

A NEW EL DORADO:

Guides to Minnesota, 1850s-1880s

Carlton C. Qualey

THE MINNESOTA Historical Society has an impressive collection of narratives of travel in the United States and of guidebooks, especially to Minnesota. Although this essay is primarily concerned with Minnesota guidebooks, the collection includes narratives of travel to all parts of the United States and Canada. Classified under "Travel and Description" in the society's library, the collection compares favorably with those of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, and several university and private depositories.

The holdings of the Minnesota Historical Society reflect in part the interest of Solon J. Buck, its superintendent from 1914 to 1931, who also directed the Ameri-

can Historical Association's ill-fated Bibliography of American Travel, 1750-1830, project which was begun in 1911 and carried on intermittently into the 1930s. Regrettably, the massive bibliography was never completed, for lack of funds.

Epitomizing much of what was published in the guides to Minnesota is an 1850 account, *Rural Sketches of Minnesota, the El Dorado of the Northwest*, by Henry W. Hamilton, a visitor from Milan, Ohio. He was ecstatic about the frontier territory:

"Yes, I am in Minnesota. It seems like a dream, almost; and yet I am in the very midst of a world of deeply interesting realities. . . . Bright skies are above me; glorious scenery is around me; 'the Father of Waters,' mighty and majestic as when Time was young, is roaring and sweeping on below me; the images of a beautiful land, a new *El Dorado*, are seen on every side; the impulses of a young empire, mighty while young . . . are

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thrilling every heart and quickening every pulse, with their great vibrations. . . . *And no where are good farmers making money faster or easier than in Minnesota.*"

He continued to warm to his theme:

"I wish I had language to describe to you the agreeable sensation which inhaling this pure, bracing air has upon my spirits and feelings. . . . Oh how delightful it is bathing in the cool spray of St. Anthony by moonlight! I have enjoyed it with the rapture of a nymph in the surf of [the] fairy sea."

He then came down to earth by commenting:

"Most kinds of business are in a prosperous and flourishing condition here now, and the prospects of Minnesota are certainly good. That it will one day become an influential, important, and populous State, is as certain as it is inevitable.

"The professions, are all greatly overstocked, as is generally the case in new countries. It is no place for large or small 'dandies', and 'gentlemen of leisure,' of every description, will find hard sledding and poor pay. For working heads and working hands, the field is good and a broad one. It will have forests to fell; prairies to break; acres to till; houses to build; mouths to feed; bodies to clothe; minds to educate; laws to make, rights to defend and wrongs to redress, as long as its skies are blue, and cataracts roar. Those who do not live by toil and honest industry, in other places, wouldn't find their chances bettered any by coming to Minnesota."¹

Guides to Minnesota may be classified as follows: those about the United States in general but containing chapters devoted to Minnesota; those primarily concerned with Minnesota; those directed to a particular ethnic group; publications of the Minnesota State Board of Health and Vital Statistics and the State Board of Immigration; railroad promotional guides; and guides to counties and cities. Travel literature is not included here unless it contains specific information on the state and could be used as a guide.

Guides were written for a variety of readerships. European and American readers were necessarily of the literate classes, but illiterates frequently had knowledge of the guide's message through an obliging priest, minister, or friend who could read or abstract the contents. American readers resided chiefly in the North-east and the states of the Old Northwest. Most of the guides were directed to young, sturdy, married yeomen who were accustomed to manual labor, and who, it was hoped, would settle in Minnesota. There was a remarkable period, too, when Minnesota was promoted as a health resort, especially for consumptives.² No

doubt this image lured many people to Minnesota from other states of the union. The sheer quantity of all these types of guides indicates that there must have been a profitable market for them.

For the most part, general guides to the United States were complimentary to Minnesota. One of the most widely distributed and frequently reprinted was Joseph H. Colton's *The Western Tourist, and Emigrant's Guide* (New York), of which the first edition (1852) contained five pages on Minnesota, as did the almost identical 1853 edition and the 1857 revision by Richard S. Fisher which corrected the first edition's misspelling of the territory's name. It first appeared as "Minesota." Colton emphasized that "every portion of Minesota may be reached by inland navigation," and that "the white inhabitants are from almost every portion of the world: the Canadian, the sons of New England and the Middle States, with English, French, and Germans, are all intermingled." His general description of the Minnesota country is reminiscent of Hamilton's:

"Beautiful lakes of transparent water, well stocked with fish, and varying in size from ponds to inland seas, are profusely scattered over the territory. Forests of pine and other evergreens, orchards of sugar-maple, groves of hard and soft woods of various species, wild rice and cranberries, and various species of wild fruit, copious springs of pure water, a fertile soil, and water-power, easily improved and abundantly distributed, render this region peculiarly adapted to the wants of man. Add to these a salubrious climate, and Minesota appears to enjoy eminent capacities for becoming a thriving and populous state."³

Similar to Colton's guide was *Western Portraiture, and Emigrant's Guide*, by Daniel S. Curtiss, also published in New York in 1852. It contains a short section on Minnesota and includes the observation that "notwithstanding its northern position and rigorous climate, emigration, from New England, with some

¹ *Rural Sketches of Minnesota*, 5, 12, 21 (first and second quotes), 24-25 (third quote), (Milan, Ohio, 1850).

² The mythology of this image took a long time to wear off. See Philip D. Jordan, *The People's Health: A History of Public Health in Minnesota to 1948*, 1-8 (St. Paul, 1953); Helen Clapesattle, "When Minnesota was Florida's Rival," in *Minnesota History*, 35:214-222 (March, 1957); Ralph H. Brown, "Fact and Fancy in Early Accounts of Minnesota's Climate," in *Minnesota History*, 17:243-261 (September, 1936); J. Arthur Myers, *Invited and Conquered: Historical Sketch of Tuberculosis in Minnesota*, 15-33 (St. Paul, 1949).

