

## THE "FASHIONABLE TOUR" ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI<sup>1</sup>

FROM THE DAYS of trail blazer and trader to those of lumberman, farmer, and town builder, rivers have been of great importance to the Northwest; and one in particular captured the imagination of the pioneers—the Mississippi. It was the path of explorer and voyageur, the line of steamboat pageantry, the route of incoming settlers, the link of frontier with civilization. To all it was dignified by the term "the river"; and it is still "the river"—great in its sweep from Itasca to the sea, great in its span of the nation's history, great, too, in its role in American life. The very magnitude of "the river," geographically, historically, and in many-sided interest, perhaps explains why no historian has yet succeeded in writing the book of the Mississippi—a magnum opus that tells the story in its full range and interprets it in all its varied aspects. One must turn to Mark Twain, to the poets and singers, to the narratives of old steamboat men, and a hundred other sources to understand the meaning of the Mississippi and to know the glamor of the "War Eagle," the "Northern Belle," "Time and Tide," and other steamboats that churned its waters. The historians are doing their part, however, for they are piecing together this chapter and that in the story, hunting out and preserving the old records, and gradually building up materials for a broad history of the Mississippi.<sup>2</sup>

That history should include some account of the beginnings of the Northwest tourist trade, which has become, we

<sup>1</sup>This paper was read on June 17, 1939, at the Frontenac session of the seventeenth state historical tour and convention held under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society. *Ed.*

<sup>2</sup>Two recent publications of much interest and value are William J. Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi* (Iowa City, Iowa, 1937), and Mildred L. Hartsough, *From Canoe to Steel Barge on the Upper Mississippi* (Minneapolis, 1934).

are told, a major industry. It was the Mississippi and its steamboats that inaugurated the trade and spread the fame of Minnesota as a vacation land, promising to the enterprising tourist the adventure of a journey to a remote frontier coupled with the enjoyment of picturesque scenery and of good fishing and hunting.

Giacomo Beltrami, a passenger on the "Virginia" when that first steamboat on the upper river made its maiden journey in 1823, may perhaps be called the first modern tourist of Minnesota. The mercurial Italian was bent on a voyage of exploration, but he traveled up the Mississippi as a tourist who compared the wonders of its towering bluffs and wooded hillsides with the scenery of the Rhine. Beltrami recorded the astonishment of the Indians when they viewed the boat on which he was traveling. "I know not what impression the first sight of the Phœnician vessels might make on the inhabitants of the coast of Greece; or the Triremi of the Romans on the wild natives of Iberia, Gaul, or Britain," he wrote, "but I am sure it could not be stronger than that which I saw on the countenances of these savages at the arrival of our steam-boat." Some "thought it a monster vomiting fire, others the dwelling of the Manitous, but all approached it with reverence or fear."<sup>3</sup>

To another traveler goes the distinction of calling attention to the vacation possibilities of an Upper Mississippi journey and also of giving it a slogan-like name. George Catlin, the well-known artist of American Indian life, made a trip by steamboat up the Mississippi from St. Louis to Fort Snelling and the Falls of St. Anthony in 1835. "The majestic river from the Balize to the Fall of St. Anthony, I have just passed over; with a high-wrought mind filled with amazement and wonder," he wrote.

All that can be seen on the Mississippi below St. Louis, or for several hundred miles above it, gives no hint or clue to the magnificence of the

<sup>3</sup> Giacomo C. Beltrami, *A Pilgrimage in Europe and America*, 2: 199, 200 (London, 1828).

scenes which are continually opening to the eye of the traveller, and riveting him to the deck of the steamer, through sunshine, lightning or rain, from the mouth of the Ouisconsin to the Fall of St. Anthony.

After describing the scenery above Prairie du Chien he said, "I leave it for the world to come and gaze upon for themselves." He proposed a "Fashionable Tour" — a trip "by steamer to Rock Island, Galena, Dubuque, Prairie du Chien, Lake Pepin, St. Peters, Fall of St. Anthony," and he expressed the opinion that

This Tour would comprehend but a small part of the great "Far West;" but it will furnish to the traveller a fair sample, and being a part of it which is now made so easily accessible to the world, and the only part of it to which *ladies* can have access, I would recommend to all who have time and inclination to devote to the enjoyment of so splendid a Tour, to wait not, but make it while the subject is new, and capable of producing the greatest degree of pleasure.<sup>4</sup>

One wonders why the modern boosters of Minnesota and the Northwest have not built a monument to George Catlin.

