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Governor Ramsey and Frontier Minnesota: Impressions from His Diary and Letters

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THAT GOVERNOR ALEXANDER RAMSEY'S *daughter left a description of his arrival in Minnesota and of his experiences in the fifteen years following 1849 was learned only recently. Mrs. Furness was born in 1853, four years after her parents arrived in Minnesota. Through the years, she carefully preserved her father's diary and letters, and to them she turned for information about his early experiences in the territory and the state. The resulting narrative, consisting largely of quotations from these important documents, was prepared during the First World War and read before the New Century Club of St. Paul on January 9, 1918.*

Since Mrs. Furness wrote for a listening rather than a reading audience, she sometimes combined diary entries or used other devices that might add to the smoothness of the exposition and increase the enjoyment of her hearers. Her narrative is here printed much as she wrote it. With the Minnesota Territorial Centennial fast approaching, it is particularly appropriate that the Minnesota Historical Society, which Governor Ramsey helped to found, should publish this fresh and authentic picture of his frontier experiences. Here, in the first territorial governor's own words, are described many of the events to be commemorated in 1949. The narrative was made available through the kindness of Governor Ramsey's granddaughters, Miss Anna E. Ramsey Furness and Miss Laura Furness of St. Paul. Ed.

IT WAS IN MARCH, 1849, as I need not remind you, that the territory of Minnesota was created by act of Congress, and shortly after, the president, Zachary Taylor, tendered the office of governor of the new territory to Alexander Ramsey of Pennsylvania. My extracts from his diary begin with this laconic entry of April 2: "Appointed Governor of Minnesota, and received commission. Wrote Secretary of State accepting it." How absolutely, even in name, was the new territory a "terra incognita" may be inferred from my mother's exclamation when told of the appointment: "Minnesota! Where upon earth is it? In Denmark?"

In Baltimore, en route home from a hurried trip to Washington on April 13 (and a Friday at that), he "Took the oath of office as Governor of Minnesota before Chief Justice Taney, calling upon him at his house in the evening." The point of departure on May 9 for the long journey west was New York City. The route led up the Hudson River to Albany, thence across New York state by rail to Buffalo, on the Great Lakes steamer "Niagara" to Milwaukee, and from there to Prairie du Chien and up the Mississippi to St. Paul. There the party, consisting of the governor and his wife, the nursemaid (whose wages, by the way, were one dollar per week), and the little boy Alex, just three years old, arrived on May 27.

This letter of June 5, 1849, to a friend in Harrisburg gives some of the details of the journey that are lacking in the hurried notes of the diary: "From Buffalo we came round by Mackinaw to Milwaukee, about 1200 miles on the same steamboat, and had a pleasant passage and most excellent accommodation. Reached Milwaukee on Friday noon and remained there until Sunday morning at 5 o'clock, when we took stage across Wisconsin — I having to pay as for two extra seats for my baggage. So far we had gotten along very pleasantly, but the stage travel across Wisconsin, especially the first 50 miles, is the most damnable riding I ever experienced. My baggage made the stage top-heavy, and we were in constant danger of an upset. I drove outside with the driver and bribed him all the way or I verily believe some of our heads or limbs would have been broken. It took us four days to cross Wisconsin, about 210 miles. We feared

we should be compelled to remain several days in Prairie du Chien for a boat up the river, but fortunately before we had been there two hours one came in sight, which brought us up on Sunday morning, May 27th. When we reached Saint Paul, it was very early on Sunday morning, and there being few persons about, the captain persuaded me to remain on board the boat, until she should return from Saint Peter['s] about 5 miles above.[1] This we did, and at Saint Peter met Mr. [Henry H.] Sibley, the late delegate from Wisconsin, and the agent of the American Fur Company. He insisted upon our landing and remaining with him until our house in Saint Paul was prepared for our reception. We accepted his kind invitation, and here we have been ever since, save that I have been to Saint Paul several times, to Fort Snelling and the Falls of Saint Anthony, etc. It is very pleasant here, their entertainment is good and kind. It is particularly agreeable to Anna, who finds in Mrs. Sibley's mother and sisters, friends who formerly lived on the riverbank in Harrisburg.[2] The climate here is delightful and the soil very rich. Saint Paul is a very new town, there is scarcely a house in it that looks as if it were two years old. There are no log houses, they are all weather boarded frames. At the Falls of Saint Anthony there is a town springing up. Stillwater on the St. Croix is quite a flourishing village. I have had two or three Indian Councils already, have smoked the pipe with them, and have received and made presents. Have issued the first proclamation declaring the Government organized, and shall now order the census taken, and thereafter an election to be held. Shall probably have the Legislature together in September."

