

THE STATE HISTORICAL CONVENTION OF 1937

Members and friends of the Minnesota Historical Society who have participated in some or all of the annual tours held under its auspices since 1922 have penetrated many parts of the North Star State. They have visited the rugged North Shore of Lake Superior, viewed the beauties of the Mississippi Valley both above and below the Twin Cities, followed old cart trails over the fertile plains of the Red River Valley, explored the valleys of the Minnesota and the St. Croix, pushed southward to Albert Lea and Fairmont, and traced the Mississippi to its source in Lake Itasca. What remained for the society's fifteenth annual tour and convention? The choice for 1937 fell upon the most remote section of the state, the Lake of the Woods country, which may be appropriately described as Minnesota's last frontier.¹

With the northernmost portion not only of Minnesota but of the main area of the United States as their destination, about fifty people traveling in two busses and a number of private automobiles left the Historical Building in St. Paul on Friday morning, June 18. By the time they reached Little Falls, where they paused for the first session of the convention, they had been joined by about forty additional tourists. Approximately a hundred and thirty people, some forty of whom were residents of Little Falls, attended the luncheon at the Hotel Buckman at 12:15 P. M.

Mr. Edward C. Gale of Minneapolis, president of the society, who presided, opened the convention by announcing that the society was happy to hold the first session of the

¹ A multigraphed sheet giving "Glimpses of the History of the Route" covered by the tour was distributed among the tourists at the beginning of the trip.

1937 tour in "Lindbergh City," as he termed the home community of Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh. He then called upon Dr. John T. Flanagan of the department of English in the University of Minnesota for a paper on "The Hoosier Schoolmaster in Minnesota." Many members of the audience were surprised to learn from this speaker that Edward Eggleston, the "first of the Hoosier realists," spent much of the decade from 1856 to 1866 as a resident of Minnesota and that he gathered the material for one of his novels, the *Mystery of Metropolisville*, in this state. His activities in frontier Minnesota as a Methodist pastor, an eager traveler, a popular lecturer, and the first St. Paul librarian were described by Dr. Flanagan. As one of a series of articles by the same author on the Minnesota experiences of well-known literary figures, this interesting paper will appear in a future issue of MINNESOTA HISTORY.

The "Story of the White Earth Catholic Indian Mission" was outlined by the second speaker, Sister Grace McDonald of the College of St. Benedict at St. Joseph. She told of the difficulties encountered by the Chippewa of the White Earth Reservation after the "peace policy" of President Grant was put in operation there in 1874. It was part of this plan to "give the agencies over to such denominations as had for the longest time maintained missions among the Indians" and to allow the church in question to name the agent, teacher, farmer, interpreter, and the like. Missionaries of only one denomination were to work on each reservation. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the Indians at White Earth were Catholics, said Sister Grace, the reservation was placed under the supervision of the Episcopal church. She told how Father Ignatius Tomazin, who was ordered to minister to the White Earth Indians by the Catholic church, clashed with the agent appointed by the Episcopal bishop, Henry B. Whipple, and how the Indians rose in defense of their black-robed missionary.

After triumphing over the civil authorities, Father Tomazin was replaced by Father Aloysius Hermanutz, a Benedictine. With Sisters Philomene Ketten and Lioba Braun, he went to White Earth in 1878, where, according to the speaker, "these three were destined to work together for over fifty years." The school that they established in 1881, said Sister Grace, has "continued to grow until today it numbers eighteen teachers and helpers, and over five thousand pupils have enrolled in its classes."

At the conclusion of this paper, the chairman called upon Mrs. Harry Stillwell, vice president of the Morrison County Historical Society, who welcomed the visitors and said a few words about the activities of the local society. Mr. R. D. Musser of Little Falls was then asked to introduce Mrs. Milo Young, the oldest living schoolteacher in the county, who recalled memories of the Sioux and Civil wars and of the caravans of ox carts that once passed through western Minnesota. At the close of the meeting, Mr. Musser invited the tourists to visit Lindbergh State Park before leaving Little Falls. A heavy downpour of rain did not prevent many of the visitors from taking advantage of the opportunity to see the park established in memory of Congressman Charles A. Lindbergh and to go through the house on the Mississippi in which his famous son spent a part of his boyhood.

