*West Side of Saint Anthony Falls about 1852—Tallmadge Elwell, photographer*
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

# "MERRILY OVER THE PRAIRIE": THE GRAND EXCURSION VENTURES TO SAINT ANTHONY FALLS


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## PROJECT BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Grand Excursion 2004 will celebrate, in the words of its promoters, "the renaissance of the upper Mississippi River region, by recreating the 1854 train and steamboat expedition that brought worldwide attention to what was then America's wild, western frontier."[1] To prepare for this event, the Minneapolis Community Development Agency (now the Community Planning and Economic Development Department), with funding from the Saint Anthony Falls Heritage Board, hired Hess, Roise and Company to conduct historical research to:

- Determine the appearance of the two towns in 1854;
- Establish the activities of the 1854 visitors who traveled from Saint Paul to Minneapolis and Saint Anthony; and
- Identify and provide brief biographies of local participants.

Because reporters from across the country covered the Grand Excursion in 1854, contemporary newspaper accounts are the primary documentation of the event. Nineteenth-century newspaper collections at the Minnesota Historical Society in Saint Paul and the University of Minnesota's Wilson Library in Minneapolis were particularly valuable. Research was also conducted at the Minneapolis Public Library and the Newberry Library, Chicago. The Onondaga County Public Library in Syracuse, New York, provided biographical information on General James Robbins Lawrence.

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## GRAND EXCURSION OF 1854: THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

Ostensibly, the Grand Excursion of 1854 was to celebrate the "nuptials of the Atlantic with the Father of Waters"—in other words, the completion of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, the first to connect the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River. The excursion was also to honor Henry Farnam and Joseph E. Sheffield, the railroad's builders. But there were more agendas for the fête.

National pride in conquering the frontier played a great role in the celebration. When the rail line was finished on February 22, 1854, the trip from New York City to Rock Island, Illinois—the breadth of the original United States—could be made in less than two days. When the country had been founded less than a century earlier, this journey would have taken several weeks by horse. Clearly, the railroad's development greatly facilitated settlement of the West and the expansion of the United States' empire. The decision to extend the celebration up the Mississippi to Saint Anthony Falls reinforced the idea that settlers could easily move to western lands via the railroads. If the sole point of the Grand Excursion had been to recognize the new connection between the Atlantic and the Mississippi, the event could have terminated at Rock Island with no loss of symbolism.

[1] http://www.grandexcursion.com.

Some also hoped that the celebration would attract "desirable" classes of settlers—namely, people similar to themselves. Historian Merlin Stonehouse observed:

> In the Minnesota of 1854 railroading was a faith curiously confused with the Christian. Edward D. Neill preached a sermon on railroads and religion, claiming that railroads were antidotes to bigotry, idleness, and profligacy. Railroads would promote "pure and undefiled religion" by encouraging immigration from the East to outweigh the heathens, roughs, and nominal Roman Catholics in Minnesota. Bigotry—at least the kind God and Neill objected to—would end when the steam carriages could whisk the ministers of the Gospel to distant parts. Neill took his text from Isaiah 40:3—*Make straight in the desert a highway for our God*.
>
> In essence, this was the carpetbagger's faith, a combination of the ideal and the practical, advocating the moral improvement of a country by immigration of the right sort of people in such a flood to inundate the wrong sort.[2]

The issue of slavery was another subtext for the Grand Excursion. By 1854, the truce between slave states and free states that had been worked out in the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was broken. This compromise stipulated that equal numbers of free and slave states would be admitted to the Union and that the Louisiana Purchase territory would be free of slavery north of the southern Missouri boundary. For several decades, this legislation maintained the balance of power between pro-slavery and antislavery forces, at least in the United States Senate. (The pro-slavery forces were outnumbered in the House of Representatives.) By mid-century, the balance was shaky. A series of bills known as the Compromise of 1850 attempted to settle the unresolved issue of slavery while preserving the Union. These bills provided, among other things, for admitting California as a free state, eliminating slavery from the District of Columbia, and more stringently enforcing fugitive slave laws. The latter initiative became known as the Fugitive Slave Act.[3]

Given the rapid expansion of the West, however, the 1850 laws were unable to quiet the debate over the status of new states and territories. The Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 repealed the Missouri Compromise and allowed settlers of new territories to vote to be free or slave states. The act was a victory for pro-slavery forces, as the Missouri Compromise would have banned slavery in the territory covered by Nebraska and Kansas.

It was in this volatile era that the Grand Excursion was launched.

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[2] Merlin Stonehouse, *John Wesley North and the Reform Frontier* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965), 74-75. The June 17, 1854 issue of the *Saint Anthony Express* noted Neill's sermon on railroads and humorously suggested that lumber interests, promoters of paper (fictional) town sites, speculators in town lots, and banks distributing "shinplaster" (privately issued, poorly secured currency) were also worthy subjects for the pulpit. Isaac Atwater edited the *Express*.

[3] Far from settling the question of slavery, the harshness of the Fugitive Slave Act incited more opposition to slavery in the North. The Whig Party disintegrated over the issue of slavery in the 1850s and was replaced by the Free Soil Party, which had been founded in 1848, and, eventually, by the Republican Party. Both opposed any extension of slavery.

## A CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION: THE CHICAGO AND ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD

The seed for the Grand Excursion was planted at a meeting of civic leaders in Rock Island in June 1845. The group decided to build a railroad from LaSalle, Illinois, to Rock Island to facilitate shipment of local agricultural products to the East by connecting the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers.[4] On February 27, 1847, the Rock Island and La Salle Railroad Company was incorporated by an act of the Illinois legislature. The company's directors spent the next few years attempting to raise enough capital to build the railroad.

By 1850, the directors had hired engineer Henry Farnam to carry out the construction. Born in Scipio, New York, in 1803, Farnam studied mathematics and became a surveyor. He relocated to New Haven, Connecticut, in 1839. Farnam had experience in building railroads, and was just finishing construction of the Michigan Southern to Chicago. Farnam disagreed with the directors' plan to build a railroad between the two rivers. Since Chicago was becoming an important railroad hub, Farnam agreed to build the railroad only if the route went from Rock Island to Chicago. The directors had incentive to concur: Farnam brought along his partner, financier Joseph Sheffield, who was able to provide the much-needed capital for this plan.[5]

After the directors agreed to Farnam's plan, they petitioned the Illinois legislature to amend their charter and to change the name to the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, which was done on February 7, 1851. On October 1 of that year, work on the line commenced at Twenty-second Street, the southern limits of the city of Chicago.[6] This first segment connected Chicago and Joliet, a distance of forty miles.

Farnam completed the Joliet segment in the following fall. The first train ride between Chicago and Joliet on October 10, 1852 was something of a disappointment:

> From all evidence of that early history Messrs. Farnam and Jervis [John B. Jervis, an engineer and president of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad] knew a great deal about railroad building, but apparently very little about good public relations. Indications are that the launching of the first train was miserably planned. While the rail was in place and some of the right-of-way was dressed, the line was by no means completed. The only station anywhere near ready to open was at Blue Island. The Mokena depot was barely under construction, and at Joliet there were no facilities to turn the engine.

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[4] William Edward Hayes, *Iron Road to Empire: The History of 100 Years of the Progress and Achievements of the Rock Island Lines* (New York: Simmons-Boardman, 1953), 5-7. Hayes lists the participants at this meeting as Judge Jim Grant, Colonel George Davenport, and Ebenezer Cook of Davenport, Iowa; Lem Andrews and Mr. Whittaker from Rock Island, Illinois; Charlie Atkinson from Moline, Illinois; Nelson Elwood from Joliet, Illinois; Dick Morgan, a railroad engineer; and A. C. Fulton.

[5] Hayes, 13-14. An article by a reporter identified only as W in the *New York Daily Times* on June 8, 1854, entitled "The Great Excursion from Chicago to the Falls of St. Anthony," gave the route as follows: Chicago to Joliet, Morris, Ottawa, LaSalle, Peru, Tiskilwa, Geneseo, and Rock Island, for a total of 181 miles. The route roughly parallels present-day Interstate 80, which runs east-west across Illinois. Please note that the town of LaSalle is spelled as one word, while the railroad company of the same name is spelled with a space between La and Salle.

[6] The October 1, 1851 commencement date was taken from the Rock Island Technical Society web page at http://www.simpson.edu/~RITS/histories/RIHistory.html.

> Evidently little advance notice of the coming of this historic event was circulated. When at 10 a.m. on Sunday, October 10, 1852, the gaily bedecked train was ready to leave the Twenty-Second Street depot, the occasion had caused hardly a ripple in the busy life of Chicagoans. There were no flag-waving crowds at the station. There was no blare of bugles, and the usual firing of guns that had marked similar occasions elsewhere was conspicuously absent.[7]

The trip to Joliet took two hours. The return trip to Chicago required the engine to back up all the way.

By March 1853 Farnam had completed the segment to LaSalle, and by February 22, 1854 the line reached Rock Island. This time, Farnam and the company would not let such a historic event pass unnoticed. Handbills advertising the initial run were posted around Rock Island drawing crowds from the Rock Island vicinity and Davenport, Iowa, to the railroad station. When the train from Chicago arrived in the evening, there were artillery salutes, a banquet, and several speeches, including one by Farnam:

> It is less than one quarter of a century, and within the memory of most of you that the first locomotive made its appearance in the States. Now more than fourteen thousand miles of iron rails are traversed by the iron horse at almost lightning speed.
>
> It is less than two years since the first train of cars entered the State of Illinois from the east, then connecting Lake Erie with Chicago. It is less than one year since the first continuous line of road was completed connecting New York with Chicago.
>
> Two years ago there were less than one hundred miles of road in operation in the State of Illinois. . . . Now more than twelve hundred miles of rail of the most substantial character is in operation, eight hundred miles of which leads directly into the City of Chicago.
>
> Today we witness the nuptials of the Atlantic with the Father of Waters. Tomorrow the people of Rock Island can go to New York the entire distance by railroad, and within the space of forty-two hours.[8]

Still, all was not well for Farnam, who was only as good as his last project. He had sent Hiram Price, an Iowa lawyer, to secure the right-of-way for the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad through Iowa. Price was not having much luck. Farnam had contracted to build this railroad even before he had finished the Rock Island line. He faced several problems in Iowa, among them the high price of land and resistance among Iowans who favored another railroad developer.[9] A nationally publicized event to celebrate the completion of the Chicago and Rock

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[7] Hayes, 20-21.
[8] Ibid., 29-30.
[9] To reassure investors, the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad published the *Circular Statement of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad Company Embracing the Report of Henry Farnam, Chief Engineer, June 1854* (New York: Baker, Godwin and Company, 1854). This piece explained why Iowa land had become so expensive and why the investors should stay with this project: "The railroad now in progress of construction from Davenport, on the Mississippi, to Council Bluffs, on the Missouri, a distance of three hundred miles, is a combination of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, which terminates on the Mississippi, opposite the first-named city. The completion of the

Island line might persuade Iowans and the world that Farnam was just the man to build a railroad through Iowa.

Invitations were sent out on May 1, 1854 to stockholders, prominent citizens, politicians, and journalists, bidding them to be the guests of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad at a formal celebration that would begin in Chicago on June 5.

## THE EXCURSION BEGINS

Many newspaper reporters accepted the invitation and provided regular accounts of the trip.[10] Even though all were on the same journey, different writers offered wildly varying versions of the experiences they shared. Their stories were colored by particular prejudices and points of view, as well as by a particular writer's sour or cheerful outlook. Their accounts diverged even more when they reached Saint Paul, where they split into several parties heading in different directions. Not everyone made the trip to Saint Anthony Falls, and those who went did not necessarily participate in all the same activities.

An example of a reporter's bias is provided by James Fairchild Babcock, a correspondent for the *New Haven (Conn.) Palladium*. Throughout his journey, he looked for resemblances to New England towns and people, often revealing his disdain for anyone who did not share his Protestant, Anglo-Saxon background. At the same time, however, Babcock was an ardent abolitionist, being a featured speaker at antislavery meetings in New Haven only months before the Grand Excursion.[11]

Babcock began his account on June 1 in Erie, Pennsylvania, as he traveled by train to Chicago where the Grand Excursion was to begin. On June 2 he remarked: "The traveler sees New England enterprise and taste marked all over this section of the State [Ohio] from Erie to Cleveland, —in dwellings, orchards, clearing up of lands, and laying out of towns and cities.

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last-mentioned road, has demonstrated that a railway maybe constructed through a country of prairie, on the line of immigration, and yield a profit as soon as it is opened. It is difficult for settlers on eastern lands covered with timber to understand this proposition, but the explanation is very readily made. All that is required in prairies is to turn up the sod and plant the seed. There is no timber to be cut down and cleared away—no stumps to be grubbed up—nothing, in short, to postpone to a future day the remuneration of labor. Thus, it is the case of constant occurrence for a settler who has paid the government price of $1.25 per acre for his land, to raise $20 or $30 per acre in corn within twelve months after the surface is broken.

