

TERRITORIAL AND STATE ROADS.

Some curious results would be reached by studying the manner in which public roads were projected and located by acts of the Legislature, Territorial and State, up to the adoption of our present constitution. These inchoate highways would seem legitimately to have had but one purpose—that of facilitating travel and intercourse between different portions of the Territory or State. But in time their establishment became an abuse which the makers of our constitution did well to suppress. Candidates for the legislature were ready and even eager to promise to secure the establishment of these roads, in order to obtain support in securing nominations, as well as votes at the election. The carrying out of pledges was generally easy, for as a rule these projects met with very little opposition in the legislature. Then, these laws provided not a little patronage in the appointment of commissioners to locate the roads, who were also generally authorized to appoint one or more practical engineers and surveyors. A team, a tent, and other camp equipage, one or more common laborers, and subsistence for the party, were also required. The location of some roads required several weeks, and as the work was for the most part undertaken as early in the season as animals could subsist on prairie grass, they were real junketing, “picnicing” excursions. Nothing could be pleasanter than going out to perform such official duties. The pay was sufficient in those “days of small things” to make the position of commissioner a very welcome appointment. The appointments seldom went a-begging. The prairies were most beautiful with their carpets of green grass, interspersed with myriads of flowers, and fairly alive with feathered game. Deer and elk were occasionally killed, and as soon as the spring floods subsided fish were plenty and of the choicest quality. Enterprising frontiersmen who had gone out beyond the settlements to make themselves homes always gave them the heartiest welcome. Such set-

tlers were hospitable to all comers, but especially so to these parties whose work promised to open up roads and place them in communication with populous places.

But it not only became apparent that this work had too often degenerated into mere schemes of politicians, either to acquire influence and votes, or to pay off debts already incurred, but that railroads then rapidly extending westward, would largely obviate the necessity for even genuine State roads. So the convention of 1857, in Article III, Section 30, of the present constitution, prohibited the general assembly from "laying out, opening, and working roads or highways." The summer of that year saw the last parties engaged in laying out State Roads. The legislature of 1856, however, had been so industrious in the establishment of State Roads, that it takes almost three pages in the index merely to name the various laws or sections in which they were decreed. The commissioners in the summer of that year were very active and "made hay while the sun shone," well knowing that the laws would provide for no more such roads. And so this usage—so pleasant to its beneficiaries—came to an end.

NEWSPAPER FILES.

Indicative of a valuable work that is being done by historical societies is the recently published "Annotated Catalogue of Newspaper Files in the Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin." This catalogue is of course simply an index to the files of papers in the library of the Wisconsin Society; but it is illustrative of the kind of work that our historical societies generally are now doing. And it is perhaps safe to say that these societies do not in the broad field of their activities perform a more useful function than this of collecting and preserving newspapers.

By the general readers of text history this work is not always appreciated as it should be. Sometimes they are in-

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