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# MINNESOTA, MONTANA, *and* MANIFEST DESTINY

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A HUNDRED YEARS ago, in the summer of 1862, Minnesotans were in the vanguard of fortune hunters who migrated to new gold fields of the northern Rocky Mountains. Drawn west by news of rich discoveries in the Salmon River region of present-day Idaho, they turned off the trail to prospect in what in 1864 became Montana Territory. In the period between 1862 and 1868 unnumbered hundreds of them, hearing the magic word "gold," loaded their wagons, hitched up the oxen, said goodbye to Minnesota, and headed west for Bannack, Virginia City, and Helena, in the Eldorado of southwestern Montana.

Gold alone, however, cannot explain the significance of Montana in the minds of fron-

tier Minnesotans. A fascination with the area was widespread among those who stayed at home as well as those who went. Shakopee, Mankato, Winona, and St. Cloud held mass meetings to hear wagon train leaders speak of Montana and discuss ways of going to the mines. The Anoka Library Association, the Minneapolis Lyceum, and the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul scheduled lectures on Montana, as did chambers of commerce and boards of trade in various other places. These local citizens' groups adopted memorials to government officials in support of a variety of projects they hoped would be helpful to the development of both Minnesota and Montana. Their proposals were forwarded to the state capital and to Washington. Newspapers of the state at once reflected and fostered this Montana enthusiasm by reporting on proposals for legislation, publishing dispatches from the gold fields, and printing news and gossip from neighbors who had migrated there. Their columns left the impression that every emigrant who went from Minnesota or through Minnesota to the west had contributed to the long-range interests of the state.<sup>1</sup>

While a few writers saw Montana only as a land where individuals fortunes could be made, others perceived the wide-ranging benefits which the gold fields could gener-

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<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul Daily Press*, December 31, 1863; January 16, May 5, 13, 1864; January 16, 31, May 1, August 23, 1866; January 24, May 4, 1867; *State Atlas* (Minneapolis), January 27, 1864; *Winona Daily Republican*, February 1, 1864; *Anoka Star*, February 13, 1864; *Mankato Weekly Union*, April 8, 1864; *Shakopee Argus*, April 30, May 14, 1864; *St. Cloud Democrat*, March 10, 1864; January 11, 25, February 1, March 15, August 9, 1866; *St. Paul Pioneer*, February 12, 20, 1864; *St. Paul Pioneer and Democrat*, January 16, 1866; *Congressional Globe*, 38 Congress, 1 session, p. 37; 39 Congress, 1 session, p. 446, 2 session, p. 471; *Minnesota, Laws*, 1863, p. 284; 1866, p. 124; 1868, p. 193-195; United States, *Statutes at Large*, 12:333, 642; 13:14, 516.

ate for Minnesota. Immediate gains from the outfitting trade were apparent. In addition, profits could be expected from increased military activity on the northern plains, occasioned by the emigration across Indian lands. Beyond the plains, these visionaries saw the beginnings of a trading area that would look to Minnesota for supplies and capital. Sensitive to the promise of this expanding empire, these writers encouraged Minnesotans to go west and button Minnesota to the sleeve of the gold regions.

Another group of dreamers had a still larger vision. Newspapers of the territory and the state during the 1850s and 1860s revealed a global view of Minnesota's manifest destiny. Their columns expressed the belief that the gold fields were but a way station on a destined line of communication between Minnesota and the Orient. To this group the state's dreams of empire were not limited to the western regions of the North American continent. Roads to the new gold fields, when extended to the Pacific, would become the route of a future railroad connecting Minnesota with Puget Sound and the trade of the Orient.<sup>2</sup>

IN THE OPINION of some of Minnesota's most articulate boosters the state's greatest resource was its unique geographical position at the heart of the North American continent. Its capital city, St. Paul, was located on the forty-fifth parallel, half way between the equator and the North Pole — a circumstance of symbolic and almost mystical meaning for some writers. Within the state's borders were the headwaters of the Mississippi River, then at the height of its importance as the country's great inland waterway. To the north Minnesota shared a boundary with British America and commanded the source of the Red River of the North, a navigable stream leading to Winnipeg and the rivers flowing into Hudson Bay. At the head of Lake Superior, Minnesota stood at the terminus of an inland waterway which dreamers even then believed would bring ocean vessels from the Atlantic into the heart

of North America. Thus situated on natural avenues of commerce to the east, the south, and the north, Minnesota needed only a connection with the Pacific to place it in easy communication with the whole Northern Hemisphere.<sup>3</sup>

