

NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

HUNTING HISTORY BY AUTOMOBILE

Have you ever tried hunting history by automobile? If not, why not try it this summer. Unlike ducks and deer, the quarry is to be found, if one searches for it, at all times and in any part of the state, and there are no closed seasons.

Suppose we try the Minnesota Valley on our first excursion. High on the north bluff overlooking the mouth of the Minnesota River stands Fort Snelling, founded in 1819 as the extreme northwestern outpost of American authority. Across from the fort one may see Mendota, one of Minnesota's earliest settlements with its historic Sibley House, Minnesota headquarters of the great American Fur Company a century ago and home of the state's first governor, Henry Hastings Sibley.

Following one of the historic Red River trails, one passes up the valley to Traverse des Sioux State Park, the scene of the great Sioux treaty of 1851; to St. Peter, home of governors; to Mankato, where thirty-eight Sioux Indians paid with their lives for the outbreak of 1862; to beautiful Minneopa State Park; and to New Ulm, that interesting German community which saw such desperate fighting in the dark days of August 1862. Fort Ridgely, Redwood Falls, Wood Lake, Camp Release near Montevideo, and Chippewa-Lac qui Parle State Park are all names to conjure with in Minnesota history.

A second tour with interesting scenic as well as historical possibilities would take the traveler north from St. Paul on United States Highway Number 61. After crossing the old Sioux-Chippewa boundary line near Forest Lake, a short detour should be made on Highway Number 8 from Wyoming to Taylor's Falls, that interesting old lumber town, and to the Interstate Park. Thence back to the pavement

over Highway Number 95 and on through Mission Creek, Hinckley, Sandstone, and Moose Lake—towns that recall terrible forest fires which cost hundreds of lives—the trail leads to the St. Louis River on the old canoe route used by the fur traders bound for the headwaters of the Mississippi, to old Fond du Lac, where a Northwest Company fur-trading post was erected in 1793, and to Duluth at the head of Lake Superior.

Little need be said of the beauties and historic interest of the far-famed North Shore Drive through Two Harbors, with its gigantic ore docks, to Grand Marais and to old Grand Portage, the rendezvous of the Northwest Company traders in the late eighteenth century. Tower, where the first Minnesota iron ore was mined, Vermilion Lake, where men labored madly in the late sixties to find the gold which was reported to be abundant in the region, and the towns of the Mesabi Range, too, will furnish much of interest to the historically minded tourist.

Not far to the westward lie Leech Lake, Winnibigoshish, Cass Lake, and a thousand other lakes that were the paradise in years gone by of the fur trader and the Indian. It was at Leech Lake that Lieutenant Zebulon Pike, first American army officer to penetrate the region, shot down a British flag from the Northwest Company fur post at that spot in the winter of 1805–06 in token of the assertion of American authority in northern Minnesota. Through this region, too, journeyed Henry R. Schoolcraft and his missionary companion William T. Boutwell in 1832 on the expedition that culminated in the discovery of Lake Itasca as the source of the Mississippi River. Farther south is Mille Lacs, where Du Lhut visited the native Sioux in 1679 and to which Hennepin, emissary of La Salle, was brought the next summer.

Just west of Itasca State Park, with its wealth of virgin timber, one finds the great White Earth Indian Reserva-

tion, home of many Chippewa since its establishment in 1867, and the famous old Red River trail connecting the Mississippi River at Crow Wing with the Pembina country to the far northwest. The White Earth region, too, is rich in lakes and in glacial ridges that are relics of the days when the Red River Valley was covered with the waters of Glacial Lake Agassiz.

Swing south to Fergus Falls, the city that has sprung up splendidly from the ruins left by a great tornado; to Alexandria and Sauk Center, old stockaded towns on the stage route to Fort Abercrombie in the sixties; to the Norway Lake-Litchfield-Hutchinson area, where pioneers fought and died during the Sioux Outbreak of 1862; and on to beautiful Lake Minnetonka, famed summer resort in the region where Peter Gideon experimented with apple-growing to the lasting benefit of northwestern fruit-growers.

In the far southwestern corner of the state the red stone quarries at Pipestone extend a historic hand of welcome. Why not also visit Lake Shetek and Jackson, scenes of Indian disturbances in 1857 and 1862, and then go on through the southern tier of counties to Rochester and Winona before turning northward up the Mississippi River Valley through the old river towns of Reads Landing, Lake City, and Frontenac on beautiful Lake Pepin, to Red Wing, pioneer American town where Minnesota's first college was established in 1854. From Red Wing one may drive to the Twin Cities by way of Hastings, where stand today the ruins of a stone mill of the fifties, and Nininger, where the old Ignatius Donnelly home is a historic landmark.

Hunting history by automobile is a fascinating undertaking, and there is no community in Minnesota that is lacking in historical associations. Do not neglect to slow down when you see a black and white highway sign, "Historic Site Ahead," for just beyond there will be a special descriptive marker to call your attention to some interesting his-

toric site in the vicinity. Approximately a hundred such markers have been erected by the state highway department and the Minnesota Historical Society throughout the state. They have been set up to make your tours more enjoyable and interesting. Let's go touring!

WILLOUGHBY M. BABCOCK

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL



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](#).