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The World and Minnesota in 1849¹

Clara Cross Lyman

WITH THE ADVENT of 1949 and the Minnesota Territorial Centennial celebration, my thoughts turned back to the year 1849 when Minnesota Territory was created. Many questions arose in my mind as I thought about that eventful year, both as to the infant territory and as to the world into which it was born. What was life like in that initial year in the pioneer territory? What kind of a background had its people left behind them in the East? What were the problems of our national life in 1849? What was behind the movement from the Old World to the New? What were people reading, and what were they thinking and talking about? If I could find the answers to some of these questions I could get some ideas of what it meant to be alive a hundred years ago when our territory was established.

By 1849 the great transformation known as the Industrial Revolution was well on its way. The machine age had arrived, made possible by the harnessing of steam and by a long series of inventions. The telegraph was in use and railroads were being built, but by 1849 easier transportation and communication were only beginning to make the world smaller and more interdependent.

At mid-century change was in the air, not only from the social and economic standpoint, but politically as well. In 1848 a series of revolutions had exploded over Europe, sparked by an uprising

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in France, where the Second Republic was proclaimed and Louis Napoleon, nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, was chosen president. This was followed by uprisings all over the continent—in Italy, where Mazzini was active; in Germany, where the Frankfurt Assembly met but came to naught; and in Austria, where Metternich fled and the emperor abdicated in favor of his nephew, Franz Joseph. Each revolt seemed to succeed at first but later fizzled out, for the revolutionists themselves were not sure enough of what they wanted and in most cases by 1849 those formerly in control had regained authority. Even in democratic England, where Victoria was giving her name to an age, revolt had threatened, but the Chartist agitation, aimed at giving the poor equal political rights with the rich, came to nothing. Many of the reforms demanded were brought about later in the century, however, both in England and on the continent. In Ireland, too, there was dissatisfaction among the people, aggravated by the failure of the potato crop in 1845 and 1846, many dying of starvation in the famine that followed. As a result, thousands were starting for America in a flood of emigration.

Many of Europe's cultural leaders were involved in the revolutions of 1848. The novelist George Sand, who had broken off her liason with Chopin the previous year, published a newspaper and took an active part in the uprising in Paris. Victor Hugo was a member of the convention that elected Louis Napoleon, but turned against the president three years later when he was found plotting to become emperor. As a result of his activities, Hugo was exiled and forced to live outside his beloved France for twenty long years. Richard Wagner had gotten himself mixed up in the political agitations in Dresden. After haranguing a crowd, he was forced to flee, but was able to escape to Weimar, where Franz Liszt was preparing *Tannhäuser* for performance. With his help, Wagner finally got to Zurich, where he lived for some time in retirement.

By 1849 things were fairly well back to normal in Europe, and there was much activity in the worlds of music and literature. The Schumanns were living in Dresden, where Robert was composing and his gifted wife, Clara, was appearing in occasional piano con-

certs when not too busy with her household cares. She sometimes found it hard to popularize her husband's compositions—the contemporary music of 1849.

The "Glamour Girl" of the European scene was from Sweden, just as our Ingrid Bergman is today. Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," had just reached the height of her career and was singing to wildly enthusiastic audiences on the continent and in England. In London, Thackeray went to hear her, but, unlike those who waited hours in mobs for her concerts, he was not much impressed. He was writing for *Punch*, the humorous magazine, which was only eight years old at the time. The year 1848 had seen the completion of *Vanity Fair*, which was published in twenty-four installments. Dickens' *Dombey and Son* had appeared the same year and in 1849 the novelist was engaged in writing *David Copperfield*. The appearance of its first number Dickens celebrated by giving a dinner at which Thackeray, the Carlyles, and Mrs. Gaskell were among the guests.² The Brownings, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett, who had run off to Italy from Wimpole Street three years earlier, spent the summer of 1849 in Siena, with short visits to France and England. Before the end of the year their only child was born at their home, Casa Guidi, in Florence. While life was coming into the world, it was also being extinguished, for Frederic Chopin died in Paris in August.