The idea of a "Fashionable Tour" up the Mississippi quickly spread. Each year saw increasing numbers of sight-seers who took Catlin's advice. Most of them in the earlier years were men, but there were a few women who were willing to hazard the dangers of a journey to the outposts of America. One of these, a vivacious lady of eighty years, was none other than Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton, the widow of Alexander Hamilton. She had gone west to visit her son William in Wisconsin in the summer of 1837 and decided "to ascend the Mississippi to the St. Peter's." She journeyed to Fort Snelling on the new steamboat "Burlington," saw the Falls of St. Anthony and Minnehaha, and, as befitted a queen of fashion, was accorded a royal reception by the officers of the fort. "A carpet had been spread," wrote a friend of Mrs. Hamilton, "an armchair [was] ready to receive her, the troops were under arms, we passed

<sup>4</sup>George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, 2: 590-592 (Philadelphia, 1857).

between two double rows of soldiers, and a very fine band was playing."<sup>5</sup>

The "Fashionable Tour" was stamped with the approval of this distinguished lady, who was delighted with the Minnesota country and her experiences. The next year, in 1838, Captain Frederick Marryat, the author of *Mr. Midshipman Easy*, traveled up the river, saw the sights, witnessed a game of la crosse, which curiously he said was "somewhat similar to the game of golf in Scotland," and studied "the Indians in their primitive state."<sup>6</sup> His *Diary in America*, published in England in 1839, recorded the entire experience—and his was but one of many narratives putting before the world the story of travel on the upper Mississippi. Something more was needed, however, to establish the popularity of the "Fashionable Tour." The impetus came from the motion pictures of our grandfathers, the panoramas, great unwinding rolls of painted canvas which artists exhibited in America and Europe to the accompaniment of lectures. As early as 1839 John Rowson Smith and John Risley presented a panorama of the upper valley. About a decade later John Banvard showed to the world a vast panorama of the Mississippi. His canvas, with its many scenes, was three miles long, but unhappily it portrayed only the river below St. Louis. By 1849, however, three more Mississippi panoramas were giving the public a demonstration of the potential delights of the "Fashionable Tour." Henry Lewis had spent the summer of 1848 making a leisurely tour of the river between St. Louis and Fort Snelling and the next year began to exhibit his famous panorama, a canvas twelve hundred yards long and twelve feet high. Leon Pomarede and S. B. Stockwell, both associates of Lewis, soon had competing panoramas on display, and by the end of the 1850's

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Schafer, "High Society in Pioneer Wisconsin," in *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 20: 449 (June, 1937).

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Marryat, *A Diary in America, with Remarks on Its Institutions*, 2: 78-124 (London, 1839). This section of Captain Marryat's narrative is reprinted *ante*, 6: 168-184.

GESCHIED. EN AARDRIJKUNDEGE BESCHRIJVING

VAN BET

REUSAGROEGE PANORAMA

VAN DEN

MISSISSIPPI,

NAAR SCHEITSEN

door den Heer LEWIS op de plaats zelve gezamenl.

VAN

DEN WATERVAL VAN ST. ANTHONY

TOT AAN

DE STAD ST. LOUIS.

BEVATTENDE EENE OPGAAF VAN DE NAMEN DER STEDEN,  
PLAATSEN EN DORPEN AAN DE RIVIER GELEGEN, HUNNEN  
AFSTAND VAN ELKAANDER, BENEVENS GESCHIEDKUN-  
DIGE AANMERKINGEN, BETREFFENDE DIE GORDEN  
DE ZEDEN EN GEBRUIKEN DER WILDE INDIANEN

TE 'S GRAVENHAGE

BIJ GEDE. J. & H. VAN LANGENHUYSEN  
1831.

LEWIS' PANORAMA.

A DESCRIPTION OF LEWIS'

MAMMOTH PANORAMA

OF THE

MISSISSIPPI RIVER,

FROM THE

FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY

TO THE

CITY OF ST. LOUIS:

CONTAINING AN ACCOUNT OF THE RIVER, AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE  
COUNTRY: THE NAMES AND PARTICULARS OF THE  
SEVERAL VILLAGES OF THE RIVER, WITH ANECDOTES  
RESPECTING THE SAME. COMPIL'D FROM TRAVELERS  
AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE.

BY CHARLES GAYLOR,  
AUTHOR OF PANORAMA.

CINCINNATI

PRINTED AT THE DEWITCH OFFICE, 36 ST. ST. BASS AND STAGHORN,  
1849.

