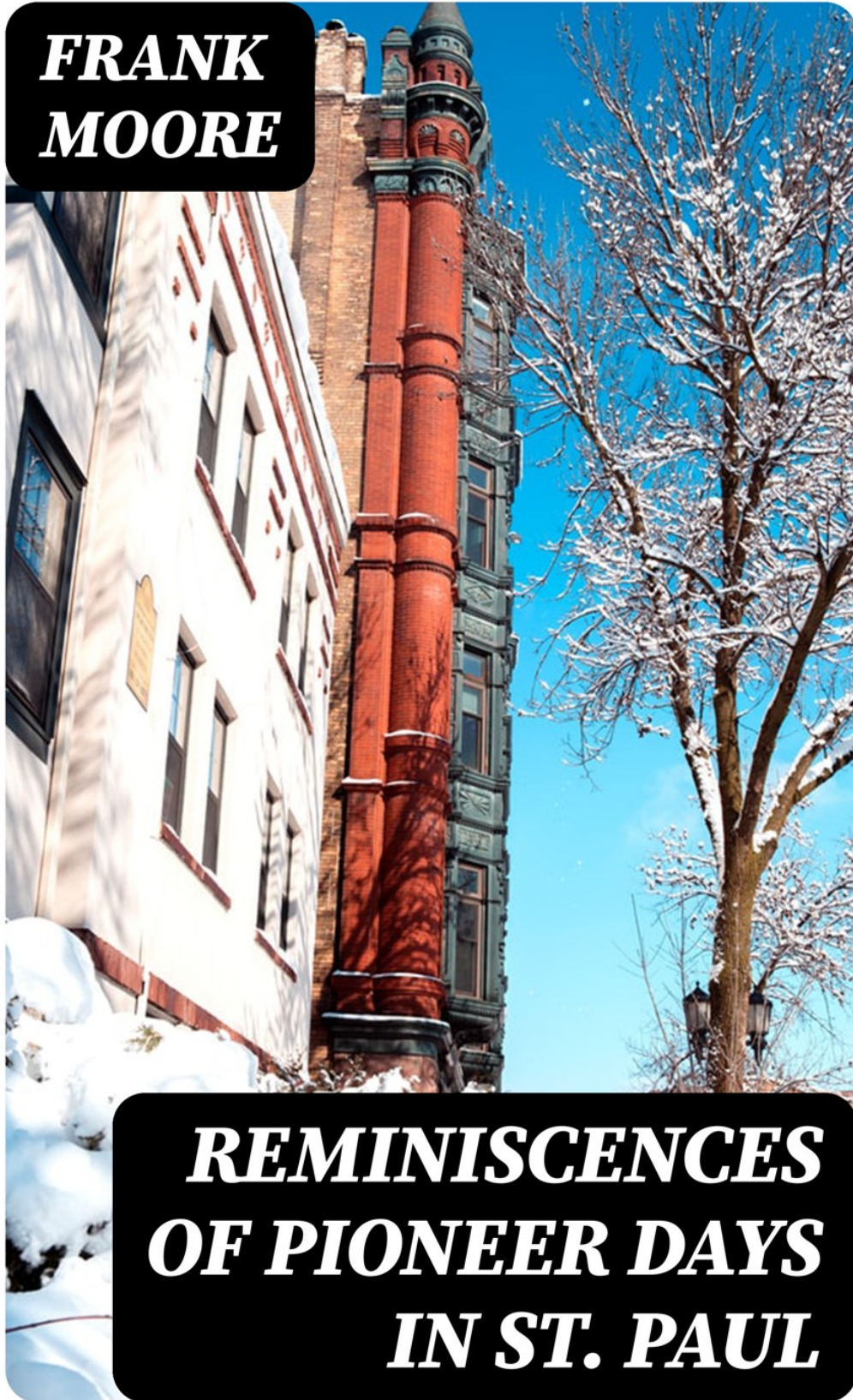




***FRANK
MOORE***

***REMINISCENCES
OF PIONEER DAYS
IN ST. PAUL***

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Frank Moore

Reminiscences of Pioneer Days in St. Paul

**A Collection of Articles Written for and Published in
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NEWSPAPER STRUGGLES OF PIONEER DAYS.

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A BRIEF NARRATION OF INCIDENTS AND EVENTS CONNECTED WITH THE EARLY DAYS OF ST. PAUL, DAILY NEWSPAPERS.