³ Colton, *Western Tourist*, 50 (first quote), 51 (second quote), (first edition). The Fisher edition is entitled *Colton's Traveler and Tourist's Guide Book Through the Western States and Territories* (New York, 1857).

foreigners, is pouring into the territory in such numbers, that it must soon be asking for a place in the Union as a State."⁴

In 1857, John Disturnell began his long career as a writer of guides, especially for the Great Lakes region.⁵ Although his efforts did not deal directly with Minnesota to any extent, travelers and immigrants would have found them useful for journeys to Minnesota. In his *Prairie Farming in America* (New York, 1859), Sir James Caird devoted a chapter to Minnesota, but there is little about prairies in it.

AN INTERRUPTION in the publication of guides because of the Civil War and the Sioux Uprising came to an end with the appearance in 1868 of Charles H. Sweetser's *Tourists' and Invalids' Guide to the Northwest* (New York), which was actually a bit more than the title would seem to indicate. Sweetser described a "Home for Emigrants" in St. Paul that served as a temporary shelter for newly-arrived immigrants, mainly Germans and Scandinavians. Another 1868 publication in New York was Chauncey N. Brainerd's version of a visit to Martin County, Minnesota. It records a city-bred newcomer's amazement at seeing the vast prairies and experiencing, "especially about sunset," the ferocity of the mosquitoes.⁶ Brainerd's account of the beauty of the prairies, the fertility of the soil, the ease of land acquisition, and the accessibility of the area should have influenced his readers.

A twenty-page section of Frederick B. Goddard's *Where to Emigrate, and Why* (New York, 1869) might have been useful to a prospective Minnesotan. Some of the material is borrowed from Girart Hewitt's pamphlet which will be referred to later. Goddard utilized the popular unearned-increment argument:

"A man with a small, but high-priced farm in the old States can dispose of it for sufficient to set himself up well in Minnesota, and procure a farm for each of his children besides; and these farms, in a few years, will be as valuable as the one in the old State is now. The fortunes made by farmers here within a few years, would scarcely be credited in the older States."

⁴ Curtiss, *Western Portraiture*, 123.

⁵ *A Trip Through the Lakes of North America* (New York, 1857); *The Great Lakes as Inland Seas of America* (New York, 1863, 1865, 1868, 1871); *Tourist's Guide to the Upper Mississippi River* (New York, 1866); *Lake Superior Guide* (Philadelphia, 1872, 1874); and others.

⁶ Brainerd, *My Diary: or Three Weeks on the Wing. A Peep at the Great West* (New York, 1868). The rare pamphlet is reproduced in *Minnesota History*, 12:43-64 (March, 1931), edited by Bertha L. Heilbron.

⁷ Goddard, *Where to Emigrate*, 235 (first quote), 237 (second quote).

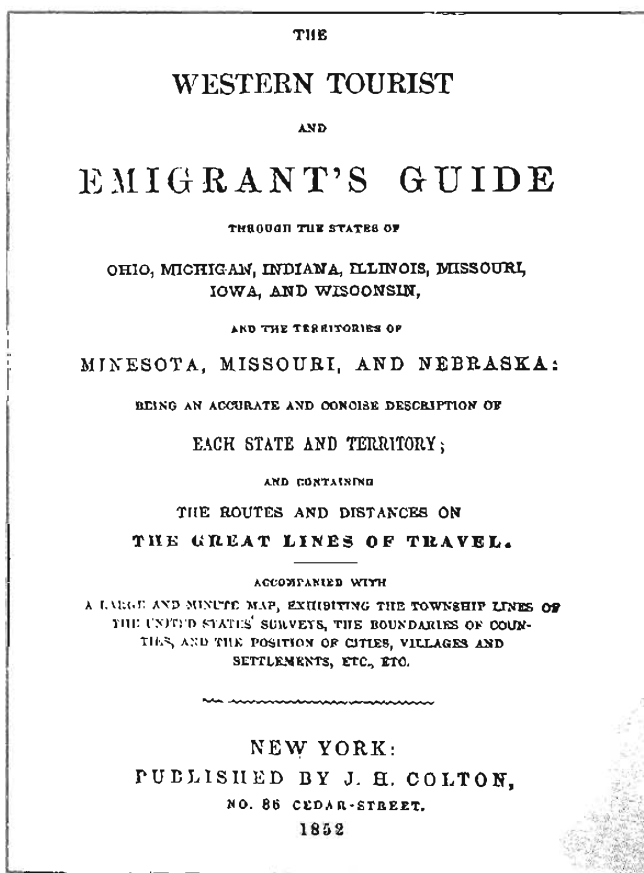
Of the scenery he wrote with fervor:

"When clothed in the sylvan garments of summer, decked with the floral gems of a thousand fragrant prairies, and lighted by the gorgeous tints of its sunshine, or mellowed and softened by the dreamy haze of the 'Indian summer' of the autumn months, nothing could surpass the scenery of Minnesota, diversified as it is with rock-ribbed hills and slumbering valleys, woodland and prairie, lofty and rugged bluffs, ravines, gorges, cataracts, cascades, eternal springs of limpid purity, and leaping streams which never dry."⁷

How could anyone resist such a hard sell? The guide concludes with four letters, written in July and August, 1868, by settlers who praised their good fortune in coming to Minnesota.

