

II. THE FOUNDATION OF THE FRONTIER MILITARY ROAD SYSTEM

When Wisconsin was admitted to statehood, that portion of the original territory of Wisconsin lying west of the St. Croix River was excluded from the new state and no provision was made for the continuation of territorial law. Some people thought that there was no longer any authority to enforce laws, if indeed there were any to enforce. The country lying north of Iowa and west of the Mississippi River was in a similar position, for it had been separated from Iowa when that territory was admitted as a state. But there the neglect was less harmful, for the region had never been opened to white settlement, and, aside from a few traders who were pretty much their own law, few white men inhabited it. The Minnesota country east of the Mississippi had been open to white settlement for a decade, and its people had brought to it many of the attributes of settled regions. It would have been difficult to relegate that white man's land to the uncertain status of Indian country. ¹

As the summer of 1848 waned and no Congressional action was taken to provide a territorial government for the Minnesota country, the inhabitants of the re-

1. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 236, 488.

gion took matters into their own hands. In August a group of citizens met at Stillwater and named one of their number to present their case to Congress. Henry Hastings Sibley was chosen for this important task, and the choice was a fortunate one, for, although Sibley's claim to the seat vacated by the delegate from Wisconsin when that territory became a state was of doubtful legality, the surprisingly suave fur trader from the West so won the members of Congress that they overlooked the irregularity of his election and accorded him the right to occupy the seat. As the representative from the territory of Wisconsin, he was in a position to work for the things that the Minnesota country needed. ²

There is reason to believe that the need for an adequate system of communication was an important factor in the agitation for the creation of Minnesota Territory. The country was new and sparsely settled, and its meager beginning of a road system was far less than even so thinly populated a country needed. But there were too few people to perform the physical labor of building the roads. Urging the necessity for a road between St. Paul and Stillwater, Henry L. Moss of the latter place wrote to Sibley: "The interests of the country require that something should be done. And at the present time there is not sufficient number of

2. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 241-246, 365-367.

settlers upon the route to effect anything by their own labor." But there was a way in which roads might be obtained, no matter how poor and sparsely settled the country was. The federal government might be persuaded, under the guise of frontier defense against the Indians, to provide the foundation for a system of roads years before the people of the territory themselves could build them. Next to obtaining a territorial form of government for the Minnesota country, Sibley's most important task was that of getting Congress to appropriate money to build roads. ³

Sibley returned to Minnesota in the spring of 1849 with his principal mission accomplished, and, while he had not obtained the hoped-for Congressional appropriations for military roads, he had laid the foundations for future action. He had succeeded in getting a bill introduced in Congress asking for an appropriation of \$12,000 for the construction of a road from the St. Louis River to St. Paul and Point Douglas by way of Marine Mills and Stillwater. Congress had not had time to consider the bill during the session of 1848, but Sibley anticipated no difficulty in obtaining that body's

3. Moss to Sibley, November 20, 1848. In this letter and in one from Orange Walker to Sibley, dated November 7, 1848, petitions for roads, which were being prepared by residents of Stillwater, are referred to. The letters are in the Sibley Papers.

approval when next it met. ⁴

He had reason to be optimistic, for Congressional appropriations for road construction had ample precedent. Since the early nineteenth century, when Congress first appropriated money to build the old National Road, every territory and many of the western states had received grants of money or lands to aid in building roads and canals. In Wisconsin and Iowa, nearest neighbors to the Minnesota country, the federal government had spent money liberally for the construction of military roads for the protection of the frontier. In the background of Minnesota history, also, were two expeditions sent out expressly to make explorations for contemplated military roads through the southern portion of the region. The road for which Sibley asked was one that the territory of Wisconsin had endeavored to obtain for half a decade. Its route was slightly different, but the plan for a military road from the Mississippi River to Lake Superior was the same. ⁵

4. Congressional Globe, 30 Congress, 2 session, 409, 599, 615; address of Sibley to the people of Minnesota Territory. The latter is an undated, printed document in the Sibley Papers.

5. See ante, p. 25-30; Archer B. Hulbert, "The Old National Road -- The Historic Highway of America," in Ohio Archaeological and Historical Society, Publications, 9: 405-519 (Columbus, 1901). A list of appropriations by Congress for constructing and repairing the road may be found on pages 511-517. The idea of constructing military roads apparently had its inception in 1819. See Jeremiah S. Young, A Political and Constitutional Study of the Cumberland Road, 31 (Chicago, 1904). Appropriations for military roads in territorial Wisconsin

During the summer that followed the organization of the territory, the Minnesota country hummed with activity. Real estate values began a spectacular rise in St. Paul, and settlers -- farmers, merchants, and professional men -- thronged in. Those forerunners to a mighty wave of immigration were dreamers and planners, speculators on the fortunes of a new country. They were not content to let things drift on the winds of chance; they wanted immediate results. They were dissatisfied that only the small portion of the territory east of the Mississippi River was open to settlement, for they had visions of vast fortunes in real estate and commerce built upon the foundations of a thriving population not only there but in the "Suland" to the west of the Mississippi

sin, according to Sibley, totaled \$104,000; those for territorial Iowa, \$65,500. Congressional Globe, 31 Congress, 1 session, 1074; Statutes at Large, 5: 303, 352, 670, 778. The route suggested in memorials to Congress by the Wisconsin legislature extended from Prairie du Chien to La Pointe on Lake Superior, and one memorial asked for a road from St. Croix Falls to La Pointe. It was claimed that such a road would bring the rich copper regions of Lake Superior into close contact with the civilization of the Mississippi River and would give the citizens of La Pointe County the "protection and benefits of the courts of justice agreeable to our free institutions." Wisconsin Argus (Madison), February 11, April 15, 1845, January 20, February 10, 1846; Strong, Territory of Wisconsin, 453, 477, 507, 543. The Argus for January 12, 1847, argued that a road up the St. Croix Valley to Lake Superior would open an immense market in the copper mining region for the agricultural produce of the Mississippi Valley. It claimed that the distance from St. Croix Falls to Fond du Lac was only about a hundred miles and that it was only a few miles farther to La Pointe. Furthermore, the paper asserted, engineers had reported that the route was feasible and that the cost of construction would be small.

as well. They demanded that the Indian title to that land be quieted and that facilities for transportation throughout the territory be provided. ⁶

Chief among their prophets stood James Madison Goodhue, fiery editor of Minnesota's first newspaper, the Minnesota Pioneer. He arrived in St. Paul close on the heels of the messengers who brought the news of the organization of the territory. On April 28, 1849, he issued the first number of his newspaper, and from that time until his death in 1852 he was an outstanding exponent of expansion and growth and an ardent advocate of the necessity for improving the means of transportation and communication in Minnesota. He foresaw the possibilities for St. Paul as a distributing point for the Northwest. Its position at the head of navigation on the Mississippi River, he declared, made it the natural center from which goods would be distributed by land over a wide area -- to the Selkirk settlements, to the Indian country extending to the Rocky Mountains, and to the Lake Superior country and the basin of the Great Lakes. The possibilities that he envisioned were national in scope and importance, but their fulfillment, in part, depended upon the completion of a network of roads such as that for which Sibley in the fall of 1849 asked Congress to appropriate funds. ⁷

6. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 266-270.

7. Minnesota Pioneer, April 28, May 5, 1849.

Just what plans for achieving the desired results were discussed during the summer months of 1849 may never be known, for much of the debate undoubtedly took place in private conversations. In August the first territorial election was held, at which representatives to the territorial legislature and a delegate to Congress were elected. It is noteworthy that popular regard for Sibley was so great that he was unanimously elected to serve as delegate to Congress from Minnesota Territory. The legislature met for its first session on September 3, and Governor Alexander Ramsey, in his address to that body on the following day, outlined what he considered were the essential needs of the territory. Among other things he suggested that "much good . . . could be done by the general government, in opening a great military road from Fort Snelling to the Missouri, and marching a respectable military force over it at least once a year." This, he felt, would curb the menace from the prairie Indians, and, if the "Suland" were purchased, would go far toward ending it. A good wagon road from the St. Croix to Lake Superior, he stated, "would open the mineral regions on the shores of that lake to the farm produce of our Territory. . . . It would, moreover, give convenient access to the extensive pineries on that river; and thus enable the General Government, at an early period, to realize something out of her public lands in that quarter. . . . On the Mississippi, a good

road is needed; and one could be constructed at small expense, from St. Paul . . . to Crow Wing . . . and when completed, it would afford to the Government a good military road from Fort Snelling to Fort Gaines." The governor recognized also that a road to Crow Wing would facilitate the Red River trade, the cultivation of which he thought distinctly advisable.⁸

The legislature took up its work with enthusiasm, drafting a series of memorials to Congress which surpassed the recommendations of Governor Ramsey. In addition to the three roads which he thought were important to the territory, the two houses asked that a road be constructed from the Mississippi River at the mouth of the Swan River to the Winnebago agency at Long Prairie on the grounds that the agency was unable to procure needed supplies. A memorial for a road on the west side of the Mississippi River from Mendota to the Iowa line was also adopted, for such a road would "be highly beneficial to the Government of the United States, by enabling it much more rapidly to dispose of the lands on the west side of the Mississippi river convenient to the line of said road, and which will in all probability be soon in market." The pioneers even then were anticipating the negotiation of a treaty for the extinction

8. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 246-255; Council Journal, 1849, p. 13, 15, 16. Fort Gaines was renamed Fort Ripley in 1850. Upham, Geographic Names, 355.

of the Sioux title to the lands west of the Mississippi. ⁹

To what extent the influence of Sibley had determined the recommendations of Governor Ramsey to the legislature is not known. Ramsey, a newcomer in the region, could hardly have made such specific recommendations without advice from someone, in spite of his extensive travels in Minnesota during the summer of 1849, and Sibley, with his experience of a decade and a half in the fur trade, was well equipped to guide him. There were men in the legislature, too, who knew the communication needs of the territory, not from hearsay, but from actual experience. The influence of David Olmsted, president of the Council, and since 1848 a trader at Long Prairie, was important. Martin McLeod, for over a decade a trader in the Minnesota Valley, reported to the Council on the memorial for a road from Fort Snelling to the mouth of the Big Sioux River. The memorial for a road to Fort Ripley and the Winnebago agency was laid before the Council by William Sturgis, a trader at Little Falls; and that for a road from Point Douglas to Lake Superior, by David B. Loomis, a lumberman from Stillwater. In the House Alexis Bailly, long a figure of prominence in the Minnesota fur trade, played an important part in drawing up the memorial for a road from Mendota to the Iowa line. ¹⁰

9. Council Journal, 1849, p. 28; House Journal, 1849, p. 31; Laws, 1849, p. 165, 169, 172, 173. Four of thirteen memorials adopted at this session relate to roads.

