

V. COMPLETING THE FRONTIER ROAD SYSTEM

During the frontier era in Minnesota's history, wagon roads were built through virgin country in advance of, or contemporaneously with, its occupation by white men. Wagon roads were the sole means by which the communication of a large part of the state was carried on, and widespread interest was displayed in developing a system of main thoroughfares to connect the interior towns with each other and with those on navigable streams. But, with the coming of the railroad, the attitude of the people of Minnesota toward their wagon roads changed perceptibly, for the railroads took the place which, in the frontier age, the main highway system had occupied. Thereafter, the wagon roads were transferred to a position of secondary importance in the communication system. They were looked upon simply as a means for getting to the railroads, and, for the most part, they were of local interest only. No definite period can be pointed out as the one in which this change in popular opinion occurred. When one portion of the state arrived at a point where its most pressing communication needs were satisfied by the railroads, another part, still occupied with the problems of subduing the frontier, was trying

desperately to open wagon roads to the settled areas.

The eagerness for railroads was characteristic of Minnesota settlers from the beginning of the territorial period. Indeed, the craze for them was so pronounced that one editor was constrained to warn his readers that "in our eagerness for Railroads we are forgetting these common avenues through which in reality are flowing our wealth. . . . This road business is a matter of concern to us and we should not neglect it, and the best time to attend to it is now." ¹ Many of the early wagon roads were laid out with the express idea in mind that they might be used later as the routes for railroads. In laying out the Fort Ridgely-South Pass emigrant road, for example, every precaution was taken to insure the adoption of a route which would be a feasible one for a railroad. The same ideal was evidenced in Simpson's reports on the location of the Lake Superior-Point Douglas military road. The military roads, almost without exception, were designed to follow courses which railroad lines could later follow. The idea was carried over to the selection of routes for roads laid out by the territorial legislature. The route of the road from St. Paul to Kettle River, for example, was thought to be feasible for the construction of a railroad from St. Paul to Lake Superior.

1. Saint Peter Courier, June 26, 1857.

In the early sixties, the backers of a project to construct a direct road from St. Cloud to Lake Superior urged the rapid construction of the road not only because it would facilitate immediate communication needs, but also because it was a favorable route for a railroad. Even the frontier road system, therefore, was influenced by the probability of future railroad construction. ²

The eagerness of the farmers and businessmen of Minnesota to have railroads is understandable, for the businessman of the interior towns had to freight his merchandise over fifty or sixty, and sometimes many more, miles of rough roads, while the farmer had to haul his small loads of wheat to market over equally long distances. The wholesaling centers for merchandise and the buying centers for surplus agricultural products were located at points where goods and produce could be shipped most easily and cheaply to or from the mills or manufacturing centers. Transportation was important, and because costs of transportation by team were high, the steamboat, a cheaper means, was the determining factor in the location of important markets and wholesale points. The river towns, therefore, were the focal points to which trade and commerce ultimately

2. Report of Simpson to Abert, September 15, 1851, in 32 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 12, p. 11 (serial 637); Minnesota Democrat, July 15, 1851, September 7, 1853; post, p. 183.

flowed. It was not unheard of, for example, for farmers 150 miles from Winona to haul their surplus wheat to that important wheat market, and businessmen -- even those of a bustling center like Mankato -- sometimes had to freight their goods from Winona, especially when periods of drought restricted navigation on the smaller streams. In 1861 it was estimated that the average distance of the wheat farmers of Minnesota from towns on navigable streams was nearly eighty miles. During the season of grain buying, the congestion of grain wagons at such centers was so great, that they frequently waited in line for two or three days before they could be unloaded. The bumpy, poorly constructed roads of the frontier era restricted the size of loads that a farmer could haul, and the small profit that accrued to him from the sale of his wheat or other produce was quickly swallowed up by the excessive costs of transportation to the market. Under such conditions, it was inevitable that the wagon roads should have been overshadowed in importance by a much more convenient and less expensive railroad. ³

The frontier of settlement at the end of the ter-

3. Henrietta M. Larson, The Wheat Market and the Farmer in Minnesota, 1858-1900, 17-54 (New York, 1926). In a historical account of the village of Mapleton in Blue Earth County, published in the Mapleton Enterprise for April 24, 1891, the statement is made that when the farmers began to raise wheat they "hailed it to the Mississippi river, a load of it being sufficient to buy a barrel of salt and a few nick-nacks."

ritorial period extended beyond the Minnesota River, up the valley of the Mississippi beyond St. Cloud, and northward up the valley of the St. Croix to Sunrise City. Yet scarcely one-third of the area of the state was included in the settled portion. The narrowness of the margin of white occupation is illustrated by the blood-curdling massacre of frontier settlers by Indians at Spirit Lake, Iowa, which occurred during the winter of 1857, and Spirit Lake lies only slightly west of a line drawn through the midpoint of Minnesota from north to south. In 1862 New Ulm was so much a frontier town that its inhabitants were subjected to a furious siege by Indian hostiles, while red men that same summer attacked communities such as Hutchinson, Glencoe, and Maine Prairie near St. Cloud, and at the latter place the panic-stricken inhabitants erected a barricade for defense against a threatened raid. At the head of Lake Superior an isolated settlement carried on its communication with the principal towns of Minnesota over a frontier trail. The line of settlement reached up the Mississippi Valley to Fort Ripley and Crow Wing, and along the Red River trail up the Sauk Valley a few straggling settlements had been begun. Pembina in the Red River Valley was isolated from the rest of Minnesota save for a modicum of communication, and near the junction of the Bois des Sioux and Otter Tail rivers Fort Abercrombie was built to protect the land-hungry

settlers who were reaching out to grasp eligible sites for homes in the valley.

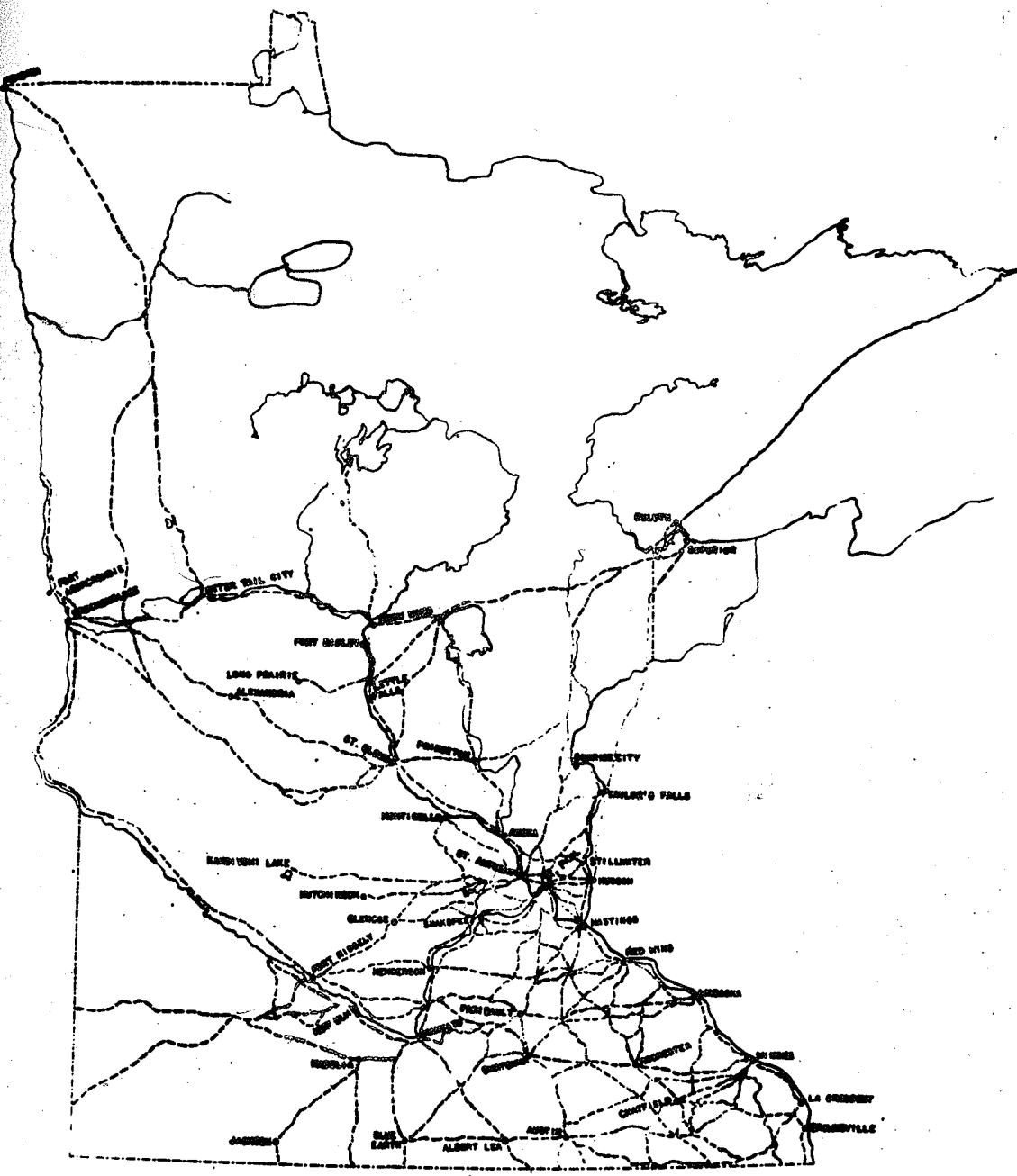
For the settlers in the region beyond the line of the frontier, the immediate concern was the opening of wagon roads. A few of them might penetrate the wilderness to find new homes, but like their predecessors of the fifties in the southeastern portion of Minnesota, unless roads were opened they could not expect settlers to follow them. Consequently, the advance of the frontier of settlement and the advance of the rapidly widening network of roads proceeded side by side, and the frontier of settlement coincided with the borderline beyond which there were no roads.

