FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF EMIGRATION,

FOR THE

STATE OF WISCONSIN.

MADISON:
DAVID ATWOOD, PRINTER.
1853.
REPORT

OF THE

STATE COMMISSIONER OF EMIGRATION.

NEW YORK, December 23, 1852.

To His Excellency LEONARD J. FARWELL,
Governor of the State of Wisconsin.

SIR:

By the Bill of last Legislature, providing for the establishment of a Commissioner of Emigration for our State in the City of New York, it was made the duty of said Commissioner:

1st. To keep office during the usual business hours;

2d. To distribute, free of expense, to the immigrants pamphlets in their respective languages, containing a description of the State;

3d. To give the immigrants information in relation to the soil and climate of the State, the branches of business to be pursued therein and the cheapest and most expeditious route to reach the same;

4th. To protect immigrants as far as practicable against imposition;
5th. To report the number of immigrants sent to the State, their nationality and business; and

6th. To employ such assistance, as will be required.

The said bill being approved April 17th of this year, the duties of the office were conferred on me May 12th following.

I was not unconscious of or unprepared for the difficulties and enmities I would have to encounter in the City of New York, but feeling the importance of the trust and the great advantages to be derived from it by the State I felt gratified by the confidence of the Chief Executive of the State, and I undertook it cheerfully, to connect myself more directly and to the best of my abilities with the present and future development and well-being of my adopted State. Besides I had long enough known and appreciated Wisconsin’s great advantages in regard to healthy situation, moderate temperature, richness of soil and easy access to the best markets of the United States, its liberal political institutions, richly endowed and excellent schools, the true progressive spirit of its American and European population and the rapid growth of fine internal improvements, to foster the conviction, that, in devoting myself wholly to the interest of the State, my exertions would prove a true blessing to all immigrants, whom I could induce to settle there.

Arriving in the City of New York on the 18th of May last I made it my first duty, to become acquainted with the Directors of the various Protective Societies, with the Consuls of most of the European countries, with the Mayor of the city of New York and with a good many of the shipping-houses to European ports, supposing that their combined and favorable influence would greatly promote the objects of my office. Everywhere I met with the most cordial reception and a number of houses of excellent reputation promised to send my pamphlets and information about my office to various districts in Europe; and many of the Consuls offered, to direct all people asking for information regarding the Western States to me. I often had reason to congrat-
ulate myself on the favorable results produced by my conversations with the said gentlemen. I went also to several of the forwarding agents, to find out by those best acquainted with emigrant-business, combined with my own observation, the most suitable locality for an office and to inquire about the routes preferred by them for their passengers, with the reasons therefor, as also about the price to be paid for passage and luggage from here to the several ports on the western shore of Lake Michigan.

A couple of days after the arrival of the first pamphlets from Madison, June 3d, I opened my office at 110 Greenwich street, for my business the most suitable locality in the city. I went at work immediately to procure a translation of the pamphlet, prepared under the direction of your Excellency, in the German, Norwegian and Dutch languages, and got in possession of 20,000 copies in German June 16th, 5,000 in Norwegian June 26th, and 4,000 in Dutch July 2d. In the beginning I had the assistance of a Norwegian; June 9th I engaged an intelligent and well educated German, and as soon as matters were well arranged I enlisted two others, one English and one German, the German emigration to the West and especially to Wisconsin being the most considerable.

From conversations at the office of the Commissioners of Emigration for New York, with the Secretary and Agent of the German Protective Society, the Directors of the N. Y. & Erie and of the Hudson River Railroads, as also with the above mentioned forwarding agents, I found out, that the safest, quickest and cheapest conveyances and now preferred by most of the immigrants, who are, for the great majority, disgusted with water-traveling after a long and tedious trip of from five to ten weeks across the Atlantic, are the New York and Erie and the Hudson River Railroads; the former of which has made the people acquainted during the whole season with the regular fare for passengers and luggage from here to the different ports on the Western shore of
Lake Michigan, without allowing their agents or runners to charge any higher price, than the one expressed on the bills.

My great object in this city is of course, to make as many immigrants as possible well acquainted with our State. For this purpose I worked by distributing the pamphlets on vessels, (sail—and steam—) in hotels and in taverns, mostly to the immigrants personally; by sending the same across the Atlantic for distribution among emigrants leaving port; by advertising in English, German and Dutch papers here and in Europe; by editorials in such papers; and finally, by talking personally, or by my assistants, to as many of the immigrants as possible, whenever an opportunity offered itself.

