

## MINNESOTA PIONEER LIFE AS REVEALED IN NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENTS

In the busy search of historians for source materials illuminating past conditions, the newspaper advertisement is not infrequently neglected. It is well to be reminded by Professor Lucy M. Salmon, the author of a scholarly study of newspapers as historical sources, that the advertisement "serves the historian in every part of his effort to reconstruct the past," and that it is "an invaluable record in the reconstruction of the normal life of the past, — invaluable, because in large part unconsciously made and recording not only material conditions but even more clearly the intellectual and moral conditions from which they have sprung."<sup>1</sup>

In the present paper the writer purposes to describe some aspects of life in Minnesota, particularly in St. Paul and St. Anthony, in the period from 1849 to 1851, when these towns — the nucleus of the later metropolitan center of the Northwest — were in their infancy, basing the description upon contemporary newspaper advertisements. The writer is well aware of the fact that a full-length description of social and economic conditions in early Minnesota must be based upon a variety of sources — manuscripts, letters, books, newspapers, pamphlets, and the like. The advertisement is properly a supplementary source of information, but since one of the principal purposes of this paper is to illustrate the interest and value of advertisements as historical material, no apology need be made for utilizing only this one type of source.

In many of the homely aspects of living, the situation in Minnesota — and in America — about the middle of the nineteenth century naturally presents interesting contrasts with that of the present. Not kerosene, gas, or electricity, but sperm

<sup>1</sup> *The Newspaper and the Historian*, 375 (New York, 1923).

oil, and "Sperm, Tallow and Star Candles, by the box or pound," met the lighting needs of the St. Paul housewife.<sup>2</sup> In

**FASHIONABLE HATS.**  
 **J. D. NOBLE** has just received his usual large and well selected assortment of Hats, which are all of the very best articles and most fashionable styles, which he will dispose of either at wholesale or retail at reasonable prices **FOR CASH.**

Country merchants are particularly invited to call and examine his stock of hats before purchasing at other places.

My Spring Style of French, Satin and Beaver Hats cannot be excelled, either for beauty or durability.

Leghorn, Panama, and Straw, and every style of Fancy Hat can now be found at the **SIGN OF THE THREE HATS.**

**J. D. NOBLE.**

1½c's ex. Fr. satin hats.	10 doz. soft brush hats
20 " " silk	7 " " white " "
10 " No. 2 "	1 " beaver " "
10 " Angola	1 " otter " "
6 " ex blk beaver	1 " scol " "
5 " No. 2 "	30 " blk. cas'o "
10 " blk nutria	80 " " wool " "
5 " blk brush N. S.	17 " pearl wool "
10 " common	6 " brown " "
75 " old style	95 " miners' " "
10 " coney	10 " boys' " "
13 " boys' fancy	30 " blue old st'le "
3 " mens' Hung'n	10 " mens' straw "
50 " mens' Leghorn	3 " boys' " "
6 " " Panama	3 " " Leghorn "
100 " mens' palm leaf	20 " " p'm leaf "

Cloth Caps, Umbrellas, Walking Canes, Buck  
 Gloves, Mittens, &c., always on hand.

☞ Cash paid for Furs, Deer Skins and Bees  
 Wax. 2-4-1y [May 10, 1850.]

A GALENA MERCHANT INVITED MINNESOTANS TO BUY THEIR HATS DOWN RIVER.

[From the *Minnesota Pioneer*, August 22, 1850.]

complete assortment of ladies muffs, of the finest quality, and for sale low."<sup>5</sup> The clothing needs of her household could

the matter of house furnishings she was doubtless interested in "Marble Mantle Pieces of every variety . . . Furniture Tops, and Marble work of every description."<sup>3</sup> At the hardware store, among other things, she could buy bed cords, mahogany knobs, sleigh bells, gridirons, and cooking stoves. She had a fondness for shawls and the advertisements reminded her of ample stocks of "shawls—Cashmere, Marino, blanket and delane Shawls";<sup>4</sup> and no doubt she was intrigued when she read the announcement of Freeman, Larpenteur and Company: "Muffs! Muffs! Received by the steamer Franklin, a

<sup>2</sup> *Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), April 28, 1849.

<sup>3</sup> *Pioneer*, May 30, 1850.

<sup>4</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>5</sup> *Minnesota Chronicle and Register* (St. Paul), November 3, 1849.

be met at Henry Jackson's store, which offered for sale satinets, Kentucky jeans, "bang up cord," cottonade stripe, laces of all kinds, corset jeans, blue drills, lawns, muslins, Swiss jaconet, cambric muslin, gingham, delaines, bombazines, alpacas, "Gent's Cravats," silk gloves, and numerous other articles.<sup>6</sup> At Fuller and Brother, "one door west of the Rice House, Upper Landing," a cordial — if somewhat aggressively genial — invitation was extended to the public:

Examine, if you please, Ladies and Gentlemen, the prime staple, and firm texture of these woolen goods! Here is a "jam up" article of Sheep's Gray, for pantaloons; — or, if you want something finer, look at this Kerseymere. Here are Satinets, which are warranted to wear like buckskin, and which we could sell for all wool, if we were not too honest. Here are Vestings hard to beat, especially, when on the back of a fighting man. Examine that bolt of Fustian, so firm that it seems like anything but "all fustian."<sup>7</sup>

That institution known as the "general store" was ready to sell miscellaneous articles such as nails, shovels, window glass, playing cards, groceries, candy, nuts, mackerel, liquors, and tobacco.<sup>8</sup> When a bakery was established in St. Paul it hastened to explain that its products were not of the crude western variety: "Cakes, butter crackers, Boston crackers, hard bread and loaf bread, in the latest New York style, and all kinds of candies by wholesale or retail."<sup>9</sup>

Farmers could get the best kind of implements at a St. Paul store: "Grain Cradles. — Patent Grapevine Cradles; also, Scythes, Snaths, Forks, Shovels, Spades, Hoes, etc."<sup>10</sup>

If one may judge by advertisements, our grandparents were addicted to the excessive use of patent medicines. Dewey and Cavilier of St. Paul had an enormous supply:

<sup>6</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>7</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>8</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>9</sup> *Pioneer*, May 30, 1850.

