

Author: **Hubbell, James Boyd**, 1836-1905. (ME#2388)

Title: James Boyd Hubbell papers, 1834, 1865-1906.

Description: 0.25 cu. ft. (1 box), and 1 microfilm reel.

Notes: Originals of the microfilm were loaned for copying by Mrs. V. W. Dawson, St. Paul.

Correspondence, diaries, accounts, and legal papers of Hubbell, a founder of the Northwestern Fur Company, documenting its creation and management (1865-1870); Dakota-white hostilities (1860s) on the upper Missouri River; Hubbell's unsuccessful prosecution of Indian depredations claims (1868-1903); and the removal of Minnesota Dakota bands to Fort Thompson, South Dakota (1860s).

There is information on Hubbell's later business interests in Minnesota and Dakota railroads (1870s-1880s), Montana and Dakota mines, Montana townsites, and Michigan gypsum mines.

Also included is an 1834 diary by William Tew, Hubbell's father-in-law, commenting on various aspects of a journey from Connecticut to Ohio and back.

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Bates, C. Francis.

Hawley, Alpheus F.

Hoffman, Charles W.

Pay, Byron E., 1844-

Pease, F. D.

Powers, T. B.

Rankin, William Galloway.

Sitting Bull, 1834?-1890.

Wilkinson, Mahlon H.

Willard, John A., 1833-1897.

American Fur Company.

Columbus and Black Hills Railroad Company.

Cook Gold Mining and Milling Company.

Hubbell and Hawley.

Minnesota and Northwestern Railroad Company (1857-1872).

North West Fur Company.

Northwest Fur Company.

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Rocky Fork and Cooke City Railway Company.

Rocky Fork Town and Electric Company (Red Lodge, Mont.).

Saint Paul and Pacific Railroad Company.

Dakota Indians -- Wars, 1862-1865.

Fisk Expedition.

Fur trade -- Dakota Territory.

Fur trade -- Missouri River.

Gypsum mines and mining -- Michigan.

Military bases.

Mines and mineral resources -- Great Plains.

Fort Benton (Mont.).

Fort Berthold (N.D.).

Fort Pierre (S.D.).

Fort Randall (S.D.).

Fort Rice (Fort Rice, N.D.).

Fort Ridgely (Minn.).

Fort Sully (S.D.).

Fort Thompson (S.D.).

Fort Union (N.D.).

Mankato (Minn.).

Other authors: Boyd, James.

Tew, William.

Wilder, Amherst H. (Amherst Holcomb), 1828-1894.

Wilkinson, Morton S. (Morton Smith), 1819-1894.

Other authors: Pierre Chouteau Jr. & Company.

Location: Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, MN.

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New Light on the NORTHWESTERN FUR COMPANY

LUCILE M. KANE

A PICTURE of the organization and activities of the little-known Northwestern Fur Company, which operated on the upper Missouri River from 1865 to 1870, emerges from the papers of James Boyd Hubbell, recently presented to the Minnesota Historical Society by his daughter, Mrs. Vincent W. Dawson of St. Paul. Only scant and scattered information about the formation and operation of the company was available before the discovery of the Hubbell Papers. Among the sixty-five items in the collection are Hubbell's correspondence with his family and business associates, his diaries for 1880 and 1891, business accounts, articles of agreement, depositions, and miscellaneous papers.¹