The legislature of 1857-58 authorized the opening of 166 roads. Most of these were located within the settled areas of southeastern and central Minnesota, but the opening of roads from Henderson to Lake Traverse, from Henderson to the Nobles road at the crossing of the Big Cottonwood River, from Madelia westward to Benton Lake, and from Blue Earth and Mankato to Jackson represents the advance of the frontier in the southwestern portion of the state. Roads from Otter Tail City and St. Cloud to Breckenridge, from Breckenridge to the mouth of the Sheyenne River, and from Minneapolis to the western boundary of the state by way of Kandiyohi meant the extension of the frontier westward beyond the Coteau des Prairies. Similar extensions of the lines of

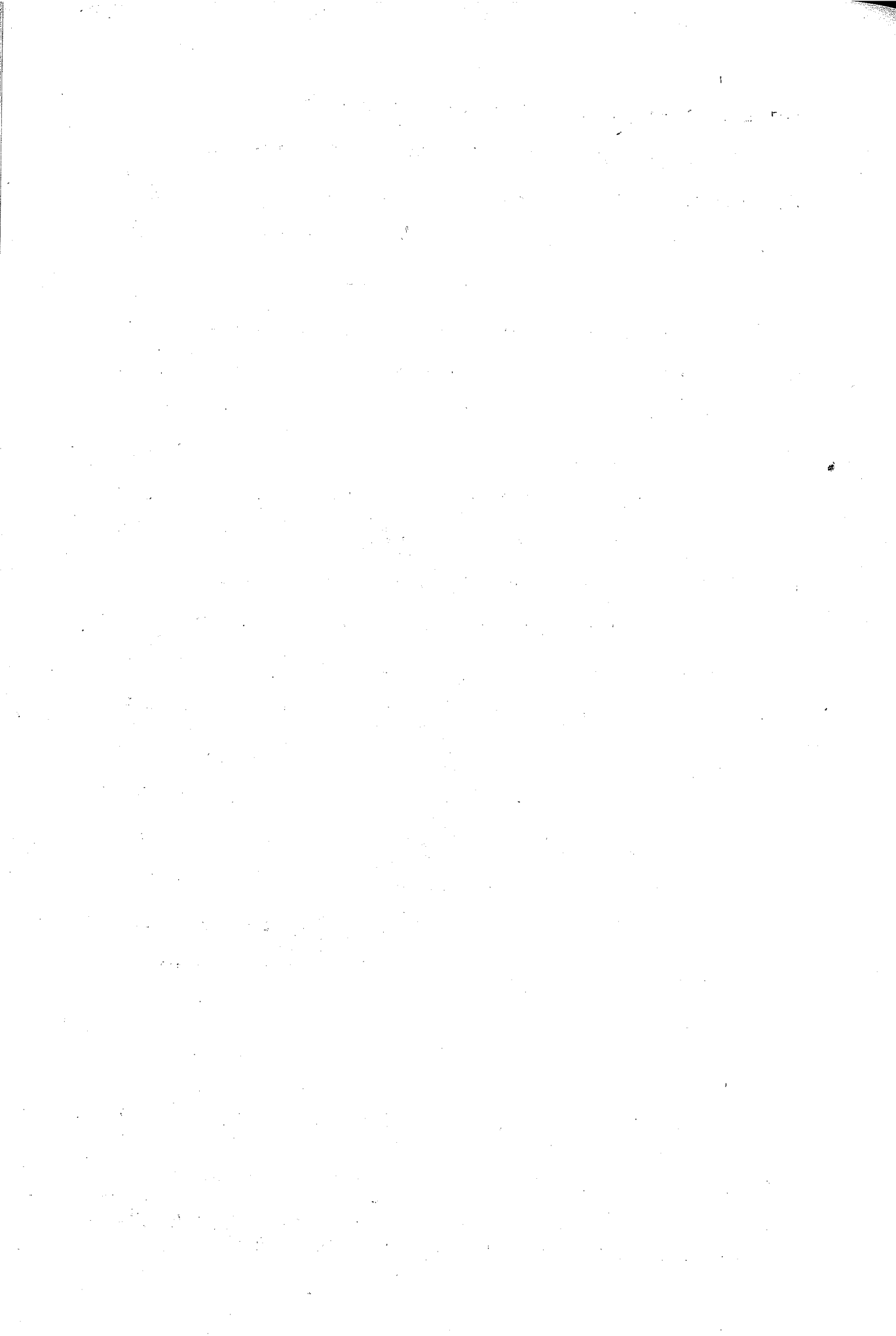
communication in the northern and northeastern portions of Minnesota testify to the conquest of the wilderness in that direction. ⁴

The full effects of the panic of 1857 were not felt by the people of Minnesota until the spring of 1858. Then only did they realize that the depression was more than a temporary tightening of purse strings. Money almost disappeared from the frontier markets, and in many communities barter and credit money appeared. Hundreds of persons lost their property through foreclosures of mortgages or through forced sales to liquidate debts. As one historian has expressed it, "speculators were forced to become farmers" in order to survive, and the prophecy of a contemporary observer that "the beggar and the broker will change coats . . . without either losing his respectability" was abundantly demonstrated. Recovery from that financial storm was slow, and, about the time conditions were becoming normal, the rebellion of the southern states occurred. As a climax, the Sioux Indians in the summer of 1862 rose in revolt against the whites, and for the next two or three years the frontier settlements had not only to contend with a depressed financial condition and the Civil War, but it had constantly to fear a recurrence of the bloody Indian war as well. The net result was that the frontier advanced

4. Special Laws, 1858, p. 107, 110-112, 117-119, 299, 387.



MAIN ROUTES OF TRAVEL IN MINNESOTA IN 1860



slowly, if at all, during these years. ⁵

As the progress of settlement was slowed down by the war and unrest of the early sixties, so the program of extending roads into the frontier was retarded. In the areas ravaged by the Indians, hundreds of settlers fled in panic from their homes. In that portion of the state it was necessary to reoccupy the frontier, and that process consumed the greater portion of the remaining years of the Civil War period. In areas more remote from the Indian troubles, however, the struggle for the mastery of new soil proceeded as rapidly as the decreased immigration of those years permitted.

The improvement of communication between the upper Mississippi River settlements about St. Cloud and the settlement at the head of Lake Superior engrossed the attention of the pioneers in those regions. The roads laid out during the territorial period slowly were made ready for use. In 1859 citizens of Superior completed a road leading westward to Mille Lacs at an estimated cost of \$20,000. At the same time the people in the upper Mississippi Valley built their end of the road, and in April, 1860, it was so far completed that teams loaded with provisions passed over it. ⁶

5. Larson, The Wheat Market and the Farmer, 18; Minnesota Republican (St. Anthony and Minneapolis), October 30, 1857.

6. Ante, p. 156-160; A. G. Descent to Isaac Crowe, February 24, 1859, in the Crowe Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society; New Era (Sauk Rapids), January 26, March 9, April 19, 1860.

In 1864 the legislature authorized the construction of a direct road from St. Cloud to Lake Superior. The city of St. Cloud was authorized to spend up to \$200 for surveying the road and a maximum of \$2,000 toward paying for its construction, while Stearns and St. Louis counties each might expend \$4,000 for construction purposes. By the beginning of summer the road had been laid out for a distance of twenty-five miles, but the surveying of the remainder was deferred until the following year. This was sufficient to give access to the rich pineries of the upper Rum River country, however, and bade fair to give St. Cloud merchants a monopoly of the lucrative trade of this industry, for the lumbermen, up to this time, had to transport their supplies through the mud and ruts of the "most execrable roads" from Anoka and Princeton. ⁷

The extension of the frontier northward during this period was accentuated by a brief, but intense flurry occasioned by the discovery of gold in the country about Vermillion Lake in the summer of 1865. For a few months that fall there was a stampede of gold seekers to the mining country eighty miles north of Duluth. The first gold hunters had to make their way to Vermillion Lake from Duluth on foot through interminable swamps, or by a tedious and exhausting voyage in a canoe up the St.

7. St. Cloud Democrat, March 10, 31, 1864; Special Laws, 1864, p. 328-330.

Louis River. To overcome the barrier of swamp and forest, the citizens of Duluth and Superior began to raise funds for the construction of a wagon road. In response to appeals for financial aid, citizens from St. Paul, St. Anthony, and even from Chicago made contributions, and by the time snow covered the ground, a roadway had been cleared for a distance of forty miles. During the winter a band of miners, bound for Vermilion Lake with equipment for extracting the gold from the quartz rock of the mining country, completed the track.⁸

The opening of this road was the signal for a boom in the mining country. By the time spring came, there were fifteen mining companies in the field, and the wilderness was transformed into a busy mining camp. Then the boom collapsed as suddenly as it had begun. An attempt to revive it in the fall of 1867 was only partially successful, but under the stimulus of proof that there was gold in the Vermilion Lake region, the legislature in 1868 was persuaded to authorize the opening of a road from Duluth to Vermilion Lake which would be passable in summer or winter. The sum of \$5,000 was appropriated for its construction from the internal improvement fund, and more money, if needed, could be drawn from the state's general revenue fund. The follow-

8. St. Paul Pioneer, November 11, 28, 1865, January 28, February 17, March 28, 1866; Primmer, in Minnesota History, 16: 295.

ing year the legislature appropriated an additional \$1,000, and this, together with the federal appropriation of \$10,000 made that same year, was sufficient to build a road which was passable the year round. By that time, however, the gold boom had died and the settlements were deserted. The country was not attractive for agricultural purposes, and hence for more than a decade the road was used only by Indians, lumbermen, and occasional trappers. Along the north shore of Lake Superior the land offered little more attraction for farmers. Yet as early as 1854 there was a trail extending from Minnesota Point as far as Beaver Bay. In 1857 the territorial legislature in a memorial to Congress asked for an appropriation for a military road, which, had it been built, would have passed along the shore of Lake Superior from Minnesota Point to Pigeon River. The petition was not granted, but in 1858 the Minnesota legislature authorized the opening of a road along the north shore to Beaver Bay. It was not until 1873 that a road to Pigeon River materialized, when an appropriation of \$1,500 from Minnesota's internal improvement fund was used to help St. Louis and Lake counties to open the road. ⁹

