

**MINNESOTA: ITS RESOURCES AND
PROGRESS; ITS BEAUTY,
HEALTHFULNESS AND FERTILITY, AND
ITS ATTRACTIONS AND ADVANTAGES
AS A HOME FOR IMMIGRANTS.**

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Minnesota: its resources and progress; its beauty, healthfulness and fertility, and its attractions and advantages as a home for immigrants. by Various

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MINNESOTA:

ITS

ATTRACTIONS, RESOURCES AND PROGRESS.

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL.

The State of Minnesota occupies the exact centre of the continent of North America. It lies midway between the Arctic and Tropic circles—midway between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans—and midway between Hudson's Bay and the Gulf of Mexico. It embraces the sources of the three vast water systems which reach their ocean termini, northward through Hudson's Bay, eastward through the chain of great lakes, and southward *via* the Mississippi River. It extends from $43\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ to 49° of north latitude, and from $89^{\circ} 29'$ to $97^{\circ} 5'$ of west longitude; and is bounded on the north by the Winnipeg district of British America, on the west by the Territory of Dakota, on the south by the State of Iowa, and on the east by Lake Superior and the State of Wisconsin.

The State derives its name from its principal river, which the Dakotas named "Minnesota," signifying, by a somewhat liberal and poetical rendering, "cloud-colored" or "sky-tinted water." The name is peculiarly apt and appropriate, the waters of that river, contrasted with the dark coffee-colored flood of the Mississippi, possessing that peculiar tint of a slightly clouded sky which is compounded of many colors.

This important region was almost wholly unknown to the Anglo-American long after other sections of the country, far less inviting, had been subjected to the refining influences of industry, science, and religion. Indeed, until within the last twenty-five years, few sounds, save those of wild beast and wilder men, broke the stillness of the awful solitude; and prairie, lake and river were alike

the possession of the savage aborigines. But now the steamboat plows its waters, the rail car whistles through its valleys, the axe resounds throughout its mighty forests, and the work of improvement goes forward with almost unparalleled rapidity.

The immigrant, tourist, and land surveyor have explored its utmost reach, and observation has accumulated facts, science deduced principles, and enterprise developed capabilities, which give to Minnesota a prominent position among the States of the Union; whilst the beauty of its scenery, the healthfulness of its climate, the wealth of its agricultural and mineral resources, the vastness and variety of its manufacturing facilities, and the grandeur of its commercial position, make it the most desirable of localities for the multitudes coming westward in quest of new homes, new fields of enterprise, and improved advantages for ultimate success.

Although the first actual settlement of Minnesota, and the effort to develop its vast resources, are of so recent date, nearly two centuries have elapsed since its discovery and partial exploration by white men. As early as 1680, Louis Hennepin, a Franciscan priest, in company with fur traders employed by a French exploring party, ascended the Upper Mississippi as far as the great falls, to which he reverently gave the name of Saint Anthony. The early strife for American territory between England and France resulted in the treaty of Versailles in 1763, by which all the territory now embracing Minnesota was ceded to the former power. In 1766 Captain Jonathan Carver, a native of Connecticut, a zealous royalist and enthusiastic adventurer, undertook an exploration of England's newly-acquired possessions. In the fall of that year he reached St. Anthony Falls, and ascended the Mississippi some miles further, and then returned to the mouth of the Minnesota, ascended that river, and passed the winter of 1766-7 among the Indians near the present site of New Ulm. Carver was deeply impressed with the extraordinary beauty and fertility of the country. Of the region adjacent to St. Anthony Falls he left this glowing description:

"The country around them is extremely beautiful. It is not an uninterrupted plain where the eye finds no relief, but composed of many gentle ascents, which in the summer are covered with the finest verdure and interspersed with little groves that give a pleasing variety to the prospect. On the whole, when the Falls are included, which may be seen at the distance of four miles, a more pleasing and picturesque view I believe cannot be found throughout the universe."