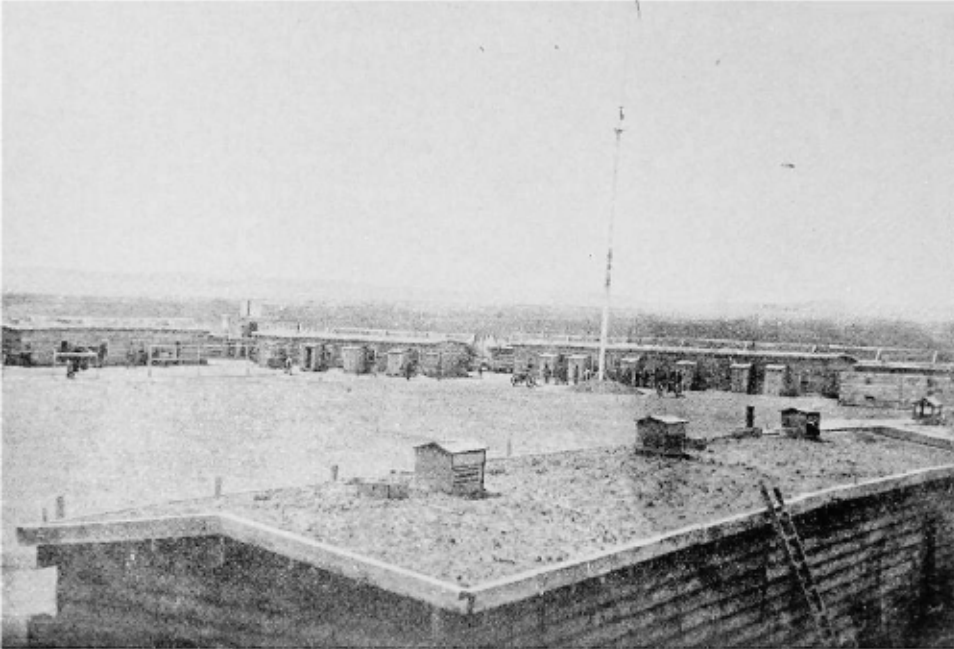
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in 1905, he moved to Minnesota from Winsted, Connecticut, in 1857. At Mankato, his first home in Minnesota, he helped organize the First National Bank and entered the mercantile business. At the time of his residence there, the Indian trade was flourishing, and Hubbell was soon in the thick of it. With his fellow townsman, Alpheus F. Hawley, he formed a partnership to trade in the Far West. By the 1860s, he was engaged in freighting, filling government contracts, and trading with the Indians at several posts on the Missouri River.² It was as a result of the contacts made there that the Northwestern Fur Company was formed.

Earlier, it was known that the Northwestern Fur Company was organized in 1864-65 by Hubbell and Hawley, who bought out the upper Missouri posts of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company; that the firm sold its posts below Fort Union in 1869 to Durfee and Peck; and that it retired from the trade above Fort Union in 1870. General Régis de Trobriand, commandant at Fort Stevenson on the Missouri from 1867 to 1869, added substantially to the elusive lore of the company when he recounted in his diary stories about its traders. Additional bits of information concerning Hubbell's

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In the midst of his difficulties with the hostile Sioux, Hubbell accepted a new responsibility that brought him into still closer touch with that troubled nation. In 1864 he was commissioned by the government to transport the Santee Sioux remaining on a reservation north of Fort Ridgely on the Minnesota River to Fort Thompson on the lower Missouri. Among Hubbell's papers is a deposition dated November 20, 1902, made by Byron E. Pay, the man engaged by Hubbell to make the trip with the Indians. Pay not only describes his journey from Fort Ridgely to Pipestone, where his train was joined by fifty of Hubbell's wagons loaded with supplies for the Indians, but he tells of the difficulties encountered in carrying out his task.

Hubbell's experience as a trader represents only one phase of a varied business career. Operating from his homes in Mankato and St. Paul, he traveled extensively throughout the United States, developing

railroads in Minnesota and Dakota, mines in Montana and Dakota, townsites in Montana, and gypsum mills in Michigan. The fact that railroads seem to have absorbed his attention in the 1870s and 1880s is reflected in items among his papers relating to the Minnesota and Northwestern and the Southern Minnesota railroad companies, the Central Railroad Company of Minnesota, and the Rocky Fork and Cooke City Railway Company of Montana. Included, for example, is a copy of a *Prospectus* published by the latter road in 1887, giving data on gold, silver, and copper mining in Montana, and on the various companies formed for that purpose. This pamphlet is not the only indication in the papers that Hubbell was broadly interested in mining. Also included is a stock certificate of 1903 in the Cook Gold Mining and Milling Company of South Dakota, illustrated with mining scenes. Other references to mining appear in Hubbell's diary for 1880, which