"When the Chicago and Rock Island road was commenced in 1851, a considerable portion of the line was run through the public lands then unsold and unoccupied. There is now not an acre on the line of the road that has not been purchased, and that is not held at prices varying from $10 to $30."

[10] Some newspapers carried brief notices of the Grand Excursion but did not send reporters on the trip; see the *Charleston (S.C.) Daily Courier,* June 13, 1854, and the *New Orleans Times Picayune*, June 17, 1854.

[11] *Speeches and Other Proceedings at the Anti-Nebraska Meeting Held in New Haven Connecticut March 8 and 10, 1854* (New Haven: John H. Austin, 1854), Ayer Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago. These meetings were held to protest the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854. In his emotional speech Babcock asserted: "I stand not here as an abolitionist in the common acceptation of that term. It is not for the colore[d] man alone that I speak; but to you all as free men, to your country, to posterity and to humanity, by every social, moral and political obligation that can be urged upon men in the possession of a godly heritage obtained by the blood and toil of a gallant and virtuous ancestry. Shall we yield this heritage now to the imperious demands of the all-grasping continually encroaching Slave Power? (Cries of no! no!) The fathers of the republic contemplated slavery in its true aspect, and looked forward to its extinction rather than its expansion."

This results from the fact that the pioneers of this region were generally from Yankeedom. From Dunkirk to Erie, all these signs are wanting. The soil is generally less inviting, and the population contains a larger admixture of the German element, which in this country is more inclined to utility than to ornament."[12]

The following day, Babcock was in Toledo, Ohio, which he found to be beautiful and thriving. His guide was Reverend A. Smyth, formerly of New Haven. Babcock believed that Smyth's New England influence had improved Toledo's schools. Again showing his bias, Babcock reassured readers that "the name [Toledo] was affixed to the town from a mere freak of fancy on the part of its fathers, not from any association, in the way of trade or immigration, with the ancient city of their Catholic majesties."[13]

In Chicago, Babcock joined the other excursionists on the morning of June 5, 1854. "Mr. Farnham [Farnam] is busy at the railroad office, receiving the names of the party who intend to push on to the Falls of St. Anthony," Babcock reported. "His arrangements appear to be most complete for a pleasant trip. Friends and acquaintances will be kept together as much as possible."[14] Former President Millard Fillmore and his daughter, Mary Abigail, and son, Millard Powers, headed the distinguished guest list. Other luminaries included politician and journalist Thurlow Weed, historian and diplomat George Bancroft, and Illinois governor William Matteson. Both Millard Fillmore and Weed were natives of upstate New York, and they were joined by many others from that state: the Honorable William J. Bacon from Utica; the Honorable John A. Granger, Canandaigua; former Postmaster General N. R. Hall and George R. Babcock, Buffalo; Judge Parker and V. P. Down, Albany; the Honorable John C. Wright, Schenectady; and Azariah C. Flagg, former comptroller of New York and a member of the "Albany Regency," New York's first political machine. Other states such as Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Illinois were represented on the guest list, but not nearly to the extent as New York.[15]

Two trains with nine cars apiece departed from Chicago at 8 a.m. and reached Rock Island at 4 p.m. [16] Babcock described Rock Island as having about 4,500 people, and most of them were waiting at the depot when the trains arrived. It was at Rock Island that Babcock got his first glimpse of the Mississippi and the seven boats—*War Eagle*, *Galena*, *Lady Franklin*, *Sparhawk*, *Golden Era*, *Black Hawk*, and *Jenny Lind*—that would take the party to Saint Paul. "A Mississippi steamboat is a queer looking affair to a green Yankee," he wrote. "The hull is little less than a sharp pointed scow, while the upper works, two or three stories high, look in some respects like an Indian Pagoda."[17]

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[12] James F. Babcock Scrapbook, June 2, 1854, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.
[13] Babcock, June 3, 1854.
[14] Babcock, June 5, 1854.
[15] "The Railroad Excursion," *North-West Democrat*, June 14, 1854, listed the names of thirty-four reporters who were part of the Grand Excursion. This list was described as incomplete. The sheer number of journalists ensured that this event would receive a great deal of newspaper coverage. The same issue names more than seventy other guests who were mainly politicians, educators, ministers, and businessmen, all of whom were leading opinion-makers in their communities. More than fifty of the reporters and other guests were from the state of New York.
[16] Babcock's account of June 5, 1854, states the train left at 8 a.m., but the Grand Excursion tickets give the departure as 9 a.m.
[17] Ibid.

It was Farnam who swayed Babcock to go all the way to Saint Anthony: "I had thought of going no father than Rock Island; but the arguments of our friends are rather eloquent to persuade me to keep on to the end. Besides, Mr. Farnham informs me that the ladies of St. Anthony's Falls are preparing a *pic-nic* for the guests when they shall arrive there. Think of that! Ladies at St. Anthony's falls, where I had anticipated seeing only Indians, bears, catamounts, and other citizens of a primeval forest."[18]

A reporter for the *New York Daily Times*, known only by the initial W, was favorably impressed by the hospitality at the beginning of the trip, writing that "the Excursion is really a splendid affair. The arrangements for the comfort and entertainment of guests, have been conducted I understand, on a princely scale."[19] Babcock was assigned a stateroom in the *Golden Era*, the same boat accommodating President Fillmore. At 5 p.m., the guests on that vessel sat down to what Babcock described as an elegant dinner. He also noted that some of his fellow travelers indulged in alcohol for medicinal uses: "The miserable muddy water of the Mississippi, afforded a considerable number of men and women an opportunity to guard against injury by a few drops of brandy and the flasks of liquor were numerous along the table. I have no doubt, however, that a majority really used the ardent as a supposed antidote to the water, and they were the more easily persuaded to try it because a few had found themselves unwell at Chicago and did not come to the river."[20]

Not all of the excursionists, though, settled in as smoothly as Babcock and W. Originally only five boats were chartered, but the number of unexpected or uninvited guests was so great that two more, the *Black Hawk* and *Jenny Lind*, had been added. Still, there was not enough room for everyone. Some had lost their tickets for the steamboat and others had not received a ticket. The confusion was amplified because some of the tickets were accidentally left in Chicago. An express train brought them to Rock Island just as things had been sorted out and the boats were ready to depart. The disorder might have dissuaded some from continuing on to Saint Paul. One writer stated that at least one-third of the guests abandoned the steamboat trip and returned to Chicago. Estimates of the number who continued on aboard the steamboats vary from 700 to 1,200 people.[21] "At 10 o'clock the boats started up the river in single file, for Minnesota

[18] Ibid. Babcock consistently spells Farnam as Farnham. It is unclear if Babcock knew that Farnam was born in New York, not New Haven. Although not a true New Englander, Farnam certainly qualified as a Yankee, which predisposed Babcock to hold him in high regard.

[19] W, "The Great Excursion from Chicago to the Falls of St. Anthony," *New York Daily Times*, June 8, 1854. All out-state newspapers papers quoted here, with the exception of the *New Haven Palladium*, are available at the Wilson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

[20] Babcock, June 5, 1854.

[21] William J. Petersen, "The Rock Island Railroad Excursion of 1854," *Minnesota History* 15 (December 1934): 409. Petersen's article states that 1,200 people were on board when the steamboats left Rock Island. Babcock suggests there were between 600 and 800 people on the Grand Excursion. Just before reaching Dubuque he described a woman working on the shore, "undaunted by the focus of six or eight hundred pairs of eyes from the steamers" (June 6, 1854). An article entitled "The Great Excursion" in the *Boston Evening Transcript* on June 12, 1854, places the number of participants at 700.

Territory," according to the *Chicago Daily Tribune*. The story revealed, however, a major communication gap: "They will probably reach St. Paul this evening."[22]

The trip instead took several days. As the steamboats proceeded north, the party stopped at many towns along the way, allowing President Fillmore and others aboard to make speeches. By the morning of June 6, the steamboats arrived in Galena, about one hundred miles upstream. On June 7, just past Dubuque, Babcock found "scenery, much as beautiful as that on the banks of the Connecticut [River].[23] *New York Tribune* reporter Charles A. Dana found the Mississippi far more beautiful than the Palisades of the Hudson River, and the prairies far richer and better suited to agriculture:

> There is no region on earth, I think which can sustain a larger population than that on both sides of the northern Mississippi. A rich soil, suited to every produce of the temperate zone, and absolutely inviting the hand of the farmer, a climate genial but not enervating, frequent streams to afford water power and fuel abundant on earth, the great river for a highway, and railroads which in forty-eight hours, land the traveler on the Atlantic—with all these advantages the entire country must become the home of one of the freest, most intelligent, most powerful and most independent communities of the world. No where else has the hand of Providence so marked out the foundations of Empire, no where else is there such an influx of immigration from all directions. [24]

A local paper, the *Saint Anthony Express*, later wrote with pride: "One sentiment prevailed in regard to the beauty of the country and scenery in this vicinity—that of unqualified admiration.[25]

## FROM SAINT TO SAINT

The steamboats pulled into Saint Paul on the morning of Thursday, June 8, surprising local residents who had not expected the excursion until the following day. A reporter from the *New York Evening Post*, who signed his stories A. J. A., gave his impression of the city:

> By general course, the town is on the east side of the river, but the *local* course is from S.W. to N.E., making it really upon the left or western bank. This is practically the head of navigation, though boats can, in high water, go up to the Falls of St. Anthony, nine

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[22] "The Grand Excursion To-Day," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 5, 1854, and "The Rock Island Excursion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 6, 1854. According to Babcock's account, the party reached Lake Pepin on June 7 (June 7, 1854).

[23] Babcock, June 7, 1854.

[24] Charles A. Dana, "The Upper Mississippi," *New York Tribune*, June 14, 1854. The weeklong delay between the opening event in Chicago on June 5 and its coverage in the *Tribune* probably reflects the reporter's sporadic access to telegraph lines and mail service as the party moved further away from urban areas. Although the dateline was given as June 8, this story did not appear until the June 14 edition. Dana was an influential editor of the *New York Tribune*; during the Civil War he became the Assistant Secretary of War. After the war, Dana purchased the *New York Sun.* According to the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Dana's participation in the 1854 Grand Excursion, along with W. H. Appleton of Wisconsin, who accompanied Dana on this journey, resulted in the publication of the sixteen-volume *American Cyclopedia*. The first volume was published in 1858, the last in 1864. The two editions of this work sold more than three million copies. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), 5:50.

[25] "The Great Excursion," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 10, 1854.

> miles above. . . . St. Paul, like Dubuque, is very substantially built, mostly stone and brick, and contains several very elegant buildings, among which is the Capitol. It contains 8,000 inhabitants, and is now five years old. [26]

The current governor, Willis Gorman, and ex-governor Alexander Ramsey met the boats in Saint Paul. Dana found the inhabitants of Saint Paul to be welcoming and friendly, even if confused about which day the excursionists would arrive. Accounts diverge as to how the visitors were treated and the level of disorganization and hazard associated with the trip to Saint Anthony. Babcock wrote:

> The excursion party landed from their steamers this forenoon amid the cheers of the people, who gathered from all points as soon as the news spread that the boats had arrived. They appear to be much chagrined that they had not perfected their arrangements for our reception. They say we have taken them by surprise, as they did not look for us until to-morrow, at which time their militia were to appear and other demonstrations to be made. Besides, carriages were engaged for the whole company, for a trip to the Falls and the village of St. Anthony. Now all is bustle and confusion on shore, and sorts of vehicles are coming down the bank.[27]

A. J .A. observed that "everything in the shape of a conveyance was put in requisition for the emergency."[28] A local reporter provided more details:

> No sooner had the boats landed than every vehicle of every kind, description, shape or age, that could be propelled by horse power, was at once seized by the impatient crowd, anxious to visit the great points of interest and attraction, the Falls, Minnehaha and the Fort. The morning was delightful—the air cool and bracing, the roads in fine condition, and free from dust. Such a turnout we never before saw in Minnesota. More than one hundred teams must have left St. Paul on Thursday morning for the Falls, averaging ten persons to a team. The splendid coaches were all loaded to their utmost capacity, carrying 15 to 25 each.[29]

Babcock managed to get a seat on one of the carriages bound for Saint Anthony along with Governor John Barry of Michigan, Professor Alexander Twining, historian George Bancroft and his son, and several ladies. Babcock noted that "one of the editors of the *New York Times*" was also on board. Babcock described his journey through Saint Paul:

> The various carriages began to move on up the main street. Here is a fine view, for miles, and almost every kind and quality of buildings are to be seen. We now pass a three story brick building, marked in large letters, "Office of the Daily Times." The newspaper here is conducted by our friend T. M. Newson, formerly of the Derby Journal. His paper

[26] A. J. A., "Our Rock Island Railroad Excursion Correspondence," *New York Evening Post*, June 15, 1854. The writer estimated the population of Saint Paul as 8,000, instead of 6,000 as claimed by the *New York Tribune*, and placed the number of excursionists at 1,000.
[27] Babcock, June 8, 1854.
[28] A. J. A.
[29] "The Great Excursion," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 10, 1854.