The first month in Minnesota, spent in Mr. Sibley's hospitable home, must have proved a delightful assurance that the loss of agreeable and congenial companionship was not to be, in this instance, one of the hardships of frontier life. The permanent move to St. Paul is indicated in these entries for June 25: "Paid man on

[1] St. Peter's was the early name of Mendota.

[2] Anna was Mrs. Ramsey. Like the Ramseys, Mrs. Sibley and her family came from Pennsylvania. Her mother was Mrs. James Steele; her brother was Franklin Steele, a prominent Minnesota pioneer businessman; and one of her four sisters, Abbie Ann, married Dr. Thomas R. Potts of St. Paul.

bark canoe coming down from Mendota to St. Paul $2.00. Man hauling us from landing to house, $1.00." This last is not very explicit, but tradition has it that it was sitting on their trunks, in a wagon drawn by oxen, that the governor's family arrived at the new home on the river side of what is now Third Street, somewhere between Jackson and Robert. We have in the letter just quoted the first fresh impression made by St. Paul on the new arrivals, and I fancy that, except for the beauty of its location, most of us have seen on the western prairie many a counterpart of the straggling little village it was on that June day of 1849.

The new home was a house belonging to the American Fur Company, and it had just been put in repair by the company. It was a story and a half frame building, the roof extending over the porch in front. A large room facing on Third Street, which had been originally intended for a saloon, became the governor's office and reception room and his wife's parlor. In the reminiscences of William Pitt Murray, we have this picture of it: "Sometimes might be seen on one side of the room Mrs. Ramsey entertaining some lady friends, on the other the Governor with a half a dozen or more Indians . . . or there would be a squad of Indian traders who, no doubt, were advising him how to discharge the duties of his office. To his great honor he ran it to suit himself."

"We have now been living in Saint Paul about two weeks and as well quartered as we could desire. Our house is not very large, but is yet one of the finest private residences in the town and the only one that could have been had for either love or money." This paragraph from a letter written on July 7, 1849, shows philosophy and a masculine determination to look only on the bright side. But one would be glad to know now what the feminine point of view at the time was. In the balance of the letter we have some of the occupations which had made the intervening weeks such busy ones: "With the Sioux I held a general council on yesterday. They had so many complaints to make and favors to ask, that the Council was protracted to set of sun. Bad Hail, their chief orator, wound up his speech, remarking that they understood their father was a great hunter and they wished he would take a gun and go out and kill

them a deer — in English he wanted me to make them a present of a few oxen. As it is customary, of course I did. Our old Uncle Sam will pay. . . . These Indians are constantly visiting our house until they have got to be rather a bore. Alex is perfectly fearless, and walks up and offers them his hand whenever they enter."

But to return to the diary. There, on June 28, is mentioned the first guest: "Mr. Morrison of the Chippewa Trade dined with us"; and among the purchases of the day we find, "one quarter of veal, 35 pounds, $2.80," which proves beyond question that the fare, though simple it may have been, was not lacking in quantity. That there was quality as well, we may guess from this: "Strawberries, 50 cents." They were wild ones, of course, and picked, I dare say, by some enterprising squaw.

And that spirit of friendly hospitality which we know was universal here is everywhere evident throughout these pages. Not a week goes by without mention of guests at home, friends from the town, from Mendota, or Fort Snelling. Missionaries came from the country around; and sometimes an Indian chief or two from one of the near-by agencies appeared accompanied by the agent. There are constant references to dinner or supper with friends. "Party given to wife and self by Mrs. [William] Holcombe at Stillwater" is one of the entries for that first summer; and on October 12, "With wife Judge and Mrs. [David] Cooper went up to Mendota in the afternoon. Party there in evening. Remained until next morning." Nearly everything in the way of food, except game and perhaps a few vegetables, was brought up the river from Galena. The diary reads: "Paid the young Irishman on the boat" for tomatoes, melons, etc., or "Paid the old Irishman on board the Senator in full for articles brought from Galena." One has to remember how absolutely the river dominated everything in those days. A veritable "river god" was the Mississippi, the all-powerful Manitou upon whose favor all depended, but whose fickle and capricious moods, in the spring months of the year, must have been a sore trial of patience.