In the meantime the railroad had come to the aid

9. Primmer, in Minnesota History, 16: 295-297; Special Laws, 1868, p. 446-448, 1873, p. 314; General Laws, 1869, p. 119; ante, p. 112, 159.

of the pioneers in the conquest of the frontier. In 1862 the success of Minnesota visionaries in their long struggle against financial hardships was signaled by the opening of railroad service between St. Paul and St. Anthony on the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. By the end of 1865 railroads were operating over 210 miles of road. Two years later the Minneapolis and Cedar Valley Railroad had completed its road to the Iowa line, where it connected with the McGregor Western Railroad, making possible an all rail connection with Chicago. By 1867 a railroad constructed westward from Winona had reached Waseca. Another railroad followed the Minnesota River in the general direction of the Mendota-Big Sioux road, which by 1867 had reached Le Sueur. From St. Paul and St. Anthony the branch line of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad reached St. Cloud in 1866, and the construction of the main line westward from Minneapolis toward the Red River Valley near the junction of the Bois des Sioux and Otter Tail rivers was begun the following year. It was completed in 1871. Northward from St. Paul the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad extended toward Duluth, and the opening of service on this line in 1870 stilled the long plaint of the communities at the head of the lakes, for they at last had a through connection with St. Paul. But the construction of the line to Duluth also meant that the construction of another important rail link -- the Northern Pacific, authorized by Congress

in 1864 -- could be begun. By the end of 1872 this road had pushed westward across the wilderness, first to Brainerd near old Crow Wing, and then along the route of the Crow Wing trail to the Red River at Moorhead. So rapidly did Minnesota's railway system advance, that by the end of 1872 there were almost two thousand miles of railroad in operation in the state. By the end of the decade the mileage had increased to more than three thousand, and by the end of the century the latter figure¹⁰ was more than doubled. 10

The construction of railroads hastened the occupation of the frontier, for, in relation to the unsettled interior, the towns along the line of a railroad assumed a position similar to that which the river towns had held during an earlier age. Then the steamboats had brought settlers and supplies to the frontier. During the later period, when the frontier had moved beyond the reach of the river steamboat, the railroads reached to, and sometimes beyond, the frontier, and portions of the hinterland which had been inaccessible were readily reached by land-hungry settlers. On this new frontier, or series of frontiers, the processes of the advance of settlement were the same as those that had been enacted during the territorial period. Wherever the fron-

10. Message of Governor Marshall, January 10, 1868, in Minnesota, Executive Documents, 1867, p. 24; Railroad Commissioner, Reports, 1872, p. 42; Railroad and Warehouse Commission, Reports, 1900, p. 3.

tier was located, roads had to be opened before the wilderness was conquered. The story of the development of the trails about such a center as Alexandria during the late sixties and early seventies is essentially the same as that enacted in southeastern Minnesota during the fifties, and it was repeated in the regions farther west during the seventies and eighties. When the last frontier areas of northern Minnesota were settled during the closing years of the nineteenth century, the processes which those pioneers went through to open a system of roads were essentially the same as those experienced by their earlier counterparts.

In 1866 St. Cloud was the northern terminus of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. St. Cloud merchants anticipated great financial gains from that fact, and many of them believed that the town would develop into a wholesaling point rivaling St. Paul. At the celebration commemorating the completion of the railroad to St. Cloud they were warned that "the country to the west is ready to pour into this granary -- your town -- its surplus products to be transported to the great markets." ¹¹ St. Cloud was already the center for a large forwarding and freighting business, and the completion of the railroad increased activity in this field. Between three and four hundred wagons were employed in hauling supplies from the

11. St. Cloud Democrat, August 23, 1866.

end of the railroad to the government posts on the frontier, or to the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company during the season which began in May and continued into the early winter. In the spring of 1868 more than three hundred teams from St. Cloud were on the road at one time, and the passage of trains containing forty or fifty wagons were events so commonplace that they seemed scarcely worthy of mention. St. Cloud also was the point where the numerous small towns in the interior transshipped their supplies. The railroad brought these inland communities closer to civilization, and, with the establishment of new wagon roads which opened wide areas of agricultural lands to settlement, immigrants thronged in. For a distance of a hundred miles or more, merchants and businessmen turned to St. Cloud as the source of their supplies. ¹²

The settlers in the interior country were as keenly interested in building contacts with the railroad as the communities along the railroad were in making contacts with them. For the people in a town like Alexandria, located ninety miles from the railroad on the crooked stage road from St. Cloud to Fort Abercrombie, the problem of communication was important. They expected that the railroad would be extended beyond St. Cloud, but

¹². St. Cloud Journal, September 13, 27, October 25, 1866, September 5, 1867, May 28, 1868; Sauk Centre Herald, May 14, 28, June 18, September 17, November 5, 1868, May 13, 27, 1869; Alexandria Post, May 5, June 5, 1869.

until it was actually built, they were dependent on the wagon roads. Consequently, they were intensely interested in improving the old road and opening new ones. The excessive cost of transporting goods by team as compared with transportation by rail, however, was the decisive factor in determining the towns to which the trade of the inland communities would flow. The editor of the Alexandria Post, in the spring of 1869, estimated that it cost twelve dollars to haul forty bushels of corn fifty miles by team, but that by railroad the same amount of grain could be hauled the same distance for only four dollars. More specifically, it cost Alexandria merchants \$1.25 to transport a hundred pounds of freight from St. Cloud to Alexandria. Therefore, when the construction of the main line of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad westward from Minneapolis was begun, and it became apparent that the new railroad would pass a short distance south of Alexandria, these pioneers turned their attention in that direction. By October, 1870, the main line had reached Benson, only forty-eight miles from Alexandria. The ambitious Alexandrians were fully prepared for the event. Almost a year before they had cut out a new road to Benson and had made arrangements for the inauguration of stage service as soon as the railroad reached that point. Within a short time the stage line was operating on a daily schedule, and a large freighting business was carried on. The ties that

bound the community to St. Cloud were severed, because "in these railroad days the saving of forty-five miles of staging is a great object." 13

The ascendancy of Benson lasted less than a year. In the summer of the following year, the head of the railroad reached Morris, a point which was still closer to Alexandria. Immediately a new road was built to the latter town in order that the shortest route to the railroad might be utilized. Two years later the busy road to Morris had degenerated into a little-traveled country road, for the resumption of construction on the branch line had brought the railroad to Melrose, a point still closer to Alexandria. The construction of several modern grain elevators at Melrose, together with spirited competition between a number of grain dealers there, made that point a very favorable market for the wheat of the Alexandria country and provided an additional inducement for the traffic of the agricultural regions of western Minnesota to move in that direction. Thirty thousand bushels of wheat were received at the Melrose elevators in January, 1873, and much of it came from the Alexandria and Long Prairie country. Travel from Alexandria centered at Melrose for more than five years, for the panic of 1873 completely disrupted the building program of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad. It was not

13. Alexandria Post, January 20, 1868, April 7, June 19, November 20, 1869, January 15, October 1, 15, 1870, March 11, May 27, 1871.

until 1878 that the construction of the railroad was resumed. On July 30 train service was extended to Sauk Center, and on November 15 the railroad finally reached Alexandria, ending that phase of the development of its communication system. ¹⁴

While the people of Alexandria were so keenly interested in their own problem of developing lines of communication to the railroad, that community was itself the center toward which the country beyond it turned. For a decade Alexandria was the last town of any size on the westward road to the Red River Valley, and it became the market center for the settlers in the country beyond. For several years the flour mill at Alexandria was the only one in that portion of the state, and the pioneers who were building settlements such as Elizabethtown, St. Olaf, Clitherall, Otter Tail City, or Fergus Falls made regular pilgrimages to Alexandria for flour and feed. Many of them came forty or fifty miles for this purpose, but the appearance upon Alexandria's streets of twenty-five or thirty teams from the far-off settlement of Rush Lake, near present-day Perham in Otter Tail County, provoked the editor of the Alexandria Post to exclaim: "Think of it, ye dwellers in towns and cities, who all your lives have had your barrels of flour rolled to your doors -- one hundred and fifty