> would be creditable to any of the eastern cities. . . . There are, however, four daily papers in this small city, some of which must suffer for some time, for the want of healthy support.[30]

At least two accounts paint a picture of an absurd procession traveling from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony. An unnamed reporter from Galena, Illinois, provided his wickedly comic version:

> The 'March to Finchley' was nothing compared to our motley cavalcade. Here was a governor astride a sorry Rozinante of which even the great Don would have been ashamed; here an United States Senator, acting the part of footman, stood bold upright in the baggage boot of a coach, holding on by the iron rail surrounding the top; here the historian [probably George Bancroft] of whom the country is justly proud, squatted on the top of a crazy van, unmindful of everything but himself, his book, hat and spectacles; there a hot-house flower, nursed in some eastern conservatory, so delicate and fragile that a falling leaf might crush it, but a beautiful specimen of the feminine gender withal, would be seated over the hind axle of a lumber wagon, supported on each side by opera glass exquisites, who only wondered 'why the devil the people of this country didn't send to New York for better carriages?' and whose groans between every jolt, furnished amusement for the more hardy of the party; here some corpulent madame, whose idea of a ride is bounded by luxuriant cushions, shining hammer cloths; spirited horses, and obsequious flunkies, was seated in a hard bottom chair, in an open one-horse wagon, first cousins to her husband's vegetable drag, or perhaps his pedlar's [peddler's] cart, before riches came to bless them (about which she has forgotten of course), here she was, surrounded perhaps by the *canaille* whom she has learned in latter days to despise, dragged along at a snail's pace by one old mare, with a crazy, foolish, wickering colt alongside, to torment her and make the driver curse; there is a politician who has ridden successfully more than one easy hobby [horse], would have been glad to ride a rail. The scene was animated and amusing![31]

Novelist Catherine M. Sedgwick was probably the most notable woman on the Grand Excursion. Her account of the trip in a letter to Charles Butler, who had gone only as far as Rock Island, appeared in *Putnam's Monthly Magazine*. Sedgwick seemed to enjoy her experience. She queried: "Ah, Mr. Butler, why did you not come with us? You should have seen that beautiful tower of St. Paul's, sitting on its fresh hillside, like a young queen just emerging from her minority. You should have seen the gay scrambling to 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 —some among us accustomed to

[30] Babcock, June 8, 1854.

[31] Edward D. Neill, *History of Minnesota from the Earliest French Expedition to the Present Time* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Company, 1882), 596-597. Neill reprinted this account and identified the writer only as "an editor from Galena." The "March to Finchley" refers to a William Hogarth painting of 1750 which satirized the British troops as drunken, disorderly louts on their march to Finchley Common to defend London against a possible invasion by Jacobites in 1745. *Canaille* is a mob or riffraff.

cushioned coaches at home—could drive merrily over the prairie in lumber-wagons, seated on rough boards." [32]

The large number of vehicles and general disarray of the expedition to Saint Anthony proved dangerous for some. A Saint Paul reporter noted: "On Thursday last, a wagon loaded with ladies and gentlemen, members of the excursion party, while on their way to St. Anthony, was run into by a four-horse stage coach, the poll [pole?] of which shattered the wagon, and threw the inmates to the ground. Several persons were bruised and one lady severely injured."[33] In another instance, "the historian, Bancroft, has fallen from his seat to the ground, and we all fear is crushed by the carriage wheels; but, fortunately, he escapes injury. In searching the pockets of his coat he lost his balance. The efforts of his son to save him were near bringing him directly under the coach. He remounts his seat, and we are once more on our way."[34]

As they moved out of Saint Paul, the visitors were again struck by the countryside: "We pass on, ascending a hill which overlooks the whole place. On either hand are wide prairie plains, the Mississippi on our left, resembling here some parts of the Housatonic [River Valley in Connecticut]. Forests and shrubs are seen in various directions, and the scenery not unlike that observed in some of the drives around New Haven."[35]

The visitors traveled to Saint Anthony via the Territorial Road, a route later adopted in large part by University Avenue and East River Road. One of the highlights along the way was Cheever's Tower (Figure 1). William A. Cheever, a Massachusetts native, had settled in Saint Anthony in 1847 and claimed land now mostly occupied by the University of Minnesota's East Bank campus. Cheever was an entrepreneur: he operated a farm, established a boat landing, and, in 1853, built a ninety-foot observation tower on a knoll subsequently flattened by university construction.[36] Advertisements in the *Saint Anthony Express* exclaimed: "Cheever is Open! Call at his Tower and get an Ice Cream and a glass of Sparkling Soda, and Pay Your Dime and Climb. And see all the country and some of Texas, at a single view. No stranger should leave the country without one view which would take days to obtain in any other way. Ladies' Saloon first story and strictly temperance. Second—Gent's Saloon; Hard Cider and two live coons [raccoons] on exhibition FREE."[37]

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[32] Catherine M. Sedgwick, "The Great Excursion to the Falls of St. Anthony," reprinted in *Minnesota History* 25 (June 1944): 113. Sedgwick (1789-1867), a Massachusetts native, spent much of her time in New York. Her novels celebrated domestic virtues and the natural beauty of the Berkshires

[33] "Accident," *Minnesota Weekly*, June 13, 1854.

[34] Babcock, June 8, 1854.

[35] Ibid.

[36] George E. Warner and Charles M. Foote, eds., *History of Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis* (1881; reprint, Marceline, Mo.: Walsworth Publishing Company, 1977), 366. Cheever's Tower was described as ninety feet high and located at "Cheevertown in Saint Anthony City." Cheever had platted his claim as Saint Anthony City.

[37] *Saint Anthony Express,* July 22, 1854. The 1859-1860 Minneapolis and Saint Anthony city directory locates Cheever's tower at "Sixth and Prospect streets." This is the intersection of present-day East River Road and Arlington Street SE, near Fraser and Wulling Halls. The site is on top of a steep bluff and visitors looking across the river and upstream could get their first glimpse of the falls, as well as a clear view of what we now know as downtown Minneapolis and the Chain of Lakes.

Although Cheever is not specifically mentioned in any accounts of the Grand Excursion, he likely greeted the excursionists who visited his tower. In any event, his tower made the news. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter offered this account:

> About half way to St. Anthony, some genius has erected an observatory, after the manner and form of the one which towers up towards Heaven near the Crystal Palace. You are charged the sum of one dime (good and lawful currency of this Republic) for the privilege of ascending to the top of this edifice, upon accomplishing which feat you behold a panorama of beauty and sublimity which enrapture you, and which would make the fortune of our nervous and talented friend M. Andrieu, could he transfer it faithfully and in its true loveliness, to his canvas. Such is the height of the observatory that is gives you a view of the country for forty miles around, embracing Fort Snelling, the Falls, the river and a number of bright and sparkling lakes which shine out from their emerald settings like gems in a princess crown. [38]

Babcock declined to climb the tower, but mentioned it in his report of the journey:

> We have now driven seven miles, an[d] passed several cultivated fields, some log houses, and some wooden dwellings, resembling somewhat our New England farm houses. The Falls are two miles distant, making nine from St. Paul. Here is a tower of observation [Cheever's Tower], similar to that near the New York Crystal Palace. The American flag is flying over it. For a dime you can ascend and take a look at the country around. Several of the party are going up. Our stage passes on. [39]

## SAINT ANTHONY AND MINNEAPOLIS IN 1854

The communities and landscape that greeted the Grand Excursion visitors at their upstream terminus was far different from what exists in the same location today. Saint Anthony Falls extended all the way across the river and the man-made apron, which protects the underlying limestone, did not yet exist. There was no clear channel for shipping or locks to move boats over the falls. The horseshoe dam above the falls was not built until 1857. While the nascent lumber industry was starting to alter the appearance of the river, the falls were still in a relatively natural state and the river was filled with huge boulders, the result of Saint Anthony Falls retreating upstream over many centuries. These boulders made river navigation above Saint Paul very difficult even for small crafts, such as canoes, and virtually impossible for large boats with deeper drafts. This is why the Grand Excursion steamboats stopped in Saint Paul, which would remain the head of navigation until the Meeker Island Dam opened in 1907. In 1854, there were several islands along what is now known as the central riverfront: Cataract, Upton, Spirit, Boom, Nicollet, and Hennepin (Figure 2). Today, only Nicollet, Boom, and Hennepin Islands survive more or less intact. Upton Island has been incorporated into the Upper Saint Anthony Lock and Dam, and Cataract and Spirit Islands have been virtually annihilated.

[38] "The Grand Western Excursion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1854.
[39] Babcock, June 8, 1854.

Two communities flanked the Mississippi in 1854, Saint Anthony on the east side and Minneapolis on the west, both platted with streets and blocks.[40] A suspension bridge—the first structure to cross the Mississippi at any point along its course—was being built over the river in the vicinity of the present-day Hennepin Avenue Bridge, using Nicollet Island as a stepping-stone. The bridge was not completed, however, at the time of the Grand Excursion. Saint Anthony, the more developed community, was divided along Bay Street (present-day East Hennepin Avenue) into Upper Town and Lower Town, corresponding to what is now Northeast and Southeast Minneapolis.[41] At the time of the Grand Excursion, two ferry lines shuttled between Saint Anthony and Minneapolis. The Upper Ferry established by Franklin Steele in 1847 operated above the falls, near the point where the bridge was being built (see Figure 3). By 1854, Mr. Z. M. Brown was operating the toll-free Lower Ferry, which was subsidized by the local citizenry. The Lower Ferry ran between what are now the East and West Bank campuses of the University of Minnesota.[42]

Settlers in Saint Anthony had the chance to receive legal title to their land starting in 1848. Those in Minneapolis would have to wait until the west bank was removed from the Fort Snelling Military Reservation in 1855. (Originally, Fort Snelling extended up the Mississippi from its convergence with the Minnesota River to Saint Anthony Falls, including nine miles of land on either side of the river.) Although Minneapolis would not be incorporated or have a town government until 1858, it was named in 1852. Schoolteacher Charles Hoag proposed combining the Dakota word "Minne," meaning waterfall or water, and the Greek word "polis," for city, to form "Minneapolis," meaning "waterfall city." Because the waterfall was crucial to the development of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony, it is not surprising that the names of both communities paid homage to the falls.

Various writers on the 1854 excursion guessed the population of the two towns at several thousand people. Official sources confirm this was a fairly accurate estimate. A federal census gave the population of Saint Anthony as 538 by 1850 and 2,500 by 1854. Minneapolis did not yet exist in 1850, although there were people living there. The census claimed that Minneapolis and Fort Snelling had 132 inhabitants in 1854, while the *Saint Anthony Express* placed the number at about 300. By 1857 when the territorial census was taken, Saint Anthony's population was 4,720, while Minneapolis's stood at 4,120.[43] Although Saint Anthony had a head start in getting established, it was soon passed by its rival and was merged into Minneapolis in 1872.

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[40] Saint Anthony was platted in 1849 and Minneapolis in 1854, but the latter plat was not recorded until 1855.

[41] Giving directions in terms of north-south or east-west is often confusing in this area of Minneapolis as both the early towns were laid out to follow the river instead of the ordinal directions.

[42] Isaac Atwater, ed., *History of Minneapolis, Minnesota* (New York: Munsell and Company, 1893) 31; "Minneapolis," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 17, 1854. The Lower Ferry traveled between the foot of present-day Essex Street SE on the east riverbank to the foot of Third Street South on the west bank. It was established by William Cheever in 1847 and taken over by Edward Murphy in 1853 according to Scott Anfinson in "Archaeology of the Central Minneapolis Riverfront, Part 1: Historical Overview and Archaeological Potentials," *Minnesota Archaeologist* 48 (1989): 82. The *Saint Anthony Express* account suggests that Z. M. Brown had taken over from Murphy, but it could be that Brown was simply the operator, while Murphy retained ownership of this ferry.

[43] Atwater, 1,000, is the source for the 1850, 1854, and 1857 figures. The 1854 count for Saint Anthony is from the *Saint Anthony Express*, January 28, 1854.

