The PALIMPSEST

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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The Rock Island Comes

Railroad building before 1850 was sporadic, haphazard, and controversial. While the practicability of steam railroad transportation had been demonstrated, opinion as to its importance relative to canal and river traffic was by no means certain. Each road, usually a short line, was a separate enterprise undertaken upon the initiative of adventurous promoters. Instead of forming a system to join commercial centers and connect waterways, the roads began and ended almost anywhere. As early as 1828, William C. Redfield had described a "geographical" trunk-line route from New York City to Rock Island, touching the important lake ports and affording a direct overland connection between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean, but the project did not materialize for a quarter of a century and then the line consisted of several roads separately owned and managed.

The first railroad to be completed between Chicago and the Mississippi had its beginnings on February 27, 1847, when the Illinois legislature incorporated "The Rock Island and La Salle Railroad Company". This corporation was granted the right to survey, locate, construct, and maintain a railroad "from the town of Rock Island on the Mississippi River in the County of Rock Island, to the Illinois River, at the termination of the Illinois and Michigan Canal". The capital stock was fixed at $300,000 and a commission was appointed to receive subscriptions.

Early in 1848 the stockholders met in Rock Island to elect directors and officers. Judge James Grant, an attorney and railroad enthusiast of Davenport, Iowa, was chosen president, N. B. Buford, secretary, and A. K. Philleo, treasurer. But a feeling of apathy was apparent in the towns along the route and the sale of stock was slow. Indeed, the people of Iowa seemed more interested than the settlers in Illinois, for the citizens of Davenport and Scott County subscribed for almost half the stock. Although meetings were held periodically, nothing seemed to be accomplished and by 1850 grave misgivings if not open dissension was expressed in many communities.

But help was coming to the Rock Island and La Salle Railroad Company from an unseen quar-

ter. In the fall of 1850, Henry Farnam, an engineer and contractor in New Haven, Connecticut, visited Chicago upon the invitation of William B. Ogden, who hoped to interest him in the Galena and Chicago Union Railroad. Farnam was impressed with the West and returned shortly with Joseph E. Sheffield, his friend and wealthy partner. Together they made a trip by carriage along the Illinois and Michigan Canal to La Salle and thence to Rock Island where they learned of the projected railroad. Visions of this eighty-mile road forming a link in a lucrative transcontinental system lured them to participate in the enterprise, but sober second thought made them realize that the short line would be almost certain to fail unless a terminus could be secured on Lake Michigan to connect with the eastern railroads and benefit from the commerce on the Great Lakes. After considerable negotiation, they agreed to build the road if the charter could be amended to extend the line from La Salle to Chicago. It was a golden opportunity for the local stockholders. The officers of the R. I. & L. S. promptly commenced planning for action at the next meeting of the Illinois legislature.

While James Grant was engaged in securing the revision of the articles of incorporation, the firm of Sheffield and Farnam contracted with

John B. Jervis to build the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana from Hillsdale, Michigan, into Chicago, a distance of one hundred and sixty-seven miles. Farnam believed that with the consummation of this work, the union of the Atlantic with the Mississippi would soon become an accomplished fact.

Meanwhile, fearful lest the canal interests would prevent the construction of a railroad paralleling the waterway, Farnam warned Grant on January 22, 1851, to "be sure to get the charter to make the road on the shortest route from La Salle to Chicago, and even if they insist on your paying tolls on freights taken from points along the canal." It was largely through this concession, perhaps, that the Illinois legislature passed an act on February 7, 1851, authorizing the extension of the railroad from La Salle to Chicago by way of Ottawa and Joliet, for the bill stipulated that the railroad was to pay tolls during the season of navigation on all business taken from or destined to any point on the Illinois and Michigan Canal or twenty miles west of its termination at La Salle. By way of compensation, the railroad was to obtain a right of way through canal lands and State lands, and the amount of tolls paid was to be deducted from its taxes. The name of the corporation was changed to the Chicago and Rock Island

Railroad Company, and the capital stock could be increased to any sum not exceeding three million dollars.

In compliance with the terms of the new charter, additional stock to the amount of $300,000 was subscribed and the company was reorganized with a larger board of directors on April 8, 1851. The officers of the Rock Island and La Salle took charge of the affairs of the new company until the annual meeting in December. With the encouragement of eastern capitalists, preparations for construction proceeded rapidly.