<sup>10</sup> *Pioneer*, September 12, 1850.

## FAMILY MEDICINES.

Anti-bilious, cathartic, vegetable, and ague pills Coxe's hive syrup, Stoughton's bitters, Burgundy pitch, Liniment—volatile, nerve and bone, poor man's and anodyne; Am., Thompson's eye water opodeldoc, paragoric, castor oil without taste or smell, rheumatic drops, together with every article in the Drug line for sale cheap for cash.<sup>11</sup>

The same firm expatiates on the marvelous qualities of Dalley and Connell's Magical Pain Extractor, Dr. McNair's Acoustic Oil for the cure of deafness, Langley's Great Western Indian Panacea (for dyspepsia and liver complaint), and addresses a special message to ladies—in an age when bobbed hair was anything but “elegant.”<sup>12</sup>

To the Ladies.

*The Genuine Balm of Columbia for Restoring Hair.*

“Long Hair is a glory to woman,” says Paul,  
And all feel the truth of the pious quotation;  
Preserve it then, ladies—your glory may fall,  
Unless you protect it with this preparation.

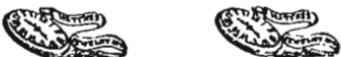
Column after column of advertisements is devoted to medicines, though doctors were scarce in the frontier town. On May 12, 1849, Dr. N. Barbour announced a new drug store and also declared that he would prescribe medicine “according to the Eclectic practice, as taught in the Cincinnati Reformed College of Medicine.”<sup>13</sup> He later made it clear to the public that in his practice he did “not use any calomel nor the steam system.” Dentists in St. Paul and St. Anthony had need, apparently, of a side line. The *Minnesota Pioneer* of May 30, 1850, announced that “Doctor Jarvis, Dentist & Daguerrean” was coming to St. Paul, not as an itinerant practitioner, but to “make Minnesota his home for life.” The

<sup>11</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>12</sup> *Pioneer*, November 15, 1849.

<sup>13</sup> *Pioneer*, May 12, 1849. Two of the pioneer doctors of St. Paul, whose cards early appeared in the *Pioneer*, were Dr. John J. Dewey and Dr. T. R. Potts.

nature of his practice was explained in the advertisement: "His stock of materials, both in the Dental and Daguerrean line is most extensive and complete. Pictures taken in superior style, in clear and cloudy weather." The doctor appears to have found the "daguerrean line" more profitable than the dental, for in 1851 his announcement was made simply as a "Daguerrean": "An Appropriate New-Year Present, Is a good daguerreotype likeness handsomely colored in fine case for \$2. Two heads upon one plate, \$2.50. Splendid gold and pearl embossed, satin, velvet and morocco cases, suitable for family groups."<sup>14</sup> Henry Fowler in St. Anthony combined dentistry with his work as a jeweler and as a repairer of guns, locks and umbrellas.<sup>15</sup>



**Henry Fowler,**  
**WATCH AND CLOCK-MAKER,**  
**DENTIST AND JEWELLER,**

**W**OULD inform the inhabitants of St Anthony that he has commenced in the above, and guarantees that all work done by him will be finished in the best style, and at reasonable prices.

Colt's, Allen's, and other guns and pistols cleaned and repaired, Locks of all kinds do.— Parasols and Umbrellas repaired. Engraving neatly executed.

*Shop in the front room of the Post Office, opposite the Falls.* 16

A ST. ANTHONY DENTIST WAS A JACK-OF-ALL-TRADES.

[From the *St. Anthony Express*,  
 October 4, 1851.]

Spirituos liquors flowed freely in the frontier towns, and their merits are given considerable space in the advertisements. Liberal amounts were available to customers. Thus "F L and Co." of St. Paul advertised "Whiskey — 50 bbls old rectified Whiskey, for sale cheap for cash,"<sup>16</sup> and wines, brandies, and gin were also in stock. John Orth of St. Anthony made the proud announcement: "I am now prepared to supply the citi-

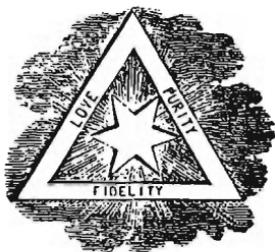
<sup>14</sup> *Pioneer*, March 13, 1851.

<sup>15</sup> *St. Anthony Express*, October 4, 1851.

<sup>16</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

zens of the Territory with Ale and Beer, which will be found equal — yes superior — to what is brought from below. I am now demonstrating that malt liquors of the very best quality can be manufactured in Minnesota.”<sup>17</sup> A St. Paul dealer made a crafty appeal when he promised “something to smoke, a good fire to sit by, and whatever is usually called

### SONS OF TEMPERANCE.



ST. PAUL DIVISION NO. 1.

Instituted May 8th, 1849.

Meets every Tuesday evening at TEMPERANCE HALL, at 7 o'clock.