10. Warren Upham and Mrs. Rose B. Dunlap, Minnesota Biographies, 1655-1912, 28, 448, 476, 565, 756 (Minnesota Historical Collections, vol. 14 -- St. Paul, 1912).

Sibley returned to Washington armed with the memorials to Congress and the knowledge that the only way a badly needed road system could be obtained quickly was by liberal governmental expenditure. He was spurred on by anxious letters from home. "I trust you will do your best in getting an appropriation for our road to Lake Superior," wrote one St. Croix Valley supplicant. "If not assisted by Gov[ernment] we have a hard task before us if left to individual enterprise and until there is a road opened the country north of us will settle verry [sic] slowly." Another constituent wrote, "The difficulty in getting access to the interior is now a perfect barrier." David Olmsted entreated, "Cannot an appropriation for the improvement of the road between this place [Long Prairie] and the Mississippi be procured and Expended at an early date? It is imperatively needed each by the Government, the Indians, the traders, and the citizens generally." 11

Sibley's bill to provide for the construction of roads in the territory was introduced in the House on February 4, 1850. The committee on roads, to whom the bill was referred, reported favorably on it in the following words:

11. William Holcombe to Sibley, January 15, March 12, 1850; J. O. Henning to Sibley, March 26, 1850; David Olmsted to Sibley, March 25, 1850. Orange Walker suggested that an appropriation of land be obtained for constructing the road to Lake Superior. Walker to Sibley, December 10, 1849. These letters are in the Sibley Papers.

That same fostering care which has always been extended to the new Territories of the country may, in the opinion of the committee, well be manifested towards Minnesota, in opening and improving such thoroughfares as may be necessary for her protection, and useful in advancing her settlements. Such a policy will not only conduce to the general interest and welfare of the settlers, but will increase the value and sale of the public lands to the benefit of the government. 12

When the bill came up for consideration in the House, however, it was opposed by Representative George W. Jones of Tennessee on the grounds that the people of the territory could make their own roads as well as could those living in the states. Sibley countered this assertion by appealing to precedent.

It has been the uniform policy of Congress to aid the organized territories, by appropriations of money for the construction of roads. The Government being the only great landholder, it is in accordance with its own pecuniary interests, as well as just to Minnesota, that proper means of access should be afforded to immigrants who wish to settle upon the public lands. The roads asked for are to be the great thoroughfares of the country, some of them to lead to your military posts and your Indian agencies, and the Government, by constructing them, will, in a very few years, save more than the sums asked for, by the consequent diminution of the cost of transporting military stores and supplies, and goods and provisions for annuities under treaty stipulations.

Representative Richard Parker of Virginia moved to omit the sum requested for the Mendota-Big Sioux road, and stated flatly that he would not vote for any military roads unless the bills for them were accompanied by

12. Congressional Globe, 31 Congress, 1 session, 230, 276, 511; report of the House committee on roads and canals, March 13, 1850, in 31 Congress, 1 session, House Committee Reports, no. 172 (serial 583).

recommendations and estimates from military officials. The opposition of Jones and Parker was overcome, but an amendment proposed by Representative Orin Fowler of Massachusetts that the governor of the territory be required to report annually to Congress on expenditures of money appropriated was adopted, and in that form the bill was passed by the House. Contrary to the expectations of both Sibley and Ramsey, the bill had smoother sailing in the Senate. There Stephen A. Douglas, ever Minnesota's friend, and Augustus C. Dodge of Iowa, quieted the objections that were raised because the war department had not asked for the roads. The bill passed by a vote of 28 to 7, and Minnesota's road-building program was ready to be put into operation. 13

13. Congressional Globe, 31 Congress, 1 session, 1074, 1075, 1089, 1112, 1348, 1356; Sibley to Ramsey, May 27, 30, 1850, in the Ramsey Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society; Ramsey to Sibley, June 3, 1850, in Sibley Papers. In a sense there had been recommendations for roads in Minnesota by the war department. Captain John Pope, after his return from Minnesota in 1849, recommended to the secretary of war that three wagon roads be constructed, one to connect the Red River and Mississippi River valleys, one from St. Paul to the Missouri River, and one from St. Paul to Crow Wing and eastward to Lake Superior. Pope's report is in 31 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 42, p. 1-42 (serial 558). See also a letter from Pope to Henry M. Rice, dated September 26, 1850, which was published in the Minnesota Democrat on December 10, 1850. Pope evidently hoped to obtain the appointment to direct the construction of Minnesota roads. Pope to J. J. Abert, August 16, September 3, 1850, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2757, 2758). Photostatic copies of these letters are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

The measure became effective on July 18, 1850. It appropriated \$15,000 for the construction of a road from Point Douglas on the Mississippi, via Cottage Grove, Stillwater, Marine Mills, and the falls of the St. Croix, to the falls of the St. Louis River. For the construction of a road from Point Douglas, via Cottage Grove, Red Rock, St. Paul, and the Falls of St. Anthony, to Fort Ripley, \$10,000 was set aside, and the sum of \$5,000 was made available for a road "from the mouth of Swan River, or the most available point between it and the Sauk Rapids, to the Winnebago agency at Long Prairie." Sibley did not obtain money for a road from the Iowa line to Mendota along the west bank of the river, but he did get an appropriation of \$5,000 for a road from Wabasha to Mendota. Also, the sum of \$5,000 was set aside for the survey of a road from Mendota to the mouth of the Big Sioux River, but no provision was made for its construction. The act stipulated that the roads were to be built by contracts let under the direction of the secretary of war. Thus, the foundations for the military road system of Minnesota were laid. The roads were patterned wheel-like, with St. Paul as the hub. One spoke reached northward to the Great Lakes; another, northwestward toward the Red River settlements; one extended to the southwest toward the Missouri; and another to the southeast -- the first step in the formation of a connecting link with Iowa. The sums appropriated were

not regarded as sufficient to insure completion of the roads, but Sibley, and others, felt that they would "go far towards opening the country to immigrants, and will prove of incalculable benefit, even on that score alone." Minnesota confidently relied on Congressional generosity to obtain future grants to complete them. ¹⁴

The appropriations, totaling \$40,000, were available immediately, and were intended to be used during the current fiscal year. The secretary of war entrusted the construction to the road builders of the army, the topographical engineers, and Colonel J. J. Abert, their chief, assumed direct charge. He was unable to place an army engineer in the field at once, so, after considerable delay, he employed John S. Potter, a civilian engineer. Since no detailed recommendations for the routes of the roads had been made, Potter was instructed first to make preliminary surveys. Unfortunately, he was ordered to begin work on the road from Mendota to Wabasha, for which, since it passed through Indian country where there were few white inhabitants, there was no pressing need. The people of the St. Croix region, however, wished the road to Lake Superior to be built first, and they appealed to Sibley, who wrote to Abert in protest. The legislature of Minnesota also complained,

14. Statutes at Large, 9: 439; address of Sibley to the people of Minnesota, July 29, 1850, a printed document in the Sibley Papers.

and asked that more men be employed on Minnesota roads. In March, 1851, therefore, Abert requested Potter to give his immediate attention to the road from Point Douglas to Lake Superior. By that time, however, Potter had completed his survey of the Wabasha-Mendota road, and had begun a reconnaissance of the road from the Swan River to Long Prairie. In April, however, Lieutenant James H. Simpson of the topographical corps came to Minnesota to take charge of the work, and he soothed the ruffled tempers by concentrating his efforts on the roads from Point Douglas to Lake Superior and Fort Ripley. 15

The army officers estimated that a sum of \$70,000 was needed to complete the roads in Minnesota, and they asked for an additional \$5,000 for a survey of the Mendota-Big Sioux road. It therefore devolved upon Sibley to seek further appropriations that winter. In February,

15. Abert to Conrad, September 2, 1850, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 4: 207-210 (Calendar, 126); Abert to Potter, October 5, 1850, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 13: 47-49 (Calendar, 2227). Photostatic copies of these letters are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society. See also Holcombe to Sibley, January 8, 1851, in Sibley Papers; address of Sibley to his constituents, March 4, 1851, a printed document, in Sibley Papers; Abert to Sibley, March 11, 1851, enclosing a copy of a letter from Abert to Potter, March 7, 1851, in Sibley Papers; Minnesota Pioneer, November 14, 1850, March 6, 1851; Minnesota Democrat, December 24, 1850, April 8, 22, May 13, 1851; report of Abert to the secretary of war, November 14, 1850, in 31 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, part 2, p. 390-393 (serial 587); Council Journal, 1851, p. 51; House Journal, 1851, p. 64, 66. The field notes of Potter and Simpson are in the Alfred J. Hill Papers, in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

1851, he wrote to Ramsey in a jubilant vein that the House committee on ways and means had approved this huge appropriation and had added it to the army appropriations bill. When the bill came up for consideration, however, the House, irked by the growing appropriations asked for under this heading, began to slash away the items, and one after another the sums for roads in Minnesota were dropped. Sibley confessed that he had not expected any appropriations to be obtained because of the large sums voted by the previous Congress, but that, when the army engineers asked for \$75,000, he did not consider it proper to withhold his aid. He felt, however, that the requests would have been granted had they been included in the bill to provide civil and diplomatic expenses, as he had originally desired. After the denial of Minnesota's requests for roads, Sibley toyed with the idea of having a new measure introduced in the Senate, asking for a single appropriation of \$15,000 for the Point Douglas-St. Louis River road. But, upon the advice of the senators from Wisconsin and Iowa, he concluded to let the matter rest. 16

Early in the following session Sibley renewed his campaign for funds by asking for an appropriation of \$45,000, which, he said, would be a sufficient sum for

16. Sibley to Ramsey, December 4, 1850, February 19, 1851, in Ramsey Papers; Minnesota Democrat, April 22, 1851; Congressional Globe, 31 Congress, 2 session, 731-736, 752.

the work on the roads in Minnesota for the coming year. Since that sum represented a decrease of \$30,000 from the figure submitted by the war department the previous spring, the House called for an explanation from the secretary of war. Sibley, however, took full responsibility for cutting down the estimates of the army officers, and pointed out that their figures were based on construction costs in Wisconsin, whereas the greater amount of prairie land in Minnesota would reduce the costs of road building by at least the difference between the two sets of estimates. He admitted that \$45,000 would not provide finished roads for Minnesota, but it would "make them passable, at least between the points where they are now most needed." The fact that, at the end of 1851, no construction work had been started but that \$12,890 had been spent for preliminary surveys, also caused some discussion in the House. Representative George S. Houston of Alabama contended that, until construction was actually begun and more accurate knowledge of future needs was obtained, there was no point in making further appropriations. Sibley retorted that contracts had been let to the limits of the appropriation, and that he had received a letter from Lieutenant Simpson in April asking whether funds would be available for the coming year. ¹⁷

17. Congressional Globe, 32 Congress, 1 session, 21, 1377, 1451. The resolution of the House, dated December 15, 1851, is in the War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 1524). In

Houston, however, was not convinced and burst out with a violent denunciation of the measure. It was, he thundered, "internal improvement by the Federal Government, in its most odious form. I believe it brings up that system in all its length, breadth, and bearings, and for that reason I have always opposed these appropriations." Sibley took a new tack: the engineer in charge had said that the roads were necessary for the government itself; the government would save large sums annually in transportation costs. Then he expressed the philosophy of the frontier:

The Government, being the sole great land proprietor in the Territories, is bound, by every consideration of equity and justice, to make its domain accessible to the settler, by means of roads. To do otherwise, would be to abandon the policy hitherto pursued towards all your Territories. How, sir, can your lands be sold if the immigrant cannot reach them?