A 50-cent pamphlet compiled by B. F. Brown of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, entitled *Homes in the West; and How to Obtain Them* (Pittsburgh, 1870), borrowed heavily from the Minnesota state guides without acknowledgment, but it did contain a great deal of

J. H. COLTON'S early general guidebook, according to the title page, contained a "concise" (five-page) description of "Minnesota" Territory.

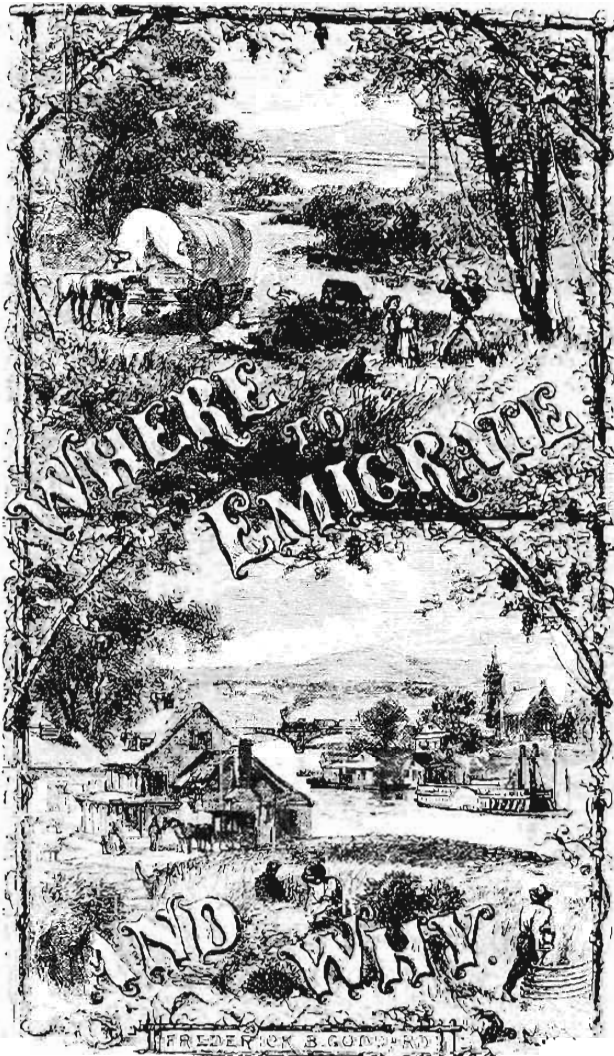


useful information about Minnesota. After giving a general description, reciting the usual arguments regarding the healthfulness of the climate, and describing available public and railroad lands, Brown included what he claimed to be authentic examples of successful farming by a capitalist, a poor Swede, "a shrewd, cautious emigrant from an Eastern State," and "an ambitious farmer from Maine." He concluded:

"The State needs an actual settler upon each quarter section of her millions of unoccupied lands, to give beneficent action to the idle richness slumbering in the black soil."⁸

Except for the famous name, the two volumes edited by poet William Cullen Bryant, entitled *Picturesque America: or, the Land We Live In* (New York, 1874), probably were of little interest to immigrants to Min-

IDYLLIC SCENES such as those pictured on the front paper of Frederick Goddard's guide created an image of Minnesota that was of questionable accuracy.



nesota, although the description of the journey from St. Louis to St. Paul and St. Anthony might have encouraged some. A final general guide that merits mention, *The Golden Northwest* (Chicago, 1878), was written by Goldsmith B. West. In the third chapter is a fairly extensive "Sketch of Minnesota."

Of the Minnesota guides, mention has already been made of Henry W. Hamilton's rhapsodic description of 1850. In the same year Henry Hastings Sibley, Minnesota's territorial delegate to Congress, prepared a report on Minnesota for Senator Henry S. Foote of Mississippi which was published in the 1850 *Annals* of the Minnesota Historical Society under the title, "Description of Minnesota." It is a highly literate account of the physical characteristics of Minnesota, its soils, forest cover, climate, current settlement, and accessibility. Sibley reported the Indians as "kindly disposed," and remarked in conclusion that "the people of our Territory are distinguished for intelligence and heightened morality."⁹

Subsequent to the Hamilton and Sibley reports, a full-fledged guide to Minnesota entitled *Rise and Progress of Minnesota Territory* (1855) was published at the *Minnesota Democrat* newspaper office in St. Paul by Charles L. Emerson. After making general comments on the territory, Emerson wrote:

"The soil of this favored region is admirably adapted to the cultivation of cereals and roots. The prairies are natural fields, already prepared for the plow; and the liberal earth returns the husbandman reward for his labor an hundred fold. The culture of several kinds of fruit trees has been fully tested; and the apple, pear, quince and cherry are found to thrive beyond the most sanguine expectation."

In the same vein, Emerson continued:

"Garden vegetables grow to a size which appears almost fabulous; wild grasses supply nutritious pasturage for stock; and orchards of sugar maples, wild rice, and wild fruits of various species, in connection with fish and wild game, present means of subsistence to the different aboriginal tribes. . . In spring no late frosts occur; the whole country is clothed as if by magic, in robes of the greenest verdure, and a thousand varieties of wild flowers enamel the hill sides and prairies. . . Autumn in Minnesota is the most charming season of the year. A soft haze rests on every object, mellowing the distant landscape, dreamy in the lingering sunshine of the dying year."

⁸ Brown, *Homes in the West*, 57, 60.

⁹ Minnesota Historical Society, *Annals*, 1:31.

