

Territorial Daguerreotypes

E. D. NEILL'S GOSPEL OF MINNESOTA

Edited by Huntley Dupre

ALREADY SATURATED *with the history and the beauties of the Territory of Minnesota, Edward Duffield Neill at the end of the year 1853 wrote an article on "Saint Paul and Its Environs" which was published in the January, 1855, issue of the well-known Graham's Magazine. His article is not only one of the most inclusive of the early descriptions of the capital of the new territory, but it is full of allusions to persons and events important in the earlier history of the region. Neill's story of explorers, priests, traders, soldiers, Indians, and pioneers, and of far wilderness places must have excited the imaginations of the cultured—largely Eastern and largely feminine—readers of Graham's Magazine.*

In April, 1849, at the age of twenty-six, Neill went with his bride to the new territory to labor under the auspices of the American Home Missionary Society. A native of Philadelphia, the young clergyman had been educated at Amherst College and Andover Seminary. Before settling in Minnesota, he had been preaching at Elizabeth, a coal-mining hamlet near Galena. This vigorous and versatile pioneer organized the First and the House of Hope Presbyterian churches in St. Paul; he was one of the founders of the Minnesota Historical Society in 1849; he became the first secretary of the St. Paul board of education, the first superintendent of schools of the territory, founder of the Baldwin School and of the College of St. Paul, superintendent of public instruction in the new state after 1858, and first chancellor of the yet unorganized University of Minnesota; he was chaplain of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War, and he became a secretary of President Lincoln during the same conflict; he founded Macalester College, serving on its faculty as professor of history, English literature, and political

economy; and he was the first authoritative historian of Minnesota and the author of numerous historical treatises.

Without any previous training for historical research, and prompted by an ever-lively interest in history and by an intense curiosity about his new environment and its origins, Neill at once gave himself to historical investigation. Steadily, he developed the skills essential to the true scholar, using all available materials in a most critical fashion. Immediately on his arrival in St. Paul, he must have begun his study of regional history, for a paper on "The French Voyageurs to Minnesota during the Seventeenth Century," read before the first annual meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society on January 1, 1850, attests to a wide and growing familiarity with the earliest history of the upper Great Lakes and upper Mississippi regions.¹ Neill worked prodigiously in those early years of the territory, and published his *History of Minnesota* in 1858. In the preface to this work, Minnesota's pioneer historian said: "Nine years ago, the writer wished to obtain some information in relation to Minnesota, but could find no reliable history." He proceeded to rectify this lack in a volume which has stood the test of time. He concluded his preface with these words: "The endeavor has been always to bear in mind the essential of the historian, neither to state false things nor suppress the truth; 'Nec falsa dicere, nec vera reticere.'"

By the 1840's Graham's Magazine had become the pre-eminent literary magazine in the country under the ownership and editorship of George R. Graham. Founded as *The Casket* in Philadelphia in 1826 by Samuel C. Atkinson and Charles Alexander, also the founders of the *Saturday Evening Post*, it was purchased by Graham in 1839. For fifteen fertile and exciting months, beginning in 1841, Edgar Allan Poe was its literary editor. In the great years of Graham's Magazine the contributors included not only Poe, but also James Russell Lowell, William Cullen Bryant, James Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Nathaniel Parker Willis. Graham published some of the most important work of these writers and paid them generously for their

¹ Published in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 1:17-36 (St. Paul, 1872).

contributions, thus demonstrating to publishers and authors alike that liberal payments were practical and profitable. Illustrations and book reviews combined with the stories and articles to produce a magazine which in the early 1840's "displayed a brilliance which has seldom been matched in American magazine history."²

Graham finally sold the magazine in December, 1853. It had begun to decline after 1850, partly because of competition with Harper's. The circulation of eighty thousand, claimed in 1850, diminished steadily, and the magazine deteriorated rapidly after Graham's departure. The new editor, Charles Godfrey Leland, edited the once-illustrious magazine "without pride or enthusiasm," though he did increase the circulation. After being merged with the new American Monthly in 1856, Graham's Magazine expired in 1858.