Let us cross the Western Ocean, as the Atlantic was sometimes called, and take a look at America. Our crossing would probably have been made in a packet, the type of ship on which so many immigrants were traveling in that year. The packets were square-rigged, wooden sailing ships built for the passenger and freight service across the stormy North Atlantic. They were sturdier than the slim, long-bowed clipper ships that were just starting to make their appearance and that were destined to play such an important part in the gold rush. Had we crossed in 1849, we could have gone on one of the famous Black Ball Line packets, such as the "Independence" or the "Dreadnaught."

² Bennett Cerf, "Trade Winds," in *Saturday Review of Literature*, March 12, 1949, p. 4.

The "Swedish Nightingale" sailed on a packet when she went to America, but her crossing in fine quarters was not much like that of the Irish immigrants crowded together in the hold in dense masses, often in unseaworthy, filthy vessels. The packets averaged three weeks eastbound and six weeks westbound for the Atlantic passage, depending on the winds. By 1849 the early Cunard liners, wooden side-wheelers, were crossing the ocean under steam, plowing slowly but steadily along. They were due shortly to put the stately wooden sailing ships out of business. In October, 1849, Herman Melville, the American author, went abroad to arrange for the publication of two of his books. In his *Journal* he describes the trip over on the packet "Southampton." His longing to return to his young wife and baby son in America, he expressed when he wrote from London: "Would that I could go home in a Steamer—but it would take an extra \$100 out of my pocket. Well, it's only 30 days—one month—and I can weather it somehow." Weather it he did, for he returned on the packet "Independence."³

Norwegian and Swedish immigrants, lured from Europe, which was suffering from hard times, by promises of economic advancement, were beginning to pour into America too, but not in such vast numbers as the Irish. Most of the Scandinavians were bound for the Middle West, while the Irish usually stopped in New York or the coastal cities. Much of the man power used in the construction of the early American railroads was furnished by the Irish immigrants of the potato famine years. Another type of immigrant was coming to America in our year and the years just following. The failure of the revolutions of 1848 in Europe drove to our shores great numbers of liberals, many of whom took an active part in our intellectual life and added their liberal ideas to our American ones. New Ulm in southern Minnesota was founded by just such people, who had left Germany during and after the revolutions of 1848. Two groups, one which had gone to Cincinnati and another

³ Herman Melville, *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent, 1849-1850*, 73, 74 (Cambridge, 1948). For an account of ocean packets and early steamers see Ralph D. Paine, *The Old Merchant Marine, 136-153* (New Haven, 1921).

to Chicago, joined forces in the middle 1850's and founded New Ulm.⁴

What were some of the problems that were confronting our nation at this time? The Mexican War was over in 1847, but the country was torn over the question of slavery in the newly acquired lands, for it upset the balance between slave and free states, which had been equal for thirty years. The year 1848 had been, like 1948, a presidential year; but, unlike the unsuccessful "Draft Eisenhower" movement of 1948, in 1848 the Mexican War hero, Zachary Taylor, was persuaded to run. Abraham Lincoln, who was forty at the time and was just completing his term as a Whig member from Illinois in the House of Representatives, was a delegate to the convention which nominated General Taylor. The 1848 Whig convention was held, believe it or not, in Philadelphia.

Taylor, besides being a popular general, was a planter in Louisiana and the owner of three hundred slaves. Since he had been in command at Fort Snelling earlier in his career, the locale of the proposed new territory was quite familiar to him. His oldest daughter had married a doctor at the fort, and two Taylor grandchildren were born there. It was his second daughter, the lovely Knox, who married young Lieutenant Jefferson Davis against her parents' wishes, only to die three months later. The wedding took place with the parents' knowledge and was not the "elopement" many would have it.⁵

In the election Taylor ran against Lewis Cass of Michigan, nominated by the Democrats—the same Governor Cass who led an expedition out to Minnesota in 1820 and for whom Cass Lake and Cass County are named. There was a new third party, the Free Soilers, founded to support the Wilmot Proviso, which stated that neither slavery nor involuntary servitude should ever exist in any part of the territory acquired by the Mexican War. The presidential

⁴ See Alice Felt Tyler, "William Pfaender and the Founding of New Ulm," in *Minnesota History*, 30:24-35 (March 1949).