As early as December, 1850, before the charter had been amended, a survey of the route between Rock Island and Peru had been commenced under the direction of Richard P. Morgan, chief engineer for the Rock Island and La Salle Company. This work was almost completed by the following April.

At that time William Jervis was appointed chief engineer of the new company. He promptly began operations on the line from Peru to Chicago, ably assisted by Samuel B. Reed, John E. Henry, and B. B. Brayton. These men, and others who joined them later, were experienced in both canal and railroad construction. Some had held responsible positions on the Erie Canal, while younger men, such as Peter A. Dey, had been

employed on the Michigan Central or the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana.

The new engineers encountered unexpected delays from the unprecedented high water of 1851, and the board of directors was unable to let the contract for construction on June 26th as they had planned. They therefore determined to "refer the subject of making a contract for building the entire road to the Executive Committee, and have that portion of the line between Peru and Rock Island, revised and straightened, and the roadbed raised above the overflow of the streams". The surveys and estimates were completed in August and on September 6, 1851, a contract was concluded with Sheffield and Farnam in New York. Drawn by Judge Grant, the contract provided for "the construction and equipment of the whole road, including all cost, except right of way, station-grounds, fencing and incidental expenses", for the gross sum of $3,987,688. Of this amount, $2,000,000 was to be paid in seven per cent bonds, $500,000 in cash at the rate of $25,000 a month, and the balance in certificates of stock. The contract was unanimously approved by the board of directors at a meeting held in Rock Island on September 17, 1851. The bonds, secured by a first mortgage on the road, were issued to Shepherd Knapp of New York on December 23rd.

The firm of Sheffield and Farnam was well-qualified to build a railroad. Joseph E. Sheffield was a man of keen business foresight who had amassed considerable wealth in a North Carolina cotton mill. Returning to his native State of Connecticut, he had for fifteen years been closely associated with Henry Farnam in canal and railroad projects, matching his fortune against his partner's engineering skill, indefatigable energy, and bold courage. The risks appeared to be about equal, and it was mutually understood that "if any profit resulted it should be equally divided". While Farnam worked in the front lines, Sheffield took upon himself "the entire charge and control of the financial part of the enterprise".

Henry Farnam lost no time in beginning construction. When the board of directors met in Chicago on December 22, 1851, President Grant was proud to report that the contractors had "under-let the grading and masonry of the road from Chicago to Ottawa, eighty-five miles, and in a few days will conclude contracts for the same work as far as Indiantown, a distance of one hundred and twenty miles. A contract for building the bridge across Rock river, the heaviest work on the road, will be concluded in a few days. Engagements are also made for the iron for the whole road. Ten thousand tons, sufficient to finish it to

Peru, are to be delivered next year, and the balance the year following." The track was already laid as far as the junction with the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana at what is now the Englewood station and about eight hundred men were laboring on the line between Chicago and Ottawa.

President Grant felt that a number of factors combined to insure the future success of the company. The traffic of the Illinois River and the Illinois and Michigan Canal, the unity of interest with the eastern lines which were steadily extending westward into Chicago, the commerce of the Great Lakes and the coal beds situated along the line of the road, were of immediate significance. Equally important, however, were the proposed bridge connecting Rock Island with Davenport and the bill before Congress "to grant the State of Iowa land, to aid in constructing a road from Davenport to Council Bluffs, intersected by another from Dubuque to Keokuk". The rapid increase of population in Iowa, particularly in the southern and central portion of the State, he thought, would redound to the ultimate good of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad. "It falls to our lot", he concluded, "to forge an important link in this great chain across the Continent, and we have every motive of pecuniary advantage,

and obligation of duty to ourselves and our country, to stimulate us to the successful completion of a work which we have commenced under such favorable circumstances."

Following President Grant's report at the annual meeting on December 22, 1851, a new board of directors was chosen consisting of John B. Jervis, James Grant, N. D. Elwood, Isaac and Ebenezer Cook, Elisha C. Litchfield, John Stryker, George Bliss, Lemuel Andrews, P. A. Whitaker, Charles Atkinson, Theron D. Brewster, and John Stevens. The officers elected were: John B. Jervis of New York, president; James Grant of Davenport, vice-president; N. D. Elwood of Joliet, secretary; and Azariah C. Flagg of New York, treasurer.