After crossing the Mississippi at Little Falls, the tourists pushed northwestward, following the route used by the Red River cart trains of old, to Detroit Lakes, where they arrived late in the afternoon. In making this trip they passed over the Mississippi divide and entered the Red River Valley, which is part of the Hudson Bay basin—a fact to which attention was called by Mr. L. M. Benshoof, editor of the *Detroit Lakes Record*, who presided at the evening session. More than a hundred people assembled at the Hotel Graystone for a dinner program, which included two speakers. The first, Professor Charles J. Ritchey of Drake

University, Des Moines, Iowa, described some of his adventures in "Hunting for Manuscripts in the Northwest." The experiences of which he told grew out of his search for materials for a book on the Fisk expeditions from Minnesota to Montana in the sixties. He offered the story of his adventures as concrete evidence that the study of history is "not dry as dust." His searching expedition began at the Minnesota Soldiers' Home, where James Liberty Fisk died, and continued over a complicated trail that led to White Bear Lake, where he had lived, to Hartland, Wisconsin, over the route that Fisk himself had followed to Helena, Montana, to the Bitter Root Valley, to Mandan, North Dakota, and eventually back to the starting place in Minnesota. Among the rewards reaped by the searcher were some documents preserved by Fisk's daughter, a diary kept from 1863 to 1870 by his brother, Andrew Jackson Fisk, another kept by R. E. Fisk in 1866, and some items preserved by the family of a surgeon who had accompanied one of the expeditions. Mr. Ritchey announced that he knows of other diaries and records which he is still hoping to find and that, since his book on Fisk is not yet complete, the "search is still on." He invited members of the audience to join the search and to tell him of any pertinent material they might find.

A diary of a very different type, in which a trader, Daniel Hunt, recorded his experiences "On the Red River Trails in the Fifties," formed the basis of the second paper presented at Detroit Lakes. The speaker, the Reverend Arthur H. Gilmore of the St. Anthony Park Congregational Church, St. Paul, revealed that this record was accidentally discovered when material was being assembled for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his church. The diarist, a young Maineite in search of adventure, went to Minnesota in 1857, visited St. Paul, St. Anthony, and Stillwater, steamed up the Mississippi to St. Cloud on the "North Star," and then struck west with a Red River cart train

bound for Breckenridge. There he staked a claim, established the "first brick yard in this part of the country," and became involved in local politics. But Hunt was not ready to settle down; the next spring he built a boat and voyaged down the Red River to Fort Garry. In the two years that followed he visited numerous points of the frontier Northwest—Pembina, St. Vincent, the Lake of the Woods, Thief River, Red Lake, and Cass Lake—and he carried many loads of furs from the Canadian fort into Minnesota. Mr. Gilmore told of one journey made in January, 1859, when Hunt was almost frozen to death. In the following June he shipped a cargo of furs to Fort Abercrombie on the "Anson Northup," the first steamboat on the Red River. Mr. Gilmore revealed that Hunt served with a Minnesota regiment in the Civil War and that he eventually settled on a large farm in what is now the Midway district of St. Paul. Before the session adjourned, Mr. Benshoof remarked upon the large and enthusiastic audience, and noted that it included at least twice as many people as had attended a session of the state historical convention in the same community in 1924. He then called upon Mr. Charles Stees of St. Paul, a member of the executive council of the Minnesota Historical Society who has attended most of the society's summer tours. Mr. Stees expressed appreciation for the hospitality enjoyed by the tourists in Detroit Lakes and for the excellent arrangements made by the local committee.