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GOLD mining stock certificate from the Hubbell Papers

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Some personal information about the Hubbell family is to be found in the papers. Hubbell's many references to his home in Mankato, and to St. Paul, where he lived after 1881 and where his business interests were closely allied with those of Amherst H. Wilder, bespeak his affection for the state in which he lived. He kept in touch with relatives in Connecticut through correspondence with an uncle, James Boyd. In a long letter written on September 6, 1868, and preserved in Hubbell's papers, the stay-at-home Boyd displays a keen interest in the nephew who ranged from Michigan to New Orleans, and from New York to Montana. After asking for more news of Hubbell's "goings and movements," he remarks: "To me the rapid growth of the West has an engrossing interest, and my admiration of the energetic men, who are accomplishing such wonders there, is unbounded. I hope I may not only live to see the rails all laid to San Francisco & Pugets Sound, but that I may yet travel over them and see the wonders of the Pacific region."

These newly acquired papers depict Hubbell as a chameleon-like entrepreneur, changing his interests as new opportunities unfolded. In a country where natural resources were abundant and skilled management and capital scarce, he followed the natural lines of economic development, turning from furs to mining, trade, transportation, and townsites. Energetic, imaginative, and optimistic, he entered each new enterprise with fresh enthusiasm. It was not money alone that he sought, for as early as May 24, 1866, he wrote to his wife that "money making for me is now but a game of excitement." He felt the exhilaration of moving along in the mainstream of the Northwest, identifying his interests with those of the fast-growing country.

But the Northwest grew too fast for him. By 1900, a magical change had come over

its "wild regions." Mankato, the boom town from which his wagons traveled westward, had become a quiet city. St. Paul, the rude capital, had almost fulfilled the promise of its raucous boosters as it matured into a metropolis. The Far West, too, had changed, adding to its economy of furs, gold, and silver the sobering alloy of cattle, sheep, and farms. Before he died, Hubbell had already become a man of the past. Out of his adventures, his struggles, his acquisition and loss of fortunes, there remains a small monument—his papers. In them, scholars now have a new avenue to the understanding of his times.

Memorials

THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY has a Memorial Fund to which contributions can be made upon the loss of a relative or friend. Such gifts not only serve as appropriate expressions of sympathy and condolence, but they help to support work that is a fitting memorial to any Minnesotan.

Whenever a contribution is received for the Memorial Fund, a suitable card is mailed to the bereaved family, and the names of those whose memories are honored, as well as of contributors, are recorded in the society's permanent Memorial Book.

Use the blank that follows in contributing to the Memorial Fund:

ENCLOSED is my contribution of \$_____ to the Minnesota Historical Society's Memorial Fund.

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IF YOU prefer that a memorial be used for a specific purpose, check below:

Purchase of books , manuscripts , pictures , museum objects , publication work .

From: <http://archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/TEW/1999-09/0938270145>

