

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Irvine Park in 1854:
*Its Homes and the People
Who Once Lived There*

See article on page 20

Spring, 2004

Volume 39, Number 1

'High and Dry on a Sandstone Cliff'

St. Paul and the Year of the Chicago and
Rock Island's Great Railroad Excursion

—Page 4



This postcard dated 1909 shows St. Paul's Lower Landing where the Great Railroad Excursion came ashore 150 years ago. From historian Robert J. Stumm's collection and used with his permission. See articles beginning on page 4 and page 20.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 39, Number 1

Spring, 2004

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN JULY 2003:

The Ramsey County Historical Society shall discover, collect, preserve and interpret the history of the county for the general public, recreate the historical context in which we live and work, and make available the historical resources of the county. The Society's major responsibility is its stewardship over this history.

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A Message from the Editorial Board

Ramsey County Historical Society is celebrating two major events this spring. The first is the sesquicentennial of the Great Railroad Excursion in June of 1854 that heralded the completion of the railroad to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, and the opening up of the trans-Mississippi west to settlement. In the lead article in this issue, historian Steve Trimble deftly reports what the historical record tells us about St. Paul in 1854. Then Robert Stumm, an avid collector of historic postcards, takes us on a tour of present-day homes in Irvine Park that have their origins in the era of the Grand Excursion and explains what those buildings tell us about the people who lived in them.

This issue of *Ramsey County History* completes forty years of unbroken publication. Begun in 1964 under the editorship of its founder, Virginia Brainard Kunz, our magazine has won two awards for excellence from the American Association for State and Local History. *Ramsey County History* has also demonstrated that local history, especially when it concerns the history of Ramsey County and St. Paul, can be a rich source of materials for authors, historians, and readers. Given the pleasure and enlightenment that this magazine has provided to all who have read it over the years, we thank the many authors who have contributed the fruits of their research and writing to RCHS. In addition Virginia Kunz deserves special thanks for her sterling editorship of this history magazine for the past forty years.

John Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board

'High and Dry on a Sandstone Cliff'

St. Paul and the Year of the Chicago and Rock Island's Great Railroad Excursion

Steve Trimble

As the new year dawned in January, 1854, Minnesota was still a territory on the northern reaches of the great Mississippi. St. Paul was its capital, and its citizens greeted the passage of the old year with all the fervor of a community that would be ice-bound until April. As the *Minnesotian* noted in its January 7 edition:

New Year's Eve was generally celebrated by the ladies and gentlemen of St. Paul in the usual way. We have never known "calling" more general or receptions more cordial and well provided for. All appeared to enjoy themselves to their heart's content.

Little did they know that the following spring would bring them the "most notable event" of that new year. Although the event commemorating it in this year of 2004 is called the Grand Excursion, it was known in its own time as the "Great Railroad Excursion" because it celebrated the completion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad's first line in the Northwest to reach the Mississippi. In the meantime, the about-to-be incorporated city's Yankee settlers went about introducing into their young community some of the graces they had carried in from back East. One of them was the handing out of calling cards as they progressed from home to home that New Year's Day. While calling cards might seem out-of-place on the frontier, they nevertheless represented a touch of formality that was exactly what the influential New Englanders hoped to introduce into their new home.

Although the Yankees were in the minority among St. Paul's citizens in 1854, they already possessed much of the money, power, and influence that was alive in the city, and they were determined to bring their vision of reality to what they saw as "The New England of the West." For them, St. Paul was "a city in the wilderness," and a settlement that would bring "civilization" to Minnesota.

They were caught in the national transmigration movement as settlers

moved westward and chose to build their cities first, rather than till the soil. As historian Richard Wade wrote in *The Urban Frontier*, cities rather than open land were "the spearheads of the frontier," developing "in advance of the line of settlement." St. Paul's 1854 population of around 5,000 was quite large, considering that the total number of European-American residents in the territory was estimated as just over 30,000.

St. Paul, as the territory's center of commerce, communication, and culture, held an importance to the region that went beyond the size of its population. With its two steamboat landings or levees—one at the foot of Jackson Street in Lowertown and the other at the foot of Chestnut Street in the Seven Corners neighborhood of Upper Town—the city also was head of navigation on the Mississippi. All water-borne products and people had to be loaded or unloaded at its levees and both time and money were spent in town before new arrivals moved on. As the territorial capital and the seat of Ramsey County's government, the community drew visitors and shoppers. Its population supported four daily newspapers.

Those early settlers arrived from Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburg, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and the cities of New England. Used to the faster pace of urban life, knowing how cities worked, they came to build an urban mercantile center

in the Northwest. Many had considerable financial resources to start businesses, including dealing in real estate. They brought a vision of how a city should look, how it should be run, and they passed on their practical knowledge of how older metropolitan areas had dealt with their problems.

The following accounts, based on the words of journalists, travelers, and ordinary citizens who lived there, document twelve months in the life of St. Paul as it was 150 years ago.

'How Changed the Scene!'

Five years ago the present location was a wilderness, where civilized man seldom or never trod, where nought but nature in her most rugged state met the eye, and where the untutored Savage roamed in pursuit of food, or loitered lazily beneath the shade of the forest trees. How changed the scene! The trees have fallen beneath the axe of the pioneer [and] the soil has been made subservient to the wants of civilization.

—J. W. Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*

"Bringing civilization to the wilderness" was a frequent theme of discussion in early St. Paul. It was written into the 1854 newspapers, preached from the pulpit, spoken at public gatherings, and echoed in letters and travel journals. Ironically, the same issue of the *Pioneer* that published J. W. Bond's statement, also reported a fatal assault on two men whose skulls were fractured in several places with "a slug shot." It was the first case of premeditated murder in the city, the newspaper said, "and the wanton barbarity of the act shows that we have among us some of the most depraved of our race."

There were meetings at which leaders encouraged "moral outrage," residents asked for a special investigator to be ap-



St. Paul from Cherokee Park. This undated lithograph shows the city as it might have looked in the mid- to late-1850s. The now-vanished Upper Landing at the foot of Chestnut Street is on the left; City Hall, flying a flag, stands on the bluff near the Lower Landing at right. From the author's collection. Unless otherwise noted, all other photographs with this article are from the Minnesota Historical Society.

pointed, ministers denounced the crime from their pulpits the following Sunday. Temperance leader Nathaniel McLean reminded people that alcohol always had been "a fruitful source of immorality and vice" in the territory and usually was the cause of "street rowdyism." Although a sizeable reward was offered, the crime was never solved.

Like other quickly growing urban areas, St. Paul was concerned with public safety issues in 1854. There was a constant influx of newcomers: residents, visitors, and people just passing through. Growing steamboat traffic—over 250 boats arriving in 1854—meant the area often was filled with roustabouts and dock workers. The rapidly increasing population and its fluid nature put pressure on the city's sparse law enforcement apparatus, and made it difficult to maintain social control.

The policing was done by William R. Miller—"Marshall" Miller, as he was called—who was the only peace officer.

Said to have been almost seven feet tall, he was a formidable presence on the streets. "He not only had physical power but he looked [like] power," one writer said later, "and overawed small men by the very largeness of his proportions." Even so, it was hard for one man to effectively patrol an entire city. The *Pioneer* suggested that citizens help him "so St. Paul might continue to hold the good name for peace and quiet she so enjoys."

The most frequently reported problem was disturbance of the peace. In September, for instance, the *Democrat* mentioned trouble caused by drunks in Upper Town. They noted that Marshall Miller was doing his best, but he needed deputies "to assist him in keeping the peace of the city." Even while saying that "fights on Sunday are becoming entirely of too frequent occurrence," the *Pioneer* insisted the city was safe.

The notices in newspapers of illegal activities were short, but reveal the problems facing frontier law enforce-

ment. There was a store break-in where money, guns, knives and some clothing were taken; a case of bigamy with the accused released on \$300 bond; the arrest of a drunken man, "driving at a furious rate" who ran into another buggy and seriously injured its driver. There also were assaults, a few stabbings, a suicide with morphine, and a case of infanticide.

Certain parts of the city were considered areas of frequent unrest. "Our levee has again been disgraced with a set of itinerant, pugnacious individuals," the *Pioneer* stated in August. A group of card-playing deck hands in the upper story of Tanner's Saloon had a fight and one of them was stabbed four times. The attacker was arrested, but the victim left the next day without filing charges. Since there were no other witnesses, the man was released after being fined for unruly behavior.