The choice of John B. Jervis for president was wise. Jervis had gained valuable engineering experience on the Erie Canal and on the Delaware and Hudson canal and railway system. In 1836 he had become the chief engineer on the Croton Aqueduct, and in 1850 had engaged in the construction of the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad. Exactly four months after he became president of the Chicago and Rock Island Company, on April 22, 1852, the first train of the M. S. & N. I. entered Chicago over the newly laid track of the Rock Island to the junction of the two

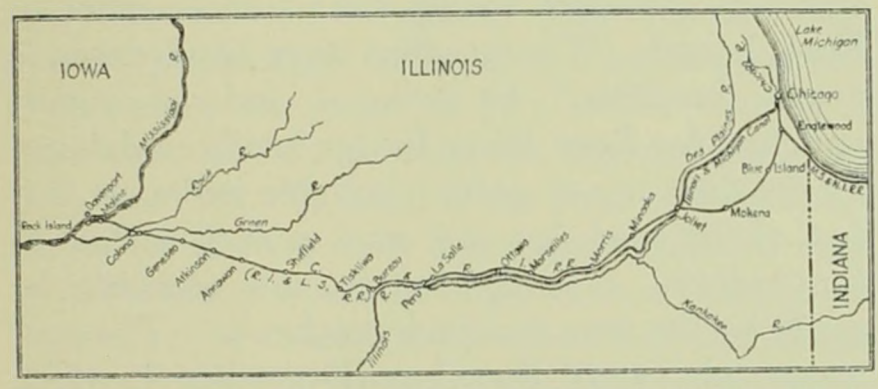
roads. The rails to this point (Englewood) had been laid early in January and thus the final links in welding the first railway bond between the Atlantic Ocean and the Mississippi River were completed under his administration.

The year 1852 witnessed a rapid extension of the road westward. By the first of October chief engineer William Jervis reported nine-tenths of the grading between Chicago and Peru completed and ready for track. The track layers were not far behind and on October 10, 1852, the locomotive "Rocket" came puffing into Joliet with six new and beautifully-painted coaches. The road was said to be "remarkable for its smoothness and solidity" and engineer James Lendabarker was able to make the run to Joliet "easily" in two hours. Among the passengers on this memorable trip, besides railroad officials, was J. A. Matteson, the Governor of Illinois.

The completion of the road to Morris on January 5, 1853, was the signal for another celebration. The "unceasing influx of travelers" into this hitherto "quiet village" led the Morris *Yeoman* to declare that "one would imagine that our town was the terminus of all creation instead of the Rock Island and Chicago Railroad".

Ottawa celebrated the arrival of the railroad on February 14, 1853, leaving only sixteen miles of

staging to the Illinois River. This was considered a "hard piece of road" but with the "iron going down rapidly beyond Ottawa" it was felt a "little patience on the part of the traveling public" would be rewarded by the completion of the road to Peru. Jubilant over the rapidity with which the



THE ROUTE OF THE CHICAGO AND ROCK ISLAND RAILROAD

Rock Island was being constructed, the Chicago *Tribune* observed that in "a few years more these rays of commercial light will stretch across our broad prairies forming a perfect net-work of communication from one end of the state to the other. Train after train will traverse our fertile plains, like busy bees, gather together the vast products of our rich soil and indomitable industry, and with the speed of the wind carry them off to some distant market."

A lull in construction followed the completion of the Rock Island to Peru. Track laying west of

that city was resumed in June and the contractors "commenced running passenger and freight trains to Tiskilwa September 12th, and Sheffield October 12th." Chief engineer William Jervis informed the board of directors on December 19th that the track was entering Geneseo that very day and was therefore within twenty-three miles of Rock Island. "The grading west of Geneseo is nearly completed", he declared, and the "superstructure for Rock River Bridge has been delayed by the difficulty of getting suitable timber at that end of the road, but it is now in such a state of forwardness, that the bridge will probably be ready by the time the track reaches it." The estimates for "work done" to December 1, 1853, totalled $3,440,000 as follows: grading and bridging, $1,202,000; track and superstructure, $1,432,000; stations, $191,000; equipment, $348,000; material delivered, $171,000; and engineering, $96,000.

