

## THE STATE HISTORICAL CONVENTION OF 1938

TO DULUTH, the scene in 1922 of the first state historical convention held under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society, members and friends of the society returned on July 29 and 30, 1938, for its sixteenth annual tour and convention. They went to participate in a celebration of national significance, to welcome to Minnesota a caravan that had spent seven months in traveling westward from Massachusetts, and to witness the first Minnesota presentation of a pageant commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Ordinance of 1787 and the beginning of settlement in the Northwest Territory. And they attended also, at Gooseberry Falls State Park, the tenth annual North Shore Historical Assembly arranged by the historical societies of Lake, Cook, and St. Louis counties.

On the morning of July 29, some sixty tourists left the Historical Building, St. Paul, in a chartered bus and a number of private cars. After pausing at Duluth, where luncheon was served at the Spalding Hotel, they followed the picturesque North Shore of Lake Superior to Gooseberry Falls State Park, about twelve miles beyond Two Harbors. Upon entering Lake County, near Knife River, the visitors were welcomed by a reception committee, consisting of Mr. Lawrence Claffy, chairman, Mr. M. H. Brickley, mayor of Two Harbors, Mr. W. O. Lomasney, Mr. J. R. Lindgren, Mr. A. E. Haugan, and Mr. Paul W. Nelson. They led the way to the picnic grounds near the mouth of the Gooseberry River—said to have been named for the French explorer, Groseilliers—where the assembly of the three North Shore historical societies was already in session. There Mr. Charles E. Campton, the presiding officer, introduced Mr. Edward C. Gale of Minneapolis, who voiced the

greetings of the Minnesota Historical Society, of which he is president. Mr. Gale announced that he had come from the land of the Sioux to smoke the pipe of peace in the country of the once hostile Chippewa, and he congratulated members of the three northeastern local historical societies upon their noteworthy activity.

The meeting then in session was tangible evidence of that activity. After Mr. Gale had concluded his remarks, Mr. Campton called upon Mr. Otto E. Wieland of Duluth, president of the St. Louis County Historical Society, for a paper on "Early Beaver Bay and Its Part in the Discovery of Iron." Among those who noted the presence of iron in northeastern Minnesota at an early date, said Mr. Wieland, were Dr. John McLoughlin, the trader, and J. G. Norwood, a member of the expedition led by David Dale Owen. The speaker emphasized, however, some discoveries about which very little has been known, in which members of his own family, Christian, Henry, and Ernest Wieland, played an active part. In the summer of 1865 they led Henry H. Eames of St. Paul, who was searching for gold, to the vicinity of the Vermilion iron deposits, and in the early 1870's they acted as guides for Peter Mitchell, who "is justly ranked as the first real explorer for iron ore in northern Minnesota." In 1866 the Wieland brothers were authorized by the Minnesota legislature to build a toll road between Beaver Bay and Lake Vermilion, and in 1872 Christian Wieland surveyed some lands for a group of business men at Ontonagon, Michigan. What Mr. Wieland designates as the "Ontonagon pool" took over a tract of ten thousand acres, and "out of this pool there grew, a few years later, the Mesaba Iron Company, the first iron mining company organized in the state of Minnesota."

Mr. Wieland, who spent his youth at Beaver Bay, was followed on the program by another North Shore pioneer, Mr. E. A. Schulze of Los Angeles. He recalled particularly the difficult methods of transportation with which the

early settlers at Beaver Bay were obliged to cope. For two decades after the arrival of the first settlers in 1856, all supplies reached the frontier community by boat or trail, and as late as 1876 a family left by sleigh for a visit to Ohio. Residents of old Beaver Bay counted themselves fortunate if they received their mail once a week. With the inconveniences of travel endured by these pioneers, the speaker compared the speed and efficiency of modern transportation. Upon the conclusion of Mr. Schulze's talk, Mr. Campton called upon Mr. Thomas Hughes, superintendent of Gooseberry Falls park, to rise, and he extended to the visitors a word of welcome. The final speaker on the program was Mr. Edwin S. Cay, who represents the National Park Service in Lake County. He reviewed the history of the Gooseberry Falls area from about 1900, when the white pine was taken out by a lumber company. The land about the mouth of the river and the falls was acquired after that by Senator William F. Vilas of Wisconsin and it was from his estate that the property was purchased for park purposes by the state of Minnesota in 1934. A CCC camp was established in the same year, trails to the falls and the river were opened up, buildings constructed, and picnic grounds arranged. The recreational possibilities of the beautiful North Shore area have been well exploited at the mouth of the Gooseberry River. After the meeting some of the tourists took time to walk through parts of the park and to view the falls before returning to Duluth.