"Popcorn" Johnson's Wabasha Street store had been burglarized in February. That summer, Popcorn himself was

behind bars for taking someone's money playing "picayune poker." He refused to pay a fine and was jailed. "His apples and melons now rot upon his stall," one paper commented. Under the headline "A Rogue in Petticoats," the *Times* made the only report of criminal activity by a woman. While leaving employment at the Winslow House in December, she filled her trunks with stolen property. "It is sad at any time to record the weakness of human nature," the paper said, "but more particularly when a female is the actress."

A Vital Role

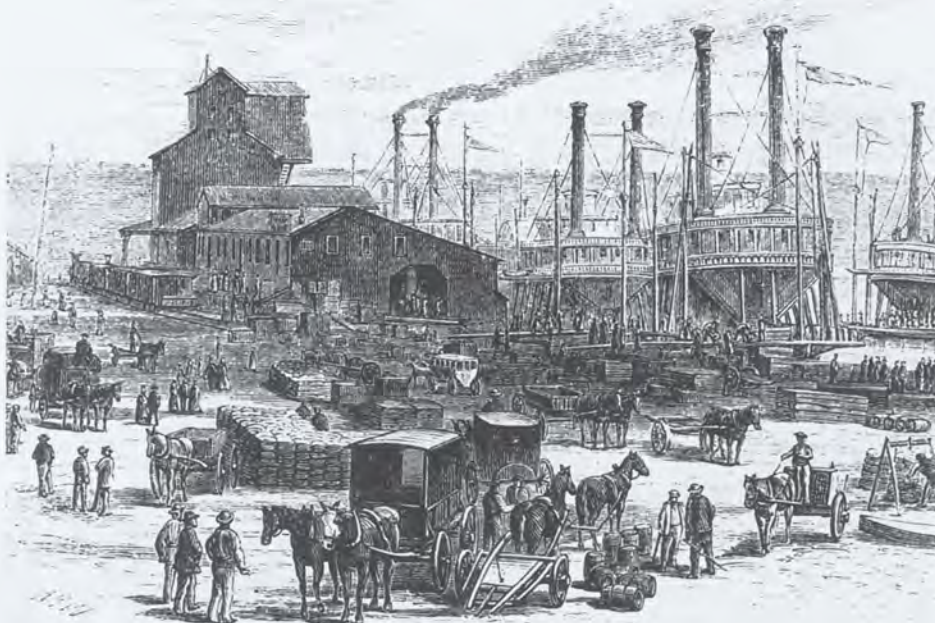
The New Englanders, pretty numerous in St. Paul, have imported from their former home their narrow eastern prejudices against liberty of conscience and the freedom of education. In the name of liberty, as understood by them, they disregarded last year numerous petitions on that subject and defeated a bill claiming that each denomination should be authorized to have schools of their own supported by the public funds.

—Bishop Cretin, 1854 *Catholic Directory*

Religion played a vital role in St. Paul life and by the end of 1854 there were seven churches a person could attend. The Catholic Church, whose log chapel had been built in 1841, was the oldest. Led by Bishop Joseph Cretin, its members had been French Canadians and Irish, but there also was a growing number of Germans. The first Protestant house of worship in the territory was the Market Street Methodist Church, built in 1848 and facing today's Rice Park.

There had been a boom in church construction in 1850. The First Presbyterian congregation had built a church in 1848, but it burned down and a new church was being erected at the corner of Third and St. Peter. The First Baptist Church, organized a year earlier, was putting up a structure on what came to be called "Baptist Hill." When the church ran into financial trouble, the women organized the St. Paul Baptist Sewing Society and sold items to pay off the mortgage.

The Episcopalians began services in their new church in December, 1850. They took a different approach when they needed money in 1854; they relied on the old custom of selling space. The *Pioneer*



A steel engraving of the bustling Lower Landing as it looked around 1854, the year of the Great Railroad Excursion.

told its readers that Christ Church was making such plans and advised that "persons in want of pews should by all means avail themselves of this opportunity."

Sometimes early St. Paul congregations operated without a permanent home. This was the case for the Second Presbyterian, which had been meeting at the territorial Capitol and other locations since 1852. They finally constructed their own building in 1854. That same year First Lutheran Church was officially organized. Often called the Scandinavian Church, it was the first Lutheran congregation in Minnesota, but they would not have a building of their own until later.

Though the newspaper editors tended to be Protestant, they usually printed positive items about others. When the *Pioneer* reported on the completion of Bishop Cretin's new hospital in October, the newspaper called it a "magnificent monument to the benevolence and Christianity of our fellow Catholic citizens," and said the effort "deserves and will receive warm wishes of every right thinking man in the community."

The *Democrat* expressed similar thoughts about the work of the St. Joseph nuns. "Many a man has cause to bless these Sisters of Charity, for ministering

to the sick, doing their work silently and without ostentation," it said. "We are no believers in the Catholic Religion, but are willing to do them justice."

At another time the *Pioneer* was happy to announce that the sons of John O'Gorman and Richard Ireland were in school in Europe, preparing for the priesthood. One of them, Thomas O'Gorman, later became Bishop of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The other, of course, was John Ireland, who later would play a prominent role in city affairs as Archbishop of St. Paul. Both were at the top of their classes academically. "This demonstrating," the paper said, "that Minnesota is not only the climate for fruits and vegetables, but also for brains."

Hotels: Get Ready!

St. Paul Mutual Insurance Company: We take pleasure in referring to the advertisement of this Company, in another column. We understand that its prospects are very flattering, the receipts having been more in one month than was anticipated for one year. The gentlemen who compose this Company, are well known to the community, and we cannot but believe that our citizens will give them preference to all other associations of a like character.

—*Minnesota Pioneer*, March 2, 1854

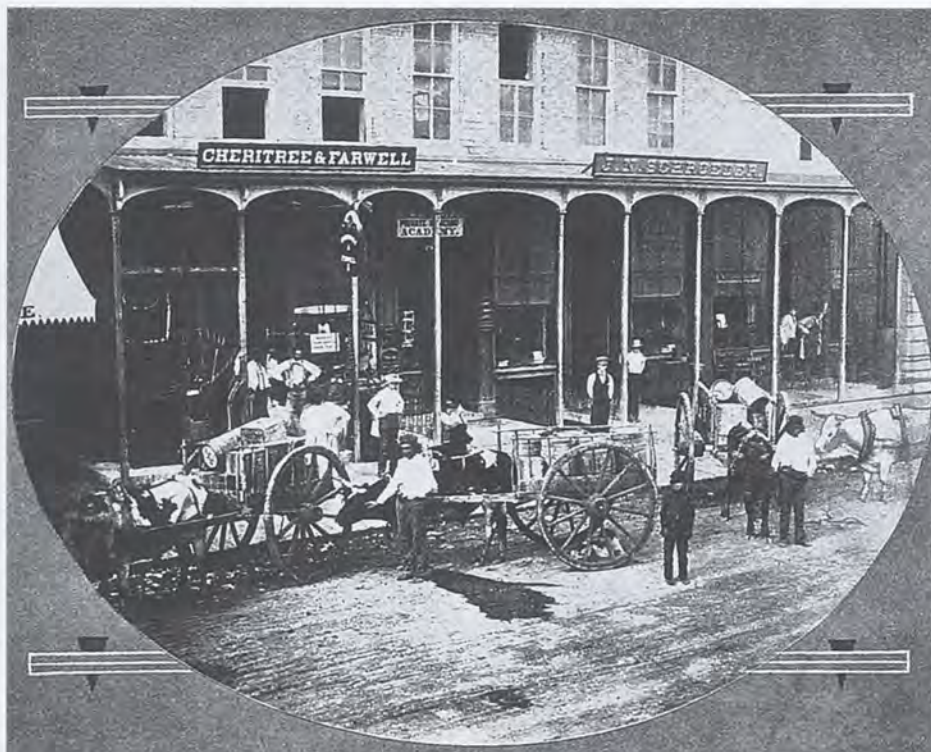
St. Paul Fire and Marine had been incorporated in 1853, opened its doors in February, 1854 and soon sold its first policy. It was not the only company to do well in this era of booming business. The older frontier economy, if waning, was still strong, and a new urban mercantile economy based on transportation, commerce, wholesaling, and light industry was developing to take its place.