Sibley felt, moreover, that Congress could afford to be generous, for Minnesota had never demanded huge appropriations for lighthouses or harbors. At that point James Brooks of New York broke in to declare that the only justification for such roads lay in the anticipation

1851 Simpson submitted the following estimates of the sums needed for road construction in Minnesota: \$30,000, each, for the St. Louis River and the Fort Ripley roads; and \$20,000, each, for the Winnebago agency and Wabasha roads. At the end of 1851 a balance of about \$23,000 remained from the appropriation of 1850. Report of Abert to the secretary of war, December 22, 1851, in 32 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 12 (serial 637). See also Sibley to James M. Goodhue, February 28, 1852, and Simpson to Sibley, April 3, 1852, in Sibley Papers.

that they might be necessary to combat an enemy. He admitted that military roads in Oregon were of some service, but he scoffed at Sibley's argument that the Sioux were dangerous. Unless the army should decide that the roads were necessary for defense, Brooks could see no reason for them. Road construction by the federal government, he reiterated, was representative of the principle of internal improvement at the expense of the government, and he declared that the time had come to settle the question. If such benefits were accorded to Minnesota, he held, they should be accorded to all the states. This view was shared by Abraham W. Venable of North Carolina, who asserted that the government already was almost giving the land away, and he wished to know if it was a good policy, "after giving land to the landless," to make roads to the land. A majority of the House, however, held the view of Representative David L. Seymour of New York, namely, that the territories had to look to Congress for help in solving their problems, and that every state which had passed through a territorial period had gone through the same process as that which Minnesota was experiencing. The bill was passed by the House by a vote of 85 to 83. The Senate, however, failed to reach a vote before its adjournment. Twice, now, had Sibley's efforts to obtain roads for Minnesota failed.¹⁸

18. Congressional Globe, 32 Congress, 1 session, p. 1451-1455, 1532, 1535, 1682.

Minnesota's citizens, needing roads badly, must have been bitterly disappointed at this failure of Congress to provide for them. Yet, little complaint was voiced. The legislature, which is usually a barometer of public sentiment, made no comment in the form of memorials to Congress in 1851, and in 1852 it contented itself with the passage of a single memorial asking for means to continue work on the road from Point Douglas to the St. Louis River. Nothing was said of funds for other military roads. Nor did the press of Minnesota have much to say, but in the newspaper comment that did appear there was a strong undercurrent of discontent. The St. Anthony Express for June 7, 1851, carried an editorial denouncing the failure of the army to do any work on the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley road.

Now we ask, what has been done towards the construction of this road? Has the route been surveyed? Has the road been located? Has any part of the money been expended in working the road? . . . We hope this appropriation will not all be expended in paying officers and assistants for making useless surveys, while nothing is actually done towards making a road. And further, that what is actually expended, will not all be laid out below St. Paul.

The policy of the government in sending out army officers who had to spend several months in getting acquainted with unfamiliar country, while there were men in the territory who could do the work without such preliminaries, was condemned as wasteful. The same spring a grand jury for the third judicial district, investigating the activities of the army road makers, presented a report which was a blis-

tering indictment of the government's policy. 19

Criticism of that sort was allayed as construction work progressed, and it was not directed at Sibley. In the fall of 1851, however, the people were stirred up over the failure of the engineers to begin building the road to Lake Superior, and then he did come in for his share of censure. "Mr. Sibley took good care that the first road surveyed in the Territory, was from Wabashaw to Mendota. He will have a bill passed by Congress if he can, to enable himself and associates to get possession of Mendota, and by claims, of the adjoining land also." Such statements arose from a fear that the roads were being neglected, although the situation probably was complicated by the uncertainty as to whether or not the treaty negotiated that summer with the Sioux Indians at Traverse des Sioux would be ratified. It was felt in some quarters that Sibley was opposed to the ratification of the treaty. Further criticism of Sibley was based on the fact that, when he went to Washington, he thought that he could best serve the interests of Minnesota by being nonpartisan. Many Democrats attributed the failure of Congress to make a road appropriation in 1851 to Sibley's refusal to take advantage of Democratic strength in Congress. 20

19. Laws, 1852, p. 64. The report of the grand jury is published in full in the Minnesota Democrat for June 24, 1851.

20. Minnesota Democrat, October 14, 1851, June 9, 1852.

In the meantime, the army engineers had been at work. Surveys, begun in 1850 by Potter, had been continued by Simpson and his assistants, and by the end of 1851 routes for all the military roads in Minnesota Territory had been surveyed, except for the Mendota-Big Sioux road, which was not regarded as imperative to the immediate needs of the settlers. The failure of Congress in 1851 to appropriate money for roads in Minnesota proved to be a handicap. Simpson reported in September, 1851, that road expenditures had amounted to \$8,725, all of which had been spent for surveys, and none for construction. He had been instructed to distribute the balances of the appropriations for work on the entire length of each road, so as to make as many miles as possible useable. On the Fort Ripley road, Simpson said, he proposed to bridge the larger streams and do minor construction work where the old Red River trail was too rough for wagons, and on the road to Lake Superior he thought it would be advisable to begin construction on the portion north of Stillwater. Although a route along the north bank of the Swan River had been surveyed for the Winnebago agency road, Simpson held that the road should not be built until a practicable route was found along the south bank of the river, for then it would be wholly within Indian country and Indians, who might use it, thus would be prevented from trespassing on lands

open to white settlement. ²¹ Early in 1852 he called for bids on several sections of the two main roads to be constructed. In the spring, impatient because of the limited amount of work he could do with the meager balance of money at his disposal, he sought permission to advertise for bids on road construction in anticipation of appropriations by Congress. This, of course, he was forbidden to do, and when Congress adjourned without making money available, Abert directed him to close his accounts and recommended that the secretary of war transfer him to the post at Rock Island, Illinois, where the army engineers were removing obstructions from the Mississippi River channel. ²²

21. Minnesotian (St. Paul), November 6, 1851; Minnesota Democrat, November 11, 1851; Minnesota Pioneer, February 19, 1852; report of Simpson to Abert, September 15, 1851, in 32 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 12, p. 7-12 (serial 637). The difficulty of finding a route for the Swan River-Long Prairie road is demonstrated in extracts of reports and correspondence during 1851 of Potter and Emerson to Simpson, in the Hill Papers. See also Potter to Abert, February 25, 1851, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2772). A photostatic copy of this letter is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

22. Minnesota Democrat, February 18, 1852; Minnesota Pioneer, June 24, July 1, August 12, 1852; Weekly Minnesotian, June 19, July 24, 1852; St. Anthony Express, June 25, 1852; Simpson to Abert, March 17, April 20, 1852, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 3193, 3220); Abert to Simpson, September 16, 1852, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 15: 45 (Calendar, 2416); Abert to Conrad, September 7, 1852, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 5: 410 (Calendar, 182); report of Abert to the secretary of war, November 18, 1852, in 32 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 217 (serial 659).

The Minnesota situation was not as dark as those orders made it appear. The House of Representatives had passed Sibley's appropriation bill before adjourning in the spring of 1852, and the bill had proceeded to the Senate. It was that body which refused to take action, and Congress adjourned with the bill one among many on which no vote was taken. During the summer the friends of Minnesota were at work, and, when Congress met in the fall, the Minnesota road appropriations bill was still very much alive. Late in December the Senate passed the bill, and it was signed by President Fillmore on January 7, 1853. A letter from Sibley to the editor of the Minnesota Pioneer, published in that paper on January 20, 1853, made the announcement to the people of the territory, while Colonel Abert notified Simpson that he should continue his work in Minnesota. However, it was not until mid-April that Simpson was able to obtain even a portion of the funds, which were so apportioned that \$20,000 was allotted to the Point Douglas-St. Louis River road; \$10,000 to the road to Fort Ripley; \$5,000 to the Swan River-Long Prairie road; \$5,000 to the Mendota-Wabasha road; and \$5,000 for surveying and laying out the road from Mendota to the mouth of the Big Sioux River. ²³

23. Minnesota Pioneer, February 17, 1853; Statutes at Large, 10: 150; N. J. Faulkner to Abert, July 17, 1852, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 885); Abert to Simpson, January 10, April 14, 1853, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 15: 224, 432 (Calendar, 2468, 2571).

