



## HISTORICAL NOTES

### A GLIMPSE OF THE GALENA LEAD REGION IN 1846

EDITED BY LARRY GARA

By the early eighteenth century French miners were working the rich deposits of the Wisconsin-Illinois lead region and mining continued until the mid-nineteenth century when most settlers in the area turned to cultivating the rich prairie soil.<sup>1</sup> Until 1830 the lead region centering around the Fever (Galena) River was the only settled section of northern Illinois, and even after that date its mineral resources proved useful to those who promoted and advertised the area to prospective settlers. Cyrus Woodman was one of the many who migrated to the lead region and became its enthusiastic promoter.

Woodman left his native New England in December, 1839 when he accepted employment as land agent for the Boston and Western Land Company with headquarters at Winslow, Illinois.<sup>2</sup> The company holdings in-

<sup>1</sup> About ninety per cent of the lead deposits of the Upper Mississippi Valley were in the present state of Wisconsin and the other ten per cent in Illinois and Iowa. However, Galena was an important center because it became a main shipping point for sending lead down the Mississippi. There is an excellent study of the lead region and its history in Joseph Schafer, *The Wisconsin Lead Region (Wisconsin Domesday Book, General Studies*, vol. 3, Madison, 1932). Volume two of R. Carlyle Buley's *The Old Northwest: Pioneer Period, 1815-1840* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1951), 55-57, 118-21 contains a good short summary of lead region history.

<sup>2</sup> Larry Gara, "Yankee Land Agent in Illinois," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, XLIV (Summer, 1951), 120-41 describes Woodman's work as land agent. The same author's *Westernized Yankee: The Story of Cyrus Woodman* (Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, 1956) gives a more complete account of Woodman's business activities in the lead region.

cluded numerous tracts in Illinois and Wisconsin Territory, and his work as agent familiarized him with the lead mining area. In 1843 the Boston and Western Land Company was dissolved and its holdings were parceled out to the individual stockholders. The following year Woodman became the law partner of Cadwallader C. Washburn<sup>3</sup> who had settled in Mineral Point, Wisconsin Territory. The Washburn and Woodman firm soon became primarily a land agency, and the partners later branched out into banking, lead shot manufacturing and timberland speculation. Woodman took every occasion to tell others about the resources and possibilities of the lead region and while on a business trip to the East in 1845 he suggested that his Bowdoin College classmate, Samuel Phillips Abbott, should venture west to fill a vacant pastorate in Mineral Point.<sup>4</sup>

Abbott was interested but at the time he was not free to leave New England. He was the head of a family school of twelve boys in the midst of a school year. He also wanted further information and asked Woodman a number of specific questions concerning travel costs, the appearance of the lead region country, and the general character of its inhabitants.<sup>5</sup> Although Woodman answered his inquiries a year later, Abbott never came West. The letter, in addition to Woodman's personal impressions, gives a rather full picture of life in the lead region in the 1840's.<sup>6</sup>

MINERAL POINT, WISCONSIN TERY.  
APRIL 12, 1846.

REV. SAML. P. ABBOTT  
FARMINGTON ME.

DEAR SAM:

Yours of the 18th of April last was recd. by me in Boston only a few days previously to my departure for the West. On my arrival here, I found that a minister of the Presbyterian order had been settled here during my

<sup>3</sup> Cadwallader C. Washburn (1818-1882) was also from New England. After eleven years of partnership with Woodman in Mineral Point, Washburn was elected to Congress for three successive terms. He served in the Civil War as a major-general, then—after a term as governor of Wisconsin—he moved to Minneapolis where he made a fortune in flour milling. John D. Hicks, "Cadwallader Colden Washburn," in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>4</sup> Samuel Phillips Abbott (1814-1849) went to Andover Seminary after graduating from Bowdoin College. Following several years in the ministry he opened a family school for boys at Farmington, Me. He never attained the success of his two brothers who were authors, possibly due to chronic ill health which led to an early death. Nehemiah Cleaveland, *History of Bowdoin College*, edited and completed by Alpheus Spring Packard (Boston, 1882), 485-86; Francis Gould Butler, *A History of Farmington, Franklin County, Maine* (Farmington, 1885), 103, 352-54.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Abbott to Cyrus Woodman, April 18, 1845, in the Cyrus Woodman Papers, Library of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>6</sup> Woodman to Abbott, April 12, 1846, in the Woodman Papers. Permission to publish the letter has kindly been granted.



absence, and as I had therefore nothing special to say to you on that subject and as I have been constantly busy since my return from the East, I have omitted to answer your kind letter. I will now proceed to answer the inquiries made in it.