When the ice had become too thin to bear vehicles, and the melting snows had made the overland roads well nigh impassable, this

region was sometimes cut off for weeks at a time from all communication with the outside world. Then, as spring advanced, the passing of the ice and the opening of the river to navigation became the all-absorbing subject of thought and conversation. For example, March 23, 1850: "On this evening we have been eleven days without a mail . . . the delay can not be accounted for. Ice still on the river"; and a week or so later, "All the town out of patience at not seeing a boat arrive. It might have been expected long since. Ice out of the river far as the eye can reach." This entry early in April shows patience at the breaking point: "The river has now for nearly two weeks been clear of ice, or at least of any that would obstruct steamboat navigation, between this and the head of Lake Pepin, but, on that lake the ice is still solid and immovable, and we are thus cut off from intercourse with the world south of us by the obstinacy of this petty inland sea." Finally, however, the governor reports: "Great noise in town—great tumult, and presently discovered that a boat was approaching, the *first* of the season. This proved to be the Nominee and the Excelsior, with each about 350 passengers." But that there was some diversion to be derived from this great annoyance we may infer from this half-apologetic entry of a subsequent year: "I have, in consistence with the spirit of the town, made a bet of a box of cigars that there will be a boat in by the 5th of April."

Subject to drawbacks and uncomfortable in many ways territorial life may have been, but surely it was not monotonous. How full of picturesque variety it was, this description written by my father only a few years after he came to Minnesota suggests: "Emphatically new and wild appeared everything to the incomers from older communities, and not the least novel feature of the scene was the motley humanity, filling these streets—the blankets and painted faces of the Indians, and the red sashes and mocassins of the French voyageurs and half-breeds." Everything connected with the Indians must have been at first of tremendous interest—their curious characteristics and customs and even their strange-sounding names. Their visits to the governor, who was ex-officio superintendent of Indian affairs, occurred almost daily, and on every pretext. As, for

example: "Little Crow here, complaining of the purpose of restraining him and his people from hunting on the St. Croix." Or, "'Flat Mouth,' 'Sitting in a Room' and 'Good Road' came before we were up, asking that their blankets be issued to them at this time." And, "Gave the Rogue and old Waukon Dekora a permit to go down the river on their promise to return on this same boat next week."

The most ordinary transaction with the Indians was a matter of endless time and patience. In a much greater degree was this true of a treaty between them and the government — occasions always of great form and ceremony. The penciled notes of the Traverse des Sioux and Pembina treaties of 1851, fragmentary though they are, give, I fancy, in the *mise en scène* and the manner of dealing with the redskins, a true impression of one of those long-drawn-out, serial functions that is typical of them all.

It is evident that there was no lack of entertainment for the commissioners during the two long weeks of waiting at Traverse des Sioux until the various bands which were to take part in the council had assembled. On July 3, 1851, there was "Constant firing of musketry on the other side of the [Minnesota] river, announcing the arrival of parties of Indians. . . . The amusements of the day are riding out and watching the Indians at Ball Play." Again, "In the evening had a magnificent display of horsemanship by one hundred Indians." A day or two later: "Indians in great numbers arrived in the afternoon, played off in pantomime their dance with Chippewas. Having an effigy set up, the warriors in presence of the Council passed through all the stealthy approaches, etc. up to the taking of life."

Near Pembina, on September 15 of the same year, "Council opened on the Square in front of [Norman] Kittson's house. I began by telling them of the purpose of the Government in sending me here, and proposed to buy a tract of 30 miles on either side of the Red River — and so on. Coming to no determination adjourned until next day." But as the next day was "rainy and cold, held no Council." On the seventeenth, "Sky clear, wind from the west. In a few hours the deep, tough mud that prevails here was dried off, and by pressing the traders and interpreters, finally got the Indians into

Council, but they seemed not to have agreed on anything. Indeed, their total want of Government among themselves prevents any facility in transacting business with them. An old warrior of Pembina spoke first, wanted further time until others of his principal men came in. Moose Dung, a Red Lake Chief, desired me to restate my proposition of the first day. I did so, and he said that if he understood me, he would *not* sell his country on such terms. I adjourned Council suddenly, so as to leave the impression that I was dissatisfied and might not meet them again. This, I soon saw, had the desired effect." Two days later, on September 19, "Had a private Council with the Chief and principal men who called to renew negotiations. In the evening, had a dance from the young men, which was, in fact, a demonstration against the Treaty, but I affected not to understand it." The governor notes that "B. thinks I did not in the Council on Friday urge the Indians with sufficient force to sign the Treaty. These miserable *Traders have no influence* themselves, but would have me be unscrupulous and make promises to the Indians, which I cannot fulfill." On September 20, he writes: "This day about 2 P.M. Chiefs signed the Treaty. Dragoons were out. Indians danced, made presents, etc. Feel much relieved at the conclusion of the Treaty, for, from the evident want of ability on the part of the Traders in the management of the Indians, I began to feel much anxiety."

