



View of the Valley of the Mississippi

by Robert Baird

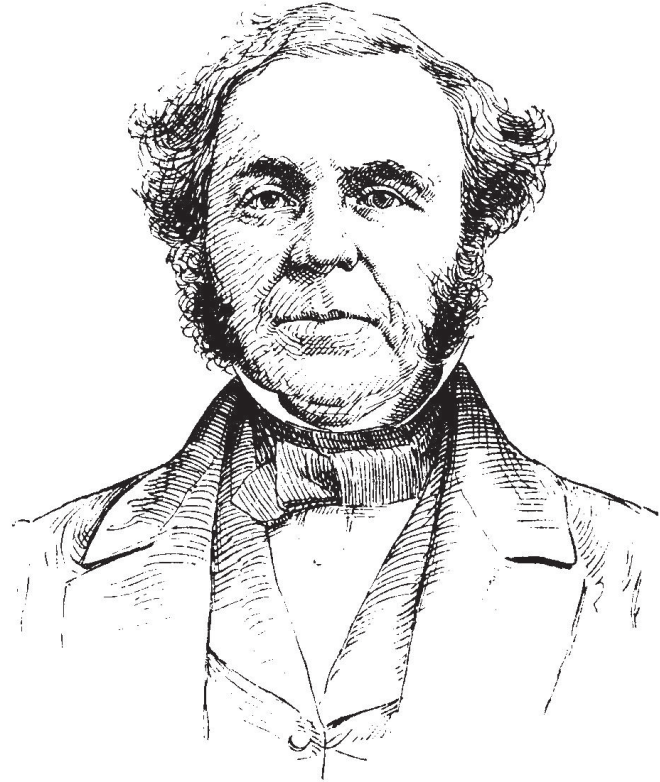
Illinois

This state proffers¹ many inducements² to those who are emigrating to the West.

There are 28,237,859 acres of public land in this state to which the Indian title has been extinguished³, yet to be sold; and 3,158,110 still belonging to the Indians, which will soon be in the market. For a treaty has very recently been proposed to the tribes in this state, by which they will probably sell their lands. The price of public land is \$1.25 per acre. No credit is allowed.

Farms, considerably cultivated, may be purchased from the early settlers who desire to purchase government lands again, at prices varying from \$2.50 to \$8 per acre.

In no part of our country is it possible to convert an uncultivated piece of land into a good farm, sooner than in this state. Let an emigrant purchase, as he may do in thousands of places, a quarter of a section (160 acres) of land, or the half of it, or a section, if he is able, on the borders of a fertile prairie, so that one half of his purchase may be wood-land and the other half prairie, or whatever other proportion he chooses. And let him fence the larger part of his prairie land, and retain the wood-land to furnish timber, and in a short time he may have an excellent farm under cultivation. He may soon raise as many cattle, hogs, horses, etc. as he may desire, or has corn



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and hay to feed them with in the winter. And there need be no want of these things, if he has two or three hands to help him to cultivate his fields and mow his prairie. The prairie and woodland will afford range enough for his cattle, hogs, and horses in the spring, summer, fall, and early winter.

The larger prairies, which are sometimes several miles across, are like the lakes in New York and other parts of our country, public property; and all who live around their borders, have a common right to send as many cattle into them as they choose. The prairie, when turned into fields, is difficult, for two or three years, to subdue⁴ completely. This is owing to



the unyielding grassy sward⁵ with which they are covered; and to plough⁶ which requires a strong team of horses or oxen.

The climate of Illinois is delightful, and unquestionably healthy. If emigrants will choose favourable situations, and be careful to have comfortable houses as soon as possible, and dress warmly when sudden changes from hot to cold weather are occurring, and not expose themselves to inclement⁷ weather, they will have good health. The summers and autumns are generally dry and warm,—more so than in the Atlantic states.

The diseases which prevail are those which are common in the western states in the same parallels of latitude⁸. Bilious fever⁹, in its various types, is the most noted. By timely attention, it is generally a manageable disease. It is far from being the case that even emigrants from the East, generally have a seasoning¹⁰ of sickness before they become accustomed¹¹ to the climate.

Taken as a whole, this state is one of great fertility of soil, and capable of sustaining a vast population. It has the finest situation of all the western states. It is sufficiently remote from the mountains which bound each side of the Valley, to have a climate little affected by them. It has milder winters than those states which border the mountainous ranges. This is a country of vast and beautiful plains, with noble streams.

The eastern emigrant will find warm-hearted friends in every neighbourhood¹² in this state. The people of the West have much plain and blunt, but sincere hospitality. And any emigrant who comes among them with a disposition¹³ to be pleased with the country and its inhabitants¹⁴,—to partake of their hospitality cheerfully,—to make no invidious¹⁵ comparisons,—to assume no airs of distinction¹⁶—and in a word, to feel at home in this region, where, of course, every thing is very different from what he has been accustomed to, will be truly welcome.

Baird, Robert. *View of the Valley of the Mississippi, or the Emigrant's and Traveller's Guide to the West. Containing a General Description of that Entire Country; and Also Notices of the Soil, Productions, Rivers, and Other Channels of Intercourse and Trade: and Likewise of the Cities and Towns, Progress of Education, and c., of Each State and Territory.* Philadelphia: H.S. Tanner, 1834.

1. offers
2. attractions
3. voided
4. conquer; bring under control
5. surface of land
6. plow
7. stormy
8. distance from the equator
9. illness that includes fever and nausea or vomiting
10. period of time lasting for one season (spring, summer, autumn, and winter)
11. used to
12. British spelling of neighborhood
13. tendency, mood, or inclination
14. people that live in a certain area
15. unpleasant or unkind
16. superior attitude