

III. THE EXPANSION OF THE GOVERNMENT ROAD SYSTEM

Throughout the period of difficult relations with the representative of the topographical engineers in Minnesota, Rice continued his efforts to obtain funds for the construction of roads. In 1855 he departed from the usual custom of seeking appropriations to be expended under the direction of the secretary of war, and began to work in part through the department of the interior. It may be that he grew tired of attempting to co-operate with the topographical engineers, with whom he had been embroiled continually since he came into office in 1853. There is no explanation for the change in the official records. In 1850, however, Rice had fulfilled a contract with the commissioner of Indian affairs, whereby he transported the Winnebago Indians, who were scattered over much of southwestern Wisconsin, northeastern Iowa, and southeastern Minnesota, to a new home in the Long Prairie region of central Minnesota. His relations with the department of the interior at that time had been so amicable that it seems reasonable to suppose that he hoped to find the department equally amenable in the matter of road building. ¹

1. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 310-318.

A movement, begun in 1854, to provide a comprehensive system of roads throughout the settled regions of Minnesota did not get beyond the committee on roads and canals in the House that year. The bill asked for roads from Brownsville, by way of Winona, Minnesota City, Traverse des Sioux, and Fort Ridgely, to Sauk Rapids; from Fort Ridgely, by way of Lake Minnetonka and St. Anthony, to Taylor's Falls; from Minneapolis to Sauk Rapids; from the mouth of the Rum River to Mille Lacs; from Stillwater to Manomin; from St. Paul, by way of Little Canada, to White Bear Lake; and from Fort Ripley, by way of Crow Wing and the Chippewa agency, to the Red River. The bill was most comprehensive in scope, and, as one commentator declared, "It does not need much geographical knowledge of our Territory, to see how important all these roads are to Minnesota, and that if constructed they will add much to the value of Government lands in their vicinity." However true that may have been, the probability of obtaining this valuable network of roads was decreased greatly by the rapid growth of settlement during the middle fifties, which transformed the southern area from a wilderness into a region of farms. ²

2. Minnesota Democrat, March 15, 1854; Congressional Globe, 33 Congress, 2 session, 414, 486, 492, 697, 767, 773. The request for these roads originated in the territory itself. The legislature in 1854 adopted eight memorials to Congress pertaining to roads, and in 1855, five more. Laws, 1854, p. 152, 154, 159-161, 163-166, 170, 1855, p. 177-181, 185.

Rice was not discouraged by his failure to secure appropriations for these roads. It was at this point, however, that he shifted his ground. In February, 1855, the government negotiated a treaty at Washington with the Pillager and Mississippi River bands of Chippewa Indians to obtain the relinquishment of the Indian title to a huge body of wilderness land. In the terms of the treaty Rice caused to be included, among the "promises" for the Mississippi bands, a stipulation that the sum of \$5,000 be set aside for the construction of a road from the mouth of the Rum River to Mille Lacs, to be expended under the direction of the commissioner of Indian affairs. Among similar "promises" for the Pillager and Lake Winnibigoshish bands, the commissioner of Indian affairs received authority to expend \$15,000 for the construction of a road from Crow Wing to Leech Lake. Without any demur the treaty was ratified, and thus two more roads were provided for. Rice exultantly wrote to Emerson: "You will see that I am getting appropriations for roads where ever and whenever I can. On Monday next the Winnebagoes will sign a treaty, and then we will get another Road, if the Senate ratify the treaty." Unfortunately, Rice's hopes were not fulfilled, and the treaty with the Winnebago, negotiated on February 27, 1855, contains only the provision that the Indians should grant a right of way for roads through the lands on their new reservation in Blue Earth County if

and when roads were built.³

In 1856 Congress passed a measure providing for the construction of a wagon road from "Fort Ridgley [sic] in the Territory of Minnesota, to the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, in the Territory of Nebraska." It was a measure that was dear to American hearts, and one that had been advocated for a half dozen years. The earliest migrants to the gold fields of California and to the fertile valleys of the Pacific Northwest had trudged the weary miles across burning prairies, leaving their broken wagons, their discarded household goods, and, often, their bones to mark the way for those who came after them. There were no roads to the Pacific; there were only routes. The most used of these western trails was that which began at Independence, Missouri, followed up the valley of the Platte River, crossed the valley of the Great Salt Lake in Utah, and then continued across the endless mountains to the promised land.

In 1851 William H. Nobles, one of the gold seekers,

3. Statutes at Large, 10: 1167, 1168, 1172-1176; Minnesota Democrat, March 21, 1855; Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 306-308. Rice did not describe the route of the road for which he hoped to get appropriations when the Winnebago Indians signed the treaty. He persisted in the effort to provide a road through the agency, and in 1856 George W. Manypenny, the commissioner of Indian affairs, refused to recommend an appropriation for such a road. See Manypenny to Rice, April 15, 1856, in Interior Department Archives, Indian Office, Letter Books, 54: 91 (Calendar, 15250). A photostatic copy of this letter is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

looking for an easier route to the Pacific, discovered a pass which led, on a gradient much easier than that of the old trail, over the Rocky Mountains. For several years he tried without success to interest the government in this new route. In 1853 he came to Minnesota, and from this frontier outpost of civilization he continued his campaign. He discovered that the fringes of civilization in Minnesota were more than a hundred miles closer to the new pass over the mountains than were the frontier regions of Missouri. Through the press he argued that, since it was shorter by way of Minnesota, the route should begin there. Other advantages that he pointed out were that an abundance of wood and water could be found on the route, which was more than could be claimed for the trail up the Platte River; that the country was of the kind through which a road easily could be made, a fact which was pointed out in the report of Captain Reno who had that year made a survey of the government road from Mendota to the mouth of the Big Sioux River; and that the route ran more nearly east and west than any of the other transcontinental routes, thereby saving the traveler from the inconvenience and discomforts of changes in latitude. 4

4. Statutes at Large, 11: 27; ante, p. 65. The Minnesota Democrat for October 19, 1853, reprinted, from various California and New York papers, letters written by Nobles.