14. Alexandria Post, June 24, September 16, 1871, February 8, 15, 1873, August 2, November 15, 1878.

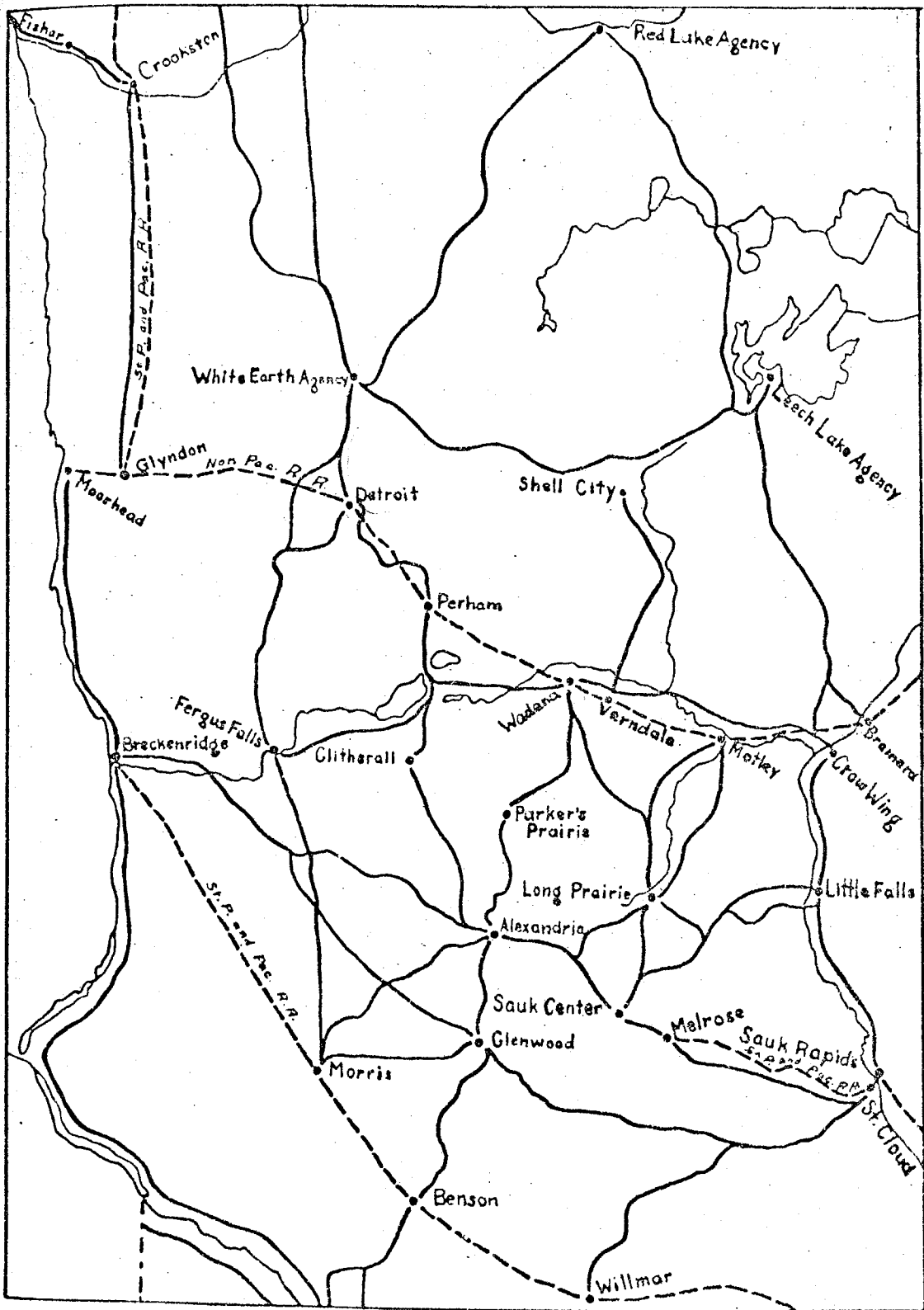
miles to mill." These remote communities watched the progress of railroad construction on both the Northern Pacific and the St. Paul and Pacific lines with no little interest. The beginning of railroad service on the latter line to Morris in 1871 divorced their trade from Alexandria, for it was the signal for the inauguration of a heavy freighting business and the establishment of a stage line over a newly opened state road from Morris to Fergus Falls, and the extension of these services over country trails to the other towns of the county. As soon as the railroad was completed to the town of Campbell, the road from Morris was forsaken in favor of a newer route to the nearest town on the railroad. Each community sought its nearest way to the railroad, and when the Northern Pacific Railroad reached this region, the towns along its route attracted the trade of the interior villages such as Otter Tail City and Pelican Rapids. While there was some competition between the two railroads for the trade of a community such as Fergus Falls, a commonsense compromise prevailed whereby each community sought its railroad over the route which was shortest and most easily traveled. 15

15. Alexandria Post, October 10, December 26, 1867, December 2, 1868, January 6, 1869; Sauk Centre Herald, June 11, 1868; Fergus Falls Advocate, April 29, June 3, 10, 17, July 1, December 23, 1871, March 9, 16, 1872, January 28, February 18, July 15, December 9, 1874; Otter Tail City Record, November 25, 1871; Special Laws, 1871, p. 345. The legislature in 1875 appropriated four hundred dollars to aid in the construction of a state

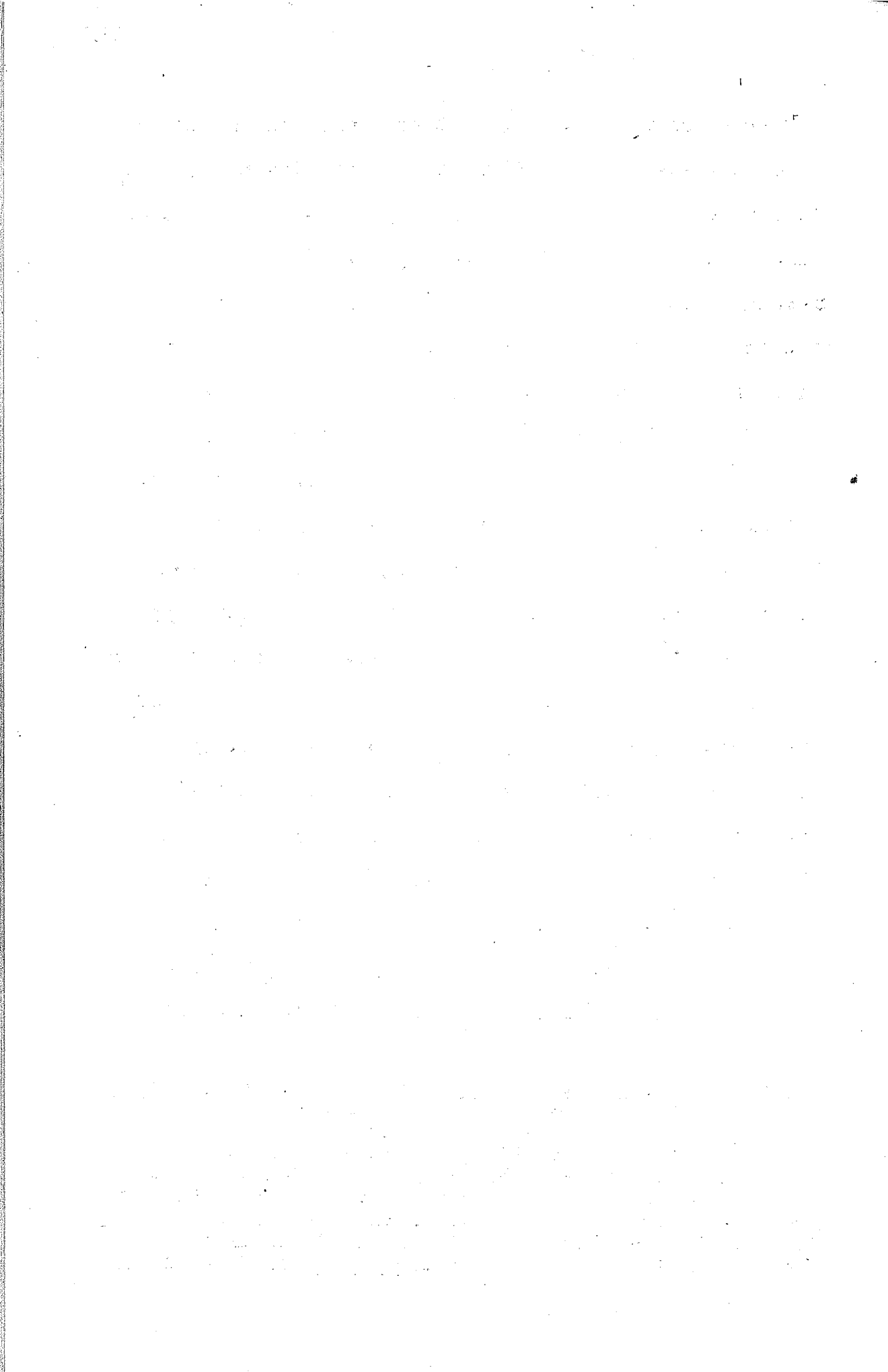
The construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad weaned away from Alexandria the trade of such communities as Rush Lake and Parker's Prairie. The trade of the former was irretrievably lost, for it was within a few miles of the railroad. The people of Parker's Prairie were somewhat more remote from the railroad, but they at once undertook the task of opening roads northward. In the fall of 1871 they completed their new road, which led to Wadena, and in 1874 the legislature authorized the location of a state road between the two towns and appropriated seven hundred dollars to be used for building bridges across the streams along the way. Over this road a stage line was operated and a heavy traffic in wheat was carried on. The alienation of the trade of Parker's Prairie was not allowed to occur without a contest on the part of Alexandria, however, for the same session of the legislature which authorized the opening of the road to Wadena, authorized a state road to be laid out from Alexandria to Parker's Prairie. The distance to Alexandria was shorter than that to Wadena, and, had all other conditions been equal, Alexandria logically should have drawn the trade of the

road from Frazee to Pelican Rapids, thus assuring the former place of the trade of Pelican Rapids. See Special Laws, 1875, p. 413. Alta Kimber, in "The Coming of the Latter Day Saints in Otter Tail County," in Minnesota History, 13: 391 (December, 1932), relates that the settlers at Clitherall hauled their grain to Cold Springs, near St. Cloud, to have it ground into flour.