#### OFFICERS FOR THE PRESENT QUARTER

B. L. SELLORS, W. P.  
 A. R. FRENCH, W. A.  
 T. DUDLEY, R. S.  
 W. H. NOBLES, A. R. S.  
 A. H. CAVENDER, F. S.  
 J. A. WAKEFIELD, T.  
 J. LUMLY, C.  
 W. A. CHAPMAN, A. C.  
 B. F. HOYT, I. S.  
 S. FISHER, O. S.

THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT HAD AN EARLY START IN MINNESOTA.

[From the *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, November 10, 1849.]

New England element was strong in early Minnesota and the

<sup>17</sup> *Express*, May 31, 1851.

<sup>18</sup> *Pioneer*, February 20, 1850; March 13, 1851.

for at a well provided bar,” and he exhibited a seasoned knowledge of human nature when he added, “People in traveling between the landings, who get fatigued, will find here a comfortable place to rest on their way.” A somewhat mysterious advertisement announces a “Liquorary Association,” with nightly meetings for the discussion of such important topics as “Oysters, Sardines, Pigs feet &c.”<sup>18</sup>

All was not bliss for the liquor dealer, however, for another and somewhat grimmer type of association was active. The

movement for temperance reform was early begun. On May 31, 1851, the *St. Anthony Express* carried this advertisement: "Sons of Temperance. Cataract Division No. 2, St. Anthony Falls; instituted May 18th 1850; meets every Wednesday evening at 8 o'clock precisely." An advertisement of "St. Paul Division No. 1" discloses that the Sons of Temperance were organized in St. Paul as early as May 8, 1849, and that they held their meetings at seven o'clock every Tuesday evening at Temperance Hall.<sup>19</sup>

The transportation problem of the remote frontier settlements, untouched as yet by railroad lines, was not a simple one, but the Mississippi River furnished a main highway and the river boats tied Minnesota to the outer world. Incidentally it may be noted that St. Louis, Galena, and Dubuque

business firms advertised liberally in the Minnesota newspapers. A. C. Monfort, captain of a well-known boat, advertised in the *Pioneer* of November 1, 1849: "Dr. Franklin No. Two Will leave St. Paul on Thursday Nov. 8, for St. Louis, Louis-

<sup>19</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, November 3, 1849.

SPRING & SUMMER ARRANGEMENT  
FOR



1850.



Regular Semi-Weekly Line from Galena to Saint Peter's.

Sir. DR. FRANKLIN, | Sir. NOMINEE,  
CAPT. M. W. LODWICK. | CAPT. ORRIN SMITH.

THE Nominee will leave Galena every Monday, at 12 o'clock, M., stopping at all intermediate points, and return on Friday. The Dr. Franklin will leave regularly on Thursdays, at 2 o'clock P. M., will remain at St. Paul on Sunday, and return to Galena on Tuesday.

Both the above boats are new, fast, light draught, and possess superior accommodations for passengers.

They will remain at St. Paul or St. Peter's sufficiently long to afford passengers an opportunity to visit the Falls of St. Anthony. Goods forwarded to the Agents at Galena to go above will be stored free of expense. Every attention will be paid to the comfort of passengers, and careful management of freight.

AGENTS.

B. H. Campbell & Co., Galena.  
Peter Waples, Dubuque.  
B. W. Brisbois, Prairie du Chien.  
H. M. Rice, St. Paul.  
Burriss & Hartzell, Point Douglas.  
Churchill & Nelson, Stillwater.  
April 6, 1850.  
32—6m—\$10.

RIVER BOATS CONNECTED MINNESOTA  
WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

[From the *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, August 12, 1850.]

ville, Cincinnati and Pittsburgh. To go through direct." Orrin Smith, master of the "Nominee," announced weekly service between Galena and St. Paul and advertised the cabin fare as six dollars for the journey upstream and five dollars for the trip down. It was apparently harder to get into than to get out of Minnesota. In 1850 a "Regular Semi-Weekly Line from Galena to Saint Peter's" was announced by Captains M. W. Lodwick and Orrin Smith, who listed agents at Galena, Dubuque, Prairie du Chien, St. Paul, Point Douglass, and Stillwater. They announced that their boats would "remain at St. Paul or St. Peter's sufficiently long to afford passengers an opportunity to visit the Falls of St. Anthony." These boats made connections with the "Galena and Chicago Union Rail Road," which also used the Minnesota newspapers to advertise its summer arrangements for 1850, with train service between Chicago and Elgin, and connected stages between Elgin and Galena.<sup>20</sup>

Transportation in another direction is described in an advertisement of the "Steamer Governor Ramsey, John Rollins, Master," which plied between St. Anthony and Sauk Rapids, leaving St. Anthony every Monday and Thursday at 1:00 P.M.<sup>21</sup> Charles R. Reed advertised an express line for passengers and freight between St. Paul and Prairie du Chien, with freight charges of two dollars per hundred pounds.<sup>22</sup> Burbank and Person's "Minnesota Express" made connections at Galena with the American Express Company and assured the public of "speedy and safe" transportation of valuables, with a messenger leaving St. Paul every Wednesday.<sup>23</sup> A four-horse stagecoach line connected St. Paul and Stillwater.<sup>24</sup> Pattison and Benson advertised a "Daily Line

<sup>20</sup> *Express*, May 31, 1851; *Chronicle and Register*, August 12, 1850.

<sup>21</sup> *Pioneer*, September 12, 1850; *Express*, May 31, 1851.

<sup>22</sup> *Pioneer*, March 13, 1851.

<sup>23</sup> *Express*, November 22, 1851.