Minnesota visionaries saw in Nobles' plan a chance to make Minnesota the starting point for a great trans-continental route, and through the medium of the press sponsored his cause enthusiastically. The Minnesota Democrat, early in 1854, called on the people of Minnesota and the legislature to ask for an appropriation for a road to Fort Laramie where the old Independence trail would be joined, assuring its readers that little more was required than "to mark it out distinctly." The papers of Chicago and other western cities, it was claimed, were advocating this route, and it was up to the people of Minnesota to do something about it also. In response to this appeal, a meeting, attended by most of the influential men of the territory, was held in St. Paul on February 9, 1854. Judge Andrew G. Chatfield, associate justice of the territorial supreme court, presided, and Joseph R. Brown acted as secretary. The group appointed a committee to draw up resolutions to be presented to Congress urging the construction of the emigrant road, and delegated Nobles to go to Washington to work for the passage of the act, the sum of \$500 being voted for his expenses. In the enthusiasm that followed, the territorial legislature authorized the laying out of a territorial road from St. Paul, by way of Fort Ridgely, to the Missouri River "as near to old Fort aux Cedre as . . . expedient," and adopted a memorial to Congress praying for the appropriation

of funds for the construction of a military road from Minnesota to Oregon and California.⁵

More than two years passed before Congress could be induced to take up the subject seriously. The territorial legislature of 1856 again memorialized Congress for an emigrant route, reminding that body that Minnesota had already opened a road to the Missouri River, and it asked for an appropriation of \$20,000 for the construction of a road from there to the South Pass. Nobles, himself a member of the legislature, again packed his carpet bag and hurried to Washington to do some more lobbying for the road. On April 4 Representative Elihu B. Washburne of Illinois introduced the desired measure, providing for an appropriation of \$50,000 for the road which was to be constructed under the supervision of the department of the interior. Superficial objections to this appropriation were made on the ground that, although it was evidently a military road, its construction was not to be entrusted to the secretary of war. An amendment to place the construction of the road under the war department was defeated when it was decided that the authority to deal with the Indians, through whose lands the road was to pass, rested with the secretary of the interior. Senator Albert G. Brown of Mississippi refused to vote for the

5. Minnesota Democrat, January 11, February 15, 22, 1854; Laws, 1854, p. 45, 164.

bill unless he was assured of favorable action on a measure of his own to construct a road from Vicksburg to California by way of El Paso. That Nobles had been persistent in his efforts may be ascertained from the caustic remark of Senator Andrew P. Butler of South Carolina regarding this "appropriation to a man by the name of Nobles." The opposition to the measure was fleeting, however, and on July 22, 1856, it became a law. ⁶

The plan for opening the road to the Pacific included the construction of a road from Fort Ridgely to the Mississippi River. The Minnesota legislature, about the time that it memorialized Congress for the road to the South Pass, adopted another memorial asking for an appropriation of \$30,000 for the construction of a military road from Winona to Fort Ridgely. The route suggested was substantially the same as that named in the bill that Rice had presented in 1854. The House committee on military affairs referred the memorial to the war department, whose experts reported that such a road was not necessary nor directly useful for military purposes, thereby sounding the death knell of the effort to secure a connection between Winona and the frontier outpost. The legislature of 1856 presented

6. Laws, 1856, p. 347; Daily Pioneer and Democrat, December 8, 1855, March 6, July 7, 1856; Congressional Globe, 34 Congress, 1 session, 822, 1166, 1473, 1616, 1630-1632; Statutes at Large, 11: 27.

Congress with memorials for two other east and west roads -- one from Wabasha to Fort Ridgely and the other from Brownsville to the Mankato territorial road. Neither of these fared any better. ⁷

Perhaps there was an awakening realization in Minnesota of the fact that the territory was gradually growing up, and that, unless the favors of Congress were courted immediately, it would be too late to obtain the full benefits of its largess, for grants for roads scarcely could be expected after statehood was attained. At any rate, the legislature of Minnesota in 1856 and 1857 bombarded Congress with memorials asking for appropriations for roads. In the session of 1856, memorials were adopted for a road extending along the west bank of the Mississippi from Fort Snelling to Pembina -- there was a military road along the east bank as far as Crow Wing; for a road from St. Paul by way of White Bear Lake to Kettle River, which would intersect the military road from Point Douglas to Lake Superior; for the extension of the Mendota-Wabasha road to the Iowa line; and for a liberal appropriation for the construction of bridges and culverts on the road from Iowa, by way of Richland, Preston, and Chatfield, to Rochester,

7. Laws, 1856, p. 343, 351, 358; 34 Congress, 1 session, House Committee Reports, no. 191 (serial 868); Abert to Davis, April 2, 1856, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 8: 135 (Calendar, 457).

