

VOYAGEURS  
*celebrating Christmas  
at a trading post*



FROM ROBERT M. BALLANTYNE, HUDSON BAY, 198 (LONDON, 1876).

## CHRISTMAS IN MINNESOTA

### *A Holiday Portfolio*

CHRISTMAS celebrations in Minnesota began as early as the era of the explorer and the fur trader, and the day of the Indian agency and the frontier military garrison at Fort Snelling. Gala balls often marked the holiday at trading posts, where voyageurs found partners among Indian and half-breed maidens. After watching such a Christmas ball, one trader wrote that the dancers seemed to aim at "getting the largest amount of exercise out of every muscle in the frame" while they moved to the music of "one vile, unvarying tune, upon a worse old fiddle," with a "brilliant accompaniment upon a large tin pan." Food and drink, too, played important roles in wilderness holiday festivities. Traders gave their men extra rations of sugar, flour, and rum, and explorers on the march treated their followers to such luxuries as meat, whiskey, and tobacco.

With the growth of settlement in the 1850s, more conventional holiday celebra-

tions became the rule. Although the pioneers went to church on Christmas, they also marked the festival by attending balls and other parties, staging amateur theatricals, cutting fir trees and trimming them in homes and schoolrooms, exchanging gifts, enjoying elaborate dinners, going on sleigh rides, and the like. By the early years of the present century, Minnesotans were familiar with the gaily lighted streets, the shopping jams, the colorful decorations, the Salvation Army lassies, and the school programs that characterize modern Christmas celebrations in the North Star State.

Numerous pictorial records of holiday celebrations of bygone years are to be found among the thousands of visual items in the collections of Minnesota's state and local historical societies and other institutions. A portfolio of selections from them is presented herewith as the final statehood centennial feature to appear in the issues of this magazine for 1958. *Ed.*

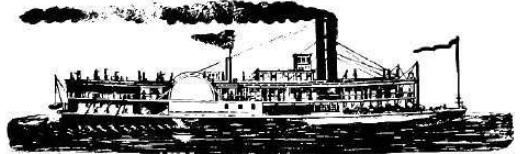


COURTESY BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEW ULM Turnverein members of the 1870s enjoyed a Christmas party in Turner Hall

BROADSIDE advertising a Christmas cruise on the Mississippi in the 1870s, when mild weather made navigation possible far later in the season than usual

# RIVER EXCURSIONS CHRISTMAS DAY!



## AUNT BETSEY

WITH BARGES AND BANDS OF MUSIC,

Will give Two Excursions to-morrow, Christmas Day, starting from Lower Levee at Ten o'clock, and at Half after Two o'clock.

**FIFTY CENTS THE ROUND TRIP.**

Good order assured. Calling at the Upper Levee on the way to the Fort and Minnehaha.

E. B. COSTAIN, Master.

COURTESY TAYLORS FALLS PUBLIC LIBRARY

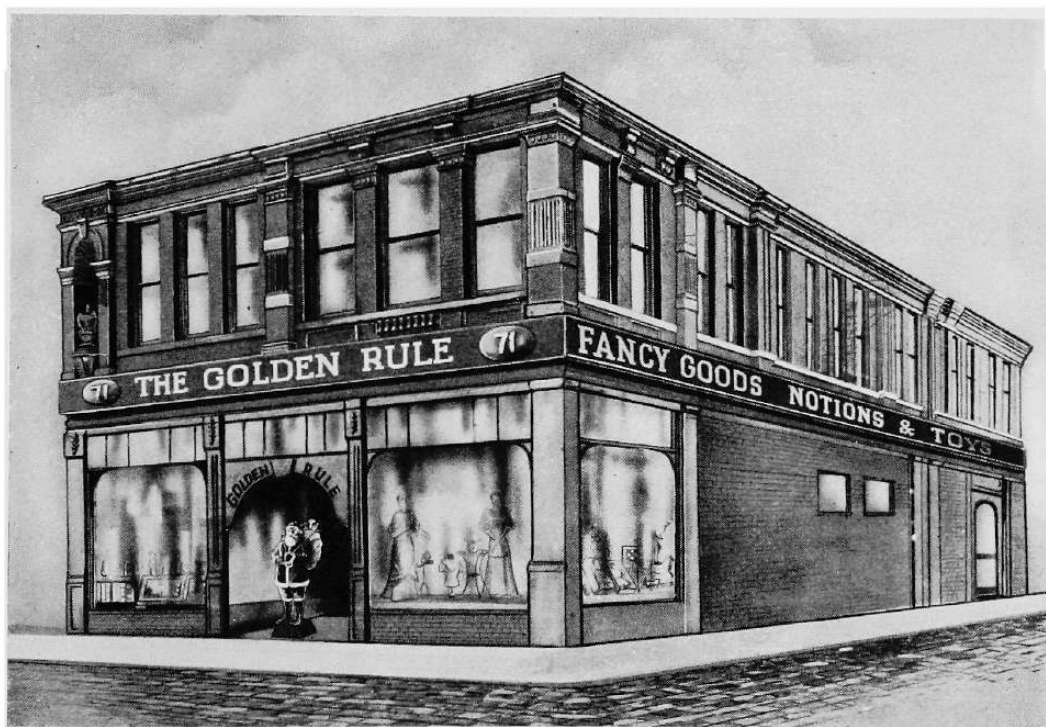


A Christmas tree decorated this schoolroom at Taylors Falls in 1899



*A robust Santa Claus attracted shoppers to the Golden Rule (below) shortly after that St. Paul store opened at Seventh and Minnesota streets in the late 1880s. Many local youngsters received toys purchased there.*

*THE children pictured above in a Christmas scene photographed in 1913 found a hobby horse and a doll buggy beneath their tiny tree, which was profusely decorated with candles, tinsel, and glittering ornaments.*



*THIS Salvation Nell  
appealed to passersby to  
"keep the pot boiling" in  
Minneapolis about 1900*



*HOLIDAY wreaths of electric lights brightened St. Paul's business district during the  
Yule season of 1915, when this photograph was taken at Sixth and Robert streets.*





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