<sup>24</sup> *Pioneer*, May 5, 1849.

of splendid Hacks between St. Paul and St. Anthony, during the season of navigation, leaving each place every morning and evening regularly; making twice a day each way.”<sup>25</sup> A somewhat humbler mode of transportation is indicated by such an advertisement as the following: “A pair of large, well-trained Oxen, in prime condition to work, for sale cheap for cash.”<sup>26</sup>

The isolation of the Minnesota towns after the cold weather had closed the Mississippi for steamboat navigation led to at least one curious project that to modern ears suggests a practical joke. It was apparently not so intended, however. It seems to have been a sober illustration of Yankee ingenuity coupled with a somewhat too trusting faith in the coldness of the Minnesota winter. The *Pioneer* of November 15,

1849, carried an advertisement announcing that the “Ice-lander,” Captain Orrin Smith, and the “Gladiator,” Captain Harris, were ready for business. They were “Locomotive Ice Trains prepared expressly for travel on the ice of the Mississippi” between Galena and St. Anthony, “with ten cars in each train besides the engine and tender cars, with ample arrangements for meals and for sleeping.” The trains “will commence running as soon as the ice is sufficiently strong.” “The prices of freight and passage for the present, will be the same usually

<sup>25</sup> *Express*, May 31, 1851.

<sup>26</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

### STEAMER



### GOV. RAMSEY,

John Rollins, Master.

THE light draught Steamer GOV RAMSEY, will hereafter ply regularly between Saint Anthony and Sauk Rapids, leaving St. Anthony every Monday and Thursday, at 1 o'clock, P. M., and Sauk Rapids every Wednesday and Saturday, at 8 o'clock, A. M.

☐ For freight or passage apply on board.

June 24, 1850. 43

CAPTAIN ROLLINS RAN A STEAMER ABOVE THE FALLS OF ST. ANTHONY.

[From the *Minnesota Chronicle and Register*, August 12, 1850.]

paid on steamboats in the month of September. The trains will stop at all the usual steamboat landings. As this novel enterprise is attended with great expense, it is to be hoped that the public will extend it their liberal patronage." One additional advantage is presented: "By this arrangement, tri-weekly mails will be furnished between Galena and the Falls." No further announcements of the project appeared, however, and one suspects that the ice of the river did not become "sufficiently strong." At any rate the project does not appear to have materialized.<sup>27</sup>

A less chimerical arrangement was that of M. P. Ormsby for the "United States Mail Stage Line to Minnesota," announced in the *Minnesota Democrat* for December 31, 1850. It provided for the conveyance of passengers between Prairie du Chien and Stillwater, by way of Black River Falls and Chippewa, in sleighs and carriages. The stages "will leave Prairie du Chien every Wednesday and Stillwater every Thursday, and go through in six days." Ormsby's announcement was modest: "His sleighs and carriages are covered and fitted up in a manner to render the passengers as comfortable as possible, and no pains will be spared to make the passage as pleasant as can be in a country and on a road so new as this is, and he is also happy in stating that the fare and accommodations on the road are as good as can be found on any road as new as this." Connections were made at Prairie du Chien with Galena, Madison, and Dubuque stages, and at Stillwater with St. Paul.

In the early transportation situation ferries were of considerable importance. In the summer of 1849 a St. Paul newspaper contained in one issue advertisements of eight ferries: the Sauk Rapids Ferry "on the road leading to Red River,"

<sup>27</sup> The *Pioneer* for December 19, 1849, carries a note stating that the openness of the winter has delayed the project for an ice locomotive train, but "that the thing is now fairly in motion." It is promised that "steam will be up" before Christmas.

kept by A. Grignon; the ferry at the Falls of St. Anthony, kept by Joseph Landrie; the Rum River Ferry, owned by A. Robert; the Fort Snelling Ferry, kept by S. J. Findley; the ferry near the mouth of the St. Peter's (Minnesota) River, conducted by Francois Gammel; the ferry at the mouth of the Swan River, kept by the well-known William A. Aitkin; the Crow Wing Ferry, at the mouth of the Crow Wing River, with A. Morrison as ferryman, who invited the trade of "Persons travelling to and from Lord Selkirk's settlement"; and finally the Stillwater Ferry crossing St. Croix Lake at Stillwater, kept by John Collyer. Other advertisements disclose the fact that several of the ferrymen, — Aitkin and Robert,

for example, — were also tavern-keepers.<sup>28</sup> In the *Pioneer* for November 1, 1849, is a formal notice that James M. Goodhue

<sup>28</sup> *Minnesota Register* (St. Paul), July 21, 1849.

### BURBANK & PERSON'S

#### MINNESOTA EXPRESS,

CONNECTING, at Galena, with the American Express Company, for the speedy and safe transportation of money and valuable packages, collection of notes, bills, &c., purchase of merchandise, by sample or otherwise, &c., to and from all the principal cities in the United States and Canadas

A Messenger will leave St. Paul every Wednesday, and Galena every Friday.

*All orders left with Messrs. J. H. Stevens & Co., will be promptly attended to.*

#### OFFICES AND AGENCIES;

MESSRS. RICE, HANEY & Co., *St. Paul.*  
 " J. H. STEVENS & Co., *St. Anthony.*  
 " CHURCHILL & NELSON, *Stillwater.*  
 B. W. BRISBOTS, Esq., *Prairie du Chien.*  
 F. STEEL, Esq., *Fort Snelling.*  
 PETER WAFFLES, Esq., *Dubuque.*  
 G. R. WEST, Esq., "  
 J. BROOKES, Esq., *Galena.*

July 19, 1851.