The Northwestern Territory, including what is now Minnesota,

was transferred to the United States in 1783; but no attempt was made to extinguish the Indian title until 1805, when a purchase was made of a tract of land for military purposes at the mouth of the St. Croix and another at the mouth of the Minnesota River, including St. Anthony Falls. Upon the latter was commenced the construction of Fort Snelling, in the summer of 1820. In 1822 the first mill was built in Minnesota. It was erected under the supervision of the officers of the fort, for the use of the garrison.

The summer of 1823 is memorable for the arrival of the first steamboat, the *Virginia*, at Mendota, opposite Fort Snelling. A few years subsequent to this period, a company of Swiss, from the Selkirk settlement, located near the site of Saint Paul, and were the pioneers of agriculture in Minnesota.

During the year 1832 the first regular mail was brought to Fort Snelling. Measures were being taken by the government to obtain a title from the Indians to the lands east of the Mississippi, and in anticipation of the event, settlements had been commenced as early as 1836, on the east side of the river, between Saint Paul and Fort Snelling. In 1838 the Indian title to this section became extinct.

In 1843 was commenced the settlement of Stillwater, on the Saint Croix, and the erection of a saw-mill at that place. Up to this time the section now known as Minnesota had belonged to various successive territorial organizations, having no separate government of its own. But on the third of March, 1849, Congress passed a bill organizing the Territory of Minnesota, whose boundary on the west was the Missouri River, designating Saint Paul as the capital, and appointing Alexander Ramsey, of Pennsylvania, as Governor.

At this time Minnesota was an unexplored wilderness, the home of the savage, the hunting-ground of the half-breed and the resort of the fur trader and government officials. All the lands on the west, and a large portion of those on the east side of the Mississippi, were still in the possession of the original inhabitants. Saint Paul and Stillwater were small villages, and other settlements mere hamlets. The whole population of the Territory was but little over four thousand. At the opening of navigation came the first great wave of immigration. On the first of June the Governor proclaimed the Territory duly organized. On the third of September was convened the first legislative assembly.

Thus, in rapid succession, transpired those events which gave Minnesota a distinct existence, and an important position among

the States of the Union. In the year 1851, in consequence of a treaty with the Indians, the lands on the western side of the Mississippi were opened for settlement. Two years later these Indians were removed to their new homes on the Upper Minnesota.

The tide of immigration was now setting in with irresistible force. The emigrant wagon wended its way over bluff and prairie; the wharves were crowded with boats loaded with new comers from the valleys of the Wabash and Ohio, from the banks of the Hudson and Kennebec, from the green hills of Vermont and the ocean shores of Massachusetts; and mingled with these were representatives from nearly every country of Northern Europe. Here congregated the idle wanderer, man of broken fortune and lost health, the hard-handed laborer, the shrewd, calculating man of business, the restless, keen-eyed speculator, the capitalist, student, and politician; the lady of fashion, and the care-worn mother with the infant in her arms.

Villages suddenly expanded into cities; towns sprang up on the water-courses; and magnificent schemes were formed for future aggrandizement; money was abundant; and excitement, speculation, and fortune-making were almost the sole pursuits of the masses.

Suddenly came the great financial crisis, in 1857, when speculation collapsed, money disappeared from the market, property depreciated in value with the rapidity with which it had been inflated, and immigration almost entirely ceased. Upon immigration, the Territory was, at that time, almost wholly dependent for its rapid growth of population; upon such growth of population was founded the enhanced value of property; and upon such advance of property were based the exacting and fabulous rates of interest which were eagerly paid by sanguine speculators. Thus the schemes of the day, the calculations of business and the expectations of a generous future, were instinct with a common hope; and when the supporting cause in these linked dependencies gave way, the unsubstantial fabric fell, burying its builders in its ruins.

It is difficult to exaggerate the extent and vital character of this sudden revulsion. The most princely fortunes vanished like shadowy dreams. With men rated among the wealthiest it was not now a question of meeting a maturing obligation or compassing a cherished scheme in the future, but the more urgent one of averting present starvation from their families. Fast horses were put to the plough, stylish equipages disappeared, holiday apparel was refurbished for new service, and expectant fortune hunters sought by unwonted labor to earn an honest livelihood.

