

MR. MC DERMOTT is professor of English in Washington University, St. Louis. He identified as Hoeffler's work the narrative here reprinted and its illustrations some time before the Minnesota Historical Society acquired a group of the artist's original sketches. We are presenting his Minnesota impressions exactly a century after they were recorded.

Minnesota Years Ago

Described and pictured by ADOLF HOEFFLER

Edited by JOHN FRANCIS McDERMOTT

OF THE MANY ARTISTS who roamed the Mississippi Valley in the middle decades of the last century sampling the strangeness of life on the frontier and examining the beauties of its scenery probably the least known is Adolf Hoeffler. Yet when the full story of his years in America is eventually pulled together he may prove one of the most interesting recorders of what was then western America.

Born in Frankfurt on Main, Germany, in 1825, the son of Heinrich Hoeffler, a painter, he studied under his father and other artists of Frankfurt until 1847. After a tour of Switzerland, Italy, the Tyrol, and a period of further study in Düsseldorf, he left for America, arriving at New Orleans on December 7, 1848.¹

In the United States he followed the typical career of the itinerant artist, painting portraits for a living while he filled his sketchbooks with impressions of the landscape through which he passed. He went up the Mississippi by steamboat to St. Louis and presently moved on to Belleville, Illinois. After some months in that neighborhood studying English and doing portraits, he went back to St. Louis in the spring of

1849 and was there at the time of the great fire in May.

During the summer he ventured up the Mississippi to Fort Snelling, a great point of attraction to tourists and to artists, and to St. Paul, capital of the new Territory of Minnesota. There he painted portraits of Mrs. Alexander Ramsey and her child, for which on October 18 the governor paid him fifty dollars. On October 24, Ramsey noted in his diary, Hoeffler left Minnesota on the "Dr. Franklin No. 1" for St. Louis.²

That he had kept busy during those months in the North is suggested by half a dozen signed and dated pencil and water-color sketches recently acquired by the Minnesota Historical Society. Among them

¹ Hoeffler returned to Europe in 1853, settled in Frankfurt in 1856, and lived there until his death in 1898. Biographical facts are from Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, *Allgemeines Lexicon der Bildenden Künstler*, 17:191 (Leipzig, 1924), and from the Hoeffler family through the courtesy of Professor Albert W. Frenkel of the University of Minnesota and Mrs. Helmut J. Sieverts of Thiensville, Wisconsin.

² The Ramsey Diary for 1849 is owned by the governor's granddaughters, the Misses Anna and Laura Furness of St. Paul; the Minnesota Historical Society has a copy.



HOEFFLER'S view of St. Paul, 1852

are two views of Fort Snelling, done on August 2 and 4, which show the post from the east bank of the Mississippi below the Minnesota. Two others made on both sides of a single sheet of paper on August 10 and 12 picture the Falls of St. Anthony from the west bank. A fifth sketch, done in September, is a view of St. Paul taken from some distance below on the east bank. The Little Falls, as Minnehaha was then known, is the subject of the sixth picture dated 1849. A handsome water color of the Falls of St. Anthony from the east bank—the most finished picture in the entire collection—is undated, but may belong to Hoef-
 fler's first visit to Minnesota.³

The painter's itinerary next took him up the Ohio to Cincinnati, where he made a short stay, and then on to Pittsburgh, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. Early in 1850 he was working in Trenton to accumulate by

³ Twelve of the society's Hoefler pictures—six for 1849, five for 1852, and one undated—were purchased for the society in the spring of 1952 by a group of its friends. They were obtained from the artist's granddaughter, Mrs. Hilde Jaspert of Oberursel an Taunus, Germany. The story of their acquisition was reported in the *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune* for May 11. Ed.

⁴ In the distribution of the pictures in December, 1850, this landscape, number 179, went to Alfred Mosher of Stanfordville, New York. None of the Hoefler pictures acquired by the Art Union has been located.

portrait painting enough money to finance a summer of traveling to sketch landscape. It was probably on a visit to New York early in 1850 that he submitted to the American Art Union a view of the Falls of St. Anthony. According to the catalogue description "the principal part of the composition is taken up by the river. In the distance are the Falls. The sky is covered by thick drifting clouds." From this description it seems possible that the water color of the falls from the east bank, mentioned above, served as the original for the oil.⁴

The following year two more of Hoefler's upper Mississippi landscapes were accepted by the American Art Union. Number 6, as listed in the *Bulletin* for October, 1851, represented Fort Snelling; in it "the river is seen by evening light. On the broad table land on the right are the buildings of the



fort, while beyond lie a line of hills." The other oil (number 21), a view of St. Paul, showed "in the foreground a promontory, with Indian wigwams. The river flows through the picture between low banks." All three canvases measured twenty by twenty-seven inches.

Hoeffler's next explorations were to the south, a trip which he extended in October and November, 1851, to Cuba. The only result known today is an article entitled "Three Weeks in Cuba. By an Artist" in Harper's New Monthly Magazine for January, 1853. Since three of the twenty woodcut illustrations bear Hoeffler's signature as delineator and since the author identifies other sketches as his own, it is safe to assume that both text and illustrations were Hoeffler's.

