

## THE STATE HISTORICAL CONVENTION AT BRAINERD

“I am going again next year and I hope that the program will call for a three-day tour and convention,” said one enthusiastic member of the Minnesota Historical Society after returning from the seventh state historical convention, held in Brainerd and its vicinity on June 13 and 14. When the excursion started from St. Paul on the morning of June 13 the skies were leaden and a drizzle had begun. Nevertheless a crowded chartered bus and some ten automobiles appeared at the rendezvous in Anoka and as the party made its way along the route to old Fort Ripley its size increased until it numbered not less than seventy-five people, or five times as many as made up the group that set off from St. Paul in 1922 for Duluth to attend the society’s first summer meeting. The rain proved to be but a friendly laying of the dust; soon the skies were smiling; and as the tourists entered the region of central Minnesota, with its winding streams, its lakes, and its pine woods, nature was in one of its gracious moods.

At the outset of the tour the members of the party were each supplied with a series of multigraphed notes giving historical information about places along the route. Thus they learned that Osseo occupies a part of Bottineau Prairie, where Pierre Bottineau, the Kit Carson of the Northwest, located a claim in 1852; that at the entrance to Champlin the Daughters of the American Colonists have recently marked the approximate place where Father Hennepin and Antoine Auguelle launched their canoes in July, 1680, to descend the Mississippi to the falls that the famous friar named in honor of Saint Anthony of Padua; that the mouth of the Rum River was the scene in 1839 of a fierce battle between the Sioux and the Chippewa; that this automobile party of 1928 was following the same

route that the Red River cart trains of seventy years ago traversed with swarthy *bois brulés* plodding wearily along in the dust of the prairie to the siren squeaking of their carts; that St. Cloud, an important stopping place for the cart brigades, was incorporated as a town in 1856; that the village of Rice was named for George T. Rice, a tavern keeper on the old stage road that crossed the prairie some distance west of the place; and that Little Falls, recently heralded to the world as the home of the "Lone Eagle," is situated some three or four miles above the spot where Zebulon Pike — also a hero if not an eagle — built his stockade for the winter of 1805-06 while on his notable expedition into the heart of the Minnesota country. There are two kinds of tourists: those who see only with the physical eye, and those whose knowledge of the past kindles the imagination and enlivens the physical scene with the action of history. The directors of the tour and convention were determined that this should be an excursion both into central Minnesota and into the storied past of that region.

The general committee on arrangements was headed by Mr. Frederick G. Ingersoll of St. Paul, president of the society, and the management of the tour and convention was in the hands of Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the society's museum. Other members of the committee were Mr. L. J. Ahlstrom, Mr. Joseph Chapman, Dr. A. J. Chesley, Mr. E. C. Gale, Mr. J. H. Riheldaffer, and Mr. B. B. Sheffield, of Minneapolis; Mrs. S. F. Fullerton, Mrs. C. E. Furness, Mr. L. C. Jefferson, Mr. J. M. McConnell, Mr. Julius Schmahl, and Mr. Charles Stees, of St. Paul; Mr. W. E. Culkin, Mr. H. J. McClearn, Mr. D. E. Woodbridge, and Mr. J. L. Washburn, of Duluth; Mr. Roe Chase and Mr. Scott DeLong of Anoka; Judge L. B. Kinder and Mr. G. D. LaBar of Brainerd; Mr. R. D. Musser and Mr. C. A. Weyerhaeuser of Little Falls; Mr. A. W. Troelstrup of Cambridge; Mr. O. W. Samuelson of Carlton; Mr. A. J. Crone of Deerwood; Mr. Peter Schaefer of Ely; Mr. L. H. Pryor of Glenwood; Mr. Weaver Saterbak of Long

Prairie; Mr. J. C. Pope of Mora; Mr. F. W. Bessette of Orr; Mr. E. L. McMillan of Princeton; Mrs. Fred Schilplin of St. Cloud; Mr. H. D. Ayer of Vineland; Mr. W. E. Parker of Wadena; Mr. F. A. Althaus of Wahkon; Mr. Victor Lawson of Willmar; and Professor Irving H. Hart of Cedar Falls, Iowa. The invitation to hold the convention in Brainerd and central Minnesota came from the newly organized Crow Wing County Historical Society, cordially seconded by the Brainerd chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, the mayor, the chamber of commerce, and various clubs of Brainerd; and the chairman of the committee on local arrangements was Judge Kinder, who holds the position of historian in the local historical society. Other members of the local committee were Mr. T. T. Blackburn, Mrs. J. M. Elder, Mr. R. R. Gould, Mr. D. C. Gray, Mrs. J. M. Hayes, the Reverend J. M. Michaelson, Mr. Clyde Parker, Mr. E. H. Rhodes, Mr. Will Spencer, and Mr. F. W. Wieland, of Brainerd; Mr. R. A. Butts, Mr. T. G. Johnson, and Mr. F. H. Kraus, of Crosby; Mr. L. E. Clouse, Mr. S. R. Kramer, and Mr. Claude Tucker, of Fort Ripley; Mrs. M. A. Bronson of Merrifield; and Mr. Ayer of Vineland.

