

copyist to write "Otauack," we get a result which means "to the Ottawa," or "at the Ottawa," or simply "the Ottawa," as described in Miss Kellogg's descriptive note. The heading, therefore, is to be read as if it were: "*Now followeth the Ottawa Voyage into the Great and filthy Lake of the Hurrons, Upper Sea of the East, and Bay of the North,*" which has common sense and is historically and geographically correct. The variation on the word at the end of the third voyage, "*The ende of the Auxotacicac voyage, w<sup>ch</sup> is the third voyage,*" may be the result of another effort on the part of the copyist to write down or copy some strange word or words with which he was unfamiliar.

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### THE STATE FAIR EXHIBIT

The exhibit of the Minnesota Historical Society at the annual state fair in September brought 1856 and 1926 face to face. It was installed at the south end of the building devoted to state department displays. Just outside the door the latest types of threshing machines, plows, road-graders, and ponderous trucks were in operation under the direction of leather-lunged demonstrators. Against the inside wall, forming the background of the historical exhibit, was a giant map in yellow and black, showing Minnesota's progress toward good roads. In the center of the great hall was a large exhibit of the Minnesota highway department showing in miniature the types of roads and the methods used in maintaining them. Near-by were the spaces occupied by the dairy and food commission, the department of agriculture, and the public health service, with their practical suggestions for better living conditions in 1926. Everything in the building bespoke the complexities of twentieth-century life save the quiet booth at the lower end.

Railed off completely from the rest of the displays, as if to emphasize the separation of the past from the present, stood the exhibit of the Minnesota Historical Society, a half-faced log cabin partly hidden by evergreen trees. There was a glow in the fireplace which invited the visitor, damp and chilly as he was from the drizzle outside, to stop, warm himself, and ponder for a moment upon the life that grandfather and grandmother led in Minnesota seventy years ago. The rough homemade bed with its home-woven blue and white "kiver," the table, stump stools, rifle and powderhorn, iron kettle, bellows, candle mould and wooden pound churn — all were there. Conveniently at hand outside the cabin door lay the ox yoke, grub hoe, adz, flail, and grain cradle with which the pioneer battled the wilderness.

Drawn up near the cabin stood a Red River oxcart, survivor of the days of the fur trade. As the old-timer gazed upon it, a mist seemed to pass before his eyes as he conjured up before his vision the spectacle of a pioneer ox train. One could almost read in his eyes the story of a meeting such as that described in an early account of "The Red River Trail."<sup>1</sup>

Soon a single ox-cart could be distinguished at the head of the column, as if just emerging from the thick pall of dust. As the train approached, the outlines of other carts, filing in long procession, could be defined; and soon the foremost came up. . . . There were some hundred and fifty carts in all — rude, wooden vehicles, put together without a particle of iron — not excepting tires and linchpins — and each drawn by a single ox, harnessed in shafts with gearing of strips of raw hide. The appearance of the drivers accompanying was not less grotesque. One hardly knew whether to be most surprised at the odd uniformity of their costume of coarse blue cloth, richly ornate with brass buttons, their showy belts of red flannel, and their small jaunty caps, or at the remarkable diversity of their figures and complexions, including as it did, the fair skin and light-brown curls of the Saxon, and the swarthy hue and straight black hair of the Indian, with every intermediate shade that amalgamation could produce. Each driver had the charge of five or six carts, the animals being led

<sup>1</sup> *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 18: 615 (April, 1859).

by a strap tied to the cart next in front—so that, while he flourished his whip over the back of the leader, the rest were compelled to follow,  *nolens volens*. In some cases these straps had chafed the roots of the horns until the flesh was raw and bloody, and this added much to the woe-begone appearance of the wretched animals. Each cart was heavily loaded with furs, which were covered with a buffalo robe spread over the top.

Perhaps in the old-timer's memory the picture was enlivened by an unforgettable noise—"while the heavy wheels, that had never known grease, kept up an incessant creaking and groaning, as if speaking for the dumb oxen their unspeakable woes." If so, the sound merged, as the oxcart disappeared into the dust,—of ages,—with the raucous blasts of the horn of a motor truck forcing its way through a traffic jam.

Though such visions might fade, the oxcart itself was real and substantial, and to thousands of visitors whose memories did not run back to scenes when Minnesota transportation was still in a primitive stage, it furnished, when viewed in its setting, an interesting and instructive reconstruction of pioneer conditions.

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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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