The evening session convened at the Duluth Chamber of Commerce, where dinner was served to about a hundred people at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Gale introduced Judge Bert Fessler of Duluth, a prominent leader in North Shore historical work, who presided. It was appropriate, said Judge Fessler, that the principal address of the evening should be presented by Dr. Louise Phelps Kellogg, senior research associate for the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, for she is "acknowledged as the leading scholar of her genera-

tion on the history of the Northwest Territory," and particularly on the French period in this region. Miss Kellogg began her interpretation of "The Old Northwest and the New" by defining the Old Northwest as the area bounded by the Great Lakes, the Ohio, and the Mississippi. To the French it was known as the "upper country," and they called the great lake on which Duluth is located the Upper Lake. The French lost the Northwest to the British, who called it the "back country," prohibited settlement in it, and in 1774 made it a part of the Province of Quebec. The speaker then turned to the question, "Who won the Northwest for America?" She pointed out that George Rogers Clark is frequently given credit for this feat, but, she said, she is inclined to consider the winning of the Northwest a diplomatic victory on the part of Adams, Franklin, and, notably, John Jay. After the region was won it had to be organized, and for this purpose the Ordinance of 1787 was passed by Congress. "This was a new thing in the world," said Miss Kellogg, for it granted "equal powers to colonies or outlying regions," which after certain preliminaries were to be formed into new states. It was not, however, until after Anthony Wayne had conquered the Indians of the Northwest in 1794 and Jay had made a treaty with the British in 1795 whereby they surrendered the Northwest posts that the Old Northwest could be really organized. Miss Kellogg made it clear that the more remote portions of the region did not come under American control "until after a second war with England had ended in a second diplomatic victory for the Americans." It was only then that the new states of the Northwest took form. If the original boundaries of the five states as outlined in the Ordinance of 1787 had been observed, said the speaker, Toledo would be in Michigan; Chicago, in Wisconsin; and, without the sixth state, Duluth and St. Paul, in Wisconsin. She called attention to the fact that while the New Northwest has only one-twelfth of the area

of the United States, it has one-fifth of the population, "and that too the most composite group perhaps in America—the real melting pot, which is transforming European immigrants into American citizens." In conclusion she expressed the hope: "May we continue, in the words of the famous Ordinance whose proclamation we celebrate, to believe that 'Religion, morality and knowledge' are 'necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind.'"

The second speaker on the evening program was the distinguished Duluth novelist, Mrs. Margaret Culkin Banning. She rose to announce that she felt that she was representing at this meeting her father, Mr. William E. Culkin, founder in 1922 and president until 1937 of the St. Louis County Historical Society, who could not be present because of illness. Speaking informally on "A Novelist Glances at History," Mrs. Banning revealed with grace and charm how the writer of fiction can draw upon the work of the historian to produce enduring literary masterpieces. The romantic novelist of the past distorted many historical facts, but now the "historian is coming closer to the novelist and the novelist closer to the historian. The old fantastic liberties are not being taken with history because there are imaginations at work which do not have to take those liberties," she continued. "The realistic novel has done wonders in providing a base for the historical novel. For when a good realist turns to history, you have something!" As a recent example of a good historical novel, the speaker cited Kenneth Roberts' *Northwest Passage*. In defense of the novelist's right to look at history, and to draw upon it, she pointed out that "History for the novelist must be interpreted, not through race or natural movements alone, not through entire groups of people, but through the separate characters of men," and she made it clear that "it is because of those characters that there is history." She finds, she said, in many of the characters who built the frontier state

of Minnesota, potential material for novels, and she expressed the wish that "we would develop in Minnesota a novelist so competent, so thoroughly trained, in fact and in method, and yet so imaginatively keen that we would get the novel that would fittingly deal with this territory." Such a book has not yet been produced "because no one sufficiently robust has attempted it." The great Northwest novel will be written, Mrs. Banning believes, only when we have better novelists, better historians, and a more educated public.