On the following morning, June 19, the tourists departed, over a northward course that skirted the western boundary of White Earth Indian Reservation, for Roseau, where they joined residents of one of Minnesota's northernmost counties in a celebration commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of white settlement. An informal luncheon at the First English Lutheran Church was followed by an afternoon session in the recently completed municipal auditorium. This building, which was erected as a WPA project, was

first used for the anniversary celebration. The entire countryside must have been represented in the audience that assembled that Saturday afternoon in Roseau, for about a thousand people were present when Senator Victor E. Lawson, publisher of the *Willmar Tribune*, called the meeting to order. Several selections by a school band preceded the program proper. Mr. Lawson opened the session by commenting upon the significance of the anniversary celebration. He noted particularly the racial elements that have helped to build Roseau County in the past half century, and he praised the Scandinavians for their work in permanently settling this frontier region. He then introduced the first speaker, Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, who remarked that, whereas Mr. Lawson's comments related to the recent history of the community, he would speak on its ancient history. His subject, "Fort St. Charles and the Northwest Angle," revealed that he was about to deal with the isolated bit of Minnesota that is cut off from the rest of the state by the waters of the Lake of the Woods and Canadian territory.² How it happens that the international boundary runs farther north at this point than at any other place was explained by the speaker before he related the story of the fort erected by the French explorer, La Vérendrye, in 1732 on an island just south of the present boundary. Dr. Blegen unfolded a tale of daring adventure, involving a trading explorer, his four sons, his nephew, and two Jesuit missionaries. The speaker concluded with a recommendation that either the United States or the state of Minnesota should reserve the site of Fort St. Charles "for posterity as a permanent park set aside by virtue of its international historical importance," that it should be appropri-

² The story of La Vérendrye and of the *Discovery of Lake of the Woods*, as told by Father d'Eschambault of the St. Boniface Historical Society in Manitoba, was published in pamphlet form by the Roseau County Historical Society and placed on sale in connection with the celebration.

ately marked, and that a replica of La Vérendrye's post should be erected there. By publication in the present issue of this magazine, his paper is made available to a wider audience.

In view of Dr. Blegen's recommendation, it was appropriate that he should be followed on the program by the director of Minnesota state parks, Mr. Harold Lathrop of St. Paul, who seconded the suggestions relating to the fort site. Taking as his subject "State Parks and State History," the speaker revealed that state park sites in Minnesota have been selected both for their historical associations and their recreational facilities. Among the parks of special historical interest he noted Itasca, Sibley, Sleepy Eye, Jay Cooke, Traverse des Sioux, and Fort Ridgely. Small areas, he remarked, often are designated as "historical state waysides." He stressed the need for a survey of state park sites based upon a careful study of Minnesota history. At the conclusion of this address Mr. Lawson announced that Mr. Lathrop had just been elected a director of the national council of state parks. Two songs by Mrs. R. S. Rice preceded the final speaker on the afternoon program, Mr. Eddy E. Billberg, president of the Roseau County Historical Society, who reviewed "Fifty Years of Roseau County." La Vérendrye and his men were the first white men to see the Roseau country and they gave to a river and a lake the name that was later applied to the county, said Mr. Billberg, but it remained for the pioneers of 1887 to accept the challenge of the wilderness and to transform it into a civilized region. They established friendly relations with the Indians and built homes and schools. Later the county was advertised and farmers were encouraged to settle there when some of its products were displayed at the Minnesota State Fair. The Indian scare of 1891 and the coming of the railroads, which had been commemorated in a morning session, also were touched upon. The speaker called upon Mr. J. W. Dur-

ham, one of the settlers of 1887, to rise, and he also asked those who had attended classes in the first Roseau County school to acknowledge the applause of the audience. Mr. Billberg closed by assuring the pioneers present that their services to the county would be commemorated in song and in story.³

After this program visitors went to another part of the auditorium to view the exhibits in the museum of the Roseau County Historical Society, which has been arranged in two rooms on the second floor. All were favorably impressed by the remarkable collection of objects illustrative of pioneer, Indian, and bird and animal life in the county to be seen in this local museum. The exhibits were arranged by Mr. P. O. Fryklund, the curator. Many of the tourists also took advantage of an opportunity to see the "William Crooks," the first locomotive used in Minnesota, which was on display at the Roseau station through the courtesy of the Great Northern Railroad.