REDUCED FACSIMILES OF THE TITLE PAGES OF DUTCH AND AMERICAN  
TEXTS OF LEWIS' PANORAMA

[From copies of originals in the possession, respectively, of the New York  
Public Library and the Library of Congress.]

there were eight or ten panoramas of the upper Mississippi touring the show halls of the nation.<sup>7</sup>

The panoramists tried to picture in faithful detail not only the river but also the life alongside it—the native Indians and their villages and the American towns and cities. In their attempts at realistic effects they used ingenious devices. Pomarede, for example, somehow managed to make real smoke and steam roll from the steamboats in his pictures.<sup>8</sup> And yet the artists felt the inadequacy of their efforts. Lewis wrote in his diary one day, “As I looked I felt how hopeless art was to convey the *soul* of such a scene as this and as the poet wishes for the pencil of the artist so did I for the power of descript[i]on to tell of the thousand thoughts fast crowding each other from my mind.”<sup>9</sup>

Crowds of people went to see these travel movies of the 1840's and 1850's and thus toured the great river vicariously. The throngs that wished to view Banvard's panorama were so great when it was displayed in Boston and New York that railroads ran special excursions to accommodate them. In these two cities alone more than four hundred thousand people saw the exhibition. “The river comes to me instead of my going to the river,” wrote Longfellow. Whittier, after seeing a panorama, sang of the “new Canaan of our Israel,” and Thoreau, who not only viewed a panorama but also made the tour itself, envisaged a coming heroic age in which simple and obscure men, the real heroes of history, would build the foundations of new castles in the West and throw bridges across a “Rhine stream of a different kind.” Risley's canvas, unwound before audiences in Oslo in 1852, touched the imagination of the Norwegian poet Vinje, who came away from the exhibi-

<sup>7</sup> Bertha L. Heilbron, ed., *Making a Motion Picture in 1848: Henry Lewis' Journal of a Canoe Voyage from the Falls of St. Anthony to St. Louis*, 3–11 (St. Paul, 1936).

<sup>8</sup> Heilbron, ed., *Making a Motion Picture in 1848*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> Heilbron, ed., *Making a Motion Picture in 1848*, 35. The scene that provoked this comment was that from Trempealeau Mountain, looking north.

tion convinced that America was destined to conquer the world. Banvard had a run of twenty months in London, with admissions exceeding six hundred thousand.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, people were coming singly, in honeymoon couples, in small groups, and sometimes in parties of hundreds to make the tour portrayed in the panoramas. Sometimes they chartered boats to carry them up the river and back, and often the steamboat companies, with an eye to increasing business, organized excursions of their own, advertising their plans far in advance through newspaper announcements and offering low rates. Such excursions were conducted from places as far away as New Orleans and Pittsburgh. Ordinarily the fare from St. Louis to St. Paul was \$12.00. From Galena it was \$6.00, though rate was brought it at times as low as \$1.00. The tours were made expeditiously. In 1850, for example, the "Dr. Franklin" left Galena on Thursday, spent one day in St. Paul, and was back to Galena on Tuesday. The round trip from St. Louis normally took eight or nine days, but might be made in six or seven on speedy boats. The idea of excursion boats reserved for patrons of the "Fashionable Tour" captured the fancy of travelers, and by the late 1830's such outings were not uncommon on the upper Mississippi.<sup>11</sup> The tourists could view the scenery, see Indians at first hand, and enjoy their vacations without the hubbub and the annoyances encountered on vessels heavily loaded with freight for the frontier forts or fur-trading stations.

As the fame of the upper Mississippi Valley spread, travelers from the far South and the East increased in number. By the middle 1840's tourists from New York, Washington,

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy Dondore, "Banvard's Panorama and the Flowering of New England," in *New England Quarterly*, 11: 821-826 (December, 1938); Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860*, 342, 343n. (Northfield, 1931); Heilbron, ed., *Making a Motion Picture in 1848*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> Hartsough, *From Canoe to Steel Barge*, 163, 164; *Minnesota Chronicle and Register* (St. Paul), August 12, 1850; Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, 256, 260, 261.

Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati, as well as from New Orleans, St. Louis, and Galena were making the trip. Each traveler helped to spread the story of what was to be seen from the decks of a steamboat pushing upstream to old Fort Snelling.