ROADS OF WEST CENTRAL MINNESOTA IN 1878



Parker's Prairie country. But even when the railroad reached Alexandria in 1878, trade continued to flow to Wadena, because the road to that place was much better than that to Alexandria. The efforts of Alexandria merchants to construct a good road were of no avail, and the grain trade of Parker's Prairie flowed to the Northern Pacific town of Wadena. ¹⁶

The Northern Pacific towns monopolized a large share of the trade of Todd County, drawing from a territory extending as far southward as Long Prairie. Before the removal of the Winnebago agency from Long Prairie, a military road had led from the Mississippi River near Little Falls up the valley of the Swan River to Long Prairie, and as early as 1852 a trail had led into the Long Prairie region from the Sauk Valley. When settlement got under way in the late sixties and early seventies, however, it was concentrated in the valley of the Long Prairie River, and it was over two roads, one on each side of the river, which led from the Northern Pacific town of Motley to Long Prairie, that settlers came into the county. During the fall

16. Otter Tail City Record, November 4, 1871; Wadena Tribune, March 10, 1877, March 30, October 5, 1878; Alexandria Post, July 4, October 10, 1879, August 5, November 25, 1881; Special Laws, 1874, p. 309, 395. In 1876 the legislature authorized the opening of a road from a point on the Long Prairie River south of Parker's Prairie to the state road from Parker's Prairie to Wadena, thus weaning away still more of the trade of the Alexandria merchants. Special Laws, 1876, p. 195.

of 1873 a new road between Sauk Center and Long Prairie was opened, partly by county action and partly by the co-operative action of the people living along its route, and over this road a mail and passenger stage line was established, which later was extended along the river roads to Motley. By the middle seventies, the Long Prairie country had become a wheat growing region of considerable importance, and the rough prairie roads were depended upon to bear the grain to the railroads. 17

During the unusually wet season of 1873, the Todd County roads became quagmires, and the bogged-down grain growers sought for other means of transport. In 1870 a contractor furnishing timber supplies for the Northern Pacific Railroad construction crews had built a flat boat, called the "Black Maria," upon which he transported his cargoes down the Long Prairie River. This boat, and another of similar design, were adapted for use in transporting grain from Long Prairie to Motley. It was not a great deal more economical than hauling by team had been, for the average cost of the trip was about twenty cents per bushel of wheat, and that was what teamsters estimated the cost of "wagoning on good roads" to be, but the existing roads were so bad that

17. Ante, p. 51; Minnesota Pioneer, February 19, 1852; Alexandria Post, December 18, 1869; Sauk Centre Herald, December 1, 1870, September 14, 21, 28, 1872, January 4, October 18, 1873, December 26, 1874, March 3, 1877, March 14, 1879.

it was practically the only way in which the grain could be got to market. The enthusiastic frontier navigators decided that if a steam engine were installed on one of the flatboats, it would be possible to make the return trip in much less time and with less expense. In the spring of 1875, therefore, a steamboat appeared on the little Long Prairie River and made a number of trips back and forth to Motley hauling wheat and supplies. Unfortunately, however, the river was high enough to float the steamboat only during a few weeks in the spring and a month in the fall, and navigation was hindered by a tortuous channel and numerous obstructions. The legislature of 1875, therefore, was prevailed upon to appropriate \$2,000 to clear the channel. Drier seasons followed, however, and the roads improved so much that the steamboat venture was given up. The boat lay on the sandy beach of the river at Long Prairie for several years thereafter. 18

Gradually a system of roads into the Long Prairie region was developed. In 1871 a new road from Little Falls to Sauk Center, which the legislature had author-

18. Sauk Centre Herald, October 20, 1870, June 20, December 5, 26, 1874, April 3, May 29, July 3, 31, 1875, June 24, 1876; Special Laws, 1875, p. 405. The Fergus Falls people embarked on a similar experiment in 1873 and 1874 with better success. A fleet of barges was constructed to haul flour and lumber to Fort Garry, and in the summer of 1873 a steamboat was navigated on the Otter Tail River. Fergus Falls Advocate, February 19, 26, March 19, August 27, October 8, 1873.

ized in 1867, was opened in order that the drouth-stricken farmers of the Little Falls region might exchange lumber for grain which was raised in large quantities in the southern portion of Todd County. The road facilitated the settlement of that large area between Sauk Center and Little Falls, as well. During the last part of the seventies, a state road from Wadena to Long Prairie, following the east bank of the Wing River, was built, providing a new road to communities such as Hewitt, Eagle Bend, and Browerville. For the northern portion of the county, the natural outlet remained the Northern Pacific towns, but the completion of the St. Paul and Pacific to Sauk Center during the summer of 1878 had the effect of drawing to that town the trade from the southern portion of the county. Until a railroad was built from Sauk Center to Wadena in the summer of 1891, however, the communication system of Todd County was based upon the development of a series of wagon roads extending north to the Northern Pacific and south to the St. Paul and Pacific railroads. 19

Directly north of the Long Prairie region lay another fertile area of prairie and timberland which was made accessible to settlers by the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad. The Shell prairies,

19. Sauk Centre Herald, July 15, 1871; Wadena Tribune, May 26, August 4, 1877; Special Laws, 1867, p. 329, 1877, p. 276-278.

three in number, were located about ten miles farther north of the railroad than Long Prairie was south of it. It was possible to reach this region by wagon before the Northern Pacific Railroad was built westward from Brainerd, but the route lay by a roundabout way, following the government road from Crow Wing to Leech Lake, which was opened in 1855, and thence along the rough wagon road made in 1870, when the Chippewa Indians were removed to the White Earth agency. This latter trail skirted the northern edge of the middle prairie, near present-day Park Rapids, and crossed the third prairie from east to west near Osage. In 1872 the agent at White Earth opened a road to the railroad at Detroit, by following which, it was also possible to gain access to the Shell prairies from the railroad. Both routes were long and circuitous, however, and the uncertain nature of the roads kept the region from becoming popular. Until the late seventies, therefore, the Shell prairies remained unsettled. ²⁰

During the winter of 1878 a few pioneers explored a route for a road northward from Verndale to the Shell prairie region. It was a rough and stumpy road which they cut out for spring travel, but it was a more direct route. During the next two years settlers thronged toward the prairies, but the bad roads were a serious

20. Ante, p. 90, 100, 115-117.

hindrance to immigration. One would-be settler, tarrying at Wrightstown in the spring of 1880, wrote to a friend in Alexandria that numerous settlers were making their way to the Shell prairies, but that "others are returning, uttering the most bitter curses against the country, all owing to such bad roads." The editor of a Park Rapids newspaper wrote, "A ride . . . over the present road is not a delightful trip." Forty miles or less separated the Shell prairies from the railroad, but over the roundabout road the distance was about sixty miles.²¹ In 1881 a new road to the Shell prairie country was opened from Detroit by one of the county officials of Becker County who undertook on his own initiative to locate this road. When he demonstrated that a road could be made, the county commissioners appropriated four hundred dollars of county funds for that purpose. The only possible route was also a roundabout one, winding among the lakes of Becker County, but it was many miles shorter than the old road through White Earth. Its construction made it possible to travel from Park Rapids to Detroit by team with little more difficulty than attended a journey from Park Rapids to Verndale.²²

In the meantime the citizens of Wadena were view-

21. Park Rapids Enterpriser, July 25, October 26, 1882; Wadena County Tribune (Verndale), April 19, 1879; Alexandria Post, August 8, 1879, June 25, 1880.

22. Park Rapids Enterpriser, August 17, 1882; Alvin H. Wilcox, A Pioneer History of Becker County, Minnesota, 654-659 (St. Paul, 1907).

ing the development of this new region with considerable interest. The wheat trade flowing to Verndale was an inducement to them to make efforts to open a road to divert at least a portion of this traffic to their town. Accordingly, the merchants of Wadena contributed privately to a fund for the construction of a road to tap the Verndale road about a dozen miles north of town. Their first effort to obtain the Shell prairie trade was not successful, for they failed to build a better road or to shorten the traveling distance. In 1883, however, construction of a new road was begun which would shorten the distance materially. That the opening of this new shorter route was welcomed by the Shell prairie residents is demonstrated by their willingness to help to construct it. They built not only the portion that ran through Hubbard County, but also two miles of it in Wadena County. The completion of the road was greeted as "certainly a great improvement on all the old roads, being fifteen miles shorter, and a far better road to travel over." It saved freighters an extra day of traveling, and made Wadena the nearest point on the railroad. A stage line was put into service over the new road, and one proud citizen who traveled in a private conveyance boasted that he had covered the distance in a little more than six hours, a remarkable feat in comparison with the previous average time of fourteen hours on the road between Park Rapids and Verndale. Commercially,

the road was profitable for Wadena, for the wheat trains which formerly had traveled to Verndale now made Wadena the terminus of their journey. In response to the wondering comment of a Wadena editor on the increased number of Park Rapids visitors in town, the Park Rapids newspaper replied, "We can tell our Wadena neighbors -- if they do not already realize the fact -- that this highway they have cast up will be a very good thing for them." 23