Tourism also was an important resource for the city. The newspapers frequently spoke of the need for more lodging in the city. With the coming of spring, 200 or so wealthy families soon would leave the hot Southern climate and stay for the summer months, one newspaper said, urging that the hotels get ready. As late as October, the *Pioneer* reported that nearly half the passengers on six steamers had to stay overnight on their boats because the hotels were full. "It is indispensable to the well being of our city that strangers who are flowing hither, should have good accommodations."

Chicago visitors remarked at the number of specialty shops, rather than the general stores expected in newly settled places. A New York writer also was surprised by the variety, by "a gaily painted omnibus traveling the streets," and by "handsome well-filled stores" of all kinds. "Substantial brick houses, with imposing stoops, a Daguerreotype gallery, soda-water fountains . . . large stores of dressed and undressed furs . . . are what principally surprised me in St. Paul's."

Among the specialty shops were several offering women's garments. Mrs. M. L. Stokes came to St. Paul in 1849 and opened the first "full millinery establishment." By December, newspapers included advertisements for four other millinery shops, all operated by women. These businesses also were a source of employment. When a Mrs. Dover opened a shop, she advertised for two or three milliners and dressmakers, who would "find steady work and good salaries," as well as two or three apprentices who wanted to learn the trade.

Because the city's economy was growing so quickly, there was a chronic labor shortage and workers usually were able to find work at decent wages. "Wanted.



Red River ox carts in front of Cheritree and Farwell's Hardware Store on Third Street, just up the bluff from the Lower Landing, in 1857. This perhaps was a scene that greeted the thousand or so participants in the Great Railroad Excursion in 1854.

Norwegian or German girl as a cook for a private family," a typical advertisement read. There was a job for a girl "to live with an officers family at Fort Snelling, as good capable house servant, to whom liberal wages will be paid." In the fall, men were sought to quarry stone from Dayton's Bluff for construction of the Fuller House, a hotel. Charles Mayo wanted "two competent tanners" and offered "constant employment and good wages."

There was an early labor exchange in the city. Throughout the spring and summer newspapers carried advertisements from the "St. Paul Intelligence Office," which offered to connect employers with cooks and "servants of every description, both male and female for city or country" for a two dollar fee. In June, it "needed 100 men—teamsters, carpenters, cooks, sawyers, choppers." They also were seeking "25 good housemaids immediately."

News of city workers is limited, but there were two notable events in 1854. One was a celebration of the birth of Benjamin Franklin, sponsored in late January by the St. Paul printers. The first ever

in the territory, it was called a "Printers Festival," and was an evening of food, drink, and speeches that went until midnight. It is uncertain whether the printers were union members, but Judge Aaron Goodrich spoke and jokingly apologized for not being "a member of the Printer's Union;" later there was a toast to the union.

It is also unclear if the St. Paul journeymen tailors belonged to a union, but they engaged in the territory's first known strike in late October. In a short notice, the *Pioneer* said the group had "been on a strike for higher wages" for three days. The men said that the cost of living had risen so much that the compensation they had been receiving for their labor was "not sufficient remuneration." Local papers never reported the outcome of the action.

While most of St. Paul's business problems were similar to those faced by other cities, there were some situations unique to Minnesota. One was the isolation when the river froze, making it almost impossible to replenish inventory. The rapid increase of immigration



Downtown St. Paul, clustered on the bluff above the Lower Landing in 1857. Fourth Street, beginning in the righthand corner of this photograph, runs diagonally toward Robert Street. Cedar Street, right center, resembles a stone quarry. The city looked much like this in 1854. Benjamin Franklin Upton photograph.

had furnished many new customers, the *Times* commented in November, "and although our merchants have laid in a very large winter stock, still they are fearful it will not last until spring."

Another frontier problem was the presence of a great deal of "wildcat currency," issued by distant banks. The need to trade it in at discounted prices could result in significant losses for the merchants. "Considerable trouble is experienced here in consequence of the currency," the *Minnesotian* stated in December. "There is no bank in the Territory, and financial [matters] here are managed by private bankers."

Mostly because of this problem, the St. Paul businesses community organized a Board of Trade near the end of the year. The currency issue, they announced, would claim a large share of the group's attention. "It is rather a misfortune for the people of this country that we have not some more secure system of banking amongst us." The Board also hoped to settle disputes to aid "in the prevention of fraudulent practices among business men" so that "the worthy may not suffer from the acts of the unprincipled."

'Nasty Streets, Nasty People'

We landed in St. Paul on a dark, rainy April day. Brother David . . . met us at the foot of Jackson Street with a carriage . . . The buildings on Third street, I remember—for there was no other street properly speaking—were . . . Mr. Neill's brick church, then two cottages standing together, painted white, with green blinds and enclosed with a fence-looking very civilized—I think I recall them especially from the fact that there was a spotted fawn running loose in one of the yards and an Indian standing nearby.

—Abby Fuller

Abby Fuller decided to come to the frontier even though her family had received disparaging letters from her brother George. "I am afraid nothing could tempt me to live here," he told them. "Everything here, Lizzie, is half civilized or savage. You see nasty streets, nasty people in them, nasty looking houses." She came anyway, arriving in a community that must have seemed only partly civilized. She was in time to observe the remaining fur trade culture, and experience the area's transition into a diversified urban economy.

A year or two earlier, Native Ameri-

cans were an integral part of St. Paul's landscape, but the treaty of 1851 had removed the Dakota to reservations along the Minnesota River. They and the Ojibwe still came to trade in St. Paul, but far fewer came and they arrived less often. In early May, Dakota leader Little Crow, who used to live at nearby Kaposia, arrived in the city. He had been in Washington to argue against the removal of his people to the Missouri River. He stayed overnight and then left for his Minnesota reservation.

Two weeks later the *Minnesotian* "had the privilege of again seeing the familiar faces of many of our old Sioux neighbors, including Little Crow, Little Six . . . alias Shakopee, and old Betsy." They had arrived for unspecified business with the government. Betsy told the paper that she was now "living as white people," and "trading as a white trader" with the western bands.

Abby Fuller left one of the best descriptions of a frontier city hotel. "The American House was the typical western hotel; a long, white, wooden structure with a piazza across the front," she wrote. The office and the bar room were to the right

of the entrance. On the left was a long dining room, "in which gathered as motley a crowd as ever graces the frontier—Indians and half-breeds, steamboat men, bankers and frontiersmen of every type." The hotel was crudely but comfortably furnished. "The parlor was unique," she wrote. "The walls [were] hung with paper of huge and garish patterns" and were "adorned with the family portraits of the proprietors."

Some of the people Abby Fuller saw at the American House were likely involved with the fur trade. Even though declining, it still provided an important base for the local economy and the arrival of the Red River carts was still a major event. "The caravan which annually visits this place from the far off plains of Pembina has again arrived," the *Democrat* said in late July. The party consisted of around 200 people "who left with 187 carts loaded with 600 packs of furs and robes, besides various items of Indian manufacture, curiosities . . . designed to exchange here for goods."

New residents and visitors were fascinated with the scene. "The trains from Red River of Pembina have arrived at St. Paul," Benjamin Densmore wrote his sister. "Their vehicles consist of carts made entirely of wood—they are drawn by one horse or an ox and look quite old-fashioned." Writer Ida Pfeiffer thought "these people lead a curious life," she said, "closely associating and intermarrying with the Indians." They "wander far up toward the north," she told her readers, "and endeavor to make acquaintance with the tribes of natives, from whom they get furs."

Laurence Oliphant, another author who visited in August, wrote that the Indian trade "is certainly diminishing, but still forms a large share of the business done in St. Paul." During his stay in August, he "frequented constantly the shops of some of the traders," and looked at "moccasins embroidered with porcupine quills; tobacco-pouches ornamented with beads; tomahawks, pipes, and all the appurtenances of Indian life which these men pick up . . . and sell as curiosities."

First Among Many

High and dry, on a natural sandstone cliff lay this lovely little city of 6,000 people, a city five



A huddle of log and frame structures at the corner of Third and Roberts streets in 1851. This is thought to be the earliest known image of pioneer St. Paul.

years old . . . It was Sunday afternoon; we met a few of our countrymen at the boat landing. . . . They requested me to preach there in the evening . . . The services were held in a primitive schoolhouse on Jackson Street. This street had at that time very few buildings above Seventh Street. Quite a few people were present

—Eric Norelius

Norelius was on his way north to meet with his rural countrymen, but stayed long enough to help St. Paul Swedish residents establish the first Lutheran congregation in Minnesota. Churches were among the earliest organizations immigrant groups created, but there were many others. People enjoyed associating with those who shared their own language and culture. What developed in St. Paul differed from the ethnic "island communities" found in the state's rural areas. Even though they clustered together, frontier city immigrants were in frequent contact with other groups and the interaction developed a unique social pluralism.