Among the contributions appearing in one of its later issues was the article much of which is herewith reprinted. Into it Neill packed not only a vivid and accurate description of contemporary St. Paul, but also a considerable amount of historical background with even more allusions to earlier history, attesting to his growing scholarship in the field of exploration and settlement. His article is illustrated with ten apt drawings by an unidentified and probably itinerant artist, E. Beaulieu. They were engraved by W. H. Van-Engen, who did much of the engraving for Graham's Magazine.

[From *Graham's Magazine* (Philadelphia), 46:3-17 (January, 1855).]

ST. PAUL AND ITS ENVIRONS

E[dward] D[uffield] N[eill]

SINCE THE FALLS of Niagara have been brought, by means of "lightning" railways, almost to the doors of the citizens who dwell in the vast wildernesses of brick and mortar—New York, Philadelphia and Boston—their roarings have become familiar, and the charm of novelty has gone. The tourist no longer makes that cataract the "ultima thule" of his summer wanderings, but roams beyond the great inland seas, to the territory of the "sky-tinted water,"³

² This account of *Graham's Magazine* is based upon that in Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines, 1741-1850*, 344, 544-555 (New York, 1930).

³ Minnesota is the name of the principal tributary of the Mississippi in that region,

and gazes upon lofty limestone turrets and battlements,—worked out by the ancient architect TIME, with his tools of frost, air and water,—that guard the Mississippi on each bank for hundreds of miles; bathes and fishes in its thousand lakes with agate pavements, and dwells with rapture on the picturesque scene around the Falls Saint Anthony.

Saint Paul is eight miles distant from the falling waters, and bears the same relation as Buffalo to Niagara. It is the capital of the territory of Minnesota, which was created by Congress a little more than four years ago.

The steamboats at the levee of Saint Louis, eight hundred miles below, and also at Galena, with signs marking their destination for Saint Paul, gives [*sic*] evidence that there is “a city in the wilderness” that has sprung up since our most modern geographies were issued.

The traveler, as he steps from the steamboat that has brought him from below, and walks through the streets of this north-western capital, is forcibly reminded by the many stumps standing in the middle of the thoroughfares, and by the Indians stalking about with their blankets, pipes, and vermilioned faces, that he is some distance from the Atlantic coast and towns, whose buildings have grown gray in the service of man.

The origin of the settlement is ignoble. As at Saint Mary, in Maryland, no Lord Baltimore was the presiding spirit—no graduate of the University of Paris, like the founder of Philadelphia—no men of faith and principle, like the settlers at Plymouth Rock, erected the first log tenements. Situated as it was, immediately contiguous to the military reserve of Fort Snelling, and in the vicinity of several Dakota villages on the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers, it became a choice spot for those modern harpies, the frontier whisky sellers, to pitch their tents. . . .

from which the territory has derived its appellation. It is a compound of Minne (Water) and Sota, which, in the Dakota language, is applied to that peculiar tinge of the clouds which is neither blue nor white [*author's note*].

Neill was among the first to publish this translation of the name of the river and the territory. He goes into the matter also in the first edition of his *History of Minnesota*, xlvii (Philadelphia, 1858). For a detailed discussion of “The Meaning of ‘Minnesota,’” see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:455-457 (St. Paul, 1921).

The origin of the present designation was in this manner:— Those who had erected their log trading-houses at this point were French Canadians, or mixed bloods, that had been voyageurs of the Fur Companies. At certain periods quite a number would assemble here from the interior, and amuse themselves with the fiddle and the dance.

In time, a Roman Catholic priest sought them, and erected a log chapel, which is still standing near the centre of the town, (and is represented below,) in which he could hear confession, say mass, and unite in marriage.⁴

On the occasion of the first marriage of one of the French Canadians, in making out the certificate it was designated as the Chapel of Saint Paul. From that time the voyageurs began to know Saint Paul's Chapel, and soon Saint Paul's became familiar in the Indian country. When it was chosen as the capital, the possessive termination was dropped, and the place became known from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico as Saint Paul.