To protect the immigrants effectually against imposition of forwarding agents, runners and tavern-keepers, it was necessary, to induce as many as could be induced thereto, to visit my office before making contract or buying any ticket from whomsoever. Here I met with the great difficulty. Neither forwarding agents nor runners have any objection against Wisconsin; they are rather favorably inclined towards it, for the obvious reason, that a big profit by overcharging for passage and luggage can be made only on travelers from here to a far distant part of the country. The question with this sort of people is never, whether Wisconsin or any other State has advantages not to be found in the same degree elsewhere; nor whether the prospects for immigrants are more favorable in one part of the Union or in some other, but merely how much more they can make out of a passage to Wisconsin, than to Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, &c. It is plain therefore, that they must like Wisconsin, but they abhor all interference on my part; they fear that people will get information according to the truth, notwithstanding I have informed several of the best of them, as a matter of policy, that I never would interfere in their affairs, when they had sold their tickets, before the people came to see me at my business place. To me it is quite obvious, that most of those emigrant offices would be shut up within a couple of years,
if the passengers could only receive the necessary information in time. Warfare against my business and person consequently is laboring for self-preservation. It was often said within-hearing disy assistants, that the State was as good as represented in the pamphlets and the information contained therein reliable and excellent, but that the people connected with the office were more dangerous than any other in the city of New York; that I would not be able to keep an office, pay several assistants, and distribute thousands and thousands of pamphlets gratis, without imposing upon the people by my friends and agents in the State of Wisconsin, where I divided the spoils with them; in short, they do not oppose immigration to our State, but they keep the immigrants from my office, whenever they have a chance.

There is another reason why the immigrants do not flock in larger numbers to an office like mine, to wit: the strong competition between the several railroad directions, forwarding agencies, &c., each of whom tries to get the advantage of the other, in consequence whereof it has become usual, to send the passengers off on their way south or west as quick as it can be done. Even the Direction of the New York and Erie Railroad, though in its own interest most favorably inclined towards my exertions, make the passengers start for their destination immediately after arrival in port, without stopping a single night in the city, for fear they might be induced to buy their tickets in some other office. For such immigrants as are going to other states than Wisconsin, it is a benefit, because they cannot gather here the desired information from any awfully appointed representatives of other Western States, especially if they leave by the New York and Erie or the Hudson River Railroads, there being no chance left in that case for imposition by any of the numerous sets of sharpers, who go out for prey, nor of wasting away valuable time in the miserable emigrant-holes and taverns of this city.

A short description of the manner, in which this passenger-business is managed, may not be deemed here out of place:

As soon as any vessel reaches the Hudson River, the Telegraph
wires bring the news to the city. Lots of runners, stationed on purpose at Staten Island and at the Battery, take immediately to the rowboats and board the ships, to make some contract or agreement with the captain or some other officer acting for him about the permit, which in all probability is sold to the highest bidder, without any consideration of the interest of the passengers. The buyer and his companions then take hold of all the passengers, who wish to go into the country; shortly after a propellor comes alongside the vessel, riding at anchor in the middle of the stream; men, women and children, trunks, boxes and luggage of all sizes, kinds and descriptions are stowed away in the propellor, and within a couple of hours they are landed on some dock, where they are kept prisoners till the hour of departure for a part of the country, it may be, of which some of them never heard before or where they never intended to go. Often said permit is given or sold by the shipping-house to some agency before or during the trip of the vessel across the Atlantic Ocean. The thanks of the people in general and especially of the immigrants are due to many of best shipping-houses, which give their permits regularly to the agents of the New York and Erie Railroad. Not seldom it happens, probably from the best motives, that neither shipping-house nor captain wishes to interfere with the passenger business. In such cases no permit is given and every body is allowed to work for his own interest. As matters now stand I believe it to be the most pernicious of all for the poor people; an army of a hundred or more, composed of runners, tavern-keepers, and ped are come on board and every one of them takes hold of as many as he can get in his grasp, squeezing out of them all the money or profit he is able to.