The time came when one could go all the way from the East to the Mississippi by rail. The "Fashionable Tour" was thus brought more easily within the range of possibility for thousands of people. When the Rock Island Railroad was completed from Chicago to the Mississippi River in 1854, a special celebration was arranged which included a voyage in chartered steamboats up the river from Rock Island to St. Paul.<sup>12</sup> Twelve hundred persons in a flotilla of seven steamboats made the tour commemorating this union of steel and water. The party included ex-President Millard Fillmore, the historian George Bancroft, Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale, and a regiment of journalists. Charles A. Dana of the *New York Tribune*, Samuel Bowles of the *Springfield Republican*, Thurlow Weed of the *Albany Evening Journal*, and Epes Sargent of the *Boston Transcript* were among the writers whose detailed reports advertised Minnesota not only to prospective settlers but also to those interested in an unusual kind of pleasure jaunt.<sup>13</sup> The journey upstream was enlivened by music, dancing, popular lectures, mock trials, and promenades from boat to boat. Four of the steamboats, for example, were lashed together as they plowed their way up through Lake Pepin. At the river towns there were gala receptions, with addresses of welcome by local citizens and responses by the visiting dignitaries. Everyone talked about the marvels of the Mississippi scenery and the coming greatness of the West, and everyone accepted the view of Catherine Sedgwick that the

<sup>12</sup> The best account of this event is William J. Petersen, "The Rock Island Railroad Excursion of 1854," *ante*, 15:405-420.

<sup>13</sup> The Minnesota Historical Society has had typewritten copies made of the letters about the excursion printed in the *Boston Evening Transcript* and various other eastern newspapers.



# RAIL-ROAD EXCURSION.

Office Chicago & Rock Island Railroad Co. }  
CORN EXCHANGE BANK BUILDING,  
13 William Street, New-York. }

DEAR SIR:

The object of this excursion is to afford the Stockholders and Bondholders an opportunity of visiting and inspecting their Road.

The enclosed ticket of invitation will enable our friends to assemble at Chicago at their leisure, and by any of the several routes.

The party will leave Chicago on Monday morning the 5th day of June, and reach Rock Island in time to dine in the afternoon, and embark same night. Leaving Rock Island in the morning for the Falls of St. Anthony.

Returning to Rock Island the party will be conveyed back to Chicago, on Saturday, and with the same ticket, may take their choice of routes back to New-York.

As no TRANSFER of tickets will be recognised by the several roads, it is particularly requested, that such tickets as are not intended to be used by the party invited, may be returned in an envelope by mail, directed to this office, before the 1st day of June, in order that the Committee may know how many to provide for.

The Excursion on the River may be made in four or five days, and the whole time from New-York and back, need not, necessarily, exceed ten or twelve days.

## COMMITTEE.

J. B. JERVIS,  
A. C. FLAGG,  
WM. WALCOTT,

THOS. C. DURANT,  
JOS. E. SHEFFIELD,  
HENRY FARNHAM,

ISAAC COOK,  
L. ANDREWS,  
EBEN. COOK,

NEW-YORK, May 1st, 1854.

DIRECTIONS FOR THE RAILROAD EXCURSION OF 1854  
[From a copy in the possession of Mr. L. O. Leonard of Iowa City, Iowa.]

"fashionable tour will be in the track" of this excursion.<sup>14</sup> St. Paul was out in force to welcome the visitors, to listen to the praises of Fillmore and Bancroft, and to provide vehicles for a trip to the Falls of St. Anthony and Minnehaha. Dana, writing to the *New York Tribune*, described the infant town of St. Paul. There were, he wrote,

Brick dwellings and stone warehouses, a brick capitol with stout, white pillars, a county court-house, a jail, several churches, a market, schoolhouses, a billiard-room, a ten-pin alley, dry goods' stores, groceries, confectioners and ice-creamers, a numerous array of those establishments to which the Maine law is especially hostile, and a glorious, boundless country behind.<sup>15</sup>

There were a few discordant notes in the general hymn of praise, however. One journalist wrote:

As the Upper Mississippi must now become a route for fashionable Summer travel, it is only proper to say that those who resort here must not yet expect to find all the conveniences and comforts which abound on our North River steamers. Everything is very plain; the state-rooms are imperfectly furnished, but the berths are roomy; the table is abundant, but butter-knives and sugar-tongs are not among its luxuries.<sup>16</sup>

In due time these and many other luxuries appeared. Companies, competing sharply for traffic, vied with one another in bettering accommodations, providing well-furnished state-rooms, improving steamboat architecture, serving good food, rigging up bars where, as Mark Twain says, "everybody drank, and everybody treated everybody else," employing bands and orchestras, and in other ways adding to the attractions of the "Fashionable Tour." And when large and luxurious river boats docked at the St. Paul levee, their captains liked to invite local citizens on board to see the wonders of the ships and to join in "grand balls," as was done, for example, when in 1857 the "Henry Clay"

<sup>14</sup> Catherine M. Sedgwick, "The Great Excursion to the Falls of St. Anthony," in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*, 4: 323 (September, 1854).