In the year 1847 there were about one hundred persons dwelling here, chiefly half breeds; but at the time of the formation of the territory, in 1849, several American families had moved here, and the population was about three hundred.⁵

The close of the year 1853 discovers but few of the original tenements or settlers, but in their places modern and tasteful mansions, and an active, intelligent population of about four thousand five hundred.

Saint Paul is a city of three hills or plateaus, overlooking the Mississippi, and in the rear surrounded by a gracefully undulating and elevated ridge, already covered with cottages, and destined to afford sites for many more handsome suburban residences.

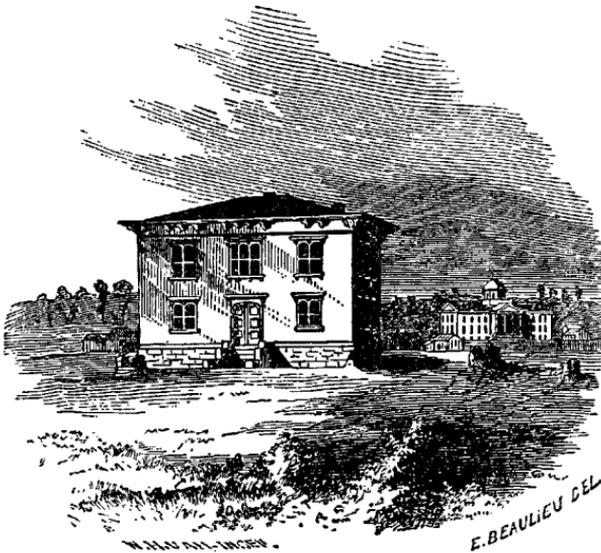
The central plateau is about ninety feet above the water, but

⁴ The priest, Father Lucien Galtier, built the Chapel of St. Paul in 1841. See J. Fletcher Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul*, 111 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 4). The picture of the chapel mentioned by Neill has not been reproduced. A sketch made in 1852 by Robert O. Sweeny is reproduced above, 29:209.

⁵ By the summer of 1849 the population of St. Paul had grown to 910. See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:352. The *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul) estimated, on November 17, 1853, that the population then was about 4,700.

descends gradually, forming a good steamboat landing at each extremity. This may be termed the city proper.

The plain from the river to the semicircular ridge in the rear is about one mile in width, and until quite recently was a dense



THE BALDWIN SCHOOL

grove. Upon it stands at present the First and Second Presbyterian, Methodist, Episcopal, and Roman Catholic Churches, the Stone Hospital of the Sisters of Mercy, the Town Hall, the Court House, the Territorial Capitol, and the Baldwin School . . . an edifice which owes its erection to the unselfish benefaction of Matthias W. Baldwin, of the city of Philadelphia, at present a member of the legislature from that city, but better known as the successful manufacturer of locomotives on Broad street, and the friend of every good enterprise.⁶

Two stories in height, with bracketed cornice and window caps, facing the public square, surrounded by the stumps of the primeval

⁶ No other reference to a town hall has been found in works describing St. Paul in the 1850's. The Baldwin School was founded by Neill as a preparatory school for boys and girls, and was incorporated under a legislative act of February 26, 1853. See Henry D. Funk, *A History of Macalester College*, 31-38 (St. Paul, 1910).

forest, it is one of the most refreshing and encouraging sights in the place, and marks the great advance that has been made in a few years. . . .

The stranger that has walked the regular streets of the "Quaker City" feels out of patience with the original surveyors of Saint Paul. They felt that beauty was in crooked lines, and as a consequence the streets with few exceptions are irregular. Some one has aptly said, that the blocks of the town map look as if some one had joined together "helter skelter" the diagrams of Euclid.

At times Saint Paul is quite thronged with parties of Ojibway, Winnebago, and Dakota braves, and reminds those advanced in years of Detroit and Saint Louis, as they were a quarter of a century ago. Several times, within two or three years, there has been no little excitement, caused by scalping in the vicinity. . . .

