

Joseph P. Wilson to Governor John Gregory Smith
August 22, 1869
St. Cloud, Minnesota

Gov J. G. Smith
President Northern Pacific Railroad Co.
St. Albans, VT

Dear Sir

When I saw you at Rush Creek on my return from Lake Superior I intended to have a long talk with you in regard to the St. Cloud and Minneapolis Rail Road Charter –which I originated and kept alive since 1856. But you and your party was just getting on to the stage going to Superior and there was no opportunity and I also had to take the cars for St. Paul. But I can say to you now what I intended to say then.

In 1856 I got up the charter of the [Minneapolis?] and St. Cloud Rail Road. My brother [?] were then both members of the legislative [freight?] were both original proprietors of the town of St. Cloud and have done more than all others up to the present time to make the Town what it is.

I have managed to keep the charter to the Rail Road alive –I have always, up to within a short time, held the Books and papers –it is but lately that they were put into the hand of the Hon. H. T. Welles for my benefit and others who I had made present of stock –In 1864 and 65[.] I was a member of the Senate of this state –and in connection with Lafayette Emmet then Chief Justice of the State got additional amendments to the charter including the swamp land grants, etc.

I write you this governor to let you know how matters stand as regard the position of the parties here claiming to control this large swamp land grant.

The stock that T. C. McClure holds the transfers of to your company –every share of it came from me – was given to them with an understanding that whatever was done –nothing should be done without my consent [?] matter –there is 100 shares transferred by [?] that belongs to me also. 100 shares [transferred?] by Charles A. Gilman that also belong to me and 250 shares to R. M. Richardson which belong to me. All of that stock was transferred to the parties with the understanding that if they did not succeed in accomplishing certain things before the legislature (they all being members) that the stock should be returned to me.

I have assigned everything to Hon. H. T. Welles who is one of the best, soundest, and clearest headed men in this state –and any arrangement he may make with you will entirely satisfy me –what McClure (who has been appointed by the one horse Board of Trade) would do trade have would not be satisfactory to me and Judge Emmet unless H. [?] Welles would agree to it.

I am thus particular in writing to you for the reason that some two or three men such as McClure –Wait and Clark are trying to control and manage the entire thing and have you believe (who have not lived [?]) have to governed by what you hear) that [?] here is controlled by them –It is [?] they have some little capital among them that they have managed to skin around and get –some 8 years ago McClure's sister died who lived in Boston –left a son Mc was the guardian so Mc got [\$20,000?] to work on that was about four years ago –on that he has cut quiet a splurge. We will probably go to New York to your meeting –H. [?] Welles Esq. will also in all probability be there –Mr. Welles has something to turn over to

you –McClure nothing and if he attempted to there would always be trouble after –You will find Mr. Welles a whole souled honorable gentleman one who every one has the largest confidence in –anything that he says or does can be relied upon –He is also a possessed of large means being worth nearly half a million.

Perhaps Governor, it is not necessary for me to write to you all this –And what I say to you here I wish you would keep for your own ear and those connected with you in this enterprise. I don't care to have those parties know what I say to you here, but by enquiry you will ascertain what I say to be true in every particular.

In connection with others here are [?] to have your Road run here. I am willing to aid you in every way to I [?] toward getting you additional [Ses?] should you need any. I was in the senate when you asked permission to cross the state and was friendly to your road then –altho insisted that you must cross north of 45.30, but after several joining committees of conference I agreed to let it pass as it was –

I was the first organizer of a party to go overland to Idaho –we could not get protection as that time and I wrote out to Washington to Rice and Aldrich who was then in Congress –and Aldrich had on the strength of my representation a part of my fund to protest emigrant overland to Washington and Oregon –set aside for the benefit of my party. The War Department sent Capt. Fisk to take chase of the party after organized and he led several expeditions afterward. He is now running a [horde?] at Helena Montana –which was then a part of Idaho –in 1866. I started a transportation Line called the Minnesota and Montana Transportation Company where I agreed to take freight Overland from St. Paul and St. Cloud cheaper than it could be taken from St. Louis up the Missouri River and I could have done it –But that year the Indians were troublesome and we did not get the protection the government promised us and shippers would not ship by us without military protection and we had to reduce an expedition and send out what we did send on private account –at that time I was out to New York and Boston to see your body about the matter. A friend of mine, Franklin Steele, had been told in Washington by Mr. Perham then a member of Congress and connected your road –that the Northern pacific R.R. would aid an enterprise of that kind on the strength of that I expended considerable money –neve have asked any one to make it good and don't want it made good –at that time I saw Mr. Caufield, Col. Roland, Mr. Fuller, and Mr. McGill in New York and Mr. Tobey and next up to St. Albans to see you but you was absent from home.

Now Governor I will tell you what I would like to do –for all I have done in one way and another in turning over a land grant worth a million or more of dollars. If there is a side show for me, I wish you would let me in some where.

I know that I am first the man you want. I suppose it is now necessary for a man to blow his own horn – but we in the west have to do that –otherwise we may be out in the cold. I have a brother here who had some stock in the R.R. co. He would be as good a man as can be found to get up the right of way he is an old settler having lived here 20 years and laid out the town and named it –it is John L. Wilson.

It is not that I am in need that I make the request because I am pretty well fixed have means enough to take hold of almost anything that I see money in. I have the Army Transportation this year for the department of Dacota which requires quite a large capital to handle. I just merely mention this to show you that I am not dead but alive. I am worth \$150,000, and would like to join teams with some one who will know something –that I don't know –and make some money out of it as the work goes along.

If you take hold of the charter will you have any directors in this state?

I don't know but it will weary your reading this letter –you will please excuse me if it does.

Very Respectfully Yours,
J.P. Wilson

I have some strong friends and relatives in Congress –would go there this coming winter if it would be necessary –it has been said that Western men are as good as any there –they would have so much cheek–some say brass.