

**NOTES OF A JOURNEY FROM TORONTO
TO BRITISH COLUMBIA, VIA THE
NORTHERN PACIFIC RAILWAY
(JUNE TO JULY 1884): BEING LETTERS TO
HIS SISTER AND MOTHER FROM CHARLES
WESTLY BUSK**

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Notes of a journey from Toronto to British Columbia, via the Northern Pacific railway (June to July 1884): being letters to his sister and mother from Charles Westly Busk by Charles Westly Busk

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BEING
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FROM
CHARLES WESTLY BUSK, C.E.,
M.A. TRIN. COLL. CAMB.

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Victoria, British Columbia,
July 9th, 1884.

MY DEAR MADELINE,—

You will probably have received, by the time this arrives, the post-card I sent you announcing my safe arrival at this city of the Far West, as also I hope, in their due order, the cards I posted almost daily *en route*. I now propose to give you a short account of the journey and the country and scenery on the way. A good deal of the information and the Indian stories and legends are all from reliable sources, as far as I have been able to obtain such; and I trust the combination may prove instructive, geographically and historically, as well as afford amusement. As the country between Toronto, Chicago, and St. Paul is comparatively well known, and is a route constantly traversed by hundreds of people, I do not propose to enter into any details of that part of the trip, but only to confine myself to the Northern Pacific Railroad and its connection with the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, which, as you should know from the post-cards received, is that part of the journey lying between St. Paul and the "Queen City of the West."

There was a good deal of hesitation as to how I should travel; I don't mean whether on foot, horseback, or rail, but as to the class of train to be used, for there is not only a difference in time of two days, but also a very considerable difference in the price of the ticket. A first-class ticket right through costs 128 dollars. This entitles the passenger to one seat in a first-class car, and nothing else; but it will also take him through to Portland, Oregon,

in six days. In order to obtain sleeping accommodation and a through-car from St. Paul, it is necessary, in addition to this, to take a bed in a Pullman Car; this adds an expense of exactly 20 dollars, making a total of 148 dollars for fare, to which must be added 75 cents a meal for the entire journey. The choice lay, therefore, between this and the third-class, or emigrant rate, which is 71.50 dollars per ticket, right through. This entitles to a seat and bed in a through-car from St. Paul; but the journey takes, as I have said, two days longer. I finally decided to adopt this latter course; and I have had no reason to regret it—rather the contrary, for I have been able to see considerably more, and probably gather more information on account of the slowness of the travel, caused principally by the very long stops at different stations, which are avoided by the regular express passenger-trains. In order that you may have some idea whereabouts the various places are that will be mentioned, I send you the official map of the Northern Pacific Railway; but you will find that it has been badly printed, the coloured parts are all a little to west and by south of their proper places, but you will easily rectify this; the black outline is, in the main, correct, and so you can go by that and ignore the colour altogether.

The train left the Union Station, Toronto, at 1.5 P.M. on Monday, June 23rd, and drew up in the Michigan Southern Station (or dépôt), in Chicago, at 7.50 the following morning, the clock being put back one hour at the Detroit river. On presentation of a through-ticket to a Canadian port, the baggage is all passed without examination. At Chicago I posted you a card. I would have preferred to leave Chicago by way of Milwaukee, but the tickets did not read that way, and so it was necessary to travel by the Rock Island and Pacific Railway, *vid* Albert Lea, to St. Paul, and this was accomplished with extreme punctuality. Up to this there is no difference, either in time or accommodation, between one class and another. First-class passengers leave St. Paul again shortly after 4.0 in the afternoon, and arrive in Portland at half-past 11 in the morning of the fourth day. Emigrant passengers have

to remain in St. Paul till 10 minutes to 8, and are due in Portland at a quarter past 4 in the afternoon of the sixth day. It was quite early when the train reached St. Paul; so I went to an hotel for the day, for meals and general refreshment. Of course I walked about the city a great deal, and looked down on the Mississippi river, and so on. St. Paul is the capital of the State of Minnesota, and is situated on the Mississippi river, rather over 2000 miles from its mouth, and at the head of steamboat navigation. Thirty-four years ago the city was a small out-of-the-way settlement, near St. Anthony Falls, now it has over 80,000 inhabitants. The Indian name of the locality, before there was a city, was Immigaska, which means White Rock, and was so called by them, I suppose, on account of tall white cliffs of sandstone which lie along the course of the river, and, in fact, the city is itself on the top of one of them. It seems an extraordinary place on which to have built a city, as it is quite apparent to-day that many hills have had to be levelled and thrown over into valleys to make a kind of level place; and this must have cost, and does still cost, a lot of money. The streets are lighted with gas and electricity; street-cars (*i. e.* tramways) are numerous, and so are the suburban and local trains. St. Paul is almost midway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and therefore is enabled to carry a considerable trade both east and west.