But the treaties had still to be ratified by the U. S. Senate, and there they met with opposition. "J. B. is a most bitter and uncompromising opponent," writes some one from Washington. "He has made three strong speeches against the treaties . . . but he has evidently overdone the thing." The following letter from Mr. Sibley, the territorial delegate in Congress in June, 1852, tells their final fate: "The long agony is over with regard to the treaties, as you well know by this time. Never did any measure have a tighter squeeze through. The Pembina treaty went by the board. I tried to stave off action upon it, but in vain. It had to be offered up as a conciliatory sacrifice by the friends of the other treaties. It was not opposed upon its merits at all, but merely on the ground that the country ceded was too remote to be needed now." Thus square miles by the hun-

dred thousands were thrown open to settlement by the Traverse des Sioux treaty, and St. Paul was the gateway through which passed the stream of immigration on its way to the newly acquired domain.

But beside permanent settlers, there were many others traveling in pursuit of health or investment, or because of a love of adventure and a desire to see the new country. One's eye is constantly struck by the names of many of the visitors noted in the diary — people of prominence at the time, or some who later became famous. For all there would seem to have been a cordial welcome. And what interest they must have given to the social life of the little town, what a distinctly cosmopolitan flavor! For example: "Mr. McClung, an artist of Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, dined with us; had been in the Chippewa country, studying Indian character and painting Indian faces." Or, "Messrs. Nokes, King and Montagu Williams, dined with us; they are intelligent Englishmen, traveling in this country for information." Again, "Count de-la-Guiche, a French gentleman of about 30 years, who had been hunting and travelling in Hudson's Bay the past summer, called, bringing me letters from Governor Colville." Two days later a dinner party is mentioned for several members of the Legislature, at which the count and Miss [Rebecca] Marshall, later Mrs. Cathcart of St. Paul, were present. And this: "Called upon Mrs. W. H. Ellet, a literary lady of New York. With her and wife took a drive to the [*Carver's*] Cave."

But the first real, bona fide celebrity was Miss Fredrika Bremer, a Swedish authoress, whom the diary introduces to us in the entry for October 17, 1850: "Nominee in after dinner. Mr. Sibley and Miss Fredericka Bremer, the Swedish authoress on board. The latter a guest at our house." The next day: "With Miss Bremer took a drive up to the falls of St. Anthony. . . . Walked over to Mr. [John W.] North's residence on the Island. Miss Bremer remarked, as a characteristic of the Americans, they were gentle in manner, but had a great energy of purpose and will. They are less pleasing than the English." On October 20: "After dinner walked out with Miss Bremer over the bluff back of St. Paul. The day was warm, thermometer at 60°, the atmosphere hazy, as is the case in Indian sum-

mer, and she was most delighted with the views around." Another visit was to the St. Peter's Indian agency and the Little Falls, as Minnehaha was then called. "Miss Bremer sketched the likeness of Moza Hota and Wauhpa, his wife. We visited the Indians in their tepees, which gave her much pleasure." It is interesting to read and compare Miss Bremer's account of this occasion in her *Homes of the New World*.[3]

Miss Bremer is said to have been an agreeable and very interesting woman, but the tales of this visit which have been handed down suggest qualities which nowadays would be ascribed to the artistic temperament. This among others: When she retired on the first night of her stay in St. Paul, there were two pillows on her bed, but these were not enough, so another was brought, but still she called for more, until finally seven were produced. This exhausted the supply of the modest establishment, so the demand had to cease. The host and hostess essayed to rest their weary heads on carpet bags or whatever their ingenuity improvised as pillows, so I suspect regret was not unmingled with relief when, as the diary records on October 25, "Steamer Nominee in about 7½ A.M. Left for South again at 2 P.M. Miss Bremer went down on her!"

The annoyances and impositions which sometimes resulted from this ever-ready hospitality are indicated in the letter file: "I am writing to you in reference to my wretched brother . . . warning you against him. I had hoped, in the new country, that he might be induced to reform. But he is an abandoned villain, and in perfect keeping with his conduct hitherto, I learn that he has forged a note on me for $1,000." This is only one of many of a similar character. And here is another from Pennsylvania: "Permit me to state to you that a few weeks since a young man by name Isaac Bucher, left this place for your territory in quest of an office, or in the capacity of a clerk in one of your departments. Whether you have any scruples in regard of politics I am not aware; if so Mr. Bucher is one of the most inscrupulous locofocos in Lebanon County. Him and his family were concerned in the late presidential campaign in hanging

[3] Fredrika Bremer gives her own impressions of the Indians, tells of sketching their portraits, and reports visits to Fort Snelling, St. Peter's, and Minnehaha Falls in her *Homes of the New World: Impressions of America*, 2:291–298, 312 (London, 1853).