Minneapolis claimed one of the first developments, the Government Mill, which was built on the Mississippi River at present-day Portland Avenue between 1821 and 1823 to supply flour and lumber to Fort Snelling. In 1849, Congressman Robert Smith of Illinois received permission from the War Department to occupy the Government Mill, which he later purchased and leased to tenant millers (Figure 4).[44]

Another early west bank occupant was Colonel John Stevens, who built a one-and-one-half-story clapboard house near the present-day Hennepin Avenue Bridge (Figure 4). Stevens had permission to erect the house and stake a claim on what was then part of the Fort Snelling Military Reservation in exchange for operating the ferry there.[45] He was not alone for long, as historian Isaac Atwater recalled: "Others soon followed Colonel Stevens and made claims, and built 'claim houses,' but they were much annoyed, and often driven off, and their houses pulled down by the soldiers from the Fort, . . . whose orders were to prevent unauthorized settlements to be made on the reservation. But these orders seem not to have been impartially executed; for while many settlers were driven away, others were permitted to remain."[46]

Although these claims were unauthorized and illegal, some of the settlers were able to establish their claims when the Fort Snelling reservation was reduced in 1855 (Figure 5). Atwater noted that the most desirable tracts of land near the river had been claimed by 1850. The claim shanty of Isaac and Permelia Atwater located at the intersection of present-day Seventh Street and Twelfth Avenue South, was among the residential and commercial buildings in place by the time of the Grand Excursion. Anson Northrup, who already owned property on the east side, made a claim next to the Government Mill in 1852, built a house there in 1853, and cultivated eight acres. Charles B. Russell made a twenty-six-acre claim next to Northrup and by 1854 was farming at that location.[47]

The *Saint Anthony Express* in June 1854 noted that several commercial buildings were newly built or going up in Minneapolis including a carriage factory, a hardware and tin shop, and a general store near the Lower Ferry. Meanwhile at the Upper Ferry:

> Messrs. Davy & Lindsey have opened a hardware store opposite the upper Ferry. They have also a large and select assortment of stoves and hardware just received, and will be prepared to manufacture tin to order. . . . I. I. Lewis & Co. have erected a large two story store, and opened a general assortment of Dry Goods, Groceries, Provisions. . . . A little below, Dr. Fletcher has recently erected a good sized two-story building, and opened an entire stock of Dry Goods, Groceries.

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[44] Lucile M. Kane, *The Falls of St. Anthony: The Waterfall That Built Minneapolis* (Saint Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1966; reprinted 1987), 31-33. Smith purchased the Government Mill in 1853 for $750.
[45] The John Harrington Stevens house is now located in Minnehaha Park. Stevens (1820-1900) was born in Canada, although his parents were from Vermont. He served in the Mexican-American War of 1848 and came to Minnesota in 1849. Stevens took over the Upper Ferry operation that Franklin Steele had established in 1847.
[46] Atwater, 33.
[47] Ibid., 72; Kane, 33.

The article mentioned several more hardware stores, a few dry goods-grocery stores, a furniture factory and accompanying sales room, a blacksmith's shop, and a brickyard.[48] The large number of hardware stores on both sides of the river mainly served the burgeoning lumber industry, with a lesser emphasis on consumer goods.

Nicollet Island was largely forested in 1854 but had a few permanent structures (Figure 7). Franklin Steele constructed a cabin at the north end of the island in 1849, which was occupied by John and Ann North before they built their own house. Lumberman Daniel Stanchfield's Greek-Revival-style house, built in 1852, also stood on the north end Nicollet Island. Greek Revival-style buildings was common in both Saint Anthony and Minneapolis during this period. Considered America's first national architectural style, Greek Revival had become popular throughout the East in the mid-1820s. New Englanders carried this style west.

Franklin Steele's dam ran from the south end of Nicollet Island to the north end of Hennepin Island, diverting water to power a sawmill that began operation in September 1848. The 1854 visitors would have seen Steele's sawmill operation, which included a bunkhouse for the mill hands, on and near Hennepin Island (Figure 8). A contemporary newspaper reported that eight saws were "in constant operation" with a capacity of 50,000 feet of lumber per day. A lath and shingle machine manufactured 20,000 laths daily and 450,000 shingles per year. Over one hundred men worked at this operation. Hennepin Island was connected to the east bank by a footbridge that allowed pedestrians to walk over the east face of the falls.[49] Some of the 1854 excursionists walked over this bridge to get to Hennepin Island.

The river's east bank was dominated by the village of Saint Anthony. The land had been removed from the Fort Snelling Military Reservation when the fort's commander, Colonel Joseph Plympton, had redrawn its boundaries in 1837, allowing the east bank of the river to revert, at least nominally, to the Dakota and Ojibway tribes. This land was included in the 1838 treaties signed by the Dakota and Ojibway that granted the United States sovereignty over the area between the Mississippi and Saint Croix Rivers. Although it was not officially opened to settlement, entrepreneur Franklin Steele had staked a claim at Saint Anthony Falls in 1838. Steele had to wait a decade before receiving legal title to his claim, but this did not prevent him from commencing work in 1847 on his dam and sawmill.

Development mushroomed after the area was officially opened to settlement in 1848. By January 1854, only six years later, Upper Town claimed a variety of merchants: D. Baldwin and Son, grocers; J. A. Lennon, dry goods; S. Stanchfield, grocer; Reuben Ball, dry goods and groceries; R. Fewer, grocer; D. E. Moulton, dry goods and groceries; Walker and Gardiner, dry goods and groceries; H. Hendy, dry goods; N. Holer, grocer; and E. P. Mills, dry goods and groceries. Messrs. Mills and Nash had erected a three-story building at the intersection of Main and Bay, the center of town. This structure had a large hall on the third floor that was often used for church services and other public gatherings. Like Upper Town, Lower Town had businesses that

[48] "Minneapolis." This issue added that Minneapolis had three organized churches, three lawyers, two physicians, a post office, and a land office. It also reported that Minneapolis had about fifty houses and from $30,00 to $50,000 invested in businesses.

[49] "Lumbering Business," *Saint Anthony Express*, January 28, 1854. Present-day Hennepin Island is no longer an island as Third Avenue SE links it to Main Street and the east side falls are long gone.

catered to basic needs: Holmes and Toser, grocers; J. G. Lennon, dry goods and groceries; A. King, dry goods; Rufus P. Upton, dry goods and groceries; and J. C. Tufts, groceries.[50]

Yet, Saint Anthony had more to offer the shopper than just dry goods and groceries. Anson Northrup had built the Saint Charles Hotel on the corner of present-day Marshall and Sixth Avenues NE in 1849. When Ann and John North stayed there, she described it as one-and-a-half stories tall, with four small bedrooms and four other rooms, plus a kitchen built on the back. It housed twenty-two people, and the regular arrival of travelers swelled this number.[51] The Saint Charles was expanded in 1853 and offered accommodations for seventy-five guests. The community also had two other hotels, a bookstore operated by J. W. LeDuc, a drug store, two hardware stores, two cabinet and chair makers, two carriage makers, one plow maker, two blacksmiths, one harness maker, an ornamental painter, several sash and door factories, three shoemakers, a jeweler, three millineries, two tailors, five physicians, John Orth's brewery, a bakery, two livery stables, three saloons, and two daguerreotypists (Figure 9). Two newspapers reported on events of the day: the *Saint Anthony Express*, founded in 1851, and the *North-Western Democrat*, established in 1853. The fledgling community also claimed eleven lawyers whose capital investment, the *Express* writer speculated, was "principally, in *brains and brass*." By the time the excursionists arrived in June, even more businesses had been established.[52]

In addition to these commercial establishments, Saint Anthony was home to several schools, including the University of Minnesota (Figure 10). Founded in 1851, the university's first building, a wood-frame structure, was at University and Central Avenues SE, on what is now known as Chute Square. Classes were held erratically in the school's early years as few occupations required a college education. The building was used for a number of purposes, including a grammar school. Saint Anthony had a few other schools as well. The first had opened on June 1, 1849 in a small frame building at present-day Second Avenue and Second Street SE. Another grade school appeared on Second Street SE in the fall of 1849. Everett School (also called the Second Ward School) began in 1851 on present-day University Avenue between Sixth and Seventh Avenues NE. [53]

Main Street was Saint Anthony's principal road, as its name suggests. It evolved from an ancient trail threading along the riverbank. Well into the 1850s, Red River ox carts traveled along Main Street, laden with furs and hides that would be exchanged for consumer goods in Saint Paul (Figure 11). Millwright Ard Godfrey built his Greek Revival-style house on Main Street in 1849 (Figures 12 and 13).[54] Originally located just behind the present-day Upton Block at Second

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[50] "Mercantile Establishments," *Saint Anthony Express*, January 28, 1854.

[51] Ann North to Dr. and Mrs. George Loomis (her parents), November 19, 1849, John Wesley North and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.

[52] For a more exhaustive list of businesses in the town of Saint Anthony see John H. Stevens, *Personal Recollections of Minnesota and Its People and Early History of Minneapolis* (Minneapolis: Tribune Job Printing Company, 1890), 224-232. Stevens also noted that by the summer of 1854, W. W. Wales had taken over Joseph Le Duc's bookstore (239).

[53] The first university building was used for school purposes until 1864, when it burned down. In 1854, plans to relocate the University of Minnesota to Fifteenth and University Avenues SE were afoot, but nothing was built at that location until 1856. Atwater, 114, 127.

[54] After several moves over its 150-plus-year existence, the Godfrey house now sits in Chute Park at the corner of University and Central Avenues SE. Despite the date of 1848 given on the metal plaque at Chute Park, the Godfrey house was built in 1849. Ard Godfrey, in a letter to his wife dated February 7, 1849, wrote that he was about to

Avenue SE, the Godfrey house would have been quite prominent in 1854, as the Upton Block was not yet built. Godfrey was no longer living in this house, however, as he had moved to Minnehaha Falls in 1853 to build a mill.

Although Main Street had other residential buildings, such as the John Rollins house, this thoroughfare was increasingly becoming commercial (Figure 14). Lawyer John North had built his office on Main Street in the summer of 1850.[55] William Marshall located his store on Main Street in 1849, and harness maker William Spooner's building (Figure 15) was nearing completion at the time of the excursion:

> Col. Spooner's New Building—is rapidly approaching completion, and presents an imposing appearance—in fact, is surpassed by no wooden building in town. Col. Spooner has pushed this structure through with an energy and enterprise characteristic of the man, and deserves great credit for having done so much towards ornamenting the lower part of the town, and increasing its business facilities. We learn that nearly the whole building is already rented. The Hall in the upper story, (the largest in town,) will be called "Cataract Hall."[56]

During the spring of 1854, shortly before the arrival of the Grand Excursion, the *Saint Anthony Express* ran two long, consecutive articles on the amazing growth of Main Street. The reporter took readers on a walk down Main Street, describing the establishments along the way. "Here, a little further on," he added, "a new store has suddenly sprung up almost like a mushroom in a single night—not indeed an Aladdin's palace without, but destined probably to be furnished with Oriental magnificence within—at least with such a tempting variety of goods as [store keeper] King knows so well how to display."[57] Perhaps the exterior of this building was plain, but the writer was confident that it would soon be stocked with attractive merchandise moved from the store the merchant had just vacated. The reporter also noted that "Farnham and Tracy [real estate agents] are erecting a convenient office on the corner of Main and Spring [Fifth Avenue SE]."

Main Street was so well established, in the mind of the reporter, that some of its buildings had outlived their usefulness:

> As we pass up the street, it is pleasant to observe some of the old buildings which had occupied too close a proximity on the crowded thoroughfare, have been raised [razed] to the ground. Let the good work of destruction go on. Let those old buildings, those unsightly piles of slabs, those heaps of rubbish be burned and their ashes strewn to the four winds of heaven. The room they occupy will be soon—nay, even now, is wanted for better purposes, as well as more ornamental. The march of improvement is onward.[58]

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begin building the house and intended to have it ready by April. (Penny A. Petersen, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Minneapolis' First Neighborhood* (Minneapolis: Marcy-Holmes Neighborhood Association/NRP, 1999), 44.

[55] North's office was located at what is now Fourth Avenue SE and Main Street on Block 50, Lot 20, Town of Saint Anthony Falls, where the Pillsbury "A" Mill complex is located.

[56] "Col. Spooner's New Building," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 17, 1854.

[57] "A Stroll Through Main Street," *Saint Anthony Express*, April 22, 1854.

[58] "A Stroll Through Main Street," *Saint Anthony Express*, April 29, 1854.

Although the first stone building in Saint Anthony would not be built until 1855, when storeowner David Edwards built the three-story Edwards Block where the Pillsbury "A" Mill Complex now stands, some brick buildings were beginning to appear.[59] Ezra Dorman built the first brick structure in Saint Anthony in 1852 at the corner of present-day Second Street and Second Avenue NE.[60] By 1854, several more brick buildings were either built or in the works. The June 17, 1854 edition of the *Saint Anthony Express* noted that storekeeper D. E. Moulton was located in a new brick building on Main Street in Upper Town.