What are the travelling expenses from Boston to Mineral Point?

From Boston to Buffalo by railroad, about 40 hours, & about . . . . .	\$16.—
“ Buffalo to Milwaukie, average say 5 days, first class of steam-boats—distance through the Lakes, about 1000 miles, & fare from \$10 to \$12.—say . . . . .	12.
“ Milwaukie to Mineral Point, about 120. miles—stage-coach,—fare . . . . .	6.—
For porters, meals, &c—say . . . . .	6.—
This would be ample, & by taking the N.Y. canal, one might save \$5. which would pay expenses from Buffalo to Niagara or Lockport to Niagara.	<u>\$40.—</u>

Or if one should go through New York to Philadelphia, & thence to Pittsburgh or to Baltimore & thence to Wheeling—either of which, are fine routes and greatly travelled—he could then come by the Ohio & Mississippi Rivers to Galena—40 miles from this place. The expenses on this route from Boston through, would be about the same as by the Lakes, if there was a fair stage of water in the Rivers, but if the water was low the expenses would probably be \$10. more, or \$50. in the whole. One travelling for pleasure should come one route and return by the other and in the Spring or early part of Summer it would be better to come by the Rivers.

The distance from Mineral Point to the nearest prominent city? From Milwaukie & Chicago our distance is 120 or 130. miles; the former I suppose, has about six & the latter, about ten thousand inhabitants. Galena is the nearest point to which steamboats come. It has probably four or five thousand inhabitants. An immense quantity of lead is annually shipped from this place and it is a very busy and thriving place.

You ask in regard to the general character of the inhabitants &c &c. I would say in reply that they are *men*, and on the whole have I suppose, just about as much human nature in them, as any equal number of men that you will find anywhere else. The proportion of the cultivated & refined is much less than with you for our population embraces citizens of nearly all civilized countries. The most of the foreign population, however, is from Cornwall in England—Cornish miners, who are principally engaged in mining.<sup>7</sup>

The mining region of Wisconsin, South of the Wisconsin River, is, speaking generally, about 70 miles long by 40. wide, embracing the Coun-

<sup>7</sup> Albert Louis Copeland's "The Cornish in Southwest Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 14:301-34 contains interesting observations on the manners, customs and language of the Cornish in the lead region.



ties of Grant and Iowa & part of the Counties of Green & Dane. If you can refer to one of Smith's large maps of the United States, published some two or three years since, you will readily perceive how it is situated. The number of inhabitants in this Mineral District is now probably about 25,000 and constantly increasing. The character of the miners resembles in many respects that of sailors and lumbermen. There are vices and virtues common to them all. In years gone by this was a "hard country," the pistol & the bowie knife, drinking & gambling were every where to be seen. The former implements are now rarely used, but the vices last named are still very prevalent, though I think the change for the better is constant and rapid. There have certainly been great improvements since I came into the country six years ago.

You may perhaps think that as this is a good mining country it is a poor farming country. The contrary is true. Everything that can be raised in this latitude is raised here in abundance and with little labor. The Mineral District is finely watered & abounds with never failing springs. The country is more rolling, more diversified with hill & valley than the Illinois country, but still we have large prairies and some of them are the finest I have ever seen. The country is also very healthy—healthier, I think than any part of New England, because consumption, very rarely, if ever originates here. On the whole, it has great natural advantages & will eventually become one of the richest interior countries in the world.

But after all you can learn but little from general descriptions. You must come and see the country for yourself. If you could leave home & come & stay two or three months among us, I am strongly inclined to think that you would ultimately make your residence here. My impression is that you would find employment either as a teacher of youth or as a clergyman with little or no difficulty and at fair prices.