⁵ An article on "Zachary Taylor and Minnesota" by Holman Hamilton appears above, p. 97-110 (June, 1949). Information about Taylor's political career and his family, especially the romance of Sarah Knox, is to be found in the same writer's *Zachary Taylor*, 1:101-107, 160 (Indianapolis, 1941).

election was close, but Taylor was elected. His victory was to be of particular importance to Minnesota, since Taylor's short term as president, from March 4, 1849, to July 9, 1850, when he died, happened to coincide exactly with the setting up of Minnesota's territorial structure. The Wilmot Proviso had been deadlocked in Congress, and Polk's term ended without any progress having been made toward the organization of the new acquisitions.

In the meantime an event the impact of which was to be felt far and wide had taken place in California. Gold had been discovered by James Marshall while digging a ditch for a millrace at Sutter's Fort, and as the news spread the rush to the gold fields began. From the rest of California and the neighboring regions, from the river valleys of the Midwest, from the East Coast, where hard times made young men anxious to seek their fortunes elsewhere, even from Europe, streams of gold seekers were soon converging on California. Governor Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota Territory wrote to a friend about "the California rage, which seems to be now the bewitching belle, that charms the public favor."⁶ The excitement swept over the country; people were singing a new version of Stephen Foster's *Oh, Susannah!* ending, "I'm off to California with my wash bowl on my knee!" The rage was soon at fever heat, and those who could scrape together enough money for the trip were California bound!

There were three ways to go—around the Horn, overland, or across the Isthmus of Panama. The trip around the Horn was slow, but reasonably safe; it generally took about six months, though the clipper "Flying Cloud" made it in eighty-nine days in 1851. The hardier souls went overland. They banded together in groups with their cattle and goods and started forth in covered wagons in the spring on journeys that took five months if nothing went wrong. At the height of the migration in the spring of 1849 no fewer than fifty thousand people started out, wagon trains following one on another's heels. Their way was not easy, for these emigrants crossed

⁶ Quoted by Marion Ramsey Furness, "Governor Ramsey and Frontier Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 28:319 (December, 1947).

the plains, the desert and alkali wastes, and the mountains, suffering great hardships and leaving a trail of shallow graves behind. The Panama route was crowded and expensive, but it was the quickest. After crossing the isthmus by boat and on muleback, there was a long wait at overcrowded Panama City, then a scramble for transportation up the coast. Cholera and fever took their toll, and many died. Though the confusion was great at first, this later became the favorite and easiest way to California.

Some of the forty-niners made huge fortunes in a few weeks. It is said that gold worth five million dollars was taken out the first year, and by 1853 the sum had reached sixty million dollars.⁷ Not all the emigrants struck it rich, by any means, but many stayed to make their fortunes in other ways in the fast-growing community of San Francisco, into which people continued to pour. With the growth of population came the need for more adequate government, and a convention met in September, 1849, which drew up a constitution. Slavery was excluded by a unanimous vote, the forty-niners being mostly from the North. When the Californians asked admission to the Union as a state, the problem of slavery in the new acquisitions was brought to a head. The issue was hotly debated in Congress, which met in December, by three of the greatest orators in our history—Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. A compromise was reached only after President Taylor's death in July, 1850, when Millard Fillmore, who favored the bill, stepped into the presidency. The slavery question was not solved—it was only postponed—and secession was put off for a decade.

In the year we are describing, in Washington, our political center, Mrs. Polk was moving out of the White House and Mrs. Taylor in, after its refurbishing with new carpets and furniture and the installation of gas for illumination. The Democrats also were moving out and the Whigs in, but their triumph was to be short-lived, for this great party was to disintegrate before the next presidential election.

