REPORT

OF THE

TRAVELING EMIGRANT AGENT

OF THE

STATE OF WISCONSIN,

FOR THE YEAR 1853.

MADISON:
BERIAH BROWN, PRINTER.
1854.
To His Excellency William A. Barstow,
Governor of the State of Wisconsin:

Sir:—In accordance with an act entitled an act for the appointment of a Travelling Emigrant Agent, I received the appointment, entered upon the duties of the office, and started for the city of New York on the 1st of May last.

No task of a similar nature was probably ever undertaken under more discouraging circumstances, the spring immigration had been no greater, as every citizen of Milwaukee will admit, than that of '51 and '52; nor was there any prospect of an increase, unless the prejudice against our State, which I found prevailing all over the Eastern country, could be removed. To effect this, I had circulars arranged with great care by some of the best writers in the State, setting forth the fact, that the crisis through which we in common with every new State must pass, had gone by; that we had just commenced the construction of railroads in almost every part of the State; advertising the fact that we had twenty-five million acres of government land; that according to the census returns, figures proved we had the healthiest State in the Union; also showing our splendid position—immense mineral wealth—extensive lumbering interest, and almost endless variety of natural privileges. In distributing those
circulaires, I travelled forty-two thousand miles; I obtained their publication in over nine hundred of the country papers of the Eastern and middle States. I visited every principal city in the Northern States and Canada, and nearly every village in New York and New England; and whether the publication and distribution of those circulaires, and the representations made by me to the thousands I met, had any effect in changing the sentiment before alluded to, the fact can be established, and every intelligent citizen of our State who visited the East during the spring and fall of last season, will bear me out in the assertion, that while no Western State had a worse reputation than ours last spring, no one had a better reputation last fall; and while we received comparatively none of the spring emigration, no State at the West received as much of the summer and fall emigration. While I claim a share of the credit of this, candor forces me to admit that certain causes have operated strongly in our favor. The unusually fine crops of the season having been advertised all over the Eastern country, have established our reputation as an agricultural State, and the excitement about railroads has done much towards bringing our State again into favorable notice; besides I have received nothing but kindness and encouragement from the Press of our State.

Judging from all the information to be obtained from superintendents of Railroads, ticket agents, steam boat registers, collectors of ports, &c., the annual immigration of '51 and '52 did not exceed twenty thousand, while, according to the Report of Mr. White, collector of the port of Milwaukee, the number of passengers arrived at that port alone last season, amounted to 25,222, and he admits this statement too low, while, according to figures, which I have been at great trouble to obtain, the number landed between the first of May and the first of December, '53,

At the port of Milwaukee . . . . . . 27,632.
Kenosha and Racine . . . . . . 7,200.
Sheboygan and Port Washington, (mostly at Sheboygan) . . . . . . 13,400.
Green Bay, Twin Rivers, Manitowoc, (mostly at Green Bay) 11,328

I have assurances that many have come into the State by way of the Chicago and Beloit Railroad, Chicago and Galena Railroad, and the Mississippi river, but no figures can be offered with any probable degree of correctness, but if, as many suppose, the number would equal one-third of the entire immigration; then the whole number arrived in our State last season, would amount to 79,413, or an increase over that of the previous year of 59,413; but if the increase has only been 40,000, the usual estimate, and they had an average capital of $300 each, the amount would be twelve millions of dollars. To say nothing of the good effects of the introduction of this capital in any other respect just the annual State tax upon it, at the present rate of 6 mills on the dollar, would amount to seventy-two thousand dollars, while the tax required to defray the entire expense of the whole board of emigrant agencies would not amount to the fifteenth part of a mill to each taxpayer in the State.

In consequence of some peculiar features of the bill through which I received my appointment, I was forced to run all the risk attending a failure; and if the main object for which I was appointed has been accomplished, I may be pardoned, perhaps, for claiming, and am confident none but the invidious and malicious will deny me the credit due success. But while I claim that the prejudice, which had existed against Wisconsin for two or three years, has been removed, and that we may confidently expect a large immigration another year, I would not be understood as urging the discontinuance of the office; and inasmuch as I am not and shall not be, under any circumstances, a candidate for re-ap- pointment, it may not be out of place, perhaps, to recommend the re-establishment of the office. I would do this on the ground of economy alone. I see no way of materially decreasing the present rate of taxation except by encouraging, by every possible means, the settlement of our country, and I can see no impropriety in making the advantages of our State correctly known abroad, or of
inviting the wanderers from other countries to a home among us. Rival States will have such agents, and if we can select one who will honestly and energetically perform the duties of the office, he will many times earn his salary.

As farther evidence of the increase of immigration, I will call your attention to the fact that much of that country north and west of the Fox and Wisconsin rivers, has been occupied during the past season. Certain counties there have received an addition of thousands of the best class of settlers to their population. In proof of this statement, I will refer you to their representatives now here. Men of capital have come in and purchased improved farms. In many different parts of the State, property of all kinds has been enhanced in value, and a period of unparalleled prosperity has taken the place of hard times, gloom and depression. Whether I have aided, in my humble capacity, in producing this happy result, I leave your Excellency to determine.

Respectfully submitted.

Yours, &c.,

THOS. J. TOWNSEND.