It is merely as the author of "Three Weeks in Cuba" that Hoeffler is identified in connection with another narrative published in Harper's for July, 1853. This is of double interest for Minnesotans, since in it he records both in pen and pencil his impressions of the upper Mississippi on a second trip to the region, made in the fall of 1852. With it appear seventeen woodcuts based upon the artist's own drawings. Six views in the Minnesota Historical Society's collection of Hoeffler sketches are signed and dated 1852—one in September and five in October.⁵ Additional pictorial records of the 1852 trip—views of Fort Snelling from Mendota and of the Mississippi as seen from the post—are owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin at Madison.

Hoeffler's "Sketches of the Upper Mississippi," as he called the second article published in Harper's, is a simple and vivid narrative that recreates for us today the Minnesota the artist saw exactly a century ago. In the following reprint, sections that merely summarize upper Mississippi Valley history have been omitted, but all that Hoeffler set down of his own observations of the Minnesota country in the autumn of 1852 is presented.

ONE OF THE most interesting and important portions of our country, whether viewed in the light of its past history, its present progress, or its future destiny, is that region which embraces the Upper Mississippi and its higher tributaries, known as the *Minnesota Territory*. It has a history coeval with the narratives of Marquette, Hennepin, La Salle, and other French explorers of the great Lake Country, a century and three quarters ago. Its fertility is exuberant; its climate, many months of the year, delightful, and never very changeable; its industrial resources are vast and abundant; and the promises of future glory, as one of the States of our Confederation, which its present progress and the great movements of society reveal, are full of beauty, grandeur, and beneficence. Its soil, capable of sustaining a population of eighty millions of inhabitants is most agreeably diversified in its external aspect by hills and vales, lakes and rivers, vast rolling prairies and magnificent forests. In appearance and resources, Minnesota has properly been called the New England of the West.⁶ From its bosom gush forth the fountains of great rivers which flow into the Atlantic, at points almost the length of the Continent apart—some through Hudson's Bay, some through the chain of great lakes and the St. Lawrence, and some through the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico.

This region was once the broad land of the powerful Sioux, through which flows the Upper Mississippi and the *Mi-ni-so-tah*

⁵ A view in pencil of St. Paul, sketched from the heights above the territorial capitol in October, 1852, was presented to the Minnesota Historical Society in August, 1952, by St. John's Abbey at Collegeville, through the courtesy of the abbot, the Right Reverend Baldwin Dworschak. The abbey received the picture from Mrs. Jaspert in 1948, as a token of appreciation for food packages sent to her family after the close of World War II. *Ed.*

⁶ E. S. Seymour, who visited Minnesota early in the summer of 1849, entitled his travel book *Sketches of Minnesota: The New England of the West* (New York, 1850). There is evidence that Hoeffler drew a number of his "facts" from this volume.

GALENA, Illinois,
in 1852



(turbid water), piously named St. Peter by the French missionaries. . . .

The Minnesota Territory was established in 1849, and St. Paul, then a hamlet of a few houses (eight miles by land below the Falls of St. Anthony), was made its capital. That hamlet, which even yet is on the borders of civilization in that direction, is making rapid strides toward the population and dignity of a city; and the Territory will soon have its sixty thousand legal claimants to the title of a sovereign State of the Confederation. To that land, until lately so dark, mysterious, undefined, and almost unknown, I went, with pencil and portfolio, in the autumn of 1852, to gaze upon its scenery, and wonder at the receding tribes which still linger, mere tenants at will, upon the borders of the Mi-chi-si-pic and Mi-ni-sotah, and to transfer to paper, as aid to memory in future years, many things that might seem noteworthy. I here offer a few of these jottings to the reader who, bridegroom-like, must take them upon trust, "for better or for worse," and prove their faithfulness by future experience.

⁷ The view of Galena and other woodcuts reproduced herewith are from *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 7:177-190 (July, 1853). Two little pictures showing "A Furnace" and a "Sketch of the Lead Region" were probably done at Galena during Hoeffler's day's wait for a boat. Several paragraphs describing the town are omitted.

HOW I GOT to Rockford, in Illinois, where the railway from Chicago ended, is of little consequence. Until then nothing had marred the pleasure of my journey; all had been comfort and convenience. During thirty-six hours after leaving that terminus, all was mud and misery. Jupiter Pluvius seemed to have upset his watering-pot; and into the rickety stage-coach, crowded and ill-ventilated, the rain trickled in little turbid streams. . . . We reached Galena at an hour past midnight; and it was ten in the morning before wearied limbs, and more wearied eyelids were aroused to the enjoyment of a warm breakfast within, and the glorious sunshine without. The storm-clouds had rolled away to the prairies of Illinois, or their homes on the lakes; and over the hills of Galena and the majestic forests across the river, the sun and the rain had scattered diamonds and rubies, emeralds and sapphires, in profusion. . . .⁷

We left Galena in the morning — a warm, serene, and altogether lovely morning. The headlands of the narrow and sinuous Fever River soon placed Galena out of sight; and after brushing the dew from many an overhanging tree with our wheel-house for almost an hour, we left the narrow stream, and were floating upon the bosom of the mighty Mississippi. I now beheld the Father of Waters for the first time, and the impression of its grandeur as its turbid volume

came rolling on in a still but stayless current from the far off wilderness, more than a thousand miles away, can never fade from memory. The aspect of the scene changed every moment as we glided by the beautiful islands, heavily wooded headlands, picturesque bluffs, beautiful green slopes, neat hamlets, and thriving villages.