and on the road from St. Paul to Elliota, by way of Cannon Falls, Rochester, and Carimona. The legislature of 1857, faced with the imminent problems of statehood, contented itself with the adoption of only two memorials. One reiterated the need for a military road from St. Paul to Kettle River; the other introduced a demand for a road which was to cut across the territory from the far northeastern corner on Pigeon River, following the shore of Lake Superior to Fond du Lac, and thence leading westward to Fort Ripley. ⁸

There was little hope that anything could be accomplished in Congress in 1856, but Rice did what he could. The bill which he had introduced at that session to provide for bridging streams and opening roads in southern Minnesota he prosecuted to the best of his ability. When a member of the House asked who was officially endorsing this unusual bill -- unusual because it not only was extremely comprehensive, but also because it advocated roads that were not necessarily of a military nature -- Rice read into the record a letter from George W. Manypenny, commissioner of Indian affairs, for the war department had not been consulted. The bill provided for the appropriation of \$10,000 for the erection of bridges on the territorial road from St. Paul to Elliota, and \$5,000, each, for roads from

8. Laws, 1856, p. 355, 360, 367, 371, 373, 1857, regular session, 292, 294.

Shakopee to Le Sueur, from Kasota to the Winnebago agency in Blue Earth County, and from Faribault to Traverse des Sioux. The roads were to be built under the direction of the commissioner of Indian affairs. Rice was unable to get a vote on the measure before Congress adjourned, however, and it was not until January, 1857, that it passed the House. There still remained the Senate to convince, and when Senator Douglas submitted the measure for consideration, it was at once evident that that body felt that Minnesota already had received more than its share of Congressional appropriations for roads. At that time Congress was considering a statehood bill for Minnesota, and the opinion that it had "a population sufficient to support her own government and make her own improvements" was generally accepted. Moreover, that very day, March 3, Congress passed an act which gave Minnesota a magnificent grant of public lands to be used in the construction of railroads, and, in addition, the army appropriations bill, passed the day before, included an appropriation of more than \$50,000 for the completion of the military road system. These considerations, together with a hint of sectionalism and a charge that Douglas was favoring the northern territory, were sufficient to defeat the bill. 9

9. Congressional Globe, 34 Congress, 1 session, p. 1452, 1492-1494; Congressional Globe, 34 Congress,

While this final attempt to obtain federal funds for Minnesota roads was being made, the work of construction progressed steadily. On the roads that were assigned to the secretary of the interior, work was begun immediately after the ratification of the treaty with the Chippewa Indians. In April the commissioner of Indian affairs appointed William McAboy to take charge of opening the roads from Crow Wing to Leech Lake and from the mouth of the Rum River to Mille Lacs. By fall the roads, under McAboy's direction, were in passable condition. It was not until the summer of 1856, however, that they were completed and all contractors paid off. The contrast between the rapidity with which construction on these roads was being forwarded and the relatively slower rate at which the army engineers worked provided the editor of the Minnesota Democrat with a venomous dart to cast at Simpson and added fuel to the quarrel that flared in the fall of 1855. ¹⁰

3 session, 391, 399, 734, 987, 1046, 1110-1112, 1116; Statutes at Large, 11: 203, 204; Daily Pioneer and Democrat, July 10, 1856, February 4, March 20, 1857; Winona Republican, February 10, 1857.

10. Manypenny to Willis A. Gorman, April 3, 1855, Manypenny to McAboy, April 19, 1855, June 26, August 6, 1856, C. E. Mix to Gorman, June 28, 1855, Manypenny to Rice, February 19, 1856, Manypenny to Francis Huebschmann, July 8, 1856, in Interior Department Archives, Indian Office, Letter Books, 51: 200, 287-289, 54: 401, 55: 22, 52: 89, 53: 402, 54: 443 (Calendar, 14730, 14763, 15339, 15394, 14892, 15164, 15357); Minnesota Democrat, July 4, 1855. The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of the letters of April 19 and June 28, 1855, and February 19 and July 8, 1856.

As soon as the funds for the construction of the road from Fort Ridgely to the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains was available, Manypenny began to organize the staff necessary to carry on the work. In recognition of his work in pushing the bill through Congress and because of his wide knowledge of the country through which the road was to pass, Colonel Nobles was appointed superintendent of construction for the eastern half. He began a preliminary survey of the route that fall, getting a better idea of the country over which the road was to pass and erecting storehouses for supplies. The following spring, after many exasperating delays, Nobles' expedition got under way. A minimum amount of construction work was done on the road and it was graded only where it was absolutely necessary to do so; nevertheless, the appropriation was exhausted by the time the expedition reached the Missouri River. Nobles estimated that it would take an additional \$300,000 to complete the emigrant wagon road. 11

11. Manypenny to Nobles, September 18, 1856, in Interior Department Archives, Indian Office, Letter Books, 55: 105-107 (Calendar, 15435); Jacob Thompson to Nobles, April 25, 1857, in Interior Department Archives, Wagon Roads, Letter Books, 1: 3-6 (Calendar, 3). The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of these letters. See also Daily Pioneer and Democrat, October 4, November 18, December 17, 1856, April 30, May 21, June 14, 16, 17, 21, July 12, 29, September 26, November 5, 1857; report of Manypenny to the secretary of the interior, November 22, 1856, in 34 Congress, 3 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 5, p. 570 (serial 875); report of Nobles to the secretary of