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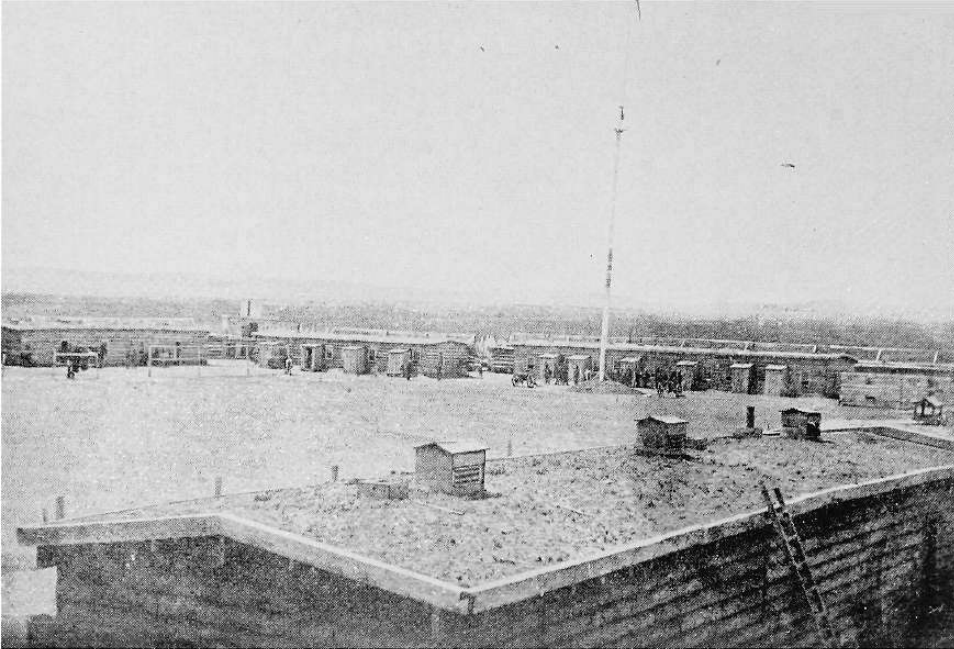
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GOLD mining stock certificate from the Hubbell Papers

tells of his visits to the Homestake, Father de Smet, and Florence mines during a trip from Montana to St. Paul.

Some personal information about the Hubbell family is to be found in the papers. Hubbell's many references to his home in Mankato, and to St. Paul, where he lived after 1881 and where his business interests were closely allied with those of Amherst H. Wilder, bespeak his affection for the state in which he lived. He kept in touch with relatives in Connecticut through correspondence with an uncle, James Boyd. In a long letter written on September 6, 1868, and preserved in Hubbell's papers, the stay-at-home Boyd displays a keen interest in the nephew who ranged from Michigan to New Orleans, and from New York to Montana. After asking for more news of Hubbell's "goings and movements," he remarks: "To me the rapid growth of the West has an engrossing interest, and my admiration of the energetic men, who are accomplishing such wonders there, is unbounded. I hope I may not only live to see the rails all laid to San Francisco & Pugets Sound, but that I may yet travel over them and see the wonders of the Pacific region."

These newly acquired papers depict Hubbell as a chameleon-like entrepreneur, changing his interests as new opportunities unfolded. In a country where natural resources were abundant and skilled management and capital scarce, he followed the natural lines of economic development, turning from furs to mining, trade, transportation, and townsites. Energetic, imaginative, and optimistic, he entered each new enterprise with fresh enthusiasm. It was not money alone that he sought, for as early as May 24, 1866, he wrote to his wife that "money making for me is now but a game of excitement." He felt the exhilaration of moving along in the mainstream of the Northwest, identifying his interests with those of the fast-growing country.

But the Northwest grew too fast for him. By 1900, a magical change had come over

its "wild regions." Mankato, the boom town from which his wagons traveled westward, had become a quiet city. St. Paul, the rude capital, had almost fulfilled the promise of its raucous boosters as it matured into a metropolis. The Far West, too, had changed, adding to its economy of furs, gold, and silver the sobering alloy of cattle, sheep, and farms. Before he died, Hubbell had already become a man of the past. Out of his adventures, his struggles, his acquisition and loss of fortunes, there remains a small monument—his papers. In them, scholars now have a new avenue to the understanding of his times.

Memorials

THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY has a Memorial Fund to which contributions can be made upon the loss of a relative or friend. Such gifts not only serve as appropriate expressions of sympathy and condolence, but they help to support work that is a fitting memorial to any Minnesotan.

Whenever a contribution is received for the Memorial Fund, a suitable card is mailed to the bereaved family, and the names of those whose memories are honored, as well as of contributors, are recorded in the society's permanent Memorial Book.

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