Our first landing-place was at Dubuque, a town of Iowa, twenty-six miles from Galena. . . .

At sunset we passed Cassville, a finely-located town, but lying almost inert under the incubus of a speculating monopoly. Under more propitious circumstances it may become a large town. During the night, we passed many interesting spots upon the shores of Wisconsin and Iowa, and at peep of day we were greeted with the sight of the pretty village of Prairie du Chien, lying upon the river margin of the charming plain of that name, about four miles above the mouth of the Wisconsin River. The prairie is ten miles in length, and three in width, inclosed by bold bluffs sweeping in majestic curves around its borders, like the shores of a lake. Here was an early French settlement, and in its vicinity are rich copper-mines. Immediately south of the village is Fort Crawford, a United States military post, erected in 1819, but now unoccupied.⁸ Here the Mississippi presents a perfect labyrinth of islands, crowned with cotton-wood and willows, and festooned with vines, forming a scene highly picturesque and beautiful.

We did not tarry long at Prairie du Chien. Three hundred miles of our voyage was yet unaccomplished. The beautiful and picturesque scenery continually increased in attractiveness as we ascended the river, and the monotony of mere sight-seeing was relieved by occasional historical associations. Toward evening we passed the famous battle-ground of the Bad-Ax, five miles below the mouth of the Bad-Ax River, where the last battle of the "Black Hawk War" was fought between the United States troops under General Atkinson, and the



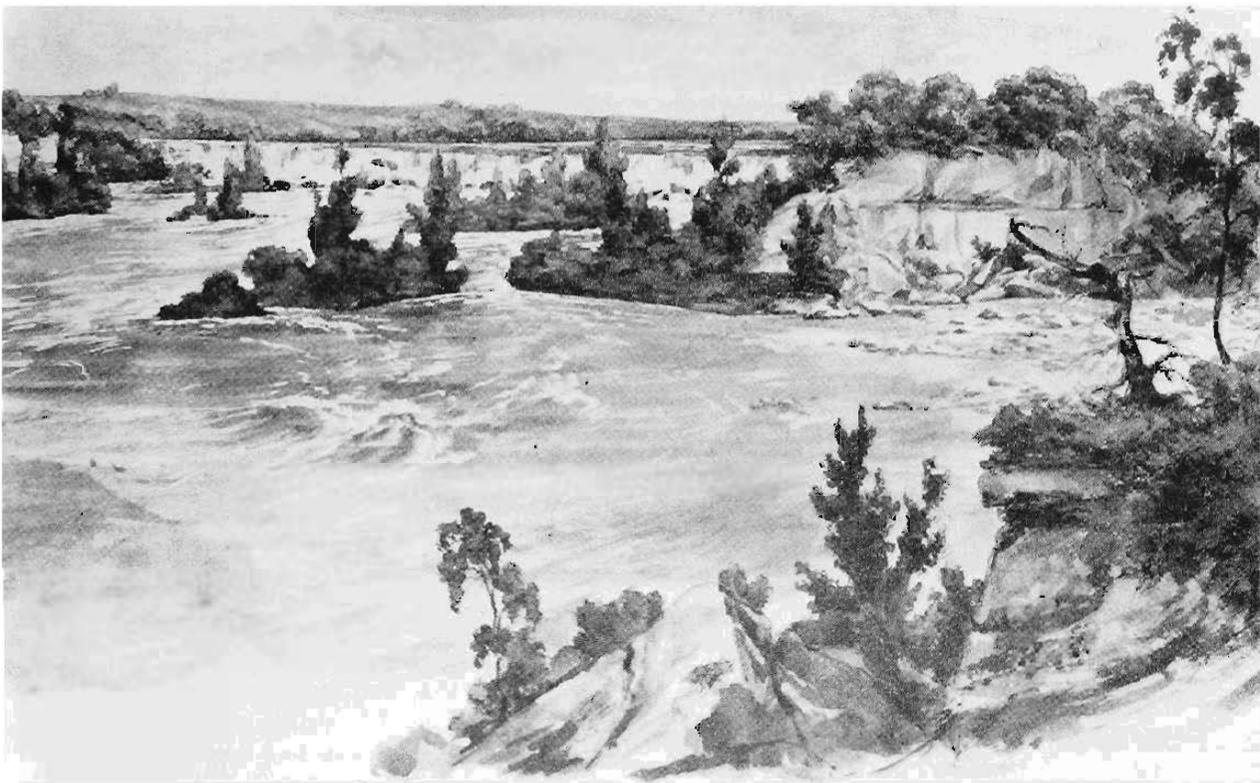
THE Falls
of St. Anthony
from the
east bank

Sacs and Foxes under Black Hawk. It was the decisive stroke. Many warriors, and their wives and children, were slain; the great chief and his brother were made prisoners; and the war ended.⁹

Our second night voyage brought us at daylight to Prairie du Crosse [*La Crosse*], another of those beautiful plains which abound along the Wisconsin shore of the Mississippi. It is a most lovely prairie, three miles in width and fifteen in length, level as a floor, and was formerly a place of great resort for the Indians to enjoy their favorite game of ball-play. It now contains many

⁸ There were resident traders at Prairie du Chien as early as 1779. For the early history of the town consult Peter Lawrence Scanlan, *Prairie du Chien, French, British, American* (1937). Fort Crawford was begun in 1816, and the troops were removed in 1849. See Bruce E. Mahan, *Old Fort Crawford and the Frontier* (Iowa City, 1926).