In dealing with settled areas, Emerson mentioned the new suspension bridge of St. Anthony and included the following references: St. Paul — "Our city has risen from the wilderness as if by magic"; Washington County — a "rich and flourishing district"; Minneapolis — "beautifully situated"; the Minnesota Valley — "the unrivalled beauty of the landscape diversified with compact villages and highly cultivated farms." The pamphlet was obviously financed by the many advertisements in it.¹⁰

In 1855 also, a rival newspaper in St. Paul put out a guide entitled *The Minnesota Messenger, Containing Sketches of the Rise and Progress of Minnesota*, "circulated gratuitously." It, too, had frequent advertisements. The guide presented a political history of the territory, praised territorial delegate Henry M. Rice for getting appropriations for roads, claimed that "Education in the Territory is approaching a perfect system," described the rapid growth of cities and communities, explained how Minneapolis got its name, and gave particular information on the Minnesota and St. Croix river valleys.¹¹

The next year a very useful handbook, called *The Immigrant's Guide to Minnesota in 1856, By an Old Resident*, was published by W. W. Wales in St. Anthony. The guide offered a general description of Minnesota, told how to get to it, and suggested that the Minnesota and St. Croix valleys were the best bets for settlement. The book then gave practical advice on such matters as what to plant in the first years and how to make a pre-emption claim (do not depart from it after you make it, the book warned). It gave figures on wages being paid (lumber workers, \$25-\$30 per month; farm hands, \$20-\$25 per month; housemaids, \$1-\$3 per week, with good chance of marriage); dates of seasonal closing of navigation on the Mississippi River; possibilities of farming and farm land speculation; and the names of churches and schools comparable to those in New England.

One of the first and most influential state guides (it went through at least ten editions) was J. Wesley

Bond's *Minnesota and Its Resources* (New York, 1853). Despite its dense rhetoric, one could learn much about Minnesota from it. Among places for farmers to settle, Bond recommended the Minnesota and St. Croix valleys, the Crow Wing area, and the lands west of Lake Minnetonka. He asserted that there was need for artisans and workers, but not for confirmed bachelors. "The territory *must* be peopled. . . . Don't waste time, either, by going east for a wife. *You* want a whole-souled, strong, wholesome Minnesota woman."

About the climate, Bond wrote: "From a residence of over six years in Minnesota, I can safely say that the atmosphere is more pure, pleasant, and healthful, than that of any other I have ever breathed on the continent of North or South America." Of St. Paul, he boasted: "The town has sprung up, like Minerva full armed from the head of Jupiter, and now contains ten thousand inhabitants; its whole history of seven years forming an instance of western enterprise, and determined energy and resolution, hitherto unsurpassed in the history of any frontier settlement."

He also was concerned about Minnesota getting a superior type of mankind: "We want here a race of men of higher physical and mental powers, of more meat and muscle, of more force and energy." And finally:

"Emigration to the West has heretofore been nauseously associated with the idea of low latitudes, the miasms of flat lands, and consequent disease and heart-sickening disappointments. It has, too, been associated with backwoods institutions — lynch law, the bowie-knife, uncertain means of education, and a gospel ministry on horseback. Minnesota presents another picture, and is truly a phenomenon in the eyes of the migrating world. It occupies a high latitude, has a quickly-drained surface, and is the inviting home of intelligence, enterprise, good laws, schools, and churches."

Bond concluded with an account of a camping trip to Pembina and the Red River of the North.¹²

ONE OF THE heroines of early Minnesota history was Harriet E. Bishop, St. Paul's first schoolteacher. She traveled from her native Vermont to Minnesota in 1847 under the auspices of the newly-organized Board of National Popular Education to teach a mixed ethnic group of children in primitive conditions where Christian education was not available.¹³ After her return to the East, she wrote of her experiences in a highly romantic account entitled *Floral Home; or, First Years in Minnesota* (New York, 1857). Her engraved picture appeared as the frontispiece, the book was dedicated to Governor Alexander Ramsey, and there was a sur-

¹⁰ Emerson, *Rise and Progress*, 1 (long quote), 4, 26, 33, 34.

¹¹ *The Minnesota Messenger, Containing Sketches*, 13. In the account of the naming, credit was given to George D. Bowman, editor of the *St. Anthony Express*, who also considered such names as "All Saints" and "Albion." However, in Warren Upham, *Minnesota Geographic Names*, 223 (Minnesota Historical Society, 1969 reprint), Charles Hoag, the publisher of the *Express*, shares the credit.

¹² Bond, *Minnesota* (Chicago, 1856 edition), 59, 64, 109, 161, 228 (quotes). The book has 412 pages, with a map in the back cover.

¹³ Zylpha S. Morton, "Harriet Bishop, Frontier Teacher," in *Minnesota History*, 28:132-141 (June, 1947).

prising amount of concrete and seemingly reliable information about the territory. To the present-day reader the rhetoric is cloying, but the book was eagerly read by many people and references to it appear in other guides.

A series of letters originally published in the *Boston Post* in 1856 was collected in 1857 in a volume called *Minnesota and Dacotah* (Washington, D.C., 1857). Written by Christopher C. Andrews, who was designated "Counsellor at Law, Editor of the Official Opinions of the Attorneys General of the United States," its fourteen chapters and appendixes gave a comprehensive report for the first time on the Upper Mississippi region, especially the Crow Wing area, as a favorable place for settlement. Andrews also commented on the state of the practice of law in Minnesota, and said it was "a little above the average of territorial bars."¹⁴ Readers were probably interested in his encounters with Chippewa Indians near Crow Wing and his visit with Chief Hole-in-the-Day. Andrews also recorded interviews with Red River oxcart drivers and estimated prospects for business investment in addition to devoting a whole letter to advice for prospective farmers who might settle in the Crow Wing area.

