

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Transactions and Reports, Nebraska State
Historical Society

Nebraska State Historical Society

1887

On the Establishment of An Aboreal Bureau

J. Sterling Morton

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebhisttrans>



Part of the [History Commons](#)

Morton, J. Sterling, "On the Establishment of An Aboreal Bureau" (1887). *Transactions and Reports, Nebraska State Historical Society*. 20.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/nebhisttrans/20>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Nebraska State Historical Society at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Transactions and Reports, Nebraska State Historical Society by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ARBOREAL BUREAU.

[A letter of Hon. J. Sterling Morton to Secretary Howard, Jan. 5, 1886.]

Prof. Eggleston, chief of the forestry bureau at Washington, puts the annual value of forest products at \$8,000,000 in the United States, and Prof. Sargent made the estimate for the year 1880 to be \$7,000,000. That is more than the cash worth of our annual corn crop, twice our yearly wheat crop, and outvalues the yearly production of hay, rye, oats, barley, potatoes, buckwheat, and tobacco, all lumped together in silver dollars. The forests of the United States contribute more in value to the channels of commerce each year by more than ten times than all the gold and silver mines of the continent.

The denudation of all the hillsides, plains, valleys, and mountains in the Eastern and Middle states is making a history of the decline of agriculture, the increase of drouths, and the annual destruction by floods in spring time along rivers whose banks have been shorn from source to mouth of timber growth. And while deforesting is keeping a diary of destruction there and making hard history with the ax and the saw, cannot we, here in Nebraska, reforesting the plains from the Missouri river to the Rocky mountains, keep legitimately, a record of our tree increase, tree growth, and tremendous prosperity in agriculture because of arboriculture?

If the State Historical Society will only establish within itself an arboreal bureau and appoint a competent person or persons to gather, for preservation therein, the history of all the orchards and all the tree plantations of Nebraska, from the earliest to the latest planting, it will do a most practical and philosophical thing. And thus—after some years—a datum will be conserved which will materially aid in solving the question of climatic changes being brought about by ar-

got to Fort Kearney. There, the cattle being foot-sore, I left Stocking and Fellows to come in at their leisure, and started for the river alone. Before getting far on my way, however, I fell in with Ben Holladay, who was returning with mule teams from Salt Lake City, and who is known, by the way, as the man who first ran a mail across the 'Great American Desert.'

"We traveled in company to Salt creek ford, where the town of Ashland now stands, when Holladay went on to Nebraska City and I to Plattsmouth.

"I rode a very small mule, whose bridle was made of bed cord, while my saddle was composed of a piece of blanket and an antelope pelt.

"Wherefore it is that I claim first blood in getting gold from Pike's Peak, as it then was known, to the Missouri river."

boriculture. And more than that, this arboreal bureau will act as a signal station does upon a stormy coast, and warn the race in Nebraska and elsewhere from danger to its very existence which shall come from non-attention to forestry—too much activity in cutting down and too little in planting out trees. The dead lands in the Orient, in Spain, in China, where man destroyed and never planted forests, teach a lesson that we should understand now. The Historical Society of Nebraska can with great propriety, it seems to me, take this matter intelligently in hand and preserve, in the manner suggested, very valuable facts—facts which involve human life and happiness—for the use of succeeding generations.

Men like Gov. Furnas and Dr. George L. Miller, who have practically planted forests, who have, with keen relish, zealously studied trees and their adaptability and growth in Nebraska, can, by taking hold of the biography of all the planted trees in the state, lift into view valuable facts and render humanity a vast service.