

[1853?]

To His Excellency, Leonard T. Larwell,
Governor of the State of Wisconsin.

Madison.

Sir - I consider it as one of my most pleasant duties, although not prescribed by law, to submit to your Excellency, from time to time, a condensed report in relation to my present official activity. Fully convinced of the warm interest you take in the future prosperity of our young State, not only as her chief Executive but also in the capacity of an individual citizen, I beg leave to direct your attention to the following report, short as it is and must be, considering the small space of time elapsed since the day on which I commenced the discharge of the duties assigned to me by the State Legislature.

I left Milwaukee on the 25th of April last, having provided myself with numerous recommendations to influential persons in New York from some of our most distinguished citizens, and reached Buffalo on the 27th, where I made a stay of two days, in order to become acquainted with the agents of the different railroad companies, and to inquire more particularly into the manner in which emigrants are treated on their way to the western States. My attention was principally attracted by the transportation of emigrants round the lakes in steamboats & propellers. I had repeated conferences with the owners of the vessels, forming the daily line of steamers between Buffalo & Chicago, on this subject, whereby I understood that this mode of conveyance would be preferable to all emigrants going to the northern parts of Wisconsin, on account of cheapness as well as of comfort. I visited several vessels

of this line, then lying in Buffalo harbor, and found them furnished with commodious berths for emigrants on the upper deck, and better adapted, in every respect, to the transportation of large numbers of passengers, than in former years.

While immense exertions are being made by the different railroad companies to secure themselves, exclusively of all other lines, the transportation of emigrants to the western states, nothing had been done, so much as I could see, by the managers of the above mentioned daily steamboat line to meet this competition.

A large portion of the emigrants, perhaps most of them, are "licked through" from New York to the place of their destination, by which circumstance I was induced to procure myself the necessary authority from the said steamboat owner, to suggest, on their behalf, to one or more of the better emigration agencies of New York a connection with them and the sale of through tickets to emigrants, preferring the route round the lakes.

Immediately after my arrival at New York, on the 30th of April, I paid a visit to my predecessor's office, Mr. van Dierwight, to whom I had written, soon after my appointment, that I would rent the same office rooms he had occupied, if they could be had for the ensuing year. He informed me, to my great regret, that they had been let to somebody else before the arrival of my letter, and the first thing now to be done, was to look out for a suitably located office room. I soon found one on the same street, answering all my purposes, of which I took possession on the 2^d of May.

The first days of May I spent in visiting many of the foreign consuls, residing in this city, the officers of the different associations for the protection of emigrants, and especially the principal agents of the several transportation lines, in order to make myself thoroughly acquainted with all circumstances that could bear on the faithful discharge of my duties.

Besides my regular assistant, Mr. J. L. Byrne, who arrived in this city at the same time with me, I engaged the services of two men, whose business it is to visit all emigrant ships on their arrival at this port, and most of the hotels & taverns usually resorted to by foreign emigrants, to distribute among them descriptions of the state of Wisconsin in their respective languages, and to communicate with them personally in other respects. I had my business card & other necessary advertisements published in several english & german papers, and besides that circular notices &c. printed.

It is made my duty, not only to protect emigrants, going to the West and especially to Wisconsin, against imposition, and to give them all the aid and comfort in my power, and a full information in relation to the soil, climate &c. of Wisconsin, - but also to induce those who are either wholly undecided as to their place of settlement, or intend to go to other states, to choose Wisconsin for their new home. To bring about this desirable result, it is not sufficient to ~~just~~ have distributed among them pamphlets, hand bills and business cards; but it is of the utmost importance to meet and communicate with them personally.

The greatest impediment against the attainment of that object is the existing system of transportation which, by the immense profit it yields, crushes all efforts to resist it, for the benefit of the deluded emigrant, and is supported by the favor and countenance of the state & city authorities there.

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The railroad companies & other transportation lines appoint regular agents to whom they give the exclusive privilege of selling their tickets to emigrants. The profit, allowed to these principal agents on each ticket sold is so high, that this business may be called an extremely lucrative one. Owing to the brisk competition of the said lines, these agents always keep in their pay a host of subagents, runners & house keepers who receive, besides a fixed salary proportioned to their skill & experience in business, a certain percentage for each & every ticket sold by them. It will easily be imagined that these persons use every all means to get passengers for their line, that is, to pocket the percentage, without caring the least for the honesty or dishonesty of the agent, or for the merits of the line in whose service they are. In the eyes of this class of business men the emigrant is but an article of trade which they try to buy as cheap, and to sell as high, as they possibly can do. - The best lines and most honest companies are obliged to resort to the same means for obtaining emigrant passengers; they differ, however, from those swindling agencies in one respect, viz: they never charge more than their advertised rates, and do not, as the others do, extort all the money, they can, from the poor emigrant.

The captains of emigrant ships, instead of landing their passengers at a public wharf, go at anchor in the middle of the river, and then sell the permission of boarding the vessel to the highest bidding agent and his army of runners. The emigrants & their luggage then are brought on board a river steamer, hired expressly for that purpose by the agent, and on their passage to the shore are induced, by all tricks imaginable, to buy "through tickets" to the place of their destination, before they reach American soil. (The runners call this operation, "looking.") These more obstinate emigrants are led to a house keeper, who gets regular pay

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from the agent, and finally, ^{are} prevailed upon by him to take passage on the same line. The greatest number of the emigrants are simple farmers and mechanics who, forgetting but too soon all the cautions received in the old country, fall victims to the impositions of those agents and their assistants, who always know, in one way or another, to get the confidence of their ignorant & guileless countrymen. It is no wonder, therefore, that so many cases occur every day, in which emigrants are forced to pay twice the passage price, or to take new tickets at Buffalo or some other intermediate station, and, besides that, must be satisfied with the worst mode of conveyance.