[J.Q.A.?] Ward and Young's *The Emigrant's Guide to Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota* (St. Paul) was brought out in 1857 from the *Minnesotian* newspaper office. The book included an account of sixty-one towns of the Upper Mississippi and its tributaries. In the same year, *A Guide for Emigrants to Minnesota By a Tourist* (St. Paul, 1857) promoted the St. Croix and Rum River areas. It contained a copy of the pre-emption law and gave directions on how to secure land under the law.

As with similar works, there was an interruption in publication of Minnesota guides during the first years of the 1860s, but it ceased in 1868 with the appearance of one of the most influential of the genre — J. Wesley McClung's *Minnesota As It Is* (St. Paul). It was reprinted several times, the 1870 edition being completely rewritten and greatly enlarged. Oddly enough, the frontispiece of the first edition was a drawing of "the lunatic asylum" in St. Peter. Aside from this disquieting item, one could find detailed information about Minnesota, especially in the 1870 version. McClung described each county, told about soils, climate, resources, and opportunities, and quoted extensively from travelers' accounts. An attached map added greatly to the usefulness of the guide.

In 1868 John Fletcher Williams produced *The Guide to Minnesota* (St. Paul), describing features along the rights of way of railroads then operating in Minnesota.¹⁵ The year 1868 also saw the publication of what the author and publisher, Colonel C. Hankins, claimed to

be a "novel" entitled *Dakota Land or the Beauty of St. Paul*.¹⁶ Mixed in with some appalling rhetoric were some seemingly authentic descriptions. The author was sufficiently proud of the book to have his picture grace the frontispiece.

A much-quoted guide, which was translated into German and Dutch and went through six editions in English between 1867 and 1869, was Girart Hewitt's *Minnesota: Its Advantages to Settlers* (St. Paul). Hewitt was an attorney and real estate dealer in St. Paul. His forty-one-page pamphlet is succinct and practical, giving concrete information but also adding the inevitable boast about the healthful climate of the state.

HEALTH GUIDES were a particularly popular form of promotional literature. Frequently quoted was a pamphlet issued by the State Board of Immigration in 1865, and the quotation one encounters most often, usually without acknowledgment, is as follows:

"The dryness of the air, the character of the soil, which retains no stagnant pools to send forth poisonous exhalations, the universal purity of its water, the beauty of its scenery, and the almost total absence of fog or mist; the brilliancy of its sunlight, the pleasing succession of the seasons, all conspire to give Minnesota a climate of unrivaled salubrity, and to make this the home of a joyous, healthy, prosperous people, strong in physical, intellectual, and moral capabilities. And while the chilly, damp winds from the Atlantic are sowing broadcast the seeds of that terrible disease, pulmonary consumption; while the malarious exhalations from the undrained soil of Indiana, Illinois, and other States of the Southern Mississippi Valley, yield an annual harvest of fevers, Minnesota enjoys an almost entire immunity from both. If fever and ague occur, the germ was imported; if consumption claim[s] its victim, the cause is to be sought elsewhere than in the climate of Minnesota."¹⁷

¹⁴ Andrews, *Minnesota and Dacotah*, 41.

¹⁵ The enlarged edition, published in 1869, included a map of Hennepin and Ramsey counties.

¹⁶ The book is subtitled, "An original, illustrated, historic and romantic work, presenting a combination of marvelous dreams and wandering fancies, singular events and strange fatalities, all interwoven with graphic descriptions of the beautiful scenery and wonderful enchantment of Minnesota. To which is added 'A Round of Pleasure,' with interesting notes of travel, maps, etc., and forming a comprehensive guide to the Great North-West."

¹⁷ [Mary J. Colburn], *Minnesota As a Home for Emigrants*, 24.

The two most influential books on the subject of the superior healthfulness of Minnesota, however, were Ledyard Bill's *Minnesota: Its Character and Climate* (New York, 1871) and Dr. Brewer Mattocks' *Minnesota As a Home for Invalids* (St. Paul, 1871). Bill's volume offered an enthusiastic description of the pure air and the progress of the state: "It might be entirely safe to assume that the people of Minnesota, as a whole, are distinguished by a more aesthetic character than their neighbors living in the nearly dead level country below them."¹⁸ He spent some time on the treatment of consumption, cited the celebrated case of the Reverend Horace Bushnell, whose right lung healed after a July-to-May sojourn in Minnesota, and devoted a chapter, "Hints to Invalids and Others," to proper clothing, diet, and exercise.

Mattocks, president of St. Paul's Board of Health and physician at St. Joseph's Hospital, carried more weight. After exploring known cures for consumption, none satisfactory, he embarked on a series of chapters on the peculiarly curative character of Minnesota's climate and living conditions. The state, he wrote, is

¹⁸ Bill, *Minnesota*, 16.

¹⁹ The *Northwestern Medical and Surgical Journal*, 1:71-72 (July, 1870) published a full account of the medical interchange. Mattocks, *Minnesota as a Home*, 112 (Murphy quote), 121 (second quote), 128 (third quote).