Climate became an important consideration in this global vision. It was true that winters were severe and the northern waterways frozen over half the year. It was also commonly believed in the mid nineteenth century that the northern latitudes of Minnesota and the plains to the west were inhospitable to settlement or gracious living. But the global dreamers turned attention from latitude to isotherms and reasoned away the bugbears of snow and ice with the help of two men — Alexander von Humboldt and Lorin Blodget. Pointing out that the climate of a region is influenced by configuration of the surface, humidity, prevailing winds, and altitude, as well as by distances from the equator and the poles, Humboldt developed the concept of isothermal lines connecting points of equal average temperatures. Maps drawn by Blodget placed Minnesota and much of the northern plains region in an isothermal zone of temperatures ranging from thirty-two to fifty degrees. This zone extended around the globe in the Northern Hemisphere and embraced the areas of greatest settlement and human enterprise. Because a high civilization flourished in this

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, John Wesley Bond, *Minnesota and its Resources*, 243–251 (New York, 1853); *Minnesota Territory, House Journal*, 1857, p. 46; *Minnesota Democrat* (St. Paul), December 31, 1850; *Pioneer and Democrat*, July 1, 3, 1858; January 18, 1859; Joseph A. Wheelock, *Minnesota: Its Place Among the States*, 103 (Minnesota Bureau of Statistics, *First Annual Report* — Hartford, 1860). American ideas of manifest destiny to which these Minnesota visions were undoubtedly related are described in Albert K. Weinberg, *Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (Baltimore, 1935). See especially p. 43–71.

<sup>3</sup> These ideas are expressed in *Minnesota Democrat*, May 20, December 2, 17, 1851; July 28, 1852; *Daily Minnesota Pioneer* (St. Paul), June 14, 1854; *Pioneer and Democrat*, August 21, 1856; January 14, April 28, 1859.

zone, it was asserted that the climate was therefore particularly conducive to the health and happiness of the human race. The exhilarating conclusion to be drawn from such reasoning was that human enterprise would thus inevitably expand and flourish in Minnesota and the unsettled area to the west.<sup>4</sup>

During the 1850s the belief in Minnesota's future greatness was further strengthened by the expansion of transportation routes and means of communication. The survey of a northern railroad route to the Pacific conducted by Isaac I. Stevens in 1853 first fired the hopes of expansion-minded Minnesotans, and these were given further impetus by the completion of a rail line to the Mississippi River at Rock Island, Illinois, in 1854, the opening of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal in 1855, and the extension of telegraph service to St. Paul in 1860. In the same year the building of a stage road from St. Cloud to the Red River and the beginning of steamboat navigation on that stream projected the state's line of communications far to the north and west.<sup>5</sup>

Around the world in the Northern Hemis-

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander von Humboldt, *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, 2:317-335 (New York, 1850), translated by E. C. Otte; Helmut de Terra, *Humboldt: The Life and Times of Alexander von Humboldt*, 355, 374-376 (New York, 1955); Lorin Blodget, *Climatology of the United States and of the Temperate Latitudes of the North American Continent*, 529-534, charts op. 210, 308 (Philadelphia, 1857). Evidence that Minnesota promoters made use of the isothermal concept may be found in *Minnesota Democrat*, June 22, 1853; *Pioneer and Democrat*, July 3, 14, December 10, 1858; January 28, April 5, May 22, November 13, 1859.

<sup>5</sup> William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:358; 2:65 (St. Paul, 1956, 1961); Russell Blakeley, "Opening of the Red River of the North to Commerce and Civilization," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 8:46-50 (St. Paul, 1898).

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Minnesota Pioneer*, June 28, 1854. On the cable, see *Pioneer and Democrat*, September 3, 1858. The cable operated only a short time in 1858 and was not really completed until 1867. On Russia, see *Pioneer and Democrat*, September 16, October 23, December 10, 30, 1858.

<sup>7</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, September 18, 1858.

<sup>8</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, September 16, 1858.

phere, Minnesota's global dreamers saw a corresponding expansion of people and lines of communication which they felt supported their dreams of Minnesota's destiny. The premature opening in 1858 of the Atlantic cable, a joint British-American venture, was hailed as a major stride toward linking the markets of Europe and America and occasioned a large public celebration in St. Paul. An aroused British interest in western Canada encouraged Minnesotans to think either of beating the British to the Pacific by railroad, or if that were impossible, of somehow tying British enterprise to Minnesota, either by the logic of geography or by practical business arrangements. In Russia the visionaries saw a country which was expanding into a frontier region similar to the northern plains of the United States and extending its commerce and civilization toward the Pacific. The opening of Japan to trade following the expedition of Commodore Matthew C. Perry in 1852-54 was greeted by the *Pioneer* as "one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century."<sup>6</sup> The results of Perry's trip appeared even more promising when scientific information which had been gathered concerning the Japanese Current was made public. This pointed to advantages in a great circle sailing route from the Orient across the Pacific to Puget Sound and caused one Minnesota booster to rhapsodize that "even the broad currents of the Pacific enter into the conspiracy of natural and human agencies for building up this great Northern Highway to the Indies."<sup>7</sup>