About five hundred people assembled in the Roseau Auditorium for the evening session, which convened at 8:15 P.M. with Mr. Blegen presiding. He congratulated the community upon its historical museum and the excellent manner in which it is housed and arranged. After the playing of several selections by an instrumental trio, Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society, read a paper on "Manton Marble and the Nobles Expedition of 1859." This narrative was based upon reports sent to the *New York Evening Post* by its correspondent, Manton Marble, and to the *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat* by Joseph A. Wheelock in the summer of 1859, when they accompanied Colonel William H. Nobles of St. Paul on an overland expedition to the Canadian Northwest. James Wickes Taylor, later American consul in Winnipeg, was another member of the

³ A brief survey of the history of Roseau County was given in a special *Program* issued by the Roseau County Historical Society.

expedition, which was sponsored by the St. Paul city council. The party that left the Minnesota capital on June 4, 1859, consisted of twenty men, some of whom were bound for the Fraser River gold fields. Mr. Babcock described the travelers' progress over one of the old Red River trails to St. Cloud, where they met Jane Grey Swisshelm, the editor; through the Sauk Valley, dotted with rough claim shanties; over a stage road that was being built by Burbank and Company to Osakis Lake and the site of Alexandria; to Fort Abercrombie on the Red River, where they found the pioneer steamboat, "Anson Northup"; through Dakota Territory to Pembina, where they were royally entertained by Joe Rolette and where six members of the party left the main group to push on to the Fraser River mines; and on to Fort Ellice, where the party disbanded. Among the experiences that Marble and Wheelock described in their accounts of the expedition, said Mr. Babcock, were a meeting with two "Scotch lassies," who were traveling to Lake Athabasca, where one of them was to marry a Hudson's Bay Company employee, a buffalo hunt which supplied the travelers with fresh meat, and a visit to one of the Red River settlements while its inhabitants were absent on a hunting expedition. Upon the conclusion of this paper, Mr. Blegen remarked that Miss Ellen Wheelock, a daughter of the famous St. Paul editor mentioned by Mr. Babcock, was in the audience and asked her to rise.

A number of vocal selections by a group of nine boys formed a pleasing interlude between Mr. Babcock's paper and a talk by Mr. Gale, who told of his discovery of "An Original La Vérendrye Document" at Goodspeed's Book Shop in Boston some years ago. This interesting manuscript—a contract written by a notary at Quebec in 1748 and signed by the explorer after he returned from the West and just a year before his death—helped to create a vivid picture of the intrepid Frenchman to whom the Roseau country was familiar ground more than a century and a half

before the first Americans settled there. Mr. Gale displayed the original document and read the following English translation of its text:

We the undersigned have made the following agreement, to wit, that I, Pierre Gauthier, Esquire, Sieur De la Verendry, captain of infantry, commandant for the King at the post of the Western Sea, acknowledge and avow that, at the good pleasure of Monseigneur, Marquis de la Galissoniere, knight of the royal military order of St. Louis, captain of the King's fleet, and commandant general for His Majesty in all of New France and in the region and country of Louisiana, I have rented and accepted payment for four entire and consecutive years to commence on the fifteenth of next April and to end at the arrival of the fleet, according to custom, in the year seventeen hundred and fifty-three; and I do promise to guarantee to Sieurs Dominique Godé and Alexis Le Moine Moniere, merchants of Montreal, and by these presents do promise, accepting them as lessees and holding for them the said title during said period, to put them in possession of all the exclusive trade in commodities to be carried on with the French as well as the Indians and others at the posts of Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods and their dependencies; the limits of which, as far as Rainy Lake is concerned, to commence at Lake Saguinaga, and for the Lake of the Woods at Fort St. Charles, and to end at River Pichikoka, whose mouth is in the vicinity of the mouth of the Maurepas River, otherwise known as Grande Rivière, which empties into Lake Winnipeg, the said post to extend to the north thirty leagues and to the Southwest twenty leagues. Moreover, I, Laverendry, promise not to carry on or cause to be carried on directly or indirectly, under any stipulation made or to be made, by any means whatsoever any trade at these said posts and their dependencies on pain of all damages, expense, and interest. We, Godé and Moniere promise under pain of loss of our right, to pay to the said Sieur De la Verendry the sum of twelve hundred livres rental for each of the said four years, of which rentals I De la Verendry acknowledge to have had and received in cash from the said lessees before the consummation of these presents the sum of seventeen hundred livres and for the remainder which will be due me the said acceptors are held and accountable to me only at the expiration of the present lease. Knowing, moreover, that Sieur Gonneville is the present farmer of the posts above mentioned and that his lease will not expire until seventeen hundred fifty, should he wish to hold his lease, the four years of tenancy by Sieurs Godé and Moniere shall not begin until the expiration of the said lease and shall not end until the year seventeen hundred and fifty four instead of seventeen hundred and fifty three as stated above.