Religion played a large role in the life Saint Anthony, prompting the construction of several churches. The first Catholic church got its start when Pierre Bottineau moved his large family to what is now Northeast Minneapolis about 1845. Born in 1817 in present-day North Dakota, Bottineau was of French-Canadian-*Metis* descent. For many years he served as a guide and translator on the western frontier. After he moved to Saint Anthony, he farmed and sold real estate. Bottineau donated the land where Saint Anthony of Padua Church now stands (804 NE Second Street). The first church on this location was begun in 1850 but not finished until 1851, as funds ran out mid-construction.[61] Visitors who ventured upstream to Saint Anthony Street (now Eighth Avenue NE) could have seen the simple, one-story, wood-frame building there. Bottineau may have been in Saint Anthony at the time of the Grand Excursion, but he and his family moved to Maple Grove sometime in 1854.

Saint Anthony was also served by several Protestant churches. The First Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1849, and in 1852 the congregation built their first church, a frame building located on present-day University Avenue between Central and Second Avenues SE. A small log house on Third Street (present-day University Avenue SE) between Second and Third Avenues SE served as the meetinghouse for several Protestant congregations, including the First Baptist Church of Saint Anthony, until they had the resources to build their own churches. Organized in 1850, the Baptists built their first church, a 25- by 35-foot, one-story building at Second Street and Fourth Avenue SE, in 1851.[62] The First Congregational Church of Minnesota began its first church, a wood-frame structure, on Fourth Street NE and East Hennepin in 1853 and finished it in 1854 (Figure 10).

The Episcopalian congregation began as a mission church at Fort Snelling in 1838. In one account, construction of an Episcopal church was started in Saint Anthony in 1850 on Second Street between Second and Third Avenues NE. The wood-frame structure was completed in 1851 and Holy Trinity Protestant Episcopal Church was formally organized the following year

[59] The Edwards Block housed Edwards's store on the first floor and had a public hall on the third story. Early congregations, such as the First Presbyterian Church of Saint Anthony (now Andrew-Riverside Presbyterian), used this as their meetinghouse until they could afford to build their own church, and several noted musicians, such as Ole Bull, performed in this space (*Minneapolis Tribune*, July 29, 1900). In the ensuing years, several more stone and brick buildings would be built along Main Street, including the Upton Block (1855), the First Universalist Church (1857, present-day Our Lady of Lourdes), the Winslow House Hotel (1857, razed 1886), and the Martin-Morrison Block (1858).
[60] Stevens, 175.
[61] *Saint Anthony Express*, May 31, 1851.
[62] Petersen, 34-36.

under the leadership of Reverend Timothy Wilcoxson, who had been sent to Fort Snelling in 1850.[63]

## LOCAL PARTICIPANTS OF THE GRAND EXCURSION

While it is relatively easy to reconstruct the appearance of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis at the time of the Grand Excursion, identifying local participants is more difficult. Out-of-state newspapers extensively covered the event but rarely included names of local people, perhaps assuming that their readers would not be interested in this level of detail. Reporters for Saint Anthony newspapers also failed to name local participants. Still, it is possible to learn the identities of some who participated in the Grand Excursion.

Reverend Wilcoxson, who had relocated to Saint Paul by 1854, apparently accompanied the visitors to Saint Anthony and Fort Snelling. At the end of the excursion, Babcock noted: "I cannot take my leave of St. Paul without acknowledgements to Rev. Mr. Wilcoxson, of the Episcopal Church, to whom several of our friends are indebted, for much information regarding the place and vicinity. Mr. W. was for many years a resident of New Haven, and of course was glad to see all that came from that place. He accompanied us to Fort Snelling, and afterwards took the Rev. Mr. Goodwin in Middletown, Mr. C. B. Lines and your correspondent to his church and his house and parsonage."[64]

The most prominent Saint Anthony residents involved with the Grand Excursion were John Wesley North and his wife, Ann (Figures 16 and 17). They had settled in Saint Anthony in 1849 in hopes of restoring John's health, as the climate was reputed to be "wholesome." John was one of the first lawyers to establish a practice in Saint Anthony. Born in 1815 in Rensselaer County, New York, John moved with his family to Cortland County, New York, in 1832. North studied to be a minister at Cazenovia Seminary in Cazenovia, New York, and it was there he was first acquainted with the antislavery movement and became deeply committed to the cause of abolitionism. He later switched to law, but his commitment to abolitionism never wavered. In 1848, at the age of thirty-three, he married seventeen-year-old Ann Loomis, in Onondaga County. She was a native of Dewitt, which was near Syracuse, where John practiced law. Soon after the newlyweds moved to Saint Anthony, John became a leader of the nascent community. He was elected to the Minnesota Territorial Legislature in 1851and was instrumental in establishing the University of Minnesota. He became a Republican just as the party was forming in the early 1850s and was one of the founders of the *Minnesota Republican* in the fall of 1854, the first Republican newspaper in Minnesota.[65]

The Norths regularly corresponded with her family in upstate New York and, fortunately, many of these letters survive. In a letter to her brother George back in Syracuse, Ann wrote: "Some of

[63] Ibid., 33. Reverend Jacob Chamberlain replaced Wilcoxson at the Saint Anthony church shortly after the congregation was organized.
[64] Babcock, June 8, 1854.
[65] The Norths left Saint Anthony in 1855, moving first to southern Minnesota, where John North established the town of Northfield, and later to California, where he founded the town of Riverside. Biographical material on John North was taken from Merlin Stonehouse, *John Wesley North and the Reform Frontier* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1965).

our acquaintances who came up here among the excursionists, we are very sorry not to have seen—although we took some pains to see many of them."[66]

It is not surprising that the well-connected Norths knew several of the Grand Excursion participants, especially those from New York. John wrote glowing letters about Minnesota Territory to Eastern newspapers (but only those with antislavery sympathies) to encourage Yankee settlement of Saint Anthony. This was part of his effort, according to his bibliographer, Merlin Stonehouse, to populate "Minnesota with northerners who held strong convictions about temperance, peace, abolition, and free soil. . . . Thus every immigrant North brought in canceled one vote for the fur company in Minnesota. In fact, the immigration grew geometrically, for every person North attracted brought on others of his own kind, and each of them still others of like persuasions."[67]

Stonehouse added: "Publicity for Minnesota was aided considerably by the showing of five panoramas painted of the Mississippi in the 1840's—gigantic pictures unrolled before audiences all over the nation. The landscape painter Henry Lewis showed his *Great National Work—Lewis' Mammoth Panorama of the Mississippi* in Syracuse in 1850 while the North letters were appearing in Onondaga County papers. The high point of the program for many of the 'capitalists' of Syracuse was the scene of St. Anthony Falls, which was well-known locally as the 'island home' of Mr. and Mrs. J. W. North."[68]

John's publicity efforts might have helped attract the large number of excursionists from New York, some perhaps using the trip as a way to "test the waters" before moving to Minnesota. Some of the excursionists extended their visit to Saint Anthony to stay with the Norths at their home on Third Street (now known as University Avenue NE) between present-day First Avenue NE and East Hennepin (Figure 18).[69] All the New York excursionists would return home and talk about their experiences, which in turn would generate more interest in Minnesota. New Yorkers and New Englanders were exactly the type of settlers that John North and other abolitionists hoped to bring to Minnesota.

For a brief time, North shared a law practice with Isaac Atwater (Figure 19). Although he is never mentioned by name, Atwater was very likely another participant in local Grand Excursion events. By 1854, he had served as editor of the *Saint Anthony Express* for three years. In his own words, Atwater was the only employee of this operation: "As may be imagined the position of editor of a weekly paper at that day was no sinecure. There were no telegraphs—mails for half the year only[,] once a week, not frequently more seldom; no reporters; no numerous accidents; seldom deaths; some marriages; and some notices of new arrivals."[70] In other words, if the

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[66] Ann North to George Loomis, June 11, 1854, John Wesley North and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul.
[67] Stonehouse, 27.
[68] Ibid., 43.
[69] In a letter dated June 17, 1850, John North wrote to his father-in-law, Dr. George Loomis, that he would build his house on Block 17, Town of Saint Anthony Falls. His plans called for a two-story house, 24 feet by 34 feet, with a root cellar. The first floor would have two bedrooms plus two other rooms, with more bedrooms on the second floor (John Wesley North and Family Papers, Minnesota Historical Society). Given the John and Ann's abhorrence of liquor, it is ironic that their homestead site is now occupied by Surdyk's Liquor store.
[70] Atwater, 356.

*Express* was to carry stories about the Grand Excursion, Atwater was the reporter who would write them. At the time of Grand Excursion, Atwater was far more than a newspaper editor: he was a prominent citizen of Saint Anthony. In 1851, he was made a regent of the newly established University of Minnesota. By 1853, Atwater was elected district attorney of Hennepin County.

There are several parallels between the lives of John North and Isaac Atwater. Like North, Atwater was from upstate New York. He was born in the town of Homer in 1818. Homer was in Cortland County, where young John North relocated in 1832. Atwater met North at Cazenovia Academy in the 1830s. Atwater, too, took up law as a profession, graduating from Yale in 1847. Soon, Atwater established a law practice in New York City. In 1849, he married Permelia Sanborn of Onondaga County, New York, where North was living and practicing law, and it is quite likely the two men renewed their acquaintance there. Atwater contracted consumption and was advised to move to a healthier climate. At the urging of North, he and his wife settled in Saint Anthony in 1850, where the two men shared a short-lived law practice.

After coming to Saint Anthony, the differences between the two men became apparent. For a time, the Atwaters boarded with the Norths in their newly built house, but the two couples had frequent disagreements. The law partnership did not fare much better. Atwater, who spoke French fluently, was quite willing to represent the French-speaking fur traders who needed legal advice, while North could only represent English speakers. For his part, North did not consider the fur traders of French-Canadian-*Metis* ancestry to be "real" Americans. North was deeply involved in land speculation, believing that his holdings would increase in value once outsiders discovered all Saint Anthony had to offer. As a result, he was perennially short of money. Atwater soon numbered among North's many creditors. To add insult, North expected Atwater to mind the law office on his own, while North represented Saint Anthony in the territorial legislature. By 1851, Stonehouse noted, "it was clear that Atwater was less a partner than a competitor of North."[71]

The turn of events was not surprising because Atwater and North were polar opposites on the political issues that were an undercurrent of the Grand Excursion. North was fervently devoted to abolishing slavery by any means. Atwater "deplored the existence of slavery as much as anyone," according to an 1888 biography, but "could not lend himself to any but constitutional methods for its suppression." North was a staunch Republican; Atwater was a Whig until 1854, when he joined the Democratic Party. Historian Stonehouse noted: "To North's great disgust, his law partner supported Fillmore and would continue to annoy North until the paper [the *Saint Anthony Express*] ceased publishing a decade later with the Republican victory." North was a "Dry," a temperance advocate, who hoped to better the public by banning alcohol, while Atwater was a "Wet," believing that people should make their own decision about liquor consumption. In their divergent views, North and Atwater mirrored the deep divisions in America that were soon to drive the country to Civil War.[72]

[71] Stonehouse, 51-52, 59.
[72] Ibid., 59; Charles E. Flandreau, "Judge Isaac Atwater," *Magazine of Western History* 7 (July 1888): 258.

## THE WHIRLWIND VISIT

But the threat of disunion was far from the minds of the excursionists who descended on Saint Anthony on June 8 at about 10 a.m. Some excitement marked the arrival of one carriage, which lost its brakes while descending a steep hill into Saint Anthony. The carriage was thrown onto the two horses pulling it and broke into "fragments," but no one inside was killed or seriously hurt.[73]

The *Saint Anthony Express* had alerted residents to the upcoming excursion two days before the trains left Chicago, noting that these distinguished visitors were coming to acquaint themselves with the resources of Minnesota:

> As they will visit the Falls, it is hoped that our citizens will take such measures to give them a cordial welcome, and afford them every possible facility for the accomplishment of the object of their visit, as may lie in their power. From their standing and position, it is evident that the impression which they may form of the capabilities of the Territory will have an important influence upon its future welfare in general, as well as certain localities in particular.[74]

It appears, though, that Saint Anthony like Saint Paul was not expecting the visitors until the following day. The sudden influx of several hundred to one thousand people into a town of twenty-five hundred inhabitants brought festive disorder. In the absence of a planned program, visitors formed an impression of Saint Anthony by looking around and speaking to residents. A Saint Anthony newspaper, the *North-Western Democrat*, gave a local booster's impression of the arrival of the excursionists: "All that could procure any kind of conveyance left St. Paul for this place with as little delay as possible. About 10 o'clock they commenced entering our village. We will not even venture a guess at the number, but there was a long string of teams, of every description, and our streets, stores, and other public places were soon filled with delighted strangers."[75]

Babcock recorded his initial impressions: "Now we have on our left the first glimpse of the Falls and the village close by them. It is another large town of two or three thousand inhabitants. We were not expected here until to-morrow. The wagons and stages are crowding up, and the party are thronging to the Falls."[76]

The falls were clearly the star attraction. However, they initially underwhelmed some visitors as the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported:

> The first view of the Falls of St. Anthony is obtained from the road, and does not sustain the expectations which are generally entertained of its beauty and sublimity. This disappointment, however, is soon simply dissipated, and gives way to the most profound satisfaction upon a nearer and more favorable view being secured. Arriving at the *village*

[73] "The Great Excursion," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 10, 1854.
[74] *Saint Anthony Express*, June 3, 1854.
[75] "The Railroad Excursion," *North-Western Democrat*, June 14, 1854.
[76] Babcock, June 8, 1854.