The exhaustion of the appropriation allotted to the eastern portion of the road halted the work. Although Nobles complied with instructions to economize on the amount of construction work done, his expenditures for supplies and equipment laid him open to a charge of extravagance. He apparently believed an additional appropriation would be made by Congress to carry on the work when the initial appropriation was exhausted. At the end of the season of 1857 his accounts were in arrears to the extent of \$10,000, and, as a result, he was suspended from his position. McAboy was appointed to take his place, but he failed to take up the duties, and in February, 1858, Nobles was reinstated. Early in the spring he began to reorganize his staff, but on June 17, 1858, he was informed that, since no appropriation had been made by Congress, he should, in co-operation with the Indian agents in the vicinity, appraise the government property still in his possession, preparatory to closing his accounts. Perhaps Nobles still hoped that an appropriation would be obtained. At any rate, he delayed in complying with the instructions of the secretary of the interior so long that sharp disciplinary measures had to be resorted to. In the end he resigned, but the discrepancy in his accounts re-

the interior, January 18, 1858, in 35 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 36, p. 13-16 (serial 984).

mained unrectified. In 1861 the government obtained a judgment against him to the extent of \$3,446 and costs. 13

The interest aroused in Minnesota in the late fifties by this road to the Pacific paralleled that displayed in Minnesota in 1853, when Governor Isaac I. Stevens made his famous expedition to Puget Sound. Governor Stevens, however, was primarily interested in discovering a route for a proposed northern transcontinental railroad from Lake Superior to Puget Sound. That he found a practicable wagon route was more or less incidental to the purpose of his trip. The route favored in the Stevens report was that later adopted by the Northern Pacific Railroad. That of the Fort Ridgely-South Pass wagon road angled to the southwest. It is significant, however, that the latter road, al-

12. Thompson to Nobles, June 2, 3, 22, August 8, October 30, December 14, 1857, February 4, June 17, August 25, 1858, Thompson to M. W. Irwin, June 22, 1857, Thompson to McAboy, October 20, 30, 1857, February 3, 1858, Campbell to McAboy, October 30, November 30, 1857, in Interior Department Archives, Wagon Roads, Letter Books, 1: 37, 39, 52-54, 81-83, 102, 114, 129, 171, 182, 54, 99, 100, 128, 100, 109 (Calendar, 12, 14, 25, 30, 42, 47, 55, 74, 76, 26, 37, 40, 54, 39, 44). The Minnesota Historical Society has copies of the letters of June 22 (Thompson to Nobles) and August 8, 1857, and June 17, 1858. See also Daily Pioneer and Democrat, April 23, May 21, June 9, 1858. The documents relating to the investigation of Nobles and the judgment against him may be found in the Interior Department Archives, Wagon Roads, Letter Books, 1: 182-203 (Calendar, 77-89). See also Kelly to Junius Hillyer, January 21, 1861, in Interior Department Archives, Wagon Roads, Letter Books, 1: 284 (Calendar, 92). A photostatic copy of the latter letter is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

though it originally was intended for a wagon road, was built with the idea in mind of "its ultimate adaptability for the route of the 'Pacific Railroad.'" 13

The roads built under the auspices of the secretary of the interior formed but a small part of the total number built in Minnesota by the federal government. On the comprehensive network of roads over which the topographical engineers had supervision, progress was made slowly and without spectacular display. Federal funds for their construction were appropriated in 1855, 1856, and again in 1857. The appropriations of 1855 were supposedly sufficient for their completion; yet as long as the army engineers were in Minnesota they annually requested additional funds for the completion of the roads. The repetition of these requests may be accounted for in part by the changing personnel of the army engineers in charge of the work, for each of them had a different concept of what was needed to complete the roads. Simpson was removed from the Minnesota post in May, 1856. He was succeeded by Captain George Thom, who remained in the territory until May,

13. Stevens to Sibley, April 17, June 7, 15, 1853, in Sibley Papers; Minnesota Pioneer, February 23, March 9, 30, April 13, 1854; Stevens, Report of Explorations for a Route for the Pacific Railroad, 87-95, 141-143, 222-226, 352-358 (33 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 91 -- serial 791); report of Samuel Hedary to Nobles, December, 1857, in 35 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 36, p. 23 (serial 984).

1858. Thom in turn was replaced by Captain Howard Stansbury, who remained in charge of road making in Minnesota until 1861. When he was recalled, the comprehensive program of road making in Minnesota, which the federal government had begun in 1850, came to a halt, and the burden of maintaining the roads it had constructed was taken over by the communities through which they passed. ¹⁴

It is probable that at least a portion of the funds requested after 1855 was used for maintenance and repair purposes. Bridges frequently were washed out in the spring freshets and had to be replaced. It sometimes was discovered, after a road had been laid out, that a better route existed elsewhere. When such discoveries were made, the route was changed if it was possible to do so. Additional work often had to be done because of skimping or carelessness on the part of the contractors, which was not immediately apparent, but which showed up after the road had been subjected to the hard frosts of a northern winter. It sometimes happened, too, that the engineers found that their own specifications had been insufficient to insure the con-

14. Abert to Thom, May 7, 1856, Hartman Bache to Stansbury, October 23, 1861, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 20: 70, 23: 164 (Calendar, 3447, 4028); Thom to Abert, June 23, 1856, May 31, 1858, Simpson to Abert, June 24, 1856, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 4094, 4199, 3952). The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of the letters of June 23, 1856, and October 23, 1861. See also the St. Anthony Express, May 24, 1856.

struction of a good road.