²⁰ See John T. Flanagan, "Thoreau in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 16:35-46 (March, 1935).

well above "miasms" and has a climate of "natural healthfulness." Disclaiming any paradise image, he nevertheless suggested that residence in Minnesota for at least twelve months might help, the climate being tonic, if not remedial. Air in Minnesota, he said, is good for anything that cold water is good for. As proof he reported a session of the Minnesota State Medical Association at Winona in June, 1870, at which the effect of Minnesota's climate was discussed. Specifically, Dr. J[ohn?] H. Murphy of St. Paul testified that when he arrived in Minnesota twenty-two years before he had "decided symptoms of pulmonary disease," but that now there was not a "healthier man in the State." Dr. Murphy was rigorously cross-examined by Dr. William W. Mayo, but Murphy stoutly maintained his assertions. (As Helen Clapesattle has recorded in her history of the Mayo family, Dr. Mayo himself came to Minnesota for his health.)

However, said Mattocks, "Climate is of little avail without . . . other advantages," especially a happy home and success. He wrote disparagingly of Florida as a health resort because of its heat and humidity and added: "Another advantage that we possess over the old health resorts is a tonic *moral influence* that pervades everything in our new State. . . . In Minnesota it is *hard to die*."¹⁹ The doctor informed his readers about land, soil fertility, timber, game, markets, Indians (not dangerous any more), wages, schools, and churches and concluded with advice to invalids about what they should do on arrival and how long they should stay (preferably permanently).

As late as 1879, Dr. Talbot Jones of St. Paul, in his *A Plea for cold climates in the Treatment of Pulmonary Consumption. Minnesota As a Health Resort* (New York), made essentially the same claims for Minnesota's climate. His pamphlet was a reprint of a paper published in the *New York Medical Journal* for September, 1879. The health gambit survived a surprisingly long time — from early territorial days until late in the century. Perhaps it has never really ended. There were outstanding failures, as in the case of noted author Henry D. Thoreau, who visited the state for his health in 1861, a year before his death.²⁰ However, he did not stay long enough by Dr. Mattocks' standards, and there was still the Reverend Horace Bushnell's sensational cure. In general, people probably were not harmed by coming to Minnesota.

Apart from state agency guides that were translated

J. W. BOND'S guide contained an amazing array of hard facts, wild generalizations, and literary allusions certainly intended to stir the venturesome spirit of the would-be immigrant.

MINNESOTA
AND
ITS RESOURCES
BY
J. W. BOND



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into foreign languages, a number of guides to Minnesota were directed to the Germans and Scandinavians and, to a lesser degree, to the Irish. In 1859 Karl Andree published a 404-page volume, entitled *Geographische Wanderungen*, in Dresden, Germany. It contained a lengthy chapter on "Der Staat Minnesota am obern Mississippi," giving the location of the state on the North American continent, the nature of the climate, the population as of 1857, opportunities for agriculture, suitability for northern European crops, the location of millions of acres of available lands, projected railroads, lumbering operations, and business potentialities. He reported (translation): "Even now, in the second half of 1858, Minnesota has become important, and it is on the main road to the goldfields of British Columbia."²¹

Published in St. Louis, Missouri, in 1858, was another German volume, G. Brückner's *Amerikas wichtigste Charakteristik nach Land und Leuten* (America's Principal Characteristics as to Land and People). It included a few pages of information about Minnesota. Meanwhile, European publications such as Thomas Rawlings' *Die Auswanderung mit besonderer Beziehung auf Minnesota und British Columbia* (The Emigration with Special Reference to Minnesota and British Columbia), published in Hamburg, Germany, in 1866, gave a brief but very favorable report on the advantages of Minnesota for immigrants. Eduard Pelz, in *Minnesota das Central-Gebiet Nord-Amerikas* (Minnesota the Central State of North America), published in Leipzig, Germany, in 1868, acknowledged that for many years Minnesota was regarded as America's Siberia, but he attempted to correct this image with evidence of Minnesota's capabilities for agriculture. Particularly enamored of the climate, he claimed (translation): "The climate of Minnesota is the healthiest in the United States."²²

OF THE MANY GUIDES for Scandinavians, only a few were concerned specifically with Minnesota. Although Fredrika Bremer's *The Homes of the New World; Impressions of America* (New York, 1853) was a travel narrative, one section told of her visit to Minnesota in 1850, and included the famous quotation, "What a glorious new Scandinavia might not Minnesota become!"²³ She visited with Governor Ramsey, called at the home of John Wesley North on Nicollet Island, visited Sioux Indians, and wrote enthusiastically about the new territory.²⁴ Her travelogue was published in 1853 and was widely read.

More properly in the category of guides was Adolph T. Boyesen's *Udvandrerens Veileder og Raadgiver* (The Emigrant's Guide and Adviser), published in Christiania (Oslo), Norway, in 1868. The author,

a first lieutenant in the Norwegian army, devoted twenty-six pages to Minnesota. Boyesen, however, drew heavily on the Hans Mattson guide of the Minnesota Board of Immigration. More useful, though briefer, was Sören Listoe's *Staten Minnesota i Nordamerika* (Minneapolis, 1869). Written by the editor of *Nordisk Folkeblad* of Minneapolis, the guide treated of Minnesota's brief history, its geographical location, climate, resources, government, political subdivisions, taxes, surveys of land, population composition, schools, land laws, farming potentialities, wages, products, railroads, towns, and how to get to places in the state. Listoe reported that no immigrants were more welcome in Minnesota than Scandinavians.

A curious pamphlet was *Trapperens Veileder* (Trappers Guide) by K. Hasberg, published in 1871 at the office of *Fædrelandet og Emigranten* in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Like many other guides, it gave agricultural information, but it also told of hunting and trapping possibilities in Minnesota. Finally, there was the 1872 Gunnestad & Company's *Haandbog for Emigranter til de Forenede Stater* (Christiania, Norway), a translation of an English language guidebook which is not named. After warning sternly that emigration was a serious and virtually irreversible matter, the guide answered questions as to who should go, when to depart, how to travel, what to do on arrival at Castle Garden (the disembarkation point for immigrants in New York), and where to go from there. The only ones encouraged to emigrate were the young and vigorous and those of farming or handicraft background. The guide assessed Minnesota favorably, with emphasis on the huge acreage awaiting settlers.