A large contingent of people from Brainerd and the village of Fort Ripley were waiting for the tourists at a natural park on the east bank of the Mississippi nearly opposite the site of old Fort Ripley. Here a complimentary picnic luncheon was provided by the members of the Crow Wing County Historical Society and was eaten to the strains of martial music furnished by the gorgeously uniformed Brainerd Ladies' Band under the direction of Miss Effie Drexler. After the luncheon some two hundred people formed a semicircle about an improvised speaker's stand and the first session of the convention was opened, with Theodore C. Blegen, assistant superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, presiding. A military note was sounded by the drum and bugle corps of the Brainerd boy scout troops, which contributed the first number of the program, with

special bugling by Mr. Dale Sanders. A hearty welcome was then extended to the visitors by Mr. S. R. Adair, the president of the Crow Wing County Historical Society, and Mr. J. L. Washburn of Duluth, a member of the executive council of the state society, responded.

After a number by the band, Judge Kinder delivered an address in which he told vividly and concisely "The Story of Old Fort Ripley."<sup>1</sup> Through the courtesy of the Crow Wing County Historical Society copies of a specially printed picture of the fort as it looked in the early sixties were distributed among the members of the audience while Judge Kinder was relating its history. The post was established in the year when gold was discovered in California. Protection for the Winnebago Indians, who had been assigned lands in Minnesota after ceding their Iowa land, and the checking of Sioux-Chippewa hostilities were among the objects that led the government to set up this fort in north central Minnesota, according to Judge Kinder. In November, 1848, General George M. Brooks of St. Louis, with staff officers and a squad of dragoons, proceeded up the Mississippi to the old trading post of Crow Wing and selected a site for a military post on the west bank of the Mississippi just below the mouth of the Nokasippi River. Captain Napoleon J. T. Dana, later colonel of the First Minnesota Volunteer Infantry, was ordered to superintend the work. Temporary log buildings were erected to house the workmen, a sawmill was built, and logs were prepared during the winter. In all sixteen frame buildings were erected on three sides of a square whose opening faced the Mississippi, with two angles guarded by log blockhouses. On May 13, 1849, Company A of the Sixth United States Infantry arrived from Fort Snelling under Captain J. B. S. Todd to form the garrison.

The fort was compelled to depend upon a ferry for its connection with the military road from Fort Snelling to Crow Wing, the speaker said; occasionally floating ice would carry

<sup>1</sup> This address is published in full in the *Brainerd Daily Dispatch* for June 13, 1928.

the ferry down stream and on one occasion it upset in mid-stream and one soldier was drowned. The first eight years of Fort Ripley were peaceful ones; a faithful record of its routine and casual happenings is to be found in the manuscript diary of the chaplain, the Reverend Solon W. Manney, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society, which Judge Kinder had used. Upon the withdrawal of the garrison in June, 1857, the Chippewa became unruly and a number of depredations occurred. Three Indians murdered a German peddler and shortly afterward the guilty men were lynched by a party of whites. Late in August reports of trouble to be expected from Chief Hole-in-the-Day caused hurried calls for troops to be sent to Fort Snelling and their arrival at Fort Ripley checked the excitement.

When the government decided to build Fort Abercrombie a part of the small garrison of Fort Ripley was ordered to the Red River Valley to put up the new post, the speaker said. Constant changes in the personnel occurred, especially after the Civil War opened. In fact, in its twenty-six years of activity Fort Ripley had not less than sixty different commanders. Judge Kinder gave a brief account of the situation at the fort during the Sioux War. When news of the outbreak reached it the garrison of thirty men hurriedly molded bullets during all of one night and prepared vigorously to resist attack. For a time the attitude of Hole-in-the-Day seemed to threaten an uprising on the part of the Chippewa, but an order to cut off the supplies of the Indians brought an end to the disturbance and matters quieted down. After the Civil War there was little need for the post; one after another its buildings were destroyed by fire; in July, 1878, it was abandoned, and two years later the site was sold. The fifty-two bodies in the post cemetery were removed to the national cemetery at Rock Island.