IN SPITE of the "sublime combination of causes which seems to sum up the energies of half the globe to build a railroad from Puget's Sound to St. Paul," there remained nearly two thousand miles of unsettled wilderness to span.<sup>8</sup> The financial collapse of 1857 discouraged promoters, as did the threatening shadow of the approaching Civil War. In this setting, the discovery of gold in the northern Rockies was indeed fortuitous, and the molders of Minnesota's destiny were not slow to take advantage of it.



JAMES Wickes Taylor

Already it had occurred to these men that emigrant routes opened over the northern plains could become channels of communication between the Mississippi and the Pacific and would encourage settlements along the way which would eventually support a railroad. They had no doubt that a wagon road would serve as an "entering wedge" for the iron horse. This idea prompted the *Pioneer and Democrat* to remark as early as December 17, 1856, that an "emigrant road becomes of far greater importance to the people of Minnesota, than attaches to it merely as a wagon road through our Territory to the Pacific."

Attempts in 1857 to open a route through Dakota and Wyoming to California and in 1859 to establish a northern route through Saskatchewan to the Fraser River, had both fallen far short of Minnesota expectations.<sup>9</sup> In January, 1862, however, Congress—spurred to action by the great interest in the new gold fields and conscious also of the need for increased gold supplies to finance the Civil War—appropriated \$25,000 "for the Protection of Overland Emigrants to

California, Oregon and Washington Territory."<sup>10</sup> Late in April Minnesota Representative Cyrus Aldrich, accompanied by Senator James W. Nesmith of Oregon, called on Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. They asked him to earmark some of the appropriated funds for emigrants traveling over the northern plains. Stanton agreed and designated five thousands dollars for protection on the route surveyed by the Stevens expedition.<sup>11</sup>

Aldrich was only one of the many Minnesota politicians and business leaders who were dedicated in varying degrees to the vision of the state's manifest destiny. Probably the best known and most articulate spokesman for Minnesota expansionism was James W. Taylor, a lawyer who was at that time a special agent of the treasury department. His interest in western British America—looking toward the annexation of that region to the United States—had already earned him the sobriquet "Saskatchewan," and his talents as a scholar, lecturer, politician, and skilled writer had long been employed in disseminating information and ideas about the importance of the northern plains.<sup>12</sup> He was ably seconded by others, including Joseph A. Wheelock, Minnesota's pioneer statistician and editor of the influential *St. Paul Press*. If, however, these were the movement's men of thought, its man of action was James Liberty Fisk. To him fell the task of guiding emigrants across the plains and mounting a propaganda offensive in support of the route.

A twenty-six-year-old Irishman from White Bear Lake, Fisk had worked as a raftsmen, farmer, carriage maker, and newspaperman. In 1857 he had accompanied the

<sup>9</sup> See *Fort Ridgely and South Pass Wagon Road* (37 Congress, 2 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 35—serial 1129); Willoughby M. Babcock, "Gateway to the Northwest: St. Paul and the Nobles Expedition of 1859," in *Minnesota History*, 35:249 (June, 1957).

<sup>10</sup> United States, *Statutes at Large*, 12:333.

<sup>11</sup> *Press*, May 2, 30, 1862.

<sup>12</sup> See Theodore C. Blegen, "James Wickes Taylor: A Biographical Sketch," in *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 1:153-195 (November, 1915).