<sup>15</sup> *New York Tribune*, June 20, 1854, quoted in Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, 279.

<sup>16</sup> *New York Tribune*, June 20, 1854, quoted in Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, 284.

brought up an excursion party from St. Louis. The captains and pilots, the envied monarchs of the river, took unbounded pride in their boats. One pilot in after years recalled the "Grey Eagle" as "long, lean, and as graceful as a grey-hound"—the "sweetest thing in the way of a steamboat that a man ever looked at." Steamboats, he believed, had souls; and his idea of heaven was the "Grey Eagle" plying "celestial waters, carrying angels on their daily visits, with their harps," Daniel Harris, captain, and himself the pilot.<sup>17</sup>

The general picture of beautiful boats, luxury, and gala entertainment must not close one's eyes to another side of river traffic—the vast throngs, on most of the boats, of immigrants who crowded the lower decks while the tourists occupied cabins and balconies on top of the decks. Coming in ever-increasing swarms, the immigrants accounted for great profits to the steamboat companies, and, with the expansion of freighting, they help to explain why, in the 1850's, the number of steamboat arrivals at St. Paul sometimes ran to more than a thousand in a single season. Bound for the Promised Land, the immigrants faced, as Dr. William J. Petersen says, the hazards of "runners, blacklegs, and gamblers, explosions, tornadoes, and devastating fires, snags and sandbars, poor food and wretched accommodations, sickness, suffering, and death." When cholera and other diseases broke out on board ship, they were likely to spread with appalling rapidity. On one occasion a traveler complained because the towel in the wash-room was filthy. "Wal now," said the purser, "I reckon there's fifty passengers on board this boat, and they've all used that towel, and you're the first on 'em that's complained of it."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, 370 (Boston, 1883); Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, 265; George B. Merrick, "Steamboats and Steamboatmen of the Upper Mississippi," in *Saturday Evening Post* (Burlington, Iowa), November 6, 1915.

<sup>18</sup> Petersen, *Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi*, 353, 357.

What did the people who made the "Fashionable Tour" in early days see? For most, the magnificence of the scenery made up for torment by mosquitoes and the inconvenience of crowded quarters. Indeed, many were so delighted that they accepted philosophically the hazards of explosions and collisions. The scenery held them spellbound upon the decks of the steamboats through the days, and often far into the nights. Said one traveler:

I had taken my impressions of the Mississippi scenery from the descriptions of the river below St. Louis, where the banks are generally depressed and monotonous. But nothing can surpass the grandeur of the Upper Mississippi. Is it then strange that I was fascinated while floating through these Western paradises, over which the moon shed her soft, shadowy light, and where the notes of the whippo[or]will rose and died far away, as I had heard them in my boyhood's home?<sup>19</sup>

Another tourist wrote:

We came . . . on the Steamer Yankee, and a delightful trip we had. The scenery of the Upper Mississippi, for wildness, beauty and grandeur, is unequaled and perfectly indescribable.

We had grand moonlight scenes on this glorious river, that were perfectly enchanting. It seemed as though I could gaze all night; that my eyes would never tire or be satisfied, in beholding the beauty and grandeur of its ever-varying banks and lofty hills.<sup>20</sup>

And Fredrika Bremer, the kindly and observant visitor to America from Sweden, wrote:

I have . . . seen the scenery on the upper Mississippi, its high bluffs crowned with autumn-golden oaks, and rocks like ruined walls and towers, ruins from the times when the Megatherium and mastodons walked the earth, — and how I did enjoy it!<sup>21</sup>

Sometimes a traveler, vexed by the slow progress of his boat, annoyed by its unscheduled stops on sand bars, or wearied alike by travel and by travelers, failed to join the usual chorus. Ida Pfeiffer, an Austrian lady of wealth, had

<sup>19</sup> Luther W. Peck, "The Upper Mississippi," in *National Magazine*, 9: 483 (December, 1856).

<sup>20</sup> H. W. Hamilton, *Rural Sketches of Minnesota, the El Dorado of the Northwest*, 8 (Milan, Ohio, 1850).

<sup>21</sup> Adolf B. Benson, ed., "Fredrika Bremer's Unpublished Letters to the Downings," in *Scandinavian Studies*, 11: 192 (May, 1931).