“That the annals of Fort Ripley are not more bloody,” said Judge Kinder in conclusion, “evidences the efficacy with which it protected this section of the state. The swords of its soldiers

have long ago been sheathed or beaten into plowshares. The windows and boards of its buildings have been turned into claim cabins; the stones of its foundations used in a bridge across the Mississippi. Like the pioneers it knew, it is gone. But its memory is still cherished. The Crow Wing County Historical Society hopes some day to acquire its site for a Fort Ripley Memorial Park."

Not all the soldier pioneers that knew the daily routine of old Fort Ripley are gone, however. Among the people who listened to Judge Kinder's interesting address was an old soldier, L. E. Day of Clinton Falls, who was on duty at Fort Ripley in the winter of 1861-62. In the nearly seventy years since, Mr. Day had never revisited this scene of his early soldiering. Now, hale and hearty at the age of ninety-one, he had returned, accompanied by his son, Dr. G. R. Day of Farmington. Alert and clear of memory, Mr. Day, when introduced to the audience, gave an interesting brief account of his experiences as a bugler at this frontier post on the upper Mississippi. Yet another Fort Ripley soldier was in the audience, Mr. Homer Moore, who was born in New York in 1838 and came to Minnesota in 1864. In that year the company in which he was enrolled was ordered from Fort Snelling to Fort Ripley, but as he was unable to make the trip with the company owing to illness he later rode alone to the fort on horseback. When introduced to the audience Mr. Moore gave an excellent short speech telling about this ride and his connection with the fort.

The last number on the program of the session was a paper on "The Virginia, the Clermont of the Upper Mississippi," given by Mr. William J. Petersen, a graduate student at the University of Iowa. Mr. Petersen is making an extended study of the history of steamboat navigation on the upper waters of the Mississippi and his account of the pioneer boat that steamed up the river from St. Louis to Fort Snelling in the spring of 1823 forms a part of this larger study. His paper will be published in full in an early number of this magazine.

After this meeting a visit was made to the site of the post, on the west side of the river. Of the many buildings of the original fort all have been levelled by time and circumstance save one, an old powder magazine of hewn stone and brick, the battered walls of which are still standing. Near by on the fort grounds are depressions marking the sites of other buildings, and in some cases even these cavities are half hidden by the waving grasses — as one tourist learned with some discomfiture when he drove his car into a military cellar of the fifties. Before the party left Fort Ripley a flag that had been specially hoisted for the occasion was lowered to the bugler's taps. A quick run, and the expedition reached Brainerd, passing on its way the village of Barrows, which only a few years ago was a thriving iron-mining town but is today almost uninhabited, its desolate houses and forlorn streets reminding one of some of the abandoned mushroom towns on the early mining frontiers of the West.

Brainerd, the convention city, is connected both in name and in origins with the history of western railroad building, for it was founded in 1870 as a result of the decision of the Northern Pacific Railroad to run its line across the Mississippi at this point and it was named in honor of Mrs. Ann Eliza Brainerd Smith, the wife of the first president of that road. Blessed by the favor of the railroad, the town quickly surpassed the old trading post of Crow Wing in importance. A substantial city today, it is the headquarters of an historical society that is attempting to preserve the records of the county of which Brainerd is the seat and center. When the tourists arrived the city was in gala attire, host not only to the Minnesota Historical Society but also to the League of Minnesota Municipalities, and these two organizations came together at the Brainerd Opera House in the evening for a joint session, with an attendance of about a hundred and fifty people. With Mr. Babcock presiding, Dr. William Anderson, professor of political science in the University of Minnesota and director of that institution's bureau for research in government, de-

livered a suggestive address on "Local Government and Local History." He called upon historians to pay more attention to the history of local government and local administration and urged municipal officials not only to make more use of the recorded experience of local communities but also to give more careful attention to the preservation of local records. The address is brought before a wider audience through its publication in full in this number of *MINNESOTA HISTORY*. After its delivery the convention guests were invited to attend a band concert and dance at Lum Park, arranged by the citizens of Brainerd for the entertainment of the visitors. Not a few found time also to examine a series of special historical exhibits that had been assembled under the direction of Mrs. Bronson, vice president of the local historical society, for display in store windows.