⁹ The statement about the battle of Bad Axe is compressed from Seymour, *Sketches of Minnesota*, 72.



French and German settlers, and the nucleus of a large town. Here is to be the termination of a railway from Chicago, by way of Milwaukie, and across the State. In anticipation of this result of enterprise, quite a flourishing village has already burst into bloom from the little bud of a few years of gentle growth.¹⁰

After leaving Prairie du Crosse, the scenery changed from the mere beautiful and picturesque to an aspect of grandeur. On each side of the river arose lofty bluffs—some rocky, and some alluvial—present-

¹⁰ Settlement at La Crosse began about 1841. Ebenezer Childs, who settled there in 1852, declared its population then was 116 and in 1858 about 6,000. See his "Recollections of Wisconsin since 1820," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 4:194.

¹¹ Wabasha's village was on the present site of Winona. Holmes Landing, which is incorrectly placed in Minnesota in the caption for one of Hoeffler's illustrations, is the present Fountain City, Wisconsin. At this point, the Mississippi forms the state boundary.

ing the appearance of Cyclopean towers, grand old castles in ruins, and grotesque figures of undefinable shape. These cliffs rise to an altitude sometimes of six hundred feet; and being highly colored by the variety of materials of which they are composed, crowned often with lofty pines, and clumps of birch and chestnut-trees, and hidden below by dense forests of oak, they have a mysterious beauty and magnificence hardly to be described. The hand of culture has not yet approached their vicinage, and those magnificent creations of nature stand there in all the solitary grandeur of the early centuries, before even the ancestors of the Indian tribes came to the Great River.

Just at dawn we passed Holmes's Landing and the beautiful prairie of Wapasha. We were now within the boundaries of Minnesota, and this prairie was yet the habitation of Wapasha (Red Leaf) and his Sioux band.¹¹ I never beheld a more charming

silvan picture than this prairie presented; and I could well understand the feelings of the sorrowful Winnebagoes when, in 1819, while on their way to strange homes in the deeper wilderness, they stopped here, raised the war-whoop, and determined to go no further. But Messrs. Bullet and Bayonet from Fort Crawford persuaded them that the arid plains of Nebraska were more delightful than the cool shadows of Wapasha's prairie.¹²

TOWARD NOON we entered that grand expansion of the Mississippi, called Lake Pepin. Its width is from three to five miles, and its length about twenty-five. It is destitute of islands, and all along its shores are high bluffs of picturesque forms, crowned with shrubbery, and commingled with dense forests. The white man has not yet made his mark upon Lake Pepin and its surroundings; and there lay its calm water, and yonder uprose its mighty watch-towers in all their primal beauty and grandeur. High above all the rest loomed the bare front of the Maiden's Rock, grand in nature, and interesting in its romantic associations. It has a sad story to tell to each passer-by; and as each passer-by always repeats it, I will not be an exception. It is a true tale of Indian life, and will forever hallow the Maiden's Rock, or Lover's Leap. Listen.

Winona, a beautiful girl of Wapasha's tribe, loved a young hunter, and promised to become his bride. Her parents, like too many in Christian lands, were ambitious, and promised her to a distinguished young warrior, who had smote manfully the hostile Chippewas. The maiden refused the hand of the brave, and clung to the fortunes of the hunter, who had been driven to the wilderness by menaces of death. The indignant father declared his determination to wed her to the warrior that very day. The family were encamped upon Lake Pepin, in the shadow of the great rock. Starting like a frightened fawn at the cruel announcement, she swiftly climbed to the summit of the cliff, and there, with bitter

words reproached her friends for their cruelty to the hunter and her own heart. She then commenced singing her dirge. The relenting parents, seeing the peril of their child, besought her to come down, and take her hunter-lover for a husband. But the maiden too well knew the treachery that was hidden in their promises, and when her dirge was ended, she leaped from the lofty pinnacle, and fell among the rocks and shrubbery at its base, a martyr to true affection. Superstition invests that rock with a voice; and often-times, as the birch canoe glides near it at twilight, the dusky paddler fancies he hears the soft, low music of the dirge of Winona.¹³

Late in the afternoon we saw the top of La Grange [*Barn Bluff at Red Wing*] and at sunset passed the upper entrance of Lake Pepin to the narrow river above. The scenery became less picturesque along those lower shores, and the coming on of night was not so much regretted as on the previous evening. We passed Lake St. Croix during the darkness, and at sunrise arrived at Kaposia, or Little Crow village [*South St. Paul*], a few miles below St. Paul. There I first saw an exhibition of that strange custom of the Sioux, of laying their dead, wrapped in blankets of bright colors, upon high scaffolds, instead of burying them in the earth. Several of these airy sepulchres, with flags waving from long poles over them, were seen a little in the rear of the village, and gave me the first deep impression that I was really in the midst of pagans.