I was speaking to our Presbyterian minister a few days since about you. He seemed anxious that you should come. He says that a school teacher is now wanted in this place, and he also informed [me] that the Church at Platteville will soon be without a pastor. Platteville is about 18 miles from this place & 25. from Galena & is situated in the midst of a fine farming and mineral country. For a Presbyterian or Congregational minister I consider it one of the best locations in the West. The village has upwards of 1000 inhabitants & the Church, Mr. [Zachary] Eddy (the Presbyterian minister here) tells me, is in good condition. There is an academy also in a flourishing condition. Mr. Magoun,<sup>8</sup> a graduate of Bowdoin is the principal & a Miss Johnson a sister of Aaron C. Adams<sup>9</sup> wife is instructress in the female depart-

<sup>8</sup> George Frederic Magoun (1821-1896) served as educator and clergyman in a number of Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa communities. He later became president of Grinnell College, holding that post from 1862 until 1884, after which he taught philosophy for an additional six years. John Scholte Nollen, "George Frederic Magoun," *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>9</sup> Aaron Chester Adams was a classmate of Woodman's at Bowdoin who was graduated from a theological seminary and held a number of positions as Congregational minister in various Maine towns. Cleveland, *History of Bowdoin*, 486.



ment. Ben C. Eastman<sup>10</sup> & George W. Lakin,<sup>11</sup> lawyers from Maine and also a number of others from our state are settled there. Come & make us a visit at the least, and make my house your home. Don't come, however with hopes too much excited. The world, the flesh, and the Devil you will find here as well as in Maine.

With constant regard, your friend & classmate,

CYRUS WOODMAN.

### FRANK H. HALL AND PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION

Walter B. Hendrickson, professor of history at MacMurray College has a postscript to add to his article "The Three Lives of Frank H. Hall," which appeared in the Autumn 1956 issue of this *Journal*. He says that Hall's position on "progressive education," one of the most hotly discussed subjects of the 1890's, was not made clear, and he has recently come upon a "Syllabus of a Lecture" by the educator-inventor-agriculturist which has been helpful.

"Progressive education," Hendrickson explains, was a general term applied to the philosophy and practice of education advocated by John Dewey and his followers, which had in turn been affected somewhat by the studies in psychology of Henry James and G. Stanley Hall. Briefly, the "New Education," as Hall called it, held that the child was educated as he was exposed to an increasing number of sense perceptions, progressively more complex as his body grew. This was at variance with the "Old Education" which considered that the child was but an incomplete adult who could comprehend ideas and perceive the physical world only incompletely. In teaching, ideas and physical experience were never to be simplified or presented to the child in an order of progressive difficulty or complexity, but he was to be confronted over and over again with the full-blown idea or sense perception until finally, when he became an adult, he would understand the ideas in their entirety and would react to his physical environment in an adult manner.

Hall had studied this "New Education" and had accepted some of it, according to Hendrickson, but, along with many school administrators, he was not ready to discard a reasonably satisfactory theory or practice for one that had not been fully tried. Like any other middle-of-the-roader who has to deal with practical, everyday problems, he was not a pioneer. The "Syllabus" of the Hall lecture gives an idea of his educational philosophy and

<sup>10</sup> Ben C. Eastman (1812-1856) entered Wisconsin politics and served two terms in Congress as a Democrat. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1949* (Washington, 1950), 1115.