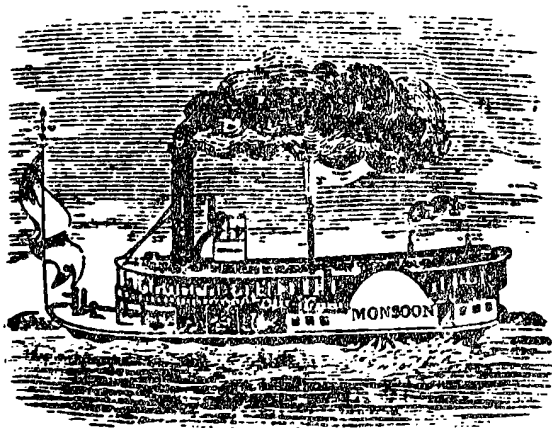
**VOYAGE OF PLEASURE  
TO THE FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY.**—The well known passenger steam boat **BRAZIL**, O. Smith, master, will leave for the Falls of St. Anthony, head of navigation of the Mississippi river on Friday the 5th of June. As it is the intention of Captain Smith to do all in his power to make the trip agreeable to his passengers, the **Brazil** will stop at the principal points of interest on the way long enough to give an opportunity to passengers to examine the curiosities of the country and any objects of interest that may present themselves, as the boat has superior accommodations for passengers and has chosen the most pleasant season of the year to make the trip to this delightful country, it is presumed that all those who wish to make a novel, pleasant and cheap voyage of pleasure will avail themselves of this opportunity.

For further particulars, apply to

may 26

**C. BASHAM,**  
No. 11 Com. Row.

**PLEASURE EXCURSION.  
FOR ST. PETERS & FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY**



The splendid, safe and commodious passenger steamboat **MONSOON**, C. G. Pearce, master, will leave Louisville the 6th June, for a trip of pleasure. Those who wish to enjoy this delightful excursion, may be assured that no efforts of the captain will be wanting to make them happy.

may 26

**C. BASHAM, Jr., Agent,**  
No. 11. Com. Row.

**ADVERTISEMENTS OF THE "FASHIONABLE TOUR"**

[From the *Louisville Journal*, June 4, 1840. A file of this newspaper is owned by the Indiana State Library, Indianapolis.]

sober second thoughts. "This is a grand thing to think of at first," she wrote, "but after a few days one gets tired of the perpetual monotony of the scenery." Even she relented, however, when her boat entered Lake Pepin, for the sight of it, she said, "almost made me amends for my long and tedious voyage up the river." George T. Borrett, an English visitor, made the journey during a period of extremely low water. He chronicles his impressions with solemn detail:

A broad expanse of extremely shallow water; a number of oddly-shaped marshy-looking islands, a tortuous channel in and out amongst them, very difficult of navigation, and intersected by frequent sand-banks, on the top of which the keel of our boat grated at every other bend in the stream, with a dull sound that brought home to the passengers the uncomfortable apprehension of the possibility of sticking fast on one of these banks and seeing much more of the Mississippi than we had bargained for; a low vegetation on most of these islands, very much like that which may be seen on any of the alluvial deposits on the Thames; a range of steep bluffs on either bank rising abruptly from the water's edge, sparsely wooded and bare alternately, but bold in outline and precipitous. Such was my first impression of the Mississippi scenery, and such it is now, for there was little or no variety.

The "Father of Waters" appeared to him "very much in the light of an imposter." "I think it extremely doubtful," he said, "whether, in his then state of aqueous insolvency, proud little Father Thames himself would have owned him even for a poor relation." Borrett's boat was crowded, the accommodations were inadequate, and he found the company intolerable. Ida Pfeiffer shared his scornful attitude toward the fellow passengers and was especially indignant at the impudence of two young ladies who patted her on the shoulder and genially called her "grandma." She also thought that the manners displayed at the dinner table were somewhat less than perfect, particularly the strange custom of certain people of pelting "each other with the gnawed cobs of Indian corn." In the evening, she says, the ladies took possession of the ten available rocking chairs, "placed them in a circle, threw themselves back in them, many even

held their hands over their heads, stuck their feet far out, and then away they went full swing.”<sup>22</sup>

Let us draw the distressed Ida away from this shocking spectacle and introduce her to a fellow sufferer, Anthony Trollope, the English novelist, who made the “Fashionable Tour” in Civil War days. The author of *Barchester Towers* also had many melancholy reflections to record. “Nine-tenths of the travellers,” he exclaimed, “carry children with them. . . . I must protest that American babies are an unhappy race.” The parents seemed to Trollope as untalkative as their babies were discontented and dyspeptic. “I found no aptitude, no wish for conversation,” he said; “nay, even a disinclination to converse.” And poor Trollope’s cabin was too hot. This circumstance led him to generalize about the effects upon Americans of their taste for living in the “atmosphere of a hot oven.” To that taste he attributed their thin faces, pale skins, unenergetic temperament, and early old age.<sup>23</sup>