If James M. Goodhue could revisit the earth and make a tour among the daily newspaper offices of St. Paul he would discover that wonderful strides had been made in the method of producing a newspaper during the latter half of the past century. Among the first things to attract the attention of this old-timer would be the web-perfecting press, capable of producing 25,000 impressions an hour, instead of the old hand press of 240 impressions an hour; the linotype machine, capable of setting 6,000 to 10,000 ems per hour, instead of the old hand compositor producing only 800 to 1,000 ems per hour, and the mailing machine, enabling one man to do the work of five or six under the old

method. Think of getting out the Sunday Pioneer Press with the material in use fifty years ago. It would take 600 hand presses, 600 hand pressmen and 600 boys three hours to print the edition, and as there were no means of stereotyping in those days the forms would have to be set up 600 times, requiring the services of 5,000 compositors. Papers printed under these conditions would have to be sold for one dollar each, and there would not be much profit in it at that. The first daily papers printed in St. Paul were not conducted on a very gigantic scale, as the entire force of one office generally consisted of one pressman, five or six compositors, two editors and a business manager. A few reminiscences of the trials and tribulations of the early newspaper manager, editor and compositor may not be wholly devoid of interest.

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In 1857 there occurred in Minnesota an election of delegates to the constitutional convention to provide for the admission of Minnesota into the galaxy of states. The election was so close, politically, that when the delegates met there was a division, and the Republicans and Democrats held separate conventions. At the conclusion of the work of the two conventions the contract for printing was awarded to the two leading papers of the state—the Pioneer and the Minnesotian—the Pioneer to print the proceedings of the Democratic body and the Minnesotian that of the Republican. This contract called for the expenditure of considerable money for material with which to perform the work. Mr. Moore, the business manager of the Minnesotian, went to New York and purchased a Hoe

press, the first one ever brought to the state, and a large quantity of type; also a Hoe proof press, which is still in use in the Pioneer Press composing room. When the book was about completed the business manager of the Minnesotian was informed that an injunction had been issued prohibiting him from drawing any money from the state until the question of the right of the Minnesotian to do any state printing had been determined by the district court. Mr. Goodrich was state printer and claimed he had a right to print the proceedings of both constitutional bodies. This action on the part of the Pioneer produced great consternation in the Minnesotian office, as most of the men had not received more than half pay for some time, and now, when the balance of their pay was almost in sight, they were suddenly compelled to await the slow and doubtful action of the courts before receiving pay for their summer's work. The district court, subsequently confirmed by the supreme court, decided in favor of the Minnesotian, and the day following the decision Mr. Moore, of the Minnesotian, brought down a bag of gold from the capitol containing \$4,000, and divided it up among his employes.

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In 1858, when the first Atlantic cable was laid, the news was anxiously looked for, and nearly every inhabitant of the city turned out to greet the arrival of the Gray Eagle and Itasca, two of the fastest boats on the river, which were expected to bring the news of the successful laying of the cable. The Gray Eagle started from Dubuque at 9 o'clock in the morning and the Itasca started from Prairie du Chien, about 100 miles farther up the river, at noon of the same

day. When the boats reached the bend below the river they were abreast of each other, and as they reached the levee it was hardly possible to tell which was ahead. One of the passengers on the Gray Eagle had a copy of the Dubuque Herald containing the Queen's message, tied up with a small stone on the inside of it, and as he threw it to the shore a messenger from the Minnesotian caught it and ran up Bench street to the Minnesotian office, where the printers were waiting, and the Minnesotian had the satisfaction of getting out an extra some little time before their competitors.

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In the summer season the newspapers had to rely, to a considerable extent, on the steamboats for late Dubuque and Chicago papers for telegraph news. There were three or four daily lines of steamers to St. Paul, and every one of them could be distinguished by its whistle. When it was time for the arrival of the boat bringing the newspapers from which the different papers expected to get their telegraphic news, messengers from the different offices would be at the levee, and as the boat neared the shore they would leap for the gangplank, and there was always a scramble to get to the clerk's office first. James J. Hill and the late Gus Borup were almost always at the levee awaiting the arrival of the steamers, but as they were after copies of the boats' manifest they did not come in competition with the adventurous kids from the newspaper offices.

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The Minnesotian was probably the first daily paper in the West to illustrate a local feature. During the summer of

1859 a man by the name of Jackson was lynched by a mob in Wright county, and Gov. Sibley called out the Pioneer Guards to proceed to the place where the lynching occurred and arrest all persons connected with the tragedy. The Pioneer Guards was the crack military company of the state, and the only service any of its members ever expected to do was in the ballroom or to participate in a Fourth of July parade. When they were called out by the governor there was great consternation in the ranks. One of the members, who is still a prominent politician in the city, when told that his first duty was to serve his country, tremblingly remarked that he thought his first duty was to provide for his wife and family.