Each one of the emigrant-tavern-keepers is, there may be some exceptions, ally and agent of some forwarding agent and gets regular pay for each passenger he brings on. If such passengers wish or are seduced to stay in the city for some days, or if any vesse comes to late in town to carry them off that same night, they are brought in large flocks to the favored taverns, where they
are immediately compelled to buy their passage tickets for the place of destination; from that moment they are carefully watched, for they might possibly find out, that they had been cheated, and bring their complaints before the New York Commissioners of Emigration, the Agent of the German Protective Society, myself, or some other officer or Society.

Before I became thoroughly acquainted with that class of people and the machinery of their business, I often applied to tavernkeepers, to induce them to send people to my office, but hardly one ever came on their advice and several times I made the experience, that even those, who pledged their word for doing so, acted right the other way by warning the immigrants against the imminent dangers of my office and influence. My place of business is right in the middle of that part of Greenwich Street, where the largest and most of those taverns are, the houses are not seldom overfilled with people, my business is painted in large German and English characters on the wall, my office is open from half-past 8 A. M. till half-past 5 P. M., my assistants often went among the people and talked to such as wanted to go out West; they promised to come, but the influence of runners and tavernkeepers was more powerful, than mine and they stayed away after all.

The agent of the German Protective Society displayed some activity in sending people for information to my office, most of them belonging to the more intelligent class of Society.

Such as read English or German papers saw my advertisements and the favorable articles and notices of editors, recommending my office, and came in considerable numbers.

I received letters asking for further information from the New England States, the interior of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and from Europe, in the English, German and Dutch languages, and answered them all to the best of my abilities, enclosing at the same time a copy of the pamphlet in each of such letters.

During the time of my residence here I have distributed over and above 25,000 pamphlets in the several languages, of which more
than 5,000 found their way to Europe, either by interposition of shipping-houses, private persons traveling to Europe, to bring out immigrants for our State, or in consequence of my own correspondence with people living in European ports.

The great mass of the pamphlets was distributed by myself and assistants on sailing vessels and steamboats to the passengers personally, to directions of railroads and to some forwarding agents, to people stopping in Hotels and emigrant-taverns and finally to all, who called at the office or who wrote for the same.

The New York and Erie Railroad sent from the latter part of June till this date to the State of Wisconsin 5,225 emigrant passengers, to Dunkirk, partly with destination for our State, 4,501. The Hudson River Railroad sent off during the same period, by their German Agent P. A. Loescher, to Wisconsin 2,372 passengers. Wm. Rischmuller, who forwarded his passengers in steamboats under his own control by way of Troy, then by Railroad to Buffalo and further round the Lakes, sent off from August 1st till Sept. 9 to Wisconsin 456 passengers. As I could not persuade myself to favor materially his exertions, I did not get further information from him.

The most extensive business of any of the forwarding agents is that of Friedrich Kreuder, who keeps a little army of not less than sixty runners, some of whom earn very considerable wages. He forwards by the People’s Line of Steamers of Isaac Newton.

Neither from him nor from any of the other agencies did I try to get information for the reason stated above in regard to Wm. Rischmuller.

In my office there have been 436 persons asking for information and intending to leave for the State immediately, of whom the majority represented also their friends and families, many of them companies of 20, 30, or even more persons. Several persons on my advice went out to investigate for themselves more closely the condition of our State, and have enabled themselves to report in Europe about the plan to be pursued and about the locality for _
settlement. They intend to come out again next spring or summer with such company as will be deemed suitable to the interest of the parties concerned.

It is hardly possible to make a true estimate of the influence exerted by the agency in New York; information has emanated from there in every direction and is now spread over a large and for our object the most valuable part of Europe. The emigration to our State, amounting many times from 1200 to 1500 a week, has probably been larger in 1852 than during any former season; still it would be unjust to limit the influence to what has been done already. The pamphlets, editorial articles, advertisements, written and verbal information, given by myself and assistants, are working their way and probably the effect will be felt more and stronger in the course of 1853, than it was during last season.

The example set by our State Government has excited already the emulation of other States and the Governor of Iowa recommends, in his late Message, the establishment of an agency like ours in the city of New York. We have no right to complain about such a plan, but we must be stimulated by it, and exert our best powers not to lose ground in the coming contest; we have the advantage of our better situation for market, of our extensive internal improvements, all in an excellent state of progress, of our healthy and invigorating climate, and we are inferior in no respect whatever; besides we have in our favor one season's experience in New York; by prosecuting in the right direction what was commenced by the action of the last Legislature, no harm can accrue to us; even the competition may show our great advantages and materially contribute towards the advancement of our object. The giving up of our agency on the contrary would prove just at this period of a very disastrous character and the results of our exertions might be turned into a different channel, so as to make the benefits designed for Wisconsin to go to the State of Iowa.