<sup>11</sup> George W. Lakin (1817-1884) served as a Whig member of the Wisconsin senate in 1848-1849 and then became United States District Attorney, a post he held for five years.

the range of the problems with which he was concerned. The original, which is a single printed sheet,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  by  $7\frac{1}{4}$  inches in size, was supplied to Hendrickson by Nelson Coon, librarian of the Perkins School for the Blind Watertown, Massachusetts. It is not dated but Hendrickson says that almost certainly it is from the period of Hall's second superintendency of the Illinois Institution for the Education of the Blind at Jacksonville (1895-1902). As far as Hendrickson has been able to learn, this is the only existing copy. It is titled "Light Out of Darkness," and the text reads:

- I. THE RESULTS OF SENSE-PERCEPTION THE BASIS OF THOUGHT.  
*"The elements of soul life are sense perceptions."* There are no *inborn ideas*. There is simply *inborn capacity*. Five avenues through which nerve excitation may be transmitted to the soul. Result if all these avenues were closed at birth. Open one avenue—smell; another—taste; another—touch (Helen Keller and Laura Bridgman); another—hearing (Lewis B. Carll, D. D. Wood, Fannie Crosby); another—sight. Sight gives rise to nine-tenths of our sense perceptions.
- II. THE BLIND CHILD—
  - (a) In the cradle: moving about the home; at school. (b) Results of school training: in hearing; in memory; in the exercise of the representative powers; in the exercise of the reflective powers. (c) Receives a small amount of crude material and elaborates it very thoroughly.
- III. THE CHILD IN ITS NORMAL CONDITION—
  1. (a) Receives a very large amount of crude material but elaborates it very imperfectly. (b) Mere sensation is not perception. (c) Mere sense-perception is not thought. *"Perceiving without the judgment's synthesis and separation of elements, would be purely mechanical activity of mind, but not thinking,"* says Lindner. (d) The utterance of mere words is not evidence of thought.
  2. The fundamental error in THE OLD EDUCATION was (and is) the acceptance of mere words as evidence of wisdom.
  3. The danger in THE NEW EDUCATION is the acceptance of mere sense-perception as evidence of thought power.
  4. The natural order of intellectual exercise: (a) perceive; (b) compare the results of perception; (c) conceive—"see with the mind's eye;" (d) compare the results of conception; (e) exercise the power of constructive conception; (f) *compare, COMPARE, COMPARE*. *"It may startle you to learn,"* says Sir Wm. Hamilton, *"that the highest function of the mind is nothing higher than comparison."*
- IV. APPLICATION OF THE FOREGOING TO THE TEACHING OF ARITHMETIC; OF GEOGRAPHY; OF SCIENCE; OF HISTORY.



## V. CONCLUSION.

Sense-perceptions are the blocks with which we build, *but we must build*. To teach words that express the wisdom of the ages, but are utterly devoid of content so far as the child is concerned, is to attempt to begin building at the top. To lead children to perceive and express, and nothing more, is to begin at the bottom and stay where you begin. The representative powers—the memory, the imagination, and the faculty of constructive conception—these must be exercised from the first; in a small degree at the outset, but the *time to begin* such exercise is immediately after the first successful effort at perception. This work must be continued and comparisons instituted all along the line. Lead the pupil to compare sense-concept with sense-concept, sense-concept with image-concept, image-concept with image-concept, and logical concept with logical concept. That he may be able to do this, see that he possesses a stock of concepts to be compared and not simply a stock of conventional symbols of concepts.

## THE WIT OF THE WESTERN PEOPLE

Some types of humor seem to have changed very little in the past century as is shown by the following account from James Silk Buckingham's *The Eastern and Western States of America* (London, [1842] 3 Vols.), II: 272-73:

Others of our companions varied the political conversation by the exercise of their wit, in the exaggerated strain so characteristic of Western manners. The unhealthy condition of some of the Western rivers, the Illinois in particular, was the subject of their discourse; when one asserted, that he had known a man to be so dreadfully afflicted with the ague, from sleeping in the fall on its banks, that he shook to such a degree as to shake all the teeth out of his head. This was matched by another, who said there was a man from his State, who had gone to the Illinois to settle, and the ague seized him so terribly hard, that he shook all the clothes from his body, and could not keep a garment whole, for it unravelled the very web, thread by thread, till it was all destroyed! The climax was capped, however, by the declaration of a third, that a friend of his who had settled on the banks of the Illinois, and built a most comfortable dwelling for himself and family, was seized with an ague, which grew worse and worse, until its fits became so violent, that they at length shook the whole house about his ears, and buried him in its ruins! Such is the kind of wit in which the Western people especially delight.