New York was, as now, the financial center of the United States,

⁷ Stewart Edward White, *The Forty-niners*, 42 (New Haven, 1921).

half of whose population of over twenty-three million lived in the Mississippi Valley or on the West Coast, according to the census of 1850. Nearly two-thirds of the country's banking capital was in the East, where some of our great fortunes were already being amassed. Among them was John Jacob Astor's, made in the fur trade, in Minnesota among other places, and invested in real estate and mortgages. New York had two famous editors at the time — Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*, which in 1856 had nearly three thousand subscribers out in Minnesota Territory,⁸ and the poet, William Cullen Bryant, the successful editor of the *New York Evening Post*. The New York Philharmonic Society was a going concern in 1849; it had been founded in 1842 with professional musicians. The bright lights certainly glittered in Manhattan when Jenny Lind was presented by P. T. Barnum in her American debut at Castle Garden early in 1850. The proceeds went to charity, and the sum of two hundred and twenty-five dollars was paid for the first ticket. An illuminated sign reading "Welcome Sweet Warbler" hung over the stage, and all the great and fashionable of the time went to hear her and sing her praises, not only in New York but on an extended tour, which included a concert at Galena, Illinois. Jenny Lind did not get to Minnesota Territory, but in the winter of 1856-57 another famous prima donna, the great Adelina Patti, gave a concert there.

It was from New England, however, that the literary glow was coming. This was the period of the Transcendentalists with their renaissance of culture. Emerson was probably the leading spirit among them, but other lesser lights were glowing too. Longfellow, who was to immortalize the Falls of Minnehaha, was already a famous poet and a professor of modern languages at Harvard University, where Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes was teaching anatomy while enlarging his reputation as a wit and an author.

Among the abolitionists were John Greenleaf Whittier, the poet, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. She had moved recently with her husband and family of six children to Brunswick, Maine, where her

⁸ Theodore C. Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 179 (Boston, 1938).

husband had taken a position at Bowdoin College. They had been living in Cincinnati, where she had seen the workings of the Underground Railroad by which many prominent citizens were helping runaway slaves to escape. In the spring of 1850 she began work on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was published two years later. The first *Biglow Papers* by James Russell Lowell had appeared in 1848 and were being widely read. Through their homely humor and biting satire Lowell made many converts for the antislavery cause. His *Vision of Sir Launfal*, written in an entirely different vein, appeared the same year. Nathaniel Hawthorne, having been dismissed from the custom house in Salem in 1849, published his *Scarlet Letter* in 1850, and Henry David Thoreau was again making lead pencils in Concord after his two years at Walden Pond. While all this was going on in New England, the brilliant, lonely Edgar Allen Poe died in a Baltimore hospital.

A magazine which found its way into many of the homes of the nation, even out in Minnesota Territory, was *Godey's Lady's Book*. Much more than a fashion magazine, the bound volume for 1849 gives many glimpses into the lives of the ladies of that day. In the front of each monthly issue appears a colored lithograph entitled "Paris Fashions Americanized." This was the day of the crinoline and of voluminous skirts. Songs with piano accompaniments and poems appear in each number; one timely poem is entitled "A California Gold Seeker to His Mistress." A section is devoted to "Model Cottages" with elevations and floor plans, giving many clues to the mid-century way of life and how it differed from ours today. There might appear a picture of a new house, like Barnum's "Iranistan" in its pseudo-Oriental magnificence, to which a stylish note was added by showing an open barouche drawn past the mansion by a spanking pair.⁹

Detailed directions could be found for making any number of creations, ranging all the way from intricate new hair-dos to a crocheted cover for a curtain pull. A department called "Health

⁹ See *Godey's Lady's Book*, 38:265, 432, 433; 39:87, 155. The issue for August, 1849 (39:155), announced that "We have received a club of four subscribers" from Minnesota Territory.