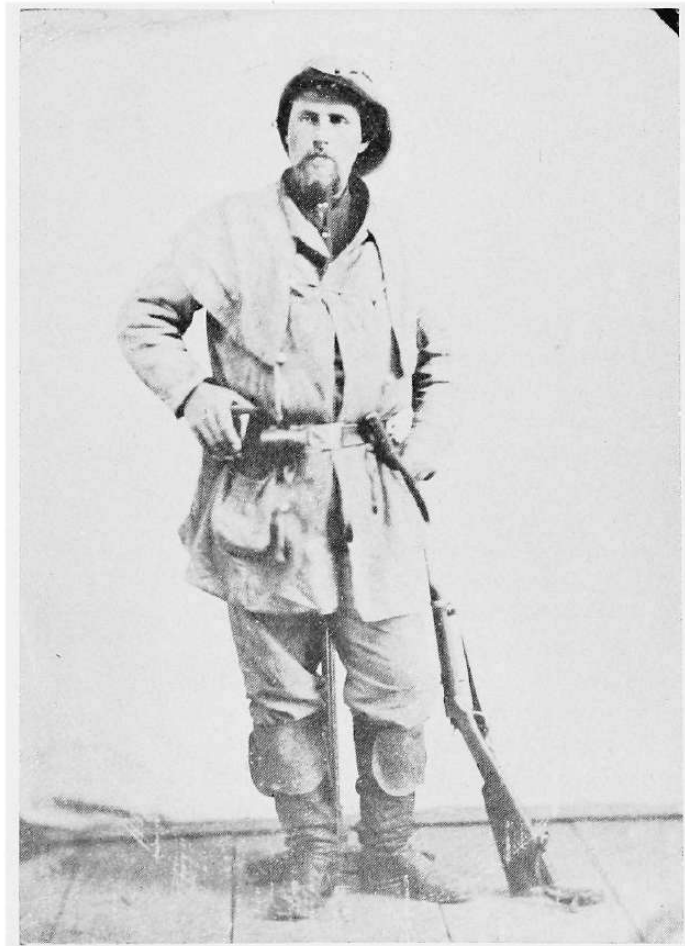
expedition headed by William H. Nobles which had tried without success to build a wagon road from Fort Ridgely to South Pass. Somewhat later he had served as secretary of the Dakota Land Company, a firm organized to promote settlement along the road. An intelligent, goodhearted, generous, and impulsive man, he had the Gaelic "gift of gab" and a strong tendency to rationalize himself out of most predicaments. He was a

<sup>13</sup> "Briefly Biographical: Col. Jas. L. Fisk," (photocopy) Fisk Papers, in the Minnesota Historical Society; "Proceedings of the Third Annual Meeting of the Stockholders of the Dakota Land Company," in *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 6:180 (n.p. 1912); *Weekly Pioneer*, March 30, 1866; James L. Fisk, "Report of Expedition (North Western) to Montana in 1864," 8. A typewritten copy is in the Fisk Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, and the original is in the National Archives.

loyal friend, an energetic enemy, a dead shot with rifle or pistol, and a frontiersman of experience.<sup>13</sup>

ON MAY 29 Fisk received a commission as captain in the quartermaster corps of the United States Army and instructions to enlist and equip a body of fifty men to protect emigrants on the northern route "not only against hostile Indians but against all dangers including starvation, losses, accidents, and the like." He was to appoint a rendezvous at Fort Abercrombie on the Red River, give notice of his plans through newspapers and handbills, and hire in addition to the protective escort such assistants as a secretary, guide, interpreter, physician, and wagon master, as well as teamsters, herders, and cooks. The duties of the escort were to

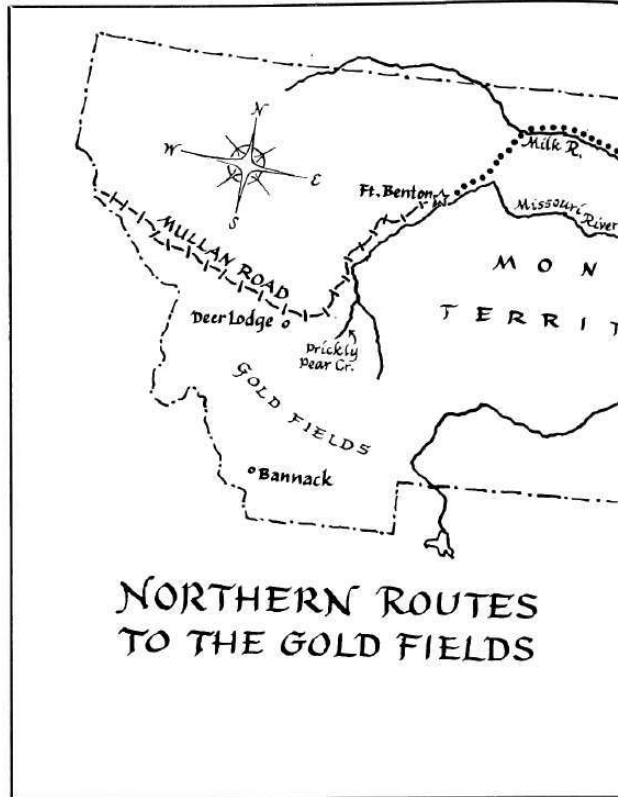
*A portrait of  
James Liberty Fisk,  
probably taken  
in the 1860s*



end at Fort Benton, the eastern terminus of a military road connecting the Missouri and Columbia rivers, which had been constructed by Lieutenant John Mullan in 1859–62. Because army crews were still at work on the road, and because the Indians of the far Northwest had been peaceable for some years, the war department no doubt felt that emigrants were safe beyond that point. Fisk was further instructed, however, to proceed over the Mullan road as far as Fort Walla Walla, sell his government property, and return home by way of Panama.<sup>14</sup>