Visitors commented on the region's diversity. "The most confused Babel of languages greets our ears as we stroll along," Laurence Oliphant wrote. "Of course, the Anglo-Saxon language, in its varied modifications of Yankee, English, Scotch, and Irish prevails; but there are plenty of good French, and the voyageur *patois*, Chippeway or Sioux, German, Dutch, and Norwegian."

The newspapers occasionally mentioned the growing ethnic communities,

usually in a positive but often stereotyped manner. The *Minnesotian* complimented the "Scandinavian population" on the formation of their church. "Norway and Sweden are already largely represented in this quarter," the paper continued, and "no population in the world is better adapted to our climate, and none make more moral, upright, industrious, and in every way desirable citizens." Discussing the beginning of a new singing society, the *Pioneer* commented that "as a class, there is no better musical talent than that of the Germans . . . we are gratified that they have selected this innocent amusement to 'drive dull care away.'"

The 1850 census had listed only a handful of Germans, including a few butchers, carpenters and cabinetmakers, two masons, a cigar maker and a few laborers, but their numbers grew quickly from then on, and many began starting businesses. Bavarian-born Anthony Yoerg came to the city in 1848, after stops in Pittsburg and Galena. He started out as a butcher, but in the fall of 1849 established Minnesota's first brewery. There were a few others by 1854, for the *Democrat* mentioned "there are a number of German Beer Houses, where beer is brewed in this place . . . and is sold in large quantities."

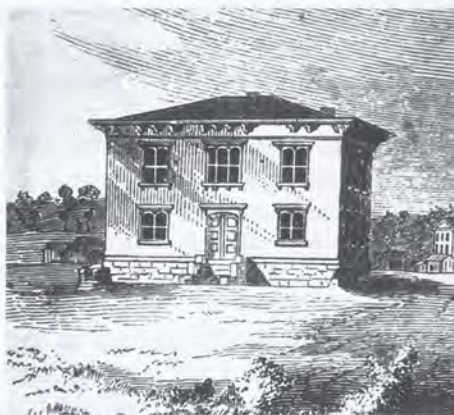
As their numbers increased, institutions developed. The German Educational and Reading Society was incorporated by the 1854 legislature. Its mission was to "spread culture, progress, enlightenment

and freedom of thought." January saw the first of what would be a series of German balls. In December, the German Reading Society was preparing for a waltzing party to raise money for a library.

Irish immigration to St. Paul had begun in the late 1840s and continued to be strong through the next decade. While there were exceptions, most came with limited financial resources and usually were artisans or laborers. Their population was large enough to create St. Patrick's Day celebrations in 1851, and soon after to establish a chapter of the Hibernians. The *Pioneer* covered the 1854 St. Patrick's Day gathering:

The sons of Erin turned out in goodly numbers, on Thursday last, to celebrate the memory of their patron Saint. Although the day was windy, yet undaunted they threaded the streets in their neat regalia, with a band of music, and so disported themselves as to reflect credit upon the occasion as well as upon their native and adopted country. In the evening, about sixty of the company partook of a supper at the St. Paul House, where wit, songs and speeches, with a plentiful supply of good things for the inner man, ended the festivities of the day.

There also was a sizeable African-American population in St. Paul. They worked in the hotels and restaurants, as carpenters and laborers; there was a church sexton and several men were barbers. Among them was Joseph Farr, who first lived in Washington D. C., worked a few years on the Galena boats and came to St. Paul in the early 1850s to work at his Uncle William Taylor's barber shop. "There must



The Baldwin School, established by the Reverend Edward Duffield Neill in 1853.

have been fifty or sixty colored people here," Farr recalled in an interview many years later, "and they were all concerned in getting the slaves out of the way of their pursuers."

He was talking about an informal hub of the underground railroad that existed in St. Paul. African-American residents would meet steamboats at the levee if an informant had let them know that a runaway slave was arriving. "When the boat came into St. Paul my uncle or one of the others . . . would be at the wharf," Farr said. "The fugitive would be brought to my uncle's house," hidden for a time, and helped to move on safely.

It is difficult to accurately determine the racial attitudes of St. Paul's residents and how well different groups got along. There was a report of a fight between two Irishmen and a German at the levee, but the paper never explained if ethnic tensions were its cause. Another paper did report that Upper Town had experienced "recent disturbances between our foreign and native born citizens" that ended up with gun shots going through a window, but provided no other information.

While more racial incidents may have occurred during the year, only one was discussed at length. According to the *Times*, a carpenter employed by the hotel, Winslow House, had taken offense that "a negro and a porter" named Bush sat down to eat at his table. They argued in the hotel kitchen and almost came to blows. Later that night, Bush received a message that he needed to go to the docks to pick up some baggage. On the way, he was assaulted by several men.

They threatened Bush, forced a noose around his neck and implied they were going to toss him off the bluff, hit him with a rock, ripped his shirt apart, whipped him, took all his money and chased him into a store. Several people were arrested for the assault and were bound over for trial in county court. However, the case was dismissed for lack of witnesses. This so outraged Bush that he moved to Chicago.

Rumors of Cholera

The Board found a young man sick on Third Street with the disease which has been prevailing to a moderate extent among immigrants upon the

decks of our steamboats . . . as soon as he was sufficiently recovered to be removed, he was provided with comfortable quarters. He is now very nearly well . . . An Irishman, in a dying condition when the board organized, was visited and after death his remains had a decent sepulchre.

—St. Paul Board of Health, June 11, 1854

Newspapers, that spring of 1854, were discussing cholera in a guarded manner, realizing that fear of an outbreak could hurt the local economy by deterring immigration or tourism. The *Democrat* insisted an outbreak of the disease was unlikely, because of the "pure atmosphere of Minnesota." It usually took the position that the disease was confined to the boats. Benjamin Densmore disagreed, in a letter to his sister in late May: "Rumor has several times reported cholera among us but so far to little purpose," he wrote, adding that "there is no doubt but Saint Paul will be as liable to be visited by cholera during the season as any other place."

There was little understanding of cholera's source. Blame often was laid on "miasmas" or bad air from stagnant water or garbage. Even after the disease hit the city in June, the *Times* declared cholera was "not epidemical," and that victims had "indulged in the rich food on the boat." There was a report of a man dying soon after eating a street vendor's watermelon. "Don't eat them unless you wish to die with the cholera," the paper warned. The *Pioneer* suggested that such diseases were usually caused by change in diet, or "immoderate use of stimulants."

The St. Paul Common Council held a special meeting and established a Board of Health. It reported a few cases of the disease, but did not seem overly alarmed. The Board said the new Catholic hospital [St. Joseph's Hospital] was not completed, so it had been difficult to find a place to house cholera victims. Shortly after the report, nine cases of cholera "broke out with much violence." After that, the city finally was able to house victims in Father Galtier's old log chapel that was being used as a school by the Sisters of St Joseph.

Friends and relatives were told to stay away from the city. In late July, Abby



The St. Paul City Hall, on the site of Landmark Center today, with the Baldwin School at right.

Fuller wrote her sister that the “cholera panic” was not over and while “they make little stir as possible about it . . . I advise our people to stay among those New England hills for the present.” She hoped the disease was abating and that “a few weeks of cold weather will remove it, perhaps it will be safe to come.”

Eventually the cholera died down, but it is unclear how many people died from the disease. Either because of a desire to cover things up, or a simple lack of knowledge, many probable cholera cases were labeled dysentery. One man, whose sister died of cholera in 1854, was interviewed many years after the fact by a medical historian. He distinctly remembered that at the Catholic cemetery “they had a blackboard where the names of those dying of cholera were written. I counted thirty-four names in two weeks.”

While most of the people who died were buried in St. Paul, at least one family wanted to send the remains back home, not an easy matter in those days. A newspaper report on a man who died in June tells how it was done: “His remains were enclosed in a zinc coffin, filled with

alcohol, and then placed in a walnut coffin, and both of these coffins placed in a large pine box” and loaded on a steamship.