Jervis reported a sufficient number of iron rails on hand in Chicago to complete the track by March 1, 1854. But the rolling stock stipulated in the contract — 18 locomotives, 12 passenger cars, 150 covered freight cars, and 100 platform freight cars, and 50 gravel cars — was already inadequate. "The traffic on the road has been so large," he declared, "that it has been difficult to

provide machinery fast enough to do the business, and leave enough to push the ballasting; consequently, this work west of Peru is not in as forward a state as other portions of the road; but the contractors propose to continue the distribution of ballasting material during the winter, and put it under the track in the spring. This course, if vigorously prosecuted, will enable them to complete the road by the tenth of July, 1854" — fully a year and a half earlier than the time designated in their contract. As soon as the road was finished, he predicted, two daily passenger trains through to Rock Island would be required, and "one additional train between Chicago and Peru, during the greater portion of the year." For the freight business, "at least one daily through train, one between Chicago and Peru and one coal train" would be necessary.

The completion of the railroad to the Mississippi was commemorated by two celebrations: one essentially local in character culminating in a banquet and jubilant speeches, the second national in scope and commonly denominated the Grand Excursion, involving a trip from Chicago to Rock Island and thence to Saint Paul by steamboat. The first of these celebrations was held in Rock Island immediately after the track laying was finished into that city on February 22, 1854.

The locomotive which drew the six first-class passenger cars out of Chicago on Washington's birthday was "handsomely decorated with wreathes and garlands". Every one was looking forward with "pleasing anticipations" to the thrill of gazing upon the bosom of the Father of Waters from the windows of the first railway passenger coaches to reach the great river. The train was welcomed by a salute of field pieces at Joliet and Ottawa, where municipal officials and other dignitaries joined the excursion. Over three hundred passengers were aboard the cars when the train left Peru and "sped its way across the broad and fertile prairies, anxious to reach its destination".

The booming of cannon heralded the approach of the first train to enter Rock Island and "such was the despatch used, that the last rail had scarcely been laid one hour, ere the cars passed over." A large temporary building in which to entertain the guests at dinner had been constructed in less than three days. When everybody had gathered about the tables, the "president of the day", N. B. Buford, introduced J. J. Beardsley, who delivered the address of welcome, dwelling at some length upon the "first union of the Mississippi and the Atlantic in the bands of commerce". In behalf of the city of Rock Island he declared it

"an appropriate time to do honor to a great achievement, that will mark an era in the history of the world's progress; and make our heart-felt and grateful acknowledgments to those who stood by our favorite enterprise in the days of its weakness and peril, and render a fitting tribute to those who with renewed zeal and fidelity have put in execution the wise design of the projectors of the Chicago and Rock Island railroad."

At the conclusion of his address, the company "helped themselves" to the abundant feast which was spread out in "prodigal profusion" before them. When every one had signified "enough", Buford arose and proposed thirteen toasts. Chief among them were the names of George Washington, Sheffield, and Farnam, the president and directors of the road, the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad, the Rock Island and La Salle Railroad, and the states of Illinois and Iowa. There were also a number of volunteer toasts such as, "To the Irish Laborers — The men who dig our canals, build our railroads, work in our fields and stables; and only ask a living, and freedom to worship God."

Henry Farnam responded to the toast to the contractors, saying he "would rather build two railroads than make one speech". Then he simply but graphically traced the events of the past few

years. "It is less than one-quarter of a century, and within the recollection of the 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 with 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. Now, there are two distinct lines the entire distance connecting Chicago and the great prairies of the West with New York and Boston. Two years ago, there was less than one hundred miles of road in operation in the State of Illinois, and most of that was what is called the 'strap rail'. Now more than twelve hundred miles of road of the most substantial character is in operation, eight hundred of which leads directly to the city of Chicago.

"To-day, we witness the nuptials of the Atlantic with the Father of Waters. To-morrow, the people of Rock Island can go to New York the entire distance by railroad, and within the space of forty-two hours."