Under the stimulus of additional funds, road making went ahead rapidly during 1853. Contracts were let on portions of all four of the main roads to be constructed. Simpson's report, made on September 17, 1853, shows that the road from Point Douglas to Lake Superior was completed, and in traveling condition from Stillwater to a point twelve miles north of Taylor's Falls, a total of forty-three miles. The road to Fort Ripley was in passable condition over its whole route. Construction during the summer had totaled twenty-eight miles and included a bridge over the Rum River at Anoka. Not as much work had been done on the other two roads, where the problems of engineering and construction were much more complex. On the Mendota-Wabasha road, which followed the Mississippi River, the difficulty was greatest, since the steep hills had to be graded, the deep streams bridged, and the numerous sloughs filled. Therefore, Simpson asked for an additional appropriation of "not less than \$15,000 on account of the bridging which is absolutely required on the road to make it passable." ²⁴

Simpson made no mention in his report of the survey of the Mendota-Big Sioux road, which was made that summer. The original appropriation for the survey was made in 1850, and as one year, and then two years, passed

24. Report of Simpson to Abert, September 17, 1853, in 33 Congress, 1 session, House Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 28 (serial 712).

without action to map the route, considerable anxiety was manifested by the settlers along the route it was generally supposed the road would follow. The treaty of Traverse des Sioux was not ratified until the summer of 1852, but that had not discouraged squatters from staking out claims and selecting townsites on the Sioux lands. There were 20,000 settlers in the region west of the Mississippi as early as the spring of 1852, and, when the government failed to open a road to St. Paul for them, the squatters on the public lands determined to do so on their own initiative. Subscriptions were solicited by Captain William B. Dodd of Traverse des Sioux and by Auguste L. Larpenteur of St. Paul from citizens of the two communities. The exact amount of the contributions is not recorded, but early in January, 1853, Dodd announced that the Traverse des Sioux contributions alone amounted to more than \$400. As soon as spring came, Dodd began the work, and by the middle of July he had chopped out a road through the woods along the ridge separating the drainage basins of the Minnesota and Cannon rivers. It was a rough trail, sixty-five miles long, but it was an all-weather road, and it opened communication for both valleys with St. Paul. 25

25. J. Wesley Bond, Minnesota and Its Resources, 22 (New York, 1853); Minnesota Pioneer, July 8, 22, December 23, 30, 1852, January 6, 1853; Minnesota Democrat, August 18, 1852, April 6, June 8, July 6, 20, 1853; Weekly Minnesotian, May 14, 1853. Simpson estimated that it would have cost the government \$2,000 to make

The efforts of these pioneers anticipated the beginning of work by the government by a matter of a few weeks. Early in April, 1853, Lieutenant Simpson was making inquiries about the possibility of obtaining supplies at the mouth of the Big Sioux River, and on May 4 Captain J. L. Reno was named by Colonel Abert to take charge of the survey. On May 20 Reno and his men left St. Louis for the mouth of the Big Sioux River. The party was at Mankato on July 25, and on August 20 the survey to Mendota was completed. From the mouth of the Big Sioux River, Reno's route followed the valley of the Floyd River for about forty miles, and then struck out in a generally northeasterly direction to the Minnesota-Iowa line in the southwestern corner of present-day Martin County. From this point, Reno turned northward to reach the Watonwan River, and from there he worked his way northeastward toward Mankato. He found that the road which Dodd had made was, with minor exceptions, the shortest and most practicable route to St. Paul from Traverse des Sioux, and his route, therefore, followed the Dodd road. His men did just enough construction work along the way to permit the passage of the army wagons which made up the train. It is significant either of the eagerness of the frontier for roads, or of the lack of frontier means

the road. Simpson to Abert, April 25, 1854, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 3552). A photostatic copy of this letter is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

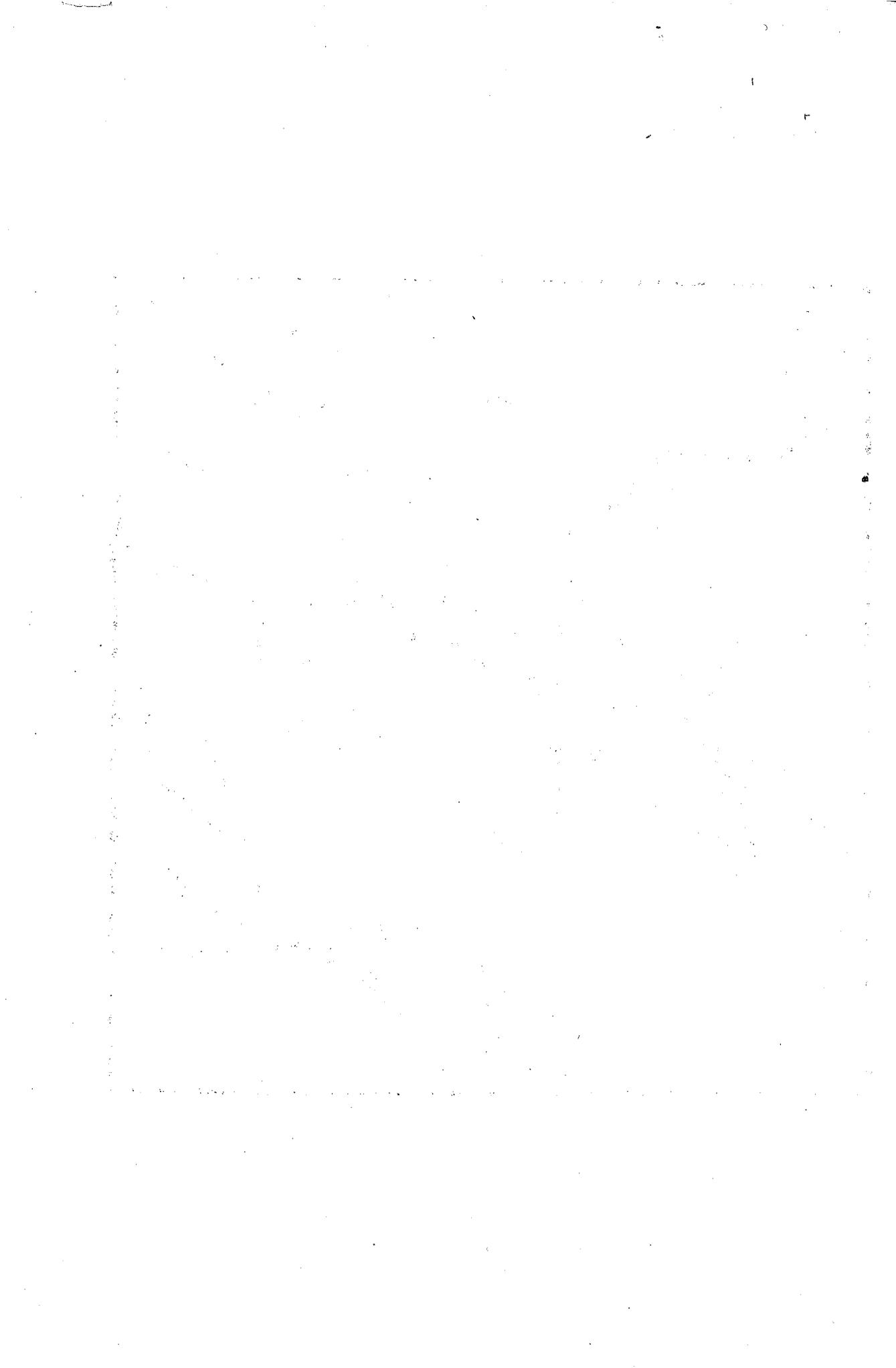
of communication, that the completion of Reno's journey immediately branded the road as "practicable" for those eager souls crowding in upon the wilderness. 26

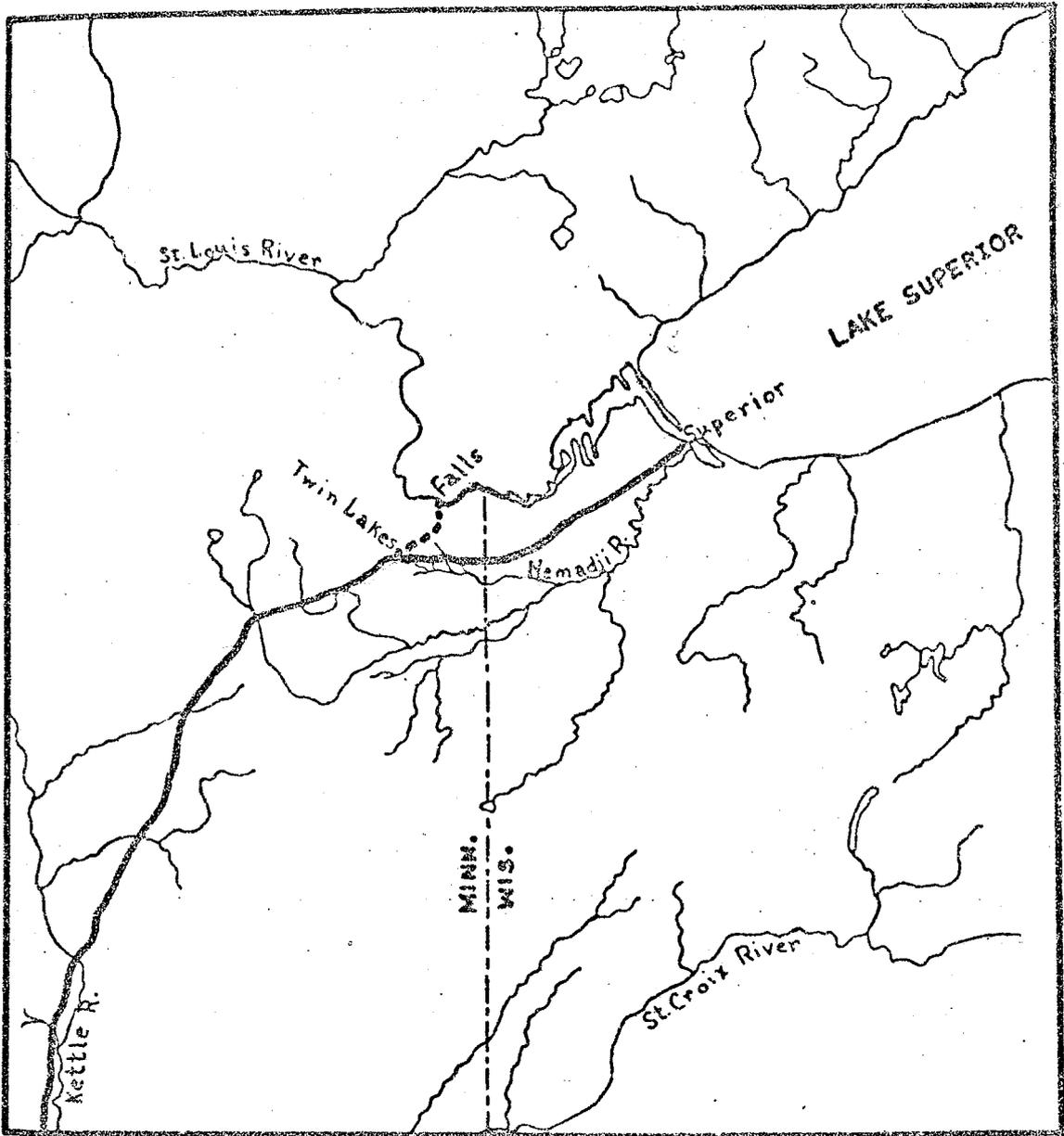
The year 1853 marked a turning point in the history of the military roads in Minnesota, for by the end of that year work was in progress on every one of the roads contemplated in the program that Sibley had submitted to Congress four years earlier. As a result, when the rush of incoming settlers began, the country was not entirely

26. Minnesota Democrat, September 7, 1853; Minnesota Pioneer, September 8, 1853; Simpson to Fred B. Sibley, April 12, 1853, and Reno to Henry H. Sibley, July 17, 24, 1853, in Sibley Papers; Reno to Abert, July 30, 1853, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2970); Abert to Reno, May 5, 1853, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 16: 38-42 (Calendar, 2607). The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy of the latter letter. Because the Dodd road was accepted as part of the route for the Mendota-Big Sioux road, Dodd entered a claim against the federal government for expenses incurred in its construction, and the Minnesota legislature adopted a joint resolution praying for the "relief of William B. Dodd" who "opened and constructed a road from St. Paul to Traverse des Sioux, which he claims to have been adopted as a part of the Government road from Mendota to the Mouth of the Big Sioux River." The claim was disallowed on the grounds that citizens of St. Paul, and presumably also of Traverse des Sioux, had raised money for the road by subscription and had paid it to Dodd before he began work on the road. Laws, 1854, p. 154; Simpson to Abert, April 25, 1854, and Reno to Abert, May 6, 1854, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 3552, 2980); Abert to Jefferson Davis, May 6, 9, 1854, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 7: 113-115, 116 (Calendar, 322, 324). The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of these letters. In his letter of May 9 to Davis, Abert quotes Rice as stating that Dodd had received from citizens of St. Paul "an amount of money to meet expenses."