#### NOTICE.

WILLOUGHBY & POWERS would announce to the citizens of St. Paul and St. Anthony, and the public generally that they have placed a

#### *New and Splendid Stage Coach!*

on the road between the two towns, to run daily in their Line, and in a few days will have its mate on the same track, for the purpose of conveying passengers to the Falls, and Fort Snelling if desired.

They have also a large number of Horses and Carriages which they will let as cheap as can be afforded, to pleasure and private parties.

*St. Paul, Min. Ter., Lower Town.*

EARLY MINNESOTANS TRAVELED BY LAND AS WELL AS BY WATER.

[From the *St. Anthony Express*,  
August 23, 1851.]

and Isaac N. Goodhue will apply to the board of county commissioners for a license to conduct a ferry at the lower landing in St. Paul. That the Goodhues encountered some opposition is shown by the following advertisement printed in the spring of 1850: "New Ferry. The subscriber would respectfully announce, that having procured from His Majesty Little Crow a license to keep a ferry, she is now prepared to carry passengers at the rates fixed by law, and for as much more as the public choose to give her. 'Old Betsey.' 'The connecting link between the Indians and the whites.' N. B. — This Ferry is in opposition to Goodhue."<sup>29</sup>

"Proposals for carrying the mail in Minnesota Territory," called for in 1850 in a long advertisement signed by J. Collamer, the postmaster general, reveal the extent of the early mail service. Provision was to be made for three routes. One was "From St. Paul at 6 a. m., once a week, Monday; By Lake St. Croix, Nelson's Landing, La Cross, Wis., and Lansing; To Prairie du Chien by 6 p. m. next Sunday, 270 miles; And back between 6 a m Monday and 6 p m next Sunday. Proposals for more frequent supply will be considered." The second route was "From St. Paul at 6 a m, once a week, Monday; To Fort Snelling by 8 a m, 6 miles; And back between 10 a m and 12 m. Proposals for a more frequent supply, stating the number of trips, times of departure and arrival, will be considered." The third was "From St. Paul at 6 a m, once a week, Monday; By Stillwater and Marine Mills; To Falls St. Croix by 12 m next day, 49 miles; And back between 2 p m, Tuesday and 6 p m next day; With one additional weekly trip from St. Paul to Stillwater." It is interesting to know that under a federal act of 1845 routes were "let to the lowest bidder tendering sufficient guarantees for faithful performance, without other reference to the mode of transportation than may be necessary to provide for the due celerity, certainty, and security of such transportation." If a bid did not name

<sup>29</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, April 13, 1850.

the type of transportation proposed, the post office department assumed that it meant "horseback conveyance."<sup>30</sup>

The advertisements reveal certain opportunities for entertainment and recreation, though naturally the social life of the new towns — a social life notable alike for its vigor and its urbanity — is not reflected in the advertising columns save in exceptional cases. The *Chronicle* for July 5, 1849, carries a notice that "The Independent Order of Odd Fellows are about establishing a Lodge at St. Paul," and in the same paper for July 12, 1849, is an announcement of the Masonic Order. "A Splendid Bowling Saloon," was announced by Charles Cave of St. Paul in 1849 and a similar establishment conducted by Alexis Cloutier was advertised in St. Anthony two years later.<sup>31</sup> It is a far cry from bowling saloons to church fairs. The "Ladies of the St. Paul M. E. Church" announced a fair to be held on July 3, 1850: "The public is respectfully invited to attend the fair by candle-light. Articles useful, as well as ornamental, will be offered for sale."<sup>32</sup> Balls and "cotillion parties" were apparently popular, with announcements like the following: "The Ball Goes On! At Lott Moffatt's on the evening of February 27th, there will be a ball; at which all gentlemen with their ladies, in Minnesota, are invited to be present."<sup>33</sup> The "Minnesota Hunting Club" represents an organized attempt to cultivate a peculiarly appropriate form of frontier recreation. Its objects were "rational amusement, the sports of the chase, and the cultivation of a taste for the history of the wild beasts, fowl, birds and fish of the West." That its objects might legitimately have included the hunting of a somewhat unusual species of wild animal apparently was the opinion of the individual who inserted this advertisement in the *Pioneer*; "Notice to the Hunters' Club. There is a

<sup>30</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, February 9, 1850.

<sup>31</sup> *Pioneer*, November 15, 1849; *Express*, May 31, 1851.

<sup>32</sup> *Pioneer*, June 13, 1850.

<sup>33</sup> *Pioneer*, February 20, 1851.

lank old *land pirate* scouring about the wild lands near Saint Paul and Saint Anthony, robbing all the vacant tracts he can find, of rail timber. He is a regular 'wolf in sheep's clothing.'"<sup>34</sup>

Occasionally professional entertainers came to town. The "American Fire King," for example, was publicly announced for an exhibition on July 6, 1849, involving the eating of live fire coals, molten lead, and other fiery substances, and the drinking of "Boiling Brandy."<sup>35</sup> It is astonishing to learn that a circus found its way to remote St. Paul as early as 1850. A flaring advertisement in the *Pioneer* for July 18 of that year announced the coming of a circus for "two days' exhibitions," with a "splendid company of equestrians, gymnasts, acrobats, pantomimists, comedians, olympiads, and Herculeans."