In walking through the streets of the capital of Minnesota, the visitor will sometimes notice in the hair of a Dakota a feather marked with a round red spot. This signifies that the wearer has killed an enemy. If the feather happens to be notched or tipped with red, the possessor has killed by cutting the throat of his foe. Upon the blanket of a woman is painted a red hand, which informs us that she has been wounded by an enemy. The black hand on the blanket of a man is the sign that he has killed an enemy.

Both at the lower and upper border of Saint Paul there are caves. The lower one has become quite famous, because it was here that Jonathan Carver, captain in the British army, and the first English subject that ever visited the country now known as Minnesota, alleged that he obtained a deed from certain Dakota bands, conveying to him, and his heirs or assigns, the whole of the beautiful country on the east side of the Mississippi, from Lake Pepin to the Falls of Saint Anthony. It has been near a century since he visited it, and time has made many ravages.⁷ . . .

⁷ Carver discovered the cave which still is known by his name in 1766. Omitted here is the explorer's description of the cave, which Neill quotes from Carver's *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America*, 63 (London, 1778). The entrance to the cave has been blocked almost continuously since 1869, when a railroad was built near by. See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:57n. The oft-told story of the Carver deed and grant is reviewed by Folwell, 1:61-64.

The description [of Carver] is no doubt exaggerated, though the outlines are true. The sandstone having crumbled by exposure to the atmosphere, many years ago the roof of the cave fell in, and covered up all of the front. In 1817 Major [Stephen H.] Long, U. S. A., managed to creep through a narrow crevice into what was once the rear.

After this the mouth of the remnant of the cave became entirely closed by detritus until 1837, when [Joseph N.] Nicollet and [John C.] Fremont had their men clear away some of the rubbish, and entered. To this day their initials, burned upon the white sandstone roof with the smoke of their pine torches, remain.

Near the river edge the sides of what was once the front part of the cave are discernible, and marked with ancient pictographs.

A short distance from the cave, as Carver asserts, there are the appearances of an Indian cemetery, which however will not continue long, for here is literally verified the lines of Whittier,

"Behind the sacred [*scared*] squaw's birch canoe
The steamer smokes and raves,
And city lots are staked for sale
Above old Indian graves."

The cave in the upper suburbs of the town, through ignorance, has sometimes been confounded with Carver's Cave, and is so marked upon many maps. [Henry R.] Schoolcraft, in the Journal

⁸ The graves to which Neill refers were in the neighborhood of the present Mounds Park. The lines quoted are from "On Receiving an Eagle's Quill from Lake Superior," written in 1849. Since the next three stanzas of Whittier's prophetic poem are particularly appropriate, they are quoted here:

"I hear the tread of pioneers
Of nations yet to be;
The first low wash of waves, where soon
Shall roll a human sea.

"The rudiments of empire here
Are plastic yet and warm;
The chaos of a mighty world
Is rounding into form!

"Each rude and jostling fragment soon
Its fitting place shall find,
The raw material of a State,
Its muscle and its mind!"

of his first tour to this country, so designates it; and [George W.] Featherstonhaugh, falling into the same mistake, speaking of the upper cave, says, "This cave is very well described by Carver, who mentions the figures cut by the Indians, which I also observed there."⁹

The proper name is Fountain Cave, and its existence appears to have been entirely unknown previous to 1811. It is in a ravine, some three or four hundred rods from the river.¹⁰ Its front is within a beautiful amphitheatre of the pure white sandstone rock, and in summer is delightfully shaded by the oak and cedar. At the entrance the cave is about thirty feet in height, and gradually diminishes for one hundred yards, until it is difficult to walk without stooping. Through it flows a stream as clear as crystal. As it hastens over the sand, that looks like powdered white sugar, one recalls the "pure river of water of life" in the Apocalypse.

A pleasant drive of six miles from Saint Paul, over a level road commanding an extensive prospect, brings one to the ferry that conveys the visitor to Fort Snelling. This is one of the finest fortifications in the West, and has always been considered a pleasant post by the officers of the army. It is situated on an elevated rock, at the very junction of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. The view from the commandant's house can hardly be excelled.