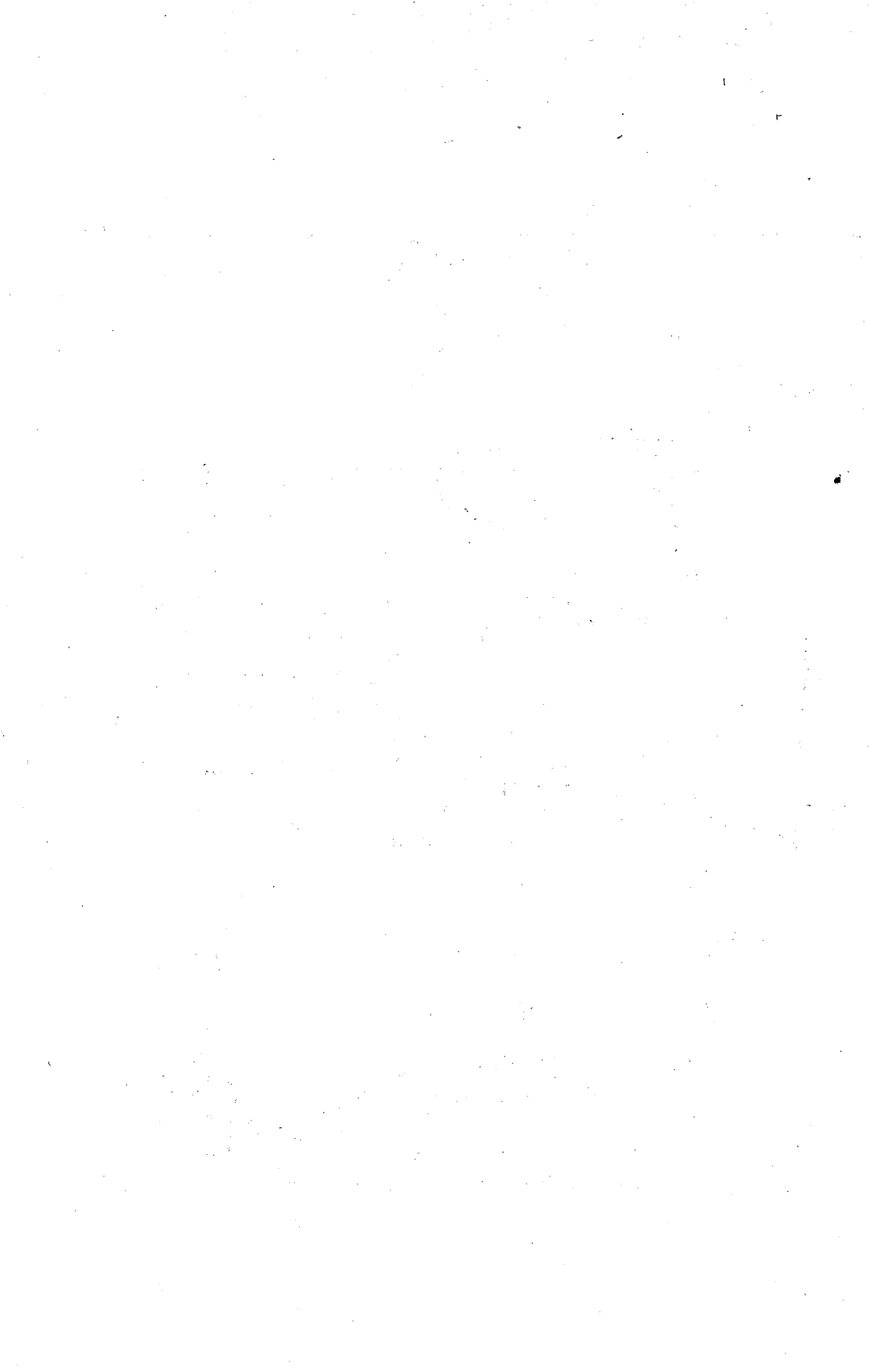
Eager as the settlers of the Shell prairies were to improve their wagon roads, their primary concern was that of obtaining a railroad. In the fall of 1883 their plans seemed about to materialize, for a preliminary survey of the route between Wadena and Park Rapids was made. Then the plan collapsed. In desperation these residents of an inland community resorted to the same expedient that the settlers in the Long Prairie district and those of Fergus Falls had tried a decade earlier. They built a steamboat -- the "Lotta Lee" -- to be navigated on the Shell River, which they launched with great ceremony in the summer of 1884. It made one trip down the river to Motley, but it never returned, the obstacles to navigation being too great. The railroad outlook continued to be dim throughout the decade, but on August 1, 1891, the inauguration of regular train service over the

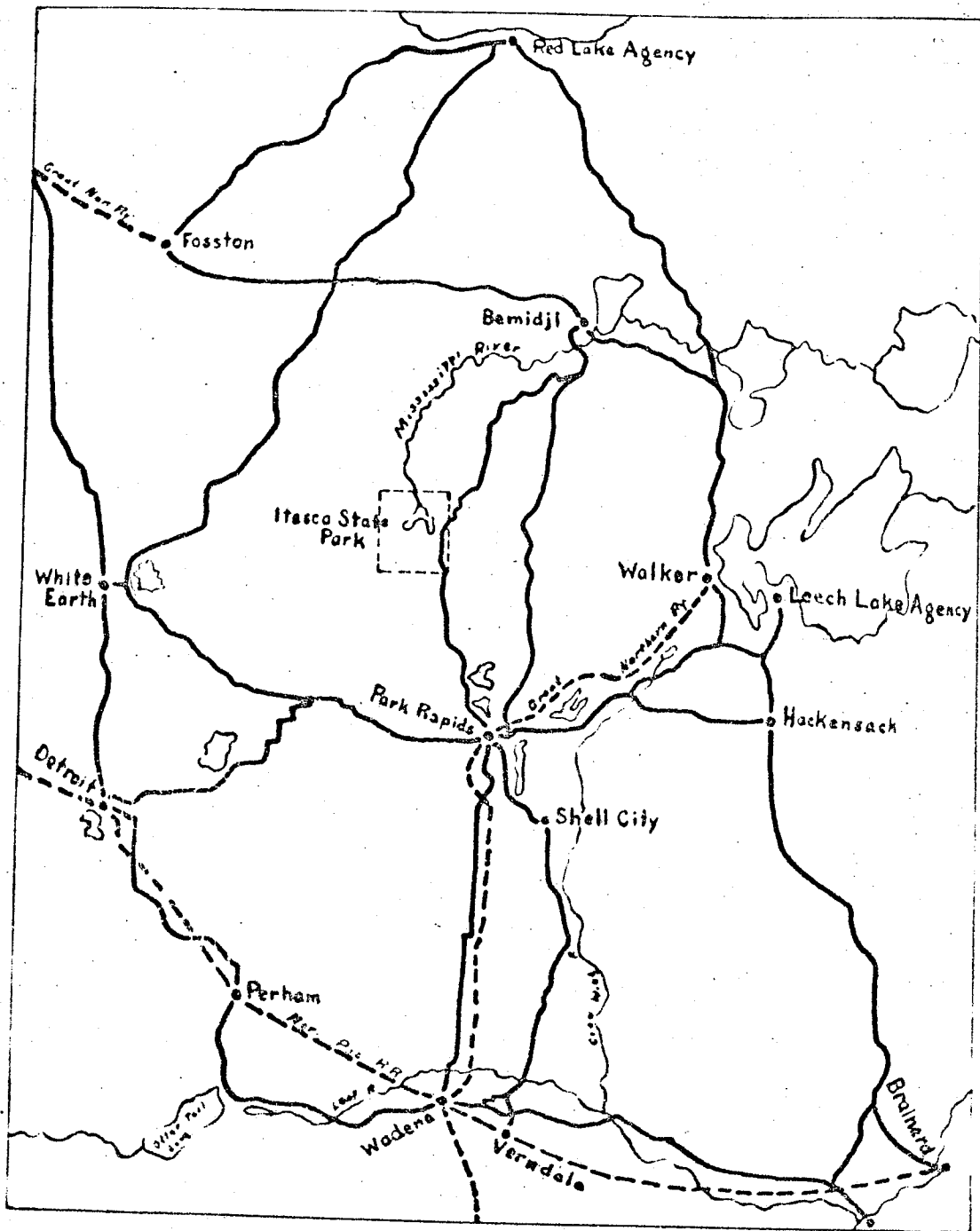
23. Park Rapids Enterprise, August 17, 1882; Hubbard County Enterprise (Park Rapids), August 10, 1883, May 1, 1885, October 19, 1888, May 10, June 28, July 5, 26, August 2, 1889.

Sauk Rapids-Park Rapids branch of the Great Northern Railroad gave the community the outlet it needed. The wagon roads to Wadena and Verndale faded into obscurity, degenerating into country roads over which the farmers along their routes brought their grain to the railroad, or over which an occasional settler, who preferred to migrate by wagon, made his way. ²⁴

Park Rapids had had some intercourse during the early years of the eighties with the Indian agency town on Leech Lake. It was restricted by the fact that the distance from Leech Lake to Brainerd was as short as that to Wadena or Verndale by way of Park Rapids, and since all three towns were located on the railroad, there was little reason for blazing out a new road for trade to follow. The completion of the Great Northern Railroad to Park Rapids changed the entire picture, however, and after 1891 that town was the point which the people of the agency town patronized. With the completion of the railroad, too, the process of settlement in the region got under way. The harvesting of the lumber crop was hastened, and gradually an agricultural settlement began. By the fall of 1892, a mail-stage line was put into operation between Park Rapids and the town of Leech Lake over the old agency road between Leech Lake and White Earth. A road was opened to the country

24. Hubbard County Enterprise, October 19, November 2, 1883, August 8, 1884, July 31, August 6, 1891.





ROADS OF NORTHWESTERN MINNESOTA ABOUT 1895

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It is essential to ensure that every entry is properly documented and verified. This process helps in identifying any discrepancies or errors early on, allowing for prompt correction and ensuring the integrity of the financial data.

Furthermore, the document emphasizes the need for transparency and accountability in all financial dealings. By providing clear and concise reports, stakeholders can gain a better understanding of the organization's financial health and performance. This transparency is crucial for building trust and confidence among investors, creditors, and other interested parties.

In addition, the document highlights the significance of regular audits and reviews. These periodic assessments help in evaluating the effectiveness of internal controls and identifying areas for improvement. By conducting thorough audits, organizations can ensure that their financial reporting practices comply with relevant laws and regulations, thereby minimizing the risk of legal penalties and reputational damage.