The appropriation of 1857 was the last made specifically for military roads in the territory of Minnesota. That year, appropriations totaling about \$38,000 were made for use on the roads from Point Douglas to the St. Louis River, from Point Douglas to Fort Ripley, and from Mendota to Wabasha. With these funds and some unexpended balances remaining from former appropriations, Captain Thom found that he had at his disposal about \$44,500. In his annual report for 1857, however, he estimated that in addition to that sum, the amount of money necessary to complete the roads already authorized or under construction was more than \$100,000. The funds he had were sufficient, he believed, to complete the roads from Point Douglas to Fort Ripley, from Wabasha to Mendota, and from St. Anthony to Fort Ridgely. He reported that it would cost \$45,200 to complete the road to Lake Superior, \$36,000 to finish the Mendota-Big Sioux road, and \$25,000 to make a good road from Fort Ripley to the Red River. Only one road, that from Swan River to Long Prairie, was completed.

The actual condition of the roads was not all that the territorial settlers hoped for. Thom reported that on the road to Fort Ripley there were several sections that had yet to be built, including one of twelve miles between St. Paul and Point Douglas, and that the bridge over the Rum River at Anoka had to be repaired. In

general, however, this road was in better condition than the other government roads in the territory, with the exception of that from Mendota to Wabasha, where the principal task remaining to be done was that of repairing the bridge over the Cannon River. Thom had estimated in 1856 that \$3,000 would be necessary for this work, but only \$2,000 had been appropriated. In order to get the work done, the commissioners of Goodhue County contracted to repair the bridge, assuming for the county any costs above \$2,000.

The Mendota-Big Sioux road was practically completed from Mendota to a point just beyond Mankato, except for the corduroying of a section near Mankato. Thom reported that even the best portion of the road, however, was but barely passable. On the last 178 miles, from Mankato to the mouth of the Big Sioux River, no work whatever had been done. The part of the federal government in making the road from St. Anthony Falls to Fort Ridgely was restricted to cutting out the timber on the route. The appropriation was not used for almost two years after it was made available, because the commissioners appointed by the territorial legislature to lay out the road were unable to decide on a route, several of which were recommended. The Henderson route finally was selected, and in July, 1857, contracts were let for the removal of the timber,

the work being finished that fall. 15

The appropriation for the road from Crow Wing to the Red River road -- a distance of about 160 miles -- had been withheld because the language of the bill granting the money required its expenditure upon a route which all who knew the country agreed was impractical. Until the bill could be amended so as to allow the use of the money upon a practicable route, no action was taken. Such an amendment was passed by Congress in 1857, and work was begun that year. The appropriation was for only \$10,000, however, and it was apparent to Thom that at least \$25,000 more would be needed to complete this important road between the Mississippi and Red rivers. 16

It was on the road to Lake Superior, however, that the situation was worst. Up to 1857 the federal government had appropriated more than \$120,000 for its construction. Parts of the road were represented as impassable even in the driest season of the year for any but "foot or horseback passengers." Corduroying, ditching, and grading were required over almost its whole length, and numerous bridges had to be built, rebuilt, or repaired.

15. Report of Thom to Abert, September 5, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 11, p. 348-355 (serial 920).

16. See ante, p. 72; Statutes at Large, 11: 204; Report of Thom to Abert, September 5, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 11, p. 354 (serial 920).

Nevertheless, Thom hoped to make a passable winter road of it that year. The settlers at the head of the lake long before this had grown impatient with the delay in opening the road. In 1854 they opened a winter stage road from Fond du Lac to a point on the St. Croix River near the mouth of the Yellow River. There it connected with an old lumbering trail which led to Taylor's Falls and the military road. Their temporary road did much to relieve their isolation during the winter, but only the completion of the government road, or the construction of a railroad, would solve their communication problems. There was little immediate hope of obtaining a railroad, however, and the government road was far from complete. Indeed, for all practical purposes, it was in useable condition only from Point Douglas to Taylor's Falls. 17

When Captain Stansbury came to Minnesota, he concentrated his efforts on these two roads. During 1858 he used up the balance of the appropriation of 1857, but there had been enough money only for the completion of the portion of the Lake Superior road from Point Douglas to Kettle River. Work on the Red River road

17. Report of Thom to Abert, September 5, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 11, p. 349-352 (serial 920); Minnesota Pioneer, February 2, 9, 1854; Daily Minnesota Pioneer, April 16, 1855; Weekly Minnesotian, February 18, 1854; Daily Minnesotian, November 17, 20, December 1, 5, 1854, January 11, 1855.

likewise was restricted by the depletion of funds. He made a complete survey of the road as far as Otter Tail Lake, however, and a reconnaissance from there to the Red River. He recommended that the route of the road be changed so that Fort Abercrombie, almost directly west of Otter Tail Lake, would have a direct road to Fort Ripley. The original appropriation bill required that the road be built to the Red River near the mouth of the Wild Rice River, far to the north. The funds he had were sufficient to build twenty-nine miles of road from Fort Ripley up the valley of the Crow Wing River to what was known as the Grand Marais. ¹⁸

With the exhaustion of federal funds, road building in Minnesota by the federal government came to a standstill. Yet, the bureau of topographical engineers retained an officer in Minnesota for nearly two years after all funds were gone, partly in anticipation of future appropriations for roads, but mostly to provide for the custody of the vast amount of federal property which had accumulated over a period of ten years. Then, too, there was a good deal of clerical work that had to be done, including the preparation of an adequate series of maps of the roads already done or contemplated. It was to this end that the officers directed