> of St. Anthony *city*, we descend a very precipitous bluff, and find ourselves standing immediately below the lesser fall [the no longer extant east face of the falls]. Its real beauty is much diminished by an immense quantity of saw logs and drift wood, which is piled up above and below the fall in most gigantic masses.[77]

Babcock also noted the debris clogging the river: "The Falls in their general form have some resemblance to those of Niagara—I mean the shape of the precipice. The fall of water is only about twenty or thirty feet. A large body of water goes over them. Huge rocks have fallen from the brink below, and in some places logs of immense size have formed a lodgment and are packed in from the bed of the river to the top of the precipice." [78]

The appearance of the falls had disturbed a local reporter a few months earlier:

> But O, "hevings!" [Heavens] what intolerable nuisances are these strewn in the stream all the way from the Mills to the minor Falls? Immense quantities of old slabs and lath, and logs, and *debris* of very kind, rolling and putrefying in the fervid rays of the sun, polluting the clear waters, if not exhaling a pestilential malaria, and endangering the health of all in the vicinity. How long shall the beauty of the stream be disfigured by these hideous deformities, and the course of the laughing waters over their rocky bed be obstructed by these unsightly heaps of rubbish? Why not make a "bee," and every man, woman and child turn out, and with two to three hours energetic work, restore the stream to its pristine beauty and purity?[79]

Other reporters put aesthetics aside and focused on the cataract's economic potential. "The city of St. Anthony," the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reporter noted, "must very soon become an important point in the Territory, on account of the incalculable water power here for manufacturing establishment of almost every variety, which, if developed, would bring out a mine of wealth sufficient of itself to build up the Territory."[80] The *New York Evening Post*'s writer A. J. A. also grasped the economic implications of the waterpower:

> St. Anthony's Falls . . . struck me as a most important point. Although St. Paul will be the commercial center of all this region of country, it seems to me that St. Anthony Falls must be the great manufacturing place.
>
> The water-power here is almost unlimited, but as yet it is only partially improved. The west side of the river is not yet in market, but one mill is in operation, and that is the St. Anthony Falls Mill Company. This company have eight up-and-down saws, one shingle machine, one lath machine and one planing mill. . . . There is an abundance of work for laborers in this town, and land to occupy, and from the price of provisions, &c, you can see that it is a very desirable place for the thousands of half-starved creatures who swarm in our eastern cities. A gentleman connected with this mill informed me that there was a great scarcity of girls for house-work. Girls can get $10 per month for work, and it is ten

[77] "The Grand Western Excursion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1854.
[78] Babcock, June 8, 1854.
[79] "A Stroll Through Main Street," *Saint Anthony Express*, April 29, 1854.
[80] "The Grand Western Excursion," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1854.

> chances to one if they cannot get a husband, well to do in the world, in less time than it would take to earn a wedding dress.[81]

Another reporter wondered about other resources hidden in the water: "In my last I gave you a brief sketch of our short visit to the Falls of St. Anthony. These Falls were named by Father Hennepin, the Jesuit missionary. St. Anthony, 'of blessed memory,' is said to have been the patron saint of fishes. So I infer that fish must have been abundant there in his day. I did not think to inquire whether the turbulent waters are thus inhabited now."[82]

The falls did ultimately win over those looking for beauty as well. Adventuresome visitors crossed the industrial east channel of the river and "found our self in sight of the other and more attractive fall." The reporter for the *Chicago Daily Tribune* "received from the view of these falls more real and exquisite pleasure than we have the words to express." [83] Catherine Sedgwick was unabashedly enthusiastic about Saint Anthony Falls: "You should have seen the troups and groups scattered over St. Anthony's rocks (what a picturesque domain the saint possesses!)."[84] Babcock also described the group's cavorting around the falls and a reporter's embarrassing incident:

> Some are standing on the banks above them, viewing the rapids, which resemble very much those above Niagara. Some are crossing a small and frail foot bridge of planks a few rods above the precipice, and some are on a similar frail bridge below. We fear disaster with so many crowding those weak stagings. There goes the editor of the *New York Times*. He has stepped upon a log—it rolls, and he has gone down. He rises, and holds on to the log—a friendly hand is reached out and he is drawn up, somewhat scared and a good deal wet.[85]

The place that Babcock was describing was on the east bank of the river in the town of Saint Anthony. The "frail foot bridge of a few planks" above the falls—described by another writer as "a very precarious footbridge"—was a temporary bridge to Nicollet Island that followed the general path of the soon-to-be-completed suspension bridge. This path would more or less correspond to present-day East Hennepin as it crosses the water to Nicollet Island. The fragile downstream bridge that Babcock mentioned was doubtlessly the wood footbridge to Hennepin Island, which at that time crossed directly over the fast moving east face of the falls (Figure 20). Presumably, the man who fell into the river did so near Nicollet Island, for if he had fallen into the east falls, he would have drowned. Later, Babcock observed that "the company are now scattered all around the Falls—some cutting canes to carry home as mementos, others searching for agate stones which are occasionally found here, and others knocking off pieces of the limestone rock, in which are imbedded fossil shells."[86]

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[81] A. J. A. The Saint Anthony Falls Mill Company, an early version of what would be incorporated as the Saint Anthony Falls Water Power Company in 1856, was operated by Franklin Steele and Ard Godfrey.
[82] Babcock, June 8, 1854.
[83] "The Grand Western Excursion."
[84] Sedgwick, 113.
[85] Babcock, June 8, 1854.
[86] Ibid.

One of the only formal proceedings of the visit was the "mingling of the waters" ceremony. This was reported by several newspapers including the *Chicago Daily Tribune*, which mentioned that Colonel Johnson of New York had brought a bottle filled with Atlantic Ocean water and, with appropriate ceremonies, emptied it into the river, just below the falls.[87] Reporter W for the *New York Daily Times* carried a more detailed account:

> One of the best events of the day was the mingling of the Atlantic and Mississippi waters, at the Falls of St. Anthony. Mr. Hamilton Morton brought the Atlantic water from Sandy Hook. There were present at the ceremony, Miss Sedgwick the authoress, Colonel Johnson from Albany, who made an interesting speech, C. Van Benthuysen of Albany, J. V. Ayer of Wisconsin, Rev. Mr. Stinson and lady of Albany, Ruggles Weld, Esq.[,] W. H. Bogart and daughter of Aurora, Thomas Olcott and lady of Albany, and several other persons. The bottle of Atlantic water was broken on a log and the contents of the salt ocean mingled with the fresh river water that had newly tumbled over St. Anthony's Falls.[88]

Sedgwick later effused: "You should have witnessed the ceremony performed with dignity by Colonel Johnson, of mingling the water taken from the Atlantic at Sandy Hook, *one week before*, with the water of the Mississippi; and there and then *have* remembered that, but three hundred years ago, De Soto, after months of wandering in the trackless forests, was the first European discoverer of this river. What startling facts! What confounding contrasts!"[89]

The *North-Western Democrat* did not report on the water-mingling story. Perhaps the editor believed that everyone already knew it. Instead, he offered another fanciful version:

> Last Thursday, while the crowd of visitors filled our streets, a gentleman stepped into our sanctorum [this newspaper, like the *Express,* was housed on Main Street SE] and introduced himself as a member of the "corps editorial" of the New York Evening Post. He seemed young—not over 30—and his appearance was rather interesting than otherwise. After he had once bid us good day, he returned and exhibited a bottle (of the Black Betty species,) which he assured us contained water which was taken from the Atlantic Ocean seven days previous. He poured out a small quantity in a tumbler for our inspection, and left suddenly. All hands gathered around for an examination. As soon as the exhalation came in contact with our olfactories, we involuntarily exclaimed—"Whiskey!" But our Devil, [an apprentice printer] who is better acquainted with such matters than we are, sung out—"Rum! real rot gut!" So, as "editors never lie," we are forced to the conclusion that the liquid which fills the great bed of the Ocean is RUM. We understand, now why it is so difficult to enforce the Maine Law in any of the Atlantic cities.[90]

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[87] "The Grand Western Excursion."
[88] W, "Railroad Excursion," *New York Daily Times*, June 17, 1854.
[89] Sedgwick, 113.
[90] "A Perfect Sell," *North-Western Democrat*, June 14, 1854. The Maine Law, enacted in 1851, made Maine the first "dry" state in the country. Several other New England states soon followed Maine's example.

This variety of "water" might account for a story that appeared in a Saint Paul newspaper, the *Minnesota Weekly*:

> On Thursday, a gentleman connected with the eastern press, who came up with the excursion party, failing to procure a carriage to his liking, chartered the water-barrel establishment of a French boy—straddled the barrel, and rode through St. Anthony street[s] much to the amusement of the lookers-on. It must be confessed that he cut a ludicrous figure—his legs and coat dangling in the air, while his white hat puts us in mind of the notable Greeley sauntering up Broadway. That man is well adapted to the West, and were we rich we would make him a present of a few acres to induce him to come here and settle.[91]

Although this account poked fun at the potential of the excursion to attract desirable settlers, Saint Anthony's *North-Western Democrat* was optimistic about the effects of the visitors' experience:

> We had the pleasure of conversing with a number from different parts, and are satisfied that this excursion, planned and executed in such a creditable manner by the Railroad Directors, will result in much good to our young and rapidly populating Territory. The agreeable disappointment was general. They had heard much and read more about this country, and yet, as they acknowledged they had very incorrect notions respecting Minnesota. . . . Here they looked for lands barren and unproductive; and how agreeably were they surprised to find that the choicest farms of New York and New England cannot exhibit a soil equal to the poorest native soil of Minnesota. . . . Some of them supposed they were coming among semi-barbarians, living in rude huts with all the wilding of nature around them. Probably they had read a pamphlet, published in the east a few years since, discouraging emigration to the west, in which the principal objection urged against it was that "it tended to barbarism."—But, as their eyes rested upon flourishing settlements and beautiful villages, (where they knew that less than five years ago, the untutored savage, without molestation, pursued his game or mingled with his tribe in the war-dance,) which exhibited all the marks of New England industry, enterprise, and intelligence; as they stepped into the well-filled stores and large hotels: cast a sly look through some open door into a richly furnished and tastefully arranged parlor; glanced at beautiful, intelligent, and happy faces at the windows of some elegant dwelling; or passed by a school room where nearly all the facilities for a thorough education, possessed by a good eastern academy are enjoyed.[92]

The article continued this not-so-subtle advertisement for Minnesota for many more paragraphs. Nearly a month after the visit, the *Express* ran another long article on the excursion, largely a reprint from the New York *Courier and Enquirer.* Saint Anthony surprised the correspondent:

> It was amazing to me to find a large town at St. Anthony Falls. This was ahead of time. I confess I thought that I should find here not a very magnificent cascade, but I did think I should see more Indians, of the wild sort—paint on— tomahawk easy and scalp unsafe,

[91] "Riding on a Barrel," *Minnesota Weekly*, June 13, 1854.
[92] "The Railroad Excursion," *North-Western Democrat*, June 14, 1854.

> than I should white men. Instead of any such aboriginal display, here were printing offices—editors—silks—parlors—and churches all that we put together in the East and call a village. . . . The presence of Indians in the street, indicated the frontier, but there were few other signs that we were near the red man's home.[93]

The impression of Eastern reporters was mostly favorable as well. Writer W of the *New York Daily Times* found some merit in Saint Anthony, describing it as "quite pretty." He added: "They have a University here under the direction of Professor Merrill, which was opened for the admission of students in 1851; and has since accommodated nearly 100 pupils. We were pleased with the people here, their prices being only half of those which obtained St Paul's."[94]

The excursionists' visit to Saint Anthony Falls was brief. "Nearly two hours were most agreeably spent in this place," Babcock remarked.[95] Some of the excursionists continued on to the Minneapolis side of the river and beyond. The *Saint Anthony Express* reported that "a large number of the teams crossed the ferry and returned by way of Minnehaha, and the Fort. A party, however, returned directly to St. Paul."[96] It is not clear whether the teams used the Upper or Lower Ferry, but probably the Upper Ferry would have been the nearest. Hiawatha Avenue corresponds, more or less, with the road to Minnehaha Falls and Fort Snelling, which was known as the Fort Road.