The Great Excursion

You should have seen that beautiful tower of St. Paul, sitting on its fresh hillside, like a young queen just emerging from her minority. You should have seen the gay scrambling at our landing there, for carriages and wagons and every species of locomotive, to take us to our terminus at St. Anthony's Falls. You should have seen how, disdaining luxury or superfluity, we . . . could drive merrily over the prairie in lumber-wagons, seated on rough boards.

—Catharine M. Sedgwick

The Great Railroad Excursion had to be the high point of 1854. The event was sponsored by the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad to celebrate the completion of its line to the eastern bank of the Mississippi River. Railroad officials and investors, journalists and other prominent people, including former president Millard Fillmore, took the train from Chicago to Rock Island and boarded several

steamboats for the trip to St. Paul and the Falls of St. Anthony.

The newspapers, which knew about the event in early May, saw it as a chance to impress eastern investors and railroad executives with the resources of the northwest, with hopes they would invest in the city. While Catharine Sedgwick later called the visit “an illustration and proof of the advancement of true civilization,” the *Pioneer* was more interested in the excursion because of “the field which it presents for the investment of capital, and the prosecution of railroad enterprise.”

Elaborate plans had been made to make as favorable an impression on the Eastern guests as possible. Preparations were made for transportation to scenic sites and for a gala evening event. But everything was thrown into chaos when the flotilla arrived on Thursday morning around 9:00, a day earlier than expected. T. M. Newson, gave his perspective on what happened in a book written many years later: “The first information the people had of their coming—they had come! Such a scene!” he wrote. People rushed from the boats to the American House and “hired every hack and every carriage they could find at enormous figures.” The hosts were overwhelmed by the huge crowd, and “the rush so ill-timed and inconsiderate . . . that it was a mixed-up and hodge-podge affair, and as a consequence created ill feeling.”

The newspapers at the time did not mention any hard feelings, insisting that even with the mix-up the guests had positive experiences. Most of the excursionists took the haphazard transportation to St. Anthony Falls and Minnehaha Falls. Others decided to take a steamboat trip up river for a visit to Fort Snelling. That evening there was a huge event at the state Capitol with food, dancing, and speeches by prominent visitors and local leaders.

Unfortunately the festivities had to be cut short so the visitors could get back on the boats for a midnight departure. One of the excursionists, the prominent railroad contractor Henry Farnam, recalled “the shrill whistles of the steamers” that warned people to get back to the boats. “Hasty farewells are given. The people



Joseph Farr, who helped in freeing slaves who came to Minnesota.

entreat us to stay longer; but the inexorable steamers demand the return of their flocks," he wrote. Finally, "the last carriage is at the river, and the last man leaps breathless upon the plank. One boat after another drops down the stream. We are on our way back to Rock Island."

Millard Fillmore may have agreed to join the Great Railroad Excursion because his brother Charles lived in St. Paul and it has been assumed that they met during the festivities. Unfortunately, Charles shared the belief that the group was arriving on Friday and he was out-of-town. However, the two were brought together through fortunate circumstances. As former President Fillmore was heading downriver, his steamer was met by an upward bound boat carrying Charles. According to the *Minnesotian*, "the two boats rounded to, for the purpose of allowing the two brothers to meet for a moment."

Charles Fillmore died soon afterward of what probably was cholera. The newspapers reported it as dysentery. He left behind a wife and two children. After his funeral there was a "mournful accident" that "shocked the community." On the way to the cemetery, the hearse carrying Fillmore's coffin was "ascending a small hill," when "the back door of the vehicle burst open and the coffin fell to the ground, and of course the event threw a gloom over everybody."

Birthday of St. Paul

An Ordinance of Miscellaneous Provisions in Criminal Cases before the City Justice . . . Section 1. All assaults, batteries or affrays committed within the city of St. Paul, shall be prosecuted and determined in a summary manner . . . and on conviction thereof the offender may be punished by a fine of not less than five dollars, nor more than one hundred dollars, according to the nature of the offence.

—Common Council Proceedings,
July 18, 1854

The state legislature passed a bill incorporating the city of St. Paul on March 4, often considered the birthday of St. Paul. However, it already had been incorporated as a town on November 1, 1849. Residents considered the earlier date as the city's beginning, saying St. Paul was five years old. To them, the importance of the 1854 event was that it created a new and hopefully more effective city charter. The *Minnesotian* saw "no cause for boasting merely for the reason that the term city sounds more elevated than that of town," but did think St. Paul now had "an act out of which we can shape the forms and practices of good and sound municipal government."

The first election under the new charter was on April 4. The dozen elected city-wide and in the three wards were mostly Democrats, but there also were some Whigs. It seems that in local elections party affiliations were less important than on the state level and the newspapers made little mention of it. The victors were native born, for the most part, coming from New York, New England, and other eastern states.

There was one Mexican War veteran from Little Rock, Arkansas, who settled in St. Paul after serving at Fort Snelling. Only two winners were immigrants. Richard Marvin, who ran a wholesale business, was born in England and lived for a time in Cincinnati, Ohio, before arriving in St. Paul in 1851. Montreal native Charles Bazille lived in Wisconsin for several years and came to the city in 1844 where he was a carpenter and brickyard owner.

The new mayor was David Olmstead, a Vermont man who came to the state in 1848 to engage in the "Indian trade,"



Edward Duffield Neill, founder of the Baldwin School.

opening stores in St. Paul and Long Prairie. He had served in the territorial legislature and owned the *Democrat*, but sold it when he was elected. Olmstead's mayoral address in April was not a grand vision, but consisted of practical items he felt the city needed to become a legitimate metropolis.

A "permanent supply of water" was "imperatively demanded" for drinking as well as fire fighting, he said. The Common Council should prohibit construction of any new "wooden tenements" on the principal streets by setting "fire limits." Along the same lines, Olmstead urged the immediate organization of a fire company.

The mayor thought the city needed "well-defined wharf regulations," enforcement to establish and repair sidewalks, and increased efforts to remove "unnecessary accumulations" of rubbish and filth from the streets. Older cities had made sure they had adequate spaces "laid out for public purposes," he said and urged the Council to purchase at least three tracts of land for "public health and comfort."

The first ordinance passed by the new Common Council was a wharf tax of three to five dollars on steamboat landings, based on size. The second regulated and licensed the sale of liquor and the keeping of billiard tables, bowling alleys

and saloons. They could remain open until midnight and had to close on Sunday. In addition, it was illegal to sell "any person then being intoxicated, or who shall be a habitual drunkard, or to any minor or any person of unsound mind."

"An ordinance to Prevent Hogs from Running Large in the City," was passed in June. The measure provided that anyone who owned a "hog or any animal of the hog kind" could no longer allow it "to run at large in any street, lane, alley, public market space, public landing or common, or public ground." The fine for an infraction was up to ten dollars and court costs.

A look at early ordinances can suggest hidden aspects of society. Prostitution was surely present in the frontier community, but was never mentioned in any of the 1854 papers. Suggestions that it was present included a minister's appeal to the young men in his congregation to "shun the haunts of vice and dissipation," including "the house of ill fame." It is also unlikely elected officials would spend time outlawing activities that didn't exist.

And the Council did pass an "ordinance relative to disorderly houses and houses of ill fame." It provided that anyone who kept a place "for the resort of persons of evil name or fame" or allowed any "immoral, indecent, or other improper conduct or behavior," could be fined up to \$100. If there were repeated violations "calculated to disturb the neighborhood, or annoy travelers," a building could be torn down at the owner's expense.

City leaders believed that some regulation of commerce was necessary. They responded to complaints that customers were being shorted on deliveries of wood, an essential fuel in a northern city. The "wood ordinance" required all loads to be examined by an inspector whose salary was paid for by a fee on the sellers. The *Minnesotian* hailed the measure as "an act of simple justice to the pockets of the citizens," and declared that the council had "done nothing since its existence of more importance to the citizens generally than this."

Licenses were a way of regulating, but

also were a major source of money, most of which came from fees placed on saloons. Licenses were required for billiard tables, theater events and other shows, and canine ownership. The yearly "dog tax" required the animal to be registered and to have a collar containing the owner's name. Other income came from a city property tax, court fines, and revenue from renting market stalls and holding events at Market Hall. One month the city made \$20.25 selling an unclaimed stray bull.

The Office of the Comptroller also documented expenses. Larger 1854 items included money to cut and grade streets and to complete a survey of the city. There was a payment to the Sisters of St. Joseph for attending the sick and for the cost of buying lots and digging graves in Oakland Cemetery. Rental of the City Market building from Vetal Guerin was a major item. While most of the city officials received salaries, the city treasurer received 4 percent of collected real estate taxes and Marshall Miller got a share of certain fees and fines.