¹² The Winnebago removal took place in 1848, not 1819; the principal reinforcements were troops from Fort Snelling; the new reservation was at Long Prairie, Minnesota. For a firsthand account by John S. Robb of St. Louis, see John Francis McDermott, ed., "A Journalist at Old Fort Snelling," in *Minnesota History*, 31: 211-216 (December, 1950).

¹³ Many versions of the Maiden Rock legend were in circulation. In the very summer of 1852 a river captain told a traveler that he certainly should be able to give the "correct" version, because "there is an old fellow lives down here on the shore who has told it to me more than twenty times — and never twice alike." *Missouri Republican* (St. Louis), August 31, 1852.

SOON AFTER LEAVING Kaposia, the whole panorama of St. Paul and the adjacent scenery burst into view, as we passed a headland; and in the midst of a motley crowd we landed at the capital of the Minnesota Territory. St. Paul is one of the hundred wonders of America. Here, five years ago, were only a few log huts; now there is a large and rapidly growing village of almost four thousand white people, with handsome public buildings, good hotels, stores, mills, mechanics' shops, and every other element of prosperity. St. Paul is upon the north (or left) bank of the Mississippi, which here flows in an easterly direction from the mouth of the St. Peter. The central portion of the village is upon a beautiful plateau, almost a hundred feet above the river; the remainder is chiefly near the

¹⁴ The site of St. Paul was included in the area opened to settlement by the treaty of 1837. The first group of settlers arrived two years later. See William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1: 219, 223 (St. Paul, 1921). For a more detailed description of the village at the time Hoeffler saw it, see Elizabeth F. Ellet, *Summer Rambles in the West*, 74-85 (New York, 1853).

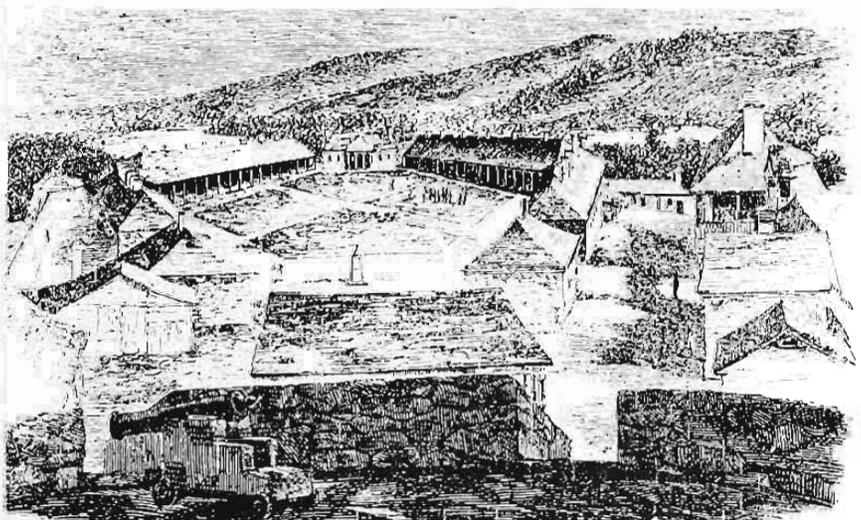
¹⁵ Ramsey's last annual message as territorial governor, from which the passage that follows is quoted with slight variations, was delivered on January 26, 1853. It was printed both as a separate pamphlet and in *Minnesota, House Journal*, 1853, p. 68-75.

water, and already there is a strife for supremacy between the "upper" and "lower" towns. The first sale of government lands there took place in 1848, and the ground upon which St. Paul is built was purchased in 1849, for the government price — one dollar and a quarter an acre.¹⁴ An idea of the wonderful changes in progress there may be obtained by reading the following eloquent passage from the last Annual Message of Governor Ramsay [*sic!*] to the Territorial Legislature of Minnesota:¹⁵