Made in duplicate at Quebec the twenty-second of October, 1748.
. . . Sieur Godé having declared that he cannot sign his name,
Sieur Moniere has signed for both

LAVERENDRYE
MONIERE

Certified exact and signed

Since Canadian-American relations had been mentioned in several of the papers presented at Roseau, Mr. Blegen invited Mr. Harold Knox of Winnipeg, one of five high-school teachers from the Canadian city who attended the Roseau meeting, to say a few words. Mr. Knox noted that Manitoba and Minnesota have at many points a common historical background, and that among the figures who help to bind closely the province and the state are La Vérendrye and James W. Taylor. While the waters that mark the international boundary between Lake Superior and the Lake of the Woods form a natural dividing line, said Mr. Knox, the boundary from that lake westward is a purely artificial barrier cutting through a region in which the Red River serves as a connecting link between Manitoba and its American neighbors. His remarks were a fitting introduction to the last paper of the Roseau session—a discussion of "Fur Traders and Border Posts" by Dr. Grace Lee Nute, curator of manuscripts on the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society. This account of life at the posts on Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Red Lake, Vermilion Lake, the Winnipeg River, and other northern waterways from 1791 to 1830 was based upon traders' diaries preserved in the archives of the Hudson's Bay Company in London and examined there by the speaker. She found evidence that the Lake of the Woods country was old trading ground even as early as 1792, for in that year an English trader, James Sutherland, wrote of examining the remains of a French fort north of the border lake. Miss Nute drew upon a large number of diaries kept at the Rainy Lake post of the Hudson's Bay Company, which became Fort Frances

in 1830. From them she learned how new posts were built, where they were established, who the traders and their men were, how they lived, what they did for amusement, and the like. She also found out how the Hudson's Bay Company met the competition offered by the Northwest Company and later the American Fur Company, and how the British traders felt about being excluded from the American Northwest. Dr. John McLoughlin, who kept a diary at Rainy Lake in 1822, noted that "In Lake of the Woods we used to keep one Post, one year on the South Side and the next on the North, but as the South side belongs to the Americans, we cannot go to our former place, War road." Miss Nute found records of British posts as far south as Lakes Traverse and Big Stone. From the extracts quoted, "it can be seen how much of interest for Minnesota history there is stored away in the basement of Hudson's Bay House in London," she said. "The series of diaries and reports goes on to the beginning of this century. . . . I have merely given a few samples of extracts that I made while I was working in these manuscripts in 1935." The Roseau celebration was brought to a close by the Honorable Mike Holm, Minnesota secretary of state, a native son of the northern community. He recalled some incidents from the early social life of the region and told how the county was organized from parts of Kittson and Beltrami counties.

