Cambridge.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The College of St. Paul, here referred to, was created under the general territorial incorporation law in 1855. Neill was the president both of the college and of the Baldwin School. Both school and college closed

I cannot forbear to mention, in this connection, the name of one to whom Minnesota, and especially St. Paul's, is largely indebted for her moral and educational advantages, as well as her material growth and development. I refer to Rev. Edward Neill, one of the most devoted, indefatigable, earnest, yet modest advocates and promoters of sound morals, sound learning and true religion, whom it has ever been my fortune to meet. One of the earliest pioneers to this remote, and then unknown settlement, he was one of the first to perceive its importance and its destiny, and to call attention to its yet undeveloped resources. Owing, in great measure, to his exertions, a press was established, a church gathered, a school opened, and the first foundations laid of the present prosperity of St. Paul's. The Baldwin school existed first in his conception. The college of St. Paul's is almost wholly his creation. Having gathered a large and strong church within a convenient and costly edifice, he left them, not long since, to take care of themselves, and set about gathering a new congregation in another quarter of the city. They meet, at present, in a rude school-house, where I had the pleasure of hearing an excellent discourse from Mr. Neill, on the dangers and duties of the emigrant to a new home. It is pleasant to meet with such instances of youthful and efficient labor in the new s[e]ttlements of our country, and to know that such men are not unappreciated by those for whom they labor.<sup>4</sup>

Of the scenery and face of the country along the upper Mississippi, I have, as yet, said nothing. A nobler, grander region of country than that whole Northwest, is not to be found, I venture to say, on this continent. The utmost fertility, and the utmost extent, at once

during the lean years that followed the panic of 1857. Macalester College is the successor to these unsuccessful efforts initiated by Neill in the years before the Civil War. The Iowa college mentioned by the writer was probably the Ladies College, later known as the Mount Ida Female College, which opened at Davenport in May, 1855. Gore Hall is still in use as one of the Harvard University buildings. Henry D. Funk, *History of Macalester College*, 29-49 (St. Paul, 1910); Leonard F. Parker, *Higher Education in Iowa*, 173 (United States Bureau of Education, *Circulars of Information*, no. 6—Washington, 1893).

<sup>4</sup>Neill, who arrived at St. Paul in 1849 as a young Presbyterian minister after serving as a home missionary near Galena, Illinois, was a leader in the intellectual and religious life of St. Paul and Minnesota until his death in 1893. He has been called Minnesota's "Apostle of Education" by Dr. William W. Folwell in his *History of Minnesota*, 4: 434-442 (St. Paul, 1930). The new church referred to is the House of Hope, which Neill had only recently organized.

and equally characterize these broad lands. Fields of apparently interminable size, waving with the richest and heaviest crops, stretch away on every side, as far as the eye can reach, as you whirl rapidly along through Northern Illinois, Wisconsin, Iowa. The introduction of the newly invented agricultural machinery, especially of the combined mower and reaper, has enabled the farmers of this region to cultivate at least ten times the number of acres that they could otherwise have done. Immense fields of wheat are sown every year, which but for these machines could never be reaped, simply for want of laborers.<sup>5</sup>

To one unaccustomed to such a broad expanse, the Western prairie is a novel and a strange spectacle. A great sea of land, unbroken, and apparently without limit or bound, now gently undulating, now perfectly level, extends on every side to the farthest horizon. Here and there the log hut of a settler breaks the monotony of loneliness with its indications of life and civilization—around it cultivated fields—then again the undisturbed prairie grass, on a soil that has never known the plough, nor felt the foot of man.

This description applies only to the regions interior and back from the river. Along the Mississippi the scenery is of a bolder and more impressive character. The banks rise into lofty, and sometimes precipitous bluffs, on either side, varying in height from one hundred to two or three hundred feet, generally green to the summit, except where now and then a mass of grey limestone crops out on the side next the river, and assumes the rounded and fantastic shape of some old ruin, with its walls and towers, and crumbling battlements, strangely reminding you of the castellated ruins of the Rhine. These hills vary in outline, and are broken by frequent ravines running back from the river, and separating the adjacent slopes from each other. Along these opposite slopes, patches of forest trees are scattered, without undergrowth, save the green grass, the trees so far apart as to admit the sunlight freely, and casting beautiful shadows on the green sward and along the gentle slopes far below them. The whole pre-

<sup>5</sup> The rapid increase in the use of agricultural machinery in the late fifties and sixties is indicated in the records of the McCormick Historical Association in Chicago. The Minnesota Historical Society has film copies of Minnesota order lists covering the period from 1854 to 1871 and of a number of letters written by agents who represented the company in Minnesota.

sents a rare combination of the elements of beauty, and forms a landscape more pleasing and lovely than the eye is often permitted to rest upon. No grander, no more beautiful scenery, is to be found in the United States, probably, than that which meets the eye for some 500 miles along the Mississippi above Dubuque. No lover of the picturesque should fail to visit this romantic region. H.

[From the *Congregationalist*, 8: 149 (September 19, 1856).]

#### INTERESTING OBJECTS IN THE VICINITY OF ST. PAUL'S

The region of St. Paul's abounds in objects of interest to the traveller. A ride of a few hours takes you to the Cave, Fort Snelling, the Falls of Minnehaha, and the Falls of St. Anthony, each well worthy of a visit.