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The Grand Excursion of 1854

The Grand Excursion of 1854 was brought about largely through the efforts of Henry Farnam, one of the contractors for the construction of the Chicago and Rock Island Railroad. During the winter of 1853 Farnam invited the Minnesota Packet Company to form a joint railroad-steamboat connection from Rock Island to Galena and points above. The invitation was accepted and Captain Russell Blakeley was sent to the annual stockholders' meeting at Chicago to make final arrangements.

The first railroad to unite the Atlantic Ocean with the Mississippi River reached Rock Island on February 22, 1854. To celebrate this event and advertise the transportation facilities to the Eldorado of the upper Mississippi Valley, leading citizens of the country were invited to participate in a joint railroad and steamboat excursion to the Falls of St. Anthony. The response was so hearty and the request for additional passes so numerous that the number of steamboats chartered was increased from one to five. So lavish were the preparations that an eastern paper declared the fete "could not be rivaled by the mightiest

among the potentates of Europe. Without bustle or noise, in a simple but grand manner, like everything resulting from the combined action of liberty and association — guests have been brought hither free of charge from different places, distant thousands of miles, invited by hosts to them unknown, simple contractors and directors of railroads and steamboats." The Grand Excursion of 1854 was properly styled the "Fashionable Tour" — a tour indeed which remained fashionable for many years.

John H. Kinzie was chairman of the reception committee in Chicago where the Tremont House served as headquarters for the assembled guests. There, early in June, 1854, a President by accident, Millard Fillmore, met Samuel J. Tilden, whose failure to achieve that distinction was less fortuitous. Prominent western leaders such as Ninian W. Edwards, brother-in-law of Lincoln, and Edward Bates of Missouri, who was later Attorney General in Lincoln's Cabinet, exchanged views with notable easterners like John A. Dix, John A. Granger, J. C. Ten Eyck, and Elbridge Gerry. Francis P. Blair, of Maryland, greeted his son Francis P. Blair, of Saint Louis. New Haven and Yale University contributed Professors Benjamin Silliman, A. C. Twining, Leonard Bacon, and Eleazar Thompson to match wits with

Judge Joel Parker of Harvard and Professor Henry Hubbard of Dartmouth. George Bancroft, another Harvard graduate and already the national historian, accepted an invitation to make the Fashionable Tour and was continually called upon to address the crowds which gathered to greet the easterners. Catherine M. Sedgwick was one of the more notable women to make the trip.

No profession was more ably or numerously represented than the press. Almost every metropolitan paper of the East sent a delegate. Charles Hudson of the Boston *Atlas* and Thurlow Weed of the Albany *Evening Journal* were seasoned and nationally known editors. Samuel Bowles of the Springfield *Republican* and Charles A. Dana of the New York *Tribune* were at the threshold of long and famous careers. Hiram Fuller of the New York *Mirror*, Epes Sargent of the Boston *Transcript*, Charles Hale of the Boston *Advertiser*, and W. C. Prime of the New York *Journal of Commerce* were other eastern reporters. The West was represented by such editors as William Schouler of the Cincinnati *Gazette* and C. Cather Flint of the Chicago *Tribune*.

Early on the morning of June 5th the excursionists assembled at the Rock Island station in Chicago. Shortly after eight o'clock two trains of nine coaches, gaily decorated with flowers, flags,

and streamers, and drawn by powerful locomotives, pulled out with the most colorful gathering the West had ever seen. Speeches, military parades, and the industrious discharge of cannon, greeted the excursionists at almost every town. A free lunch was distributed at Sheffield, Illinois. Despite frequent stops, the trains reached Rock Island at four o'clock, where the *Golden Era,* Captain Hiram Bersie; the *G. W. Spar-Hawk,* Captain Montreville Green; the *Lady Franklin,* Captain Legrand Morehouse; the *Galena,* Captain D. B. Morehouse; and the *War Eagle,* in command of Captain Daniel Smith Harris, lay waiting to take the easterners aboard.