and Beauty" contained an intriguing article on walking. It enumerated the benefits to be gained from this form of exercise, and then went on to explain to the young athletes of 1849 exactly how it is done. "The weight of the body rests on one foot while the other is advanced; it is then thrown upon the advanced foot while the other is brought forward; and so on in succession."¹⁰

In the literary section of the magazine, "Heroic Women of the Revolution" by Mrs. Elizabeth F. Ellet was appearing serially. Mrs. Ellet is especially interesting to us, as she was sent by a New York newspaper to visit Minnesota in the summer of 1852. Her account of the trip was published the next year in her *Summer Rambles in the West*. In it she tells how she and another lady wanted to join a party of men who were planning a three-day expedition to Lake Minnetonka in a spring wagon. The men objected strenuously, since the journey would be rough, there was no road, and the party was to camp out overnight at Minnetonka Mills. But Mrs. Ellet announced that she didn't see why a lady could not sit on a wagon as well as a man — and the ladies went!¹¹

A headline appeared in a newspaper recently which read, "No More Frontiers." How different it was in 1849 when one had quite a few frontiers from which to choose! While the gold rush was going on, another trek was taking place to a different frontier — our own upper Mississippi Valley. Though it was not as glamorous as the California movement, it is even more interesting to those who live here a century later. Henry H. Sibley, in a speech in Washington in December, 1848, characterized this migration well when he said: "They have not been attracted thither by the glitter of inexhaustible gold mines, but with the same spirit that has actuated all our pioneers of civilization. They have gone there to labor with the axe, the anvil, and the plough."¹²

The axes had been busy in the pine lands on the St. Croix, but there were very few anvils and ploughs in the region as yet. Per-

¹⁰ *Godey's Lady's Book*, 38:213.

¹¹ Elizabeth F. Ellet, *Summer Rambles in the West*, 116-165 (New York, 1853); *Godey's Lady's Book*, 38:307.

¹² Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 135.

haps Sibley was speaking hopefully, for though its area reached all the way to the Missouri River, there was little actual settlement when the territory was created. This was just the beginning of things; the great boom did not come until well along in the 1850's. Of course the rivers had always been there, and Fort Snelling traced its beginnings back to 1819, and Henry Sibley's good stone house across the river at Mendota dated from 1835, the year after its builder arrived to take charge of the trading post for Astor's American Fur Company. There was a small colony at St. Paul. When Governor Ramsey arrived he found "A dozen framed houses, not all completed, and some eight or ten small log buildings with bark roofs"—but it was to mushroom in size when the news spread that it was to be the capital of the territory. There was a still smaller settlement at St. Anthony by the falls, and only a government mill and a house where Minneapolis now stands, as its site still was part of the Fort Snelling Reservation and was not available for settlement. In the St. Croix Valley there had been a town clustered about the McKusick lumber mill at Stillwater since 1844, and a mill had been built even earlier at Marine up the river. There was just a bare beginning of rural settlement on the prairie on Lake St. Croix near Afton. These little communities, with the Pembina settlement on the Red River, were asking to be made a territory. There were few roads; the rivers were the highways. There were no bridges across the Mississippi, only a crude ferry at the Falls of St. Anthony. In the summer of 1849 the sheriff of St. Croix County was directed to take a census. He counted 4,680 inhabitants, including soldiers.¹⁸ This figure fell well below the population numbers which had been furnished Congress.