The lateness of his appointment left Fisk little time for preparation. In fact, one group of gold seekers, too impatient to wait for the government's "tardy agent," had already gone on ahead. Gathering at Fort Abercrombie at the end of May, they had formed a train of some seventy persons and designated Thomas A. Holmes their military captain, secretary, treasurer, Indian interpreter, and sergeant of the guard. Holmes, described by Taylor as "a representative man of the Northwestern frontier," had been a fur trader, townsite promoter, and a member of the Minnesota territorial legislature. His own estimate of his talents was summed up in the statement that though he could not sign his name, he could "skin a muskrat quicker than an Indian."<sup>15</sup> He was well equipped for the task set him and led the train safely across the plains on an old fur trade route that followed close to the forty-ninth parallel as far as the Montana border, and picked up the Stevens route in the valley of the Milk River, eventually turning south to Fort Benton.<sup>16</sup>

Fisk meanwhile had arrived in St. Paul on June 4 and made his first announcement to prospective emigrants in the *Pioneer and Democrat* of June 7. He was able to hurry preparations by recruiting his military escort from among the emigrants themselves, and for officers he secured friends, acquaintances, and persons recommended by Minnesotans promoting this emigrant project. Among the latter were Nathaniel P. Langford, a brother-in-law of Taylor, and Samuel



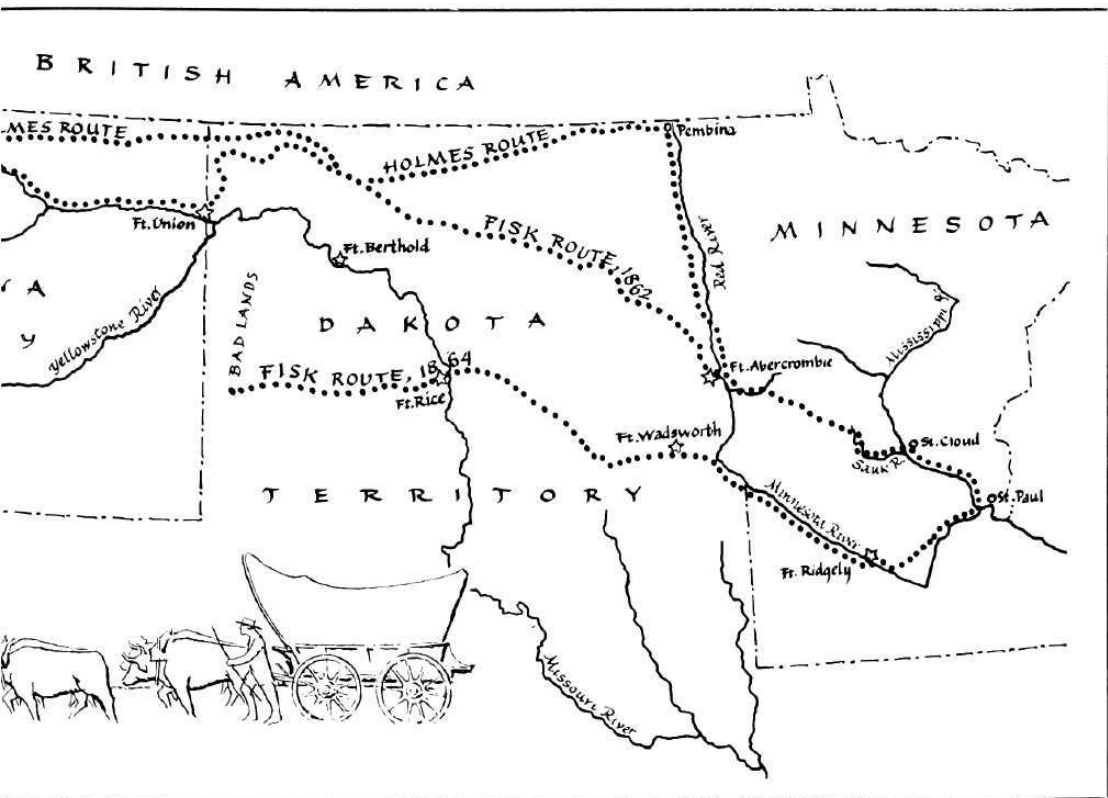
R. Bond, who served as secretary and journalist of the expedition. By a stroke of good fortune he also secured the services of Pierre Bottineau, who had guided the Stevens expedition and probably knew the northern plains as well as any man in the Northwest.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> A draft of instructions for the superintendency of overland emigration dated April 26, 1862, which has been altered in pencil to apply to Fisk and the northern overland trail may be found in File 401W, records of the Adjutant General's Office, National Archives, Record Group 94. For an account of Mullan's road, see John Mullan, *Report on the Construction of a Military Road from Fort Walla-Walla to Fort Benton* (37 Congress, 3 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 43 — serial 1149).