The large number of additional guests, together with the uninvited and unheralded, quickly jammed the five boats and it was necessary to charter two additional craft — the *Jenny Lind* and the *Black Hawk.* But still accommodations proved insufficient. According to Dana "staterooms had been alloted at Chicago, where the names had been registered, but many of the tickets had been lost, and very many persons had none at all. Besides there had been some errors — husbands and wives were appointed to different boats, and several young fellows were obliged to part from the fair ladies about whom they had hitherto revolved with the most laudable devoted-

ness." The dearth of berths caused about one-third of the guests to renounce the steamboat trip and return to Chicago. Despite this fact fully twelve hundred remained aboard the boats and were served a "sumptuous feast" said to equal those afforded by the best hotels in the country.

After brief speeches at Rock Island and Davenport, the passengers were entertained with a brilliant display of fireworks from Fort Armstrong. Bells rang and whistles sounded as the flotilla, bows wreathed with prairie flowers and evergreens, left Davenport at ten o'clock "and sailed, with music on their deck, like birds by their own song, lighted by the moon, and saluted by the gay fireworks from the Old Fort." Captain Daniel Smith Harris led off with the *War Eagle,* while the *Golden Era,* with Millard Fillmore aboard, brought up the rear.

Every one was delighted with the bright moonlight and the refreshing river breeze which greeted the boats as they puffed up-stream against the powerful current. Shortly after midnight a violent thunder-storm wound up the day in a manner at once peculiar and sublime. "Impenetrable darkness enshrowded us," wrote one, "and nothing could be seen of our fleet of seven steamers, save the lurid glare of their furnaces shining upon the agitated waves, and their red and blue lights sus-

pended from their bows. A sudden flash of vivid lightning would illumine the entire scene for a moment, and then as suddenly would it be blotted from view. At such moments, so intense was the light, and so vivid the impression produced that each separate leaf upon the trees on shore, each crevice in the bank, the form of each steamer, and even the countenances of those upon the guards, could be seen as plainly as if printed upon canvas." After a few hours the storm subsided and the weary travelers were quickly lulled to rest.

The night was spent with varying degrees of comfort, for many of the young men were obliged to "rough it" on mattresses laid upon the floor. But none of these was heard to complain, and Miss Sedgwick praised them for their good-natured and manly attitude. Another tourist was less optimistic, declaring that "through the whole trip many gentlemen" who deserved better accommodations "had but from two to four hours sleep at night, while sleeping by day was even more out of the question."

Dawn found the boats a few miles below Bellevue from whence the *War Eagle* led the fleet booming up the Fever River to Galena. A trip to the lead mines was followed by a picnic dinner in the woods. "Wines of Ohio and of France stood upon the board, sparkling Catawba the favorite,

and glasses were drained to the health and prosperity of Galena and its citizens." Charles A. Dana noted with regret "that total abstinence is not the rule of the Mississippi Valley, everybody feeling it to be a sort of duty to temper the limestone water of the country with a little brandy, or other equally ardent corrective."

Leaving Galena, the boats proceeded to Dubuque where, despite a heavy downpour, they were met by a throng of people. Ex-president Fillmore, Benjamin Silliman, George Bancroft, Edward Bates, Charles Hudson, and others addressed the citizens of Dubuque in much the same vein as at Galena, Davenport, and Rock Island.

Besides stopping at the scattered settlements along the river, frequent landings were made to "wood up" and the excursionists invariably trooped ashore. The process of "wooding up" always attracted considerable attention from those passengers who were not inclined to go ashore and wander about. While "wooding up" at Trempeleau, President Fillmore's daughter mounted a horse and scaled "the mountain that stands in the water". Her appearance at the summit was greeted with a salvo of steamboat whistles and the prolonged cheers from those aboard.

Amusements aboard the boats were as varied as human ingenuity could devise. Promenading on

deck and allowing the ever changing landscape on shore to "daguerreotype new pictures on the mind" formed the principal pastime for most of the travelers. In the evening the tourists resorted to dancing, music, and flirtation — the latter by those romantic souls who have always found their greatest joy on the upper deck of a steamboat with none but the moon to disturb their tryst. Since racing was prohibited, the boats were often lashed together and passengers enjoyed the opportunity of visiting old friends and making new ones. On such occasions dancing in one cabin would foster "a *conversazione* in another".

