

THE WHEAT MARKET AND THE
FARMER IN MINNESOTA

1858-1900

BY

HENRIETTA M. LARSON, A. M.

A THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN THE

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MY MOTHER AND FATHER

PREFACE

THIS study was begun with the purpose of investigating the development of the system by which the wheat of the Middle West is brought from the producer to the consumer. It appeared that this might shed considerable light on the past history and present problems, both economic and political, of the region. It must be admitted, however, that what has been accomplished falls far short of the original expectations. This is partly the result of the fact that it was necessary, on every hand, to break new ground, because so little research has been done on the economic history of the Middle West. A few studies, like *The Granger Movement* by Professor S. J. Buck, were very helpful. Scarcely anything, however, was available on agricultural technique, on the personnel, finance, organization and functioning of the local- and primary-market middleman system, on transportation costs and services in that section, or on the elusive matter of market demand. Although this study is, therefore, narrowed, it may serve to emphasize the place of the market in the history of the West. Perhaps later efforts in this direction will describe more completely the nature of market development, will note its effect on the type of agriculture and the economic organization and well-being of the farmers, will help to explain the causes of particular situations and accompanying political and economic philosophies, and will thus—to be very optimistic—give a sounder basis on which to attack contemporary agricultural problems.

To the many persons who have assisted me in this under-

taking I wish to acknowledge my obligations. To those who have given freely of their time for interviews, to the business concerns which have permitted me to use their records, and to the staffs of various libraries, especially to Mr. John Talman of the newspaper department of the Minnesota Historical Society, I am deeply indebted. In the earlier stages of this work I was most fortunately guided by the searching criticism of Professor N. S. B. Gras of Minnesota University. Professor Harry J. Carman of Columbia has assisted very materially in criticizing and correcting the manuscript. To Professor David S. Muzzey of Columbia I owe a debt of gratitude for his helpful advice and for his generous assistance in the reading of proof. At all times I have received from my family encouragement, which has been worth more to me than they may understand.

HENRIËTTA M. LARSON.

ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA.

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INTERVIEWS

VERY considerable information was gained from interviews with some forty men and women and from correspondence with ten, all of whom had had first-hand acquaintance with the subject matter of this study. Since many requested that their names be not published, it must suffice to note that these included farmers, merchants, different types of grain middlemen from local elevator managers to members of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce, railroad officials, editors, bankers, lawyers, teachers, a steamboat captain and others. While the material secured in this way has to be used with care, it has, nevertheless, been most valuable.

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