Overall, the document serves as a comprehensive guide for anyone involved in financial management. It provides valuable insights and practical advice on how to effectively manage financial records, maintain transparency, and conduct regular audits. By following these guidelines, organizations can ensure the accuracy and reliability of their financial information, which is essential for making informed decisions and achieving long-term success.

lying far to the north, and an increasing number of settlers began to settle in the Itasca State Park region and, farther north, in the community about Lake Bemidji, which hitherto had procured supplies from Fosston, almost a hundred miles to the northwest. The opening of this road was characterized as a "wise investment" for Park Rapids, and the chronicling of arrivals from these two regions seemed to bear out the claim. The surveying of a straighter and shorter road in the late fall of 1894 further facilitated the development of the agricultural resources of the country, and, by making Itasca State Park more readily accessible, facilitated the exploitation of the recreational resources at the head of the Mississippi. 25

The settlement of the prairie regions of southwestern and western Minnesota moved more slowly than those of the wooded central and eastern part. Pioneer accounts show that, although a few settlers usually had migrated into the prairie frontier in advance of the railroad, it was only when the railroads had established lines of communication that the prairie counties boomed. Towns such as Marshall, Windom, and Worthington were railroad towns, and many of them were laid out by the railroad companies themselves. The remoteness of the prairie counties from navigable waters upon which to

25. Hubbard County Enterprise, October 21, 1892, January 6, 1893, June 1, July 27, December 14, 28, 1894.

float their products to market was one reason for their retarded development. More important is the fact that the presence of materials for building purposes was a vital factor in the settlement of new regions, and these were lacking on the prairies. While sod shanties presented a possible solution to the problem of providing shelter for man and beast, they were temporary and, at best, unsatisfactory. Until some economical means was devised for bringing to the prairies the materials for building purposes, and for bearing from them the crops of wheat, the special product of the Northwest, settlement lagged. Wagon roads did not satisfy this requirement satisfactorily, for distances were too great. The solution for the transportation problem was provided by the railroad, which became the chief settlement agency of the prairies. 26

The pioneers who attempted to settle a prairie region such as that about Jackson, found that their problems were numerous and difficult. Settlement in that region had begun prior to the admission of Minnesota to the Union, but successive setbacks, such as the Inkpaduteh massacre, the panic of 1857, the Civil War, and the Sioux outbreak in 1862, effectively checked its growth. Jackson had one advantage over most of the

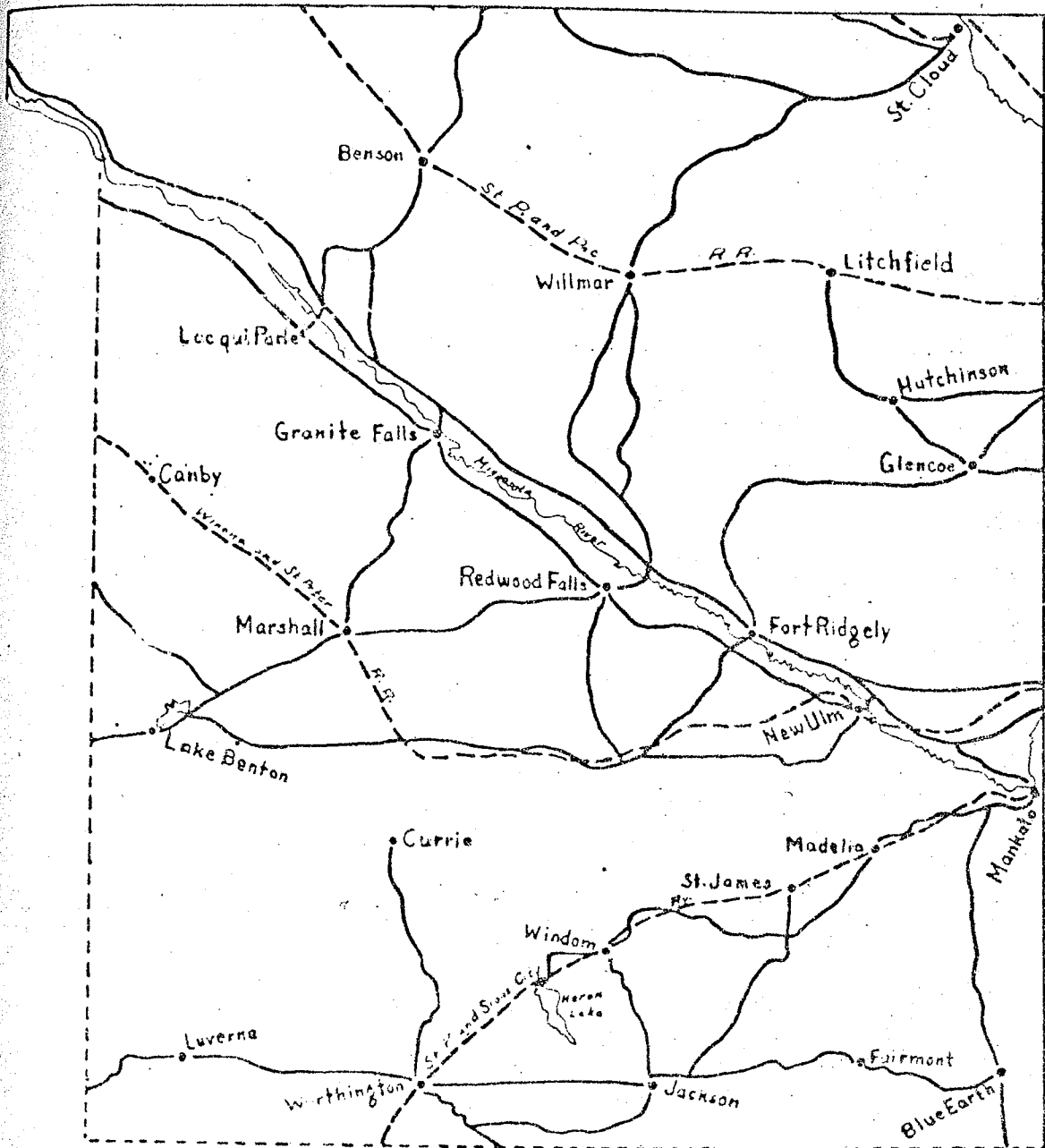
26. For a discussion of this problem, see Agnes M. Larson, "The Golden Age of Lumbering in Minnesota," in Minnesota Alumni Weekly, 32: 438 (April 15, 1933) and Larson, The Wheat Market and the Farmer, 55-60.

prairie communities, and that was its proximity to settled areas, both in Minnesota and Iowa. Consequently, it did not suffer from the effects of poor communication facilities to as great an extent as did those farther west. Yet this community, though close to the borders of civilization, had to depend for its mail service upon an uncertain weekly delivery made on horseback across the prairie from Emmett, Iowa. Gradually prairie roads were opened, and by 1870 mail communication had been established by way of Fairmont and Madelia as well. Even so, the Jackson people complained that in the spring and in rainy seasons they sometimes had to go two weeks, and often much longer, without mail service, because the unbridged prairie streams, ordinarily mere creeks, became raging torrents. The construction of the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, during the early seventies, brought this community within reach of the railroad. As railroad construction progressed, a new stage service was begun between the nearest railroad towns and the interior village. From Madelia, the head of the railroad moved to St. James, and finally to Windom, scarcely twenty miles from Jackson. The construction of the railroad through southwestern Minnesota brought improved mail facilities for the community, it hastened the occupation of the lands within Jackson County, and, above all, it made practicable the establishment of a lumber yard, thereby satisfying a need that had

"long been felt by the citizens." 27

The pioneer settlers who moved into the prairie counties, after the railroads had shown them the way to solve their transportation problem, found that their tasks were the same as those which confronted their brethren in the wooded areas. From the railroad towns outward, settlement spread as rapidly as a system of trails could be opened, and in the interior country, thirty, forty, or fifty miles from a railroad, settlements bloomed which were dependent for their supplies, including the greatly valued lumber, upon the railroad towns. Thus Marshall, on the Winona and St. Peter Railroad, was the source of supplies for communities as remote as Lake Benton and Lake Shetek. The town of Lac qui Parle, in spite of its location near the Minnesota River, found its markets over roads leading northward to the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad town of Benson, or southward to Canby on the Winona and St. Peter Railroad. The town of Windom, established in 1871 on the St. Paul and Sioux City Railroad, became the market town for the frontier community of Jackson. Worthington, which had been a straggling settlement named Okabena receiving its mail

27. Jackson Republic, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 5, October 8, 1870, April 8, 15, 22, 29, May 20, September 22, 1871, January 6, July 27, December 14, 1872. The legislature in 1868 authorized the opening of a road from Blue Earth City to Jackson, and the following year one from Madelia to Jackson. Special Laws, 1868, p. 452, 1869, p. 322.



ROADS OF SOUTHWESTERN MINNESOTA IN 1875



by a roundabout route leading through Jackson, became a market of prime importance after the railroad was built through it in 1872, and by 1874 a network of roads led to it from settlements as far away as Spirit Lake, Iowa, or Minnehaha County, South Dakota, or the lower end of Lake Shetek. 28

In all the southwestern counties the roads were bottomless quagmires after rainy seasons, and during the drouth of summer the deep dust made them almost equally bottomless, so that it was "difficult for a team to draw a load of wheat" over them. The road from Worthington to Luverne, over which two or three hundred teams traveled each week, "bringing grain to Worthington and taking back lumber and supplies," was in such bad condition during the spring of 1876, that several teams whose drivers ventured over it, "were five hours coming three miles." To remedy the situation it was suggested that the lumber dealers and grain buyers of Worthington, who profited most from the trade of the outlying communi-

28. Lac qui Parle County Press (Lac qui Parle), January 4, February 22, 1873, September 17, 1874; Prairie Schooner (Marshall), August 23, 1873, March 12, December 21, 1874; Windom Reporter, September 7, 21, 1871, February 1, May 2, 1872; Western Advance (Worthington), May 23, September 5, 1874; Worthington Advance, October 17, 1874, March 12, June 23, 1875, May 18, June 15, 1876; Jackson Republic, April 22, 1871; L. R. Moyer and O. G. Dale, History of Chippewa and Lac qui Parle Counties, Minnesota, 1: 377, 378, 477 (Indianapolis, 1916); Arthur P. Rose, An Illustrated History of the Counties of Rock and Pipestone, 48, 52, 70 (Luverne, 1911).

ties, should combine to place teams and men at work to repair the roads. The editor of the Windom Reporter, after he had made an exploratory journey over the road to Jackson, called the road "a rough and hard one to travel." He complained of the necessity for frequent pauses to rest his horse, and of the constant danger of being thrown from the animal as it attempted to travel over the deeply rutted route.²⁹ Local enthusiasts claimed that "the mere earth, with a few inexpensive culverts here and there, will make a capital road in any direction," but they hailed the construction of railroads as a welcome substitute. A historian of Lac qui Parle County, for example, after recording that early settlers had to travel sixty miles or more by ox team to have their grain ground, remarks that the construction of the railroad to the county in 1884 "changed the entire course of history for Lac qui Parle County, and opened up for it a new era of commercial and agricultural importance."³⁰

In the Red River Valley, that other great prairie region of Minnesota which came under the dominion of the plow in the latter portion of the nineteenth century, somewhat different conditions prevailed. The Red River

29. Western Advance, March 14, 1874; Worthington Advance, October 17, 1874, June 18, October 1, 22, 1875, March 16, June 1, 1876; Windom Reporter, September 21, 1871.