Guides directed to the Irish of the eastern states as well as of the homeland came from the Minnesota Irish Immigration Society and from Bishop John Ireland's Catholic Colonization Bureau, both of St. Paul.²⁵ Examples of these guides are the society's *Circular . . . for 1867* and *Emigration Pamphlet* (1870) and the bureau's *An Invitation to the Land* (1877). The immigration society's reports, both probably written by its secretary, Dillon O'Brien, were aimed primarily at the Irish in America's eastern cities. The main thrust of the 1867 pamphlet seems to have been to dissuade anyone who was not prepared to farm: "We invite none but persons anxious to go upon [the] land, who have capi-

²¹ Andree, *Geographische Wanderungen*, 242.

²² Pelz, *Minnesota das Central-Gebiet*, 29.

²³ Bremer, *Homes*, 2:56.

²⁴ See Carlton C. Qualey, "John Wesley North and the Minnesota Frontier," in *Minnesota History*, 35:101-116 (September, 1956).

²⁵ See James P. Shannon, *Catholic Colonization on the Western Frontier* (New Haven, 1957).

tal (at least as much as will support them for a whole year) to do so, who anticipate for the first few years, trials to hardships and are bravely resolved, with the help of God, by industry, sobriety and perseverance to overcome them." ²⁶ Information of all kinds was given in the more extensive 1870 edition.

The Catholic Colonization Bureau's publication of 1877 was really a sales-promotion pamphlet for lands along the lines of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad in Swift County and the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad in Nobles County. The pamphlet, probably written by Bishop Ireland, argued the advantages of the land over the city, especially for children, the greater freedom and independence to be gained there, and the greater opportunities to be found in Minnesota.

The Minnesota State Board of Health and Vital Statistics preceded the Board of Immigration in promoting immigration to the state. In 1860 it issued a pamphlet, written by Commissioner Joseph A. Wheelock, entitled *Minnesota, Its Place Among the States* (Hartford, Connecticut), which was mainly a descrip-

²⁶ Minnesota Irish Immigration Society, *Circular*, 4.

²⁷ See, for example, *Minnesota als eine Heimath für Einwanderer* (St. Paul, 1870); *Minnesota og dets Fordele for Indvandrerer* (La Crosse, 1870).

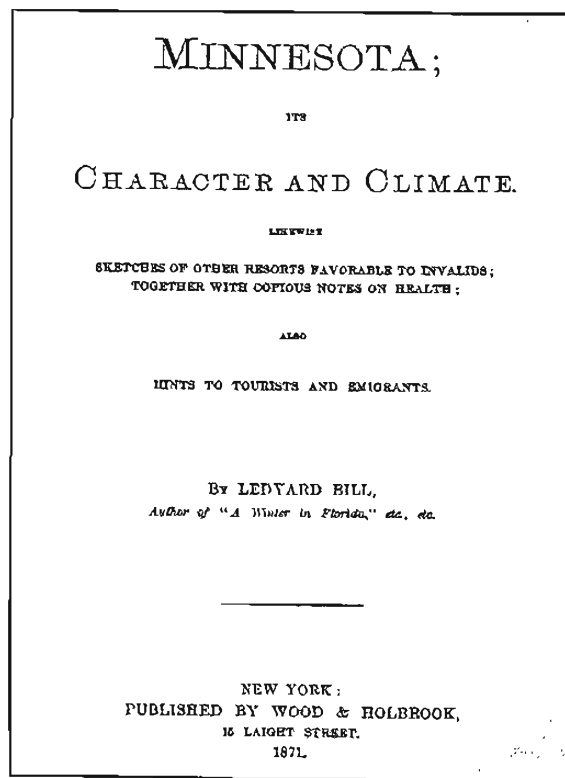
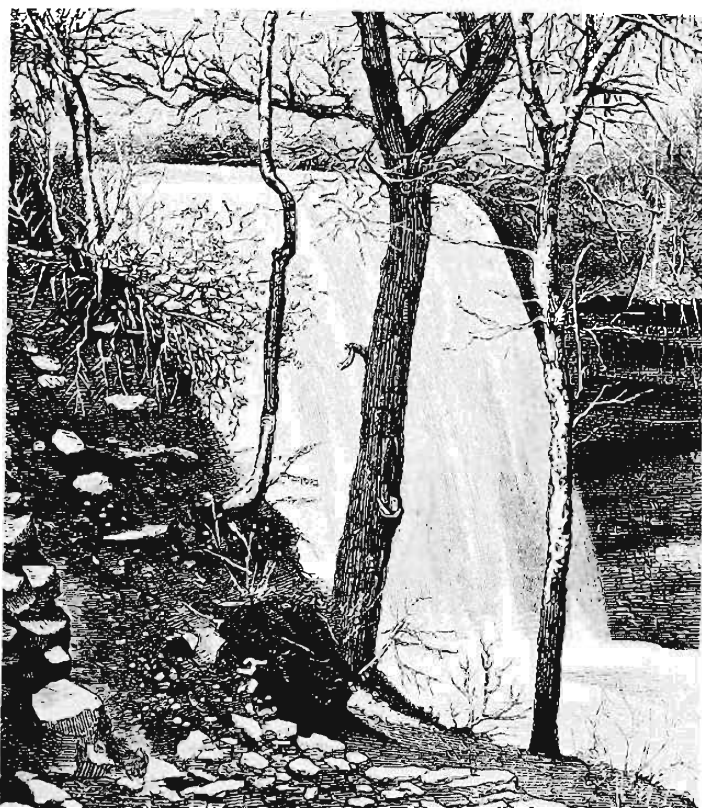
²⁸ See Theodore C. Blegen, "Minnesota's Campaign for Immigrants," in *Swedish Historical Society of America, Yearbook*, 11:3-26 (Chicago, 1926).