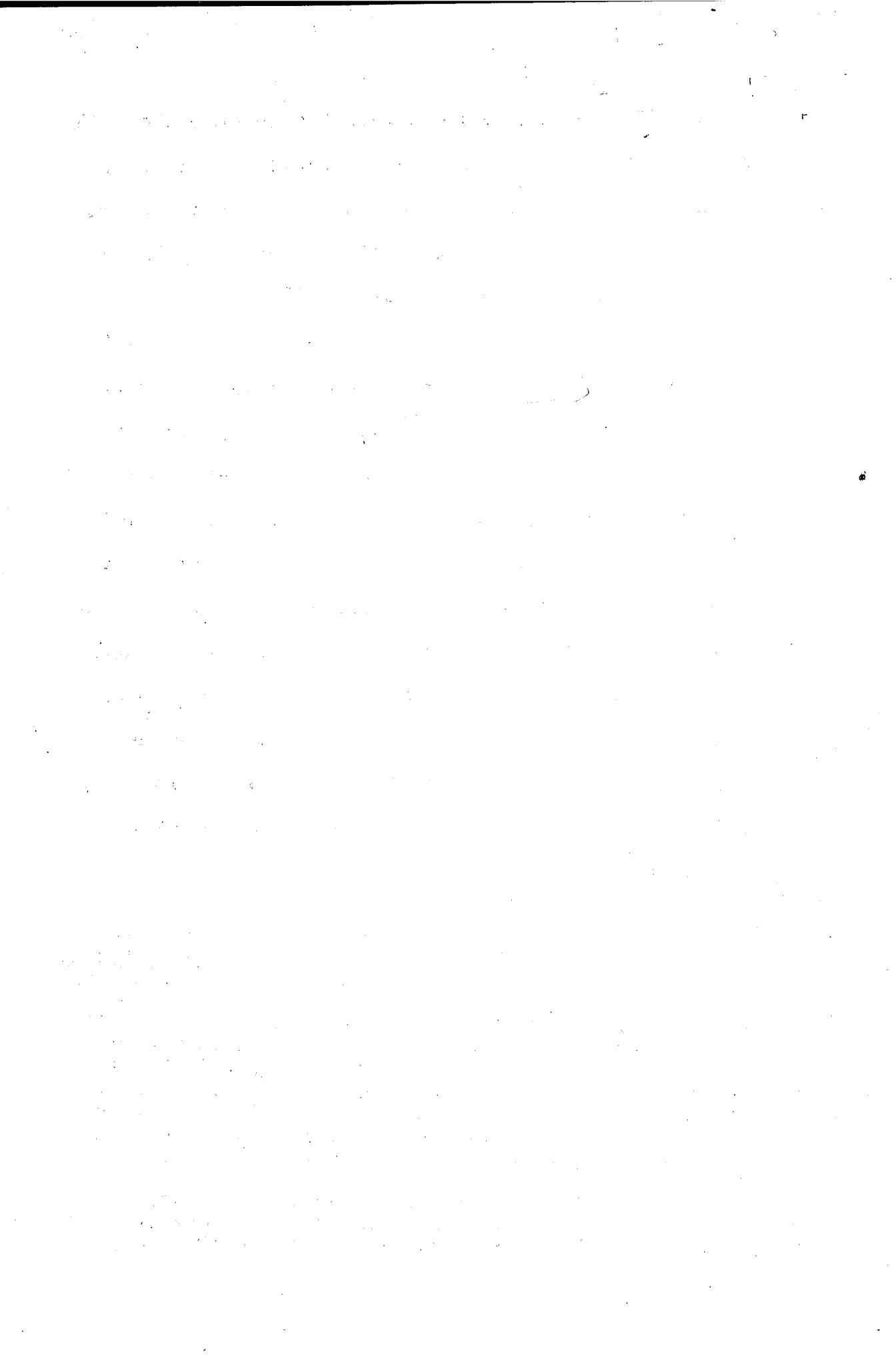
unprepared to receive them. The year, too, marked the retirement of Sibley from the delegacy to Congress. He was succeeded by Henry M. Rice, and the choice was a happy one, for Rice, like Sibley, distinguished himself by his efforts to serve Minnesota. His term of office began in December, 1853, and he served as delegate throughout the remainder of the territorial period. When statehood was achieved, he became one of the United States senators from Minnesota. 27

Rice experienced little difficulty in getting funds for the continuation of road construction in Minnesota. On July 17, 1854, his measure, providing for an appropriation of \$50,000, became effective. This sum was so apportioned that \$15,000 was allocated to the Mendota-Wabasha road, \$5,000 to the Swan River-Winnebago agency road, \$10,000 to the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley road, and the balance, \$20,000, to the road from Point Douglas to Lake Superior. The law also changed the northern terminus of the road so that instead of ending at the falls of the St. Louis River it extended to St. Louis Bay in Wisconsin. The change was a logical one, for the old terminus was far from navigable water, and the lands on the Minnesota side of the head of Lake Superior were set aside for a military reservation and, therefore, were not open to settlement. When the question was considered in the House,





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the change in the terminus was reported to have the full approval of settlers and federal authorities alike. At the time it provoked little comment, but within a short while it became a storm center about which the political discontent in the territory gathered. 28

There was no provision for work on the Mendota-Big Sioux road in the 1854 bill appropriating money for Minnesota roads. In the army appropriations bill, however, the sum of \$25,000 was set aside for that road. Because of an error in the printed act this sum was to be used for "completing" the road -- a paltry amount for a road that was to be 279 miles long. Rice called the error to the attention of Colonel Abert and the secretary of war, but the measure had already been passed and the bureau was forced to adjust its needs to the amount of money available. Rice's first session in Congress, therefore, brought appropriations totaling \$75,000 for use in constructing Minnesota roads. 29

28. Congressional Globe, 33 Congress, 1 session, 88, 182, 562, 1031, 1052, 1059, 1621, 1671; Statutes at Large, 10: 306; Daily Minnesotian (St. Paul), July 24, 1854. On December 23, 1853, Rice asked Abert for an estimate of the funds needed to complete the roads in Minnesota. "I wish to introduce a bill next week making appropriations to complete said roads. When finished they will be of the greatest importance to the people of the Territory, as they are now they are of little use." War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2979). The Minnesota Historical Society has a photostatic copy of this letter.

29. Statutes at Large, 10: 581; report of Simpson to Abert, September 15, 1854, in 33 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 347 (serial 747);

Rice's success in obtaining road funds for Minnesota continued throughout the remainder of the territorial period. As a result of his careful and clever maneuvering in the session of 1854-55, Congress appropriated upwards of \$90,000 for the completion of the roads already under construction.³⁰ In response to demands from people of Minnesota, appropriations were also made for two new roads. One of these was designed to connect Fort Ridgely, the new fort on the Minnesota River above New Ulm, with the head of navigation on the Mississippi. The Minnesota legislature had already authorized the laying out of a road from St. Anthony Falls to Fort Ridgely, so the act provided simply for cutting out the timber on the road, for which purpose \$5,000 was deemed sufficient. The increasing trade with the Red River country and the passage of an act authorizing the construction of a new fort on that river necessitated the improvement of means of communication with the region. For this purpose, Congress authorized the expenditure of \$10,000 for cutting the timber on the

Rice to Abert, August 9, 1854, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2984); Abert to Davis, August 11, 1854, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 7: 210-212 (Calendar, 351).

30. The amounts appropriated were: for the Point Douglas-St. Louis River road, \$34,213.50; for the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley road, \$13,494.09; for the Swan River-Winnebago agency road, \$2,535.39; for the Wabasha-Mendota road, \$13,871.76; for the Mendota-Big Sioux road, \$27,475.68. Statutes at Large, 10: 638.

road from Fort Ripley by way of the Crow Wing River to the "main road leading to the Red River of the north." 31

With all this money available, Simpson was able to push the work, and his report, submitted in September, 1855, testifies to his success. The road from Point Douglas to Fort Ripley, 146 miles in length, was reported to be completed with the exception of three miles between St. Paul and Point Douglas, a short distance in St. Paul through which a right of way was denied by Lyman F. Dayton, a similar small stretch about five miles above St. Anthony through land owned by Abram M. Fridley, and the grading of the bank where the road crossed Rice Creek. The sum appropriated for this road by the Congress of 1854-55 had not been the amount Simpson had asked for in his 1854 report, however, and in

31: Statutes at Large, 10: 610. The demand for a road to Fort Ridgely arose as soon as the establishment of the post was authorized. In August, 1853, citizens of communities in the Minnesota Valley raised enough money by subscription to open a rough road from Traverse des Sioux to the fort, and by the end of the year they were clamoring for the establishment of a mail route. When agitation for a road assumed serious proportions, there was a contest to determine which of three routes would be adopted. One group favored the selection of a route through Mankato, a distance of 138 miles from St. Paul. A second group wished to route the road via Traverse des Sioux, a distance of 121 miles from the territorial capital. A third group, the one which eventually won, favored a route 101 miles long, reaching Fort Ridgely from St. Paul by way of Henderson. Minnesota Democrat, November 17, 1852; Weekly Minnesotian, August 6, 1853; St. Anthony Express, December 3, 1853; Minnesota Pioneer, April 20, 1854; St. Paul Daily Times, January 31, 1855.