When Catlin made his tour in 1835, there was only a lonely frontier outpost at the junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers and a rough trading post close by to signalize white civilization at the northern terminus of the “Fashionable Tour.” The characteristic note of the region was Indian life. Catlin, like Marryat a few years later, was entertained by a Sioux game of la crosse and by a variety of Indian dances. From Fort Snelling south into Iowa, the wilderness was broken only by an occasional Indian village or trader’s post. Charles Lanman in 1846 felt that at St. Peter’s, at the mouth of the Minnesota River, he was “on the extreme verge of the civilized world, and that all beyond, to the ordinary traveller,” was “mysterious

<sup>22</sup> Ida Pfeiffer, *A Lady’s Second Journey Round the World*, 431, 432, 433 (New York, 1856); George T. Borrett, *Letters from Canada and the United States*, 135–144 (London, 1865). Sections of Borrett’s book that relate to his journey up the Mississippi and his visit to Minnesota have been reprinted *ante*, 9:270–284, 379–388.

<sup>23</sup>Anthony Trollope, *North America*, 1:206–209 (London, 1862).

# NEW ROUTE

ST. PAUL, ST. ANTHONY.  
CHICAGO, FULTON CITY & MINNESOTA  
**STEAM  
PACKET COMPANY!**



**PEOPLE'S LINE!**  
THE ONLY LINE RUNNING TO  
**FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY**  
— AND —  
**MINNEAPOLIS!**

A TRI-WEEKLY LINE OF  
**NEW AND ELEGANT LIGHT DRAFT BOATS**

With Accommodations unsurpassed by any Boats on the Upper Mississippi.

THE BOATS OF THIS COMPANY WILL LEAVE FULTON CITY EVERY  
**MONDAY, WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY**

Evenings, on arrival of Trains from Chicago

STOPPING AT ALL INTERMEDIATE PLACES ON THE RIVER.

**SAVE YOUR PATIENCE, TIME AND MONEY!**

Pleasure-seekers and Emigrants to MINNESOTA, NORTHERN IOWA AND WISCONSIN, will find this the most desirable, and the

**ONLY SURE ROUTE IN LOW WATER!**

The Boats being modern built and much improved over the old class of other lines

FREIGHT IS TAKEN BY THIS ROUTE AT  
**OVER TWO DOLLARS PER TON TO THE RIVER CHEAPER**

Than by any other route, and in less time.

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REDUCED FACSIMILE OF A HANDBILL ADVERTISING  
STEAMBOAT PASSAGE TO MINNESOTA  
[From an original in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.]



wilderness." In 1852 Mrs. Elizabeth Ellet thought it "curious to see the primitive undergrowth of the woods, and even trees, left" in portions of St. Paul "not yet improved by buildings." In walking from her hotel to the home of Governor Ramsey, she "passed through quite a little forest . . . and saw a bear's cub at play—an incident in keeping with the scene." She was attracted by the "curious blending of savage and civilized life. . . . The lodges of the Dakotas had vanished from the opposite shore . . . but their canoes yet glided over the waters of the Mississippi, and we met them whenever we stepped outside the door."<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Ellet found "excellent quarters" in the Rice Hotel in St. Paul. St. Anthony, she reported, "has but recently emerged from a wilderness into the dignity of a village."

In the summer months the town is much resorted to by visitors, especially from the southwestern States. These have come in such numbers that no accommodations could be found for them, and they were obliged to return with but a glance at the curiosities they had come to view. Now the state of things is more favorable to the lovers of fine scenery; an excellent hotel—the St. Charles—having recently passed into the proprietorship of Mr. J. C. Clark, and under his excellent management, already obtained a reputation as one of the best in the northwestern country.<sup>25</sup>

Mrs. Ellet boarded one of Willoughby and Powers' stagecoaches for what was called the "grand tour." It consisted of a drive from St. Paul to St. Anthony, then out to Lakes Harriet and Calhoun, "thence to the Minnehaha Falls and Fort Snelling, and by the Spring Cave to St. Paul, arriving in time for the visitors, if in haste, to return with the boat down the river." Shortly before Mrs. Ellet's arrival, the beauties of the Lake Minnetonka region began to be appre-

<sup>24</sup> Charles Lanman, *A Summer in the Wilderness, Embracing a Canoe Voyage up the Mississippi and around Lake Superior*, 56 (New York, 1847); Mrs. Elizabeth Ellet, *Summer Rambles in the West*, 77, 78, 81 (New York, 1853).