Chartering a carriage, and a span of stout Western horses for the expedition, and making up a little party to suit your taste, from the numerous visitors all bent, like yourself, on sight-seeing, you start off in such spirits as this pure northern air alone can inspire, and a ride of a few miles brings you to the cave. This is quite a curiosity in its way. You have seen caves before, great and small; but probably never one precisely like this. The rock composing the roof and sides of the cave, is simply a bed of pure white sand, or silex, sufficiently compact to adhere, but capable of being easily cut with a knife. You cannot imagine anything purer or whiter than this sand-rock. A small stream, a rill of water, has worn itself a channel through this bed of sand-stone, and thus formed the cave. At the opening, or mouth, the cavern is of very respectable height, allowing you to stand erect; you can proceed, in fact, some little distance in this way; presently, however, the walls contract to a much smaller space, leaving you barely room to creep in, if you are so disposed, on hands and knees, over the pure sand, along the margin of the rivulet, for a considerable distance farther. As the light penetrates but a short distance beyond the mouth of the cave, you must depend on the torch of birch-bark which your guide manufactures for the occasion, for the means of exploration.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The writer probably visited Fountain Cave, located in the bank of the Mississippi River some four miles above the main settlement at St. Paul. Major Stephen H. Long explored and described it in 1817. He chose the name because of a "fine crystal stream [which] flows through

Emerging from the sand-cave, you resume your carriage, and soon reach the ferry over the Minnesota, at its junction with the Mississippi.<sup>7</sup> Crossing this, you land at Fort Snelling, which is beautifully situated on the high bank, or bluff, above the stream, near the junction of the two rivers. The fort was intended, probably, as a place of refuge and protection to the early settlers, from the hostile incursions of their Indian neighbors. A high wall encloses a large area, within which are several stone buildings used as barracks and storehouses for the garrison.

Passing on, you find yourself now upon the broad, open prairie, the soil, as far as you can see, quite undisturbed by any trace of man, or any signs of civilization. Here and there the wild rose, or some beautiful prairie flower, invites you to leave your carriage to admire, and perchance, to plunder. Presently your driver reins up, you hardly know why, and invites you to step out; you obey, seeing however, no occasion for such a manoeuvre just then, but ready to avail yourself of whatever may turn up. A few steps from the road side brings you to the bank of a ravine, and lo, before you lies that little vision of exquisite beauty, the Falls of Minnehaha! Was ever anything more perfect devised in the way of waterfall, than this gem of a cataract? The stream itself is small—one might almost leap across it—and shallow withal; but just at the edge of the precipice, it spreads out to a very respectable width, and springs over the rock and into the ravine below, in the most joyous and playful manner possible. The descent is some sixty feet perpendicular, which it takes at one bound, and with a shout as of merry laughter, like the joyous shout of children at their play. It could not say Ha! Ha! more plainly than it does. Hence the beautifully significant Indian name, Falls of Ha, Ha. The readers of *Hiawatha* need not be reminded that this fall is spoken of in that beautiful poem; indeed the scene of much of the poem is laid in the region about St. Paul's.

the cavern, and cheers the lonesome dark retreat with its enlivening murmurs." Long, "Voyage in a Six-Oared Skiff to the Falls of Saint Anthony in 1817," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 2: 32; Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 444 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 17).

<sup>7</sup> Until 1926, when a concrete bridge was completed, a ferry was the only means of crossing the Minnesota River at Fort Snelling. *Minneapolis Journal*, August 1, 1926.

"In the land of the Dahcotahs,  
In the land of handsome women." <sup>8</sup>

The entire region from the Minnesota at its junction with the Father of Waters, to the shores of Lake Superior, constitutes the original home and hunting ground of these fierce and noble warriors. Nor are they yet extinct, nor have they forsaken their former and favorite resorts. They are to be found in considerable numbers in the vicinity. Sometimes you see them gliding along in their canoes near the mouth of some tributary that flows into the Mississippi, as you sail past in your course along that mighty river. Sometimes you come upon a little lodge or camp of them, as you explore the prairies. Not long before our visit they had a war dance within a few miles of St. Paul's, and made night hideous with their rejoicing over the scalps of some newly slain Sioux, with whom they have a deadly feud.<sup>9</sup>

To Rev. Mr. Neill, I am indebted for much interesting information respecting this tribe, whose habits, are, many of them, strange and peculiar. Christianity seems to make little impression on them, as yet, so firmly rooted and inveterate are these habits of savage and warrior life. It is not long since at noon day a Dahcotah warrior entered St. Paul's, passed up the crowded streets, made his way into a house where dwelt a little girl, of the Sioux tribe,<sup>10</sup> who had found a home with a Christian family, seized the child, bore her into the street, despatched her with a blow of his tomahawk, and bore off her scalp in triumph, making his escape before the alarm was given, or any one had perceived his intentions. A war dance celebrated the cruel exploit—hardly less valorous and noble than some recent exhibitions of Southern chivalry. Indeed the cowardly attack of Brooks upon an unarmed and defenceless man, and the great war dance of the entire South over the heroic achievement, are quite in the Dahcotah fashion.

<sup>8</sup> Longfellow's poem *The Song of Hiawatha*, which brought fame to Minnehaha Falls, was published in 1855. For further information regarding the composition of the work, see notes on "Minnehaha Falls and Longfellow's 'Hiawatha,'" *ante*, 8:281, 422-424.

<sup>9</sup> The Sioux or Dakota of southern Minnesota and the Chippewa or Ojibway of the north were traditional enemies. The writer here gives the erroneous impression that the enemies of the Sioux, and not the Sioux themselves, lived in the vicinity of St. Paul.

<sup>10</sup> The writer again confuses the names of the Minnesota Indian tribes; Dakota is simply another name for Sioux.





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