The next morning, June 14, soon after half past eight, the second stage of the tour and convention opened when a long line of comfortably filled cars swung out on the highway bound for Mille Lacs, on the shores of which in the seventeenth century stood that Sioux village to which in 1679 Du Luth brought news of the dominion of his imperial master, Louis XIV of France, and to which, the next year, Hennepin and his companions came as captured emissaries of La Salle. The objective of the tourists was the Mille Lacs Indian Trading Post at Vineland, which was reached about 10:00 A.M. About three hundred people made up the throng that gathered there to view the Chippewa wigwams, to examine the remarkable collection of Indian objects in the museum room of the trading house, to see the Chippewa braves and squaws walking about in their full regalia, and to attend the program held in the open with the blue waters of Mille Lacs forming the background of the speakers and dancers. The session was called to order by Mr. Adair and the first speaker was Mr. Irving H. Hart, director of the extension department of the Iowa State Teachers College at Cedar Falls, who told "The Story of

Beengwa, Daughter of a Chippewa Warrior," based upon an interview that he had had with an old Indian woman of the Sandy Lake band. After Mr. Hart's paper, which will appear in an early number of MINNESOTA HISTORY, Mr. William E. Culkin of Duluth, president of the St. Louis County Historical Society, gave an address on "Daniel Greysolon, sieur Du Luth and His Times." Mr. Culkin is the author of an extended study of Du Luth and explained that in the time at his disposal he would present only some of the more important aspects of his subject. He pictured the great French-Canadian explorer as one whose love of wilderness travel and adventure kept him year after year a *coureur de bois*. In person he was "dignified and reserved but not cold and taciturn." He was some thirty years of age when he made his notable journey into the wilds of the region west of Lake Superior. The speaker asserted that Du Luth on this expedition probably followed the St. Louis and Savanna rivers, crossed Sandy Lake to the Mississippi, and thence made his way to the Sioux village of Izatys, later known as Kathio, on the southwestern shore of Mille Lacs. Here on July 2, 1679, with solemn ceremony he planted the arms of the king of France while the Sioux welcomed him as an emissary who would annually bring them ornaments, clothing, and firearms in return for furs. In 1680 Du Luth made his famous trip to the Mississippi by way of the Bois Brule and the St. Croix. How he rescued Hennepin, accompanied the Mille Lacs Sioux back to their village, and then upbraided them in council for their treatment of the friar, Mr. Culkin recounted. After sketching the later career of the wood ranger the speaker declared that he was unexcelled as a business organizer, a frontier diplomat, and an officer.

After Mr. Culkin's address the chairman called upon three public health nurses, Miss Josephine Parisien of Red Lake, Miss Elizabeth Sherer of Cass Lake, and Miss Adelia Eggestine of Mahnomen on the White Earth Indian Reservation for brief talks upon the problem of health among the Indians.

They described the situation and the various methods that are being followed in the work. Miss Parisien and Miss Sherer both can boast Chippewa blood, a factor that doubtless contributes to the success of their efforts among the people they are serving. After these talks Mr. H. D. Ayer, who is in charge of the trading post at Vineland, gave a brief account of the Chippewa who reside in its vicinity and introduced to the audience two old Indians, Wadena and Tom Skinaway. They proved to be natural orators as they told in Chippewa of the possessions that their people had once had in the Mille Lacs country and contrasted the former situation with that of the present. In the absence of the government interpreter Mr. Ayer summarized their remarks in English. A series of Indian dances and songs followed, with many of the Indians who were present participating, and finally some of the Chippewa men and boys entered upon a game of moccasin for the benefit of the interested spectators. After the conclusion of the program a pike dinner was served in the trading house.

The next session of the convention was held at Crosby, an iron-mining town on the Cuyuna Range, which was reached at 3:30 P.M. after a run of an hour and a half from Vineland. The visitors were reminded of the fact that it was Flag Day when they entered the flag-lined streets of Crosby and made their way to the city armory. Here an audience of about a hundred and twenty-five persons assembled for an historical program. Commander W. G. McDonough of the local post of the American Legion extended a welcome to the visitors on behalf of the mayor, and Dr. Solon J. Buck, superintendent of the state society, who presided at the session, expressed the pleasure of the visitors in the cordial reception given them by Crosby and called attention to the purposes of the society's annual tours and conventions. He then introduced Miss Mary E. Wheelhouse, editorial assistant on the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society, who read a paper entitled "The History of Central Minnesota: A Survey of Unpublished Sources." For

some years it has been a custom to have a paper of this general type presented at each state historical convention in order to draw attention to unexplored sources of information on the history of the various regions comprising the state and to arouse interest in the preservation of manuscripts of historical value. Miss Wheelhouse's paper is published in this number of MINNESOTA HISTORY.