General Taylor in negro effigy at a Democratic meeting at Shaefferstown and now he seeks office under a Whig Gov. in disguise. You must not believe him if he says he is a whig."

In the same file was this letter, urging the extension of the telegraph from Galena to St. Paul: "The influence of it, or the certain practicability of this work, I need not now argue to you. It is well understood. But it would be a worthy enterprise for the coming season to divide the public attention with the California rage, which seems to be now the bewitching belle, that charms the public favor. The very announcement that you were to have the wires stretched to your young and favored territory would considerably increase emigration to that region and facilitate all kinds of business." This chance reference brought to mind the stress always laid on the conservative and law-abiding character of Minnesota's early settlers in contradistinction to the rough and lawless element which gave its stamp to California in forty-nine. How true it may be of that state, I cannot say, but the diary portrays a life as far removed from that of the mining camp as can well be imagined.

If the population increased rapidly, so did the churches, and denominational lines seem not to have been strictly drawn. There is much about church-going, beginning with the first Sunday in the territory. "Attended Catholic preaching at Mendota. Sermon in English. In prayer remembered the Governor of Minnesota." And thereafter rarely is there a Sunday without mention of attendance at one or more services of the various denominations. On a Sunday in November, 1850: "At Mr. Neill's preaching; the house crowded. I observe a marked improvement in the attention to public preaching in the community of St. Paul. When I came to the Territory about twenty was the highest number present at divine service. Today there were better than one hundred in attendance." And this comment was made a year or two later after my father listened to a sermon justifying capital punishment: "I could not resist the reflection today that Government upon our frontiers was under infinite obligation to ministers of the gospel of the several Christian denominations. Many flipantly declaim against priest-craft, without reflecting on the service of the clergy in giving a good direction to

Society." And note the worldly touch in this: "Remarkable improvement in the dress and appearance of a congregation in this place, in the course of a few years. The assemblage in Mr. Neill's church every Sabbath looks like a well-dressed fashionable congregation such as one sees in an Eastern town. As the congregation was passing out met John Tillinger, on a visit, from Harrisburg: 'Why,' said he, 'your people here dress better than in Harrisburg.'" A fair arranged by the ladies of the Presbyterian church early in 1852 calls forth this comment: "As an evidence of the liberality of the people of St. Paul, the increase of population, etc. it may be mentioned that 150 persons attended and took supper, tickets being 75 cents, and $205.00 were realized."

It wasn't all church-going, however, by any means. What a cheerful mingling of the life of civilization and the frontier is suggested! The winter of 1852 was crowded with festivities. On New Year's: "Day very fine and the practice of calling upon the lady of the house prevailed very generally in town. Upwards of one hundred persons called on us. The Indians of Kaposia had fired a salute before my door at 7 A.M. and several hundred of them called during the day. . . . Had a visit and music from some 30 Germans." On the thirteenth of January: "At 11 A.M. in Baptist Church delivered my message before both houses of the Legislative Assembly. . . . The Committee on part of both houses came up for me in a four horse sleigh—horses decorated with small flags. Returned in same way." There were musicals at the homes of Dr. William W. Borup and Mr. Charles Oakes, a concert by the Fort Snelling band, balls at Mazourka Hall, and on January 22, 1852, "An evening party at Col. Farrington's," with a "large crowd of ladies and gentlemen present, the finest gathering in numbers and character that I have yet seen in the territory."

There were many dinners, all in the middle of the day. An entry in February of 1853 states so pointedly that "At 2 P.M. had a dinner for the Council," that I conclude an earlier hour, up to that time, had been usual. This, of course, was the general fashion of the day. For instance, another entry made in Washington late in September records "Dined with Col. Lea, and remained until candle light."

A day or two later, "Dined with President Fillmore at 5 P.M.," shows that the modern trend toward late hours had already begun. Occasionally a menu is noted — for its unusual excellence, I suppose. But it is the abundance and variety of the dishes which especially strikes us. Listen to this: "Soup, veal, turkey, cutlets, ham and oyster pie, etc. etc."; the latter, of course, refers to vegetables. For dessert there were pies, cold custard, ice cream, almonds, and raisins. This was a much more genteel dinner, according to Miss Martineau's chatty and delightful *Hostess of 1853,* than one with thirty dishes of meat, which was not unusual at the time. Of the table talk, there is just a suggestion now and then, as: "Bishop [Joseph] Cretin, Rev. Morin, and Mr. H. dined with us. The Bishop had an indifferent opinion of Kossuth. I find the Catholics generally opposed to him since his English speeches."