The fort is built of stone, and lozenge-shaped. At present it is occupied by a mixed force of infantry, dragoons, and light artillery. The high bluff upon which the fort stands was purchased of the Sioux Indians as early as the year 1805, by Lieutenant Z[ebulon] M. Pike. It was not occupied, however, until 1819. In the Spring of that year Col. [Henry] Leavenworth left Detroit, and by way of Green Bay and the Wisconsin river came to Mendota, on the south side of the Minnesota, and erected his cantonment, and proceeded to build the present massive structure, which inspired both

⁹ The quotation, slightly paraphrased, is from Featherstonhaugh's, *A Canoe Voyage up the Minnaw Sotor*, 1:257 (London, 1847). Schoolcraft passed through the region for the first time with the Cass expedition of 1820; Featherstonhaugh's visit was made in 1835.

¹⁰ Fountain Cave was about four miles above Carver's Cave on the Mississippi, according to Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 444 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 17).

the aborigines and the French voyageur in the service of British interest with awe.¹¹

Col. Leavenworth was succeeded by [Colonel Josiah] Snelling. At Mendota, in log huts, with buffalo robes for carpets and similar rude conveniences, the wives of the officers passed the winter, cheerfully sharing the rigors of the climate with their husbands. In the spring of 1820 the troops removed their quarters from Mendota to an eminence on the west bank of the Mississippi, a mile distant from the old cantonment. Two years elapsed before the present fort was sufficiently completed for occupancy. Until 1824 it was known as Fort Saint Anthony, but that year General [Winfield] Scott having visited the place, in honor of the officer in command it was called Snelling.

Until the year 1823 all the supplies had been brought from below to this distant garrison by canoes or Mackinaw boats, but in that year the first steamboat arrived with provisions for the fort.¹² It was a day long to be remembered. In the language of another, "The Dakotas were there in full possession of both sides of the river. The Indians say they had dreamed the night before of seeing some monster of the deep, which frightened them very much. As the boat approached the mouth of the Minnesota, they stood in multitudes upon the shore, gaping with astonishment to see the huge monster advancing against the current. They really thought it was some enormous water-god, coughing and spouting water in every direction, and puffing out his hot breath. . . . The women and children flew for the woods, their hair streaming in the wind; while some of the warriors, retreating to a more respectful distance, stood their ground until the boat passed and landed. The boat being one of those awful high pressure boats, which blew off steam with a noise like unbolting an earthquake when she 'blew out' shook with

¹¹ It was not Leavenworth, but his successor, Colonel Josiah Snelling, who selected the site on the heights above two rivers and began the building of the post that bears his name. Leavenworth's cantonment was on the right bank of the Minnesota, near Mendota. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:137-139.

¹² The steamboat was the "Virginia," which reached Fort Snelling on May 10, 1823. The story of its trip is told in full by William J. Petersen, in *Minnesota History*, 9:347-362.

terror the knees of the stoutest braves, and in a twinkling every red skin vanished, screaming and shouting with all their might."¹³

A short distance from the walls of the garrison, near the military gardens, is the grave-yard. The oldest grave-stone is in fragments, but has quite recently been fastened in a bed of mortar by the



HOLE-IN-THE-DAY

mother who buried her little one there, nearly a generation ago. It marks the resting place of the infant of the late Col Snelling, who was born in the temporary barracks, and was the first white child whose place of nativity was Minnesota, and the first over whom a gravestone was placed.¹⁴ It was not until many years afterward that there were any natives of Minnesota, of European blood, outside of those connected with the government.

¹³ Neill is here roughly paraphrasing the explorer, Giacomo C. Beltrami, who came upstream to Fort Snelling on the "Virginia." See his *Pilgrimage in Europe and America*, 2:199 (London, 1828).