By that evening, most of the excursionists had reassembled in Saint Paul for a formal ball and reception at the Capitol. Territorial Governor Gorman, former President Fillmore, and historian Bancroft gave speeches. At 1 a.m. the steamboats departed Saint Paul for the return trip.[97]

Not everyone who arrived with the group left that night. "A great many who were friends of North stayed in Saint Anthony," according to historian Stonehouse. "General Lawrence and his two daughters spent a week. . . . Ann took the ladies to see the wild flowers" on the prairie. Ann North included a long description of the local flowers in a letter to her brother George back in Syaracuse. "Gen. Lawrence and his two daughters are still here," she noted. "He will leave

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[93] "The Great Excursion Party," *Saint Anthony Express*, July 8, 1854. Descriptions of American Indians or mixed-race residents were sometimes positive. Babcock reported this experience as he returned from Fort Snelling to Saint Paul: "Here comes up the stairway of our boat, a beautiful black eyed, black haired maiden, elegantly dressed, preceded by a young man as well dressed, and looking like a Wall Street broker's clerk. A citizen of St. Paul says their mother is a half-breed Indian. Their father was an early trader here, and is the richest man in the place. The young lady is highly accomplished and quite interesting. There are many such in this section of the country, and their blood is no serious impediment to their matrimonial connection, especially where the unmixed female blood is not as numerous as in the great eastern hive" (June 8, 1854). In another passage, he was less benign: "Three or four Indians have come out of the woods to see us. They are hideous specimens, for their faces are painted, except the chin, so they look almost demoniacal" (June 7, 1854).

[94] W, June 17, 1854.

[95] Babcock, June 8, 1854.

[96] "The Great Excursion," *Saint Anthony Express*, June 10, 1854.

[97] Different writers give a variety of departure times for the excursionists. The reception at the capitol seemed to last until nearly midnight by most accounts. There is no indication that former President Fillmore actually made the trip from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony. One of his biographers, Robert J. Scarry, states that Fillmore did not come to Saint Anthony. Robert J. Scarry, *Millard Fillmore* (Jefferson, N. C.: McFarland and Company, 2001), 260.

tomorrow, and I will ask him to take this [letter] to you." Judging by Ann's account, the Lawrence family arrived on June 8 and left on Monday, June 12, five days later. [98]

## CONSEQUENCES OF THE VISIT

Although most Grand Excursion visitors spent only a few hours in Saint Anthony and Minneapolis, it was an important event for this area and Minnesota Territory in general. Most major newspapers on the East Coast sent reporters on this trip, and they in turn provided extensive coverage of the excursion, giving the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad and the Upper Mississippi a great deal of free publicity. The fact that dignitaries and reporters made the trip to what was then viewed as the frontier certainly helped "put Minnesota on the map."

Some newspapers reporters, or perhaps their editors, were more interested in promoting railroad and antislavery agendas than scenery and adventure. National coverage of the excursion proved that travel to Saint Anthony and Minneapolis with the new railroad and steamboat connection was faster and safer. As Ann North wrote: "I try to be thankful for that, and think how much better it is now. I am hoping that our folks will come by way of Rock Island—it would be much easier."[99] Some publications looked even further to the west. The reporter from one Boston newspaper hardly mentioned Saint Anthony Falls, instead observing: "I would hint to those who are in favor of a movement for peopling Nebraska with a population from the North, that the most effectual mode of accelerating immigration to Nebraska is to furnish means for pushing on this railroad to Council Bluffs, which will not only forward their patriotic object, but will pay stockholders ten per cent in less than five years."[100]

The Grand Excursion also brought the abolitionist cause to Saint Anthony and Minneapolis. If abolitionists such as James Babcock and John North were unaware of each other before, the Grand Excursion allowed them to meet each other.

For raising general awareness of Minnesota Territory, the effect was beneficial overall. Reporters' accounts of the trip were generally positive. Most had expected a rough frontier town lacking all but the most basic amenities and were surprised to find a place that very much resembled a tidy New England town, offering many of the same goods and services.

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[98] General Lawrence is mentioned briefly in other newspaper accounts of the excursion. He, along with others, made speeches at Galena ("The Great Excursion," *Saint Paul Daily Pioneer*, June 9, 1854). His first name is missing from all the accounts, which identify him only as "General" or "Mr. Lawrence of Syracuse." According to a librarian at the Onondaga County Public Library in Syracuse, New York, the only Lawrence in Onondaga County to have the title of "General" during this era was James Robbins Lawrence (1790-1874) who lived in Syracuse. Lawrence was already prominent as a lawyer and member of the New York state legislature when John North established his law practice in Syracuse in 1845. Lawrence served as district judge for Onondaga County from 1847 to 1850. In 1850, President Millard Fillmore appointed Lawrence as United States Attorney for the Northern District of New York. Doubtless, North met Lawrence during his tenure in Syracuse and continued the association after his move to Minnesota. September 26, 2003, e-mail communication with Gary Jones, MLS, of the Onondaga County Public Library, Syracuse, New York; Dwight H. Bruce, ed., *Onondaga's Centennial* (Boston: Boston History Company, 1896), 345-346; Ann North to George Loomis, June 11, 1854, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul; Stonehouse, 77. Stonehouse cites Ann's June 11 letter to George Loomis. After Ann mentions General Lawrence and the flowers, she switches to other domestic concerns and does not refer to the excursionists again.

[99] Ann North to George Loomis, June 11, 1854.

[100] "The Great Excursion," *Boston Evening Transcript*, June 12, 1854.

Most complaints centered around price-gouging, which was probably due, in part, to the excursion's earlier than expected arrival. While at other stops, the party was met with garlands, banners, champagne, and free transportation, Saint Paul was a different story:

> The vehicles were charged at the following rates: a buggy to carry two persons to the Falls of St. Anthony, eight miles distant, one hour and a half, mean time, $10; a stage, to convey eight persons same distance, same mean time, $25. Those charges were a great sin, which will be chronicled against these Minnesota cormorants throughout the United States. Other charges were in proportion. A chewing friend of mine, entered a store, chose a paper of tobacco—an ordinary paper, you might have bought it for two cents in New York—and they kept the twenty-five cents that he threw down, assuring him that there was no change. A drinking friend, requiring some brandy, (to counteract the effects of the Mississippi water) having a half-dollar in his pocket, placed it innocently on the bar-counter, and beheld it swallowed up by the till, or money-drawer, which yield back not so much as a half-dime. The Hudson River is nowhere beside the Mississippi, and even the Long Island Yankees, who, after the money-changers that the Saviour whipped out of the Temple are greediest after lucre, must retire before the people of St. Paul's, or they will be assuredly beaten in the contest. St. Paul's Minnesota stands alone, unrivalled, unapproached as the greediest place on all this Western Continent. Conversing with a hundred persons of our party, and overhearing the conversation of at least two hundred more, I found the same impression had been conveyed by the treatment we received.

The reporter did not accept the excuses local hosts made for their actions: "It is fair to state their apology for their greediness. If we had arrived a day later, they told us, we should have had everything for nothing—free vehicles, free tobacco, free brandy, (to counteract the effects of the Mississippi water), free anything that we could have desired. Unfortunately, we did not arrive a day later, but just on the day that the printed programme that had been forwarded to St. Paul's foretold as the time when we should be due."[101]

The same reporter called the book *Minnesota and Her Resources*, written by J. Wesley Bond to lure settlers to Minnesota, a "humbug." The reporter found land prices in Minnesota to be unjustifiably higher than in New York or Illinois.[102]Although *New York Tribune* reporter Dana was far more enthusiastic about Minnesota Territory, he too was startled by Saint Paul real estate prices:

> If I went [to settle] there, I would still mind the caution to beware of the speculators of St. Paul. Why, in that embryo city of six thousand people, they sell in the business streets common building-lots of twenty-five feet front for $3,000, and far beyond the limits of the present settlement you must pay $125 for a spot to put a cabin on. Why, building-lots

[101] W, June 17, 1854. The reporter consistently refers to Saint Paul as Saint Paul's. Using figures from the *Columbia Journalism Review* web site inflation calculator, $10.00 in 1854 dollars becomes $212.77 in 2002 dollars and $25.00 in 1854 dollars becomes $531.91. One 1854 dollar is the equivalent of $21.28 in 2002 dollars (http://www.cjr.org/tools/inflation/index). Later, the reporter mentions he paid ten cents for a glass of inferior brandy on board the steamboat, suggesting the Saint Paul prices were at least five times higher than in New York.
[102] W, June 17, 1854.

> are dearer here, or at least quite as dear, as the big town of Chicago with its 70,000 people. I don't doubt that one of these days St. Paul will come up to these rates, and even go beyond them, but it will be some time first and will require a great deal of work to be done by the people in the country back [East?]. Meanwhile, however, the "land speculators" will have a good time if they meet with no pull-back.[103]

It is difficult to determine how many settlers the Grand Excursion brought to Minnesota who were not already planning to relocate here. Eastern lumbermen had discovered Saint Anthony beginning in the late 1840s, and at least one writer suggested that rush of settlers had begun before the excursion: "In the spring of 1854 emigration into the Territory was at flood-tide, every boat brought hundreds of people, all comfort and pleasure in the trip up the river was at an end."[104] John North's letter writing campaign accounted for at least some of these immigrants, while Grand Excursion may have brought in more. Whatever was the spur for these settlers, Minnesota soon had enough population to qualify for statehood. It was admitted to the Union in 1858, becoming the thirty-second state.[105]

## RECREATING THE 1854 TOUR

By careful comparison of the various accounts, the approximate route that the excursionists followed from Saint Paul to Saint Anthony Falls can be determined. From this it is possible to reconstruct the route today. Only a very short portion of the old route, still bearing the name Territorial Road, exists today, running from Vandalia Street in Saint Paul to Berry Street SE in Minneapolis. It would be possible to incorporate a detour along this road if desired, but mainly the 2004 tour heads west on University Avenue from Saint Paul, turning left onto Franklin Avenue SE and right on East River Road. East River Road goes near the site of the Lower Ferry and Cheever's Tower. Following East River Road as it segues onto Pillsbury Drive/Fourteenth Avenue SE, the procession passes through the Pillsbury Gate, and continues across University (which is a one-way heading toward Saint Paul at this point), making a left turn onto Fourth Street SE. Traveling down Fourth Street, approximately nine blocks, the tour turns left on Sixth Avenue SE, followed by a right turn onto Main Street SE. From there, the tour proceeds to Hennepin Island (with the permission of Xcel Energy), returning up Main Street to cross the Mississippi River on the Hennepin Avenue Bridge. From there, the route could continue to Minnehaha Falls and Fort Snelling (Figure 21).

[103] Dana. The "pull-back," or sudden drop in prices, that Dana mentions would arrive with the Panic of 1857, which deflated prices across the country. Boom and bust business cycles were a feature of nineteenth-century America.
[104] Atwater, 77. This statement was written by Permelia Atwater, who was married to Isaac Atwater.
[105] The combined population of Minneapolis and Saint Anthony was 8,840 according to the 1857 territorial census, or more than three times what it was at the time of Grand Excursion.