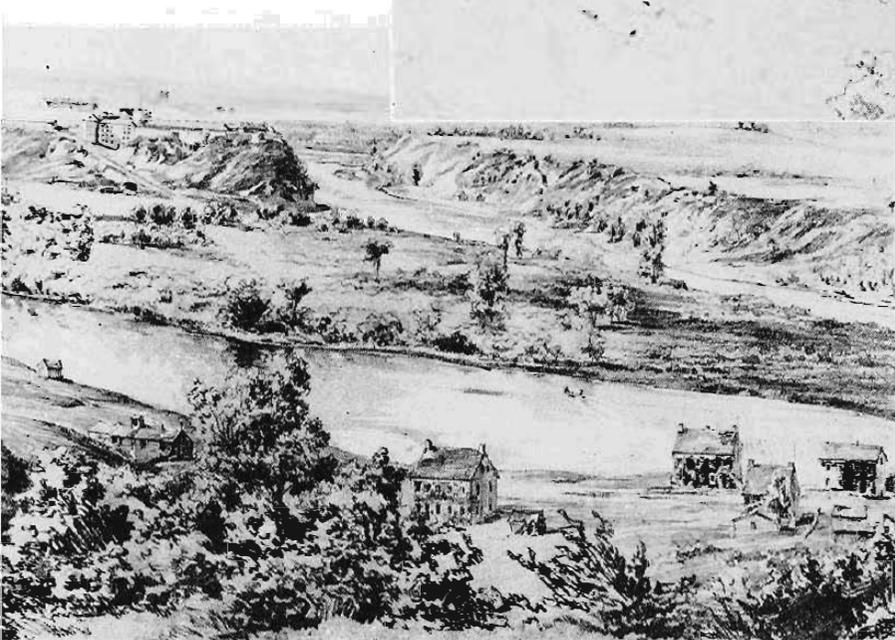
"In concluding this my last annual message, permit me to observe, that it is now a little over three years and six months since it was my happiness to first land upon the soil of Minnesota [May 27, 1849]. Not far from where we now are, a dozen framed houses, not all completed, and some eight or ten small log buildings, with bark roofs, constituted the capital of the new Territory over whose destiny I have been commissioned to preside.

"One county, a remnant of Wisconsin territorial organization, alone afforded the ordinary facilities for the execution of the laws; and in and around its seat of justice resided the bulk of our scattered population. Within this single county were embraced all the lands white men were privileged to till; while between them and the

INTERIOR
view of
Fort Snelling



DETAIL of
Fort Snelling
from the north



FORT Snelling
and Mendota

broad rich hunting grounds of untutored savages rolled, like Jordan through the Promised Land, the River of Rivers, here as majestic in its northern youth as in its more southern maturity.

“Emphatically new and wild appeared every thing to the in-comers from older communities; and a not least novel feature of the scene was the motley humanity partially filling these streets – the blankets and painted faces of Indians, and the red sashes and moccasins of French *voyageurs* and half-breeds, greatly predominating over the less picturesque costume of the Anglo-American race. But even while strangers yet looked, the elements of a mighty change were working, and civilization, with its hundred arms, was commencing its resistless and beneficent empire.

“To my lot fell the honorable duty of taking the initial step in this work by proclaiming, on the 1st of June, 1849, the organization of the Territorial Government, and consequent extension of the protecting arm of law over these distant regions. Since that day how impetuously have events crowded time! The fabled magic of the Eastern tale that renewed a palace in a single night only can parallel our reality of growth and progress.

“In forty-one months the few bark-roofed huts have been transformed into a city of thousands, in which commerce rears its spacious warehouses, religion its spired temples, a broad capitol its swelling dome, and luxury and comfort numerous ornamented and substantial abodes; and where nearly every avocation of life presents its

appropriate follower and representative. In forty-one months have been condensed a whole century of achievements, calculated by the Old World's calendar of progress — a government proclaimed in the wilderness, a judiciary organized, a legislature constituted, a comprehensive code of laws digested and adopted, our population quintupled, cities and towns springing up on every hand, and steam, with its revolving wings, in its season, daily fretting the bosom of the Mississippi in bearing fresh crowds of men and merchandise within our borders."

Yet all around this nucleus of a powerful commonwealth is the wilderness and its pagan inhabitants. Across the river we can see the Indian in his wildness and freedom upon his own soil; his canoe is darting in every direction upon the waters, and his squaw, with her papoose upon her back, is mingling with the crowd in the streets

¹⁰ Three legislators from Pembina traveled to St. Paul by dog team for the session which convened in January, 1852. Norman W. Kittson was a member of the Council, and Joe Rolette and Antoine Gingras served in the House. Clarence W. Rife, "Norman W. Kittson, A Fur-trader at Pembina," in *Minnesota History*, 6:249 (September, 1925).

of St. Paul. The legislators are obliged to traverse pathless forests to reach the capital; and it is worthy of record, for future reference, that the member from the French half-breed settlement at distant Pembina, was almost a month on his way from his home to St. Paul, to attend the last session of the Legislature; and his conveyance was a sleigh and dogs!¹⁰ A few years hence the Pembina legislator may make the journey in a railway coach in twenty-four hours.

I REMAINED a couple of days at St. Paul and its vicinity, and then started on a visit to the Indian in his native condition. Before ascending the river to the Falls, I went up a beautiful clear stream that enters the Mississippi two miles above the capital, to visit Fountain Cave, a remarkable cavern out of which this tiny river flows. The whole scenery was exceedingly picturesque. The entrance to the cave is an arched vault of rocks, about twenty feet in height, and twenty-five feet in width. The entire rock composing the level floor, the margin, and the roof, is of pure white sandstone. We lighted torches at the entrance, and followed the limpid stream from chamber to chamber for about seventy rods, when the

DETAIL from Hoeffler's water color of St. Paul in 1849



narrowness of the passage precluded further progress.