¹⁴ The infant was Elizabeth Snelling, the fifth child of Colonel and Mrs. Snelling, who was born shortly after her parents' arrival at the post and died there at the age of thirteen months. One of Leavenworth's children died and was buried at the fort earlier. Neill, *Minnesota*, 327; Helen Dunlap Dick, "A Newly Discovered Diary of Colonel Josiah Snelling," in *Minnesota History*, 18:400 (December, 1937).

The last time the writer visited this, the most distant grave-yard in the North-west, an excavation had just been made, and under the massive gateway of the fort there was issuing a procession, that was unlike the usual pomp and circumstance of military life. In front appeared the two who had acted in their several capacities as physician to the body and physician to the soul; then came the coffin, guarded by the junior and other officers of the garrison; and last came the commandant, with the only surviving child of his family by his side.¹⁵ The snow was on the ground, and the beating of sad hearts was the only funeral march that conducted the procession to the grave.

The commandant's wife had left her earthly tenement, and all by their countenances told us that they had met with no ordinary loss. The younger officers felt that they had lost a mother; those more advanced missed the being who, in living and dying, exhibited the unwavering faith of the Christian. If there had been no other burial in that lone "city of the dead," the fact that it contains the remains of one so estimable, will make it a sacred spot to her many acquaintances.

In this grave-yard there rest the bones of one of the wild native warriors, an Ojibway, who had been killed in sight of Fort Snelling by the Dakotas.¹⁶ . . .

At the last treaty made at Fort Snelling between the Dakota and Ojibway tribes, the chief whose face is presented was a prominent speaker. As the portrait indicates, he is youthful, yet he is the head chief of the Mississippi bands of the Ojibway nation. By his own people he is known as Que-we-lans, or the Boy; also, as Bug-on-a-ke-shig, or "Hole in the Day."

. . . A boy in appearance and in his actions, he is nevertheless one of the most fearless warriors in North America, and one of

¹⁵ The deceased was the wife of Lieutenant Colonel Francis Lee; she died on November 30, 1853. For an obituary notice, see the *Minnesota Pioneer*, December 8, 1853. In the early 1850's the Reverend Ezekiel G. Gear was the chaplain at Fort Snelling, and Dr. Charles McDougal was the post surgeon in 1853 and 1854. Their presence at the fort in May, 1853, is noted by George F. Fuller in a letter printed in the issue of this magazine for December, 1948 (p. 319).

¹⁶ An account of the conflict in the summer of 1839 between the Chippewa or Ojibway and the Sioux or Dakota Indians follows. The traditional warfare between members of these Minnesota tribes continued well into Neill's own time.

the most eloquent in the councils of his nation. To the Dakotas his name is a terror, for he has never retreated before a foe, but generally borne off in triumph many of the scalps of their people.

On one of the balmy days in June of the year 1850, on the level and grassy plateau in front of the gate of Fort Snelling, there was seen a small detachment of U. S. troops with a few pieces of artillery, the Governor of Minnesota, and encampments of Dakotas and Ojibways.¹⁷

The two hostile nations had been called together by the executive of the territory, for the purpose of making some arrangement which would lead to a cessation of attacks upon the defenceless of each tribe, which had become very frequent in the vicinity of the white settlements. A few weeks before, a party of Dakotas from the village below Saint Paul, and at the head of Lake Pepin, had gone into the valley of the Saint Croix and scalped some fourteen men, women and children, of the Ojibways, who were in the woods, making maple sugar.

After a salute from a cannon, the Dakotas and Ojibways began to come into council. Hardly had they seated themselves and smoked the pipe, before there was quite a fluttering among the Dakotas, and with an expressive grunt they rose up and strutted off to their tents. The officers of the United States wondered what occasioned this sudden freak, until word came that the Dakotas thought "that they were to meet Ojibways and not women in council." The dignity of these gentlemen had been greatly offended by the presence of some of the ladies of the fort.

Young "Hole in the Day" seized this opportunity to ingratiate himself with the whites, and with all the adroitness of a "diplomat," and the eloquence of a courtier in the good old days of "Queen Bess," arose and said that "he was happy to see so many sweet women there, and that they were all welcome with their bright faces to a seat *on his side* of the council." The ladies did not deem it prudent to remain, and as they retired, the youthful orator and chief stepped up and cordially shook each by the hand.