When the traveling historians started out on a journey of exploration of their own early on the morning of Sunday, June 20, they doubtless felt that the speakers of the previous day had prepared them for their travels. Across the Roseau River—the "Rush River" of the Chippewa—and over some twenty miles of flat and almost uninhabited country they sped to Warroad, a town that has grown up in the present century on the southwest shore of the Lake of the Woods. Though the modern community is new, the story of its site extends back through centuries, for it is located at the mouth of the Warroad River on a tract that was

neutral territory between the warring Sioux and Chippewa, and on which about 1820 the American Fur Company built a post. There on a perfect June day of 1937, at 7:15 A. M., about a hundred and seventy-five tourists embarked on the steamboat "Scout" and the launch "Resolute" for a voyage to the Northwest Angle and the site of Fort St. Charles. Across Muskeg Bay and into the wide, ocean-like reaches of the south section of the lake they sailed, now and again catching a glimpse of a forested shore that might be either Canadian or American soil.⁴ It was almost noon before the rocky islands that are characteristic of the central and northern sections of the lake began to appear. Then the boats followed the international boundary, and the tourists could see American islands to the left and Canadian islands to the right. One mound of rock and pine to the east proved to be Massacre Island, where La Vérendrye's eldest son, Father Aulneau, and nineteen voyageurs were killed by Indians in 1736. An occasional fishing station is the only sign of human life in this northern lake land, which has changed little since its shores echoed to the songs of La Vérendrye's voyageurs. The tourists found that, despite the lapse of more than two centuries, the wilderness that the daring Frenchman penetrated is still a wilderness. Eventually a group of buildings and a long dock that made landing possible came into sight. This was American Point, on an island near the entrance to the Northwest Angle Inlet, where Penasse, the northernmost post office in the United States, is located. There the tourists paused for lunch. A high wind that rose in the late morning and continued through most of the afternoon made impossible the landing of the large boats on the inhospitable north shore of Magnuson's Island, where La Vérendrye built Fort St. Charles in 1732. In two small motor boats, about

⁴ Blueprint copies of a map of the Lake of the Woods were distributed through the courtesy of Mr. Charles Stees of St. Paul. A chart of Fort St. Charles in blueprint form also was made available to the tourists.

twenty-five of the tourists made the trip. Over rocks and through underbrush they pushed their way for a glimpse of the crude cross erected by members of the Historical Society of St. Boniface who discovered and excavated the site in 1908. The experience of these few tourists made still more evident the need for a thorough re-excavation of the site. When the large boats left American Point at about four o'clock they sailed up the inlet past the fort site before starting on the return trip, which, though rough, was uneventful. Clouds that threatened rain in the late afternoon lifted just before 8:30 P. M., and the tourists were privileged to view a glorious northern sunset. A short time later the water tower at Warroad was sighted, and just before ten o'clock the boats landed. A late dinner, the main course of which consisted of Lake of the Woods sturgeon, was served at the Hotel Warroad.

Southward the travelers turned their course on the morning of June 21, when they set out for Bemidji, near the headwaters of the Mississippi. There, at 1:30 P. M., about eighty people gathered in the Hotel Markham for the final session of the tour. Senator Lawson, who presided, introduced the first speaker, Mr. Henry Z. Mitchell, editor of the *Bemidji Pioneer*, by announcing that he comes from a family of distinguished editors, that includes the courageous Jane Grey Swisshelm. Mr. Mitchell discussed "Local History Work in Northern Minnesota" with special reference to Beltrami County, where considerable historical work has been accomplished under WPA auspices, although a county historical society has not yet been organized. A number of romantic tales connected with the historical backgrounds of the county were recalled by the speaker, who expressed regret that they are not always founded on fact. He cited, for example, the legend of the Indian maiden whose tears formed Lake Itasca, and he asserted that he preferred to believe this tale despite the fact that proof of another origin for the name had recently been confirmed. He

closed his sparkling and informal talk by urging the visitors to attend the pageant to be staged at Itasca State Park in the present summer. He was followed by Mr. F. T. Gustavson, who described the Chippewa Museum at Cass Lake, which was established last November by a WPA project of which he is supervisor. Its chief purpose, according to Mr. Gustavson, is to gather and preserve examples of Indian artcraft and to encourage the continuation of these crafts. Both modern art objects and archaeological specimens are displayed in the museum, which is located in the Cass Lake Armory. The museum, said the speaker, acts as the custodian of the Chippewa Region Historical Society, which, though recently organized, has a membership of fifty. He invited the tourists to visit the museum, and some of them, including Mr. Blegen and Senator Lawson, accepted his invitation.