The presidential election of 1852 resulted in the defeat of the Whig party, and in March, 1853, the change to a Democratic administration. The entry for May 13, 1853, reads: "Willis A. Gorman, my successor in the office of Gov. of Minnesota, arrived on the Nominee about noon. Called on him at once. He accompanied me to my house at once and spent an hour with me." On the sixteenth: "Paid Gov. Gorman all the public funds in my hands as Supt. of Indian Affairs, $55,648.73, and thus relieved myself of a great load of anxiety and care. For the protection of the fund I have, for nights, slept with pistol by my side."

And here, although it is going back somewhat, let me read an account of a financial transaction which took place in October, 1852, and began in Washington: "Treasury drafts for Sioux money placed in my hands amounting to $599,605.18, with instructions from Commissioner Lea for disbursement." In New York, a few days later: "Called at once on the Sub-Treasurer and then transferred the large draft in my possession to the Merchants Bank. Busily engaged this day in having money counted and packed. For the sake of aiding the territory with a currency, I deemed it proper to carry as much money along as could be done safely. So had packed up $100,000 in Gold, $100,000 in good paper; the balance I left in deposit." On the thirteenth: "Up at 4 A.M. At 5 A.M. not then yet light, with Tyler

and two of the porters of the Irving House, went to Merchants Bank in a stage coach, and took up the two heavy iron boxes, weighing each about 200 lbs. Took the Steamer at the foot of Duane Street." About noon on October 15, "reached Detroit, placing our money boxes in the Depot office, keeping watch over them all the time, and at 6 P.M. took the cars for Chicago." The travelers arrived in St. Paul by boat on October 23. According to the diary entry for the next day, "Sibley came in late last night and remained here and breakfasted with us. Finished with his assistance the count of the gold $100,000, found it all correct. Looked over the packages of paper money $100,000 and found them all correct." Just compare the ease with which that could be done today.

The decade of the 1850's was one of sharp contrasts, and naturally the diary reflects both phases — the prosperity and the riot of speculation that marked the boom of the first half; and the gloomy years of depression which succeeded the "crash," as it was called, of 1857. The files are full of letters from eastern men and women wanting to invest money in western lands or mortgages. The rates of interest demanded and paid are fairly staggering. Everyone wants twenty-five per cent and apparently gets it, though occasionally some modest or altruistic soul professes a willingness, if the security should be very good, to accept twenty per cent. At all events, money seems to have been plentiful. A traveler of 1856 writes this of St. Paul: "Eastern people come, expecting to find a new, unshaped city, with a rude and unrefined people, but they find a much higher degree of elegance, fashion and display, than in any other city of its size in the world. The ladies revel in finest silks and satins. The gents carry gold-headed canes, and keep splendid driving establishments. There is a larger display of finery than is consistent with a modest taste. All this, however, is indicative of success and prosperity." Of course, this couldn't last, and it seems inconceivable to us now that the inevitable cataclysm should not have been foreseen. During the following years, such comments as these are all too frequent: "Business dull, and money tight," or "Times awful. Debts about $40,000.00, property worth many times as much, yet I fear the consequences." And I dare say there were thousands at the time who would have

echoed this. There are other entries for this period which prove the changes time has wrought in some of our ideas and standards of value. For instance, at Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, in 1853: "Took tea at Mr. Whittaker's, a gentleman of large fortune. Supposed to be worth three or four hundred thousand dollars, of his own making." About the same time in Washington: "Bill at National Hotel for 18 days, board, fires, etc. $59.38," with this comment: "Enormous!" And this purchase is a pathetic reminder of an almost forgotten fashion: "Five shells—$5.00!"

In 1855, on July 7, is this interesting record: "Taking a single buggy and two horses, drove up to Saint Anthony and Minneapolis, Fort Snelling, Mendota, and home again, about 6 P.M. taking Hon. Charles Sumner of Massachusetts with me. He expressed himself as highly delighted with the country." It is said to have been the graphic description given by Senator Sumner, after his visit to the Northwest, which inspired Longfellow's beautiful picture of Minnehaha Falls in *Hiawatha,* for the poet himself never saw them.[4]