Iowa had become a state in 1846 and Wisconsin in 1848. Twice bills to create Minnesota Territory had been introduced in Congress without success, but this time Sibley introduced a measure. He was elected delegate from part of the old Wisconsin Territory known as the St. Croix Triangle and not included in the new state,

¹⁸ William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:229, 230, 250 (St. Paul, 1921); Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 163, 164; Mary W. Berthel, *Horns of Thunder*, 100n. (St. Paul, 1948); *Minnesota, Council Journal*, 1849, p. 184.

and he succeeded in getting himself admitted to Congress. Sibley was helped along by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, who had been out to Minnesota in 1847 and was friendly to the bill, but there was little hope that it would pass. People back in Minnesota were waiting eagerly for news. By all reports the winter was a long, hard one, and of course Minnesotans were cut off from the world as soon as the river froze over. The nearest mail distribution point was Prairie du Chien, from which dog sleds carried mail over the ice in winter, but the service was infrequent and uncertain. In the winter months settlers on the upper river were really isolated. Nothing could show this more plainly than the story of how the little settlements first heard of the territory's establishment. In January, 1849, they got the news that General Taylor had been elected president in the first week of November. About February 1, news came that Delegate Sibley had introduced the Territorial Bill, but there were only faint hopes of its passing. Nothing more was heard that month. The snow began to melt early in March, and after that no more dog sleds could go through the mush, so there would be no more news until steamboat navigation opened in the spring. At long last, on April 9 the "Dr. Franklin No. 2" came up the river and docked at St. Paul, bringing word that the bill had passed and had been signed by President Polk on March 3—one of his last acts as president.¹⁴ You can imagine the excitement in the little settlements along the rivers!

Alexander Ramsey of Pennsylvania was sent out as the first governor, to the evident disappointment of some of the men already here who would have been only too glad to have the job! The first legislature met in St. Paul in the dining room of the two-story white frame Central House on September 3. Among its most important measures was an act "to establish and maintain the common schools." Stringent Sabbath laws and two important liquor laws—one forbidding the sale of liquor to the Indians, the other a license law—were passed. The Minnesota Historical Society was incorporated during this first session.

¹⁴ Blegen, *Building Minnesota*, 132; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:244-247; *History of Minneapolis and Hennepin County*, 71 (Chicago, 1914).

Who were some of the leading citizens of the young territory? Mention has been made of Governor Ramsey, who was thirty-four when he came out to St. Paul that May of 1849 and had already been a member of Congress from Pennsylvania. After doing an excellent job as territorial governor, he later became the second governor of the state—a position he left to become United States Senator during the Civil War; and he finally served as Hayes' secretary of war in 1879. His was a distinguished record of service.

Sibley, who was to be the first governor of the state, was, according to Dr. William W. Folwell, "easily the most prominent figure in Minnesota history" from the time he reached Mendota on horseback in 1834 to his death in 1891. His wife, a sister of Franklin Steele, presided over his gracious home at Mendota, where many distinguished guests were entertained. Steele had been the sutler at Fort Snelling since 1837, but he had many other strings to his bow. He had been successful in locating a claim on the east side of the Falls of St. Anthony, and in 1847 he built a dam across the east channel and erected a sawmill. He constructed the ferry and was altogether very active in the early history of the town. His assistant in the store at the fort was John Stevens, later Colonel Stevens, who in the fall of 1849 built the first house in Minneapolis where the Great Northern Station now stands.

Another prominent young man was Henry M. Rice, who went to Mendota to work with Sibley in the fur company as co-partner. As they did not get along too well, Rice terminated his connection with the company and, having married, removed to St. Paul in June, 1849. There he bought a large tract of land and started extensive real-estate developments. He had taken a part in politics, as well, having gone to Washington and lobbied for the territorial bill at his own expense. He organized the Democrats in the new territory, holding a caucus at his home and later a mass convention at the American House, his new hotel, on October 20. The *Minnesota Pioneer* was declared the organ of the party.

