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MINNESOTA HISTORICAL NEWS

August, 1937 No. 188

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CHURCH BELLS HEARD IN PIONEER ST. PAUL

What James M. Goodhue, the editor of the "Minnesota Pioneer," an early St. Paul newspaper, described as the "first proper church bell that ever hung in Minnesota" was placed in the belfry of the First Presbyterian church of St. Paul late one Saturday night in the fall of 1850. According to one writer the people were so "impatient to test its tones" that the "bell was rung even at that late hour, a source of satisfaction to the Christian people, and of wonder to the pagans, who heard the solemn tones of the church-going bell, pulsating over the valleys and rocks for the first time." As Goodhue listened, his mood became prophetic, for he "could not but feel that in a few years these sounds would be heard winding along the valley of the Minnesota, across the plains of Nebraska, and echoing among the Rocky Mountains, and over the Pacific waves."

The editor of the "Pioneer" reveals that the first St. Paul church bell was cast in the famous foundry established at West Troy, New York, in 1826 by Andrew Meneely. To Goodhue's ears "its tones were peculiarly sweet, as it reminded him of the fact that" its manufacturer "had patronized our paper by advertising, and by paying in advance." "May the bells that have just commenced their work, speak blessings spiritual and temporal," wrote Goodhue. "Church, Factory, and Steamboat bells, constantly on hand, and peals of any number furnished," reads an advertisement that appears in the "Pioneer" through most of the summer and fall months of 1850. It is signed by Andrew Meneely.

Only a short time after the Meneely bell was placed in the belfry of the First Presbyterian church, another bell for the same church arrived on the steamboat "Minnesota." This "unexpected present from a gentleman in Ohio" was cast by Hanks of Cincinnati. Upon its arrival, the Presbyterian church sold its first bell to the Market Street Methodist Episcopal church, "in whose belfry it long did good service." With the bell from Ohio came another for the Presbyterian church at Stillwater, according

to a news item in the "Pioneer" for November 14, 1850. A file of this early Minnesota newspaper is owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

#### HISTORICAL SOCIETY DISPLAYS TELEPHONES

About sixty-five pieces of telephone equipment assembled by Mr. George W. Johnson of St. Paul have been presented to the Minnesota Historical society by the Tri-State Telephone company. Some of the items in the collection, which includes switchboards, mouthpieces, dials, transmitters, receivers, complete instruments, both manual and automatic, and the like, date back to the eighties, and others are modern in design.

The collection as a whole offers a vivid picture of the progress of one method of communication in the Northwest in the past half century. It is now on display in the museum of the Historical society in St. Paul.

#### RIVER STEAMBOATING SUBJECT OF NEW BOOK

The State Historical Society of Iowa has announced the publication of a book by William J. Petersen entitled "Steamboating on the Upper Mississippi: The Water Way to Iowa." The volume should have a wide appeal in Minnesota as well as in Iowa, for many of its chapters deal with events connected primarily with the story of the North Star state.

The voyage in 1823 of the "Virginia," the first steamboat to reach Fort St. Anthony, now Fort Snelling, at the mouth of the Minnesota river, for example, is described in detail. The use of steamboats by fur traders, many of whom operated in Minnesota, is covered in a chapter entitled "Facts, Figures, Furs, and Buffalo Robes." Mr. Petersen describes the "Freight for Red River Ox carts" that crossed Minnesota in going to and from Pembina as "one of the most picturesque of steamboat cargoes by virtue of its nature and destination." The "fashionable tour" and steamboat excursions to the Falls of St. Anthony receive attention, and the role of the steamboat in bringing settlers to Minnesota is discussed.

#### HISTORICAL SOCIETIES LISTED IN HANDBOOK

Thirty-three of the forty-eight local historical societies now existing in Minnesota are listed in a handbook of "Historical Societies in the United States and Canada," recently published by a national organization, the Conference of Historical societies. For most of the Minnesota organizations the names of the officers are given and some information about activities and collections is

presented. Two paragraphs are devoted to the Minnesota Historical society, which also is listed in the handbook.

The most recent addition to the roll of local historical organizations in Minnesota is the Yellow Medicine County Historical society, which was organized at Clarkfield on May 8.

#### NEWSPAPERS LISTED IN NEW PUBLICATION

“Where can I find a file of my home-town newspaper?” Local editors and librarians are frequently called upon to answer this question. They can now do so with ease, for a “Union List” of American newspapers published from 1821 to 1936 has been compiled under the editorship of Winifred Gregory and issued by the Bibliographical society of America. It makes available a list of all newspapers known to be published in America during a period of more than a century, with information about the location and the extent of files preserved in public depositories and private hands both in the United States and Canada.

Of the 791 pages in this valuable guide, 22 are devoted to Minnesota. A scholar, lawyer, or journalist who wants to consult, for example, a file of the “Bird Island Blizzard” or the “Sauk Centre Avalanche” will find it listed in the newly published work with a record of where it may be consulted. The list reveals that Minnesota files are to be found in depositories as widely separated as the Library of Congress, the University of Colorado, the Provincial library at Winnipeg, and the American Anti-quarian society at Worcester, Massachusetts. By far the largest collection of Minnesota newspapers is, of course, owned by the Minnesota Historical society.

#### FORT SNELLING CENSUS TAKEN 100 YEARS AGO

To determine the number of “white inhabitants, exclusive of the garrison,” living on the Fort Snelling reservation, just a hundred years ago Lieutenant E. K. Smith took the first census of white men recorded in the present area of Minnesota. Within the boundaries of the reservation, he found “157 souls in no way connected with the military.” Smith also prepared a map of the reservation, on which he indicated where the settlers were located. A copy of this map is owned by the Minnesota Historical society.

The pioneer Minnesotans enumerated by Lieutenant Smith were squatters on government land under military jurisdiction. In 1838, Major Plympton, the commandant at Fort Snelling, ordered them to leave the reservation. Since the lands east of the Mississippi had been opened to settlement by the treaties of 1837, many of the Fort Snelling squatters established new homes across the river. Among them was Pierre Parrant, a French-Canadian better known as “Pig's Eye,” who for some years



past had been illegally selling liquor to the soldiers and Indians. In June, 1838, he removed his grog shop to a spot near Fountain Cave, thus becoming the first settler on the site of St. Paul.