



A White House Connection

Nina M. Archabal

ABOVE A FRENCH MARBLE mantel flanked by the collection of presidential porcelain in the China Room of the White House hangs the oil reproduced on this page. Like the one on the cover of this issue of *Minnesota History*, it was painted by Ferdinand Reichardt (1819–95), whose view of Independence Hall in Philadelphia is also part of the White House collection.¹

Reichardt's river paintings, both the society's and that of the White House, were executed only a year

apart; the society's Reichardt was done in 1857 and the White House version in 1858, the year Minnesota became the 32nd state. They are nearly identical in subject matter and composition, both depicting scenes on the Upper Mississippi River near Lake Pepin. Both illustrate the "fashionable tour" on that river, a familiar theme from Minnesota's mid-19th-century history when steamboats cruised its waters carrying sightseers from various ports along its banks — sometimes as far away as New Orleans — to the Falls of St. Anthony. By the late 1850s the fashionable tour on the Mississippi was well established. With the completion in 1854 of rail lines between Chicago and Rock Island, the great river attracted an impressive array of travelers, including former president Millard Fillmore and historian George Bancroft in 1854 and the poet of Walden, Henry David Thoreau in 1861.²

While the railroad made the river more easily accessible, artists like Reichardt were playing a significant role in promoting it as a tourist attraction. American artist George Catlin, who traveled the river in 1835, coined the phrase, "fashionable tour," and praised the trip from Rock Island to St. Anthony as one "capable of producing the greatest degree of pleasure."³

¹Mr. and Mrs. Donald C. Dayton of Minneapolis donated the painting to the White House in 1971.

²Theodore C. Blegen, "The 'Fashionable Tour' on the Upper Mississippi," in *Minnesota History*, 20:378, 384 (December, 1939).

³Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indian*, 592 (Philadelphia, 1857).

Nina Archabal, deputy director of the MHS, is a co-winner of the Theodore C. Blegen Award for 1980. Her article, "In Memoriam, Cameron Booth, 1892–1980: A Chronicle from His Scrapbooks," appeared in the Fall issue.

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Catlin's claims were reinforced by the work of panoramists who traveled the river painting what they saw on long canvasses that, when unrolled before the viewer, produced a 19th-century equivalent of today's travel film. Artists visiting Minnesota like Henry Lewis, who in 1848 painted a panorama some 1,200 yards long and 12 feet high, also produced many smaller works depicting scenes along the Mississippi. Lewis' numerous paintings of the Falls of St. Anthony, several of which are in the MHS and other local collections, exemplify the artists' fascination with the river.⁴

Reichardt's paintings reveal his feeling for the romance of the Mississippi. His 1857 painting of the Falls of St. Anthony, also in the society's collections, is a brilliant representation of the cataract and the industry that was growing up around it; it is rendered in fine detail, remarkable in an oil of such a dynamic subject on a very small canvas. His success in depicting the cascade might be attributed to his considerable experience in painting Niagara Falls, a favorite subject for artists of the time. Reichardt's larger river boat paintings are leisurely in pace, pastoral in view, and illumined by the diffused sunlight characteristic of a summer afternoon.

For all their evocative quality, Reichardt's White

House and MHS sternwheeler paintings include an array of detail. From red curtains in the windows and smoke curling from the stacks to passengers standing behind ornate wooden railings, the scenes are recorded meticulously. The log raft that appears in the Washington oil contributes to the picturesque quality of the scene, but it also suggests some of the hazards of steamboating on the Mississippi, where traffic was heavy, and industry and natural obstacles such as sand bars sometimes disturbed the tranquility of tourist travel on the river. The two closely related paintings were probably executed in New York, where Reichardt worked from 1856 to 1859, but they were presumably based on sketches and material gathered from travel in the Mississippi Valley.

⁴Blegen, in *Minnesota History*, 20:380-382; Henry Lewis, *The Valley of the Mississippi Illustrated*, 3-7 (St. Paul, 1967); 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).

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BOOK REVIEWS

Minnesota Rag: The Dramatic Story of the Landmark Supreme Court Case That Gave New Meaning to Freedom of the Press. By Fred W. Friendly.

(New York, Random House, 1981, 241 p., \$12.95.)

MINNESOTA HISTORY has not been unaware of the important *Near v. Minnesota* case. In December, 1960, John E. Hartmann's article, "The Minnesota Gag Law and the Fourteenth Amendment," appeared in these pages. The Winter, 1978, issue carried Friendly's address to the 1979 MHS annual meeting, "Censorship and Journalists' Privilege: The Case of *Near versus Minnesota* — A Half Century Later." The editors prevailed upon two authorities to review this book, which marks the 50th anniversary of the decision. Their fields of specialization give them particular insights into its significance: one is a lawyer, the other a newspaper editor. Each was told that the other was writing a review, but they did not collaborate. It is our hope that readers will find the two approaches to Friendly's book worth while and, perhaps, intriguing.

IN 1971, this country watched national security clash with freedom of the press in a court struggle which promised to be a landmark decision. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* had published excerpts from a secret Pentagon study of

the Vietnam War; the Nixon administration, never fond of the press under the best of circumstances, moved quickly to prevent publication of further excerpts. Conflicting decisions in lower federal courts propelled the case into an unusual Saturday session of the United States Supreme Court. Four of this century's leading First Amendment theorists (absolutists Hugo Black and William O. Douglas; William Brennan, who revolutionized libel law with *New York Times Co. v. Sullivan*; and Potter Stewart, who has advocated special analysis of the press clause of the First Amendment) sat on the court which heard the arguments.

Yet the Pentagon Papers case has proved to be more of a historical footnote than a legal landmark. Nine justices produced nine separate opinions, none of which mustered more than three votes. A majority of the court could agree only to reaffirm that, whatever subsequent punishment may be imposed for abuses of freedom of the press, nothing less than the most extraordinary circumstances will allow expression to be cut off at its source. That principle of "no prior restraint on expression" had become a central precept of American jurisprudence 40 years earlier, in a case involving a sleazy bigot from Minnesota named Jay M. Near.

Near v. Minnesota is a landmark case for freedom of the press, yet even many lawyers and journalists know little of its facts or background. In *Minnesota Rag*, Fred Friendly de-



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