The attention of the emigrants on their arrival in this port is attracted by so many objects that they scarcely open the pamphlets distributed by my agents, before they have taken passage, and read them only when already on their way to the western states. It is true that a great many of them become, in that manner, acquainted with the merits of our state, and may afterwards, when disappointed with their first choice, be induced to come to Wisconsin; but the state, nevertheless, loses the direct benefits of this part of the immigration.

I made it, therefore, my first object, to have personal interviews with all those who have not already chosen their future residence, or intend to go to other states, in order to show them the advantages held out by our state, and to prevail upon them, to go and settle on her fertile soil. Another object that may be obtained best by such interviews, is to inform those who have resolved already in their old country to come to Wisconsin, of the cheapest & most expeditious routes thither. - It is obvious that I cannot recommend those agencies who have no fixed price for their passage tickets, and seek only to extract as much money from the emigrant as they can, and the number of

these agencies is legion - ; and it is equally evident that these people, under the apprehensions that their requies might be exposed, use all their power to keep all emigrants they can get at, as distant from me as possible; - but I succeeded in forming a good understanding and mutual connection between my office and some of the more honest transportation lines, and their principal agents, which is working great benefits for all parties concerned. - While I promised to recommend their cheap and steady prices, and their mode of conveyance to all emigrants whom I should see, and to give favorable notice of this line in my public correspondence, they, on the other hand, have instructed their subagents & runners to send as many emigrants to my office as they can. These recommendable lines are the New York & Erie R. R. and the Hudson River R. R., carrying now emigrants to Wisconsin at the following rates:

a, on the railroad to Buffalo or Dunkirk, thence on steamboats to Toledo or Detroit, and thence on railroads & steamboats to Milwaukee or Menominee, at \$7.00, freight for baggage \$2.00 & cost, 50 pounds free.

I tried to get the "through ticket system" adopted on this line extended to Manitowish & Two Rivers, at the same price, but up to the present time without success.

b, to Buffalo as above, thence per propeller round the lakes to all ports of Wisconsin, except Green Bay, at \$6.00, freight of baggage \$1.70 & cost, 50 pounds free. Children under 3 years of age free, children between 3 and 12 years of age to pay half the rate only.

The railroad transportation lines make a greater profit by "ticketing through" passengers to Chicago only, getting the same price from those as far as which is paid by passengers to Milwaukee and Subargers, for whom they must pay a certain sum to the steamboat owners (40¢ a head, as I understood).

Great aversion seems to exist among most of the emigrants against the passage round the lakes, ^{partly} owing to the frequent steamboat accidents, recently occurred on these lakes, - of which they are generally well informed, and partly arising from the disgust against another voyage.

The connection formed with the above mentioned lines soon began to show its beneficial effects; many emigrants were sent to my office, of whom a considerable number were induced to go to Wisconsin. Up to June 1st about 200 emigrants, mostly Germans, had visited my office, and I have reason to hope that this number will increase every month. I am consulted daily by persons living in this place and other states, who intend to move westward and generally show great predilections for Wisconsin, and also receive many letters from residents of other states, asking for accurate details in regard to the climate & soil of Wisconsin, prices of lands, business prospective, which I regard it my duty to answer as completely as possible, supposing that the answer will be read by larger circles in those places, and I may, in this manner too, promote the interests of my state.

The companies of many railroads, now being in construction in the different states, have sent special agents to this city to hire out laborers among the emigrants. These agents promise them from \$8 to \$10 shillings wages a day, and sometimes even free passage to the different portions of the railroads on which they are to work. I need hardly mention that a great many emigrants are induced hereby to go with their families, where the agents send them, and that in this manner the respective states get as many new citizens,

who would not have come hither had for the construction of these railroads. The great interest, shown in Wisconsin at the present time for similar enterprises, gives me some hope that I too shall be able to hold out like advantages.

Many Mechanics of every class find, immediately after their arrival, employment & good wages here and all over the eastern states, and many new comers prefer a sure and steady employment in their trade to the uncertain prospects awaiting them in the West.

For the purpose of diffusing a more accurate & detailed knowledge of the Wisconsin advantages of Wisconsin in European countries, and of inducing emigrants, even before they are leaving their old country, to choose Wisconsin for their new home, I have sent my card, descriptions of the state and articles of correspondence to ^{European} newspapers of the widest circulation, for publication regularly or from time to time.

At present extraordinary efforts are being made to provide emigrants, when still in Europe, with tickets for the whole distance of their journey. The house Loescher & Richmoller alone had sold, during a few weeks, 400 through tickets (about 300 of which were to Wisconsin) by their agents in Germany, as I found by an inspection of their books.

This new feature in the system of transporting emigrants from Europe to the West of the Union, is an additional motive for me to keep up & increase the interest for Wisconsin by publishing weekly articles of correspondence in the most prominent newspapers of the different parts & cities of Germany &c., and to ^{recommend} therein the purchase of through tickets to Wisconsin.

directly, and not only to New York, or any other sea port.

According to the last news the immigration from Europe will not be as large this year as it has been the last.

To conclude this my first report to your Excellency with the assurance that I shall leave no honest means untried, to give to all who come to this country with the intention to settle in the west, a vivid but true picture of the advantages of our young & growing state, and thereby to contribute my share in elevating her to that station and influence among her sister states in the West, which is held by the State of New York in the East of our glorious Union.

With sentiments of the sincerest respect

Herman Haertel,
Commiss of Emigration.