This brings us to one of the most colorful characters of the territory, James Madison Goodhue, the editor of the *Pioneer*. A graduate

of Amherst, he had been editing a paper in a Wisconsin village, and upon hearing of the establishment of the new territory, he bought a newspaper outfit and went to St. Paul in April, 1849. Ten days later he issued the first number of the *Pioneer*, published in a shack which he said was as "open as a corn crib." A great booster for Minnesota, he foresaw a magnificent future for the territory, and he wielded a courageous and sometimes caustic pen. He was once stabbed by a relative of a man he had attacked in print. A visitor in the summer of 1849 wrote back to Ohio saying that there were three printing establishments in St. Paul, but only one could survive. Goodhue's paper still survives as the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*. He died in 1852, three years after his arrival in St. Paul, and his obituary was read by another outstanding citizen, the young Presbyterian minister Edward D. Neill, who was to found Macalester College.¹⁵

That these territorial gentlemen were charming as well as enterprising was attested by one of the first celebrities to visit the territory, Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish authoress. She came up on the "Nominee" in October, 1850, and visited in the home of Governor and Mrs. Ramsey. She wrote in her *Homes of the New World*: "If I were younger, and if my life's purpose were less decided than it now is, I confess that there is here and there one of these American gentlemen, with their energy, their cordiality and chivalric spirit, who might be dangerous to my heart."¹⁶

One of the earliest teachers in Minnesota, except for those at Fort Snelling and the missions, was Harriet Bishop, who came out from Vermont and opened the first school in St. Paul in 1847. She stopped first with a missionary to the Indians a few miles down the river at Kaposia, and then was paddled up to St. Paul by a couple of Indian girls in a canoe. The school was a log hovel, chinked with mud, previously used as a blacksmith shop. In 1848 some St. Paul ladies formed a sewing circle, called the Circle of Industry, to raise money for a new school. Miss Bishop was told to bring her own books, as

¹⁵ For a complete picture of Goodhue's role in Minnesota Territory, see Berthel, *Horns of Thunder*.

¹⁶ Furness, in *Minnesota History*, 28:317; Fredrika Bremer, *Homes of the New World*, 2:185 (London, 1853).

there were no bookstores within three hundred miles. In 1867 she published a book about Minnesota called *Floral Home*. She was sent out by the National Popular Education Society, a New England organization that supplied teachers for new settlements.¹⁷

A fairly typical early journey from the East to Minnesota was that of the Huse family. The father's health was bad, and since the "salubrious" climate of this region was being highly advertised for lung troubles, the family decided to go West. After leaving their home in Machias, Maine, in the spring of 1846, they went by boat to Boston, thence to Albany by train and team, and by canal boat to Buffalo. There they boarded a steamer and went down the lakes to Milwaukee, and then traveled by team to Madison, where they stayed some time, thinking to make it their home. After a time they were off again, however, this time by team and boat to La Crosse, where they boarded a Mississippi River steamboat for Stillwater, then a thriving little lumber community. There they stopped again for the winter, while the father went to St. Anthony to work in Franklin Steele's mill and to build a home for his family. In the spring of 1848 they finally arrived at their destination and moved into a little log house.¹⁸

The Huse family's trip west is interesting because it illustrates the many types of transportation utilized by settlers in going to frontier Minnesota — coastwise ships, railroads, canal boats, stage coaches, teams, and, lastly, river steamboats. They were supplemented by "shank's mare" in some cases, and by the covered wagon when the rural communities started to be settled. Though nine thousand miles of railroad had been constructed by 1850, most of them were on the Eastern Seaboard, and the rails were not to reach the Mississippi until 1854.

It is difficult today to appreciate what a significant part steamboats played in the first years of the territory; its very lifeblood depended on their comings and goings. They brought the settlers and

¹⁷ Zylpha S. Morton, "Harriet Bishop, Frontier Teacher," in *Minnesota History*, 28:132-141 (June, 1947).

¹⁸ *History of Minneapolis and Hennepin County*, 81. See also a reminiscent article by Mrs. Amada Huse Parker in the *Minneapolis Journal*, October 19, 1913.

their families, food and supplies, and equipment of all sorts, for the little colonies were not self-sustaining and almost everything was carried in by steamboat in the early years. A letter printed in the *Pioneer* in November, 1849, commented on the "sharkish" look of the "Minnesotians" when the first steamboat arrived the previous spring.¹⁹ The advertisers in the early papers were many of them Galena merchants, though the local stores were building up their stocks, too.