18. Statutes at Large, 11: 203; report of Stansbury to Abert, October 15, 1858, in 35 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 1193-1202 (serial 976).

their efforts during their inactive years in Minnesota. On June 13, 1861, Stansbury was ordered to Columbus, Ohio, as a mustering officer. He disposed of the balance of the public property in Minnesota and closed the office. 19

Some activity on the part of the federal government continued after the withdrawal of the topographical engineers. During the Sioux uprising of 1862 and the years immediately following, the federal government maintained a considerable force in Minnesota to ward off any recurrence of the rebellion of the Indians. During this period the army participated in a minor degree in the road-building program of the frontier. The troops quartered at Fort Ripley, for example, repaired the roads in their vicinity and built bridges over many of the streams during the spring of 1864. The counties and individual citizens furnished the materials, and the army furnished the labor, with the result that much work was done which the harried frontier could not have performed under the circumstances. 20

The federal government returned to a policy of

19. Report of Stansbury to Abert, September 30, 1859, in 36 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 2, p. 857-866 (serial 1025); report of Stansbury to Abert, November 5, 1860, in 36 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 532-540 (serial 1079); report of Stansbury to Bache, October 22, 1861, in 37 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 546 (serial 1118).

20. St. Cloud Democrat, April 14, 1864.

making specific appropriations for roads in Minnesota in 1869 when the sum of \$10,000 was obtained through the efforts of Senator Alexander Ramsey for the construction of a military road from Duluth to the reservation of the Bois Fort band of Chippewa Indians at Nett Lake, far in the interior. The proposed road was to lead northward to Vermilion Lake, and thence westward to Nett Lake. Although the route was somewhat roundabout the reasons for its selection were obvious. In 1865 the reported discovery of gold had led to a stampede into the Vermilion Lake country, in the course of which a rough road was opened from Duluth by volunteer workers. In 1868 the state legislature appropriated funds for improving the road. The government road, by following the route of the earlier one, would save in construction costs, and at the same time, would improve the Vermilion Lake trail. Well-meaning Duluth citizens had a further interest in the opening of this road. The Canadian government about this time was opening the Dawson route, a land-water route leading from the Red River to Lake Superior, which was established in order to divert to Canadian merchants the lucrative trade of the Red River country. Duluthians hoped that the road to Nett Lake could be extended to the Rainy River, so that the Canadian trade might be intercepted and sent to Duluth. They argued that the Vermilion Lake route would be shorter and less laborious than the proposed

land-water route which involved numerous portages between Rainy Lake and Lake Superior. 21

By the end of the summer of 1869 the government engineers had built the road as far as Vermilion Lake, and had bridged all streams. A reconnaissance was made of the route between Vermilion Lake and Nett Lake, but the engineer in charge of the road found the difficulties of construction so great that there would be no possibility of completing the road within the limits of the appropriation. For this reason, the work on the portion beyond Vermilion Lake was postponed, never to be resumed, in spite of the fact that a small amount of the appropriation remained at the end of the year. The real purpose of the construction of the road was accomplished, however, for a passable wagon road had been opened as far as the "gold country." 22

The war department acted as the agent of the federal government in one more important public work before the program of road construction begun in 1850 was culminated. From the time James M. Goodhue came to Minne-

21. See post, p. 183-185; Statutes at Large, 15: 318; S. J. Dawson, Report on the Line of Route between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement (Ottawa, 1869); Duluth Minnesotian, July 10, 17, 1869.

22. George H. Primmer, "Pioneer Roads Centering at Duluth," in Minnesota History, 16: 294-297 (September, 1935); Duluth Minnesotian, July 10, 17, September 11, December 11, 1869; report of the commissioner of Indian affairs to the secretary of the interior, November 15, 1871, in 42 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 5, p. 1014-1016 (serial 1505).

sota, he had pleaded for a bridge across the Mississippi River at Fort Snelling, and his followers kept the idea alive. It was not until 1880, however, that the bridge was built. In 1876 the legislature authorized the construction of a free bridge at the end of the Fort Street road, and appointed three commissioners with authority to make all necessary contracts. Anticipating aid from sources other than the state of Minnesota, the legislators authorized the commissioners to receive any funds that were offered to them to aid in the construction of the bridge. When completed, it was to be maintained by Ramsey County. In 1878 the law was amended by increasing the number of commissioners to five, and, to guarantee unimpeded navigation of the river, a clause was added specifying that the spans of the bridge had to be one hundred feet long. That same year the federal government appropriated \$65,000 to assist in building the important link in the line of communication between Fort Snelling and the capital of the state, to be paid only when the bridge was completed and accepted by the secretary of war. The federal government insisted that the bridge be built with "stone abutments, or stone and iron abutments, and iron superstructure," that the floor of the bridge be at least sixty-eight feet above the high water mark, and that the span nearest Fort Snelling be two hundred feet long. With the assurance that federal aid would be forthcoming, construction on the bridge was

begun at once. By February, 1880, it was so nearly completed that the Old Settlers' Association of St. Paul was able to make an inspection tour over it. On March 19, 1880, Alexander Ramsey, then secretary of war, made a formal inspection and accepted the work, the money was turned over to the commissioners, and, with appropriate ceremonies, the bridge was "irrevocably dedicated to the public, and free to the United States, and all the people thereof." 23