Some light on the cultural interests of the people of St. Paul and St. Anthony is shed by the advertisements. A curious affair was a raffle arranged by Sergeant E. K. Thomas in 1850. He informed the public that he had "a copy of that celebrated painting of the Last Supper." by Da Vinci "which he was willing to dispose of in a Raffle, thirty-five chances, at one dollar each number."<sup>36</sup> On another occasion the enterprising sergeant offered for sale paintings of the Sioux warrior "Wah-ah-cor-dah" and of the Indian maiden "We-no-na."<sup>37</sup> The earliest book advertisements were from the Galena book store of J. Brookes. On May 12, 1849, Brookes announced Parkman's *California and Oregon Trail*, Fredrika Bremer's *The Midnight Sun*, Bulwer-Lytton's *The Caxtons — A Family Picture*, Jerrold's *A Man Made of Money*, the *London Punch and Illustrated News*, and a number of historical works including books by Macaulay, Prescott, Hallam, Bancroft, Russell,

<sup>34</sup> *Pioneer*, December 12, 1849; *Chronicle and Register*, December 29, 1849.

<sup>35</sup> *Minnesota Chronicle* (St. Paul), July 5, 1849.

<sup>36</sup> *Pioneer*, June 27, 1850.

<sup>37</sup> *Pioneer*, May 30, 1850.

and Allison.<sup>38</sup> On April 25, 1850, he announced Whittier's *Old Portraits and Modern Sketches* and Longfellow's *Seaside and Fireside*.<sup>39</sup> An early St. Paul book store was that kept by William G. Le Duc and known as the "Minnesota Book-Store." Le Duc did not limit himself to books. He was prepared to sell "Jenny Lind's best Songs and 100 pieces choice sheet music, Boston Melodeons, Kingsley's series of Music Books, Ethiopian Glee Books, 100 cheap Novels, Lady Willoughby's Diary, Irving's complete works," and other items.<sup>40</sup> A sentimentally suggestive advertisement of magazines was run in 1850 by Charles D. Elfelt of St. Paul, "St. Valentine; St. Valentine! Now is the time to subscribe to the Magazines; Graham, Godey or Sartain. A copy of either is certainly the neatest Valentine a gentleman can send a lady."<sup>41</sup> In 1851 Le Duc advertised *Dakota* by Mrs. Eastman, a *History of the Ojibway Nation* by Copway, and *American Institutions* by De Tocqueville. An advertisement of *Godey's Lady's Book* for 1852 primly reminds readers that in this magazine "the useful and the elegant will always be kept in view." The subscription price was ten dollars a year in advance.<sup>42</sup> Under the caption of "New Class Book for Young Ladies" the following characteristic announcement was made: "The Hemans Reader for Female Schools; containing extracts in prose and poetry, selected from more than one hundred and thirty different authors."<sup>43</sup> A prospectus "For Publishing a Dakota Lexicon, Under the patronage of the Historical Society of Minnesota" was announced in 1851.<sup>44</sup> Early library activities in St. Anthony were reflected in an announcement in 1851 that the annual meeting of the stockholders of the St. Anthony

<sup>38</sup> *Pioneer*.

<sup>39</sup> *Pioneer*.

<sup>40</sup> *Pioneer*, November 28, 1850, March 13, 1851.

<sup>41</sup> *Pioneer*, February 20, 1850.

<sup>42</sup> *Express*, November 22, 1851.

<sup>43</sup> *Pioneer*, May 30, 1850.

<sup>44</sup> *Pioneer*, March 13, 1851.

Library Association would be held on November 24 in the office of Isaac Atwater.<sup>45</sup> Some types of religious activity are given conspicuous announcement in the advertisements. Thus the *Express* for June 7, 1851, carries a notice of an important "Bible Meeting" to be held on the following day. An address was to be delivered at the school house in St. Anthony in the morning and a "Territorial Bible Society" was to be organized at the Methodist Church in St. Paul in the evening. The announcement closes with these words: "All friends of the Bible are invited to attend both the above named meetings."

Though the University of Minnesota did not open its doors until 1869, the regents of that institution of the future were apparently holding meetings as early as 1851. A meeting was called for June 3 of that year at the St. Charles Hotel, St. Anthony, and the regents, H. H. Sibley, B. B. Meeker, A. Van Vorhes, C. K. Smith, F. Steele, I. Atwater, and W. R. Marshall, signed their own call.<sup>46</sup> Probably the meeting was concerned with plans for the opening of the preparatory department of the university, for in the fall of 1851, E. W. Merrill, the principal, announced that it would be opened on November 26. He made public the titles of the courses to be offered and in later advertisements listed the textbooks to be used.<sup>47</sup> Some light on the manner in which the institution got its start is afforded by an advertisement signed by the treasurer, J. W. North, calling for prompt payment of subscriptions for the university building.<sup>48</sup> The university school apparently represented a public enterprise. A somewhat different type of school is indicated in an advertisement by Monsieur Benjamin Lessard, in the *Express* of November 22, 1851. Lessard, who had "recently arrived from Canada," proposed to give instruc-

<sup>45</sup> *Express*, November 22, 1851.

<sup>46</sup> *Express*, May 31, 1851.

<sup>47</sup> *Express*, November 15, 1851.

<sup>48</sup> *Express*, November 22, 1851.

tion in French, Latin, and other branches, including "epistolary correspondence to those sufficiently advanced." He explained that he already had some knowledge of the English language and he hoped "in two or three months to be able to teach English classes also with profit." A St. Paul "School Notice" printed regularly as a newspaper advertisement in the *Pioneer* in the summer and fall of 1850 is of interest: "The Provisional Committee of Common Schools, of Saint Paul, having sanctioned the employment of Mr. D. A. J. Baker, a competent teacher of an English and Classical school, earnestly recommend his school to the favor and patronage of our town. By order of the Committee."

