

a certain fictitious Mr. Thompson, hoping thereby to gain information regarding Adolphine de Courcy who has been traced to his door." Mr. Marcus L. Hansen, in his volume on *Old Fort Snelling*, draws an interesting picture of the circumstances connected with the presentation of this farce: "Here, far from city streets and French barbers," he writes, "on a rude stage, Jack Ardourly fell in love with the beautiful Adolphine de Courcy — who probably only a few hours before had been hurrying to finish a task of cleaning guns so that she could call on the generous women of the garrison and beg from them capes and bonnets and hoop skirts!" Undoubtedly the resources of the entire Fort Snelling population were drawn upon in order to locate suitable stage properties for the production.

The "Thespians" of 1836 evidently were not the only actors to perform at old Fort Snelling. Colonel John H. Bliss, who spent several years of his boyhood, from 1833 to 1837, at the fort while his father was commandant, recalled that the soldiers "would get up theatrical performances every fortnight or so." He records that "those taking female parts" borrowed dresses from the soldiers' wives, and he adds that they made a "generous sacrifice to art of their cherished whiskers and mustaches." Such amateur theatricals seem to have helped to while away many hours of the long and tedious upper Mississippi winters, when work out of doors was impossible and time hung heavy on the hands of both officers and privates.

B. L. H.

### LOCOMOTIVE ICE TRAINS

In the article on "Minnesota Pioneer Life as Revealed in Newspaper Advertisements," published in the June number of *MINNESOTA HISTORY*, attention was called to an advertisement in the *Minnesota Pioneer* for November 15, 1849, of two "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 two trains were to be known as the "Icelander" and the "Gladiator," with Captains Smith and Harris in charge. The project apparently did not materialize.

Captain Fred A. Bill of St. Paul has communicated on the subject with a pioneer riverman, Mr. George B. Merrick, whose recollection of the project is that the "company that had the contract to carry the mail from Galena to St. Paul started it but it never amounted to anything." Mr. Merrick states that it was to be a long sled "propelled by a stern wheel studded with spikes." Captain Bill suggests that perhaps this sled "was to be the motive power and was expected to pull the loads behind it on other sleds equipped for carrying freight or passengers as desired." Whatever its exact nature, the captain is inclined to regard the project as "another of those visions that can rest in peace."

The following interesting reference to the subject of ice boats occurs in W. H. C. Folsom's *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 693 (St. Paul, 1888):

Several attempts have been made to navigate the river during the winter months by means of ice boats, but the efforts have uniformly failed. Of these attempts we mention the two most notable:

Norman Wiard, an inventor of some celebrity, made an ice boat in 1856 and placed it on the river at Prairie du Chien, intending to run between that point and St. Paul. It was elaborately planned and elegantly finished, and resembled somewhat a palace car mounted on steel runners. It failed on account of the roughness of the ice, never making a single trip. It, however, proved somewhat remunerative as a show, and was for some time on exhibition within an inclosure at Prairie du Chien.

Martin Mower, of Osceola, Minnesota, invented a boat to run on the ice between Stillwater and Taylor's Falls, in the winter of 1868-9. It made several trips, carrying passengers and freight. The rough ice prevented regular trips and the project was abandoned.

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