The federal government furnished funds for the construction of other roads in Minnesota during the period following the end of the Civil War, all of which were built to improve the means of communication for the Indian agencies. In the construction of these roads, the department of the interior acted as the agent for the government. In a treaty with the Chippewa Indians, in the summer of 1863, the government agreed to spend \$5,000 for cutting out a road from Leech Lake to Red Lake, where a new agency was to be located. In another treaty with the Chippewa negotiated the next year, the government promised to spend \$7,500 more for the same

23. See post, p. 134; Special Laws, 1876, p. 209, 1878, p. 348; Statutes at Large, 20: 224; St. Paul Pioneer Press, February 5, March 20, 1880; Statement of Appropriations and Expenditures for Public Buildings, Rivers and Harbors, Forts, Arsenals, Armories, and Other Public Works, from March 4, 1789, to June 30, 1882, p. 327 (47 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 136 -- serial 1992). The Fort Street road is present-day West Seventh Street in St. Paul.

purpose. Accordingly, appropriations were made during the sessions of 1864 and 1865, and the agent was allowed to begin work on the road. In 1867 the White Earth Indian Reservation for the Chippewa was created, and the process of removing the different bands was begun shortly thereafter. To facilitate the work, the agent in 1869 asked for an appropriation for a road from Leech Lake to White Earth. During the following year he opened "a good wagon road, practicable at all seasons, westward from Leech Lake to White Earth, a distance of 80 miles." The completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad to the Red River Valley made Detroit the closest point on the railroad for both the White Earth and Red Lake reservations, and the need for opening a road to that point was imperative. The agent at Red Lake claimed in 1871 that the only existing road to the railroad was a hundred and fifty miles long, and "the worst in the state." The proposed road, he averred, would shorten the distance to the railroad by fifty miles, and save thirty dollars per ton in freight charges. In 1873 Congress included in the deficiency appropriation bill the sum of \$5,000 for such a road, and the following year, \$10,000 more was made available. With this money "a very fair wagon-road, with the necessary bridges," was constructed by the end of 1875. The appropriations, in fact, had been unusually generous, and an unspent

balance of \$5,000 was returned to the treasury. 24

The roads built by the federal government differed as widely as the purposes they served. Some were simply temporary trails through the wilderness, and others were so designed that they became arterial highways for the region through which they were built. In general, the roads built by the interior department were constructed solely to facilitate the business of the government. On the other hand, those built by the army engineers were designed for a dual purpose: that of facilitating the transaction of government business, and that of opening and constructing "the great thoroughfares sufficiently to answer the wants of the people until they erect themselves into a State, or, at any rate, until they are populous enough and efficient enough to make and

24. Statutes at Large, 13: 44, 86, 165, 561, 16: 719-723, 17: 538, 18: 173; reports of the commissioner of Indian affairs to the secretary of the interior, October 22, 1866, in 39 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 296 (serial 1284), December 23, 1869, in 41 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 3, p. 480 (serial 1414), October 31, 1870, in 41 Congress, 3 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 4, p. 771 (serial 1449), November 15, 1871, in 42 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 5, p. 1009 (serial 1505), November 1, 1874, in 43 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 5, p. 506 (serial 1639), November 1, 1875, in 44 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, part 5, p. 799 (serial 1680); Edward P. Smith, United States Indian agent at the Chippewa agency, to the commissioner of Indian affairs, January 16, 1872, in 42 Congress, 2 session, House Executive Documents, no. 130, p. 3 (serial 1513); Detroit Record, July 20, 1872, March 8, June 7, 1873, October 3, 1874.

foster their roads themselves." That was Simpson's view of what was important in constructing military roads in Minnesota when he replied, in his annual report to Colonel Abert in 1855, to the question of how far the government should go in building roads on the frontier. To make roads of this sort, he continued, in dense woods the trees should be felled for at least sixty-six feet, and in some cases one hundred feet, not only to let the sun and wind dry the road, but also "to prevent fallen trees from obstructing the road." Where the trees were less abundant and lower in height, he thought a width of thirty-three feet was sufficient. The road bed, in Simpson's opinion, should be not less than twenty-five, nor more than thirty-three feet wide, and should be entirely cleared of stumps, brush, and stones. All small holes should be filled and hummocks leveled off. No grade should exceed a ten foot rise in a hundred feet, and if possible it should not be greater than eight per cent. For soft or marshy ground, he recommended corduroyed roads, with the "logs thoroughly covered with suitable gravel or earth." He believed in adequate ditching at all times to insure drainage for the roads. The bridges and culverts that Simpson built were made of logs and heavy planking, partly because such bridges were adequate for frontier conditions, but also because the material for their construction could be obtained

cheaply on the frontier. 25

The cost of building such roads varied with the difficulty of the work and the bidding of the contractors. Simpson early devised a system of contracting whereby each type of work was contracted for at a specified rate. This was somewhat of a revolutionary procedure, for most army men simply contracted for the work at a specified rate per mile. Simpson's plan undoubtedly insured greater efficiency and honesty, for payment was made on the basis of the amount of work done, and no contractor could make a claim for additional compensation on the ground that the work proved more expensive than it had appeared upon first inspection. 26

In contrast with the roads built by Simpson were those constructed by the government under the supervision of the secretary of the interior. No adequate descriptions of the roads built by McAboy from Crow Wing to Leech Lake and from Anoka to Mille Lacs have been found. Descriptions of the kind of work performed on the Fort Ridgely-South Pass road, however, are found in the reports of Colonel Nobles and his assistants. Nobles

25. Report of Simpson to Abert, September 20, 1855, in 34 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 483-485 (serial 811).