The business and professional life of the two towns is reflected in many ways in the advertisements. The cards of the lawyers appeared week after week in the professional directory of the paper, supplemented from time to time by new names. Not a few of the attorneys announced that they specialized in preëmption claims and military warrants. It is of interest to note that some of the St. Paul lawyers had their announcements printed in both English and French. The business establishments of various kinds in the towns employed the newspapers to advertise their products and services. In St. Paul forwarding and commission merchants were regularly and prominently listed.

The advertisements show that St. Paul and St. Anthony were beginning to feel the boom that was to place them in advance of other Minnesota settlements. Hotels catered to visitors and newly arrived settlers, and their claims to patronage were advanced without undue modesty. "Rodney Parker, Late of Massachusetts," the proprietor of the American House in St. Paul, declared that he could "satisfy even the most fastidious." His table was supplied "with the choicest viands the country afford [*sic*], and prepared by an experienced cuisine [*sic*]." Visitors who desired to go to the Falls of St. Anthony or any other point could be furnished "with saddle

horses, buggies or carriages at any time for that purpose." The St. Charles House offered good accommodations to visitors at St. Anthony Falls.<sup>49</sup>

The *Pioneer* for May 5, 1849, lists no less than seven "house builders" in St. Paul. Newspaper advertisements show that the sale of town lots was being rapidly promoted. David Lambert had "the exclusive agency of that beautiful portion of the town of St. Paul, owned by Vetal Guerin, adjacent to

**ST. CHARLES HOUSE,**  
ST. ANTHONY FALLS, MINNESOTA TER.  
D. E. MOULTON, PROPRIETOR.



THIS elegant house has lately been fitted up by the proprietor, and he is now prepared to accommodate the public in the best possible manner. His sleeping apartments are large, neat and well ventilated; and his table sumptuously prepared with all the market affords. He will spare no pains or expense to render the stay of those who may call upon him agreeable and pleasant.

Families can be accommodated with large and convenient rooms.

*St. Anthony Falls, Min., Aug. 30.*

**FALLS BOARDING HOUSE.**  
**Cyrus C. Jenks**



In announcing the above establishment, begs to inform the public that his object has been, and is the comfort of his customers, with strict economy, attention and cleanliness.

Located near the Steam Boat Landing, in the upper town. The views from the house command the Bay and Nicollet Island. May 31

ADVERTISEMENTS DIRECTED TRAVELERS  
TO TAVERNS AND BOARDING HOUSES.

[From the *St. Anthony Express*,  
October 4, 1851.]

The *Pioneer* for November 15, 1849, contains no less than five signed announcements of this general type: "Came on to my premises, about four weeks ago, one yoke of Oxen (with

<sup>49</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, September 29, 1849; *Express*, December 6, 1851.

<sup>50</sup> *Pioneer*, May 5, 1849.

the Catholic church, and extending from the banks of the Mississippi, beyond the bluffs at the north of the town," and he announced that the "portion of this property beyond the town line is now being surveyed into out lots of convenient size for suburban [*sic*] residences."<sup>50</sup> That the region was still only thinly settled is evidenced by the number of advertisements telling of stray ponies, cattle, and oxen "taken up."

yoke on).” In St. Anthony a famous scout and Indian interpreter, Pierre Bottineau, appears in the rôle of real estate dealer :

P. BOUTTINEU,

WOULD announce to the citizens of St. Anthony, and the Territory, that he has land by the acre, and a large Number of Village Lots for sale, which he will sell *cheap for cash*.

ALSO — All kinds of farming utensils, such as ploughs, wagons, &c.<sup>51</sup>

The St. Anthony Mill Company announces in the *Express* on May 31, 1851, that it has four saw mills in full operation; in the same advertisement the company gives a price list and states that its terms are “cash on delivery of the raft.” An intimation of the coming preëminence of Minneapolis in the milling industry is afforded by the business-like announcement of Calvin A. Tuttle in the same issue of the *Express*, a notice that also appears regularly in the St. Paul press :

GRINDING

THE UNDERSIGNED is now in readiness for grinding Corn, Rye, Oats, Peas, Buckwheat and whatever else requires grinding, including Salt, at the grist-mill on the west side of the Mississippi river at St. Anthony, for lawful rates of toll. When desired, grists will be received at the subscriber’s on the east side of the river, and be returned ground at the same place.

CALVIN A. TUTTLE

The advertisement of St. Paul’s first wagon maker, appearing in the *Pioneer* for April 28, 1849, is of interest : “I want three thousand Spokes, of good timber, for which I will pay the highest price in cash. Wm. H. Nobles.” That Nobles was more than an ordinary wagon maker may be inferred from his later career, for he was appointed in the fifties by the federal government to lay out a wagon road to the Pacific and he became the discoverer of Nobles’ Pass through the Rockies.

<sup>51</sup> *Express*, May 31, 1851.

The heyday of the fur trade in Minnesota had been passed by 1849, and an evidence of its declining fortunes is the following advertisement:

## NOTICE

IS HEREBY given that the co-partnership heretofore existing between P. Chouteau, jr. & co. of St. Louis, H. H. Sibley, H. M. Rice and Sylvanus B. Lowry, under the name and style of Northern Outfit, including Sioux Outfit and Winnebago and Chippewa Outfit, is hereby dissolved by consent of the parties. The liquidation of the amounts properly due by said business or co-partnership, as well as the general adjustment of all matters appertaining thereto, will be attended to by said H. H. Sibley.

P. CHOUTEAU, Jr. & CO.,  
H. H. SIBLEY

St. Paul, Oct. 12, 1849.