In the spring there were visitors other than those who arrived on the river boats. When the grass was long enough for pasturage, the Red River carts came down from Pembina, in trains sometimes made up of as many as five or six hundred carts laden with furs. Both the carts and their wheels were made entirely of wood, and since no grease was used, the terrific squeaking could be heard for miles. On one occasion in St. Anthony, church had to be recessed while the carts passed, for nothing could be heard above the din.²⁰

Life had its lighter moments, even in that first year. A letter from St. Paul dated August 2, 1849, tells that the Fourth of July had been celebrated in fine style with an oration by Judge Bradley B. Meeker and music by the military band from Fort Snelling. To top it off, there were fireworks and a ball was held at the American House.²¹

Nor was the cultural side of life neglected in the young communities. In 1850 a course of lyceum lectures was given in St. Anthony by the ministers and lawyers, Neill going from St. Paul to deliver the first of the series. Each was followed by the reading of a paper composed by the ladies. That year for literature the pioneers had *Harper's Monthly* and the *Home Journal*, as well as the new best seller, *David Copperfield*. It is said that a copy of this volume passed from hand to hand and was falling apart by the time the river opened in the spring.²²

In the summer of 1848 a rather unique visitor was in Minnesota

¹⁹ Willoughby M. Babcock, "Steamboat Travel in 1849," in *Minnesota History*, 7:57 (March, 1926).

²⁰ Marion D. Shutter, ed., *History of Minneapolis*, 272 (Chicago, 1923).

²¹ *New York Evangelist*, 20:123 (August 2, 1849). A copy of this item, based upon a contemporary letter, is among transcripts of Minnesota material in eastern newspapers made for the Minnesota Historical Society.

²² Isaac Atwater, ed., *History of the City of Minneapolis*, 1:65 (New York, 1893).

—an artist named Henry Lewis. He purchased two canoes and fastened them together, and then erected a wooden shelter over them. In this strange craft, which he named the "Menehaha," he and two helpers made a leisurely trip down the Mississippi, and Lewis sketched as they went. He was gathering material for what has been called the "motion picture of our grandfathers' day," a giant panorama. It consisted of a great roll of canvas on which pictures were painted to be unrolled to the accompaniment of a lecture. The next year, upon the completion of his panorama, Lewis began to exhibit his masterpiece. Twelve feet high and twelve hundred yards long, it carried to audiences far and wide pictures of the scenery along the river, records of Indian life, and portrayals of life in the American towns along the river's banks. By the end of the 1850's there were eight or ten Mississippi panoramas touring the show halls of the nation, while several had been taken abroad. They were a tremendous success. In the spring of 1849 Banvard's panorama was seen by six hundred thousand Englishmen in Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly, and exhibited to Queen Victoria and the royal household at Windsor. The wonders of the Mississippi Valley were widely advertised, and this probably had an important effect on the settlement of the new country. Henry Lewis' panorama and most of the others have disappeared, but he left a journal of his trip and later produced some charming oil paintings of early sites on the river.²³

Other scenes of the year 1849 might make as thrilling a panorama today as did those of the Mississippi Valley in 1850. Scene after scene flashes to mind as one thinks of that year of our territory's establishment—the steamboat "Dr. Franklin No. 2" moving up the Mississippi with the news about the creation of the territory, wagon trains of the forty-niners crossing the plains, stirring debates in Congress, or stately packets bearing a hold full of immigrants as they left the problems of the Old World behind to shoulder those of the New. It would certainly have been exciting to have been alive in 1849!

²³ Bertha L. Heilbron, ed., *Making a Motion Picture in 1848: Henry Lewis' Journal*, 1-13 (St. Paul, 1936). Some of Lewis' Minnesota paintings were purchased from the artist in 1901 by Thomas B. Walker, who presented them to the Minnesota Historical Society and other Twin City libraries and galleries.



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