Citizens came to the Common Council



The Market House (the long low building top left, and the territorial Capitol (top, center). In 1857. Despite arriving a day early, excursionists partied at the Capitol in 1854. Photograph by Benjamin Franklin Upton.



Abby Fuller Abbe. Photographer: Charles Alfred Zimmerman.

with a variety of requests. In August, petitions "for removal of a nuisance, namely a tannery" and a proposal to light the city with gas were read and tabled for later action. In December, the Council agreed to a request from the "Ladies of the Baptist Church" to use the Market Hall free of rent for a fundraiser. Later that month there was "a communication from Bishop Cretin, asking to be relieved from taxation on Hospital and Church property."

Under the new charter, St. Paul established a police department with expanded powers. The city had been empowered to organize a fire department, but nothing was done until a spectacular October fire destroyed a nearly completed hotel. Pioneer Hook and Ladder No. 1 was then launched in November. Its members agreed to turn out for all fire alarms. In exchange for their services, they were excused from jury duty, poll tax, work on the roads, or state military service for the period of five years.

Fresh, Canned, Salted

We were always roused . . . by a boisterous going, which at six o'clock in the morning

reverberated through the long passages of the hotel, . . . Soon after people began to drop in to breakfast, and eat hot rolls, soaked toast, buckwheat cakes, and hominy, and drink iced milk; then they grouped round spittoons, lighted their cigars, corrected their cold potations with 'nippers' of brandy, skimmed the papers, swore at the contents, and finally strutted off to their respective duties.

—Laurence Oliphant

Feeding the population of a frontier city presented a challenge. In the early days, most goods were shipped up the river. The newspapers were filled with advertisements from retailers who announced new shipments of fresh, canned, salted, pickled, dried, and otherwise preserved food for sale. There were boxes of cheese, barrels of pork, casks of dried beef, drums of codfish, kegs of pig's feet, as well as sugar, soap, spices, tobacco, and liquor. Of course, many families had gardens and preserved their own food through canning, pickling and smoking, and salting.

Until recently, food had been purchased from the Dakota Indians in the area. The changes brought by their removal to reservations were mentioned in the newspapers and one paper predicted that there would not be as many cranberries available since the Indians had left. However, hunting had benefited from the Dakotas' removal. In July, the *Pioneer* commented: "Now that the Indians have vamoosed, deer will be more plenty and killed with less labor than heretofore."

Hunting remained a source of food for city dwellers. Wild pigeons were said to be numerous that summer. "We saw a sportsman the other evening, going through the streets with a horse load of them," one newspaper noted. "Upwards of two hundred, [were] strung across his saddle." Another paper commented that nearby farmers were taking pigeons "by hundreds and thousands in nets . . . saving their grain crops from the voracious . . . destructive creatures," and selling them in St. Paul.

As farmers began to occupy land on the fringes of the city, vegetables, fresh meat, and dairy products increasingly became available. A July issue of the *Minnesotian* boasted about the locally

grown products. "Three years ago we were dependent upon Galena and the towns below, for all we ate, vegetables included," and now there was an "excellent city market, crowded to repletion with the choicest vegetables, &c., of our own growth."

One June day, "Mother Kessler" gave the editor "a mess of well-grown new potatoes, taken from her garden. This is sooner in the season than any one has produced the article heretofore." Kessler was the first in a long line of fringe farmers to sell to city dwellers. She lived in Little Canada and "drove the first wagon load of vegetables into the streets of St. Paul" in 1849. Her wagon was pulled by an ox. She also sold dairy products and pumpkins.

"Passing the flourishing garden of Mr. Selby," the *Minnesotian* remarked in July, "we were surprised at the forwardness of vegetation, tomatoes, beans, corn,

THANKSGIVING DAY.

DECEMBER 22, 1853.

First Presbyterian Church, Saint Paul, M. T.

ORDER OF EXERCISES.

1. Anthem.
We praise thee, O God.
2. Invocation.
3. Hymn.
*My country! 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty!
Of thee I sing!
Land where my fathers died,
Land of the future's pride,
From every mountain side,
Let freedom ring,
My native country! thee,
Land of the noble free,
Thy name I love;
I love thy rocks and rills,
Thy woods and temple hills,
My heart with rapture fills,
Like that above.
Our Father's God! in thee,
Luther we glory,
To thee we sing!
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light,
Protect us by thy might,
Great God, our King!*
- ii. Reading of Scripture.
3. Prayer.
6. Hymn.
*The breaking waves dashed high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the winds whistled o'er us,
Their great branches loosed!
And the heavy night was dark,
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moored their bark
On the wild New England shore.
Not on the compass came,
They, the true-hearted ones,
Not with the roll of the stirring drum,
And the trumpet that rings of war.*

Not as the flying eagle;
In silence and in fear
They seek the depths of the desert's gloom
With their banners of lofty towers,
And the stars they sing,
And the stars above, and the sea;
To the wilderness of the desert,
The ocean's edge—
From his nest by the white man's beam,
And the racking plumes of the forest rarer;
This was their welcome home,
What sought they then afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?
Ah, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they stood,
The place where Freedom's crown
Freedom to worship—find!

7. Discourse by Pastor.

8. Prayer.

9. Hymn.
*Our stern forefathers were not idle,
The planters of our earth,
But here in the battle,
And battle around the world,
In our own America's hills,
With spirits strong and high,
They plighted to find their goal,
And will you not allow your own,
Ye heroes, good and great!
Spring from such noble fathers,
Should we degenerate?
We wear the stars and stripes,
And our country's crown;
We hide not in the forest,
But rest on beds of down,
Ye sons of freedom now arise,
And wash away the stain!
'Tis oppression we loudly call,
No longer bear in vain!
Go forth and meet the tyrant,
Alone, if need there be!
Fear not, for God is with you,
Or death—we die and free!*

10. Benediction.

MINNESOTIAN PRINT.

potatoes, and other garden produce," having arrived at "a degree of maturity scarcely credible in a country so far North as ours." Outsiders needed to know that successful farming was possible in the state. A letter praising "the products of the country," was sent to the *Minnesotian* by a David Brooks. "Our farmers can raise oats, wheat, corn and vegetables of all kinds," he wrote, "and plentifully as in any part of the union."

People competed to see what different crops could be grown and how big they could get. The *Democrat* visited L. M. Ford, who ran a "horticultural garden" just west of the city. "His pears, particularly, look remarkably well," the paper reported, "and he is of the opinion that this fruit can be successfully grown in this vicinity." Selby was growing his second crop of tobacco that summer. In the fall, Ford brought in a melon that weighed thirty-one-and-a-half pounds.

Depredations at Night

We have had, in town, an abundance of dust, which . . . has been wafted in clouds into every nook and cranny of the town and has been an almost intolerable nuisance nearly all the time. Another very great nuisance with which we have been afflicted . . . is the myriads of mosquitoes with which the country abounds. . . . they have been for the last two months almost intolerable . . . their depredations at night are beyond description.

—Horace Bigelow, September 10, 1854

In 1854 St. Paul residents may have talked about the weather even more than they do today. Their lives and activities were more directly affected by the seasonal cycles. The intersection of weather and transportation was a prime concern in the frontier city. When the river froze over, the community was virtually isolated between November and April. River transportation also could be affected in hot dry summers when water levels sank and the sandbars increased in size. Occasionally conditions dictated that for weeks at a time only smaller, shallower craft could be sent from downriver ports.

Laurence Oliphant described the efforts sometimes needed to get downriver.



Charles D. Elfelt's store with Whitney's Gallery behind it, at Third and Cedar Streets. From an 1852 daguerreotype by Joel Emmons Whitney.

Approaching the Pig's Eye sandbar, he wrote, "we charged it." The first attempt was unsuccessful "but we took another run and went at it resolutely, then groaned and creaked severely upon the sand, while the old wheel behind worked and pushed away bravely, stirring up oceans of mud, until we scraped over and paddled away again with the rapid current."

Other vessels were not so lucky. In mid-July, the heavily-laden *Admiral* was riding low and got stuck on the Pig's eye sandbar. According to the *Minnesotian*, it was "puffing and steaming away like Vesuvius—trying to get off." Much of the cargo had to be put into small boats before the *Admiral* could be freed. In late August, the *Galena* was stuck at the Pig's Eye bar and passengers walked to the city from Kaposia (near present day South St. Paul), a distance of several miles.