The larger proportion of the emigrants, who called at my office, were Germans, with a considerable share however in regard to the whole number for Americans, English, Scotch, Irish, French, Belgians, Norwegians and Poles.
In relation to business they were scientific and ordinary farmers in a large proportion; mechanics of all sorts, to wit: carpenters, masons, shipbuilders, millwrights, gasfactorymen, miners, stonecutters, watchmakers, machinists, blacksmiths, tailors, shoe-makers, gardeners, bakers and butchers; further merchants, schoolmasters, musicteachers, musicdirectors, surveyors, engineers, lawyers, physicians and ministers.

As I have had divers calls from miners, and the mining business, being one of the most prominent sources of wealth for our State, it would prove probably highly beneficial, if the office of the Commissioner of Emigration was supplied with reliable statistics about the mining-business during the last few years, so as to enable men of capital and wealth to judge about the probable result of investments for mining purposes. The different counties of the State would find it equally useful and profitable to their advancement, if they could be induced, to show up the peculiar advantages for settlement they are able to offer.

Considering the good will of editors of newspapers and advertising of great value, I have advertised regularly in the New York Tribune and part of the time in the Herald; I found myself however compelled to give it up for the last named paper, the expenses amounting to 100 per cent more, than the Tribune charges. I advertised further in most of the German papers of New York City, to wit: N. Y. Staatszeitung, Criminalezitung, Allgemeine Zeitung, Handelszeitung and Abendzeitung. Most of them have given commendatory articles or favorable notices of my office. Such articles copied on the other side of the Atlantic are read by a great many people and must of course prove to be of considerable benefit to the State. As far as the means allow it, I have sent up advertisements to several, chiefly German newspapers in Europe and in the first place to such, as are mostly read by the emigrating population, to wit: Bremser Auswanderungszeitung, Rudolstädter Allgemeine Ausw. Zeitung, Dorfzeitung, Schweizerische Merkur, Koelnische Zeitung, Mannheimer Journal, Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung and Amsterdam Handel
To enable the editors to judge about the degree of reliability of my office I sent them a translated copy of the Act of last Legislature, recommendations by the State Commissioners of Emigration of New York, the Mayor of N. Y. City, the General Consul of the Netherlands &c., all translated into German, as also a German copy of the pamphlet and such letters as I deemed fit, to induce them to write favorable notices or articles in regard to our State and the office in this place.

I have tried to do fully and conscientiously everything required from me by the Act of the Legislature, and I feel convinced, that I have exerted a very beneficial influence and largely promoted the emigration to Wisconsin; I have given all the information in my power, used all my influence to protect the immigrants, and I do not hesitate to say, that the State has reaped already a rich harvest from the agency, which has been only since the middle of June effectually established. I refer besides to the statements made above in regard to the prospects for the future.

To further the objects of the State on a still larger scale, allow me to make for your consideration the following suggestions:

1st. The great requisite, to get the eyes of emigrating Europe in all quarters more directly fixed on our State, is by giving the people everywhere a chance, to become acquainted with its advantages. Therefore it is my conviction, that a delegate from the State with the necessary instructions, recommendations and introductions should go to the principal ports and starting points in England, Scotland and Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden and Norway, and perhaps Switzerland, and that pamphlets ought to be distributed and personal information given there. In behalf of French, Belgian and part of the Swiss people the pamphlet ought to be translated into French.

The majority of the people arriving here are in too great a hurry to read and a great many are by the bustle all around hardly able to think. For these reasons they ought, if possible, to receive information and advice before leaving their old homes, or at any rate before leaving the European port.
Before his arrival and during his stay in any place the delegate should advertise in one or two of the most extensively read journals of that part of the country and make known in a suitable manner the opportunity offered to get information about the State of Wisconsin.

In each of the principal cities a depot of pamphlets should be left with a trustworthy person for gratuitous distribution, after the delegate had left. Editors generally should be induced to give articles or favorable notices on the subject in their papers.