The tourists had an opportunity to compare the new Northwest with the old on Saturday morning, July 30, when they went by bus and car to Fond du Lac, the site of an early trading post on the St. Louis River. Over the justly famed Skyline Drive of Duluth they traveled for more than an hour, viewing the wide blue expanse of Lake Superior, Duluth Harbor, the great industrial city on its rim, Minnesota Point, the ore docks, and the irregular reaches of land and water that mark the mouth of the St. Louis. From the heights far above the city the visiting historians obtained a bird's-eye view of the river that Du Lhut and Perrault entered at the Head of the Lakes, tracing its winding course to old Fond du Lac. There, beneath the spreading branches of trees in whose shade traders and voyageurs probably rested, they found a reproduction of a stockaded post and trading store of the British period. After inspecting this interesting reminder of the fur-trading era, about seventy-five people assembled near the river to listen to a paper appropriately dealing with the subject "When Fond du Lac was British." Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society, introduced the speaker, Mr. Ellworth T. Carlstedt, instructor in history in the junior college at Bloomfield, Iowa. He explained that the term "Fond du Lac" was used by traders to describe a vast region extending westward from Lake Superior to the Red

River, and that he was using the name in that sense. Several British traders entered this region by way of the St. Louis River in the late decades of the eighteenth century, and in 1784 Jean Baptiste Perrault visited it for the first time. After trading there for several seasons, he was engaged by the Northwest Company to build a fort which would serve as a depot for the entire Fond du Lac region. This post—Fort St. Louis on Connor's Point in what is now part of Superior, Wisconsin—was occupied from 1793 until after the War of 1812. After 1817 the American Fur Company established posts in the vicinity, and it built a fort at Fond du Lac, Minnesota, not far from the spot on which the meeting was being held. Mr. Carlstedt's survey of the fur-trade era in the Fond du Lac region will appear in a future issue of MINNESOTA HISTORY.

While the tourists were enjoying their visit to Fond du Lac, Senator Victor E. Lawson, chairman of the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission of Minnesota, Dr. Theodore C. Blegen, superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society and secretary-treasurer of the commission, and a delegation of state and city officials remained in Duluth to welcome to that city and to Minnesota the Northwest Territory pioneer caravan. At the Arrowhead Bridge, which connects Duluth and Superior, they met thirty-six young men who in the winter of 1937-38 reproduced the long trek made by the first settlers of the Northwest Territory in 1787-88. Traveling in oxcarts, a Conestoga wagon, boats that they themselves constructed, and on foot, they covered the distance from Ipswich, Massachusetts, to Marietta, Ohio, between December and April, following closely the schedule of the original Northwest pioneers. After reaching Marietta, they traveled through most of the states of the Old Northwest, and their arrival at Duluth marked their entrance into the sixth state carved from that territory. These modern pioneers were the guests of honor at a luncheon, at the Hotel Duluth, ar-

ranged jointly by the historical society and the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission. There about a hundred and thirty people, including members of the society's tour, welcomed the caravan and met its members.

For the program of talks that followed the luncheon, Senator Lawson presided. He called first upon Mayor C. R. Berghult of Duluth, who extended an official welcome to the members of the society and of the caravan. "The city of Duluth is doubly honored in having you here for its part in the celebration of the adoption, a century and a half ago, of that document so historically noteworthy in the annals of mankind's search for freedom, liberty, and security," he said. He particularly complimented the society for collecting the records of pioneer life and "American growth," and for making it "possible for this and succeeding generations to acquire a knowledge of the great work of those whose enthusiasm, spirit of adventure, and sacrifice have made our civilization what it is today." Senator Lawson next read the following letter of greeting from Governor Elmer A. Benson:

In the past two years, we in Minnesota have taken part in several anniversary celebrations of both national and international significance. All of them have touched us deeply, because they reminded us of the wealth of our heritage from the past and the sacredness of our obligations to the future. None of them has stirred more poignant memories than this 150th anniversary of the federal Ordinance of 1787, which opened up for settlement the vast Northwest Territory, of which eastern Minnesota was a part.