30. Western Advance, March 14, 1874; Moyer and Dale, Chippewa and Lac qui Parle Counties, 1: 378, 478.

trails, worn by the carts of several generations of Red River traders, gave access to this fertile area through three main routes: one up the Minnesota Valley to Big Stone Lake and Lake Traverse; another up the Sauk Valley to the confluence of the Bois des Sioux and Otter Tail rivers; and the third over what was known as the Crow Wing trail. When settlement in the Red River Valley began, each of these became important means of entering the country. 31

During the winter of 1857 a contract was made between the Minnesota Stage Company and the Hudson's Bay Company for the transportation of the supplies of the great trading corporation from St. Paul to the company posts along the Red River. Subsequently Anson Northup -- pioneer lumberman, hotel man, steamboat navigator, and promoter generally -- transported the hull and engine of a little steamboat, which he had been operating on the Mississippi River above the Falls of St. Anthony, across the western plains from Crow Wing to Georgetown during the bitter cold of a Minnesota winter. In the spring of 1859 he assembled his boat on the Red River and inaugurated steamboat navigation on those western waters. The Minnesota Stage Company, on its part, opened a stage road from St. Cloud, up the valley of the Sauk River, to the Red River at Georgetown, where

31. Ante, p. 4-25.

it made contact with the steamboat. Purchasing the boat from Northup, the company inaugurated a combination stage-boat and wagon-boat passenger and freight service to the British dominion. ³²

Little settlement accompanied this extension of communication westward. To be sure, a number of town-sites were staked out, and a few settlements such as those at McCauleyville and Georgetown were begun, but agricultural development was almost lacking, and the growth of settlement was exceedingly slow. A part of this can be attributed to the sequence of events which slowed down the process of settlement in Minnesota generally during these years -- the panic of 1857 and the accompanying depression, the outbreak of the Civil War, and the Sioux uprising of 1862. A more important factor in the slow growth of settlement in the valley was its remoteness from the settled areas of Minnesota, for land close to settlements attracted homeseekers first. For almost twenty years, therefore, the route between American and British settlements remained essentially a trade route; it was not a pathway for settlement.

Three of the railroad lines chartered by the Minnesota legislature reached into the valley of the Red River. The main line of the St. Paul and Pacific tapped the valley at Breckenridge, providing access through the

³². Larsen, in North Dakota Historical Quarterly, 6: 46-48.

southern gateway, as had the Minnesota Valley trail of an earlier day. The St. Paul and Pacific branch line, which reached St. Cloud in 1866, came to the Red River Valley through the Sauk Valley route, and then extended northward the entire length of the valley to the Canadian border opposite Pembina. The Northern Pacific Railroad, beginning at Lake Superior, followed the route of the old Crow Wing trail from Brainerd to Detroit, then, turning westward, crossed the Red River at Moorhead. The main line of the St. Paul and Pacific reached the Red River Valley in 1871, and it was followed in 1872 by the Northern Pacific. The coming of the railroads was the signal for a burst of activity in trade and a brisk immigration to the lands adjacent to them. In anticipation of a large increase in trade, the Minnesota Stage Company in the summer of 1871 opened a stage line toward Fort Garry. By the middle of June the line, running on the Dakota side of the river, was opened to a point forty miles north of Georgetown, named Frog Point, and service to Fort Garry was begun on September 11. ³³

The opening of the stage line stimulated the growth of communities such as Fisher's Landing, located on the Red Lake River a short distance above its mouth, which had been established a short time after the beginning

33. Larsen, in North Dakota Historical Quarterly, 6: 25-57.

of steamboat navigation on the Red River. For the most part, however, these communities were either wood stations for boats or stage stations, where relays of horses were obtained or passengers were put up for the night. The principal interest of the settlers, therefore, was not agricultural, but commercial. In 1872 the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, without waiting for the completion of the branch line between St. Cloud and the Red River, began construction on the Pembina branch northward from the Northern Pacific Railroad at Glyndon. The branch reached Warren that fall, but the panic the following year struck with devastating force, and all thought of completing the line to the international boundary was dropped. Train service over the branch was intermittent and unprofitable, and, as a result, service over the northern portion was abandoned during the trying period. Indeed, the track on the portion of the branch line extending beyond the Red Lake River was taken up and the iron used for constructing a short branch westward to Fisher's Landing. The construction of the branch line, however, resulted in the migration of a considerable number of pioneer farmers into that portion of the valley. North of the railroad, settlement remained dormant; along its line, communities such as Crookston, Ada, and Glyndon grew up.

During the late seventies a movement of population into the Red River Valley began. It was fostered by

the railroad companies, for they wished to dispose of their lands, and to this end they hastened the completion of the branch line to the international boundary. But in addition to the railroad, there was another factor which aided in opening this vast area. In 1879 the legislature appropriated a thousand dollars from the internal improvement fund for the construction of a wagon road from White Earth to St. Vincent, across from Pembina. The road followed almost exactly the route of the eastern trail to the Red River settlement worn by the carts of the traders almost half a century earlier. At White Earth it joined the Detroit-Red Lake road, for the construction of which the federal government had appropriated funds in 1873 and 1874. It was the connecting link that made feasible communication by wagon with the interior portion of the Red River Valley. Immigrants poured in by the hundreds in the period following the opening of this road and of the railroad, some by train, some by boat, but more by prairie schooner, to take up land, and settlement reached inland the whole length of the valley. By the beginning of the eighties, the wheat growers of the Red River Valley had gained national recognition, and the fame of the bonanza farms in that fertile area was widespread. In 1880 the elevators at Fisher's Landing alone shipped to Minneapolis 570 car-loads of wheat, and other stations along the route of

the St. Vincent extension of the railroad made correspondingly heavy shipments. ³⁴

In the agricultural development of the Red River Valley, the construction of a long-distance network of wagon roads played, on the whole, an inconspicuous part. For that region, the railroad was the essential element that made for settlement; the wagon road was supplementary to it. The wagon road opened the way into the valley, but it was the railroad which, by providing a means of rapidly and economically moving to market the bumper crops of hard spring wheat, furnished the spark for setting off the overwhelming movement of settlement into the area. Without the wagon road, many farmers, perhaps, would not have ventured into the valley; without the railroad, few of them would have been able to remain, for their bumper wheat crops would have been of little value if they had had to pay the heavy toll of trans-

34. Fisher's Landing Bulletin, May 22, 29, 1880; Special Laws, 1879, p. 375-377; report of the state auditor, 1879-80, in Minnesota, Executive Documents, 1880, vol. 1, p. 274. A part of the slowness with which the Red River Valley was settled may be explained by the fact that a controversy was raging between the Northern Pacific and the St. Paul and Pacific railroads over the title to a huge tract of land which both claimed under the terms of their land grant charters. Until that dispute was settled in 1878 little land in the Red River Valley was opened to settlement, for much of it was owned by the companies. Return I. Holcombe and William H. Bingham, eds., Compendium of History and Biography of Polk County, Minnesota, 63-67 (Minneapolis, 1916); History of the Red River Valley, Past and Present, 1: 222, 232 (Grand Forks and Chicago, 1909).

portation to market by team.

Occasional references are found in contemporary newspapers to the long distances which some farmers traveled in order to reach the local wheat market, but the great preponderance of references regarding roads are to those within the township, or to those in adjacent townships, and the problems of maintenance and construction from the first were relegated to positions of purely local concern. One reason for this disinterest in roads is that the agriculture that developed in the Red River Valley during the seventies and eighties was of a big-scale kind. Farmers owning a section of land upon which a crop of wheat was growing were not inclined to be concerned about road conditions. It was a comparatively easy matter for them to get a railroad company to put in a convenient sidetrack upon which they and their neighbors could load their wheat directly into cars. Their need for roads was greatest at the time of marketing, which was ordinarily in the late summer and autumn, when roads in that area were at their best. Furthermore, settlement was comparatively sparse, and sparsely settled communities usually find it difficult to construct and maintain adequate systems of roads. On the open prairie, moreover, it was a simple task to lay out a way to market along the section lines. It was only when rainy spells occurred that the necessity

for improved roads was felt, and then a cursory going over of the worst spots sufficed. 35

In general, the railroad and wagon road complemented one another throughout the latter period of the conquest of the frontier. The railroad town was a center to which the wagon roads led, drawing to the railroad the commerce of a wide surrounding area. The sequence followed during the extension of the frontier into the Sauk Valley, into the Long Prairie region, into the Shell prairies, and, toward the close of the century, into the Bemidji area, was followed in virtually every community that came under the dominion of the plow or the lumberman's ax during the latter years of the nineteenth century. The railroads, performing the same function for the frontier that the navigable rivers had performed, penetrated ever deeper into the interior, where they had been preceded by a series of frontier trails. When the frontier was sufficiently well developed to support a railroad, the iron horse replaced the stagecoach and freight wagon, while the wagon roads, which formerly had carried the life blood of the frontier community, became simple country roads. They were no longer needed to supply the communication needs of a frontier settlement. In their stead, the railroad brought in the mail and supplies and carried away the produce of the newly opened land.

35. Northern Tier (Crookston), October 25, November 15, 1879; Fisher's Landing Bulletin, May 22, 29, June 26, 1880; Fisher Bulletin, June 4, October 29, 1881.