Minneapolis is another large city, about ten miles west of St. Paul, and containing about the same number of inhabitants; but I did not visit this, merely passed through in the train, and so it does not come within the scope of this letter to say anything about it, except perhaps that there seems to be every appearance of the two cities being united at no very distant date.

In order to make the journey of six days in the same car pleasant and in fact endurable, it was necessary to make preparations in advance; and in the furtherance of this a certain Captain Cook (a policeman) was extremely useful. The emigrant sleeping-car is really a thing to be seen. It is built by the Pullman-Car Company expressly for the Northern Pacific Railway, and is arranged exactly in the same way, only there is in addition, at the rear of the car, a

cooking-stove, so that with a kettle and so on, tea can be made at any time, and also, when travelling in families, dinner can be cooked comfortably from provisions the passengers bring with them; but for lone bachelors, spinsters, and the like there is every opportunity of eating to satiety at regular stations the whole way through at 50 cents a meal. The difference between these cars and the Pullman Palace Cars is the lack of upholstery; this is entirely absent, and it would not do were it otherwise. It is necessary for each passenger to provide his or her own mattress, pillow, and pair of blankets; and these you can procure for a charge, all told, of 2.50 dollars, at the Union Station at St. Paul. This is, of course, the plan I adopted; and a berth on the north or shady side of the car having been previously secured for my own personal use for the whole way, by the gallant Captain, and the necessary bedding arranged therein, with my instruments and so on under the seats, I was ready for the voyage, or, more strictly speaking, journey. There are upper and lower berths, exactly as in a Pullman, the upper berths being capable of being closed up when not in use, and so made as to contain the bedding of both. The lower berth is formed out of the seats, which draw together in the usual way. The cars are amply supplied with fresh water for washing and drinking purposes (this latter is "iced"), and thoroughly swept out at least twice a day. In addition to this, the passengers do not select their own seats or berths, but have them appointed; and in the doing of this the great Cook shows great discrimination and sense. The result was that I enjoyed the trip immensely, and was, on the whole, more comfortable than in a Pullman.

On Wednesday evening, then, June 25th, at 7.50 p.m., the train steamed out of the Union Station, St. Paul, and the trans-continental journey was begun. We were bound for oft-read-of scenes,—the Red river of the North, the mighty Missouri (the longest river in the world), was to be crossed; then there were hundreds of miles of prairie, with Antelopes and Buffalo, and Wild Indians, and Cow-boys, and Prairie-Dog villages without end; then there was to come the far-famed Rocky Mountains, the Columbia river and its

plains, and this was to be followed by the mighty Andes, and, last of all, the wide expanse of the Pacific Ocean. Who would mind sitting in one room 50 feet by 10 for six days and nights to see all this? and who is there who, having done so once, would not want to have the days halved and the nights doubled on the next occasion? Answer, I!

On waking about daybreak, the first station passed was Frazee, 217 miles from St. Paul, and 1694 from Portland. Of this 217 miles I, of course, saw nothing; but I can tell you what it was like from hearsay, and shall of course have to do this always on the night journeys. The course of the railway is along the left side of the Mississippi river, the country scenery consisting of small lakes and streams, patches of timber, and occasional tracts of open prairie or grazing-land. Anoka is on the Rum river. There are 4000 inhabitants; but I did not learn whether the Rum water affected their heads at all. Sauk Rapids is a village of some little importance, on account of large beds of granite. Crow-Wing is 128 miles from St. Paul, and is famous for its Indian history, nothing else. A little west of where the station is, a celebrated chief of the Chippeways, whose name was Hole-in-the-Day, had his habitation. This chief is said to have been a fine-looking man, and also to be a great dandy in his dress, but was looked upon by his tribe at conniving with the Agent in his evil practices. On each Indian reservation is a Government Agent, who is supposed to look after the tribe like a father, and also to dole out the Government bounties; but it is well known that these men all over the States are fearful rogues, and swindle the poor Indians to their own personal gain. It was at these practices that Hole-in-the-Day was supposed to wink. The Government determined, on one certain occasion, to send out a man to inspect the Agency. The Agent became frightened; and so to make the chief secure he bought him a beautiful saddle and bridle. When the inspector called, the chief showed these as great treasures and with great pride; then, putting the bit in his own mouth, he said, laughing, "This no horse-bridle; this Indian bridle. Indian no talk." And the Inspector had to go without his information.