A number of them made their wills before departing, as they thought the whole of Wright county was in open rebellion. After being absent for about a week they proudly marched back to the city without ever firing a gun or seeing an enemy. The late J. Fletcher Williams was city editor of the Minnesotian, and he wrote an extended account of the expedition, and it was profusely illustrated with patent medicine cuts and inverted wood type and border, the only available material at that time that could be procured.

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The year 1859 was a memorable one in the political history of Minnesota. Alexander Ramsey and George L. Becker, both now living in this city, were the rival candidates for governor. The Republicans made extraordinary efforts to elect their state and legislative tickets, as both governor and United States senator were at stake. Among the speakers imported by the Republicans

were the Hon. Galusha A. Grow of Pennsylvania and Hon. Schuyler Colfax of Indiana. Mr. Grow, then as now, represented the congressional district in Pennsylvania in which I formally resided, and I was very anxious to hear him, as the first political speech I had ever heard was made by him in a small village in Pennsylvania. The speakers were announced to speak at the old People's theater, on the corner of Fourth and St. Peter streets, and I was among the first to enter. The theater was packed to overflowing. Mr. Grow had made a very interesting speech of about an hour's duration, and Mr. Colfax was to follow for an equal length of time. After Mr. Colfax had spoken about ten minutes an alarm of fire was sounded and in less than fifteen minutes the entire structure was burned to the ground. This happened about 9:30 o'clock in the evening, and, strange to relate, not one of the morning papers had an announcement of the fact the next day. The morning papers at that time were something like an evening paper of to-day. They were set up and made up in the afternoon and generally printed in the early part of the evening. The result of that election was very gratifying to the Republicans. I can see old Dr. Foster now writing a double column political head for the Minnesotian, the first two lines of which were: "Shout, Republicans, Shout! We've Cleaned the Breech Clouts Out!"

Dr. Foster was the editor of the Minnesotian and was quite a power in the Republican party. He wielded a vigorous pen and possessed a very irascible temper. I have often seen him perform some Horace Greeley antics in the composing room of the old Minnesotian. At the time of the execution of John Brown for his attempted raid into Virginia,

I remember bringing the Chicago Tribune to the doctor, containing the announcement of the execution. I had arranged the paper so that the doctor could take in the contents of the heading at the first glance. The doctor looked at the headlines a second and then exclaimed, loud enough to be heard a block, "Great God! In the nineteenth century, a man hung for an idea!"

At another time the doctor became very much enraged over some news that I had laid before him. In the early 50's Galusha A. Grow, of Pennsylvania, introduced into the house of representatives the first homestead law and the Republican party soon afterward incorporated the idea into their platform as one of their pet measures. After superhuman effort the bill passed the house of representatives, that body being nearly tie politically, and was sent to the senate. The Democratic majority in the senate was not very favorably impressed with the measure, but with the assistance of the late President Johnson, who was senator from Tennessee at that time, the bill passed the senate by a small majority. There was great rejoicing over the event and no one supposed for a moment that the president would veto the measure. When I laid the Chicago Tribune before the excitable doctor containing the announcement of Buchanan's veto the very air was blue with oaths. The doctor took the paper and rushed out into the street waving the paper frantically in the air, cursing the president at every step.

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From 1854, the date of the starting of the three St. Paul daily papers, until 1860, the time of the completion of the

Winslow telegraph line, there was great strife between the Pioneer, Minnesotian and Times as to which would be the first to appear on the street with the full text of the president's message. The messages of Pierce and Buchanan were very lengthy, and for several days preceding their arrival the various offices had all the type of every description distributed and all the printers who could possibly be procured engaged to help out on the extra containing the forthcoming message. It was customary to pay every one employed, from the devil to the foreman, \$2.50 in gold, and every printer in the city was notified to be in readiness for the approaching typographical struggle. One year one of the proprietors of the Minnesotian thought he would surprise the other offices, and he procured the fastest livery team in the city and went down the river as far as Red Wing to intercept the mail coach, and expected to return to St. Paul three or four hours in advance of the regular mail, which would give him that much advantage over his competitors. Owing to some miscalculation as to the time the stage left Chicago the message was delivered in St. Paul twenty-four hours earlier than was expected, and the proprietor of the Minnesotian had the pleasure of receiving a copy of his own paper, containing the complete message, long before he returned to St. Paul. The management always provided an oyster supper for the employes of the paper first out with the message, and it generally required a week for the typos to fully recover from its effect.

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As an evidence of what was uppermost in the minds of most people at this time, and is probably still true to-day, it may be related that in the spring of 1860, when the great prize fight between Heenan and Sayers was to occur in England, and the meeting of the Democratic national convention in Charleston, in which the Minnesota Democrats were in hopes that their idol, Stephen A. Douglas, would be nominated for president, the first question asked by the people I would meet on the way from the boat landing to the office would be: "Anything from the prize fight? What is the news from the Charleston convention?"