¹⁷ Governor Alexander Ramsey, who was superintendent of Indian affairs for the territory, called the council. For a full account of the events leading up to it and of the proceedings of June 11, 1850, see Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:257-259.



MINNEHAHA FALLS

The Dakotas however did not appear until the next day, at which time "Hole in the Day" made the following speech to the Governor, demanding money of the Dakotas for the scalps they had taken.¹⁸ . . .

He generally appears in the streets of Saint Paul in a semi-civilized dress, and the stranger can hardly realize that he is the terrible warrior of the north.

¹⁸ A verbatim report of Hole-in-the-Day's speech follows at this point. Neill fails to mention the address of Bad Hail, spokesman for the Sioux.

A drive of about fifteen minutes beyond the grave-yard of the Fort, on the western bank of the Mississippi, brings the visitor to a view that makes a life-time impression. A small rivulet, the outlet of Lakes Harriet and Calhoun, here gently glides over the lofty bluff into an amphitheatre, forming one of the most graceful waterfalls in the country. Niagara symbolizes the sublime, Saint Anthony the picturesque, but this is the embodiment of the beautiful. The fall is about sixty feet, presenting a parabolic curve, which drops without the least deviation from the regular curve, and meets with no interruption from the neighboring rocks, until it has reached its lower level, when the stream goes curling along, in laughing childish glee at the graceful feat it has performed in leaping over the precipice. . . .

They are designated by the Dakota name Ha-ha.¹⁹ The "h" has a strong guttural sound, and the word is applied to waterfalls, because of the curling of the waters. The Dakota verb Thaha primarily means "to curl," but the secondary signification is "to laugh," because of the curling motion of the muscles of the mouth in laughter. The noise of waterfalls is called by the Dakotas Ihaha, because of its resemblance to laughter.

After the soul has been delighted by this spectacle, the ride is continued four or five miles beyond, and the traveler stands on the brink of those falls which [Father Louis] Hennepin the Franciscan . . . saw on his return from a journey to Mille Lac[s], in the month of July, 1680, and named after his patron saint, Anthony of Padua. In the last edition of his travels, the adventurous Father says: "The navigation is interrupted by a fall, which I called St. Anthony of Padua's, in gratitude for the favors done me by the Almighty, through the intercession of that great saint, whom we had chosen patron and protector of all our enterprises. This fall is forty or fifty feet high, divided in the middle by a rocky island of a pyramidal form."²⁰ . . .

¹⁹ Neill refers, of course, to Minnehaha Falls. In translation, the name means "laughing waters." The Sioux word "haha" was used for any waterfall. See Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 230.

²⁰ The quotation is from Hennepin's *Description de la Louisiane*, 199 (Paris, 1683). Since the first adequate English edition of this work appeared in 1880, the translation probably is Neill's own.

It was not far from a century after Hennepin saw the "curling waters," that it was gazed upon by a British subject, Jonathan Carver. A native of Connecticut, and captain of a provincial troop, he was the Yankee who first laid eyes upon the valuable water power, and began to make calculations for further settlement. . . .

Carver, like Hennepin, speaks of a rocky island dividing the Falls, and estimates its width about forty feet and its length not much more, and "about half way between the island and the eastern shore is a rock lying at the very edge of the fall, that appeared to be about five or six feet broad, and thirty or forty long."²¹

During the two generations that have elapsed since this description was penned, some changes have taken place in the appearance of the Falls. The small island, about forty feet broad, which is now some distance in front of the Falls, was probably once in the midst. The geological character of the bed of the river is such, that an undermining process is constantly at work. The upper stratum is limestone, with many large crevices, and about fifteen feet in thickness. Beneath is the saccharoid sandstone, which is so soft that it cannot resist the wearing of the rapid waters.