Slavery was probably the chief topic of conversation, for the Kansas-Nebraska Bill had just been passed. Other feature items in the news, such as riots in Brooklyn, the tragic wreck of the *Powhatan,* and interesting inventions were also discussed. One evening the distinguished Yale scientist, Silliman, attracted a large audience, but Dana was lured by "the gayer sounds from another boat" and was unable to report the lecture to the readers of the New York *Tribune*.

A mock trial was held in the cabin of the *G. W. Spar-Hawk* one rainy and disagreeable evening. William Schouler of the Cincinnati *Gazette* was tried for assault and battery on the person of Dr. Kennedy. The prisoner pleaded not guilty and

Moses Kimball of Boston was selected to defend him. W. C. Prime acted as prosecutor. Both Kimball and Prime appeared before the court heavily armed with dueling pistols and bowie knives. Both attorneys attempted to bribe the jury but happily evidence was produced to show that the injury had been done by breaking down the berth and bruising the plaintiff with slats while both he and the defendant were asleep. The case was promptly dismissed.

The appearance of the fleet on rounding the bend below Saint Paul on the morning of June 8th was described by those who witnessed it as "grand beyond precedent." The boats "approached in order as regular as though they were an armed squadron taking their position in line of battle" with two full bands aboard playing lively airs. Shortly after arriving at the landing, the excursionists were "bundled" into every conceivable class and variety of vehicle and trundled away at various rates of speed to the Falls of St. Anthony. Three prominent New York editors were seen perched precariously upon a one-horse water cart. The editor of the Galena *Jeffersonian* declared "the 'March to Finley' was nothing compared to our motley cavalcade. Here was a Governor bestride a sorry Rozinante of which even the Great Don would have been ashamed;

here an U. S. Senator, acting the part of footman, stood bolt upright in the baggage boot of a coach, holding on by the iron rail surrounding the top; here the historian of which the country is justly proud, squatted on his haunches on the top of a crazy van, unmindful of everything but himself, his book, his 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 either side by opera glass exquisites".

After viewing the Falls of St. Anthony the easterners visited Minnehaha Falls, Lake Calhoun, and Fort Snelling. In the evening a reception was held in the capitol where Henry Sibley welcomed the visitors. Millard Fillmore thanked the citizens of Saint Paul for their cordial reception and pointed out the significance of that city as a central point on one of the routes leading from the Atlantic to the Pacific. George Bancroft responded in behalf of the railroad directors and bade Minnesota become "the North Star of the Union, shining forever in unquenchable luster." At eleven o'clock the tired tourists returned to the landing where the boats lay illuminated, with steam hissing in their boilers. Shortly after mid-

night the fleet cast off from Saint Paul whose hills and lighted windows disappeared as the boats rounded Dayton Bluff.

Speeding down-stream at the rate of ten miles an hour, the passengers found time passing all too rapidly. In addition to the usual dances, lectures, and musical entertainment in the cabin, meetings were called for the purpose of drawing up resolutions of thanks to the hosts of the Grand Excursion. Not only were many toasts drunk to railroad officials, captains, and boats, but concrete appreciation was manifested by the generous contributions for the presentation of loving cups and gold plate. Millard Fillmore presided over the meeting in the *Golden Era* where $300 was raised to buy a silver pitcher for Captain Hiram Bersie.

Cabin resolutions also gave unstinted praise to the lower officers and crew for their efforts in making the travelers comfortable and happy. Miss Sedgwick was delighted with the courtesy of Captain Legrand Morehouse and the "civil lads" aboard the *Lady Franklin* who performed their work as if it were "a dainty task, to be done daintily." The other captains and crews undoubtedly received similar recognition from the talented writers who graced the decks of their boats.

The responsibility of providing varied and well-prepared meals fell upon the stewards who never

before had been called upon to provide for such an array of notable guests. Since the floor of the cabin was covered with sleepers, it was the steward's duty to awaken them gently and diplomatically in order that the mattresses might be removed and the tables set for breakfast by seven o'clock. No deckhand or roustabout could perform so delicate a task. Breakfast over, the cooks were given the menu for dinner. Meats and vegetables were prepared in one kitchen while pastry and desserts were made ready in another. Stocks of fish, game, eggs, and vegetables were bought when needed at the various towns along the way. At Trempeleau, for example, two bushels of speckled trout were purchased and proved a rare treat for the excursionists.