1855 he asked for \$4,696 to complete some slight grading and stump removal projects on the road below St. Paul. A stagecoach line had been operating from St. Paul to Crow Wing for the past two years, using the military road where it was completed and following the old Red River trail at other places. The Swan River-Winnebago agency road, an offshoot of the Fort Ripley highway, was reported entirely finished. The Wabasha and Mendota road, which was seventy-six miles long, Simpson reported to be in traveling condition throughout its length. Its importance in transporting supplies to St. Paul and the upper Minnesota country during the spring season, when navigation was prevented by the sluggish breaking up of the ice in Lake Pepin, was recognized almost from the beginning, and as early as 1855 the people were talking of extending it to the Iowa line. 32

32. Reports of Simpson to Abert, September 15, 1854, in 33 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 347 (serial 747), and September 20, 1855, in 34 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 472 (serial 811); Weekly Minnesotian, September 10, 1853; Daily Minnesota Pioneer, August 16, September 25, 1854, March 10, July 20, 1855; St. Paul Daily Times, July 19, 1855. The problem of securing a right of way was one which occasioned considerable difficulty. Under the existing laws, the attorney general of the United States held, there was no way to compel private owners to grant a right of way. Abert, therefore, instructed Simpson not to attempt any construction in such cases, but to stop work at the line of the disputed property. Abert to Simpson, July 7, 14, 1855, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 19: 148, 169 (Calendar, 3317,

Simpson was given no jurisdiction over the Mendota-Big Sioux road until late in the summer of 1854. No contracts for building it were let, therefore, until the spring of 1855. Yet, Simpson reported that forty-one of the eighty-nine and a half miles between Mendota and Mankato were completed and that the whole division between those two points would be completed before the end of the season. However, the quality of the work done on this road was inferior to that on the rest of the military roads in Minnesota, because only \$25,000 was allowed for its completion.

Work on the two new roads for which money had been appropriated in March, 1855 -- the St. Anthony Falls-Fort Ridgely road and the Red River road -- was at a standstill. Early in June Simpson's engineers made a reconnaissance of the old Red River trail from Fort Ripley, and reported that it was extremely crooked, and that, since it did not follow the best grades, it was subject to inundation during wet seasons. If good engineering principles were to be followed, the route of the road should be changed. Simpson requested the opinion of a number of men whose judgment would have

3322). The Minnesota Historical Society has a photostatic copy of the letter of July 7. The difficulty was solved by the passage of a law by the territorial legislature in 1856 which declared the military roads to be territorial roads, and made it possible to obtain a right of way through private property under existing territorial laws. Laws, 1856, p. 152; post, p. 236.

weight -- Sibley, Rice, Governor Willis A. Gorman, Norman W. Kittson, who was a resident of Pembina, a member of the territorial legislature, and acquainted with the route, and Charles T. Cavileer, likewise a resident of Pembina -- and they agreed with him that it was better to postpone action on the road until Congressional consent could be obtained to the construction of a road which would better fit the needs of the region. Reluctantly, the war department consented to this postponement. Two years went by before the project was taken up.

On the road from St. Anthony to Fort Ridgely no work had been done, because the act of Congress authorizing the appropriation had specified that the timber was to be removed from a territorial road already laid out, but, when Simpson was ready to begin work, he found that, although the territorial legislature had authorized the laying out of the road and had appointed commissioners to do the work, nothing had been done. He made repeated efforts to get the commissioners to act, but up to September, 1855, they had done nothing toward laying out the road, and the federal appropriation, therefore, remained unexpended. In part the inactivity of the territorial agents may be explained by the competition between various towns for the road. Not until July, 1857, was the dispute settled, the road laid out, and the way

open for the federal government to prosecute the work. 33

To the majority of Minnesotans in 1855, the most important of the government roads was that extending from Point Douglas to Lake Superior. It was valuable not only because it penetrated into the first settled part of the territory and because it gave access to a region rich in lumber resources, but also because it supplied a connection with the Great Lakes. Up to the middle fifties, the value of this outlet was theoretical, rather than practical. In 1855, however, the completion of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal made it possible for lake ships from Chicago, Buffalo, or any other lower Great Lakes port to dock at wharves at the head of the lakes without transshipment. Minnesota, therefore, had as easy access to eastern markets, and was as easy of access from the East, as any of the agricultural states of the Middle West. To capitalize on this great advantage, however, it was necessary to have some means of

33. Reports of Simpson to Abert, September 15, 1854, in 33 Congress, 2 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 346, 347 (serial 747), and September 20, 1855, in 34 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 473, 474, 475, 480 (serial 811); Laws, 1855, p. 185; Daily Minnesotian, September 1, 1854; Daily Minnesota Pioneer, December 11, 28, 1854. Simpson's correspondence with Sibley, Rice, Gorman, Kittson, and Cavileer, together with a letter from Simpson to Abert, dated July 21, 1855, and one from Abert to Davis, dated August 2, 1855, are printed in Appendix A to Simpson's report of September 20, 1855. See also post, p. 107; report of George Thom to Abert, September 5, 1857, in 35 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 11, p. 353 (serial 920).

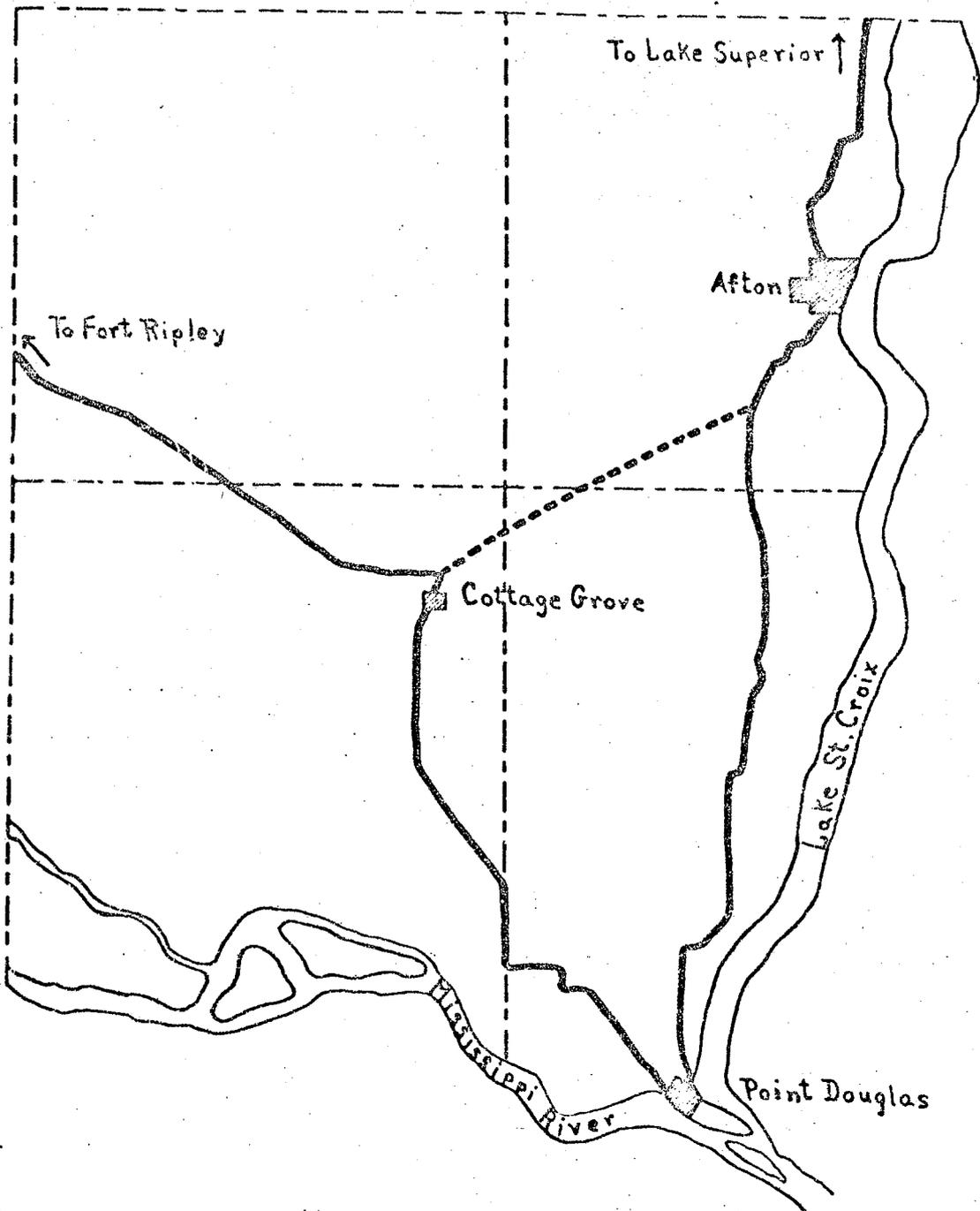
getting to the lake waterway. For the past two years the people of Minnesota had been toying with the idea of a railroad connecting the head of Lake Superior with the agricultural portions of Minnesota and of the upper Mississippi Valley. In 1853 the legislature chartered a railroad for that purpose, and in Congress Rice obtained a grant of land to aid in its construction. The exposure of an audacious fraud in the organization of the company brought about the revocation of the grant, and the prospect for another grant for railroads appeared slight in 1855. Interest in the completion of the military road, therefore, was keener than it would have been had the railroad materialized. ³⁴

On this road Simpson had expended his best efforts. He was hampered at first by the necessity for changing the northern terminus of the route in accordance with the act of July, 1854, as well as by a provision in the same act that he build the northern portion before continuing work on the remainder of the road. It was not until October that he was able to begin his surveys, and, by the time they were completed, it was too late in the season to undertake construction work. In answer to his protests against spending the entire appropriation on the northern section the secretary of war granted him permission to distribute the appropriation so as to put