Frigid weather and the need for better transportation were linked by the writer of a letter to the *Minnesotian*: "We are as good as out of the world five months in the year—might as well be living in Siberia," he complained. "We must go

for railroads, first and foremost of everything else; and in going for railroads we must not be too fastidious as to where the money comes to build them."

Sorting Itself Out

St. Paul . . . has become, as by magic, a thriving city of 5,000 people. . . . There are also the public buildings, erected by the General Government, a market-house, and a hospital. The city contains 800 houses, and is growing rapidly, many of the present generation will live to see St. Paul the eastern terminus of a great Pacific railroad stretching from Minnesota to Puget Sound.

—*Debow's Review*, October, 1854

Even in 1854, the city was starting to sort itself out into different functional zones. The loading and unloading of supplies was concentrated on the Lower (Jackson Street) Landing, along with much of the warehousing. The commercial area was up on the bluff, with Third Street recognized as the core of retail shopping, containing most of the largest stores. Residences were starting to move farther out, and were being replaced with multi-

level structures, often made of brick. There were smaller stores and shops in many outlying areas.

St. Paul in 1854 was a walking city, necessarily compact because people went on foot to and from their daily activities. Only the prosperous could afford to keep horses and carriages, but as the community spread, a transportation system began to develop. Two competing coach lines picked up people at the Lower Landing and took them to hotels and other locations. There were scheduled services between St. Paul and St. Anthony. One of the companies even ran a "four horse omnibus" between the Capitol and the major hotels during the legislative session.

Competition for customers could be intense. The *Pioneer* reported a fight between the proprietors of the Red Line and Yellow Coach lines. The trouble had started a few days earlier at the Upper (Chestnut Street) Landing "as consequence of some harsh language." The "Kilkenney fight," as the

paper called it, "continued at the Lower Landing and ended up with one man going into the river."

The newspapers often remarked on the need for improved traffic control on the waterfront. "The arrival of a boat is the signal for the dangerous convergence of various carts, drays, stages, and people" who combine to make a "motley mass" that the *Democrat* suggested was dangerous. "Runners and drummers too, with draymen and idlers occupy the moveable space." There were only two roads out, and they were filled with stones that needed to be removed.

One of the characteristics of city development in the United States has been a constant spreading outward. It is remarkable to see how early the St. Paul papers used the term "suburb" to describe this movement. In August, the *Pioneer* commented that "among other finer suburban residences erecting now, that of the Hon. M. Sherburne we regard as one of the finest, being roomy and built with every

convenience from bath-room to woodshed under his roof."

In July, the *Minnesotian* informed people who might want to enjoy "the delights of a Suburban residence" that lots in a forty-acre addition on the bluff behind the Capitol were available. They had a full view of the city and river "and when the streets are put in proper order, the farthest lots will not be over twenty minutes walk from the post office." Throughout the summer, newspapers carried short notices and printed advertisements for suburban land, including "several splendid two- and five-acre lots only one mile from the corporation limits."

A little farther out, Henry McKenty was offering four-acre lots he called "Homes for the Homeless," and portions of a 150-acre tract "bordering on Phalen's Lake, around two miles from the city." The *Democrat* reported in the fall that Jeremiah W. Selby, whose residence always was said to be in the suburbs of the city, had "commenced operations upon his property, on Summit Avenue, for the erection of a large and elegant brick mansion . . . It will add another and most desirable feature to that attractive portion of our city."

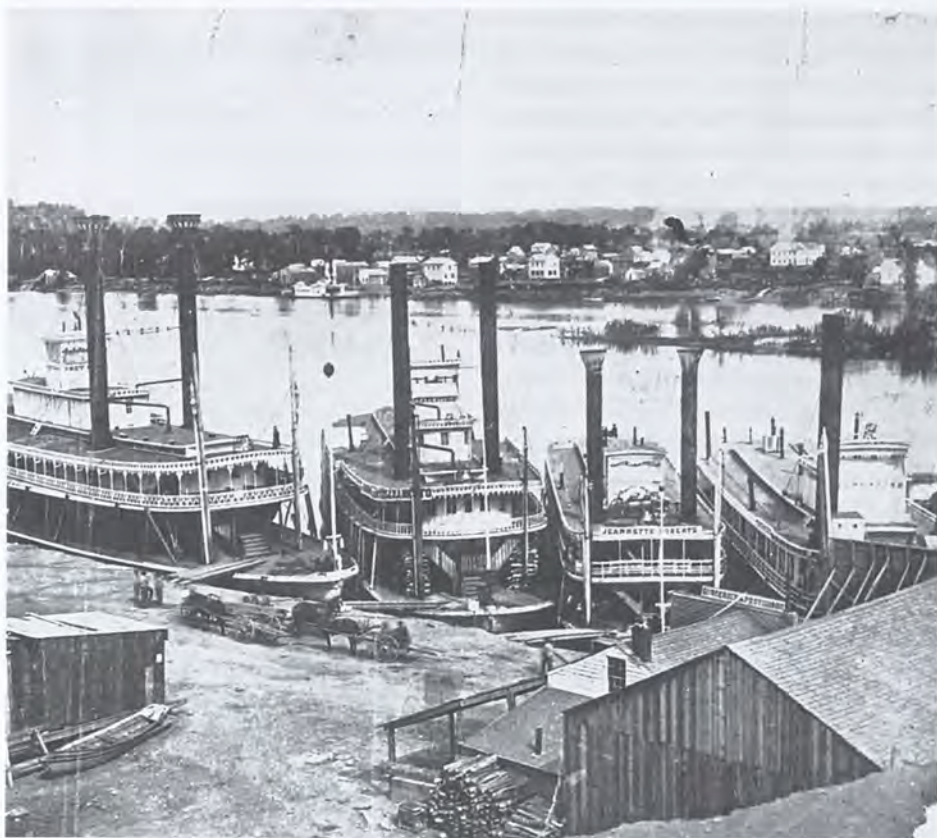
In a December issue, the *Times* summed up the city's growth during the year. Looking around from a vantage point, they could see that "a semi-circular belt of hills, their sloping sides already dotted with numerous tasteful residences, forms the picturesque environment of St. Paul. And stretching beyond these hills, speculation has spread a net-work of suburban additions to the very verge of the corporate limits."

French Lessons and Dancing

Who does not love a Minnesota winter, with its clear bracing air-its blue sky and its life-giving atmosphere? . . . Here, it is true, we are shut out from our friends below, but there are friends within who beguile the hours pleasantly . . . the social parties, the sleigh-rides . . . Fear not then, the blast of coming winter. Pile on the wood, let the cracking fire shed its heat while the Northwestern winds howl about our doors.

—*Minnesota Times*, November 20, 1854

Cities always have been cultural centers,



Steamboats tied up at the Lower Landing, much as those bearing the Great Excursion travelers would have appeared. Two of them, the *Time and Tide* and the *Jeannette Roberts* were owned by Louis Robert.

and frontier St. Paul was no exception. During the year, literary societies were formed, a group of women took French lessons at the Rice House three days a week, and a dancing academy was opened. Writers such as Jane Gay Fuller, who later gained a national reputation, frequently had poems printed in the papers. Among other things, St. Paul had five fraternal societies, a portrait artist, a photographer, three places to buy books, and a music store that sold New York pianos.

The St. Paul Philharmonic Society gave its initial concert at City Hall in January in front of a large crowd. "In a city of five year's growth, it is not expected that so great a proficiency in this delightful art would be attained," the *Pioneer* said proudly. "For the first appearance of the members, the Society has made a reputation highly credible to itself."

A Miss Crampton gave a Shakespearean performance based on *Richard III* at Market Hall to "repeated manifestations of applause." Noted author Mrs. E. F. Ellett was in town and would be giving dramatic readings from Shakespeare and other writers. Two visiting shows made their way to Market Hall in June. People could see Signor Vitor's "Lilliputian Family" for twenty-five cents. The next night it cost fifty cents to attend a "soiree fantastique" given by a man calling himself "The Fakir of Siva." Later in the year, a touring troupe of musicians called the Riley Family performed at the courthouse.