In 1858 Minnesota was admitted into the Union of States, Mr. Sibley having already been elected its first governor. My father was chosen to succeed him in 1860, and it was while on an electioneering tour in the southern part of the state late in 1859 that he recorded a visit to New Ulm. I quote it as an example of the political fashion of the day: "The Democracy came into town, in a procession of some half dozen wagons, escorting Judge Larabee, Roth, etc. Larabee, when in front of the hotel, turning to me, said: 'Governor I want to meet you before all these people today.' I said: 'I will be with you, Judge.' We met and had a joint debate." In Chicago, on May 19, 1860, is this: "Left with the Committee of the National Convention for Springfield to inform the Hon. Abraham Lincoln of his nomination for the Presidency." (How one longs for a few details here.) Then came the presidential campaign, and all through that summer we read of the raising of Lincoln poles, of serenades by the Wide-Awakes, torchlight processions, and political meetings of both parties addressed by speakers of national prominence. But

[4] For a note on "Minnehaha Falls and Longfellow's 'Hiawatha,'" see *ante,* 8:422–424.

without question the most important event of the campaign in Minnesota was the visit of William H. Seward, Lincoln's former competitor for the presidential nomination, but now canvassing the West in his interest. The entry in the diary for September 16 reads: "Hon. Wm. H. Seward and party arrived here today. In the evening an entertainment at our house for Governor Seward. About 125 present." On the eighteenth "there was a great Seward demonstration, 5,000 present. Seward spoke, so did Charles Francis Adams of Massachusetts." This was the occasion when Minnesota was absolutely and definitely put on the map by Mr. Seward, when, in the course of his address, he said, "I now believe that the last seat of power on the great continent will be found somewhere within a radius not very far from the very spot where I stand, at the head of navigation on the Mississippi river." [5]

On November 6, 1860, the presidential election is reported thus: "Lincoln, President, Hamlin, Vice-president, elected. Very orderly day; and for the first time, Democrats entirely defeated in National, State, and County offices." And this, on the following day is significant: "The general result throughout the Union is understood."

The first inkling the diary gives of the dissension between North and South, which culminated ten or more years later in the Civil War, is this, written in Washington in December, 1849: "W. J. Brown, who had received 112 votes, 2 less than necessary for his election as speaker of the House, was suddenly precipitated from his upward flight by an exposure of his trickery in pledging himself at the same time to both North and South. Great indignation in the House." The next day there were "Great confusion and excited debate in the House of Representatives and no speaker yet elected." And during the intervening years there are such casual reminders as this: "Had expected that the Minnesota Railroad Bill would be called up today, but to our disappointment, the report of the Com-

[5] Part of the diary of Charles Francis Adams, describing his visit to Minnesota with William H. Seward, has been edited by Theodore C. Blegen and published under the title, "Campaigning with Seward in 1860," *ante*, 8:150–171. Extracts from Seward's speech are quoted in the introduction to the document; the speech appears in full in the *Daily Times* of St. Paul for September 22, 1860.

mittee in the Sumner and Brooks case was again before the House to the exclusion of all other business."

My father was in Washington on state business in the spring of 1861, when the storm of the Civil War finally broke. The diary records on April 13: "News this evening of the surrender of Sumpter." On the fourteenth the entry reads: "Called early in company with Senator [Morton S.] Wilkinson, and tendered to the Sec'y of War, 1,000 men on behalf of Minnesota." A telegram sent to the Minnesota adjutant general the next day is recorded thus: "Minnesota called for a Regiment. Saw the President, Sec'y Seward etc." It was to this accidental presence in the Capital at just the right time that our state owes the privilege and honor of being the first to offer troops in defense of the Union. How ready and prompt was the response to the call may be inferred, for only twelve days later, on April 26, is this: "Engaged mostly today in determining which of the tendered volunteer companies were to be 'the ten,' about 5 of the tender, being in excess, were necessarily to be rejected." A few days later: "Spent the day at Fort Snelling where the volunteer Regiment rendezvoused. Appointed Gorman Colonel, [Stephen] Miller Lt. Colonel, and Dyke [*William H. Dike*] Major, to the general satisfaction of officers and men." The entry for May 1 reads: "Telegraphed the Sec'y of War that Regiment was organised and awaiting orders." And on the fourteenth of June: "Recd. telegram from Washington and rode up to the Fort after 10 P.M. and issued orders for moving of Gorman's regiment to Washington." I have been told that there was doubt as to the ability of the state to raise the first thousand, but before the First Minnesota had marched away, other regiments had been called for and on November 16 the diary notes: "Third Regiment Minnesota Volunteers left Fort Snelling. The Regt. left lower landing [*at St. Paul*] at about 1½ P.M." In the midst of these warlike activities, this entry for September 19, though truly marking an era in Minnesota history, seems almost out of place: "Locomotive and car on Minnesota and Pacific Rail Road and being the first R. Road in the state and first locomotive ran about ½ mile . . . on this occasion."