tion based on the census of 1860. A more extensive report, prepared by Commissioner E. Page Davis, came from the same agency in 1870. Entitled *Minnesota: Its Resources and Progress*, it quoted copiously from visitors' accounts, reprinted the letter of Reverend Bushnell concerning his cured consumption, added a similar testimonial from Reverend Henry A. Boardman of Philadelphia, and offered some material from the McClung guidebook. The pamphlet gave 1870 statistics on population and church membership. Like other guides, it furnished information on land laws and instructions about transportation and equipment. Only the young were urged to travel to the state.

COMPLEMENTARY to the 1865 pamphlet of the Minnesota Board of Immigration containing the much-quoted essay by Mary J. Colburn, a series of pamphlets in English, German, and the Scandinavian languages was issued in 1870 by the board under the general title, *Minnesota As a Home for Immigrants*.²⁷ Thousands of copies of the Minnesota pamphlet were distributed abroad, at eastern seaports, and in other states.²⁸

Certainly the Scandinavian editions of the pamphlet and perhaps others were written by Colonel Hans Mattson, Civil War hero and member of the Board of Immigration. He toured Scandinavia and successfully recruited settlers for the Northern Pacific and Lake Superior and Mississippi railroads. The pamphlet was

HEALTH GUIDES including this one by Ledyard Bill featured engravings of natural beauty spots such as Minnehaha Falls. Clearly the reader was to associate unspoiled nature with unblemished physical health.



distributed without charge and contained useful and probably exaggerated information about the state's agriculture, history, geography, government, cities, schools, population, climate, natural resources, and products. Mattson also wrote about the homestead law, pioneer life, railroads, labor opportunities, wages, welfare, churches, major Scandinavian settlements, land offices, and exemption from attachments. The latter feature was mentioned in several other guides, no doubt reflecting past painful experiences of settlers whose improved land had been "attached," or seized for failure to meet mortgage or lien payments. The Homestead Act of 1862 forbade attachment for debts incurred before acquisition of the homestead land.²⁹

It may be recalled that the first railroad promotion to Minnesota was the Rock Island excursion of 1854 celebrating the linkage by railroad of the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. At that time a thousand people traveled by rail to Rock Island, Illinois, and then upriver by steamboat to view the Falls of St. Anthony. The major effort of the railroads, however, came in the 1870s and after. There are many railroad guides in the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society, and only a few will be mentioned here.

Perhaps the earliest was the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad's *Guide to the Lands of the First Division* (1870), followed by the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad's *Lands for Emigrants* (1871), Hans Mattson's *Land for Emigranter* (1871), the Northern Pacific's *Guide to the Lands of the Northern Pacific in Minnesota* (1872), John Brennan's *St. Paul & Sioux City Railroad Directory and Business Guide* (1873), the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway's *Facts About Minnesota* (1879), the Winona and St. Peter Railroad's *Guide to the Unsurpassed Farming Region in Southern Minnesota & Eastern Dakota* (1879), the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad's *Southwestern Minnesota* (1880), the Winona and St. Peter-sponsored pamphlet by Charles E. Simmons, land commissioner of the Chicago & Northwestern Railway Company, entitled *A Guide to the Choicest Farming Lands in the Northwest* (1882), the same railroad's pamphlet by Charles A.

Chapman called *Southwestern Minnesota. The Best Farming Section in the World* (1882), and J. H. Drake's pamphlet for the St. Paul and Sioux City Railway Company entitled *The Land of Plenty, As It Is* (1884).

These guides had a certain sameness of content and character, except perhaps the publication by Hans Mattson which added the author's personal assurances that he had investigated the lands of Chisago County and urged immigrants to write or call at his office at Third and Jackson streets in St. Paul. All the pamphlets described the scenery, the transportation accessibility, the fertility of the lands, the need to come soon because of rapid settlement, the possibilities of off-season or pre-farming labor, and, of course, the fine climate.

Finally, there are the guides to cities and counties which are too numerous to mention. One of the earliest was published by D. Sinclair & Company for Winona (1858), but other counties and cities quickly produced local booster literature. A virtual flood of county and city histories and guides was produced.

The effect of this guide literature on actual immigration to and settlement in Minnesota is difficult to assess. Certain publications, such as that by Mattson, had influence that was direct and effective. The number of editions and probable extensive circulation of others suggest influence and would seem to indicate a large market for them. Whatever the rationale or significance of the guides, they reflect an optimism, an infectious enthusiasm, and a boom spirit that form an authentic expression of the character of the Minnesota frontier.

²⁹ Merrill E. Jarchow, *The Earth Brought Forth*, 64 (St. Paul, 1949). Article I, section 12 of the Minnesota constitution, adopted in 1857, also exempted "a reasonable amount of property . . . from seizure or sale for the payment of any debt or liability." The amount was determined by law.

THE SKETCH on page 218 is reproduced from Frederick B. Goddard's *Where to Emigrate, and Why* (New York, 1869). It faces page 252 in the book.



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