The people thus made wiser by reverses, turned instinctively to

the unreckoned wealth of the virgin soil. Labor with its necessities and rewards possessed a new significance and achieved new wonders. The irrepressible energy of these young communities found ample exercise in the development of our vast agricultural resources, and perhaps the world affords no parallel to the progress witnessed during the two years ending with 1860. In 1854 the cultivated area embraced but 15,000 acres; in 1857 it was estimated at 48,000; in 1860 it had reached a grand total of 433,267 acres!

Thus it appears that the dawn of agricultural prosperity in Minnesota was co-incident with the great financial revulsion, and one of its most natural results. But the most important result of this crisis, and that which was peculiarly favorable to the future growth of Minnesota, was the instantaneous check given to speculation in Western lands. In many of the Western States the speculator preceded the emigrant, bought up at government price as soon as they were offered in the market, and still holds in native wildness, some of the fairest sections of the Mississippi Valley.

Fortunately in Minnesota a concurrence of circumstances rescued the largest and best portion of the State from this dire hindrance to settlement and progress. Most of the public lands here could be obtained only under the provisions of the pre-emption laws, which required an actual settlement as a condition of transfer by the government: the financial embarrassment soon followed and kept aloof the speculator, till the timely passage of the Homestead Act saved the public lands forever from his grasp.

And now, while large portions of Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa lie idly in the hands of speculators who hold the lands at prices far above the reach of the mass of immigrants, the equally fertile lands of far healthier Minnesota are reserved for the future homes of the frugal and industrious people who are flocking to us from Northern Europe, and from the overcrowded localities of the Eastern States. Here they may find the bountiful soil, the beautiful scenery, the crystal streams and limpid lakes, the bracing climate, the liberal institutions and fostering influences adapted to the home of a noble race, who shall reap here the just reward of industry, enterprise and a laudable ambition.

Congress having passed an enabling act, a State Constitution was formed in the summer of 1857. The fall following, State officers and members of Congress were chosen; and on the 11th day of May, 1858, the State was formally admitted into the Union.

Minnesota nobly responded to the various calls of the general

government for aid against her enemies in the great civil war. She furnished the loyal cause more than 24,000 troops, or one-seventh of her entire population; and their conduct in the most trying situations, measured by whatever test of courage, endurance or discipline, answered the highest expectations of them as citizen soldiers, and reflected lasting honor upon the State.

The year 1862 will ever be memorable in the history of the State as the epoch of the terrible Indian massacre, which hardly finds its parallel in the annals of savage barbarity. The year had opened auspiciously for Minnesota. Congress had just passed the Homestead Act, immigration was on the increase, population and improvement were reaching westward, the fields promised an abundant harvest; when suddenly came the merciless marauder upon our defenceless frontier settlements; whole families were massacred, villages burnt, and thousands of industrious, prosperous citizens driven penniless from their desolated homes. Stringent measures were promptly adopted for the suppression of this savage outbreak. Many of those most directly guilty suffered at the hands of the executioner, and not only all concerned in the massacre, but the remnant of the Sioux not implicated, and all the hitherto peaceful Winnebagoes, were, as a precaution, removed to a new reservation on the Missouri River. The only Indians still remaining in the State are a few bands of distant, feeble and friendly-disposed Chippewas. With the more important of these a treaty was concluded in 1862, by which their title to about 10,000 square miles of territory, embracing the fertile valley of the Red River of the North was extinguished, leaving only a small portion of inferior land in this State still in the hands of the Indians.

Those sad days are now happily past. Since 1863 not a hostile Indian has been in the State or near it. Peace and security prevail throughout our borders. The tide of immigration has resumed its course hither with augmented volume, remote and fertile sections are being made accessible by the extraordinary development of our magnificent railroad system; agricultural and manufacturing industry is advancing with unparalleled rapidity; educational facilities are being developed and extended under a magnificent land endowment; and it may in short be confidently claimed that in no part of the world has there been achieved progress in all the aids to prosperity, power and happiness, comparable to that which the past five years have witnessed in favored Minnesota.