The scene in the interior, illuminated by torches, and contemplated by an excited imagination, was truly enchanting; and I was anxious to penetrate the gloomy adytum still further. Beyond our halting-place we could hear the murmur of the waters, as if leaping from point to point in little cascades amidst the gloom. This cave will doubtless be explored much further by more courageous and curious mortals than I, and will become one of the "lions" of St. Paul. About two miles below the village is Carver's Cave, said to contain a beautiful lake, and to be of far greater extent than Fountain Cave. Informed that its entrance had been closed by falling rocks, I did not visit the locality.¹⁷

The next day I went up the river to Fort Snelling, at the confluence of the Minnesota and the Mississippi. The current of the great river is here quite swift, and its high,

MINNEHAHA Falls in 1852



steep banks are composed chiefly of pure white sandstone. In some places the green slopes come down to the brink of the river, and the branches of trees, hanging over the rim, are washed by the tide. The Minnesota comes flowing through a wide valley, in meandering course, from the western hills four hundred and seventy miles distant, and enters the Mississippi at right angles with that stream.¹⁸ Upon the bold rocky promontory at their confluence stands Fort Snelling, an United States military post, erected as a defense against the western tribes. It commands both rivers, is a strong fortification, and has a powerful influence in maintaining peaceful relations between the settlers and the roving tribes beyond. The rock upon which it stands is pure sandstone, almost as white as marble, and appears in fine contrast with the rich green foliage, and the dark walls of the fort.

The military reservation embraces an area of about ten square miles around Fort Snelling. Over almost this entire extent, the eye may wander from one of the bastions of the fort; and from Pilot Knob (a supposed sacred sepulchral mound of the ancient people), in the rear of Mendota, opposite the fortress, a magnificent view is obtained of the high rocky banks of the Mississippi, with St. Paul in the distance; the broad and fertile valley of the Minnesota; the "meeting of the waters;" the fort, and its appurtenances within and without; Sioux villages, and the wide and gently rising prairie stretching away westward to undefined boundaries.

About four miles from Fort Snelling is the Sioux village of Black Dog.¹⁹ As in every other location of the Indians, a lively

¹⁷ According to Seymour, Carver's Cave, after being closed for more than thirty years, was opened by Nicollet in 1837 and was still open in 1848, but had again become closed up by falling rock in 1849. *Sketches of Minnesota*, 133.

¹⁸ The Minnesota River has its source in Big Stone Lake, 332 miles from its mouth.

¹⁹ Black Dog's village was west of Fort Snelling near the Minnesota River. A view of the village accompanies the narrative in *Harper's*.

LAKE of the Isles
and Lake Harriet



appreciation of the beauties of nature seemed to have determined the site of this cluster of huts. Here, too, I saw several bodies lying in blankets upon high scaffolds, beyond the reach of wild beasts, where they generally remain several months, their friends believing it to be a source of enjoyment to the dead to be, as long as flesh remains, where they may see all that is going on among those they associated with in life. In the course of a few months, they are usually taken down and buried in the earth.

The huts of the Sioux are rude structures, made of posts stuck in the ground and covered with the bark of oak trees, with only one opening which answers the double purpose of a door and window. A rude veranda of bark is generally placed over the door; and under this, in the open air, the families gather to listen to traditions, and common gossip when residing in the village, and the weather is too inclement to be abroad. A greater portion of the year, the villages are deserted, for the Sioux and their families are out upon the hunting grounds or the war path, and the movable tent or wigwam of buffalo hides, is, after all, their chief dwelling. To the pitching and striking of these, and, indeed, to every menial service, the women are devoted, while the warrior or the hunter is abroad, or lies stretched upon the grass in the cool

shade, smoking his pipe or adorning his person. The tent poles are never carried from place to place; they are cut by the squaws in some thicket, when demanded. A fire is kept continually burning in the centre of the tent, and over it is hung, from a cross pole, a camp kettle for cooking the meat of the deer, the bear and the buffalo. Around the fire the whole family sleep upon buffalo robes or rude mats, and nothing appears wanting to insure real comfort to these simple people, but cleanliness.

WANDERING in another direction from Fort Snelling, and when two or three miles distant, my ear caught the music of a cascade, and following the beck of its cadence, I came suddenly upon a high bank, crowned with shrubbery, which overlooked a deep chasm. Into this a clear stream, the outlet of several little lakes, was leaping from the crown of a precipice, about fifty feet in height. Coming upon it so suddenly and unexpectedly, and the bright sun burnishing every ripple and painting an iris upon its front, I stood in mute admiration for a long time, before I could open my portfolio to tether to paper, as far as possible, the beauty of the cascade.

The Indians, in their exquisite appreciation of nature, have given this water-fall the appropriate name of MINNIEHAHA or the The Laughing Waters, but the utilitar-



THE Falls
from the
west bank

ian, egotistical white man calls it Brown's Falls! In the name of common sense and all that is poetic and pleasing in human nature, let us solemnly protest against those desecrations which rob our beautiful lakes, rivers, and cascades of their charming and significant Indian names, and no longer allow every Brown, Smith, Snooks and Fizzle, who happens to be the first to see some beautiful creation of Nature, with dull eyes which have no appreciation for any thing more sentimental than a lump of copper or lead, a buffalo hide or a cat-fish, to perpetuate his cognomen at the expense of good taste and common honesty.²⁰ Let all good Christians, with proper reverence for every saint in the calendar, plead earnestly for the expulsion of St. Peter from among the naiades of these waters; let the *Mi-ni-so-tah* be called Minnesota forever.²¹

The distant roar of St. Anthony's Falls called me away from Minnehaha, and I hastened over a fine rolling prairie, bespangled with late-blooming flowers, passed along the margin of Lake Harriet,²² and at noon, after a ramble from the fort of almost a dozen miles, I stood upon an eminence overlooking the sublime spectacle of the whole volume of the Mississippi rushing and foaming along a bed of huge rocks, and falling, at one part of the cataract, about twenty feet perpendicularly. St.