It is more than probable that in an age long passed the Falls were in the vicinity of Fort Snelling. In the course of two years it has receded many feet. The number of pine logs that pitch over the Falls have increased the recession. As the logs float down they are driven into the fissures, and serve as levers, other logs and the water communicating the power to wrench the limestone slabs from their localities. In time the Falls will recede until they become nothing more than rapids.²²

The fall of water on the west side of the dividing island is several rods above that on the east side, and the difference is occasioned by the greater volume of water on the former side causing a more rapid recession.

²¹ Neill quotes Carver incorrectly. In his *Travels*, 70, the latter gives the "Breadth, near 600 feet," and the "Height 30 feet."

²² Actually, in October, 1869, this almost happened, and an alarm that "The falls are going out!" spread throughout the area. To stop the recession of the cataract was a long and expensive process. See Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:30, 333-347. This writer reviews the story of the "Preservation of the Falls of St. Anthony," and he graphically illustrates the improvement of the river which saved the falls in a map facing p. 344.



THE FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY

There are two islands of great beauty in the rapids above the Falls. The first juts some feet beyond the Falls, and contains about fifteen acres. It is now generally known as Hennepin Island — not, as said by some blunderer in *Harper's Magazine* for July, 1853, because the *Jesuit father was placed there by the Indians*, but in accordance with the following suggestion in an address before the Historical Society of Minnesota, on January 1st, 1850:²³

“As a town in the state of Illinois has already taken the name of Hennepin, which would have been so appropriate for the beautiful village of Saint Anthony, we take leave of the discoverer of these picturesque Falls, which will always render that town equally attractive to the eye of the poet and the capitalist, by suggesting that the island which divides the laughing waters be called Hennepin.”

A few yards above Hennepin is Nicollet Island, named after a late distinguished man of science [Joseph N. Nicollet], who has

²³ A writer who is identified merely as the author of “Three Weeks in Cuba,” contributed “Sketches on the Upper Mississippi” to *Harper's Magazine*, 7:177-190 (July, 1853). Neill himself gave the address to which he refers. See above, footnote 1.

done as much as any other in developing the resources of Minnesota. It contains about forty acres, and one of the most delightful spots for a summer residence. About the middle of the island "a small bluff rises some ten or fifteen feet high, with a slope rounded as if by the hand of art which seems to be waiting for a handsome mansion."

The little island once within, but now just below the Falls, is called Spirit Island. The Dakota legend saith, that in the mist of the morning, the spirit of an injured Indian wife, with a child clinging to her, is seen darting in a canoe through the spray, and that the sound of her death song is heard moaning in the winds, and in the roar of the waters.²⁴ . . .

The Falls on the west side of Hennepin Island, dashing themselves against the huge slabs of limestone, approach to grandeur, and are well represented in the engraving.

In consequence of a dam having been thrown across the Mississippi to the eastern side of the island, the waters creep over the ledge very quietly, and the beholder experiences a feeling of disappointment, and sees nothing more exciting than a large mill dam.

Upon the eastern shore of the Mississippi, opposite to Hennepin and Nicollet and Spirit Islands, is the town of Saint Anthony, which has all the appearance of an enterprising and intelligent New England village.²⁵ This village must be a place of importance. Should the northern route for a railroad to the Pacific be determined upon, this will perhaps be the half-way town between Boston and Astoria, and trains loaded with Asiatic produce will here cross the Mississippi. After a good afternoon's drive, and fatigued with sight seeing, the pleasure seeker returns to his hotel at St. Paul, with the lines so familiar in school days recalled and appreciated—"Westward the star of empire takes its way."

²⁴ Neill here included Samuel W. Pond's poetical version of the legend of the Sioux woman who committed suicide by going over the falls in a canoe.

²⁵ St. Anthony, the earlier of the two settlements at the falls, was settled in 1847, and was incorporated on March 3, 1855. By 1850 there were a few houses on the west bank of the Mississippi at the Falls of St. Anthony. The village that grew there was chosen in 1852 as the county seat of the newly established Hennepin County, and was named Minneapolis. It was consolidated with St. Anthony by act of the legislature on February 28, 1872. Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1:251, 260, 379, 429.



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