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"The good old times" printers often talk about were evidently not the years between the great panic of 1857 and the breaking out of the Civil war in 1861. Wages were low and there was absolutely no money to speak of. When a man did occasionally get a dollar he was not sure it would be worth its face value when the next boat would arrive with a new Bank Note Reporter. Married men considered themselves very fortunate when they could get, on Saturday night, an order on a grocery or dry goods store for four or five dollars, and the single men seldom received more than \$2 or \$3 cash. That was not more than half enough to pay their board bill. This state of affairs continued until the Press was started in 1861, when Gov. Marshall inaugurated the custom, which still prevails, of paying his employes every Saturday night.

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Another instance of the lack of enterprise on the part of the daily paper of that day:

During the summer of 1860 a large party of Republican statesmen and politicians visited St. Paul, consisting of State Senator W.H. Seward. Senator John P. Hale, Charles Francis Adams, Senator Nye, Gen. Stewart L. Woodford and several others of lesser celebrity. The party came to Minnesota in the interest of the Republican candidate for president. Mr. Seward made a great speech from the front steps of the old capitol, in which he predicted that at some distant day the capitol of this great republic would be located not far from the Falls of St. Anthony. There was a large gathering at the capitol to hear him, but those who were not fortunate enough to get within sound of his voice had to wait until the New York Herald, containing a full report of his speech, reached St. Paul before they could read what the great statesman had said.

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In the fall of 1860 the first telegraph line was completed to St. Paul. Newspaper proprietors thought they were then in the world, so far as news is concerned, but it was not to be so. The charges for telegraph news were so excessive that the three papers in St. Paul could not afford the luxury of the "latest news by Associated Press." The offices combined against the extortionate rates demanded by the telegraph company and made an agreement not to take the dispatches until the rates were lowered; but it was like an agreement of the railroad presidents of the present day, it was not adhered to. The Pioneer made a secret contract with the telegraph company and left the Minnesotian and the Times out in the cold. Of course that was a very unpleasant state of affairs and for some time the

Minnesotian and Times would wait until the Pioneer was out in the morning and would then set up the telegraph and circulate their papers. One of the editors connected with the Minnesotian had an old acquaintance in the pressroom of the Pioneer, and through him secured one of the first papers printed. This had been going on for some time when Earle S. Goodrich, the editor of the Pioneer, heard of it, and he accordingly made preparation to perpetrate a huge joke on the Minnesotian. Mr. Goodrich was a very versatile writer and he prepared four or five columns of bogus telegraph and had it set up and two or three copies of the Pioneer printed for the especial use of the Minnesotian. The scheme worked to a charm. Amongst the bogus news was a two-column speech purporting to have been made by William H. Seward in the senate just previous to the breaking out of the war. Mr. Seward's well-known ideas were so closely imitated that their genuineness were not questioned. The rest of the news was made up of dispatches purporting to be from the then excited Southern States. The Minnesotian received a Pioneer about 4 o'clock in the morning and by 8 the entire edition was distributed throughout the city. I had distributed the Minnesotian throughout the upper portion of the city, and just as I returned to Bridge Square I met the carrier of the Pioneer, and laughed at him for being so late. He smiled, but did not speak. As soon as I learned what had happened I did not do either. The best of the joke was, the Times could not obtain an early copy of the Pioneer and set up the bogus news from the Minnesotian, and had their edition printed and ready to circulate when they heard of the sell. They at once set up the genuine news and circulated both the bogus

and regular, and made fun of the Minnesotian for being so easily taken in.

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The Pioneer retained the monopoly of the news until the Press was started, on the 1st of January, 1861. The Press made arrangements with Mr. Winslow for full telegraphic dispatches, but there was another hitch in the spring of 1861 and for some time the Press had to obtain its telegraph from proof sheets of the St. Anthony Falls News, a paper published in what is now East Minneapolis. Gov. Marshall was very much exercised at being compelled to go to a neighboring town for telegraph news, and one night when news of unusual importance was expected he had a very stormy interview with Mr. Winslow. No one ever knew exactly what he told him, but that night the Press had full telegraphic reports, and has had ever since.

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Gov. Marshall was a noble man. When the first battle of Bull Run occurred the earlier reports announced a great Union victory. I remember of going to Dan Rice's circus that night and felt as chipper as a young kitten. After the circus was out I went back to the office to see if any late news had been received. I met Gov. Marshall at the door, and with tears rolling down his cheeks he informed me that the Union force had met with a great reverse and he was afraid the country would never recover from it. But it did, and the governor was afterward one of the bravest of the brave in battling for his country's honor.

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