People traveling to the West by the way of Quebec, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New Orleans would equally profit by such information, as is now limited to the city of New York alone. I look on such an agency in Europe as more advantageous still, than the one now existing in New York, especially if the commissioner in Europe acted in concert with the one established in said city.

To attain the double object proposed in the least expensive manner, I would suggest the following:

The heaviest emigration from Europe is going on from the middle of April till the later part of October. The commissioner, attending to his business in New York till the beginning of November, could leave at that time for Europe, trusting to the most reliable man in his office, to provide for the less important duties of the winter season during the time of his absence. The extraordinary expenses in that case would amount only to the traveling to, in, and from Europe, and the expenses for printing, advertising, postages and probably for some assistance.

2d. The new pamphlets, which ought to be published, should, to get a larger influence, be endorsed by the Legislature and by Yourself; and contain at the same time the name of the commissioner with the address of his place of business in the city of New York.

As the information contained in the pamphlet, however condensed and valuable, cannot be but very general in its small compass, I would like to draw your attention to a more extensive
source of information in regard to our State. I have good reasons to believe, that Mr. I. A. Lapham, the editor of the standard work about our State and of our excellent State maps, would be willing to publish a new edition of his book, adapted to the present condition of the State, with all the existing improvements, and the various reliable projects for the future and especially with an exhibit of all the resources of our beautiful and rich country, now so much better known than seven years ago, if the State would assist him by a subscription of from 500 to 1000 copies or its equivalent in cash. Knowing the importance of such a book, I mentioned the subject to Mr. Lapham at the time of my departure for New York and his principal objection was, the small support he expected in the sale of such a work from the inhabitants of the State.

In regard to the pamphlets I wish further to submit, whether or not it would be advisable, to have the recommendation of the State Commissioners of N. Y., of the Mayor of N. Y. city, and of such other societies and consular agents of European Governments, as I have gathered, printed on the cover of the same.

3. The U. S. Government ought to be acquainted with the impostions practised upon foreigners, coming here to live under the laws of the country and who consider generally, as soon as they have left Europe, the U. S. their second and their better Fatherland I consider it not so very difficult, to devise the means, effectually to protect the immigrants. A memorial to Congress by our Legislature in relation thereto would, at any rate, show an honorable sympathy with our future citizens of foreign birth. Perhaps the U. S. Government could appoint commissioners in the principal ports of the country for the protection of immigrants, and if the rights of the States severally do not allow the interference of the General Government in such matters, it would probably prove highly beneficial, if the Secretary of the Interior would direct the attention of the State Governments in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Louisiana to the great abuses, to which foreign immigrants are exposed by their being unacquainted with the language of the country and with the price of transportation of passengers and luggage to the place of destination, belonging as they mostly do to that class of society, which even in its own country is unacquainted with travel-
ing. The State Governments duly informed from such a source would likely take legal and appropriate measures to protect those, who are so much needed to aid in the development of the immense resources of this great country. To attain this desirable object, the following measures would be available:

A. A large dock should be built in each of the ports where the immigrants usually arrive, exclusively for the use of the emigrant vessels, and where alone the passengers and their luggage should be landed.

B. None of the agents or runners should be allowed to come on board of any of such vessels, but they should be admitted merely to the dock.

C. The captains of the vessels should be compelled to unload, as is their duty, the passengers and their goods on the said dock without any charge.

D. On the walls of the dock the program of each railroad—steamboat—and canalboat direction should be posted up in large characters and in the languages mostly spoken or understood by the immigrants.

E. Each program should exhibit a plain statement of the manner of traveling by railroad, steamboat, propeller or canalboat on each part of the proposed line of travel.

F. The fare on such line and on each part of the same, for passengers and for luggage per 100 lb., should be stated also.

G. At each change in the line or in the manner of traveling on the same, or in the price of conveyance of passengers and goods, it should be stated immediately on the programs, and the said changes be submitted to the authorities in the seaports above alluded to for approval.

H. No forwarding agent should get a license, to sell tickets to immigrants, unless he showed by his printed programs, that he charged a fair rate, and such of them as went beyond their own rates, stated on the programs, should be punished by the loss of their license and by a heavy fine.

If such provisions were put in the Statute books of the States concerned and were rigidly enforced, I feel assured, that they would prove, to be a blessing to the immigrants and an honor to the States.

The above report is respectfully submitted to your considera-

G. VAN STEENWIJK,
State Commissioner of Emigration.