<sup>15</sup> *Shakopee Argus*, July 12, 1862; *Press*, May 30, 1862; Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies*, 340 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 14); La Fayette H. Bunnell, *Winona and Its Environs on the Mississippi in Ancient and Modern Days*, 224 (Winona, 1897).

<sup>16</sup> *Shakopee Argus*, July 12, 1862; *St. Cloud Democrat*, July 10, October 2, 1862; November 27, 1862; January 15, 1863.

<sup>17</sup> *Expedition from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton*, 4 (37 Congress, 3 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 80 — serial 1164).



On June 16 members of Fisk's expedition set out from St. Paul. Joined by emigrant wagons along the way, they pushed north to St. Cloud and then out the Sauk Valley, following the stage road to Fort Abercrombie. The Fourth of July was celebrated at the fort, and there Fisk met other emigrants who had been waiting for his arrival. A nose and wagon count revealed 117 men, 13 women, 53 wagons, 168 oxen, 17 cows, 13 saddle horses, 14 team horses, and 8 mules. The train was made up largely of Minnesotans, almost half of them from Hennepin County.<sup>18</sup>

They left Fort Abercrombie on July 7, 1862, a fair summer day on the plains. Following the Stevens route, with Stevens'

guide ahead of the train as far as the Missouri at Fort Union, and with a copy of Stevens' report stowed away in one of the officers' wagons, the train reached Fort Benton without serious mishap in the first week of September. There Fisk's duties were officially ended, but since he had been instructed to sell his equipment at Walla Walla, and must necessarily follow Mullan's road to that point, the emigrants asked him to travel on with them on an informal basis. So the expedition continued much as it had before until it came near the valley of the Prickly Pear not far from present-day Helena. There a small party turned off to prospect. The specimens of gold they found persuaded a large number of others to stop at Prickly Pear instead of going on to Salmon River.<sup>19</sup>

Several small ceremonies marked the breakup of the train on September 22. The officers of the expedition were entertained at a table "decked with a fine white tablecloth and snowy napkins" and "loaded with

<sup>18</sup> Samuel R. Bond "Journal Kept on the Fisk Expedition of 1862," 3-24, typewritten copy in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society. For origins of the emigrants, see unpublished roster of the expedition in the possession of the author.

<sup>19</sup> *Expedition from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton*, 6-27. A more detailed account of the trip is given in Bond, "Journal," 24-129.

## Ho! for Montana!



All persons going to Montana by way of Fort Abercrombie can obtain a complete outfit of Fire Arms, Ammunition, &c.,

**At St. Cloud, Minn.,**

(The rendezvous for Capt. Fisk's train,) from

**H. W. HANFORD,**

DEALER IN

**Breech-Loading Rifles, Shot Guns,**

**Revolvers, Fishing Tackle,**

And a general assortment of Sportsmen's and Hunter's Goods, which I will guarantee to sell as low as any House in the West.

H. W. HANFORD.

my 1-1m-1st

*AN outfitter's advertisement, 1866*

viands." As Fisk and the others prepared to leave, the emigrants gathered around the flag wagon and presented the leader with a testimonial, signed by all members of the train, expressing their appreciation for his services in guiding them safely across the plains. After hearty cheers, general handshaking, and kissing of the ladies, Fisk and his small group moved on, leaving some eighty-two members of the party at Prickly Pear.<sup>20</sup>

A few days later in the Deer Lodge Valley the last of the Minnesota emigrants departed to seek their fortunes in the mining region. Three wagons and fourteen men of the escort remained to accompany Fisk to Walla Walla.

It had been from every point of view a highly successful venture, and Bond, the journalist, could not resist predicting on the closing page of his report that "the greater portion of future emigration from the northwest to the gold fields . . . will pursue the general overland route over which we passed . . . and that the whole route will, before many years, be marked by a continuous line of settlements, which the country is fully capable of sustaining."<sup>21</sup> In St. Paul the

*Daily Press* described the gold seekers of 1862 as "a victorious army . . . sent forth by Minnesota to clear the path of emigration and commerce to the Pacific."<sup>22</sup>