Anthony! Shall we ever forgive Father Hennepin for hiding the Chippewa name of *Kakabikah* (severed rock), and the Sioux *Irara* (laugh), beneath the brown mantle of St. Anthony of Padua? Never mind; a cataract by any other name is just as attractive, I suppose, and so we must allow that, as "St. Anthony" the tumultuous rapids above and below the great falls, the piles of rock, the swift current and the spray, produce a *coup d'oeil*, as beautiful and imposing as if they were called *Kakabikah*.

Above the falls the river is about six hundred yards in width. In its descent it is divided by Cataract Island, a high, rocky

²⁰ Hoeffler's view of these falls made in 1849 is labelled "Little Falls"; that dated 1852, reproduced herewith and engraved for *Harper's*, bears the title "Minni Haha, Laughing Water." The name Brown's Falls, in use as early as 1823, probably was for Major General Jacob Brown. Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 230 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 17).

²¹ The Minnesota was known as the St. Peter's River for more than a century and a half before Minnesota Territory was organized in 1849. In June, 1852, a Congressional act officially gave the stream its present name. See Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 3. At this and other points that follow, there is evidence that a translator or an editor modified Hoeffler's narrative.

²² En route Hoeffler found time to sketch views of Lake Harriet and the Lake of the Isles, now both in Minneapolis, and a group of tamarack trees near Lake Harriet, all of which are in the Hoeffler collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

mass, covered with trees and shrubbery. All around this island, above and below, are strewn huge masses of limestone rocks, heaped in Titanic confusion, and attesting the mightiness of the waters with which they seem to be contending. In the greater expanse of the river above, is Hennepin Island, where the Jesuit [*Franciscan*] Father was placed by the Indians [*sic*]. Near it saw-mills have been erected, and the eddying currents are filled with logs which have floated down from the great pine forests of the North. A dam has been constructed from Cataract Island to the eastern shore, and almost the whole volume of the river rushes through the narrow western channel.

Directly opposite the cataract, on the east side of the Mississippi, is the city of St. Anthony. It is pleasantly situated upon a handsome elevated prairie, gently inclining toward the river. There was only one house there in 1849; now it contains a population of about two thousand. It promises to be an extensive manufacturing town, and depot of all the future productions of the extreme Upper Mississippi. Steamboats ascend from New Orleans to Fort Snelling, and small steamers are now navigating the Mississippi above the Falls of St. Anthony, a distance of about one hundred and eighty miles.

The city of St. Anthony has good hotels, and will hereafter be a place of great resort for summer tourists.²³ Now that railways are about to connect the Atlantic with the Mississippi for land travel, and fine steamers are daily traversing the whole length of the great lakes, the tide of fashionable Summer travel which has been heretofore at flood at Niagara, will flow on to the Falls of St. Anthony; and those who have been accustomed to angle in Lake George or the clear lakes and streams of Northern New England, will cast their lines ere long in the green depths of the remote Itaska.

THERE IS A COUNTRY beyond the Great Falls, of surpassing beauty, fertility and grandeur, not yet opened to the light of

civilization. It is still the abode of the dusky children of the forest; but the knell of their empire has sounded. It is heard in the ring of every woodman's ax, as he fells the mighty pines along the rivers; it is heard in the crack of every white man's rifle, who is seeking game for the markets upon the borders of civilization. Soon the Red Man's hunting ground must be far beyond the Red River, for the cornfields of the White Man must occupy all the land eastward of it.

A tide of emigration is just beginning to flow in that direction, bearing upon its bosom the elements of a wealthy and powerful commonwealth, the mother of two or three future States. Already its foundation is laid deep and strong in sound territorial organization and social regulations. There a new Canaan is opened to the toiling slaves of Europe, whose oppressors are driving them into an exodus, such as the world never saw. They are coming here by hundreds of thousands, and yet there is room. Our welcome to the oppressed is yet as free and generous as the couplet,

"Come along, come along, don't feel alarm;
Uncle Sam is rich enough to give you all a
farm.["]

The vestibule of Minnesota has only been entered. The great interior is yet unoccupied.

"There are its interlinking lakes; its forests wild
and wide,
And streams — the sinews of its strength — that
feed it as they glide;
Its rich primeval pasture grounds, fenc'd by
the stooping sky,
And mines of treasure, yet undelved, that
'neath its surface lie.["]

²³ First settled in 1847 and platted in 1849, this town was united with Minneapolis in 1872. A sketch of the village in the Minnesota Historical Society's collection is reproduced in *Harper's*.

ALL THE DRAWINGS and water colors reproduced with this article are in the Minnesota Historical Society's Hoeffler collection except the view of Fort Snelling and Mendota on page 120, which is owned by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).