To the members of the Ox-cart Caravan, I extend across the state the handclasp of welcome to accompany official greetings. While they are here, I know they will discover why our people are noted for their simple and wholehearted hospitality, and why the attractions of life in Minnesota are so highly spoken of by our citizens when they are away from home.

On occasions like this, when we celebrate significant men and work of the past, we do not have our eyes only upon the past; we have them also upon the present and the future. There would be no worthwhile life in the present if we did not have great traditions from the past; and there can be no worthwhile life in the future, if we are not today building the traditions for a great future.

As has been well said, there is never a moment when the sunset ceases to die over past achievements and glories, and never a moment when the light is not breaking over the dawn of a new day toward which we must move if life is not to stand still.

In that spirit, the Northwest celebrates the opening of this territory for settlement 150 years ago. We live in gratitude for memory of the pioneers of the past, who wrought to build a society of free men, living without subordination to privileged classes such as the early settlers and later immigrants left behind them in Europe; and we use this celebration as an occasion to salute the future and resolve that we in our time shall also be pioneers, seeking to discover and bring to life a better world for the generations of young people who will follow us.

Brief talks were then given by Dr. William Bagley, director of the Duluth Chamber of Commerce; Colonel Frank Tenney, local chairman of the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission; Dr. Blegen, who spoke on behalf of the Minnesota Historical Society; Mr. O. K. Reames of Zanesville, Ohio, manager of the caravan and author of the pageant that it was producing; several members of the caravan, including Robert Neary of Manchester, Massachusetts, Ralph Swenson of Minneapolis, Arnold Raikes of Phillippi, West Virginia, Eugene Cowan of Rock Hill, South Carolina, Zeke Pugh of Wellesville, Ohio, John Ward of Evanston, Illinois, and Carl Appelgate of Terre Haute, Indiana; Mr. James Kelly, director of the Northwest Territory Celebration Commission of Minnesota; Mr. Ed Shave, director of the Minnesota tourist bureau; Mr. Gale; Mr. Wieland; Judge C. R. Magney of Duluth; and State Auditor Stafford King. Members of the caravan revealed that they came from thirteen different states and twenty-two colleges; and they told how they traveled overland in the dead of winter from Ipswich to West Newton, Pennsylvania, where they constructed by primitive methods the boats in which they made a voyage of three hundred and fifty miles to Marietta.

Twenty thousand people are said to have lined the streets of Duluth at 4:30 P.M. to witness a parade in which mem-

bers of the pioneer caravan with their ox-drawn Conestoga wagon marched. Local military units and bands, floats representing organizations and business concerns, and school children also participated. Among those who watched its progress were the members of the historical tour. They gathered at the Hotel Spalding at 6:00 P.M. for an informal dinner, and at 8:00 P.M. they went to Ordean Field to witness the first presentation in Minnesota of the Northwest Territory pageant, "Freedom on the March." In eight colorful episodes, they saw members of the pioneer caravan re-enact scenes connected with the acquisition, the organization, and the settlement of the Northwest Territory. The pageant, which was presented under the auspices of the Federal Northwest Territory Commission, opened with a scene depicting the Albany Convention, at which the "first official step toward the union of the American colonies" was taken. This was followed by episodes showing the capture of Fort Sackville by George Rogers Clark; the framing of the "Pickering petition at Newburgh, where the Ordinance of 1787 was born"; the treaty of Fort McIntosh, by which the United States secured title to the Northwest Territory from the Indians; the organization of the Ohio Company; the passage of the ordinance; the departure of the first settlers from Massachusetts for the Ohio country; and the establishment by these settlers of the first civil government in the West. The Duluth presentation took place before an audience of about six thousand people, who filled the handsome new stadium facing Lake Superior. The first of seventeen performances given in Minnesota between July 30 and August 18, it formed a fitting climax for the sixteenth state historical convention. Members of the tour returned to the Twin Cities on the morning of July 31 feeling that Minnesota was appropriately commemorating the sesquicentennial of the Northwest Territory.

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