BEFORE SPRING a full-scale campaign had been launched to gain support for Minnesota's new highway to the Pacific. The official report of Fisk's expedition was published early in 1863, and following it appeared a handbook for emigrants, the second of three accounts of northern overland expeditions to be published over Fisk's name. It contained a lyrical description of the gold region in the newly formed territory of Idaho, soon to become Montana. In addition to untold mineral wealth, Fisk assured would-be settlers that the area had a mild and healthful climate, particularly in the south and to the west, "in accordance with the well-known fact that the isothermal line, or the line of heat, is farther north as you go westward from the Eastern States toward the Pacific."<sup>23</sup>

In addition to his publications Fisk's propaganda efforts included numerous speeches, conferences with chambers of commerce, military leaders, and members of Congress, and he even joined the Minnesota Congressional delegation in 1864 in a call on President Lincoln at the White House.<sup>24</sup> By 1866 the captain had set up information and recruiting offices in various cities from which he carried on correspondence with people interested in traveling to the gold fields over the northern plains. Indeed, his publicity was so effective that one of the overland trails — approximately the Stevens route — came eventually to be known by Fisk's

<sup>20</sup> Bond, "Journal," 130–132.

<sup>21</sup> *Expedition from Fort Abercrombie to Fort Benton*, 28.

<sup>22</sup> *Press*, March 19, 1863.

<sup>23</sup> James L. Fisk, *Idaho: Her Gold Fields, and the Routes to Them*, 11 (New York, 1863); *Expedition of Captain Fisk to the Rocky Mountains*, (38 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 45 — serial 1189).

<sup>24</sup> *Weekly Pioneer*, March 30, 1866; *Pioneer*, February 12, April 28, 1864; *Press*, February 16, March 12, 1864.



name. One critic compared his tales of the West with such "monstrous but pleasing and ingenious fictions" as those in which figure Sinbad the Sailor, Gulliver, and Baron Munchausen.<sup>25</sup>

As the campaign gathered momentum, handbills, circulars, and maps were issued describing the gold fields and the routes to them and telling prospective emigrants where parties were being organized and when they planned to start west. The famous "Rubber Stamp Map" of the Northwest — so called because the name of the new territory of Montana was inserted with a rubber stamp after the map had come off the press — was issued in 1864 by Daniel D. Merrill, a St. Paul bookseller, together with a circular for gold field emigrants. Such literature was an important feature of the campaign because few of the standard guidebooks for Western travelers contained information about the northern plains.<sup>26</sup>

Newspapers reported the comings and goings of emigrants and promoters and carried announcements of the places and times of rendezvous set by various parties. They described in great detail the immediate benefits that might be expected by the Upper Midwest in the form of increased commerce and trade with the gold-field set-

tlements, and repeatedly emphasized the long-range significance of communication with the Pacific Coast. Local businessmen's organizations pledged financial support for the routes, and some companies prepared to send wagonloads of goods over the trails for sale at the mines. Eastern capitalists were urged to invest in joint-stock, townsite, or mining companies, or to finance expeditions to settle mining towns. Despite tempting descriptions, little Eastern capital seems to have been attracted.<sup>27</sup>

The spearhead of the campaign, however, was the effort to secure government assistance. In Congress such men as Asahel W. Hubbard and James F. Wilson of Iowa and Ignatius Donnelly, Morton S. Wilkinson, William Windom, and Alexander Ramsey of Minnesota supported bills for the protection of overland emigration, for the surveying, construction, improvement, and marking of wagon roads, and for the establishment of post and express routes across the northern plains.<sup>28</sup> Though loath to provide funds for the building of wagon roads, Congress did follow up the successful Fisk expedition of 1862 with appropriations in 1863 and 1864 for military protection of emigrants on the Fort Benton route. Fisk was again appointed to superintend emigration and organized expeditions in both years. Because of drouth and Indian unrest in 1863 only a small group ventured west and the expedition of 1864 was attacked by Indians and forced to turn back.<sup>29</sup>

Although the government did not directly sponsor any other emigrant expeditions over the northern plains in the 1860s, the army did in fact give military protection to privately organized trains. The extent of this protection varied considerably from year to year, but all the northern overland trains of the 1860s, except that led by Holmes in 1862, received assistance of one kind or another from the army. In some cases the help took the form of military escorts; in others, the amount and type of aid depended on the state of Indian affairs at the moment, or the whims of the officers in

<sup>25</sup> *Pioneer*, May 22, 1864. See also a circular advertising Fisk's 1866 expedition, preserved in the Donnelly Pamphlets, vol. 4, in the Minnesota Historical Society.

<sup>26</sup> Fisk also issued a map in the same year. Copies of both are in the library of the Minnesota Historical Society. See also Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America*, 4:1225 (Indianapolis, 1915).