26. Report of Simpson to Abert, September 20, 1855, in 34 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 494 (serial 811). Payment for accepted work was made monthly, but ten per cent of the contract price was withheld and was paid if the contract was completed within the specified time.

was trying, not to build a road, but to open a route. Bridging, for example, was omitted wherever possible, only two bridges being deemed necessary on the entire route. Over other streams, crossings were made by fords, or, as in the case of the Minnesota River at Fort Ridgely, by ferries. When necessary, the bottoms of the streams at the fording places were paved with boulders upon which gravel was placed. Nobles stated that there were but two or three hills along the route that presented obstacles, and those he had graded, "so that the ascent and descent will be easily accomplished." On those portions where the ground was marshy, rough corduroy roads were constructed if wood was available. Otherwise, a solid bottom was made by filling in the sloughs and swamps with grass or brush. The most laborious part of opening this road, one of the party explained, lay in the construction of mounds to mark the route. These mounds, from three to five feet in height, were placed along the side of the road "at intervals of a quarter and half mile, and nearer together, wherever it is deemed necessary." 27

The early road makers in Minnesota were not often troubled, as were those who followed them, by the neces-

27. Report of Nobles to the secretary of the interior, January 18, 1858, and accompanying reports, in 35 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 36, p. 13-29 (serial 984); Daily Pioneer and Democrat, July 12, September 26, 1857.

sity for following section lines, or by the legal technicalities which accompanied negotiations for acquiring a right of way. Most of the land was still in the hands of the government, but such private owners as there were usually recognized the advantage of having the road pass through their lands and willingly granted a right of way. Therefore the military roads were able to follow the best possible routes through the country they traversed. In this way, grades and costs of construction could be greatly reduced.

Minnesota appears to have profited more in grants of money for roads than most of her sister states. Appropriations for the eight roads constructed directly under the supervision of the secretary of war totaled something over \$312,500, and an additional sum of \$67,000 was granted to aid in the construction of bridges, the payment of which was dependent upon the approval of the structures by the war department. In addition to these appropriations, the secretary of the interior controlled the expenditure of \$87,500 on six roads, the construction of which that department supervised. The total of direct appropriations for road and bridge construction in the territory and state was about \$467,000, an amount which exceeded the combined total for Wisconsin and Iowa. According to a report prepared by the secretary of the treasury in 1882, Wisconsin received grants of money totaling only \$69,000 for

roads, and Iowa, a total of \$70,500. The former state, however, received a grant in excess of \$225,000 to aid in constructing the Milwaukee and Rock River Canal. Including this item, however, the combined total is still considerably smaller than the sum of the direct appropriations for Minnesota. Michigan, with a total of about \$400,000 in appropriations for roads, most closely approaches the Minnesota figure. 28

Perhaps one of the factors in Minnesota's good fortune in obtaining assistance from the federal government in building roads was the quality of her representation in Congress. There is no question but that Sibley and Rice, and Ramsey after them, were characterized not only by their desire to serve the interests of the frontier territory and state, but by their ability as well. Furthermore, in the halls of Congress throughout the

28. Statement of Appropriations, 304-307, 323, 327, 335-340. The appropriations for Minnesota roads totaled exactly \$467,220.93. The tabulation of appropriations is marred by frequent errors, but it is useful. Montana, for example, is charged with an appropriation of \$10,000 for the Fort Ripley-Red River road (p. 309). Minnesota is charged with the full appropriation for the military road proposed to be constructed along the western frontier in 1836 (p. 304), although no portion of the route lying in Minnesota was constructed. See ante, p. 29. On page 322 there is a statement of appropriations for a road from Fort Ripley to Bridger's Pass in the Rocky Mountains, authorized March 3, 1855. This should read "Fort Riley." See Statutes at Large, 10: 641. With the exception of the Fort Ridgely-South Pass wagon road (p. 306), and the Red Lake-Northern Pacific road authorized in 1873 and 1874 (p. 323), none of the roads constructed under the supervision of the secretary of the interior is mentioned.

territorial period, Minnesota's warm friend was that dynamic apostle of frontier squatter sovereignty, Stephen A. Douglas, and, during that period, he was at the height of his power. Minnesota grew up during that period in American history characterized by the lavish gifts which Congress made in money and land to encourage internal improvements. Minnesota had little occasion to profit from grants of land or money for the construction of inland waterways, and the era of grants of land for the encouragement of railroad construction was just beginning. It was Henry M. Rice who pointed out that the territory could not build roads through Indian land, and that, furthermore, men going to the frontier were too poor to build them. "While they are standing there with a hoe in one hand and a rifle in the other," they could not be expected to make roads. "Is it just that the people of a Territory should construct roads for the benefit of the General Government and non-residents?" Sibley previously had pointed out that the best interests of the nation itself would be served if it opened the roads into the wilderness so that the federal lands might be sold more rapidly. These arguments may have had some effect upon the members of Congress. Certainly, as Minnesota grew to maturity, Congress was almost extravagant in her gifts. On the day that the territory attained statehood, Congress bestowed upon her a gift

of lands for railroads and other internal improvements, and promised that, so long as there were public lands to be sold, the nation would give the new state five per cent of the proceeds for internal improvements. ²⁹

29. See ante, p. 49; post, 309, 311-318; Congressional Globe, 34 Congress, 1 session, p. 1493.