Guests were never invited to visit the meat and vegetable kitchens for good and sufficient reasons, but they were cordially urged to drop into the pastry and dessert kitchen at any time. The number and variety of the delicacies prepared there was astonishing. "Morning, noon, and night," Miss Sedgwick declared, "a table was spread, that in most of its appointments and supplies would have done honor to our first class hotels, and its confections would not have disgraced a French artiste with all the appliances of a French cuisine. By what magic art such ices, jellies,

cakes, and pyramids, veiled in showers of candied sugar, were compounded in that smallest of tophets, a steamer's kitchen, is a mystery yet to be solved."

The notables who made the Fashionable Tour in 1854 were almost unanimous in their praise of the upper Mississippi steamboats. Only one adverse but by no means harsh criticism was made by an anonymous writer to the New York *Tribune*. "As the Upper Mississippi must now become a route for fashionable Summer travel," the critic observed, "it is only proper to say that those who resort here must not yet expect to find all the conveniences and comforts which abound on our North River steamers. Everything is very plain; the staterooms are imperfectly furnished, but the berths are roomy; the table is abundant, but butter-knives and sugar-tongs are not among its luxuries."

But sugar tongs or no sugar tongs, the Excursion of 1854 was by far the most brilliant event the West had ever witnessed. Millard Fillmore declared it to be an enterprise for which "history had no parallel, and such as no prince could possibly undertake." George Bancroft dwelt at length on the easy and agreeable manner in which over one thousand people had been conducted a greater distance than from New York to Liver-

pool. The Chicago *Tribune* described it as the "most magnificent excursion, in every respect, which has ever taken place in America".

The steamers arrived at Rock Island on June 10th. While some of the excursionists continued on down the river to Saint Louis, most of them boarded the train and returned to Chicago. They had been gone just six days, from Monday morning to Saturday evening. Every one was reported to be well and in excellent spirits. "Not a single accident had occurred to mar" the pleasure of the trip.

The New York *Tribune* urged travelers to follow "in the wake of the just completed Railroad Excursion, ascend the Upper Mississippi, the grandest river of the world, flowing for a thousand miles between shores of incomparable beauty — the boundaries of States destined to wealth, population and power almost without rivals in the Union." Miss Sedgwick observed that as a result of the completion of the railroad to the Mississippi, "the fashionable tour will be in the track of our happy 'excursion party, to the Falls of St. Anthony.'" Probably no other single factor was so important in popularizing the Fashionable Tour with easterners as the Grand Excursion of the Rock Island Railroad in 1854.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Comment by the Editor

IF BY LAND

In the annals of transportation, no single factor is so universal as waterways. Instead of separating people, the streams and seas have actually united them. The Mediterranean was the center of the ancient world in war and peace. River valleys form the geographical basis for a common culture and also serve as highways for invaders. The St. Lawrence and Mississippi valleys led explorers through the wilderness to the prairies of Iowa as inevitably as the ocean carried Magellan around the world. Only the air provides more complete access to everywhere.

Land, which is the natural dwelling place of man, imposes tremendous obstacles to communication. Indeed, the conquest of distance on land has been a longer and more complicated process than by either air or water. In the constant struggle to achieve proximity, many amazing discoveries have facilitated travel — the wheel, a smooth, hard-surfaced path, and mechanical power to increase speed. In a sense the combination of these three fundamental ideas was the most miraculous event of the nineteenth century, for it created the

railroads. Without railroads a new nation of a hundred million people occupying three thousand miles of territory from sea to sea could not have been built, and without railroads the Union might not have been preserved.

Yet this revolutionary means of contracting distance in terms of time and comfort was not adopted with enthusiasm or vision. People persisted in towing canal boats, patronizing the river packets, and migrating in covered wagons. Railroads were supposed to be dangerous, expensive, and impractical. And the first roads were no more than isolated experiments.

But eventually a continuous chain of railroads connected the commercial East with the agricultural West. A quarter of a century of controversy, indecision, and bold pioneering culminated when the iron horse paused triumphantly on the threshold of Iowa. During the next fifty years, while the commonwealths of the Middle West were adolescent, that mighty steed dominated the economic and political scene. Iowa was born too late to remember the canal epidemic, and is just outgrowing the railway age.

J. E. B.

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