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## FIGURES

Figure 1. Detail of an 1885 stereopticon card showing Cheever's Tower.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 2. The excursionists would have seen Cataract and Spirit Islands in the middle of the river as pictured in this 1869 photograph.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 3. A daguerreotype of the Suspension Bridge about 1857.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 4. The old Government Flour Mill and Sawmill in 1857. Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 5. Daguerreotype of the John H. Stevens house about 1855.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*


Figure 6. Visitors to Minneapolis might have seen the Snyder and McFarlane land office, built in 1853, shown in this circa 1856 photograph.
Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*


Figure 7. Nicollet Island was still largely wooded in 1854. This photograph of the south end of Nicollet Island was taken from the roof of Winslow House Hotel in 1857.
Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

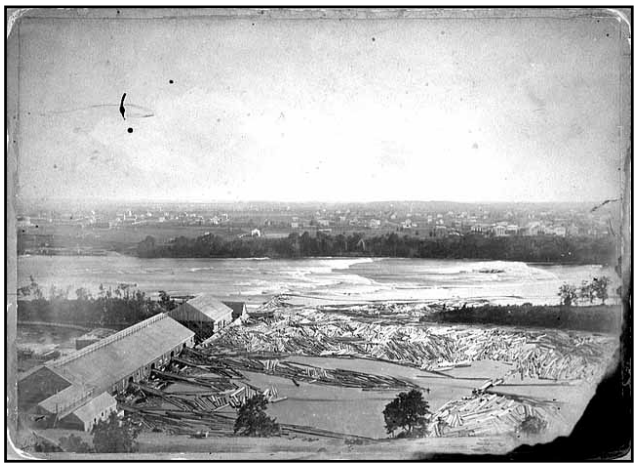

Figure 8. Franklin Steele's dam and sawmill at Hennepin Island about 1855.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

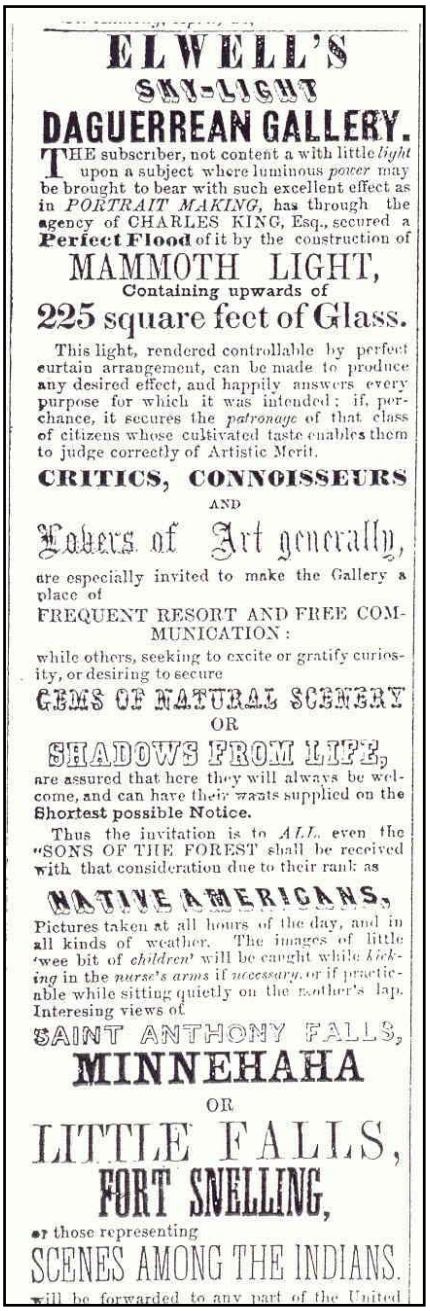

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Figure 9. Advertisement for Tallmadge Elwell's daguerreotype studio on Main Street that appeared in frequently in the *Saint Anthony Express* in 1854.

Figure 10. The white, two-story, gabled building in the center of the photograph, somewhat obscured by the chimney of the building in the foreground, was the first home of the University of Minnesota on present-day Chute Square. First Congregational church (white building in the background, center) was then located on Fourth Street NE, near present-day East Hennepin. This photograph was taken in 1857 from the roof of the Winslow House Hotel.
Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 11. A daguerreotype of Main Street taken about 1854 showing a line of Red River ox carts in the foreground and Franklin Steele's sawmills in the background.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*


Figure 12. The Ard Godfrey House at Chute Square about 1924.
Charles J. Hibbard, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

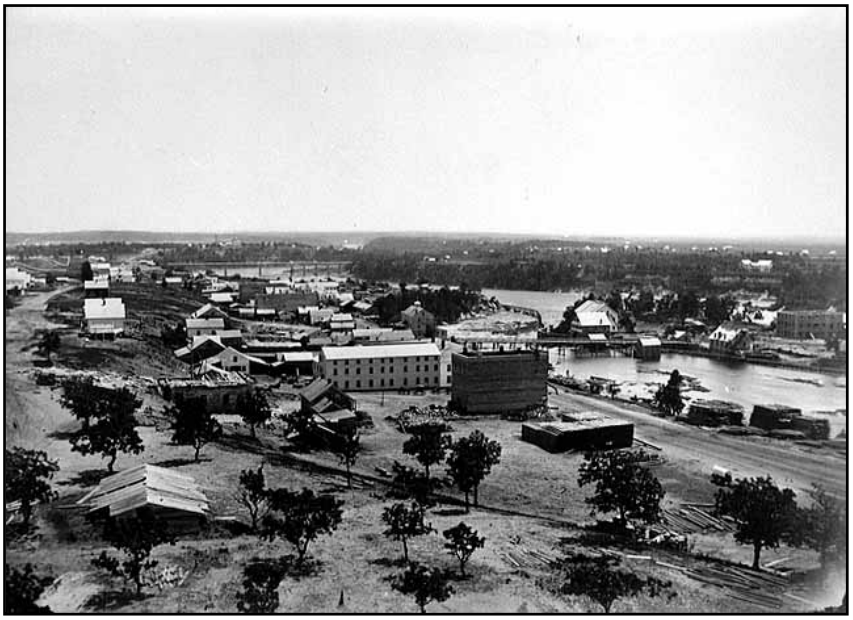

Figure 13. Saint Anthony looking east along Main Street in 1857. Hennepin Island is to the right. The Godfrey House is the small, gable-roofed building in front of the long, white three-story building in the center of the photograph.
Benjamin Franklin Upton, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 14. A daguerreotype of the east face of the falls and Main Street in about 1852.
Tallmadge Elwell, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*


Figure 15. A daguerreotype of the Spooner Building in 1860.
John W. Monell, photographer.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 16. John North.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 17. Ann North.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

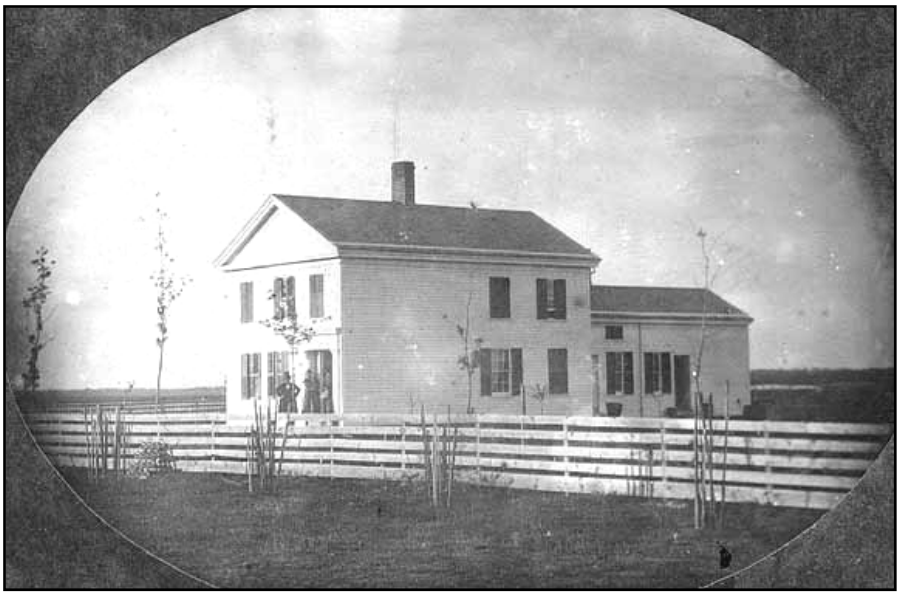

Figure 18. The John and Ann North house about 1850.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

Figure 19. Isaac Atwater about 1880.
W. G. Phillips, engraver.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

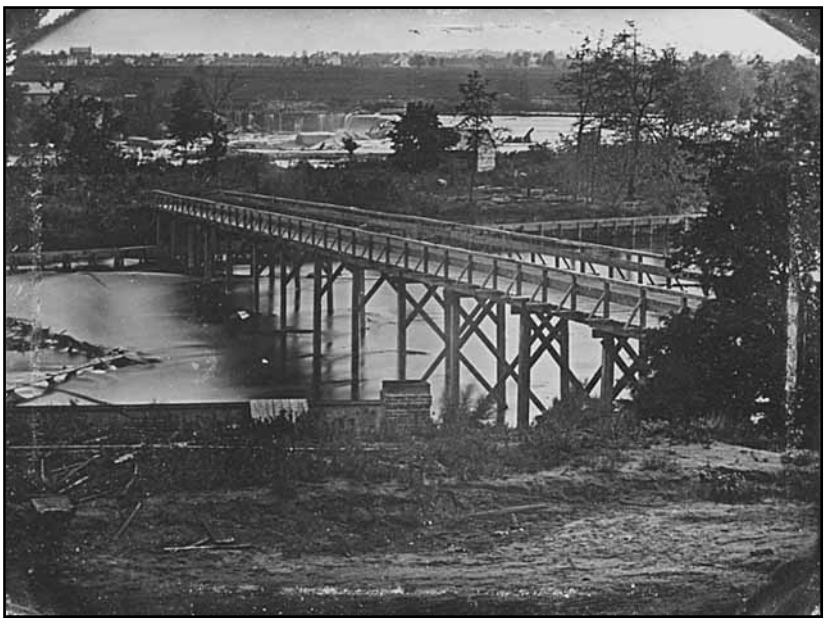

Figure 20. A daguerreotype of the footbridge from Main Street to Hennepin Island in about 1856.
*Minnesota Historical Society Collections*

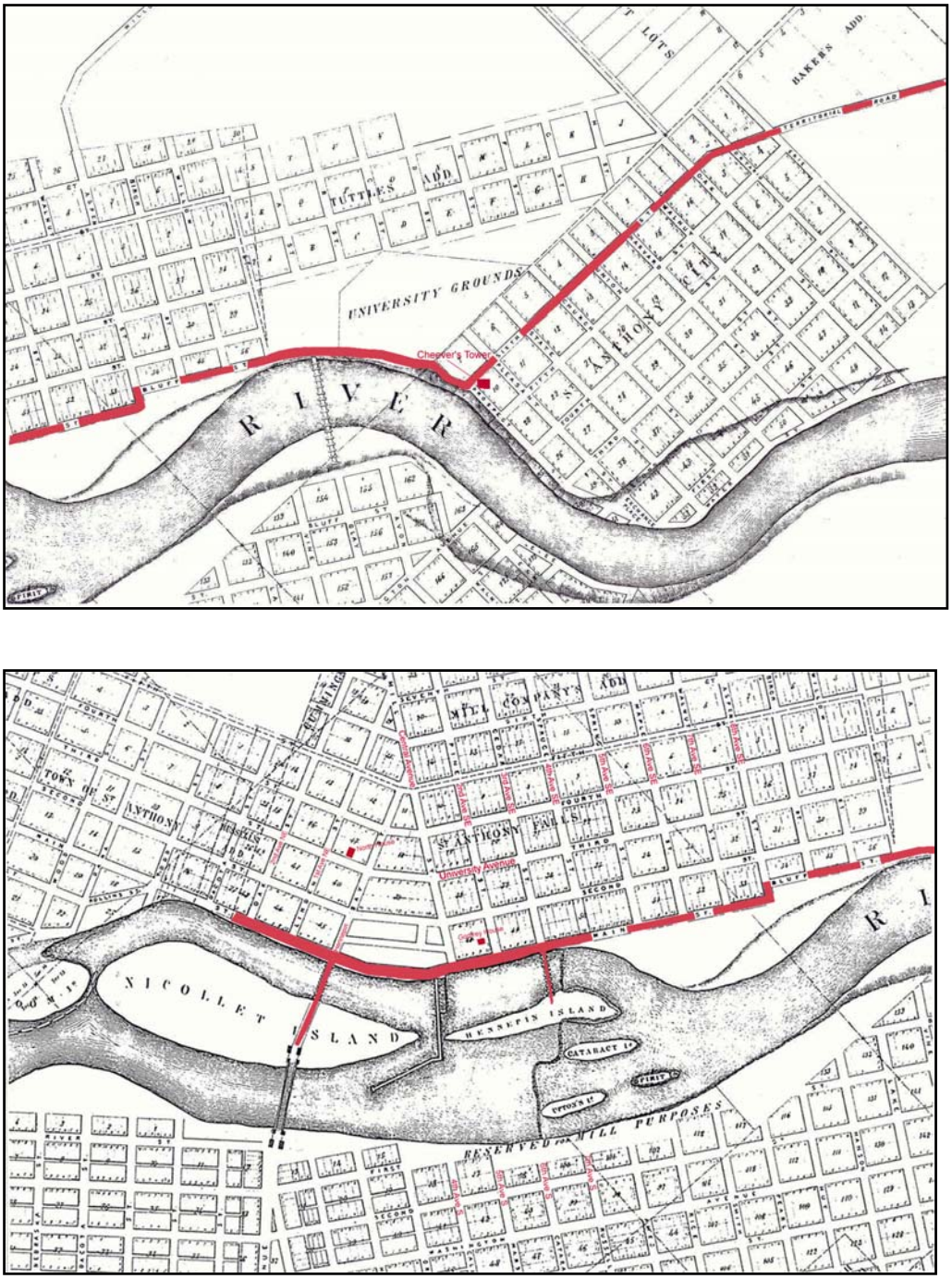


Figure 21. Detail of an 1856 map of Saint Anthony and Minneapolis, drawn and compiled by Chapman and Curtis, civil engineers. The solid red line shows the route that the excursionists took into Saint Anthony from Saint Paul.
*Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library*