The second speaker of the session, the Honorable E. P. Scallon of Crosby, gave an account of "Iron Mining on the Cuyuna Range." He first told of the work of Cuyler Adams, who in the early nineteen-hundreds bought large tracts of land in the vicinity for agriculture and lumbering. Adams noted a sharp magnetic deviation and set about mapping the magnetic lines and later started drilling at one point. He found iron ore 170 feet beneath the surface. In 1906 he devoted his attention to the north range, including the Crosby, Ironton, and Deerwood region, and in 1905-06 operations in the Kennedy mine were started. Another active worker on the north range was George H. Crosby, for whom the town of Crosby is named. The speaker described the various methods of mining that have been employed on the range, particularly the open-pit system. In all, he said, forty-five different mines have been worked on the Cuyuna range, nine of which are now in operation. He stated that twenty-five million tons of ore have been sent out since the first shipment in 1911. He spoke also of the importance of the manganese in the ore, explaining that during the war more than ninety per cent of the country's manganese came from the Cuyuna Range. The latter part of Mr. Scallon's address was devoted mainly to the prospects of iron mining in this region and to a criticism of the present policy of taxation of the industry. After this speech the attorney-general of the state, the Honorable G. A. Youngquist, who is *ex officio* a member of the society's executive council, was called upon and responded with an expression of cordial interest in the work of the society.

At the conclusion of the session the committee on resolutions, consisting of Mr. Charles Stees of St. Paul, Mrs. Fred W. Reed of Minneapolis, and Dr. G. R. Day of Farmington, presented the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, The members of the Crow Wing County Historical Society; the Brainerd Chamber of Commerce; the ladies of Brainerd; the *Brainerd Dispatch*; the Brainerd Ladies' Band; the Brainerd Boy Scout drum corps, the members of the various boy scout troops, and Bugler Dale Sanders; Judge Louis B. Kinder, Mr. S. R. Adair, and the members of the committee on local arrangements of Brainerd, Fort Ripley, and Crosby, Mrs. M. A. Bronson of Merrifield, Mr. and Mrs. H. D. Ayer of Vineland, Mr. Theodore G. Johnson and Mr. R. A. Butts of Crosby; the committee on general arrangements and Mr. Willoughby M. Babcock, the manager of the tour and convention; and all those on the program have done much to make the seventh annual State Historical Convention a great success; and

WHEREAS, The picnic tendered at Fort Ripley, the housing arrangements and hospitality extended by the citizens of Brainerd, the concert at Lum Park, the Indian program at Vineland, the hospitality of the people of Crosby, and the delightful drive provided by the people of Brainerd through one of the most beautiful of the Minnesota lake regions over wonderful roads have been greatly enjoyed by those attending the convention;

BE IT RESOLVED by the Minnesota Historical Society, its members and friends here assembled, that we hereby express our most hearty appreciation and thanks for all the many courtesies extended to us during the period of the convention.

After the Crosby session the visitors were given an opportunity to view some of the near-by open-pit iron mines in full operation. They then departed for Breezy Point Lodge at Pelican Lake, making en route a short detour through Ojibwa Park upon the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. John L. Smith of Minneapolis to see a venerable tree under which a Chippewa council was once held. The tour and convention came to a close at Breezy Point Lodge, where the tourists joined the League of Minnesota Municipalities in a banquet and listened to an address by Bishop G. G. Bennett of Duluth. The bishop stressed the importance and value of religion and the good

life and of coöperation among citizens in forwarding the application of high ideals to the administration of government.

Thus ended the seventh in the society's series of state historical conventions. One aspect of this kind of exploitation of local and state historical interest is the great amount of publicity accorded it in the press. It is noteworthy that in several newspapers the enterprise occasioned editorial comment, and this account may fittingly close with a quotation from an editorial written by Mrs. Bess M. Wilson and published in the *Redwood Gazette* of Redwood Falls for June 20:

To the people of the state the two-day trip of Society members should have much significance. Its value lies in an aroused interest in matters historical, in the retelling of tradition and lore and story and historical fact by those who went to those who stayed at home. Every member in the party was interested; this interest is bound to spread from person to person and to bring results in an increased number of interested ones.

But the chief value of such a tour lies in the fact that it awakens people to the importance of preserving manuscripts, letters and historical relics. It should be an incentive to them to put into manuscript form the "tales the old men tell" and to make permanent the wealth of tradition and legend while the makers of history are still here. It should also arouse in them a sense of the value of documents and manuscripts which may deal with this historical past, even though to the lay mind these writings may possess little but a personal value.

The Minnesota Historical society is a state organization worthy the moral, the financial, and the "unpublished manuscript" support of all the state's citizens.

T. C. B.



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