“Historic Sites and the National Park Service” was the subject discussed by the next speaker, Mr. Edward A. Hummel, assistant historian, with headquarters at Omaha, Nebraska, of the National Park Service. He pointed out that the first historic sites were acquired by the federal government some forty years ago, when the war department purchased certain Civil War battlefields. These and other sites were turned over to the National Park Service for administration when it was established in 1916. A historical division was not organized until 1932, when Mr. Verne E. Chatelain, formerly of the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society, became the first historian. Since that time the park service, said Mr. Hummel, “has become the administrator or consultant on practically all historical preservation work carried out with federal funds.” He estimated that about three-fifths of the sites now administered by the park service are of historical or archaeological significance. Such sites are selected for their recreational and educational value and for their value as “source materials in the study of history.” “We are now making a survey of historic sites

in order to determine which can best be used to illustrate the general history of the United States," said Mr. Hummel. Those selected will "be designated as national historic sites." The audience was happy to hear the speaker suggest that the site of Fort St. Charles might well be so designated.

As a final number on the program, a study of the name "Itasca" by Dr. William J. Petersen of the State Historical Society of Iowa, which was published in the June issue of *MINNESOTA HISTORY*, was presented in his absence by Mr. Blegen.⁵ It is too bad to allow the historians to "dry up Itasca's tears," he said in answer to Mr. Mitchell. Nevertheless, that is just what Dr. Petersen has done by finding contemporary evidence that this musical name is derived from the Latin words "veritas caput." The pleasure that Mr. Mitchell receives from romance, however, said Mr. Blegen, can be more than matched by a historian's excitement and thrill of joy when he solves a problem and succeeds in finding the truth. The speaker then reviewed briefly the story of the discovery of Lake Itasca and of the problems involved in the name that it received from Henry R. Schoolcraft in 1832, and he read a part of the explorer's letter telling of its origin. As the session closed, Mr. William H. Bovey of Minneapolis rose and made a motion, which was unanimously acclaimed, that a vote of thanks be extended to Mr. Babcock, the manager of the tour, and to Mr. Blegen for their work in arranging the society's most enjoyable and successful convention.⁶

Although officially the tour came to an end with the close of this session, most of the tourists went to Douglas Lodge at Itasca State Park for the night. In the evening they explored from a launch the beautiful lake that was first made known by Schoolcraft, and on the following morning they were guided by an official from the local CCC camp to the

⁵ Dr. Petersen's introduction and the Schoolcraft letter are reprinted in the *Bemidji Daily Pioneer* of June 21.

⁶ Another account of the tour and convention, by Gertrude Gove, is to be found in the *Windom Reporter* for July 9, 16, and 23.

point where the Mississippi leaves the lake to begin its long journey to the Gulf of Mexico. The morning's trip led them, too, past several of the glistening lakes that nestle in the Itasca basin and over beautiful woodland paths edged by towering pines. Here surely is a spot that combines the recreational facilities and historical interest described by Mr. Hummel. All felt that fortunate is the state for which such a site was preserved before it was spoiled by the hand of man.

As the historical tourists of 1937 made their way back to the Twin Cities through the Mississippi Valley on June 22 they remembered that they had seen on the international boundary another spot which shares with Itasca the appeal of scenic beauty and historical interest. They had visited a wilderness lake that has changed little since a gallant French explorer lived upon its shores, and had followed through a maze of wooded islands the course traced by his voyageurs more than two centuries ago. And they knew that now they could understand better the story of the trading explorer who was lured into the American wilderness by tales of the western sea. By retracing his steps, they had learned something about La Vérendrye that could not be gained from books. And so, as they parted, the tourists expressed the hope that, just as Schoolcraft's discovery is commemorated at Itasca, the exploits of La Vérendrye will soon be commemorated at the site of his Minnesota fort. B.L.H.



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