<sup>27</sup> *Pioneer and Democrat*, February 20, 1864; June 10, 28, 1865; March 21, 25, November 1, 1866; *Press*, March 4, 1864; May 17, 1866; *Weekly Press*, February 15, December 20, 1866; *St. Cloud Democrat*, August 3, 1865; February 22, May 17, July 5, August 30, 1866; *St. Peter Tribune*, May 30, 1866.

<sup>28</sup> Examples of these bills may be found in 38 Congress, 1 session, *House Journal*, 1863-64, p. 123 (serial 1179); 38 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Journal*, 1863-64, p. 30 (serial 1175); 38 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Journal*, 1864-65, p. 188 (serial 1208); 39 Congress, 1 session, *House Journal*, 1865-66, p. 191 (serial 1243).

<sup>29</sup> United States, *Statutes at Large*, 12:204, 333, 642; 13:14; *Minnesota in the Civil and Indian Wars*, 2:534 (St. Paul, 1892).

charge of forts along the routes. Some emigrant trains took advantage of the army's campaigns against the Sioux and traveled with various military units in their marches across the plains.<sup>30</sup>

After his failure in 1864, Fisk was unable to secure further government funds. In 1865 he was also unsuccessful in efforts to organize a private expedition, but the summer of 1866 found him at the head of the largest and last train he was to conduct across the plains. Meanwhile other groups which made the trek under varying degrees of danger and difficulty included a second train led by Holmes in 1864 and a third in 1866. In 1867 Captain Peter B. Davy headed an expedition. Altogether it is estimated that in these trains some fifteen hundred people crossed the northern plains.<sup>31</sup>

Not satisfied with these limited results, Minnesotans proposed another elaborate scheme. Under the guise of a contract to carry the mails from St. Paul to Helena, they hoped to have the government underwrite the opening of an improved wagon road, complete with stations, bridges, and ferries, which would, as the *St. Paul Weekly Pioneer* of April 12, 1867, put it, "endue the immigration and travel between the States and Montana, through Minnesota, with their accompaniments of capital and trade." Unfortunately the firm which received the contract was interested only in carrying the mail and had no plans to build a road or improve the route. The service was ill performed, Indians harassed the messengers, and, it was said, the riders used the newspapers for fuel and the letters for cigar lighters. With the termination of this mail contract died hopes for a wagon road.<sup>32</sup>

Though the Montana mines of the 1860s were among the world's richest placer mines, the deposits accessible by "pick and pan" methods were quickly exhausted and with them disappeared the opportunities for individual prospectors with little capital to invest. This fact, together with the opening in 1869 of the Union Pacific Railroad and continued Sioux hostility, ended migration

to Montana over northern routes. But the dream of a northern railroad that would link the Great Lakes and the headwaters of the Mississippi with the Pacific and thus put the center of the continent in touch with the two oceans survived. Eventually not one but three railroads reached across the northern plains of the United States, and the present-day traveler who journeys from Minnesota to Montana on these railroad lines follows the northern emigrant trails at many points.

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<sup>30</sup> On army co-operation with westward migration in the 1860s, see United States War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, series 1, vol. 34, part 2, p. 258, 622-625; vol. 41, part 4, p. 882; vol. 48, part 2, p. 1150-53 (Washington, 1891, 1893, 1896).

<sup>31</sup> This estimate is based on rosters in the possession of the author. For references to expeditions not already discussed, see Nicolas Hilger, "General Alfred Sully's Expedition of 1864," in *Montana Historical Society, Contributions*, 2:314-322 (Helena, 1896); *Press*, October 8, 1864; Charles S. Kingston, "The Northern Overland Route in 1867, Journal of Henry Lueg," in *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 41:235-242 (July, 1950). Accounts of all the expeditions are included in the forthcoming book-length manuscript which the author has in progress.

<sup>32</sup> *St. Cloud Democrat*, January 11, August 9, 1866; *Press*, January 24, April 9, 1867; United States, *Statutes at Large*, 13:319; 15:254; James H. Bradley, "Account of the Attempts to Build a Town at the Mouth of the Musselshell River," in *Montana Historical Society, Contributions*, 2:305.

THE MAP on pages 58 and 59 is the work of Celine Charpentier. The advertisement on page 60 appeared in the *St. Paul Press* of May 1, 1866, and the two portraits are from the picture collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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A HALF-HOUR sound film (sixteen millimeter) on the Sioux Uprising is available on loan from the Minnesota Historical Society. Entitled "Recollections of Minnesota's Indian War," the film was one of a series of three television shows produced this spring by the Minnesota Historical Society with assistance from members of the KSTP-TV staff. It is not a complete summary of the uprising but includes high lights from the tragic events of 1862. Schools or other groups may borrow it for a nominal handling charge of one dollar. Direct inquiries to Mr. Eugene Becker, curator of pictures.



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