Prairie du Chien Patriot, Galena papers, Gazette Burlington, I. and St. Louis Republican and Union, please copy.<sup>52</sup>

It is interesting to note, however, that the name at least of a great fur company was preserved in the St. Paul firm of "W. H. Forbes, American Fur Company, St. Paul Outfit, also Dry Goods and Groceries. — Bench Street."<sup>53</sup>

Not a few of the advertisements touch upon the relations between the Indians and the whites. Thus Nathaniel McLean, the subagent at St. Peter's, announced on February 15, 1850, that the bureau of Indian affairs had given him instructions "to put a stop to all trespassers upon Indian Lands, by commencing suits in all cases where proof can be obtained. No purchase of timber or firewood from an Indian chief or bands of Indians combined will be recognized as valid."<sup>54</sup> In March, 1850, Alexander Ramsey advertised that he would buy at reasonable figures a hundred horses for the Sioux Indians.<sup>55</sup> Proposals for the transportation of annuity goods to the "Winnebagoes, Chippewas and Pillagers" were called for by J. E. Fletcher, Indian agent, on March 15, 1850. A sim-

<sup>52</sup> *Pioneer*, November 15, 1849, and many later issues.

<sup>53</sup> *Pioneer*, April 28, 1849.

<sup>54</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, February 16, 1850.

<sup>55</sup> *Chronicle and Register*, March 2, 1850.

ilar advertisement for 1849 specifies transportation from St. Paul to the Winnebago agency at Long Prairie of 32,036 pounds of annuity goods, and of 16,321 pounds to be delivered at the mouth of the Crow Wing.<sup>56</sup> Another advertisement calls for bids on ninety barrels of mess pork, one hundred of flour, and three hundred bushels of shelled corn for the Winnebago agency.<sup>57</sup>

A St. Paul shop that was probably popular with the children of the worthy pioneers who founded the city was that of B. Presley. He exhorted his customers to "Walk in and See the Hanimals," and boasted the largest assortment of toys north of St. Louis. Apparently there were wooden as well as live Indians in early Minnesota, for Presley advertises thus: "Call where the wooden Indian stands sentry at the door and you can buy a little cheaper for cash than any where else in St. Paul."<sup>58</sup>

Since it is frequently assumed that the western pioneers were bearded men, it may not be amiss to note that in St. Paul their patronage seems to have kept alive the business represented by the following delicately worded advertisement:

ABSALOM LOST HIS LIFE FOR WANT OF A BARBER

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG, a Castilian by birth, continues to smoothe the countenances of the male public at the Central House, amputating the beard with the utmost facility, upon new and scientific principles. He also performs the operation of hair-cutting and hair dressing, in the latest fashion and most approved style of the art. Shampooing in the Asiatic method, as taught in Constantinople, is also his forte. It will be his delight to render these operations as agreeable as possible without the aid of chloroform.<sup>59</sup>

The alleged "Castilian" is less suave in another advertisement, for he "desires to have it distinctly understood, that those who are indebted to him for his past services with razor

<sup>56</sup> *Pioneer*, August 30, 1849; March 27, 1850.

<sup>57</sup> *Pioneer*, October 4, 1849.

<sup>58</sup> *Pioneer*, May 23, 1850.

<sup>59</sup> *Pioneer*, May 30, 1850.

and shears, are expected forthwith to liquidate; and that hereafter, his business will be conducted strictly upon cash principles."

The uniform emphasis upon "cash principles" in the early business announcements of the two towns is what one expects to find. Some customers appear not to have taken these "cash principles" seriously, however.

#### RUN AWAY

From Saint Paul, without paying his honest debts a person in the shape of a man, calling himself DOCTOR SNOW, formerly of Prairie du Chien. This is to warn all persons against this man's rascality.

GEORGE WELLS.

Prairie du Chine Patriot please copy<sup>60</sup>

A "St. Paul Price Current," run in the *Chronicle and Register*, furnishes valuable clues not only to economic conditions as reflected in prices but to kinds of materials being sold. Though not strictly speaking an advertisement, the price list is printed as a supplement to the advertisements. One learns from the list for September 30, 1850, that buffalo tongues sold at five dollars a dozen, pemmican at ten cents a pound, and sperm oil at \$1.50 per gallon. Fresh beef was offered at seven cents a pound, pork at ten, hams were sold at twelve, eggs at twenty cents a dozen, and bread was available at four cents per pound loaf.

It is clear that the advertisements in the early Minnesota newspapers contain a wealth of information about the social and economic life of the people. Often this information does not go beyond a mention, a list of articles, or an announcement of a coming event, and it needs to be supplemented by other data. Itemized lists of articles of clothing or of pieces of household furniture are not as valuable as detailed descriptions, but they afford many very interesting clues. The kinds of tools and implements used, tastes in food and drink, and

<sup>60</sup> *Pioneer*, April 17, 1850.

tendencies in the use of medicines are at least suggested in the advertisements. Transportation developments are accurately reflected and many aspects of the business and professional life of the region are faithfully recorded. Some features of the recreational and cultural activities of the people can be learned from the advertisements — for example, kinds of entertainment, lists of books and magazines available in the book shops, formal library beginnings, and tendencies in public and private education. When the many items of information imbedded in the advertisements are dug out and brought together they give one something of the flavor of the times, revealing manners and customs in the broad sense. One must be careful not to exaggerate the historical importance of advertisements, but it is undeniable that they have considerable value for “the reconstruction of the normal life of the past.”

THEODORE C. BLEGEN

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ST. PAUL



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