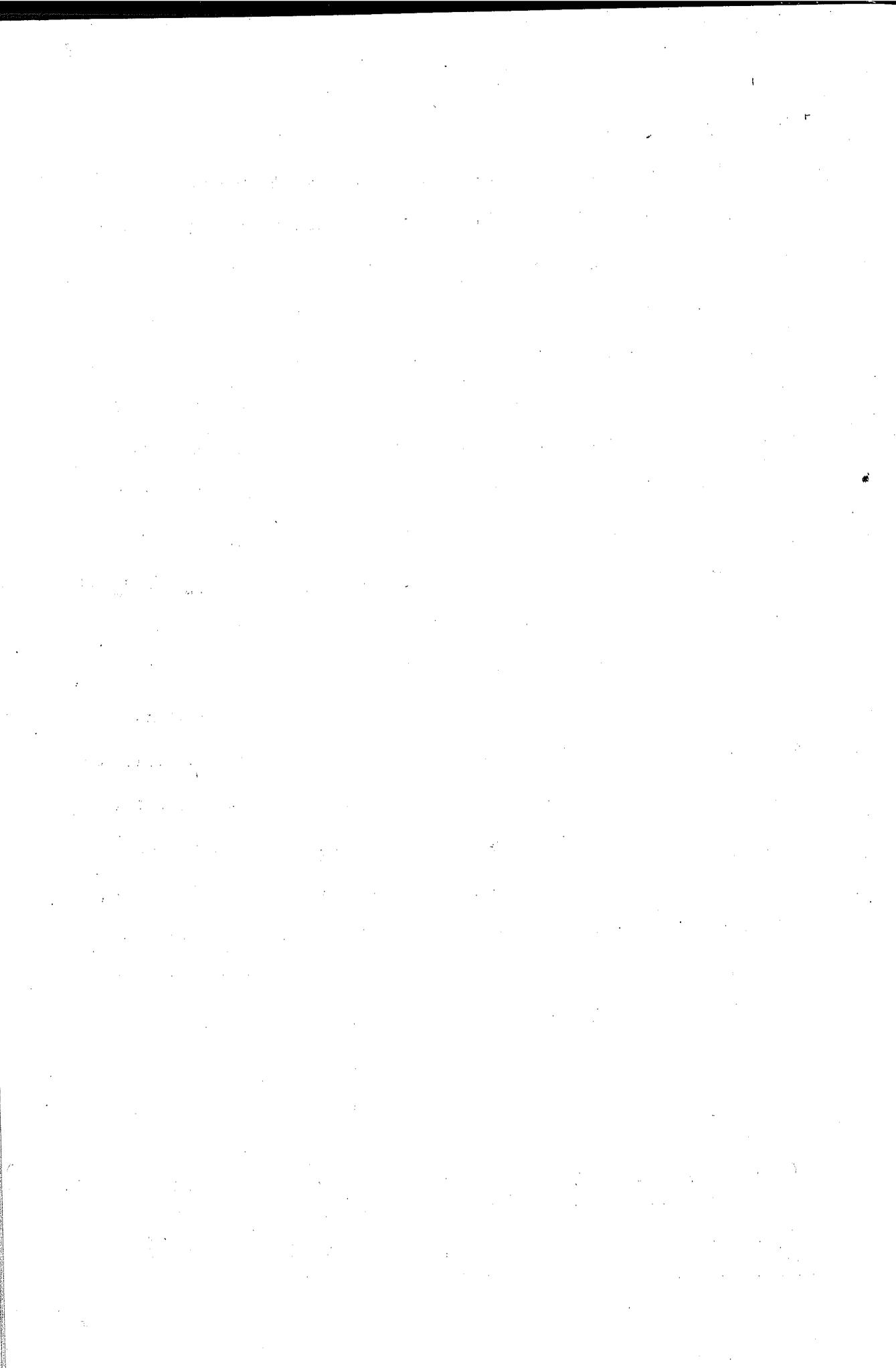
34. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 327-350.

the road in as good condition as possible over its entire length. During the winter of 1855, therefore, Simpson advertised for bids to clear the entire roadway to a width of twenty-five feet, and to grub out all roots and stumps for eighteen of the twenty-five feet. The same winter Congress appropriated funds for the completion of the road. Simpson proceeded with his earlier plans of making first a narrow trail, and then, as the appropriation should permit, improving the whole road. By the time he made his report in the fall of 1855, the first phase of the work was well under way. He was experiencing difficulty on the northern extension of the road, because his men had made the surveys during the winter when the ground was covered with ice and snow, and a considerable portion of it had had to be resurveyed when spring came. This, in turn, slowed the work of the contractor. The southern portion of the road presented still another problem. The act authorizing the construction of the road specified that it should pass through Cottage Grove, which was located several miles west of the most direct route between Point Douglas and Stillwater. Protests from the citizens of the territory resulted in Congressional authorization for a change in the route, which was incorporated in the appropriation act of 1853. By 1855 the new route, running almost directly north and south,





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had been staked out. 35

In spite of the progress that had been made in the construction of the military roads, there was considerable dissatisfaction among the people of the territory. The need for some of the roads, such as that to Lake Superior, was so imperative that the Minnesota pioneers could not brook the necessarily slow work of the army engineers. During 1854 and 1855 their criticisms became increasingly vociferous, the newspapers of the territory being the medium through which the criticisms were made public. The editor of the St. Anthony Exoress, for example, questioned, as he had done in 1851, the necessity for sending high-salaried engineers out to survey routes for the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley road when there were "men in Minnesota so perfectly familiar with the whole country, as to be able to point out the proper location for a Government road, without weeks and months spent in making preliminary surveys." Maps, surveys, and estimates were all very well, he thought, but what Minnesota wanted was roads -- something tangible to show for the large sums of money that Congress had been appropriating. In an issue published a few weeks earlier, he had suggested that roads would mate-

35. See ante, p. 67; report of Simpson to Abert, September 20, 1855, in 34 Congress, 1 session, Senate Executive Documents, no. 1, p. 469-472 (serial 811); Holcombe to Sibley, March 27, 1852, in Sibley Papers; Statutes at Large, 10: 150.

rialize more quickly, if, instead of waiting for the federal government to construct them, the territory itself did so. ³⁶

Much of this kind of criticism was inspired by a genuine concern over the delay in providing the territory with roads, but a good deal of it undoubtedly was rooted in a bitter personal quarrel between Simpson and Rice. Simpson was able, conscientious, and hard-working, but he was also inclined to be irascible and quick-tempered, and, perhaps, a bit stubborn. He had a great deal of admiration for Sibley, and the two men worked in harmony while Sibley was delegate in Congress. However, it was this friendship toward Sibley that brought the antagonism between Simpson and Rice into the open.

One evening in March, 1852, Simpson was present at a meeting held in St. Paul for the purpose of discussing the delay of Congress in ratifying the Sioux treaties negotiated the summer before. In the course of the debate, William Hollinshead, a brother-in-law of Rice, accused Sibley of working to defeat the ratification of the treaties for his own interests. Simpson had no great liking for Hollinshead, whom he believed to have been the author of a report by the grand jury for the third judicial district of the territory of Minnesota in the spring of 1851 in which the work of the government

36. See ante, p. 58; St. Anthony Express, December 17, 1853, January 7, 1854.

men in surveying the Point Douglas-Fort Ripley road was condemned "as a humbug, and a gross misapplication of the funds of the government," and he denounced the speaker and his associates in no uncertain terms. That incident marked the beginning of a quarrel that lasted as long as Simpson remained in Minnesota. The dispute caused work on the roads to be slowed down, the road question to be plunged into Minnesota politics, and, eventually, it led to the entrusting of a great deal of road construction in Minnesota to departments of the federal government other than the war department. 37

The conflict with Rice even entered into Simpson's family affairs, for his brother-in-law, Charles L. Emerson, became a close friend of Rice. Emerson, a civil engineer, came to Minnesota as Simpson's assistant. He was well qualified for his work, but the temperaments of the two men did not agree, and the discord was not improved by the friendship which Emerson displayed toward Rice. The break between them came in 1853, when Rice complained to Colonel Abert of the slowness with which road construction in Minnesota proceeded, and requested that Emerson be put in Simpson's position. Members of the Rice faction also circulated petitions for

37. See ante, p. 58; Simpson to Sibley, April 3, 1852, in Sibley Papers; Simpson to Abert, May 22, 1854, and September 10, 1855, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 3580, 3851). Photostatic copies of these letters are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

Simpson's removal which were sent to Washington. Colonel Abert, however, stood loyally behind his subordinate.³⁸ The Rice faction, through its organ, the Minnesota Democrat, continued to attack Simpson, implicitly criticizing him while praising the work of other officers of the topographical corps. Simpson, furious at the attempt to drive him from the territory, retaliated through the medium of the St. Paul Minnesotian, defending his record and giving Rice and his faction an ill-natured and emphatic berating.³⁹

Rice's election as delegate to Congress in 1853 did not improve the situation, for the two men who should have worked together for the good of the territory were bitter enemies. Simpson's position was difficult, for he knew that political pressure, if brought to bear upon his superiors, might cost him his Minnesota position. The lack of harmony might also result in a decrease in future appropriations, or even in the cancellation of the road-building projects. When Emerson, whom Simpson

38. Rice to Abert, April 27, 1853, Hollinshead and others to Abert, April 17, 1853, Simpson to Abert, May 22, 23, 1854, September 10, 1855, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2965, 2966, 3580, 3581, 3851); Abert to Hollinshead and others, May 7, 1853, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 16: 45 (Calendar, 2610). Photostatic copies of these letters are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

39. Minnesota Democrat, June 29, July 6, 1853; Weekly Minnesotian, July 2, 1853; Minnesota Pioneer, July 7, 1853.

discharged, was made editor of the Minnesota Democrat, the personal quarrel was used to feed the flames of the political conflict that divided Minnesota into hostile camps. ⁴⁰

In the fall of 1854 the government roads of Minnesota became involved in the struggle over the Congressional grant of land to aid in the construction of the railroad from Lake Superior to Iowa. The railroad land grant scheme was diligently pushed by the proprietors of the city of Superior, Wisconsin, composed mostly of St. Paul men, including Rice and his brother, for their young city was designated as an alternate and possibly the principal northern terminus of the proposed railroad. One bill to authorize the grant of lands was smothered by the opposition in Congress, but the backers of the project soon introduced a new bill which was acceptable to both houses. It was in the interval between the suppression of the first bill and the introduction of the second one, that the measure appropriating money for Minnesota roads was amended so that the northern terminus of the Point Douglas-St. Louis River road was placed at the mouth of the St. Louis River in Wisconsin, in other words, at Superior. Perhaps no one would have thought a great deal of this change, if

40. Simpson to Abert, May 22, 1854, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 3580). The Minnesota Historical Society has a photostatic copy of this letter.

the territory had not been shocked by the exposure of a gigantic fraud in the attempt of a few individuals to gain control of the land grant for the railroad. The territory split into two camps, one, led by Sibley, condemning the land grant and the perpetrators of the fraud, and the other, headed by Rice, defending the railroad scheme. It was natural, under the circumstances, that the acts of all persons involved in the scheme should be suspected, and the motives which led Rice to suggest the logical change in the northern terminus of the military road so as to bring it to the lake shore were interpreted by his enemies to be a gross misuse of political office for private gain. ⁴¹

What irked Minnesotans most about the whole affair, was that the terminus of the military road was given to Wisconsin. They did not deny the logic of the change, but they foresaw that the community at which the road terminated would have an economic advantage over all other points at the head of the lake. In July, 1854, one Minnesota editor, perceiving this fact, cried out, "What does it all mean?" In an editorial in mid-August he put the question to his readers: "Who Shall Command the Commerce of Lake Superior?" He held that it was "treason to the future welfare and

41. See ante, p. 67, 75; Congressional Globe, 33 Congress, 1 session, 1031. For an account of the railroad land grant fraud, see Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 329-350.

glory of Minnesota," to let this prize fall into the hands of another state. At the terminus of the road, he said, "the travel and trade will eventually form a nucleus of a town, and that will attract the terminus of our great Railroad to be built by lands in the bosom of our Territory." He appealed for united support from the independent newspapers of the territory in thwarting the scheme. ⁴²