The city became a focal point for cultural events which drew large audiences whether they were classical presentations or popular entertainment. The need for better accommodations prompted the construction of two new facilities in 1854. When Elfelt built his dry goods store on Third Street, he included an upper area that came to be known as Mazurka Hall. Irvine Hall was located in the attic of a new Upper Town warehouse. The 24-by-80-foot area was "high, airy, well-fitted," its owner said, and, would be rented out for concerts, exhibits, balls, and meetings.

During the summer, on-board parties were hosted by different steamboat captains. While docked at the Lower Landing, the *Prairie State* held a "fine supper"



Mazurka Hall at Third and Exchange Streets in St. Paul's Upper Town.

for the elite of St. Paul. According to the *Pioneer*, "the music was excellent, the dancing continued till a late hour," and "the gray dawn was fast endeavoring to shake off the sable mantle of night when we left."

When the river froze over, a regular party season was held at the different hotels. "Monday evening we were all invited at Mr. Bakers at the American to spend the evening," Abby Fuller wrote. "They were going to get up a little dance, there was just enough ladies to make up three cotillions, and I enjoyed it much." The next evening found her at the Winslow House. "It was a very fine dance. . . . six of the ladies were dressed finely, with their white satin skirts and lace illusion over dresses. We girls did not wear thin dresses."

While events like fancy balls were exclusive, national holidays like the Fourth of July probably served to further a general social cohesion. In 1854 there was a gathering at the Capitol, with the ringing of bells, a prayer, and a reading of the Declaration of Independence. After a speech, there was a trout and venison dinner and dance at the Winslow House.

There seems to have been unorganized celebrating as well. In addition to the "drinking of Cawtaba and Minnesota wine," the *Democrat* said, "Sioux Indians played on jewsharps," and there was "some little drunkenness, and a general rejoicing, to say nothing about the ball."

While Thanksgiving was not yet universally celebrated, Governor Willis Gorman said it was becoming customary to "set aside a day to give thanks for blessings," and he hoped people would observe Thanksgiving. He issued a proclamation that set December 21 as the date. The *Pioneer* linked the holiday with a recurring theme of the St. Paul Yankees: "In our own territory-on the farthest verge of civilization, the songs of Thanksgiving are heard almost mingling their tones with the howl of the wolf."

The paper hoped that on Thanksgiving residents would "have a real sympathy for the poor," perhaps sharing "a joint of meat," a supply of vegetables or fuel or even a friendly visit. "There are not many poor," the *Pioneer* quickly added, "but those who are here could be helped this day."



Henry McKenty's home (in the background) at Lake Como. As early as the 1850s, the neighborhood around the lake was regarded as "suburban."

The women of First Presbyterian Church gave a Thanksgiving dinner that drew 200 people, and the attendees were drawn from beyond their own congregation. The *Times* thought that "such special gatherings are highly beneficial, for they tend to harmonize and to socialize the incongruous elements of society." The paper said it trusted that "many more will take place during those months winter holds us within our ice-bound homes."

Stumps in the Streets

The steamboats at the levee . . . give evidence that "a city in the wilderness" has sprung up . . . The traveler, as he steps from the steamboat that has brought him from below, and walks through the streets of this northwestern capital, is forcibly reminded by the many stumps standing in the middle of the thoroughfares, and by the Indians stalking about with their blankets, pipes and vermilioned faces, that he is some distance from the Atlantic coast.

Reverend Edward Duffield Neill was deeply committed to bringing education to the frontier. The Philadelphia native

arrived in 1849 from Galena, Illinois. He organized the First Presbyterian Church a year later, was active in civic affairs, and served as state superintendent of education from 1851 to 1853. When his church had grown to the point it could support a full-time minister, he resigned to devote all his attention to schools.

Baldwin School, his first major project, was incorporated in 1853 and just before the new year had held a gala celebration for its new two-story brick building next to the City Hall and across from Rice Park. While it opened in 1854 as a girl's school, it responded to demand and allowed boys under twelve years of age to attend. In that first year there were forty-three girls and twenty-eight boys at the institution.

A common school system for Minnesota was started in 1849, but was not fully implemented in St. Paul until 1854. Public schools were supplemented by a variety of private and parochial efforts. There were at least seven in 1854. Harriet Bishop, considered the city's first teacher, was running "Pioneer School,"

holding classes at her residence on "Hazel Mound," and offering to board pupils "on reasonable terms." The Episcopal Mission School was an example of the small schools often sponsored by churches in 1854. The three-year-old school announced in the *Pioneer* that it had secured "the services of an able and experienced teacher" and promised "thorough and practical instruction in all the usual English branches."

The Sisters of St. Joseph had been teaching Catholics at various locations for some time, and Bishop Cretin expressed concerns in his letters about the schools. He felt the need to constantly struggle against New Englanders whom he considered "Protestants with great prejudice." He thought "Protestant propaganda" in the local schools could "pervert many isolated Catholic families" by taking children in free or with tuition paid for by Bible societies who tried to convert them.

Neill always was ready to counter such arguments. In notes for what appears to have been a talk or a sermon, he addressed "the hostility recently manifested by a large portion of the Roman Catholic people of St. Paul, to the principle of common school education" and the complaint "that their children are subject to Protestant influences in our public schools." In his view, "public education increases the wealth of every community," was "essential to the preservation of our civil and religious liberties," and should be supported by taxes. He concluded by saying "let the teachers be as independent of the Catholic priest as of the Protestant minister."

Neill also was a pioneer in higher education. After the Baldwin School was underway, he raised money for a men's school, St. Paul College, that was opened in 1854 with four major divisions. The Scientific Department, usually called the Practical Department, was a new concept. "In a country so youthful, the demand is for men rather than complete scholars," Neill wrote, and "this Department is proposed to meet the felt deficiency." The four-year course of study was open six months each year and gave instruction in topics such as engineering, chemistry, mercantile law, and ethics.

Bishop Cretin's letters reveal that he saw Neill's institution as a threat. "The Presbyterians are building at a 1/4 of an hour distance from St. Paul, a college," he wrote. "All this money comes from subscriptions collected with the avowed purpose of stopping the progress of Papism in the state of Minnesota." The Catholic Church needed to increase its efforts, he said, and "nothing therefore must be neglected to found educational institutions."

The debate over education was not a motivating factor for young St. Paul attorney Horace Bigelow. He was just trying to make a living. Lack of legal work prompted him to take a job in the boy's division of the public schools in March. Bigelow received a monthly salary and was supposed to be paid tuition, but rarely was. "I now have over fifty pupils," he penned in his diary, "a rough set of boys, mostly small ones," although one was over twenty-one years old.

Bigelow generally found it to be "a difficult, tiresome and tedious business to get along with them, since they were less "accustomed to study or to any . . . restraint or discipline at school than any collection of boys I ever saw before." He decided to abandon his educational vocation that May. Bigelow had not come to the territory to teach, he wrote, and "after three months trial, I have become about as sick of school teaching as I was of doing nothing."

A Public Execution

We question if any occasion of this kind . . . was characterized by such brutality on the part of those assembled, as the one of today. . . . Liquor was openly passed through the crowd, and the last moments of the poor Indian were disturbed by bacchanalian yells and cries, remarks . . . heartless and depraved . . . A half drunken father could be seen, holding in his arms a child, eager to see well.

—*Minnesota Democrat*, December 29, 1854

St. Paul had come a long way during 1854, but a year-end event may have convinced leaders that their vision of civilization had not fully taken hold in the city. It involved a Dakota man named

U-Ha-zy who had been convicted of killing a woman and was sentenced to hang on December 29. The *Democrat* urged that the death sentence be commuted to imprisonment so that "the barbarity of a public execution will be avoided."

The governor refused to issue the pardon requested by the "most respectable ladies of St. Paul." The night before the execution, people continually fired guns outside the jail. Next morning the sheriff began to build the scaffold in one of the most public places in the city, but was pressured to remove the gallows to a more remote location.

Followed by the mob, the sheriff headed west on St. Anthony Road and up the hill toward the Selby farm. The condemned man was dressed in a white shroud and taken by carriage to a site near today's Western and Dayton. U-Ha-zy made a few remarks in Dakota, restated his innocence, and was hanged at 3:00. The *Pioneer* summed up the general attitude of the local newspapers on the first execution ever held in the territory:

It was not enough for the fiends incarnate who attended the execution, that the poor fellow should expiate his crime upon the scaffold, but his expiring moments were disturbed by the laughs and jeers of the debauched in the crowd, and with words of jest and scoffing, uttered in his own language . . . those in attendance seemed much more like savages than he.

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