<sup>25</sup> Ellet, *Summer Rambles*, 92.

ciated, and during her stay in St. Paul she took advantage of an opportunity to visit what in due time was to become one of the most popular summer resorts in the Northwest.<sup>26</sup> Frontenac, White Bear, the St. Croix country, and many other places became widely known as ideal for tourists and vacation seekers.

When Charles Francis Adams, Jr., went up the Mississippi in 1860, he did so not for the sake of the "Fashionable Tour" but as a minor figure in a political excursion. This excursion was headed by William H. Seward and the elder Charles Francis Adams, whose purpose was to win the Northwest for Lincoln and the Republican party. To the observant and sensitive Charles Francis, Jr., however, it was a sightseeing tour of the wild and woolly West, and in his diary he gives us vivid pictures of the changing scenes, describes steamboat races, and reveals an eye for the picturesque. After the speeches and cheers at Prairie du Chien, he found himself on the deck of a Mississippi steamboat proceeding upstream at night. Of this experience, he wrote:

To me it all seemed strange and unreal, almost weird,—the broad river bottom, deep in shadow, with the high bluffs rising dim in the starlight. Presently I saw them wood-up while in motion, and the bright lights and deep shadows were wonderfully picturesque. A large flat-boat, piled up with wood, was lashed alongside, and, as the steamer pushed steadily up stream, the logs were thrown on board. As the hands, dressed in their red flannel shirts, hurried backward and forward, shipping the wood, the lurid flickerings from the steamer's "beacon lights" cast a strong glare over their forms and faces, lighting up steamer, flat-boat and river, and bringing every feature and garment out in strong relief.<sup>27</sup>

The early pioneers were not so absorbed with the task of building cities, towns, and farms that they closed their eyes to the recreational attractions of Minnesota. They were,

<sup>26</sup> Ellet, *Summer Rambles*, 89, 126.

<sup>27</sup> Theodore C. Blegen, ed., "Campaigning with Seward in 1860," *ante*, 8:167. The journal of the younger Adams is there published from a typewritten copy in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

in fact, belligerent boosters. Every newspaper was a tourist bureau; but James M. Goodhue, the editor of the *Minnesota Pioneer*, was perhaps the leading promoter of them all. He intoxicated himself with his own superlatives. In 1852 he invited the world, and more especially the people of the South, to make the "Fashionable Tour," to breathe the marvelous air of Minnesota and be healed of earthly ailments. In true Goodhuean style, he asked:

Who that is idle would be caged up between walls of burning brick and mortar, in dog-days, down the river, if at less daily expense, he could be hurried along through the valley of the Mississippi, its shores studded with towns, and farms, flying by islands, prairies, woodlands, bluffs—an ever varied scene of beauty, away up into the land of the wild Dakota, and of cascades and pine forests, and cooling breezes?—Why it is an exhilarating luxury, compared with which, all the fashion and tinsel and parade of your Newports and Saratogas, are utterly insipid.

He pictured the miserable life of a southern planter and of his "debilitated wife and pale children, almost gasping for breath." "What is such a life to him and those he loves, but death prolonged?" he asked.

A month in Minnesota, in dog-days, is worth a whole year anywhere else; and, we confidently look to see the time, when all families of leisure down South, from the Gulf of Mexico along up, will make their regular summer hegira to our Territory; and when hundreds of the opulent from those regions, will build delightful cottages on the borders of our ten thousand lakes and ornament their grounds with all that is tasteful in shrubbery and horticulture, for a summer retreat.<sup>28</sup>

In this, as in many other fields, Goodhue the booster was Goodhue the prophet. Even before the Civil War large numbers of people from the South flocked to Minnesota as a summer resort; and the habit was resumed not long after Appomattox. Folk from east and west joined in exploiting the vacation and tourist attractions of Minnesota. The day of the "Fashionable Tour" on the upper Mississippi passed

<sup>28</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer*, July 22, 1852.

when steamboating declined in the face of railroad competition. Local excursions continued to be popular, but the gala period of the steamboats and the great excursions was over. The fame of Minnesota as a summer resort had been established, however, and the railroads made the lakes and rivers of the north country even more accessible than they had been when sleek and picturesque vessels graced the river in its golden age.

THEODORE C. BLEGEN

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA



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