But we have now reached very modern history and a period with which you are familiar. The diary follows closely the events of the war, and especially those which concerned our own troops, but so briefly that little new light is thrown on any of them. But how strangely familiar it all sounds today. In Washington, on May 18, 1861: "At the War office in reference to dispatch that coats, etc. would not be delivered for Regiment unless paid for." On the twentieth: "Received promise that clothing would be inspected for Regiment." Back in Minnesota on June 6: "Telegraphed War office to learn of clothing for this Regiment." Other regiments are mentioned in later entries. "With Col. [John B.] Sanborn drove up to Fort Snelling; there are now at the Fort, six companies of the 4th, one Battery of Artillery, two Companies of Cavalry, Werts and Blanks, Capt. Wert's company being called out, I made them a speech of farewell." Later on, "Evening at opera with wife given by the Richings for benefit of First Regiment." And again: "Wife with other ladies drove up to Fort Snelling to see the sick."

But how very different the battle front familiar to our imaginations today from that suggested by these entries of October, 1861! On the first, "About 9 A.M. in charge of Adjt. [William B.] Leach and Lieut. [George] Pomeroy, set out for the camp of the First Minnesota Vols. near Poolsville about 35 miles from Washington. Reached camp about 7 P.M. Addressed troops, and was serenaded by band." On the second, "Went down to Edward's Ferry and on the bank of the river could see the enemies pickets close to the water on the other side. Afternoon Genl. Gorman had a fine drill of his men."

In March, 1862, the diary tells: "Received dispatch from Genl. [Henry W.] Halleck at Saint Louis to send down all troops. So have directed Col. Sanborn of the 4th to march forthwith." The calls for men continued to come, and on May 8: "Received telegram from Genl. Halleck to send down the 7 companies of the 5th to Hamburg Landing. Up to the Fort after dinner and, on the part of the State presented the 5th Regiment with a set of colors." On May 13: "Saw the 5th Regiment leave on board the 'Hawk Eye State' for Saint Louis." And then, when the state was almost drained of

its fighting men, like a bolt from the blue, came this message on the nineteenth of August: "Intelligence from Lower Sioux Agency, to the effect that the Sioux had murdered several persons there, also . . . at Acton in Meeker County, several were killed. Drove up to Fort Snelling and appointed Governor Sibley commander of a force, etc." And on succeeding days: "The Indians' enormities increase, with each successive Courier from the Indian border. 500 whites, it is feared, have been killed." And again: "During the last night was called up half a dozen times by Couriers from the seat of war or by parties concerned about the panic, which is driving out the people. Whole counties, North and West of the Minnesota River being depopulated." Then on October 2: "Information reached town last evening that about 100 white prisoners had been surrendered to Sibley by the Sioux. My dispatches from Sibley today confirm this." The Indians, you know, were finally rounded up and many of them captured by General Sibley. The leaders of the massacre were tried by a military commission and several hundred condemned to death. It was the execution, or rather nonexecution of this sentence, which became the burning question in Minnesota that autumn. The people of the state clamored for prompt and wholesale vengeance. The federal authorities hesitated, and there was great fear that relatives of the murdered victims might take the law into their own hands, as this for December 6 proves: "At 4 A.M. received from Gen. Sibley information of an attempt on Thursday night, near Mankato, to wrest the Indian prisoners from the wardship of the soldiers. Issued a proclamation to the people." President Lincoln signed an order for the immediate execution of thirty-nine Indians, the rest to be held awaiting further orders. Thirty-eight were hanged at Mankato on December 26, 1862.[6] On March 25, 1863, the diary records: "Called upon the President. He gave me a patient and respectful hearing . . . then went into the subject of the execution of the Sioux Indians yet unhung. He said it was a disagreeable subject but he would take it up and dispose of it."

[6] The original order for the execution, written and signed by Lincoln, is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society. One of the condemned Indians was respited. William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 2:210 (St. Paul, 1924).

It is here that the diary ceases to chronicle Minnesota events, and in the stress of those busy Washington years, the entries grow even briefer, with less of the personal about them. I have already far overtaxed your patience, but I cannot refrain from reading you this, written on November 23, 1864, just after Mr. Lincoln's second election to the presidency, for it gives so characteristic a glimpse of that great and tenderhearted man: "Called to see the President and Secretary of War in the evening. President in fine spirits, talks of the result of the election, majority in several states. Said his in Minnesota in 1860 was 10,000 and now only 7,000. I jocularly remarked that if he had hung more Indians, we should have given him his old majority. He said 'I could not afford to hang men for votes.'"