When Simpson's quarrel with Rice became public property, public opinion was divided. Those who sympathized with the efforts made by Rice to obtain a railroad charter for Minnesota defended him in his quarrel with Simpson, while those who opposed what to them was an evident effort to defraud the people came to the aid of Simpson. When Simpson was slow in making use of the appropriations of 1854, the exasperated editor of the Saint Croix Union of Stillwater accused him of misappropriating the funds allotted for the road to Lake Superior and of lending the money to local bankers for investment purposes. The Minnesota Democrat took up the accusation against Simpson and added to the charge of misappropriation others of indolence and incompetence. The letting of contracts for construction on the Lake Superior road put a quietus on the pen of the Stillwater editor, but the Rice faction persisted

42. St. Anthony Express, July 22, August 19, 1854.

in their efforts to have Simpson removed. As a result of another request by Rice, in October, 1854, for the dismissal of Simpson, a thorough investigation of the charges was made. While the verdict was never published, Simpson must have been vindicated, for he was not removed.⁴³

It was a foregone conclusion that Rice would be a candidate for re-election in 1855, but he must have been surprised at the bitterness of the opposition to his candidacy when the campaign began. He based his claim to consideration for re-election on his record, and the Minnesota Democrat pointed to it with pride: he had secured four new public land offices for Minnesota; the road appropriations secured through his efforts had reached a total of more than \$200,000; he had labored strenuously for a grant of lands for railroad construction in the territory; and he had been responsible for the negotiation of Indian treaties which had done much to open Minnesota lands to white

43. Saint Croix Union, November 25, December 26, 1854, January 23, 1855; Daily Minnesota Pioneer, January 1, 16, 1855; Daily Minnesotian, January 13, 1855; St. Paul Daily Times, January 16, 19, 1855; Minnesota Democrat, January 17, 1855; Rice to Davis, October 20, 1854, Rice to Abert, January 1, 1855, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2986, 2987); Abert to Simpson, January 17, 1855, Abert to Rice, December 30, 1854, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letter Books, 18: 288, 262 (Calendar, 3205, 3196); Abert to Davis, December 30, 1854, in War Department Archives, Chief of Topographical Engineers to the Secretary of War, Letter Books, 7: 333 (Calendar, 382). The Minnesota Historical Society has photostatic copies of these letters.

settlement. His claims were promptly challenged by Sibley. A Rice adherent, replying to Sibley through the Minnesota Democrat, strove to demonstrate that the people of Minnesota owed less to Sibley than to Rice. Sibley, Rice's defendant said, was able to obtain for Minnesota only \$85,000 in road appropriations during five years in Congress while for himself "he gained a town site worth over 100,000 dollars, and the expenditure of a large amount of the road money to enhance the value of his town site." Rice's efforts, he continued, in two years had yielded the country "a clear gain of \$200,889.65." ⁴⁴

Simpson thereupon entered the campaign, and in an open letter published in the Pioneer he expressed his views on the question of road appropriations. Sibley alone deserved the credit for initiating the system of roads and obtaining the first appropriations, he affirmed. Rice's contributions were practically nil, he claimed, for since Sibley's retirement from Congress the road appropriations totaled almost exactly what the war office, guided by Simpson's recommendations, had requested. Rice, Simpson admitted, had obtained appropriations for four roads, but they were insignificant

44. Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 373-377; Minnesota Democrat, June 13, July 25, 1855; Daily Minnesota Pioneer, July 19, 1855; St. Anthony Express, August 11, 1855. The townsite to which reference is made is Mendota, at which two of the government roads terminated.

and only two of them had been entrusted to the topographical engineers. On one of these, the road from Fort Ridgely to Minneapolis, no work had been done because, Simpson claimed, Rice had worded the bill so that the appropriation had to be applied on a territorial road that had not yet been laid out. On the other road, that from Crow Wing to the Red River, he continued, no work had been done because the language of the bill required the money to be expended on a road that was so crooked and so poorly routed that, according to the opinion of men who knew the situation, it would be a waste of public funds to do any work until the official consent of Congress was obtained to change its course. ⁴⁵

Other newspapers and men who were fighting the reelection of Rice took up Simpson's charges. One editor went so far as to state that "had there been no Delegate in Congress, and Mr. Simpson had made the recommendation, Minnesota would probably have received the same amount." He added that the railroad grant had been lost through Rice's avarice and his connivance at a fraud, and that he had injured Minnesota by diverting the terminus of the Point Douglas-St. Louis River road to Wisconsin "to benefit his embryo city." Another opponent accused Rice of being bound up with the Superior crowd, and declared that his work in obtaining

45. Daily Minnesota Pioneer, August 17, 1855.

land offices and Indian treaties might as well not have been done, for all the good they did, while his road appropriations were of no use to the people. The credit due him, the same antagonist stated, he was entitled to take, for that could "be compressed into a remarkably small space." Rice was so angry at these attacks that he wrote again to the secretary of war to show him "how Captain Simpson is disposing of his time while our roads are being neglected." Simpson, however, had already reported the correspondence to his superior, and in the Pioneer for August 23, 1855, defended his actions by asking why Rice should be allowed to try to drive him from the territory without granting him the "poor privilege of showing to the public that I have been true to their interests, even when by so doing I may only give to Mr. Rice all the credit which he or any body can justly say he is entitled to." ⁴⁶ The Minnesota Democrat calmly replied:

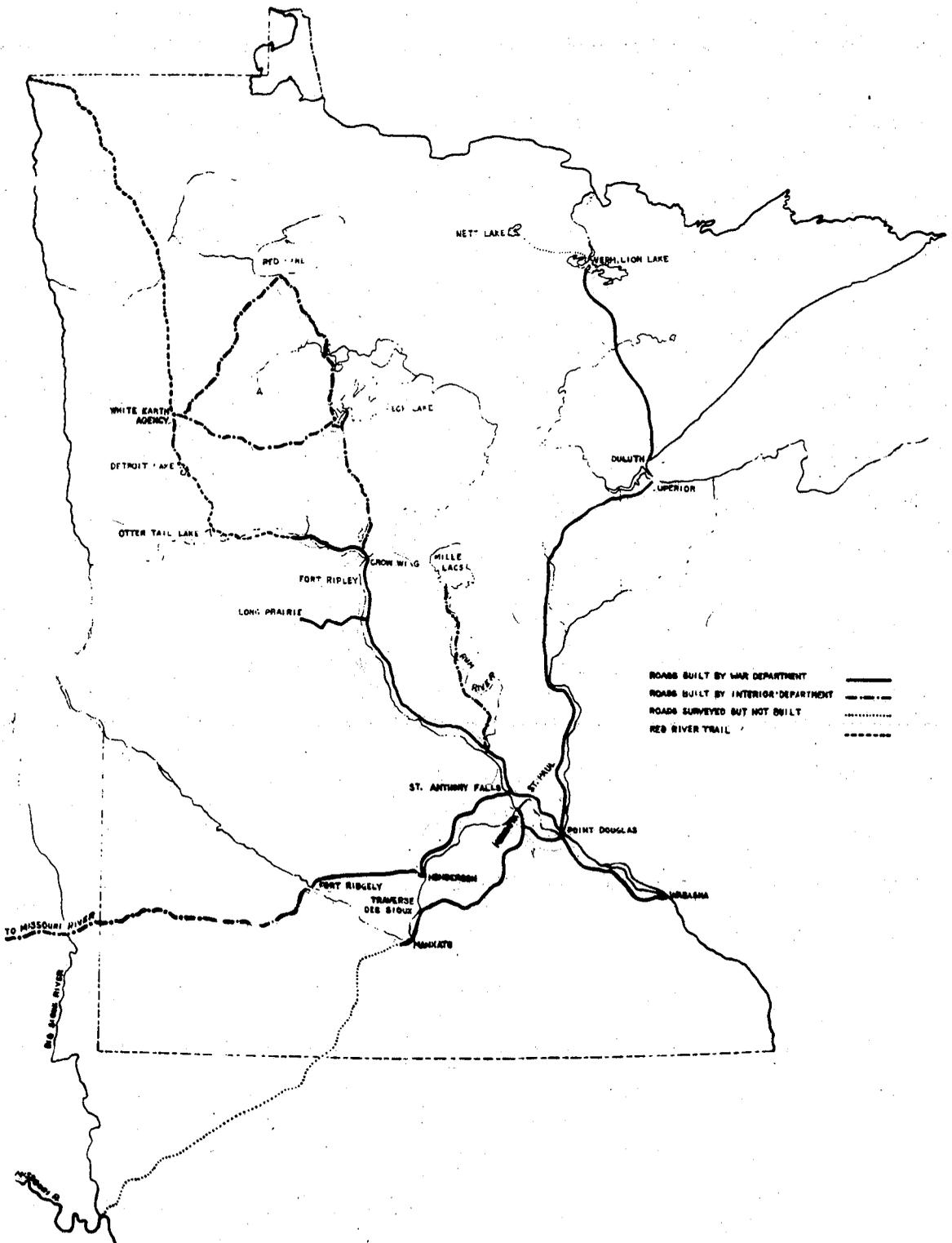
We do not like to say that Capt. Simpson is an ass. Indeed, we do not think he is -- quite; if he were he would have shown less ears. . . . An idiot would scarcely be so silly as to suppose

46. Daily Minnesota Pioneer, August 19, 23, September 4, 25, 1855; St. Paul Daily Times, August 20, 28, September 8, 1855; Minnesota Democrat, August 22, 29, 1855; Folwell, Minnesota, 1: 373-375; H. Fletcher to Sibley, August 10, 1855, in Sibley Papers; Rice to Davis, August 22, 1855, Simpson to Abert, August 11, September 10, 1855, in War Department Archives, Topographical Engineers, Letters Received (Calendar, 2989, 3818, 3852). Photostatic copies of these letters are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

that because the former delegate asked for the construction of certain roads, and obtained a small appropriation therefor, and because Capt. Simpson recommended further appropriations, Congress would, therefore, grant them, as a matter of course. . . . Let us have the money promptly expended, Captain Simpson, without reference to who is running for Congress, or which side you are on, and we will speak a good word for you the first opportunity we have. ⁴⁷

The controversy between Rice and Simpson lasted throughout the time that Simpson remained in Minnesota. Its ramifications extended to almost every phase of the army engineer's work. Rice took up, and perhaps encouraged, not only Emerson's quarrel with Simpson, but also those of others with whom Simpson came into conflict. The lack of harmony between the two men undoubtedly influenced Rice to transfer the great share of requests for roads in Minnesota from the war department to the department of the interior after 1854, and it may have been a factor in the removal of Simpson from his Minnesota post in May, 1856.

47. Minnesota Democrat, September 5, 1855.



ROADS BUILT BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT