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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

VOLUME I

JULY TO DECEMBER

1920

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA  
IOWA CITY IOWA

1920

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## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN JULY 1920

No. 1

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## The Vision

In imagination let us picture the history of Iowa as a splendid drama enacted upon a giant stage which extends from the Father of Waters on the right to the Missouri on the left, with the Valley of the Upper Mississippi as a background.

Let us people this stage with the real men and women who have lived here—mysterious mound builders, picturesque red men and no less interesting white men, Spaniards, Frenchmen, explorers, warriors, priests, fur traders, adventurers, miners, settlers, country folk, and townspeople.

Let the scenes be set among the hills, on the prairies, in the forests, along the rivers, about the lakes, and in the towns and villages.

Then, viewing this pageant of the past, let us write the history of the Commonwealth of Iowa as we would write romance—with life, action, and color—that the story of this land and its people may live.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

## Palimpsests

Palimpsests of a thousand and two thousand years ago were parchments or other manuscript material from which one writing had been erased to give room for another. The existence of these double texts was due chiefly to the scarcity of materials. Waxen tablets, papyrus rolls, parchment sheets, and vellum books each served the need of the scribe. But they were not so easily procured as to invite extravagance in their use or even to meet the demand of the early writers and medieval copyists for a place to set down their epics, their philosophies, and their hero tales.

And so parchments that were covered with the writings of Homer or Caesar or Saint Matthew were dragged forth by the eager scribes, and the accounts of Troy or Gaul or Calvary erased to make a clean sheet for the recording of newer matters. Sometimes this second record would in turn be removed and a third deposit made upon the parchment.

The papyrus rolls and the parchments of the early period of palimpsests were merely sponged off—the ink of that time being easily removable, though the erasure was not always permanent. The later parchments were usually scraped with a knife or rubbed with pumice after the surface had been softened by some such compound as milk and meal.

This method was apt to result in a more complete obliteration of the text.

But there came men whose curiosity led them to try to restore the original writing. Atmospheric action in the course of time often caused the sponged record to reappear; chemicals were used to intensify the faint lines of the old text; and by one means or another many palimpsest manuscripts were deciphered and their half-hidden stories rescued and revived.

On a greater scale time itself is year by year making palimpsests. The earth is the medium. A civilization writes its record upon the broad surface of the land: dwellings, cultivated fields, and roads are the characters. Then time sponges out or scrapes off the writing and allows another story to be told. Huge glaciers change the surface of the earth; a river is turned aside; or a flood descends and washes out the marks of a valley people. More often the ephemeral work of man is merely brushed away or overlain and forgotten. Foundations of old dwellings are covered with drifting sand or fast growing weeds. Auto roads hide the Indian trail and the old buffalo trace. The caveman's rock is quarried away to make a state capitol.

But the process is not always complete, nor does it defy restoration. The frozen sub-soil of the plains of northern Siberia has preserved for us not only the skeletons of mammoths, but practically complete remains, with hair, skin, and flesh in place — mum-

mies, as it were, of the animals of prehistoric times. In the layers of sediment deposited by the devastating water lie imbedded the relics of ancient civilizations. The grass-grown earth of the Mississippi Valley covers with but a thin layer the work of the mound builders and the bones of the workmen themselves.

With the increasing civilization of humanity, the earth-dwellers have consciously and with growing intelligence tried to leave a record that will defy erasure. Their buildings are more enduring, their roads do not so easily become grass-grown, the evidences of their life are more abundant, and their writings are too numerous to be entirely obliterated.

Yet they are only partially successful. The tooth of time is not the only destroyer. Mankind itself is careless. Letters, diaries, and even official documents go into the furnace, the dump heap, or the pulp mill. The memory of man is almost as evanescent as his breath; the work of his hand disintegrates when the hand is withdrawn. Only fragments remain — a line or two here and there plainly visible on the palimpsest of the centuries — the rest is dim if it is not entirely gone. Nevertheless with diligent effort much can be restored, and there glows upon the page the fresh, vivid chronicles of long forgotten days. Out of the ashes of Mount Vesuvius emerges the city of Pompeii. The clearing away of a jungle from the top of a mountain in Peru reveals the wonderful stonework of the city of Machu Picchu,



the cradle of the Inca civilization. The piecing together of letters, journals and reports, newspaper items, and old paintings enables us to see once more the figures of the pioneers moving in their accustomed ways through the scenes of long ago.

The palimpsests of Iowa are full of fascination. Into the land between the rivers there came, when time was young, a race of red men. Their record was slight and long has been overlain by that of the whites. Yet out of the dusk of that far off time come wild, strange, moving tales, for even their slender writings were not all sponged from the face of the land. Under the mounds of nearly two score counties and in the wickiups of a few surviving descendants, are the uneffaced letters of the ancient text.

And the white scribes who wrote the later record of settlement and growth, read the earlier tale as it was disappearing and told it again in part in the new account. These new comers in turn became the old, their homes and forts fell into decay, their records faded, and their ways were crowded aside and forgotten.

But they were not all erased. Here and there have survived an ancient building, a faded map, a time-eaten diary, the occasional clear memory of a pioneer not yet gathered to his fathers. And into the glass show cases of museums drift the countless fragments of the story of other days. Yet with all these survivals, how little effort is made to piece

together the scattered fragments into a connected whole.

Here is an old log cabin, unheeded because it did not house a Lincoln. But call its former occupant John Doe and try to restore the life of two or three generations ago. It requires no diligent search to find a plow like the one he used in the field and a spinning wheel which his wife might have mistaken for her own. Over the fireplace of a descendant hang the sword and epaulets he wore when he went into the Black Hawk War, or the old muzzle-loading gun that stood ready to hand beside the cabin door. And perhaps in an attic trunk will be found a daguerreotype of John Doe himself, dignified and grave in the unwonted confinement of high collar and cravat, or a miniature of Mrs. Doe with pink cheeks, demure eyes, and fascinating corkscrew curls.

Out of the family Bible drops a ticket of admission to an old time entertainment. Yonder is the violin that squeaked out the measure at many a pioneer ball. Here is the square foot warmer that lay in the bottom of his cutter on the way home and there the candlestick that held the home-made tallow dip by the light of which he betook himself to bed.

In the files of some library is the yellowed newspaper with which — if he were a Whig — he sat down to revel in the eulogies of “Old Tippecanoe” in the log cabin and hard cider campaign of 1840, or applaud the editorial which, with pioneer vigor and

unrefined vocabulary, castigated the "low scoundrel" who edited the "rag" of the opposing party.

But most illuminating of all are the letters that he wrote and received, and the journal that tells the little intimate chronicles of his day to day life. Hidden away in the folds of the letters, with the grains of black sand that once blotted the fresh ink, are the hopes and joys and fears and hates of a real man. And out of the journal pages rise the incidents which constituted his life—the sickness and death of a daughter, the stealing of his horses, his struggles with poverty and poor crops, his election to the legislature, a wonderful trip to Chicago, the building of a new barn, and the barn warming that followed.

Occasionally he drops in a stirring tale of the neighborhood: a border war, an Indian alarm, a street fight, or a hanging, and recounts his little part in it. John Doe and his family and neighbors are resurrected. And so other scenes loom up from the dimness of past years, tales that stir the blood or the imagination, that bring laughter and tears in quick succession, that, like a carpet of Bagdad, transport one into the midst of other places and forgotten days.

Time is an inexorable reaper but he leaves gleanings, and mankind is learning to prize these gifts. Careful research among fast disappearing documents has rescued from the edge of oblivion many a precious bit of the narrative of the past.

It is the plan of this publication to restore some of those scenes and events that lie half-hidden upon the palimpsests of Iowa, to show the meaning of those faint tantalizing lines underlying the more recent markings -- lines that the pumice of time has not quite rubbed away and which may be made to reveal with color and life and fidelity the enthralling realities of departed generations.

JOHN C. PARISH

## White Beans For Hanging

The tale that follows is not a placid one, for it has to do with the sharp, dramatic outlines of one of the bloodiest struggles that ever took place between whites within the bounds of Iowa. Therefore let those who wish a gentle narrative of the ways of a man with a maid take warning and close the leaves of this record. The story is of men who lived through troublous days and circumstances and who at times thought they could attain peace only by looking along the sights of a gun barrel.

The facts are given largely as they were related by Sheriff Warren. It is more than three quarters of a century since the events occurred, and Warren and the others who took part have long since left this life. There have been those who tell in some respects a different story, but it seems probable that the sheriff, whose business led him through every turn of the events, knew best what happened. And his long continuance in office and the widespread respect and admiration that was his, even from those who qualify his account, lead one to feel that he did not greatly pervert the record.

Warren was a Kentuckian by birth and a resident for some years at the lead mines of Galena; but he crossed the Mississippi and located at Bellevue, in Iowa Territory, when that town was a mere settle-

ment on the western fringe of population. Active and courageous, this young man was appointed sheriff of the County of Jackson and held the position for nearly a decade.

Soon after his arrival there came to Bellevue a group of settlers from Coldwater, Michigan. Among them was William W. Brown, a tall, dark complexioned man, who bought a two-story house and opened a hotel. Brown was a genial host, full of intelligence and pleasing in his manners, and he won immediate popularity among the people of the county. His wife, too, a little woman of kindly ways and sturdy spirit, was a general favorite.

Brown also kept a general store and became a partner in a meat market. In this way he came in touch with a large number of the pioneers, and the liberality with which he allowed credit and his generosity to the poor endeared him to many. The hotel was a convenient stopping place for men driving from the interior of the county to Galena. They came to Bellevue to cross the Mississippi, stopped off at Brown's, ate at his far famed table, drank of his good liquor, and listened to his enlivening talk. And usually they went away feeling that the friendly landlord was a most valuable addition to the community.

When winter came he hired a number of men and put them at work on the island near the town cutting wood to supply fuel to the Mississippi steamboats. At the approach of spring, and before the ice broke

up, the woodcutters became teamsters, and long lines of teams might be seen hauling the cords of wood across the ice to the Iowa side where they were piled up on the shore of the river.

Bellevue in 1837 was less than five years old. On a plateau overlooking the Mississippi a few houses had sprung up; then came stores and a hotel. Along the river and off in the outlying districts other small settlements began to appear. Roads and common interests united them and they formed a typical group of pioneer communities. Warren found the preservation of order in this new county somewhat of a task. Conditions of life were primitive and so also were the habits of the pioneers. Derelicts and outcasts from older settlements found their way to the new. Petty thieving was not uncommon, and travelers were often set upon as they passed from town to town—sometimes they disappeared unaccountably from the face of the earth. Men found themselves in possession of counterfeit money; horses and cattle were stolen; and pioneer feuds or drunken brawls now and then ended in a killing. Yet Jackson County was without a jail.

For some years the whole northwest had suffered from the operations of gangs of horse thieves and counterfeiters, and it began to look to Warren and others as if one of these gangs had particular associations with Jackson County. Horses and cattle, stolen in the east, turned up at Bellevue with curious frequency; bad money became common and thieving

grew more bold. Again and again circumstantial evidence associated crimes with one or another of the men who worked for Brown or made their headquarters at his hotel.

One of these men was James Thompson, a son of well-to-do Pennsylvania parents and a man of some education. Twice he was arrested for passing counterfeit money and once for robbing stores in Galena, but in each case he was cleared on technicalities or on the testimony of his associates. Two other members of the suspected group were William Fox, charged with a part in the Galena robbery, and one Chichester who, together with Thompson, was implicated in the robbing of an old French fur trader named Rolette.

The people of the county were particularly irritated by the fact that seldom was any one punished for these crimes. The aggrieved parties often found Brown appearing as counsel for his men when they were brought to trial; and almost invariably alibis were proven. At one time Thompson, arrested on the charge of passing counterfeit money near Galena, was released on the testimony of Fox and three others of his associates that at the time mentioned he was attending the races with them in Davenport. At another time a man was cleared by the statements of his friends that they had played cards with him throughout the night in question.

Brown's constant connection with the suspects and his assistance in case of their trial caused his



own reputation to suffer. Many people came to believe that he was in reality the very shrewd and clever leader of an organized gang of criminals. Others felt that he was a man unjustly accused and wronged.

Among those of his early friends who lost faith in him was Thomas Cox, a veteran of the War of 1812 and the Black Hawk War and a man of magnetic personality and dominant will. Over six feet tall and weighing two hundred and fifty pounds, he was vigorous enough even when well beyond the half-century mark to place his hands on the withers of a horse and vault into the saddle without touching the stirrups. In 1838 he had been chosen to represent his county in the Territorial legislature and in 1839 he wished greatly to succeed himself in the office. At the time of nominations Cox was absent from home attending to his duties at the capital, but he counted on his friend Brown to support him. What was his surprise then to find that Brown had been nominated in his place. He immediately announced himself as an independent candidate and was elected. But from that time forth he distrusted and opposed the hotel keeper.

Brown's charm of manner and apparent sincerity, however, kept friends and adherents for him among many of the best people of the county. A number of the men of the vicinity, anxious to help matters, finally decided to call a meeting, put the case squarely to Brown and see if he would not do some-

thing to rid the neighborhood of its reign of crime.

Brown appeared, but with him came the notorious Thompson. James Mitchell, a fiery opponent of the suspected gang, jumped to his feet at once, characterized Thompson as a robber and counterfeiter and demanded his withdrawal. Thompson, infuriated, drew his pistol, but was seized by the bystanders and hustled out of the room, breathing threats against the life of Mitchell. Outside a group of his friends gathered. They broke the door and stormed into the room, and only the efforts of Brown prevented a bloody conflict.

As a result of the meeting Brown agreed to do what he could and the next day most of his boarders, shouldering their axes, crossed over to the island where they set to work chopping wood. The relief, however, was only partial. Robberies continued and raids upon the island disclosed much plunder.

So things ran on till the winter of 1839. Warren tells us that under the dominant influence of Brown's men the holidays were marked by drinking and dissipation rather than the usual dancing and feasting. The better citizens determined to celebrate Jackson's victory at New Orleans by a ball on the evening of January 8. Furthermore, upon the suggestion of Mitchell, who was one of the managers, it was agreed that none of Brown's men should be allowed to participate in the occasion.

After many preparations the night came. The flower of Bellevue womankind, bewitching with

smiles and curls and gay attire, and the vigorous men of that pioneer town gathered at a newly built hotel to enjoy the music and bountiful refreshments and to engage in the delights of the quadrille and the Virginia reel. Mitchell was there with his wife and daughter and two sisters. Sheriff Warren, because of sickness, was unable to attend; and Thompson and the other men upon whom the company had learned to look with such disfavor were nowhere to be seen.

Around and around on the rude puncheon floor went the dancers, moving with slow and graceful steps through the stately figures of the quadrille or quickening their pace to a more lively measure of the tireless musicians. Suddenly came a strange commotion by the door and excited men and women gathered about a young woman who had reached the ball room, half clad and almost spent with fright and exhaustion. It was Miss Hadley, a young relative of Mitchell's who, too sick to attend the ball, had been left alone at his home. When she could speak the dancers learned that Thompson and some of his friends had taken advantage of Mitchell's absence to plunder his house, and the indignities at the hands of Thompson from which Miss Hadley had with difficulty escaped formed a climax that stirred the spirit of murder in Mitchell's heart. Borrowing a pistol from Tom Sublett, he left the ball room and went out into the night in search of his enemy.

The night well served his purpose. The moon — clear and full — hung high in the heavens, opening

up to his view long stretches of village street. The frosty air rang with every sound. His quest was short. There swung into sight down the otherwise empty street two men, and the quiet of the night was shattered by drunken curses. Mitchell strode on to meet them. One of the two called out to him in warning. The other came on as steadily as did Mitchell. In one hand was a pistol, in the other a bowie knife, and influenced by drink, his purpose matched that of the man he met.

Scarcely three feet separated the men, when Thompson attacked with pistol and knife at once. His gun, however, at the critical instant missed fire and a moment later a ball from his opponent's pistol entered his heart. Mitchell seeing Thompson dead at his feet, turned and retraced his steps to the ball room, where he gave himself up to the deputy sheriff and asked for protection against the mob he knew would soon appear.

The terrified guests of the Jackson Day Ball scattered to the four corners of the night. Women, unmindful of wraps or dignity, sought the safety of home, and the men, hurrying away to arm themselves, did not all — it is safe to say — return.

Anson Harrington and another man who had weapons remained with Mitchell and these three with the devoted women of his family took refuge in the upper story of the hotel. The air now became vocal with the tumult of Thompson's friends approaching with wild cries of revenge. The deputy

sheriff tried in vain to stop them, then dashed off to summon Sheriff Warren. Upstairs the little group had taken the stove from its place and poised it near the head of the stairway ready to roll it down upon the heads of the invaders.

In a turmoil of rage the crowd of men swarmed into the house and, headed by Brown, reached the foot of the stairway. But the muzzles of guns looking down upon them, and their acquaintance with the grim nature of the men above halted them. Baffled, they began calling for the women to come down, threatening to burn the house and punctuating their threats by firing bullets up through the ceiling into the room above.

Soon Warren appeared upon the scene. He promised to be responsible for Mitchell's appearance in the morning and persuaded Brown to quiet his inflamed men. They dispersed reluctantly and the disturbed night at length resumed its quiet. In the morning Mitchell was taken from the hotel, arraigned before a court, and bound over for trial. For want of a jail he was held under guard in his own house.

The friends of Thompson, though making no open demonstration, were nursing their desire for revenge. William Fox, Lyman Wells, Chichester, and a few others — unknown to Brown — laid a diabolical scheme to blow up with gunpowder the house in which Mitchell was being held. Mitchell had killed their comrade — only by his death could they be

appeased, and they had little hope that the process of law would exact from him the death penalty. So one night they stole a large can of powder from one of the village stores and repaired to Mitchell's house. At midnight everything was quiet. A shed gave access by a stairway to the cellar and the powder was soon placed by Fox, while Wells laid the train which was to start the explosion. Unobserved the two men returned to their comrades who had been drinking themselves into a proper frame of mind. The question now arose as to who should apply the match. And at this midnight council the conspirators agreed to cast lots for the doubtful honor. It fell upon Chichester and he stepped to the task without hesitation. A few moments later there was a flash, but to the men who had fixed their hopes on this instant of time there came a great disappointment for the report was strangely feeble. When the sun from across the river brought another day to the distracted town the house was still standing and Mitchell and his family and the guard were unhurt.

Among the conspirators there was discussion and probably an uneasy curiosity as to the next move of Mitchell's friends. But there came no immediate sequel. Sheriff Warren took no action, although he held the key to the situation. There had been a deserter in the camp of the plotters. Lyman Wells, in laying the train to the can of powder, had left a gap so that the main deposit of explosive had not been

reached. The next day he told the whole story to the sheriff who took possession of the powder but withheld from Mitchell the news of the attempt upon his life.

The weeks that followed saw no cessation of crime, and Warren, unable to control it, realized that the situation had become intolerable. Men in despair of proper protection from the law were trying to sell their property and move to safer communities. At length Warren and three others were appointed as a committee to go to Dubuque and consult Judge Thomas Wilson as to some means of checking outlawry in the county. The conference resulted in the drawing up of an information charging Brown, Fox, Long, and a score of their associates with confederating for the purpose of passing counterfeit money, committing robbery and other crimes and misdemeanors. The information was sworn to by Anson Harrington, and a warrant for the arrest of the men named was put into the hands of Sheriff Warren. Everyone knew that with the serving of this warrant a crisis would come in the history of Jackson County.

When Warren first went to the hotel to read the warrant to Brown and his men he found Brown inclined to be defiant — disputing the legality of such a general instrument — and his associates were ready for the most desperate measures. The sheriff as he read began to have extreme doubts as to his safety and was perhaps only saved from violence by

the sudden anger which seized the crowd when Harrington's name was read as the one who had sworn to the information. On the instant they dashed off to wreak vengeance upon him. Brown turned at once to Warren, urging him to go while he could, for he knew that Harrington had already sought safety on the Illinois shore before the warrant was served, and that the mob would soon return disappointed and vengeful. Just then Mrs. Brown hurried into the room. "Run for your life", she cried, "they are coming to kill you," and she led him to the back of the house.

Warren departed in haste, thoroughly convinced that the arrest of the infuriated gang would be a desperate task and one requiring careful preparation. He determined to organize an armed posse, and turned to Thomas Cox for assistance, commissioning him to visit certain parts of the county and bring in a force of forty armed men. The task was no doubt a welcome one to Cox. The old warrior spirit in him had been aroused by the defiant attitude of the lawless coterie, and he believed that radical measures alone could free the neighborhood from the plague of Brown and his gang.

Warren and Cox set out in different directions through the county to gather recruits. Many of the settlers, feeling that Brown was an innocent and much abused man, refused to move against him. But on the morning of April first a considerable force was mobilized in the town of Bellevue ready



to help the sheriff in arresting the men who had made life in the county almost unendurable.

At the hotel meanwhile there was a similar spirit of battle. A desperate and reckless defiance seemed to pervade the men. In front of the hotel a red flag fluttered and on it the words "Victory or Death" challenged the fiery men of the frontier who had gathered there to help make their homes and property safe. Parading up and down beside the flag were members of the gang, among them an Irishman who at the top of his lungs advised the posse to come on if they wanted Hell. The members of the posse — many of them veterans of the Black Hawk War — did not take kindly to such words of defiance, and there was high feeling between the two parties when the sheriff went alone to the hotel to read the warrant and demand a surrender.

The men listened in silence while the sheriff, alone among desperate men, read to them the challenge of the law. Then Brown asked him what he intended to do.

"Arrest them all", replied Warren, "as I am commanded."

"That is if you can", said Brown.

"There is no 'if' about it", replied the sheriff. "I have a sufficient force to take you all, if force is necessary; but we prefer a surrender, without force."

He talked privately with Mr. and Mrs. Brown, and showed them letters from various men in the county

advising Brown to surrender and trust to the courts. This the hotel keeper finally agreed to do providing the sheriff and four other men (whom he named) would come and pledge that he and his men should be unharmed. Warren left and returned shortly with the men designated. But in the meantime Brown seemed somewhat to have lost control of affairs. The four men were ordered away and the sheriff alone was admitted for another conference.

The men in the hotel were now restive with drink and no longer inclined to submit to the restraints of their leader. Warren was to be held as a hostage, they told him, and if a shot were fired from outside he would be killed at once. He was powerless to resist. Minutes of increasing tension went by. Then came word from the front of the house that Cox and his men were forming in the street for an attack. In a last effort to avoid trouble, Brown shoved the sheriff out of the house. "Go and stop them and come back", he said. Warren needed no second bidding.

But the fight was now inevitable. An attacking party of forty men was chosen. They were addressed by Warren and Cox, told of the seriousness of the occasion, and given a chance to withdraw, but not a man wavered. It was now early afternoon. The noon hour had passed with scarcely a thought of food. The town waited in breathless suspense.

In the neighborhood of the hotel the houses were deserted, and far from the scene of action, women

and frightened children gathered in groups listening intently for the first sound of a gun. And to Mitchell, confined in his own home, the acuteness of the moment must have been almost unbearable. His wish to join the posse had been overruled, but he had been given arms so that he might not be helplessly murdered in case of the defeat of the sheriff's force.

In the street the posse was forming. With orders not to fire until fired upon, the men started toward the hotel. Silently and steadily they moved until they were within thirty paces of the house, then came an order to charge and with a rush they made for the building. The crack of a gun was heard from an upstairs window and one of the forty, a blacksmith, fell dead. Brown, with his gun at his shoulder, was confronted by Warren and Cox.

"Surrender, Brown, and you shan't be hurt", they called to him. Brown lowered his gun evidently with the intention of complying but it was accidentally discharged and the ball passed through Cox's coat.

Then all restraint broke loose. The guns of two of the posse barked and Brown fell dead on the instant with two bullets in his head. From all points now bullets drove into the frame building, and answering volleys came from the windows of the hotel. There were more than twenty men in the house and with them was Mrs. Brown who with unswerving loyalty had stood by to load guns. The struggle was des-

perate. Bursting into the lower floor, engaging in hand to hand conflict, the sheriff's men drove the defenders upstairs where with pitchforks and guns they still defied capture.

No longer was sheriff, or legislator, or any other man in the posse mindful of the law. The primitive instincts had escaped bounds and the impulse to kill possessed them all. One after another, men on both sides crumpled up under fire and lay still. Warren, carried away by the excitement and unable to force the upper floor, ordered the house to be set on fire, and the torch was applied.

Then the cry arose that the men were trying to escape by jumping from a shed at the rear of the house. Pursuit was on at the instant but seven of the outlaws escaped from the hands of the sheriff's men. Thirteen others gave up and were taken prisoners, while three of their number had paid the toll of their lives.

The fight was over but not so the intensity of hatred. A number of the invading party had been severely wounded and four of them lay dead. The sight of their inanimate bodies, when the firing ceased, aroused the desire of the posse for instant punishment of the captives.

Ropes were procured and the awful, unthinking cry of revenge went up. But saner councils prevailed and the prisoners were put under heavy guard while it was decided what their fate should be. Warren's desire to hold the men for trial by law was, however,

overruled on the ground that, the county being without a jail, there was too much danger of the prisoners being rescued by friends. The settlement of the case was finally left until the morning with the understanding that a meeting of citizens should impose sentence upon the prisoners.

It is doubtful if sleep rested upon the eyelids of many in the town of Bellevue that night. Thoughts of the toll of the day — the unburied dead — and speculations upon the possible toll of the morrow, must have made the morning sun long in coming. But the surface of the Mississippi reflected its rays at last, and the excited villagers tried to compose themselves for the events of the day.

At ten o'clock occurred one of those episodes that rise now and then out of the grim frontier. Men who had faced a fire that dropped their comrades dead at their sides, who with the lust of animals to kill had stormed the defenders of the hotel, now stood possessed of the men whom they had faced along the level gun barrel but a few hours before; and it was their task to consider what should be done with them.

Thomas Cox presided at the meeting and stated that the citizens had relieved the sheriff of his duty and had taken the case into their own hands. Chichester gained permission to speak on behalf of himself and his comrades; and the man, now greatly cowed, made a pitiful plea for mercy. Others spoke — among them Anson Harrington who favored

hanging every one of the prisoners. Fear alone made them penitent to-day, he said. Revenge he saw depicted on all their faces. Mercy would only jeopardize the lives of others. But he closed by proposing that a ballot should be taken as to whether the captives should be hanged or merely whipped and exiled from the region.

Every man was required to rise to his feet and pledge himself to abide by the decision. Then two men, one with a box containing red and white beans, the other with an empty box to receive the votes, passed about among the company. The man with the beans, as he approached each individual, called out "White beans for hanging, colored beans for whipping," and the voter selected his bean and dropped it into the other box.

To the thirteen men whose lives depended on the color of the beans, those anxious moments while eighty men passed sentence upon them probably seemed like an eternity.

"White beans for hanging", and a bean rattled into the empty box. Those first four words, so brutal and so oft repeated, must have crowded the companion call out of their minds. Stripped clear away from them was the glow and excitement of the life of the past. The inspiriting liquor was not there to drown out the stark image of a drooping body and a taut rope. The red flush of battle had paled to the white cast of fear. No longer upon their faces played the contemptuous smile or the leer of defi-

ance. No bold words came to their lips. Their eyes scanned the set faces of their captors and into their ears dinned the cry, over and over repeated like a knell: "White beans for hanging".

The beans dropped noiselessly now among their fellows, and unrelieved was the hush of the men who tossed them in. How long it was since the wild events of yesterday afternoon! How near now was the choking rope!

Yet there was some comfort when they listened to the other call. "Colored beans for whipping." How welcome such an outcome would be! A week before they would have drawn guns at a word of criticism; now they were ready to give thanks for the grace of a lashing. But they had robbed these men and given them bad money, had taunted them and had killed their friends. Could there be any mercy now in these grim avengers? Were the "white beans for hanging" piling up in the box like white pebbles on the shores of their lives?

The eightieth man dropped in his bean. The tellers counted the votes and reported to Thomas Cox. The stillness reached a climax. Holding in his hand the result of the ballot, the chairman asked the prisoners to rise and hear the verdict. Again he asked the men who had voted if they would promise their support of the decision. They gave their pledge by rising to their feet. Then he read the decision. By a margin of three the colored beans for whipping were in the majority.

The voice of Anson Harrington rang out. Cox called him to order — the case was not debatable. But Harrington replied: "I rise to make the vote unanimous." Immediate applause showed the revulsion of feeling. Chichester, who was near him, took his hand and managed to blurt out his thanks.

The whipping followed — lashes laid upon the bare back and varying in severity with the individual. The thirteen men who had so narrowly escaped the rope were placed in boats on the Mississippi, supplied with three days rations, and made to promise never to return. They left at sundown with expressions of gratitude for their deliverance; and with their departure the town of Bellevue and the County of Jackson took up again their more placid ways.

And the thirteen exiles? It would be a happy task to record of them either reformation or oblivion. Unfortunately one can do neither. The trail of William Fox and two others of the Bellevue gang came into view five years later when they were implicated in the murder of Colonel George Davenport. But thereby hangs another tale which we shall not here unfold save to record that Fox again escaped custody, and fared forth once more upon adventures of which there is no record upon the parchment.

JOHN C. PARISH



## Comment by the Editor

### JOURNALISM AND HISTORY

“Our historians lie much more than our journalists”, says Gilbert K. Chesterton. This puts us in a bad light whatever way you take it. In order to defend the historian we must acquit the journalist of mendacity, and we fear the jury is packed against him. So we prefer to ask to have the case thrown out of court on the grounds that Mr. Chesterton brought the charges merely for the sake of eulogizing a third individual — the artist — as a true recorder of the past. Of which more anon.

In spite of this implied indictment of journalism, we wish to announce that the next issue of *THE PALIMPSEST* will be a Newspaper Number, wherein will be disclosed some of the words and ways of the early editors. They were often more pugnacious than prudent, and since prudence sometimes conceals the truth, perhaps their pugnacity may be counted as an historical asset. At all events, newspapers can not avoid being more or less a mirror of the times, and an adequate history of any people can scarcely be written without an examination of its journalism.

### ART AND HISTORY

But to return to Chesterton. His arraignment of historians and journalists occurs in an introduction

to *Famous Paintings*, in the midst of an argument for the effectiveness of the work of the old masters in popular education and the value of the canvas in portraying the real conditions of the past. Nor will we gainsay him in this. The artist who goes back of his own era for subjects must make a careful historical study of his period. The style of clothes worn by his subjects, the type of furniture or tapestry, and the architecture of the houses and bridges and churches of his backgrounds must be accurate. He is in that sense an historian as well as an artist, and his contribution is truthful or otherwise in proportion as he has taken the pains to be a competent historical student.

Nevertheless the best of artists and the best of historians make mistakes. We remember the discussion that arose a few years ago when Blashfield's fine canvas was placed in the Capitol at Des Moines. It depicts the westward travel of a group of pioneers crossing the prairies by means of the ox-drawn prairie schooner. It is a splendid piece of work, but some pioneer who had lived through such scenes and knew whereof he spoke observed that Blashfield had pictured the driver of the oxen walking on the left side of his charges, whereas in reality the driver always walked on the other side. True enough as Mr. Blashfield himself admitted. Yet there were difficulties having to do with the composition of the picture. The scene was arranged with the caravan moving toward the left or west side of the picture.

Therefore, if the driver had been properly placed he would have been more or less hidden by the oxen — an eclipse scarcely to be desired from the standpoint of the artist. If the directions had been reversed, the canvas would have been criticised as showing the group coming out of the west — thus defeating the basic idea.

The last straw of criticism was added when another pioneer, referring to the symbolic figures which Blashfield had painted in the upper part of the picture hovering above the caravan and leading the way to the west, remarked that when *he* went west there were no angels hovering over *his* outfit. So we hesitate to accept Mr. Chesterton's implication that the artist is more infallible than the historian or journalist.

#### THE REALM OF THE HISTORIAN

But the historian is vitally concerned with the question of the accuracy of the artist who paints of the past, the essential veracity of the novelist who chooses historic settings, and the truthfulness of the journalist who, with his editorials, his cartoons, and his advertisements, is usually the first to write the record of events. In fact the historian must concern himself with these and all other recorders, for the things of the past are the subjects of his particular realm and he must keep them in order.

J. C. P.



# The ALIMPSE

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN AUGUST 1920

NO. 2

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## Newspaper History

What is the value of yesterday's newspaper? In a bygone day it served the thrifty housewife as a cover for the kitchen table, or in company with its fellows of the days before as a lining for the ingrain carpet; and if the good husband was handy, it might on a winter evening be cut into strips and deftly rolled into the long slender tapers that stood in the tumbler on the shelf beside the Seth Thomas clock to be used in carrying the necessary flame from the briskly burning hickory wood fire in the air-tight stove to the wick of the kerosene oil lamp.

But in these ultra-modern days of steam heat, electric light and power, enamel topped tables, and hardwood floors, the newspaper, like the grass, "today is in the field and tomorrow is cast into the oven"; or it may find its way to the baler in the basement and presently it is returned to the paper mills from whence it came in the endless round of pulp and paper and print.

The average subscriber to that "largest circulation", which is the daily boast of every newspaper of any standing, would probably scoff at the suggestion that there is anything of real value from the standpoint of scientific history in the newspaper; and yet we know that the leading historical institutions of the country are piling up literally tons and tons of newspapers. Although their rapid accumulation presents a very real problem, if not a genuine embarrassment to every great historical library, thousands of dollars are spent annually in binding and properly shelving the newspapers of the day — for the use of the historian of the future.

That there is trouble ahead for the historian we will admit. In his endeavors to retrace the footprints of this present age of black-face type, what is to be the criterion of the relative importance of news? Does the 120 point headline set forth public information that is twice as consequential as the 60 point, and four times the public concern of that of the 30 point? Is he to believe as he turns the yellowing pages of the Iowa newspapers that the news "Ames Defeats Iowa" was, in the public mind of the period, of twice the importance of the news that "Wartime Coal Regime Begins", while the news that "2¾ Beer Gets Hearing" and "Mary Pickford Divorced" was of twice the importance of the Ames-Iowa game and of six times the public concern of the war time coal regime?

How will the historian winnow out the pregnant



facts that lie buried "under bushel-heaps of worthless assertion" in an age of censored dispatches, "doctored stuff", "prepared dope", private propaganda, camouflaged news, and extravagant advertising? How will he distinguish the work of the competent, independent, investigating reporter in the record of current topics and passing events from the manipulated news of the clever press agent attorney? How will he treat the deliberately scraped and sponged and overlaid palimpsests of this newspaper epoch that they may tell the true story that is there recorded?

With due allowance for the extravagant use of 120 point type, for the insidious press agent and the organized manipulation of public opinion and for all the "fecundity and fallibility which are peculiar to journalism", what is there in these great library files of daily newspapers that justifies their preservation and proper classification? Almost everything that the student of history wants. For in spite of "slang-whanging" and editorial vituperation, and the sometimes startling results of "the carelessness of the compositors and the absent mindedness of the readers of proof", in spite of its double rôle of "universal advertiser and universal purveyor of knowledge", the daily newspaper is the best reflector of the times that the student of history can find.

In our own day it has become something of a vogue to speak contemptuously of the "lurid press",

the "scandalous gossip" of the "brazen-faced reporter", the "incurable lying habit of the newspapers", "the millionaire-owned press", and of the "A. P." as "the damndest, meanest, monopoly on the face of the earth". Nevertheless, the daily newspaper holds the mirror up to modern society and reflects with unflattering faithfulness the life and psychology of the times. Old records, official reports of events, and the more carefully written and leisurely revised monographic and book literature give us the "cabinet picture" of the times, with head clamped in place "a little more to the right, please, and chin up", with the "pleasant expression" patiently held while the photographer counts off the requisite number of seconds, and with perhaps a final smoothing out of wrinkles in the retouching.

The newspaper, on the other hand, gives us all unconsciously the natural record of the every-day life of a community, and the snapshots of the times in working clothes — which are always the best pictures. These pictures with all their incongruities, vulgarities, and blemishes may not always be pleasing; but they are, for the most part, "speaking likenesses" of the community, with all of its "roughness, pimples, and warts".

It is the every-day newspaper snapshot that gives us the local color in the description of passing events, the dominant passions and prejudices in the discussion of current topics, the sudden disclosure of popular temper and sentiment in the acceptance or

rejection of political issues, and that "preserves imperishably the fashion prevailing for posterity to look upon with reverence or a smile". The testimony of gossipy letters and memoirs no longer goes unchallenged and the critical reviewer of historical monographs now scrutinizes the footnotes to see whether the writer has made use of the newspapers of the period.

For a concrete illustration, let us take the newspapers not of the present day nor of the remote past, but of eighty years ago in our own Commonwealth. The Iowa newspaper of 1840 was a very modest affair — innocent of the glaring headlines of the "extras", innocent of cartoons, half-tones, the wondrous depiction of "Wilson's Boiled Ham" and "Sunshine Biscuits", or the adventures of Mr. Jiggs; but we find abundant material in every four-page issue concerning the three chief phases of the life of the people which constitute their history — the social life, the political life, and the industrial life.

Eighty years ago Iowa City was the capital of the Territory of Iowa, and the two leading newspapers of the early forties were the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, the Democratic "organ", and the *Iowa Standard*, the Whig journal — the *Reporter* being referred to, by the *Standard*, as the "Locofoco Rag", and the *Standard* being referred to, by the *Reporter*, as the "Whiggery Humbug". These old files of the "Rag" and the "Humbug" fairly bristle with information

concerning the life of the period — the beginnings of church life, the character of the schools, the amusements, the reading matter, the follies, hopes, ambitions, and ideals of the people of the community.

We read, for example, that on two Sundays, in January, 1841, the Methodists held services with frontier camp meeting fervor in the open air near the post-office on some lumber belonging to John Horner. The Baptists with equal fervor “buried in baptism” two candidates for membership beneath the “limpid waters of the Iowa River”.

The opening of a private school is noted: “Tuition per Quarter of 12 weeks \$3.50. House rent, fuel, etc. 1.00 additional.” There is mention of a school for Young Ladies with special emphasis on instruction in “Reading, Writing, and Mental Arithmetic. History — Sacred, Profane, Ecclesiastical and Natural. Natural, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy.”

We note the laying of the corner stone of Mechanics’ Academy, which afterwards became the first home of the State University. Both Democratic and Whig papers urge special training for agricultural and mechanical employment. “Agriculture”, says the editor of the *Reporter*, “is the noblest pursuit of man and we deplore the fact that so large a part of our new country has given itself up to visionary projects of speculation.”

“A course of lessons in Music” is announced “according to the Pestalozzian system of instruction.” A Glee Club, it is said, “will bring out a new set of

glees for the approaching election." A lecture in the Legislative Council Chamber on "Astronomy" is reported. "The lecturer's remarks", we are told, "were within the comprehension of the humblest intellect." There are notices of camp meetings, and lyceum and literary association meetings which the ladies of Iowa City and its vicinity are especially requested to attend.

The citizens are requested "to turn out and attend a meeting of the Temperance Society in the school house at early candle light". The cause of temperance was popular in the pioneer days of the forties, and there are many notices of meetings of the Washingtonians and the Total Abstinence Society.

Public dinners were given to honor public men, and Fourth of July celebrations held with the ladies four abreast taking their place behind the officer of the day. Cotillion figures are described and balls recorded. One comes upon many newspaper apostrophes "To the Ladies" (who were scarce on the frontier); and there was much writing of poetry.

There are records of marriages and deaths, elopements and house-raising, and a list of river accidents and steamboat disasters. A citizen announces he will no longer be responsible for his wife Hulda's debts. There are notices of claim sales, of petitions for bankruptcy, and of the foreclosures of mortgages. In short, bits of the sunshine and shadows of the every day life of the period are recorded with an unconsciousness that gives them special value.

The political life of eighty years ago is reflected far more than it is to-day on the editorial page. This page has, as it no doubt will ever have, its problems for the student of history. In these early newspapers of the first capital he finds the Whig editor variously referred to by his esteemed contemporary as "that miserable caricature of his species", "the contemptible slang-whanger of the *Standard*", and "that biped of the neuter gender whose name stands at the mast head of that servile truckling organ of Whig skullduggery". He finds numerous references in the *Standard* to the "Bombastes Furioso" and to the "red hair and spectacles of the Loco-foco scribbler", to the "hybrid politician who furnishes the wind for the *Reporter*", and to "the thing which says it edits that filthy and demagogical sluice of Loco-focoism, the *Reporter*". He finds national as well as local issues treated with uncompromising thoroughness and partisanship. He finds scorching editorials on "The Tottering Fabric of Federalism" on the one hand, and bitter denunciation of "Loco-foco Black-guardism" on the other. "Iowa" is referred to by the *Reporter* as "the apex of the Noble Pyramid of Democracy"; and the *Standard* replies, "Whew dont we blow a shrill horn". The *Standard* declares that Democracy leads logically to a dissolution of the Union, to which the *Reporter* replies:

Bow wow wow  
 Whose dog are thou?  
 I'm Henry Clay's Dog  
 Bow wow wow.

The Legislative Assembly meets, and the *Standard* calls attention to the fact that the "Committee on Public Printing is composed of only four members and every one of them most bitter and uncompromising Locos". "Nothing good", it adds, "was anticipated from them and the result has precisely answered the expectations." To which the *Reporter* replies that "the people of Iowa have had enough of the yelps and whines of the *Standard* puppy on the subject of Extravagance in Public Printing".

A Whig leader in the Council makes a speech and the *Reporter* remarks that "it is the poorest wheel of a wagon that always creaks the loudest."

There are editorials and communications on Abolition, Tariff and Free Trade, The Right of Petition, The Preëmption Law, State Banks, Retrenchment and Reform, Bribery and Corruption, Resumption of Specie Payment, Cider Barrels and Coon Skins. One correspondent thinks too much pressure is being brought upon him to vote. "I do not like to be drove", he explains with genuine Iowa independence, "I can be led but can not be drove."

What is there here for the student of political history? A mine of information. No miner expects to find his gold ready for the jeweler's hands. Much labor is required to free it from base metal. And so the student of political history will clear away vituperation and partisanship, personalities, and "the shorter and uglier words", and find nuggets of valuable material in this collection.

In like manner advertisements reflect something of the industrial life of the period. The rise, and yea the fall, of infant industries in the Territory, the occupations of the early settlers, the degree of specialization in the trades, labor organizations, wages — all these and more one is able to portray from the paid advertisements. Either space was more valuable in those days or there was less money to pay for it, for with very few exceptions these advertisements consist of from five to eight line notices to the public signed by the merchant or mechanic himself.

The public is informed that “a ferry across the Mississippi River at Bloomington, Iowa Territory, has been established and as soon as the river is free from ice next spring a boat will be in operation.” There are proposals for carrying the “mail of the United States from Bloomington to Iowa City thirty miles and back once a week.” Territorial scrip is taken in payment (at par) for all articles at a certain store. Elsewhere Dubuque money will be accepted at five per cent discount. “Just received per Steamer Rapids the following Groceries”, reads one advertisement, “6 Boxes Tobacco. 40 bbls. New Orleans Molasses. 30 Sacks Rio & Havana Coffee 13 bbls. Rum, Gin & Whiskey. 25 Sacks Ground Alum Salt & 16 Kegs Pittsburg White Lead.” A variety of “spring goods” is advertised as received by the “Steam Boats Mermaid, Agnes & Illinois”, including “2 Bales of Buffalo Robes, Jeans & Linseys, Merinoes & Bombazines, Fancy and Mourning



Calicoes, Boots & Brogans, Salaratus, Tobacco, Loaf & Brown Sugar. Fashionable Hats & Crockery." "A Raft of Hewed Oak Timber" is offered for sale. A remedy for fever and ague is recommended. A hotel with the "best of table and stables" offers its services. So does a "Portrait & Miniature Painter". A bricklayer announces that he has arrived in the Territory. A partnership is formed in the plastering business. Eight lawyers and nine doctors respectfully call the attention of a community of six hundred souls to their existence; and we note the beginnings of the "Doctors' Trust" in the following published rate of charges as adopted at a meeting of the physicians held in Bloomington on the fifth of February, 1841:

First visit in town in the daytime	1.00
Every succeeding visit	.50
Visit in the night time	1.50
Bleeding	1.00
Tooth extracting	1.00
Attention on a patient all day or night by request	5.00

In addition to the "Doctors' Trust" there were those who practiced the "healing art"; and one Botanic Physician advertises that "the remedial agents employed for the removal of disease will be innocuous vegetables."

The arrival of the "Steamboat Ripple", the first boat to reach Iowa City, is announced; and in an editorial it is learned that its arrival was witnessed

by a delighted throng of four hundred. The event was celebrated by "as good a dinner as has ever been gotten up in the Territory." This convincing proof of the navigability of the Iowa River was prophesied as the "turning point in the commercial life of the first Capital."

An enterprising farmer makes eighty gallons of molasses ready to sugar from corn stalks, and this is regarded as the beginning of an important industry in this new country. A "load of lead" fourteen feet below the surface is discovered on the banks of the Iowa River, and in the excitement and local enthusiasm which followed, the editor of the *Standard* declares that "Nothing better could have happened to make this section of the country and especially Iowa City, a perfect Eldorado, than the discovery which has been made in Johnson County. It has, ever since the settlement of this county, been believed, that it abounded with immense mineral of various kinds. Several townships of land west of Iowa City, we are told, were returned to the General Land Office as mineral lands. This must form a new era in the history and existence of Iowa City."

Incidentally from a survey of news items, editorials, and advertisements, one gathers something of the early history of the press itself and something of the trials and vexations of the early editor. That ye editor of eighty years ago was more than the "slang-whanger" and the "biped of the neuter gender" his contemporary would lead us to believe, we learn

from the versatility of his weekly contributions. In addition to pointing out the "skullduggery" and the "venom and impotent malignity" of the opposite party, and his weekly combat on Abolitionism, Federalism, Our Legislature, The Public Printing, and Banking, he writes of Flowers, Sympathy, The Wedding, The American Girl, Winter Evenings, Setting Out in Life, The Progress of a Hundred Years, The Bunker Hill Monument, Christmas, and New Year's Musings. He observes that "true politeness is not a matter of mere form of manner but of sentiment and heart." He maintains that "virtue and honesty are better recommendations for a husband than dollars." He deplores "the senseless rage for gentility", "the silly ambition of figuring in a higher station than that to which we belong", "the folly of sacrificing substance to show", and of "mistaking crowd for society".

The editor threatens to publish the list of delinquent subscribers; and he denounces the borrowing of a neighbor's paper as unworthy of a citizen of this promising country. The scarcity of money is reflected in the editor's offers to take produce of any and every kind in exchange for subscriptions to his paper; and he demands the delivery of the wood that "a certain gentleman not a thousand miles from a neighboring town promised him last month". "It is the height of folly", he adds, "to tell an editor to keep cool when he has to burn exchange papers to keep warm." Finally, the editor takes a bold stand

and declares that "candidates for office who wish their names announced for office will hereafter accompany such notices with two dollars cash for trouble, wear of type, etc."

In spite of times being "so hard that you can catch pike on the naked hook", the paper is "enlarged at several dollars extra expense but will be afforded at the same low price as the small one has been."

A Democratic postmaster is warned that "the packages of Whig papers (which we ourselves deliver at the post office every Friday evening at 6 o'clock) are not so minute as to be imperceptible, and are not hereafter to be delayed by party malice. If they are, just wait till the 4th of March — that's all!"

The *Iowa Farmers and Miners Journal* is announced; and *Godey's Magazine* is noted by the press of Iowa as "the only magazine intended for the perusal of females that is edited by their own sex."

Such are some of the glimpses we get of the life, of the politics, and of the industries of eighty years ago — of the hopes and ambitions, the prejudices and animosities, the plans and activities, the successes and disappointments of the early Iowan — gleaned from a file of old newspapers. And so we make our acknowledgments to the newspapers of to-day and lay them carefully away in fire-proof quarters for the student of another generation.

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

# An Old-Time Editorial Dialogue

## PROLOGUE

Pied long ago was the type that first carried this exchange of civilities. And many years have passed since the two principals in the wordy duel were laid away to rest, each with his vocabulary at his side. But the ghost of the duel still flutters in the old sheets of the newspaper files. Let the ghost tell its tale.

## SCENE

The frontier town of Iowa City, capital of the Territory of Iowa.

## TIME

The early forties, when men wore their politics like chips upon their shoulders and established arsenals beneath their coat tails — with reference to the printing office, the good old days when the militant editor got out a weekly four page sheet, with the assistance of an industrious but soiled and un-washable printer's devil, a ditto towel, a dog-eared and now vanished dictionary of classical vituperation, and a "hell box" where the used-up type, exhausted by being made the vehicle of ultra vigorous language, fell into an early grave.

## CHARACTERS

**WILLIAM CRUM** — a young editor of twenty-two years — possessed of a hair-trigger pen and an inkwell full of expletives, a vast admiration for the pil-

lars of the Whig party, and no respect at all for the Democratic editors of the Territory of Iowa. Under his supervision the *Iowa City Standard* upholds the views of William Henry Harrison and Henry Clay and hurls peppery paragraphs at the awful record of the Democrats who happen to hold the whip hand in the Territory.

VER PLANCK VAN ANTWERP — educated at West Point and by courtesy called General — dignified and serious, arrayed in boiled shirt and starched collar and gold spectacles — an old school Democrat of “an age now verging upon the meridian of life.” He, too, is an editor and has in his time pealed out sonorous messages through long columns of the Democratic press.

*Enter MR. CRUM followed some time later by  
the GENERAL*

Using the words of one of his exchanges, Mr. Crum soliloquizes:

“There is, somewhere in the Territory of Iowa, one ‘General’ V. P. Van Antwerp, who . . . is much in the habit of making long-winded speeches, as frothy as small beer and as empty as his head.”

Soon he becomes aware that the said General Van Antwerp has arrived at Iowa City and become the editor of the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, and the soliloquy becomes a dialogue. In somewhat over two columns the General makes his announcement and closes with this glowing peroration:

“*To every tenet in the Democratic faith as promulgated by Jefferson, Jackson, Van Buren, and Benton, the four most shining lights among the multitudes of its distinguished advocates, I heartily subscribe; and stand ready now, as I have ever done, to devote my best energies to their support.*

“In those tenets I have been taught from early childhood, with it instilled and impressed upon my mind, to consider their effects upon the destinies of mankind as second in importance to naught else save the Christian religion itself; and, resting firmly under this belief, regardless of the consequences, or of the course of others, and come what may, adversity or prosperity, gloom or glory, weal or woe, I shall continue, while God spares my life, to do battle in the good and glorious cause!”

Mr. Crum falls upon this bit of oratory with great glee and satire: “an inaugural, and signed by *My Lord Pomposity, Ver Planck* himself”; and with alternate quotations and jeers he pokes fun at his new rival, “this West Point dandy in gold spectacles!”

The General is aroused, and in his second issue proclaims that “any charge in the slightest degree implicating our character, will not be suffered to pass by unheeded.

“But in regard to the wretched demagogical slang, which is the sole aliment upon which a certain class of men subsist, we laugh to scorn both it and its authors, confident that they can no more affect us,

with those whose respect we value, than would the Billingsgate of the fisherwomen, in whose school they were bred, and whose style they copy.”

Crum is happy. He heads his columns with the quotation from Van Antwerp in regard to “any charge in the slightest degree implicating our character”, and then proceeds to make charges which would seem to come within the category indicated. He arraigns his record as a printer of the legislative records and says, when it stirs the General to wrath:

“That little ‘Thumdomadal’ [a term Van Antwerp had applied to Crum] might point its finger of condemnation to his false Democracy, and hold up to public gaze his rotten and corrupt political form, which shone through the veil of *assumed* dignity like rotten dog-wood in pitch-darkness; but let it touch his pocket, although replenished from the People’s money, and hyena-like growls will issue in rabid fury, and in maniac-like distraction, from his troubled spirit. The jackall, an indigenous animal of Africa, noted for his want of sagacity and his innate predatory disposition, it is said will yell most furiously to his fraternal flock at a distance, whilst he is in the poultry coop of the farmer committing his usual havocs, and thereby rouse to his own great danger the farmer and the neighborhood, who repair to the coop and relieve the poultry of their fell destroyer. So it is with this West Point jackall, in relation to the public printing.” He ends by saying that the military gentleman has not learned any



branch of the mechanic arts "and has therefore taken to the trade of LYING".

But Van Antwerp is inclined to stand upon his dignity. He answers one outburst of the *Standard* by saying, "of course our sheet shall not be polluted by replying to it." And again the doughty General remarks:

"We would be the last to reproach the memory of the mother who bore him in an unlucky hour, with the frailties of her worthless son. Here we take leave of him before the public forever. . . .

"It would be ungenerous, after the heavy battery has been silenced, the guns spiked and the carriages broken, to transfix the trembling, blackened form of the inoffensive powder-monkey. When the *larger hound* bays still deeper in the forest the *feeble cur* will receive very little attention."

Meanwhile other editors have interjected a word or two into the dialogue and been editorially cuffed by Crum or the General. The *Burlington Gazette*, hurrying to the rescue of Democracy, observes:

"The public are generally ignorant of the fact, that, under the title of the 'Iowa City Standard,' a sickly, little blue sheet, of the thumbpaper size, by courtesy called newspaper . . . is weekly issued at the seat of government; yet it is even so."

Then after commenting on the insignificance of the *Standard*, the editor falls back upon the popular canine metaphor:

"It will do well enough on proper occasions to

notice the federal mastiffs; but the curs, whose vocation it is to do the barking, should be passed by with neglect akin to that usually extended to their canine prototype."

The "cur" turns aside only long enough to utter this philosophic bark: "The mere shadow of a man who clandestinely presides over the editorial department of the Burlington Gazette, *attempts* to be very severe upon us for our notices of that Bombastes Furioso of the Reporter. Now, we consider the humid vaporings of this, or any other, individual, who so far descends from the dignity of a man as to follow, puppy like, at the heels of Ver Planck Van Antwerp, as too contemptible to notice".

Upon the editor of the *Bloomington Herald* he wastes even less attention.

"The editor of the above print is greatly troubled about the editorials of the Standard. Get out of the way, man! You are not worth the ammunition that would kill you off."

A little later, however, he gives voice to his contempt for the whole array of Democrats.

"Why in the name of all that is sensible, don't the Loco-foco papers here and hereabouts, shut up shop — retire — back out — or float down the Mississippi on a shingle?— . . . Such another unmitigated set of vegetables . . . we imagine could not be raked up in any other quarter of the land. Here is the 'Iowa Capitol Reporter'— bless your soul,— with a title that rolls over ones tongue like the tones

of a big bass drum; a bloated, empty, echoing thing, that hasn't been guilty of propagating an original idea for the last three months . . . . And then there is the 'Bloomington Herald,' a little fiddling fice-dog affair, to which the 'Reporter' tosses parched peas and pebble stones, to be flung back at us. That establishment never had an idea at all . . . . Next we have the 'Territorial Gazette,' with seven editors and two ideas—both unavailable. But the Hawkeye must attend to that concern.—Then there is the 'Sun'—a little poverty stricken affair, 'no bigger as mine thumb'—at Davenport. It was for a long time published on a half sheet, and now it is a size less than that . . . . Again we repeat, what do they live for? Is it because their friends won't be at the cost of a coffin? Die, bankrupts—die. You are 'stale, flat and unprofitable'—worse than cold corn dodger without salt."

The duel of words at Iowa City becomes constantly more spirited. The proud aloofness of the General gradually gives way before the constant and wasp-like attacks of William Crum. Especially does he become wrought up by a charge that he rolled about in a coach that should go to pay his debts. The reference to the debts makes comparatively little impression; but the coach, that is a different matter. With great vigor the exponent of Democracy denies that he ever rolled in a coach except perhaps at the invitation of some friend or in a common stage coach. Likewise the charge that he is in the habit of wear-

ing silk gloves disturbs him. He never wears silk gloves, he maintains, except at public balls or parties; and even these are knit by a member of his family, out of common saddlers silk.

One can imagine him writhing uncomfortably, and nervously adjusting his cravat and his gold spectacles as he reads these terrible charges. Piqued by William Crum's constant use of the term "My Lord Pomposity" and other such nicknames, he retorts by characterizing the editor of the *Standard* as "Silly Billy" and "the last crum of creation".

Both men in the heat of the controversy lose sight of the rules of grammar.

"We were not aware," says Van Antwerp, "until the last *Standard* appeared, that it looked suspicious for any one to visit the capitol as often as they seen fit."

And Crum bursts forth in answer to an item in the *Reporter*:

"The black hearted villain who composed it knew that it was a lie when he done so."

Finally the stings of his twenty-two year old opponent so enrage Ver Planck Van Antwerp that he throws dignity to the winds. The "slang-whanging and blackguard articles of 'The Standard'" have made a demand "of *anybody* who may at this time answer for the editorship" of the *Reporter*. And in elephantine fury he replies:

"Now we tell the puppy who wrote that article that he knows, as every body else knows here, who

are the Editors of this paper; and that they are ready at all times to answer any 'demand' (?) that he or his fellows may think proper to make of them . . . . But how is it with regard to the vagabond concern that thus alludes to them? Who is the author of the mass of putridity, and villainous scurrility, that is weekly thrown before the public through the columns of that blackguard sheet?

“That it is not its nominal proprietor, the *gawkey* boy Crum, who is a pitiful tool in the hands of others, and incapable of framing together correctly three consecutive sentences, is of course notorious to every body here; as is the additional fact that it does not proceed from the other milk-and-water creature *recently imported into the concern . . . .*”

And he charges wildly along, in his wrath stumbling into language that is not here printable.

But it is the General's swan song. About a month later his name disappears from the head of the sheet. Now and again in the history of early Iowa we see his form stalking through other rôles, but his duel with “Silly Billy” Crum is over.

That young man remains, triumphant, but perhaps, too, a little disconcerted at the removal of his friend the enemy, for not again will he find a foe who will make so admirable a target for his jests, his epithets, and his satire. Pen in hand he moves off stage to the right seeking whom he may attack.

CURTAIN

JOHN C. PARISH

## Three Men and a Press

On the west bank of the Mississippi where Julien Dubuque, lead miner of the "Mines of Spain", had lived and died there grew up about 1830 a settlement known as the Dubuque Lead Mines. In the midst of miners' cabins and saloons appeared stores and churches, and finally one enterprising citizen decided that the town needed a newspaper.

So this man, John King, went back to Ohio, whence he had come, and bought a printing press. And he hired two assistants. One was William Cary Jones, a Whig, who was to help him edit the paper. The other was Andrew Keesecker, a typesetter and a Democrat.

The three men and the press mobilized in a two-story log-house, and on May 11, 1836, they issued the first newspaper in what is now Iowa. It bore the name of *The Dubuque Visitor* and carried the heading "Dubuque Lead Mines, Wisconsin Territory", — which announcement was more progressive than truthful for Wisconsin Territory had not yet been born. The little settlement was still a part of the Territory of Michigan, although a bill to create the Territory of Wisconsin was before Congress when the sheet appeared.

History, however, soon vindicated their prophecy and the heading stood. Being the only paper in the

region it served all factions. King himself was a Democrat, while both parties were represented by his assistants. In the columns of the *Visitor* appeared the announcements of rival candidates for office, long-winded and labored. "A Voter" and "A Candidate" took opposite stands on the question of holding a nominating convention. "Incognito" and "Curtius" and "Hawk-Eye" and other less modest contributors ran the gamut of newspaper eulogy and denunciation. Altogether this four page sheet was a unique and interesting organ and a worthy pioneer in the field of newspaperdom. In 1837 the name was changed to the *Iowa News* and it became a Democratic journal. Later it was succeeded by the *Miners' Express*, whose lineal descendant is the *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald*.

But let us follow a little further the fortunes of the three men and their faithful servant, the press. John King remained in Dubuque, a newspaper man, a judge, and later a retired and prosperous burger.

William Cary Jones, who had been hired by King at three hundred and fifty dollars, "with suitable board and lodging during one year", passed on to other fields. He edited and published a paper in New Orleans, and later practiced law in San Francisco. He served in the Civil War as a captain in the Union Army and was captured and held in prison for some time at Selma, Alabama. He and his fellow prisoners, not content with the *Selma Reporter*, which was smuggled in to them nearly every

day by a friendly cook's assistant, decided to edit a paper of their own, which they printed by hand upon the walls of one of the rooms. Jones was the editor and he was assisted by talented artists among his fellow officers. The paper had an elaborate vignette, composed of a Southerner, a slave, King Cotton, and numerous reptiles. Each number had an illustration, articles, and advertisements, all of which furnished much amusement to men who were punished more by ennui than by their captors.

Andrew Keesecker, like his patron John King, remained in Dubuque. He served on various newspapers, setting type for over a third of a century. He was one of those rare individuals who could compose an editorial as he set it up in type, without reducing it to manuscript; and he acquired a great reputation as a rapid typesetter. Once he engaged in a typesetting contest with A. P. Wood, another Dubuque printer and publisher.

With a printer's devil as umpire they began at a signal to set up the words of the Lord's Prayer. Keesecker finished first and according to arrangements, started to announce his success by calling out the last word. Unfortunately he had a curious habit of stuttering which seemed to increase under excitement. So while he was vainly endeavoring to bring out the triumphant word, Wood also finished and cut into his stumbling efforts with an incisive "Amen"; whereupon Keesecker, recovering his voice, insisted that he had been trying to say that



word for half an hour. The perplexed referee finally gave the award to Keesecker.

There remains the story of the press itself. It was a Washington hand press, made in Cincinnati by Charles Mallet. For about six years it did yeoman service in Dubuque. Then it was removed to Lancaster in western Wisconsin where H. A. Wiltse used it in printing the *Grant County Herald*. A few years later, J. N. Goodhue determined to print the first newspaper in Minnesota, and he bought the press, carried it by ox team up the Mississippi on the ice to St. Paul and used it to print the *Minnesota Pioneer*.

From this point on, the press seems to have had a dual personality. In two different States its remains are reverently guarded, and two State Historical Societies cling firmly, each to its own story of the later career of the old iron pioneer.

In accordance with one story the press had in its varied life acquired a wanderlust and leaving the haunts of comparative civilization it went westward in 1858, by ox team again, across the prairies and through the woods to the settlement at Sioux Falls on the Big Sioux River where it printed the *Dakota Democrat*, the first newspaper in Dakota. But its end came in 1862. In that year the Sioux Indians were on the war path. They raided and burned the town, and the deserted old press, warped and twisted by the fire, found its career of a quarter of a century ended in a typically pioneer fashion. And to-day in the Masonic Museum at Sioux Falls can be seen the

remnants of an old hand press that Dakotans point to with pride as the one which printed the first newspaper in three different Commonwealths.

But the Minnesota Historical Society maintains that the press which migrated to South Dakota was an altogether different press from the one which printed the *Dubuque Visitor* and the *Minnesota Pioneer*, and that John King's old iron servant remained to the end of its days in Minnesota. According to this version, when the *Pioneer* became a daily, the hand press was supplanted by a power press; and it moved, in 1855, from St. Paul to Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, where it produced the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*, and later the *New Era*. In after years it printed the *St. Cloud Union*, the *Sauk Center Herald*, and various other papers of central Minnesota. From 1897 to 1899 it served the publishers of a Swedish paper at Lindstrom, Minnesota. Finally, in 1905 the old press was purchased by the Pioneer Press Company and presented to the Minnesota Historical Society, where it can be seen by those who love historic antiques.

Whichever may be the correct version of the later years of this veteran press, its career is a notable one; and the fact remains undisputed that the journalism of at least two different States, Iowa and Minnesota, began with the movement of the lever of the old hand press that John King brought out from Ohio in 1836 to the lead mines on the west bank of the Mississippi.

JOHN C. PARISH.

## Comment by the Editor

### UNCONSCIOUS HISTORIANS

Blessed is the man who writes history unconsciously — who has other occupations and other purposes in life, yet leaves without realizing it a record often more illuminating, because more direct, than that of the formal historian.

To a large extent the newspaper man falls in this class. His mind is preoccupied with the present. Day before yesterday is out of his realm — so is the day after tomorrow. It is for his evening subscribers that he writes his editorials, recounts his news, and sets forth his advertisements; but the historian a half century later rejoices as he reads in the old sheets the political spirit of the time, the fresh account of current events, and the intimate presentation of the food and clothing and accessories of life of his grandfather.

Most pamphleteers and many propagandists and some diarists are unconscious historians. In letters preserved in attics, in old photographs and views of buildings and towns, in railroad time-tables and in maps and advertising literature we find history unconsciously and invaluabley recorded.

### AN OLD ATLAS

The other day we came across an old atlas of Iowa, published in 1875. We remember the book

from our boyhood days when we used to pore over it by the hour. Dog-eared was the leaf where spread the map of the old home county, with every creek and patch of wood and swamp, and every jog in the road clearly shown. All the farm houses were indicated by tiny rectangles with the name of the farmer alongside. Here and there were microscopic drawings of schoolhouses and churches; and mills and blacksmith shops and cemeteries each had their symbols until the whole page was luminous with landmarks. These maps were meant for contemporary use, not for the historian of years to come. Yet how graphic is this record of the countryside in 1875.

And how we fed our eyes upon the pictures with which these pages of maps were interlarded. Here the artist and lithographer had nobly portrayed Iowa. We found the residences of the leading citizens of our town — and of other towns. There were pictures without end of farm residences in every county in the State. Everywhere trim wooden fences enclosed those gabled houses of half a century ago, and almost everywhere the lightning-rod salesman had made his visit.

Then there were the pages that showed forth the State institutions. The three modest buildings of the State University of Iowa were far outshone by the magnificent facades of the insane asylums. Happily in the intervening years the State has come to realize that it pays to put better stuff in the making of a citizen and so save on repair work.

The book was listed as an historical atlas because of the pages of formal history in the back. But this material is easily found in other places. The historical data of prime importance was that which the atlas makers presented with no idea of recording history — the detailed maps of the counties in 1875, and the pictures of the homes and business houses and public institutions of a day that is gone.

#### IDEALS OF 1875

To be sure, one must make allowance for certain distortions due to State and community pride. For example, in the pictures of Iowa farms there were pigs, large and round, who did not wallow or lie asleep in the mud, but stalked about in stately and dignified fashion or gazed reflectively at the gigantic cows, who, disdainful of the grass, stood at attention in the foreground. The horses were of the prancing variety with upraised hoof and everflowing mane and tail. They drew brand new wagons up the road, or buggies in which rode be-parasolled and curiously dressed ladies.

I used to wonder why cattle and horses and hogs were always drawn with their fat profiles toward the front of the picture — as if a strong wind had blown straight across the page lining them up like weather vanes. Now I know that the glorified live stock was an expression of Iowa ideals in 1875 — and that fact in itself is of historic importance.

J. C. P.



The IOWA

# ALIMPSEST

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THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1920

No. 3

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## A Romance of the Forties

It was Sunday, and most of the inhabitants of the little Iowa village of Quasqueton were assembled at the town boarding house for their regular exchange of gossip and stories. On this particular occasion the ordinary town talk was probably superseded by a more absorbing topic, namely, the unsuccessful elk hunt of the day before. Again and again in the past weeks a lone elk had been chased in vain by the hunters of Buchanan County. Many and varied were the theories devised by these pioneer Nimrods to explain the failure, one being that the elusive elk was only a phantom of its departed race and kind.

Breaking abruptly into the midst of their discussion, rode a man and a girl, both on spirited black horses; and the attention of the group shifted immediately to these newcomers. The man was a commanding figure, tall and well built. He had about him an air which strongly impressed one with the fact that he was a person not to be trifled with—

yet the sprinkling of gray in his black hair lent dignity and charm to his appearance. The girl, on the other hand, was as striking in point of loveliness as her companion was in general appearance and bearing. She was fair in feature, graceful and bewitching in manners, attractive in form and speech. With the advent of this unusual couple it is safe to say that everyone speedily lost interest in the elk hunt.

Upon being asked the customary pioneer question — whence he came and where he proposed to go — he made the startling declaration that he was Bill Johnson, the far-famed Canadian patriot of the Thousand Isles of the St. Lawrence River. A gasp of wonder followed this remarkable revelation, for in the early forties the daring exploits of the renowned Canadian were fresh in the minds of all frontiersmen. But a few years had elapsed since the so-called “Patriot War of 1838”, which was a revolt of certain Canadians against the administration of Sir Francis Bond Head, then Governor-General of Canada. And by far the most conspicuous figure in the revolt was Bill Johnson, whose adventures, deeds, and escapades in the region of the Thousand Isles of the St. Lawrence, where he had been compelled to flee from justice, would fill a volume. So it is little to be wondered at that this abrupt, unexpected appearance of the notorious rebel should have affected the villagers as it did.

Before they had time to recover from their surprise, he plunged into his tale. He told how he had

long been a terror to the British Dominion, how he and his family had lived on and indeed owned many of the islands in the St. Lawrence, and how he had been forced to flee from place to place to escape the British. He concluded by saying that since his daughter and he were now the only living members of his family, and having tired of the dangerous fugitive life on the islands, they had decided to leave Canada and settle down in Iowa. Interest changed to wonder, and wonder to awe, as he fluently recited his tale of daring adventures and hair-breadth escapes; and by the time he had finished, admiration was written on the faces of all.

Johnson purchased a farm within two miles of Quasqueton; and for some time the social life of the community centered about him and his daughter. While he probably came and went in every day life like the other pioneers, one can easily imagine the effect he had on his neighbors: how the story of his arrival spread from cabin to cabin; how the loud talk in the village grocery store toned down to a subdued whispering behind his back when he stepped up to the counter to buy, only to break out again stronger than ever the moment he left; and how he was followed by admiring glances and busy tongues wherever he went. It is even possible that the children in their daily games played at the daring exploits of the heroic figure.

It came as a rude shock to many in the surrounding community, therefore, when they learned that

their prominent neighbors had been made the victims of an unspeakably cruel outrage. According to Johnson's version, a party made up of about eight white men and a band of Indians, entered his house on a wintry night, dragged him from his bed out into the bitter cold, tied him to a tree and gave him some fifty lashes on the bare back. Then they ordered him and his daughter to pack up their belongings and leave the county within two hours. Since there was nothing to do but obey, into the bleak night they went, with twenty-five miles of windswept prairie between them and refuge. It was cold, so cruelly cold that one of the rioters is said to have frozen to death, another froze his feet, while many others of the party were frost bitten before they reached their homes. To Johnson, when he learned this, it must have seemed that poetic justice had overtaken his persecutors who had driven him from his home into the cold with an unmerciful beating.

In Dubuque, Johnson commenced proceedings against the rioters. The trial proved to be a lode-stone, for hundreds of spectators crowded into the court room, no doubt as much to view the famous Canadians as to see justice done. Nor is it to be overlooked that the charms of Kate proved irresistible — she captivated the court from the judge to the janitor. So enamoured with her beauty and charm was the judge that he is said to have forgotten the dignity of his position in that he left his elevated station and escorted her to the door. And

we are told that "The cohort of loungers mounted the tables and benches, the bald headed jurors and the phalanx of attorneys stood with amazed countenance and open mouths at the unprecedented proceedings."

The trial went hard against the offenders. Four of them — Spencer, Evans, Parrish, and Rawley — were convicted, one sentenced to the penitentiary for two years, and the others fined two hundred dollars each. Stern justice must be meted out to those who dared encroach upon the rights of law-abiding people taking up residence in Iowa.

One of the absurd sequels of this trial was the effect on the young men. Although everyone at the trial, including the judge, was completely bewitched by the lovely Kate, it was the young bloods, and especially the editorial gallants who were most sorely smitten. After the trial they vied with one another in showering compliments and sweet flattery upon her through the editorial columns. Andrew Keesecker of the *Dubuque Miner's Express*, carried away in his ecstasy, wrote a rhapsody in which she was pictured as having "heavenly charms, deep blue eyes, matchless grace, piercing glances, queen-like dignity, soul-subduing countenance". As a result, he was made the laughing stock of the whole press of the West, a fact he deeply resented. The ridicule of John B. Russell, editor of the *Bloomington Herald*, he must have regarded as a personal affront, for he came very near fighting a duel with

him over it. Apparently what prevented these pioneer knights from entering the lists for a deadly tilt over the fair lady was disagreement as to place of meeting.

From Dubuque, Johnson and Kate went into Mahaska County, settling near the Skunk River. There a new turn of affairs took place in their ever eventful lives. Heretofore the famous Canadian had not been bothered much by the love-stricken admirers of his fair daughter, for they had been content to gaze and admire from a distance. But now a new problem confronted him when a man actually dared to make love openly to Kate.

Job Peck was the long reputed rowdy and terror of the Skunk River country. One day when he was hunting deer, he saw smoke curling up from the chimney of a recently vacant cabin. Curious to learn who its new occupants were, he proceeded to reconnoitre, and when his eyes fell upon Kate — the Cleopatra of the Iowa frontier — it is reported that he immediately shed his desperado characteristics. One can almost picture his desperate efforts to live down his doubtful reputation, break from his swaggering habits, and make a favorable impression on the "new girl". And hereafter, he made frequent wanderings to the little cabin in the timber; his deer in the chase seemed always to lead him to that locality. But even though Kate seemed disposed to return his affections, the old man would have none of their foolishness. And one day, rifle in hand, he

ordered young Peck off his premises, threatening him dire vengeance if he ever prowled about the place again.

These threats probably kept the love-smitten Peck well out of the range of Johnson's rifle in the day time, but evidently did not cause him to abandon the dictates of his heart. For one evening when Johnson was away, Peck eloped with Kate to Benjamin McClary's place in Jefferson County, where they were married. When the father came home and learned what had happened, he followed in hot pursuit and arrived at McClary's cabin just after the young couple had gone to bed.

With drawn pistol he entered the cabin and climbed up into the loft where they had retired for the night. At the point of his gun he forced his daughter to get up and dress and descend the ladder. Then he followed, put her on a horse and rode away with her. Peck, meanwhile, suffered the humiliation unresisting. It was hopeless to remonstrate or argue with an armed man. And was not this the fearless rebel who had struck terror into the hearts of many a Britisher in the Thousand Isles?

Several days passed. Then came a wild dismal night with the wolves howling a blood curdling chorus in the timber near Johnson's cabin. The Canadian himself sat on a rude stool before a log fire, puffing away at a corn cob pipe. There was a flash of light, a sharp report, and he fell to the floor shot through the heart. Suspicion pointed toward young

Peck, and he was arrested and held for the murder in a Washington County jail. But though it was generally conceded that he was guilty of the crime, in the trial he was acquitted.

Recently there had come unexpected developments. For some time Bill Johnson and his bewitching daughter had given new zest and color to the ordinarily hard life of the pioneers of Iowa. Unthought of events had followed each other in such rapid succession that the people hardly knew what to look for next. Then came the news out of the East that the man who had passed himself as Bill Johnson the Canadian patriot was not that noted character, but rather was the degenerate son of a worthy Welsh Canadian — that he was a criminal and an impostor, and a man of low repute. The real patriot Johnson, it was learned, was held in high esteem, even by his enemies. Then it was learned that in the Dubuque trial, Johnson and Kate had perjured themselves; and upon this discovery, the Governor remitted the penalties laid upon the assailants in the winter night attack. These men set out to arrest Kate for having committed perjury; but she was aided by those who were still subject to her charms, and made her escape.

That the person whom they had accepted and entertained so royally should turn out to be an impostor was a fact bitterly hard for the Iowans to accept. But the evidence was not to be doubted. The first clear intimation that the Bill Johnson dwelling



among them was not the Canadian patriot came in the form of a statement in a New York newspaper, denying that the Johnson of Canadian memory had been lynched in Buchanan County, for he was at that time residing in New York State, and was in good health. Shortly afterward a letter followed, from a number of inhabitants of Greenville, Maine, which revealed the facts that Iowa's hero had at one time resided in the vicinity of the Canadian patriot and learned all about him; that while in Maine he had variously passed as Killey, Willis, and Salone, and had been engaged for the most part in swindling schemes. And finally, an Iowan, A. C. Fulton, while in Canada, looked up the record of the individual who had claimed to be the hero of the Thousand Isles, and found that he was an impostor and would have been welcomed back by the Canadian authorities with open arms and a rope halter. So the people in Clayton, Buchanan, Dubuque, and Mahaska counties had to swallow their disappointment and admit that a rogue had hoodwinked them.

There are several versions of the later career of Kate and Peck, and it is difficult to say which is correct. But there is one of them — and it sounds as plausible as any — that brings the romance to a natural and happy ending. However, there were long and unhappy days for Peck during his imprisonment, and for several months following his release, when he knew nothing of his wife's whereabouts. No doubt his darkest hour came when he searched in

vain for a trace of Kate, trying bravely to fight off the fear that perhaps she was lost to him forever. Finally he learned that from Iowa she had fled to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; whereupon he set out for the East. At his journey's end he found Kate living with refined, cultured people, in whose home she delighted him with a display of her accomplishments upon the piano. From Pittsburgh, the happy couple moved back to Iowa, settling at a point near Oskaloosa, where they lived several years; later they moved still further west. In California they lived happily together until Peck's death. And the last heard of the one time vampire of the Iowa frontier was that she was again married and to a devoted husband.

WILLIAM S. JOHNSON

## Benjamin Stone Roberts

One day in the summer of 1835 a buzz of excitement broke the monotony at Fort Des Moines: a strange officer had arrived at this frontier post on the western bank of the Mississippi River. The newcomer was Benjamin Stone Roberts who had been graduated from West Point on the first day of the previous July, brevetted second lieutenant, and assigned to duty with the First Dragoons. A strange face was an unusual sight in this out-of-the-way cantonment, and the soldiers watched the young lieutenant curiously as he entered the log cabin which served as the headquarters of Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny, the commanding officer of the post.

At this time Lieutenant Roberts was about twenty-five years of age, and it is probable that he had never before been farther west than New York, for he had been born in Vermont and educated at West Point. Feeling that he must do credit to his military training he had dressed himself in the full regimentals of his rank — dark blue double-breasted coat with many gilt buttons, bluish gray trousers trimmed in yellow, elaborate cap, epaulettes, gold lace, orange colored sash, and cavalry sabre. But Colonel Kearny, the veteran frontier fighter, refused to be dazzled by the brilliant raiment of his subordinate. After careful inspection he decided that the hair and beard of the

man before him did not conform to army regulations and he gruffly ordered the young officer to get a shave and a hair cut.

The next lesson in the school of frontier army life was a problem in construction. Lieutenant Roberts, with a detail of men, was sent to build a log cabin. Cabin construction had not been covered in the West Point curriculum, but the men were experienced in such work and the walls of the cabin were soon raised. At this point the officer discovered that no openings had been made for windows and doors; and considering this an irreparable mistake, he ordered the men to tear down the partially completed cabin and cut out the necessary openings.

In vain the soldiers pointed out to their inexperienced but theoretically infallible superior that log cabins were always built thus, with notches in the logs where the openings were to be made later by means of a crosscut saw. An officer must be obeyed; and it was only after a part of the log structure had been torn down that Captain Jesse B. Brown happened to pass that way, inquired the cause of the demolition, and ordered the construction continued — much to the disgust of the lieutenant and no doubt to the great satisfaction of the soldier workmen.

Lieutenant Roberts was really a good soldier, and experience soon made him an efficient officer. He received his permanent commission as second lieutenant on May 31, 1836, and was made first lieutenant

ant on July 31, 1837. During at least a part of 1836 he served as post adjutant at Fort Des Moines, but in some way he became involved in financial difficulties — due, it is said, to the depreciation of paper money entrusted to him by the government. As a result of this embarrassment he resigned his commission on January 28, 1839.

Civil life, however, did not prove dull and prosaic to the young man for soon after he left the military service he was appointed chief engineer of the Ogdensburg and Champlain Railroad by the Governor of New York, and in 1840 he became assistant geologist of that State. Next the young West Pointer turned his attention to the study of law, but before he had completed his preparation for admission to the bar adventure once more called him; and in 1842 he went to Russia, having been assured by the Russian Minister that his services would be accepted in the railroad construction work then under way in that country. When Mr. Roberts arrived in Russia, however, he found that an oath of allegiance was required from all foreigners employed in such service, and considering that to become a subject of the Tsar was too great a price to pay for employment, he refused the terms and returned home in February, 1843.

Having finally completed his studies in the summer of 1843, the former lieutenant of Fort Des Moines began the practice of law at Fort Madison in Lee County, not far from the site of the old fort.

In addition to his duties as a lawyer Roberts was also justice of the peace. Here, too, he maintained his reputation for originality. It is said that on one occasion, when he desired to transfer a lot to a purchaser, he made out the deed, signed it, secured his wife's signature, and then as justice of the peace certified to the acknowledgment of the signatures.

Scarcely had he become established in the practice of law before the sound of guns in the southwest recalled Lieutenant Roberts to military duty. As soon as the Mexican War began he offered his services to the United States, and on May 27, 1846, he received a commission as first lieutenant and was assigned to the Mounted Rifle Regiment. The following February he was raised to the grade of captain. Indeed, he was promoted in line as if he had not been out of the service and received the arrears of pay from the date of his dismissal or resignation as if he had remained in the service. Evidently the matter of the depreciated paper money had been cleared up by this time.

The career of Captain Roberts in the Mexican War furnishes one of the romantic incidents associated with the story of Iowa and war. He was present at the siege of Vera Cruz, and led his regiment in storming the heights of Cerro Gordo on April 18, 1847. The Mexicans, who referred to the Mounted Rifle Regiment as the "Cursed Riflemen", met the charge of the Americans with a shower of bullets but, as Captain Roberts put it, "when dangers thick-

ened and death talked more familiarly face to face, the men seemed to rise above every terror.”

Again on the tenth of August, Captain Roberts led the assault on the town of San Juan de los Llanos. Eight days later he participated in the battles of Contreras and Churubusco, and on the thirteenth of September he commanded the storming party which captured the castle of Chapultepec. The following day he led the advance of Quitman's army into the City of Mexico, and to him was assigned the honor of raising the first American flag over the palace of the Montezumas. Justin H. Smith thus describes the scene:

“As a triumphal procession the command looked rather strange. Quitman and Smith marched at its head on foot — the former with only one shoe; and behind them came troops decorated with mud, the red stains of battle and rough bandages, carrying arms at quite haphazard angles. Not less astonishing looked the city, for sidewalks, windows, balconies and housetops were crowded with people. Except for the silence, the countless white handkerchiefs and the foreign flags, it might have been thought a holiday. Before the palace, which filled the east side of the plaza, the troops formed in line of battle. Officers took their places at the front, and when Captain Roberts hoisted a battle-scarred American flag on the staff of the palace at seven o'clock, arms were presented and the officers saluted.”

The following day Captain Roberts was sent out with five hundred men to drive the straggling forces of Santa Anna from the streets of the capital. In October he was transferred to the command of the United States cavalry forces in the District of Puebla and here on November 10, 1847, he surprised and defeated seven hundred Mexican guerrillas under General Torrejon, captured their supplies, and recovered a large merchant train which the bandits had captured en route to the City of Mexico. The sword of the guerrilla chief which became the prize of Captain Roberts was presented by him to the State of Iowa, and was later deposited in the office of the Adjutant General at Des Moines.

A suit of ancient Mexican armor, said to have been taken from the palace in the City of Mexico, was also presented to the State of Iowa by Captain Roberts. This souvenir, consisting of a helmet of brass similar to those worn by the Spanish military explorers, with a crest ornamented with stiff black hair from a horse's mane or tail, and a breastplate and backplate of steel covered with burnished brass, the whole weighing about thirty-five pounds, was presented by the State officials to the State Historical Society of Iowa and may still be seen in the library of the Society.

The gallant conduct of the young officer did not go unrewarded. He was brevetted major on September 13, 1847, for "gallant and meritorious conduct" in the battle of Chapultepec and lieutenant colonel on



November 24, 1847, for his part in the actions at Matamoras and the Pass Gualaxara.

But nowhere were the gallant exploits of the young captain more appreciated than in the newly admitted State of Iowa. Comparatively few citizens from this frontier Commonwealth had taken part in the battles in Mexico and the patriotic people of Iowa were sincerely proud of those who served in the front ranks. The legislature, indeed, expressed this appreciation of the achievements of the Fort Madison attorney in two joint resolutions. One of these — adopted on January 15, 1849 — was a vote of thanks and read as follows:

“*Whereas*, Capt. Benjamin S. Roberts, of the United States Army has presented to the State of Iowa, a suit of armor, taken as a prize of war; and a sword captured from General Torrejon, in the late war with Mexico, designed to commemorate the part borne in the late struggle by the officers of this State. Therefore

“*Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa*, That Capt. Benj. S. Roberts of the United States Rifles, for his gallantry and heroism during the late war with Mexico, has won for himself a brilliant distinction, which reflects a lustre upon the character of the American soldier, and an honor upon this State. And for this evidence of his patriotism and attachment to his adopted State, he deserves and is hereby tendered the cordial thanks of the Representatives of the people.”

The second resolution was approved on the same day and provided that the Treasurer of State be authorized "to procure a finely wrought sword and scabbard, not to exceed in cost the sum of one hundred dollars, with the proper inscriptions, to be presented by the Governor to Captain Benjamin S. Roberts, of the Rifle Regiment, as a memento of the pride of his fellow citizens of this State in the soldier-like patriotism and deeds of valor performed by him in the late war with Mexico."

This sword, elaborately inscribed, was presented to Captain Roberts in the Capitol at Washington by the Iowa representatives in Congress. No other similar honor has been bestowed by the State of Iowa.

Captain Roberts was a leader in organization as well as in battle. On March 20, 1860, he submitted to the Secretary of War a plan for the reorganization of the militia, but there is nothing to indicate that this plan received much notice. Indeed, the advent of the Civil War soon made necessary the training of all available men. Early in 1861 Captain Roberts was sent to Fort Stanton, New Mexico, to join Colonel George B. Crittenden who was organizing an expedition ostensibly against the Apaches. After the expedition started, however, Captain Roberts became convinced that the real object of Colonel Crittenden was to aid the Confederate cause. He refused to obey treasonable orders, and, procuring a furlough, hastened to Santa Fe to inform Colonel

Loring of the situation; but to his astonishment and chagrin he was reprovved and ordered back to Fort Stanton. It transpired soon after this that Crittenden and Loring were both disloyal.

For a time, following the battle of Valverde and the rout of the Texans, Colonel Roberts was in command of several military districts in New Mexico, but on June 16, 1862, he was made brigadier general of volunteers and transferred to the staff of General John Pope as chief of cavalry. In May, 1863, General Roberts was transferred to the Department of the Northwest, and a month later was put in command of the Iowa District with headquarters at Davenport. Here he was within a few miles of the place where twenty-eight years before he had reported for duty to Colonel Kearney.

In honor of the distinguished general and former Iowan, the camp of the Eighth and Ninth Iowa Cavalry companies at Davenport was at first named Camp Roberts. Later the name was changed to Camp Kinsman, and toward the close of the war the Federal government donated this military establishment to the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home.

Although Iowa was a loyal State it appears that some complaints of disloyalty were made to General Roberts, and that he attempted to forestall resistance to the government and especially to the draft by the seizure of arms belonging to certain citizens. General Pope, the department commander, did not approve of the action taken for in July, 1863, he

wrote to General Roberts from Milwaukee, Wisconsin:

“I regretted much to receive your dispatch stating that you had seized arms, &c., the personal property of the citizens of Iowa. I don't desire you to have anything to do with such matters. I have carefully refrained from allowing such things to be done here, though I have been repeatedly urged to do them. . . . I confine myself strictly to my military duty. I hope you will do the same . . . Surely the seizure of personal property on suspicion merely that it might hereafter be used in resisting the laws was out of place by a military commander in loyal States, and can only lead to ill-feeling and disagreeable and unnecessary complications, which it has been my steady purpose to avoid.”

General Pope urged that no action of this kind be taken by the military authorities in loyal States except upon the request of the civil authorities. Within a short time this contingency occurred in Iowa, for on August 6, 1863, Governor Kirkwood wrote to the Secretary of War that because of a mob of armed men in Keokuk County he had asked General Roberts to detain the six companies of the Seventh Iowa Cavalry until the danger was passed. This request was complied with. In a letter to General Roberts General Pope commended his handling of this tense situation and added: “It is not necessary to inform the people of Iowa that troops will be used to enforce the draft nor to hold out to them any

such threat in advance of execution of laws, which it is only apprehended they may resist.”

On December 2, 1863, General Roberts was relieved of his command of the Iowa District and was transferred to the Department of the Gulf where he served during the remainder of the war. He was mustered out of volunteer service on January 15, 1866, remaining in the Regular Army as lieutenant colonel of the Third Cavalry.

During the years immediately following the Civil War General Roberts devoted his energies to the invention and improvement of military equipment. He retired from the army in December, 1870, to take up the manufacture and sale of a rifle he had designed, but it does not appear that he was successful in securing the orders he anticipated during the Franco-Prussian War. He died at Washington, D. C., on January 29, 1875.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

## The Trial and Execution of Patrick O'Conner at the Dubuque Mines in the Summer of 1834

[Eliphalet Price, an eyewitness of the hanging, wrote the following account in the early fifties. In October, 1865, this account was published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in the *Annals of Iowa*, from which it is here reprinted. Price's spelling of the name O'Connor has been retained in the article.—THE EDITOR]

In giving a detailed historical account of the trial and execution of Patrick O'Conner, at the Dubuque mines, in the summer of 1834, we are aware that there are many persons still living who participated in bringing about a consummation of justice on that occasion; as well as many who were witnesses of the stern solemnity attending its closing scene; which may subject this reminiscence to a criticism which we believe will not extend beyond the omission of some minutia, which did not come under our personal observation.

Soon after the treaty between the United States and the Sac and Fox Indians at Rock Island in 1832, which resulted in the extinguishment of the Indian Title to the lands embraced in the present State of Iowa, permanent mining locations and settlements began to be made in the vicinity of the present city of Dubuque; and at the close of the winter of 1834, Congress attached the country acquired under the

treaty, to the Territory of Michigan, for election and judicial purposes.<sup>1</sup>

Up to that period no judicial tribunals existed in the country, except those created by the people for special purposes. Difficulties of a civil character were investigated and settled by arbitrators; while those of a criminal character were decided by a jury of twelve men, and, when condemnation was agreed upon the verdict of guilty was accompanied by the sentence. Such was the judicial character of the courts which were held at that time, in what was known as the "*Blackhawk Purchase.*"

Patrick O'Conner, the subject of this memoir, was born in the year 1797 in the county of Cork, Ireland, — came to the United States in the year 1826, and soon after arrived at Galena, in the State of Illinois, where he embarked in mining operations. Having fractured his left leg in the fall of 1828, on board of a steamboat, in Fever River, it was found necessary to amputate the limb, which operation was performed by Dr. Phileas of Galena. In this situation O'Conner became an object of public charity. The citizens of Galena, and the mines in that vicinity, promptly came forward and subscribed liberal sums of money for his support and medical attendance and in the course of time he was enabled to get about with the assistance of a wooden leg, when he began to display a brawling and quarrelsome disposition, which soon rendered him no longer an object of pub-

<sup>1</sup> This act of Congress was approved June 28, 1834. — The Editor.

lic sympathy. In this situation he endeavored to awaken a renewal of public charity in aid of his support, by setting fire to his cabin in Galena, which came near destroying contiguous property of great value. This incendiary act, and the object for which it was designed, being traced to O'Conner, and exposed by Mr. John Brophy, a respectable merchant of Galena, O'Conner soon after, while passing the store of Mr. Brophy in the evening, fired the contents of a loaded gun through the door with the view of killing Brophy. Failing to accomplish his object, and being threatened with some of the provisions of lynch law, he left Galena and came to the Dubuque mines in the fall of 1833, where he entered into a mining partnership with George O'Keaf, also a native of Ireland. O'Keaf was an intelligent and industrious young man about 22 years old, and much respected by all who knew him. They erected a cabin upon the bank of the Mississippi river, near the present smelting furnace of Peter A. Lorimier, about two miles south from Dubuque; while their mining operations were conducted in the immediate neighborhood.

On the 19th of May, 1834, O'Keaf came up to Dubuque and purchased some provisions, when he returned to his cabin about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, accompanied by an acquaintance. Upon arriving at his cabin and finding the door fastened upon the inside, he called to O'Conner to open it. O'Conner replied:



“Don't be in a hurry, I'll open it when I get ready.”

O'Keaf waited a few minutes when he again called to O'Conner, saying: “It is beginning to rain, open the door quick.”

To this, O'Conner made no reply; when O'Keaf, who had a bundle in one hand and a ham of bacon in the other, placed his shoulder against the door and forced it open. As he was in the act of stepping into the house, O'Conner, who was sitting upon a bench on the opposite side of the room in front of the door, immediately leveled a musket and fired at O'Keaf. Five slugs entered his breast and he fell dead. The young man who accompanied O'Keaf immediately ran to the smelting furnace of Roots & Ewing, about a mile distant, and gave information of what had transpired. In a short time a large concourse of miners were assembled around the cabin, when O'Conner being asked why he shot O'Keaf, replied, “That is my business”, and then proceeded to give directions concerning the disposition of the body. Some person present having suggested that he be hung immediately upon the tree in front of his cabin, a rope was procured for that purpose. But the more discreet and reflecting portion of the bystanders insisted that he should be taken to Dubuque, and the matter there fully and fairly investigated. Accordingly O'Conner was taken up to Dubuque. And on the 20th of May, 1834, the first trial for murder, in what is now known as the State of Iowa, was held in

the open air, beneath the wide-spreading branches of a large elm tree, directly in front of the dwelling then occupied by Samuel Clifton. A large concourse of people had assembled and stood quietly gazing upon the prisoner, when upon the motion of some person, Captain White was appointed prosecuting attorney, or counsel in behalf of the people. O'Conner being directed to choose from among the bystanders some person to act as his counsel, observed: "Faith, and I'll tind to my own business", and appeared perfectly indifferent about the matter. At length he selected Capt. Bates of Galena, who happened to be present, and in whose employ O'Conner had formerly been engaged. The two counsel then summoned from among the bystanders twenty-four persons, who were requested to stand up in a line; when Capt. White directed O'Conner to choose from among those persons twelve jurors. He accordingly chose the following persons, calling each by name:

Woodbury Massey, Hosea L. Camp, John McKenzie, Milo H. Prentice, James Smith, Jesse M. Harrison, Thomas McCabe, Nicholas Carrol, John S. Smith and Antoine Loire.

The names of the other two jurors, who were traveling strangers, cannot after a period of thirty years be discovered. It was known, however, at the time of the trial, that six of the jurors were Americans, three of them Irishmen, one Englishman, one Scotchman and one Frenchman. The jury being seated upon some house logs Capt. White observed

to O'Conner, "Are you satisfied with that jury?" O'Conner replied, "I have no objection to any of them; ye have no laws in the country, and ye cannot try me."

Capt. White continued, "you, Patrick O'Conner, are charged with the murder of George O'Keaf, do you plead guilty or not guilty?"

O'Conner replied, "I'll not deny that I shot him, but ye have no laws in the country, and cannot try me."

Three or four witnesses were then examined; when Capt. White addressed the jury for a few minutes and was followed by Capt. Bates, who endeavored to urge upon the jury to send the criminal to the State of Illinois, and there have him tried by a legal tribunal. Capt. White replied that offenders had been sent to Illinois for that purpose, and had been released upon "Habeas Corpus," that state having no jurisdiction over offences committed upon the west side of the Mississippi River. After this, the jury retired, and having deliberated for an hour, returned to their seats, upon the logs, with Woodbury Massey as their foreman, who read from a paper the following verdict and sentence:

"We the undersigned, residents of the Dubuque Lead Mines, being chosen by Patrick O'Conner, and empaneled as a Jury to try the matter wherein Patrick O'Conner is charged with the murder of George O'Keaf, do find that the said Patrick O'Conner is guilty of murder in the first degree, and ought

to be, and is by us sentenced to be hung by the neck until he is dead; which sentence shall take effect on Tuesday the 20th day of June, 1834, at one o'clock P. M.''<sup>2</sup>

Signed by all the jurors, each in his own hand writing.

There was a unanimous expression of all the bystanders in favor of the decision of the jury. No dissenting voice was heard, until a short time before the execution, when the Rev. Mr. Fitzmaurice, a Catholic priest from Galena, visited O'Conner and inveighed against the act of the people, denouncing it as being illegal and *unjust*. Immediately the Catholic portion of the Irish people became cool upon the subject, and it was evident that they intended to take no further part in the matter.

Up to this time we did not believe that O'Conner would be executed. It was in the power of the Rev. Mr. Fitzmaurice to save him, and he was anxious to do so. Had he appealed to the people in a courteous manner, and solicited his pardon upon the condition that he would leave the country, we confidently believe that they would have granted it; but he imprudently sought to alienate the feelings of the Irish people from the support of an act of public justice, which they, in common with the people of the mines, had been endeavoring to consummate. This had the effect of closing the avenues to any pardon that the people might have previously been willing to grant.

<sup>2</sup> The 20th of June, 1834, occurred on a Friday.—The Editor.

They, however, up to this time, would have recognized a pardon from the Governor of Missouri or the President of the United States. Application was made to the Governor of Missouri to pardon him; but he replied that he had no jurisdiction over the country, and referred the applicants to the President of the United States. President Jackson replied to an application made to him, that the laws of the United States had not been extended over the newly acquired purchase, and that he had no authority to act in the matter; and observed, that as this was an extraordinary case, he thought the pardoning power was invested in the power that condemned. A few days before the execution, a rumor got afloat that a body of two hundred Irishmen were on their way from Mineral Point, intending to rescue O'Conner on the day of execution. Although this report proved not to be founded in truth, it had the effect of placing the fate of O'Conner beyond the pardoning control of any power but force. Runners were immediately dispatched to the mines to summon the people to arms; and on the morning of the 20th of June, 1834, one hundred and sixty-three men, with loaded rifles formed into line on Main street in front of the old "*Bell Tavern*," where they elected Loring Wheeler Captain of the Company, and Ezra Madden, Woodbury Massey, Thomas R. Brasher, John Smith and Milo H. Prentice, Marshals of the day. The company being formed six-a-breast, marched slowly by a circuitous route to the house where O'Conner was

confined, while the life breathed in lengthened strains the solemn air of the Dead March, accompanied by the long roll of the muffled drum. The stores, shops and groceries had closed up their doors and life no longer manifested itself through the bustling hum of worldly pursuits. All was silent as a Sabbath morn, save the mournful tolling of the village bell. Men whispered as they passed each other, while every countenance denoted the solemnity and importance of the occasion. Two steamers had arrived that morning from Galena and Prairie Du Chien, with passengers to witness the execution. The concourse of spectators could not have been less than one thousand persons.

The company having marched to the house occupied by O'Conner, now owned by Herman Chadwick, halted and opened in the center, so as to admit into the column the horse and cart containing the coffin. The horse was driven by William Adams, who was seated upon the coffin, and was employed as executioner. He had on black silk gloves, and a black silk handkerchief secured over and fitted to his face by some adhesive substance, which gave him the appearance of a negro. The Marshals soon came out of the house, followed by O'Conner and the Rev. Mr. Fitzmaurice. The two latter took a position directly behind the cart, while the former mounted their horses and rode to the front of the column, which now moved slowly to the smith-shop of Thomas Brasher, where the irons were stricken from O'Con-

ner by Henry Becket. Our position in the column being in the front rank, following the priest and O'Conner, we were enabled to observe the bearing of the latter. He seemed to have abandoned all idea of being released, and was much distressed, wringing his hands and occasionally ejaculating detached parts of some prayer, "Will the Lord forgive me?" he would frequently ask of Mr. Fitzmaurice, who would reply, "Whosoever believeth in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved," together with other like scriptural expressions. After he returned from the smith-shop, the Captain of the company desired him to get into the cart, when the priest observed, "No, I wish to talk to him; let him walk." Capt. Wheeler replied that he had orders to place him in the cart; but would go and state his request to the Marshal. Accordingly he advanced to where Mr. Madden was sitting upon his horse, who observed in a loud tone of voice, "No; if that gentleman wishes to talk with him, let him ride upon the cart with the murderer." This was spoken harshly and contemptuously by Mr. Madden, who, we learned afterwards, was deeply offended at some remarks previously made by Mr. Fitzmaurice concerning himself, and imprudently took this opportunity to retaliate, which we have reason to believe he afterwards regretted.

The Captain of the company delivered the message as he received it, though in a more pleasant tone of voice. Fitzmaurice bowed respectfully to the mes-

sage, but made no reply. O'Conner being now seated upon the coffin, the column commenced moving forward, to quarter minute taps of the drum, and arrived about twelve o'clock at the gallows, which was erected on the top of a mound in the vicinity of the present Court House. The company here formed into a hollow square, the cart being driven under the arm of the gallows, at the foot of which the grave was already dug. The Captain immediately ordered the company to ground arms, and uncover. Even many of the spectators removed their hats, while the priest offered up, in a clear and distinct tone of voice, a fervent and lengthy prayer, parts of which were repeated by O'Conner, who, at the close of the prayer, addressed a few remarks to the people, saying that he had killed O'Keaf, that he was sorry for it, and he hoped that all would forgive him. Then pausing for a moment, he observed, "I wish Mr. Lorimier and Gratiot to have my —" here he was interrupted by the priest, who observed, "Do not mind your worldly affairs; in a few minutes you will be launched into eternity; give your thoughts to your God." The hangman now spoke to O'Conner and assisted him to reascend the cart, when he adjusted around his person a white shroud; then securing his arms behind him at the elbows, he drew the cap over his face, fixed the noose around his neck, and lastly, he removed his leg of wood; then descended from the cart, and laid hold of the bridle of his horse and waited for the signal, which was given by one of the



Marshals, who advanced into the open area, where he stood with a watch in one hand and a handkerchief at arm's length in the other. As the hand of the watch came around to the moment, the handkerchief fell, and the cart started. There was a convulsive struggling of the limbs for a moment, followed by a tremulous shuddering of the body, and life was extinct. The body hung about thirty minutes, when Dr. Andros stepped forward, felt of his pulse, and said, "He is dead." The body was then cut down and placed in the coffin, together with his leg of wood, and deposited in the grave. The company now marched in single file to the front of the Bell Tavern, where a collection was taken up to defray the expenses, when the company was disbanded. Immediately after this, many of the reckless and abandoned outlaws, who had congregated at the Du-buque Mines, began to leave for sunnier climes. The gleam of the Bowie knife was no longer seen in the nightly brawls of the street, nor dripped upon the sidewalk the gore of man; but the people began to feel more secure in the enjoyment of life and property.

ELIPHALET PRICE

## Comment by the Editor

### AN EYEWITNESS

In the July number thirteen border criminals came within a few beans of hanging. Instead they were merely whipped and exiled, with the result that one of them at least returned to take a prominent part in the murder of Colonel George Davenport. In the present number a man is actually hanged. The affair was a noteworthy one, but it occurred at so early a date that there are few records of it. Fortunately Eliphalet Price was there as an eyewitness. He had come to the lead mining regions by way of New Orleans about the time of the Black Hawk War. In fact one writer credits him with having had a part in that war, capturing twelve redskinned prisoners.

However that may be, Price was in Dubuque in 1834, and was a prominent figure in northeastern Iowa for nearly forty years thereafter. He held various offices and was influential in State politics, partly by reason of his unusual ability as a speaker and a writer. In the sixties he was a member of the Board of Curators of the State Historical Society of Iowa and wrote many graphic articles for the *Annals of Iowa* which the Society was then publishing.

### IOWA IN 1834

When Patrick O'Connor killed his partner, George O'Keaf, in 1834, the country that is now Iowa was

without a local constitutional status. It was a part of no State or organized Territory. Missouri, of which it had been a part, became a State in 1821 and the land north of it to the Canadian boundary and west to the upper waters of the Missouri River was left without organized government. No legal courts sat within its borders; no sheriff or constable protected its inhabitants. For a long time these inhabitants consisted only of Indians and fur traders. Settlement was prohibited by act of Congress.

In 1830 a group of lead miners crossed to what is now Dubuque and began to work the mines. They met beside a cottonwood log on the shore and drew up a set of rules for their own government. But Zachary Taylor, in command of United States troops at Fort Crawford, sent a detachment of soldiers under Lieutenant Jefferson Davis to drive them out. After the Black Hawk War miners and settlers crossed the river in numbers and, although still technically trespassers, developed a pioneer community into which O'Connor and O'Keaf came and settled.

The murder, according to Price's account, took place on May 19, and the hanging on June 20, 1834. Eight days later an act of Congress was approved which placed the tract of land including modern Iowa under the jurisdiction of the Territory of Michigan.

“YE HAVE NO LAWS”

The hanging was extra-legal, but under the conditions it was essentially an act of authority. Justice

is not always dependent upon the citation of statutes and the functioning of commissioned officials; in fact justice is sometimes accomplished more truly where it is not trammelled by legal technicalities. O'Connor's punishment was the deliberate, carefully-weighed act of a people who exercised the judicial function because they had no legal machinery to serve them. He was tried before a jury of his peers; he was given the benefit of a counsel to plead his cause; and a month's time elapsed between his sentence and his execution. Looking upon it in another light, his hanging was the logical answer of the people of a community to a man who said: "I'll not deny that I shot him, but ye have no laws in the country, and cannot try me."

J. C. P.

# The ALMPPSEST

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN OCTOBER 1920

No. 4

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## Father Mazzuchelli

A young Italian stood clinging to the mainmast of a sailing vessel that plunged desperately in the midst of a gale upon the Atlantic. His imagination was stirred by the spectacle of the sea in its turbulence and he held his perilous position and watched the waves vent their wrath upon the boat and toss their crests across the deck, while overhead the wind howled through the rigging and the thunder crashed in the darkened sky.

Wide-eyed and fascinated he gazed at the storm about him, and with the same wide-eyed eagerness he looked forward to the quest upon which he was embarked. Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli was answering a call that had come to him at Rome. Since he was seventeen he had been preparing for the life of a Dominican priest, but when he was about twenty-one and not yet ordained he had heard a man from America tell of the need of preachers and churches on the far western edge of that new country. And

with hardly more ado than a trip to Milan to bid his parents farewell, he had set out for the land of possibilities.

In France, on a two months' sojourn, he had picked up a little knowledge of French, but he spoke no English. He had no companion, nor was any one to meet him in New York. He only knew that somehow he was to get to Cincinnati where he was to be taught English, ordained, and assigned to a mission. And somehow he did get there and began the last round of preparation for his life work.

Two years later, in 1830, Mazzuchelli appeared at Mackinac Island in the northern part of the Territory of Michigan. This island in the straits between Lakes Huron and Michigan was one of the posts of the American Fur Company. During the winter it was comparatively quiet but in the summer when the fur traders accompanied by their boatmen and clerks came in with their loads of furs — the result of a winter's work upon a hundred rivers and lakes in the northwest — the island swarmed with a motley population of Americans, French Canadians, half-breeds and Indians.

Here the young priest began his labors. At first he was the only Catholic priest within hundreds of miles, and he tried to make this whole vast region his parish. He spent his time for five years traveling over wide spaces to celebrate mass and preach to Indians and scattered fur trading settlements. In a trader's boat he crossed Lake Michigan to Green



Bay, and there he designed a church and managed its erection. He visited again and again the far off Winnebago village on the Wisconsin River, and he traileed across country to the Mississippi and preached to the settlement at Prairie du Chien. Menominee, Ottawa, Chippewa, and Winnebago Indians as well as American and French traders and their half-breed assistants came to know and like this slender young Dominican. He was not a rugged man, but small of stature and delicate of physique. Yet, though he never spared himself, the brightness of his eyes and the rich color of his cheeks remained with him to the end of his days.

He journeyed on foot, by canoe and on horseback, and in winter on snow-shoes and by sledge over the deep snows or up and down the frozen rivers. His memoirs read like pages from the *Jesuit Relations* of a century and a half before. He held services sometimes in the open under the trees, sometimes in lodges made of bark and mats brought and set up for the occasion by the Indian worshippers. He lived at times in the cabins of Indian tribes, eating with them, trying to master their languages, and sleeping upon their mats at night.

Nature never ceased to delight him. In his memoirs, in which he always spoke of himself in the third person, he tells of a journey to Arbre-Croche on the shore of Lake Michigan.

“Taking advantage of ten Catholic Indians leaving for Arbre-Croche in a bark canoe one evening he

crossed the Straits of Mackinac with them, and spent the first night in a dense forest, under a little tent cheered by a crackling fire close by,—which was supplied with fuel by the company. Who will forget the sweet canticles sung in their own native tongue by the pious oarsmen while crossing the Lake? The starry vault above, the calm of the limpid waters, their immensity lost in the western horizon, the pensive stillness of the shores far-off yet barely discernible, all seemed to echo the sweet reverent tones of the simple good Ottawas’.

During these five years other priests had come to the Territory of Michigan, and the trading posts and Indian villages became accustomed to the sight of the long black mantle of the Dominicans. Mazzuchelli began to think of new fields of labor. In the spring of 1835 he made a trip to Cincinnati by way of St. Louis and the Ohio River, and as he went down the valley of the Mississippi he visited for the first time the town of Galena on the Fever River in Illinois and the little settlement at Dubuque on the west side of the Mississippi.

In these two lead mining towns were many Catholics, without either church or pastor, and following the visit of Mazzuchelli they petitioned his superiors to allow the priest to give his services exclusively to that section of the frontier. Thus began a new period in his life. His work was now almost entirely among the white settlers of the towns along the Mississippi, but it was none the less a life of cease-

less activity. He became more definitely a church builder. In the town of Dubuque he stirred the people to make subscriptions for a building; he drew up the plans himself, hired the workmen, and laid the corner-stone. The church was built from the native rock of the vicinity and under the zealous eye of the priest it grew slowly but steadily to completion.

In that same year, 1835, Mazzuchelli began a church at Galena. Here again he was architect and superintendent and it took long months to complete the work. In the meantime he built a little wooden chapel with a confessional on one side of the altar and a closet on the other, six feet by five, in which he slept. He alternated between Galena and Dubuque; and in the latter town while the church was going up he made his home in a little room under the Sanctuary, with unplastered walls and with the bare earth for a floor.

Eliphalet Price, who furnished the stone for a part of the Dubuque church, wrote of him:

“We never transacted business with a more honorable, pleasant and gentlemanly person than the Rev. Mr. Mazzuchelli. We left him seated upon a stone near the building, watching the lazy movements of a lone Irishman, who was working out his subscription in aid of the church.”

Just so he must have been remembered by the inhabitants of many a frontier town — seated upon a stone with the skirts of his mantle tucked up about

him, overseeing the work upon a church that owed to him not only the inspiration for its erection but the practical details of its architecture as well.

In 1839 the arrival of Bishop Loras to take charge of the newly created Diocese of Dubuque relieved greatly the burden of Mazzuchelli's work and widened the scope of his energies. Wherever he went churches sprang up. He made trips up and down the river in every kind of weather and over every kind of road. A little frame church was the result of his work at Potosi, Wisconsin; and at Prairie du Chien he drew plans and superintended the erection of a stone church a hundred feet in length.

He carried his religious ministrations to Antoine Le Claire upon the site of Davenport before that town existed. Not many years later, in conjunction with Le Claire, he made arrangements for the building of a brick church in the new town. He had complete charge of the building of the first Catholic church in Burlington, and when it was finished but not yet consecrated he rented it for one session to the Legislative Council of the Territory of Iowa and was paid three hundred dollars for its use — sufficient to finish paying the debt incurred in its construction.

When Iowa City became the capital of the Territory of Iowa and the government offered free sites in the town for churches if they were built within a given time, the energetic priest hurried over to the

inland town and made preparations for building a church. And when Bishop Loras came in 1841 to lay the corner stone, Mazzuchelli, standing on a mound of earth thrown up by the excavators, gave the address of the occasion.

So this pioneer priest passed from town to town, celebrating mass, visiting the sick and everywhere leaving brick and stone monuments to his energy. Churches at his inspiration raised their crosses to the sky at Maquoketa and Bellevue and Bloomington (now Muscatine) in the Territory of Iowa and at Shullsburg and Sinsinawa in the Territory of Wisconsin. One who knew him well credits twenty churches to this far-wandering priest.

Father Mazzuchelli took a keen interest in things political as well as religious. In 1836 he officiated as chaplain at the first Fourth of July celebration in the town of Dubuque. In the fall of that same year he responded to an invitation to open with prayer the meeting of the Territorial Legislature of Wisconsin at Belmont; and he never ceased to praise the wisdom of the framers of the Federal Constitution for allowing religion to exist free from the trammels of the political state.

In February of 1843, having heard much of the sect of Mormons, he determined to visit in person their prophet, Joseph Smith, at Nauvoo. Being then at Burlington he journeyed to Fort Madison, and from there passed down the river on the ice and across to the Mormon town on the Illinois side,

where the prophet talked to him at length but unconvincingly of the many times he had conversed with God in person, of the revelations he had received from St. Paul, and of the golden Book of Mormon whose whereabouts an angel had revealed to him.

A few weeks later he started on a long journey back to Italy. While there, largely to enlist funds for his missionary enterprises, he wrote and published in Italian his *Memoirs* dealing with the fifteen years of his life in America. With characteristic modesty he invariably used the third person, speaking of himself as the Missionary or the Priest, and nowhere in the book, not even upon the title-page, does his name appear. In 1915, over fifty years after his death, the volume was re-published in an English translation.

Mazzuchelli did not stay long in Italy, but returned to devote nearly a score of years to additional service in the Upper Mississippi Valley. His later life was spent largely in southwestern Wisconsin, and since there were many priests now in the field his labors were less arduous. But he passed down the years with busy feet, founding schools and colleges, teaching and preaching and raising new buildings, visiting the sick and dying, and now and then with unflagging devotion attending the victims of an epidemic like that of 1850 when the ravages of cholera swept over southwestern Wisconsin.

A man of wide interests and versatile talents was

Father Mazzuchelli. His ability as an architect has been mentioned. Aside from the building of churches, Archbishop Ireland credits him with having drawn the plans of the first court house in Galena, and although he himself makes no mention of it in his writings, he is said to have designed the Old Stone Capitol at Iowa City. The carving of a beautiful altar in a chapel in Dubuque is attributed to him by Archbishop Ireland. If, as seems probable, the maps of the Mississippi Valley and Great Lake region which accompany his *Memoirs*, and the frontispiece depicting the habitation and family of a Christian Indian, are his, he must have had unusual skill with the pen. His memoirs themselves show a fine command of language, a genuine love of the beautiful in nature and life, and an intense patriotism for his adopted country.

He died in 1864, not yet old, and still busy serving his fellow men. A sister in Santa Clara College, which Mazzuchelli founded in southwestern Wisconsin, writes of his death:

“One bitter night he spent laboring from one death bed to another, and dawn overtook him creeping to his poor little cottage, no fire, no light, for he kept no servant, and benumbed and exhausted, he was glad to seek some rest. When morning came, unable to rise, they found him stricken with pneumonia, and in a few days his hardships were at an end forever. He who had served the dying in fever-haunted wigwags, in crowded pest houses, in the

mines, and on the river, added this last sacrifice to the works of his devoted life.”

Ardent but gentle, inspiring yet practical, this energetic Dominican played an unusual part in the development of the West. His life was, throughout, one of service, but perhaps the keynote lies in those early years of wide and weary travel and church building. Here he was in very truth a pioneer; and wherever canoe or sled or his own tireless feet carried him, men of varying and of mixed races, of all creeds and of no creed, were better for the sight of his kindly face, the sound of his cheering words, and the unceasing labors of his hand and mind.

JOHN C. PARISH



# A Few Martial Memories

## I

### OFF TO THE WARS

O, Johnnie has gone for to live in a tent —  
They have grafted him into the Army.

In the spring of 1862, Camp Benton, just west of St. Louis, was a rallying point for the volunteers of the Northwest. Fifteen or twenty thousand new troops occupied it, in tents and barracks; brass bands paraded; raw cavalymen, with unstained sabres, stood in long lines learning to cut, thrust and “let the enemy parry”; infantry with glittering weapons were drilling in companies and in regiments; the silver ringing of bright ramrods in still brighter gun-barrels was heard on every hand; staff officers, who had been clerks or unfledged lawyers a few weeks previously, galloped about with an air of immense responsibility, as though a battle were in progress. All was glitter, bustle and excitement. “Now, this is war”, I said to myself, leaning against a cannon that had never been fired, and folding my arms in the fashion of Napoleon.

In a couple of days a great number of boxes somewhat resembling coffins, were hauled to the front of our quarters, and we turned out with loud cheers to “draw guns”. They were beautiful Springfield

rifles, as bright as silver, and of the best pattern used in either army during the war. It was an exciting moment. When the orderly sergeant handed me one, together with a belt, a bayonet and sheath, a cap-box and cartridge box, and a brass "U. S." to put on the cartridge box, I felt that a great trust was being reposed in me by the United States government. Many a man has gone to Congress or received a Major-General's commission with less actual modesty and solemn emotion than I experienced on that occasion. And that burnished rifle, so beautiful that it seemed fit only to stand in the corner of a parlor, or repose in a case of rosewood and velvet, subsequently had an obscure but worthy history. In the course of the war, from its well-grooved barrel, I hurled more than eight hundred Minie balls in protest against a Southern Confederacy, and on my last battlefield I smashed it against the side of an oak tree, that it might never fire a shot for the dissolution of the Union.<sup>1</sup>

Still other things were rapidly given to us. We received those horrible-looking regulation felt hats which somebody decreed we must wear; also black plumes to adorn them; a brass eagle that resembled a peacock in full feather, for the side of a hat; a brass bugle for the front; brass letters and figures to denote each man's company and regiment; leather "dog collars" to span our necks, and much other

<sup>1</sup> Practically the entire Sixteenth Iowa Infantry was captured before Atlanta on July 22, 1864.—The Editor.

trumpetry — all of which we threw away eventually, except the hat. The latter, in time, we lowered a story or two, by an ingenious method, and it served us well in storms of rain, and in the fierce heats of Southern summer. Buttoned and belted and strapped, and profusely ornamented, we felt we were soldiers indeed, and we pined for gory combat. Now and then a straggler would arrive, and after gazing on our splendid paraphernalia, he would be in a fever of anxiety until he, too, had secured the last gewgaw to which he was entitled at the hands of a generous Government. “Have you drawed your bugle yet?” became the slang salutation of the camp, the original inquiry having been propounded by an alarmed rural volunteer to one of his belated companions. After strutting about with our new weapons, like so many boys in their first new boots, we were ordered to the drill-ground to learn how to handle them without impaling one another.

Early the next morning the drums rattled furiously, and orders came to pack up instanter and get ready to leave for the seat of war. The wildest commotion ensued. Every other matter was forgotten, and with eager haste we got into line on the parade ground. There we learned the most annoying duty of a soldier — to stand in his place like a hitching post, perhaps for hours, simply awaiting orders.

We finally stacked arms and had breakfast, but at eleven o'clock we marched out of Camp Benton with

drums beating and colors flying, going we knew not where. Three batteries and three regiments of infantry followed us. The people of St. Louis cheered us vociferously all along the route. At 2 o'clock we reached the steamboat levee, and our regiment (16th Iowa) was packed and crowded on board a miserable old craft called the *Crescent City*. The other regiments embarked on other boats, and more troops and batteries were swiftly ferried across from East St. Louis and embarked on still other steamers. At dusk our somewhat imposing flotilla swung off, and amid the roar and clatter of martial music, and the cheering of soldiers and people, we steamed down the Mississippi. It was the 1st of April, and our commanders told us we would smell gunpowder soon.

At ten o'clock the next morning we reached Cairo, and saluted the beautiful Ohio with a round of cheers. Our fleet turned up the Ohio, and on still the next day we came to Paducah, Kentucky, at the confluence of the Ohio and Tennessee rivers. Taking on plenty of coal, we moved up the Tennessee river to join Grant's army, flushed with its recent victory at Fort Donelson. The voyage was enchanting. I shall remember those lofty bluffs, robed in green foliage, bright with blossoms and flowers, to the last days of my life. Wild and picturesque scenes lay on either side, and strains of music floated on every breeze. The weather was balmy and delightful. The air was fragrant with the breath of Southern spring. We seemed only on a pleasure excursion. We passed

Fort Henry without stopping, but close to its battle-rent works, constructed on land little above the river level, "Old Glory" floated peacefully above the riddled ramparts, sentries paced back and forth, and troops were encamped near by.

On the evening of April 5th we arrived at Pittsburg Landing. No wharves, warehouses or dwellings lined the shore. Not even a clearing was visible. We saw only a wooded wilderness. On the east shore were richly timbered low lands, subject to overflow. On the west side abrupt bluffs rose from the water's edge to a height of 150 feet. They were broken by deep ravines that came down to the river. These towering green highlands were covered with magnificent oaks and elms in full foliage, decorated here and there by dark mistletoe. In Egyptian darkness we disembarked on the west shore, and climbing nearly to the summit of the bluff, we formed in line and stacked arms. The other regiments and the artillery companies also disembarked and climbed the hill. A very large army seemed scattered about. We could see innumerable campfires far to the front, and martial music floated for miles through the woods. Worn out with a voyage of hundreds of miles, we spread our blankets and went to sleep. It was the night before the battle of Shiloh — one of the bloodiest engagements of the whole war.

## II

## THE OPENING GUNS OF SHILOH

So long as there's truth to unfetter,  
So long as there's wrong to set right,  
So long as our march is upward,  
So long will the cry be — "Fight".  
So I drink — to defeat or to conquest;  
To the laurel — or cypress and scar;  
To danger, to courage, to daring —  
To the glory and grandeur of War.

*Irene F. Brown.*

Early in the morning — very early — I became aware that something unusual was occurring. Rousing with an effort, I staggered to my feet and found that other men had also been awakened, and far away through the woods we faintly heard bugles sounding and heard the distant dull roll of drums, mingled with the discharge of fire arms. Interrogating members of a regiment near by, we got the answer:

"Why, it's the long roll beating."

"And what's the long roll?" we inquired.

They explained that it was a peculiar roll of the drum that is only beaten at a time of great danger to an army. Like a fire bell at night, it was a note of alarm. It signified the enemy's presence, and called the soldiers to arms, in haste. This was news indeed, and a presentiment of impending momentous

events seemed for a moment to possess me. Every drummer who heard the roll, snatched his drum and repeated it. The weird note sounded in every direction. We listened intently and were soon startled by the roar of artillery, somewhat distant, but frequent and heavy. Presently the cannonading became "nearer, clearer, deadlier than before." The crash of musketry, in volleys, was heard, far away to the front. Staff and field officers began to appear, many of them mounted and "riding in hot haste"; and the drums of many of the regiments around the landing beat the assembly.

The idea that some kind of a battle was commencing, had been ridiculed at first, but it was now certain that heavy fighting was being done on the outer lines. Our drums beat and our regiment hastily formed, after which baggage was brought up from the landing, ammunition was issued, and we were shown how to bite and use cartridges. We got orders to cook breakfast, eat it, and get back into line. As the roar over in the woods waxed nearer, louder, deeper and more terrible, wounded men began to appear in great numbers along the road leading to the river. The first of them who reached us gave a partially correct but exaggerated statement of affairs. The army had been surprised by an immense force of Confederates, they said; soldiers had been shot or bayoneted in their tents; whole regiments had been captured or massacred; our lines had been broken and driven back; many of our bat-

teries had been captured, and affairs were growing worse every moment. Presently a new class of men began to arrive from the field, in limited numbers. They were totally uninjured, and some of them had no muskets. In reply to any questioning, they said their regiments "were all cut to pieces," and that there was no use for them to stay there any longer. As time dragged by this class of men became more numerous, and the number of regiments that were all cut to pieces struck me as being quite appalling.

The great battle meantime waxed fiercer and fiercer, and appeared to be extending over miles and miles of ground; more artillery was getting into line; the concussion of guns grew heavier and more frightful; and volleys of musketry broke in tremendous explosions, one overlapping and drowning the other in rapid succession; the leaves on the trees and the very air seemed to vibrate with repeated shocks; and listening volunteers, fresh from the North, some of them slightly pale, abandoned their long cherished fear that the war might end before they would ever do any fighting.

The preceding night we had slept for the first time on a soldier's couch — the ground — little dreaming that before we should sleep again the surge-like tide of an awful battle would sweep to within twenty paces of that spot. It was a Sabbath morning, warm, sunny, and with a cloudless sky. I thought of the ringing of the church bells in my native State, and then I listened with awe to the ter-



rible roar of the mighty conflict raging a few miles away. It swelled into smooth thunder, varied by volleys of artillery, and then broke into redoubled violence, lashing and clashing with spasmodic rage. It seemed that some vast, devouring force of Nature was approaching; that some furious ocean had been poured upon the land, and was leaping and crashing its way through crags and abysses to the scene where we stood. On the opposite side of the river the lowlands were basking in the sunshine that streamed through the fresh foliage of the trees, and blossoms and flowers were plainly discernible. It was a picture of perfect tranquillity. The river was like a sheet of glass. Two heavily armed gunboats moved slowly back and forth like restless monsters fretted with unavailing ire; and the many transports lying along shore were rapidly getting up steam as though to fly from a region of disaster.

Fugitives and wounded men poured past our bivouac by hundreds. We had ceased to interrogate them, for the reply was invariably the same. A fearful struggle was in progress. The Union army was literally fighting for existence. It was being steadily driven back, and had met with enormous losses. The attack had been made with consummate skill, at the earliest break of dawn. At many portions of the field, not even picket lines had been stationed in front of the Union encampments, and these troops were taken by complete surprise.<sup>2</sup> Men were

<sup>2</sup> The question of whether or not Grant's army was taken by sur-

actually killed on their cots. Rebel soldiers afterwards told me that they "fired into the tents and the Yankees came buzzing out like bees." At other portions of the field, pickets were properly stationed. Where the blame lies is immaterial. Generals, colonels and soldiers knew little about actual war — especially on a large scale. The enemy rushed on in three heavy lines of battle, and won everything at the outset, but that the battle raged for forty-eight hours afterwards, and ended in a rebel defeat, is one of the wonders of history.

Albert Sidney Johnston fell that day, just after leading a victorious charge, and at the very moment he was waving his thanks to his wildly applauding soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Just before the battle he had issued to them a stirring address, in which he said:

I have put you in motion to offer battle to the invaders of your country. With the resolution and disciplined valor becoming men fighting, as you are, for all worth living or dying for, you can but march to a decisive victory over agrarian mercenaries, sent to subjugate and despoil you of

prise has been for many years a subject of controversy. For a refutation of the surprise theory see Rich's *The Battle of Shiloh*.— The Editor.

<sup>3</sup> There has been much difference of opinion as to the manner of the death of General Johnston. The story recounted by Parkhurst is to be found in many of the earlier books dealing with the battle. Later writers have in several cases maintained that General Johnston was engaged in forming the reserves behind the lines when he was hit by a stray ball. See Rich's *The Death of General Albert Sidney Johnston on the Battlefield of Shiloh* in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. XVI, pp. 275–281.— The Editor.

your liberties, property, and honor. Remember the precious stake involved. Remember the dependence of your mothers, your wives, your sisters, and our children on the result. Remember the fair, broad, abounding lands, the happy homes, and ties that will be desolated by your defeat. The eyes and hopes of 8,000,000 of people rest upon you. You are expected to show yourselves worthy of your valor and lineage: worthy of the women of the South, whose noble devotion in this war has never been exceeded in any time. With such incentives to brave deeds and with the trust that God is with us your generals will lead you confidently to the combat, assured of success.<sup>4</sup>

After breaking a Union line, and driving it back in rout, Gen. Johnston was receiving the clamorous applause of his soldiers. Three fugitives turned around to see what new calamity impended, and they guessed him to be a general. Loading their muskets as quick as they could, they fired simultaneously.<sup>5</sup> He fell in his saddle, and died a few moments afterwards in the arms of a surgeon. His death caused a temporary cessation of the enemy's activity. After some delay, that proved valuable to the Union forces, Beauregard assumed command. He swore he would "water his horse in the Tennessee river before sunset," and he nearly kept his word.<sup>6</sup> The enemy's

<sup>4</sup> This address by General Johnston to his soldiers is printed in the *War of the Rebellion: Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Pt. II, pp. 396-397.—The Editor.

<sup>5</sup> See footnote on p. 120.—The Editor.

<sup>6</sup> This famous declaration was made at the beginning of the battle by General Johnston, not by General Beauregard.—The Editor.

frantic efforts continued. By this time every Union regiment was in action.

Gen. Lew Wallace left Crump's Landing, somewhere down the river, that morning, with about ten thousand men, with rush instructions to reach the field promptly, but he got lost in the woods. Had he made the march in proper time, he might have won imperishable glory. He could have hit the left flank and rear of the rebel army, and changed a disastrous field into a victorious one. As matters went, he arrived when the crisis was over — the next morning.<sup>7</sup> All day long, hour after hour, the battle raged, and the victory seemed to be Beauregard's.

### III

#### SUNDAY EVENING AT SHILOH

Their toast to the smoke of the peace pipe,  
 As it curls over vintage and sheaves;  
 Over war vessels resting at anchor,  
 And the plenty that Peace achieves.  
 I drink to the sword and the musket;  
 To Battle's thunder and crash and jar;  
 To the screech and the scream of the bullet —  
 To onset, to strife and to War.

*Irene F. Brown.*

It was close to evening. From the hilltop where I stood, stretching down the long abrupt slope to the river's edge, and off to the left for half a mile, and

<sup>7</sup> General Wallace arrived after dark Sunday evening and during the night disposed his troops for battle.— *War of the Rebellion: Of-*

perhaps a mile, was the wreck of a terribly beaten army. Thousands and thousands of men, in the apathy of despair, awaited an apparently inevitable calamity. Buell's army was known to be close at hand, hurrying toward us, on the other side of the river, and officers of every rank from general down, were passing through this vast mob and appealing to them by everything that civilized men hold sacred to get into line and keep the enemy back, if only for ten minutes, till Buell could save them from massacre. I even saw a girl of eighteen stand on a stump like another Joan of Arc, and deliver a passionate harangue. She was in Zouave uniform—some "daughter of a regiment"—and her burning words produced astonishing effect.

We had but a little ways to go, and barely a moment to take in the situation. A long line of artillery stretched off to the right, some of the pieces being heavy enough to shatter the walls of a fortress at one discharge. The enemy was throwing a few shells.

At once there rose so wild a yell,  
It seemed that all the fiends that fell  
Had pealed the banner cry of Hell.

Thousands and thousands of infuriated men poured in to sight with fixed bayonets, yelling like demons.

*Official Records*, Series I, Vol. X, Pt. II, pp. 170, 176, 188, 193, 196, 197. For a discussion of General Wallace's march to the battlefield, see Rich's *General Lew. Wallace at Shiloh* in *The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 301-308.—The Editor.

It seemed that the earth had vomited forth a new rebel army. "Bull's Run! Bull's Run! Bull's Run!" they shrieked at the tops of their voices. They hoped to stampede us in sheer terror. We fired by instinct. Almost at the same time our massed park of artillery hurled barrels of grape and canister into their naked ranks. Their yells were drowned in the roar, but on they came, the living trampling over the dead. No commands were given us. No man's voice could have been heard. Every man loaded and fired with frantic haste. Smoke rose before us, in clouds. Suddenly a tempest of musket balls flew hissing around us. We knew we had checked the charge, for troops on a charge seldom fire. The combat deepened. A terrific and supernatural noise alarmed me. It seemed like some enormous projectile ripping the air open. I instinctively crouched to the earth. It passed in the direction of the enemy, diagonally, and fell among them. I imagined I heard it bursting, and that I saw the flames of its explosion. It was a huge shell from one of the gunboats. Others followed in swift succession, scattering death and havoc wherever they fell. They were thrown with astonishing precision.

An unusual crash of musketry to the left caught my attention. Glancing across the road I saw that a long double line of infantry had just poured a volley into the foe. Where I fought, our line was ragged and disordered. Some were standing erect, some were lying down, some were fighting on one knee,

and some were behind logs, stumps and trees. But every man of that line stood erect, in splendid order. They were fresh troops from Buell's command. The rest was like a horrible dream. We loaded and fired and smoke enveloped us. The ground trembled beneath our feet. We were in a whirlwind of smoke, fire and missiles. It was so near night that our muskets flashed fire. Our cannons belched forth streams of fire. At times I saw gunners standing erect, ramrods in hand, like silhouettes against a background of fire. At length bullets ceased to fall among us. I dreaded a new charge. Then the fire began to slacken all along our line, we began to hear cheers, we ceased firing, and knew that the conflict had ended. Then, amid the lifting clouds of smoke, and amid the dead and dying, powder-grimed and streaming with perspiration, we snatched off our hats and cheered and yelled like maniacs. We had repulsed the foe, and the first day's carnage at least was over.

As I was getting into place at the line of battle, just before the enemy's onset, I hastily viewed a most melancholy circumstance. On the left hand side of the road, on the summit of the hill stood an old log cabin, and around it were innumerable tents — I cannot say how many, for they stretched to the left — and every one of those tents was filled with wounded soldiers. Musket balls were already piercing the canvas, and I saw men running with stretchers to remove the wounded. All that stood

between those tents and the storming columns of the foe was a hurriedly forming and ragged line of battle. The line must have been within a yard of the tents, or may have been formed down through them, the outer tents being torn down. Imagine the agony of a man with a shattered leg or with a Minie ball through his lungs being jolted off in a stretcher by two excited, rough and incompetent men. Imagine this being done under a fire of musketry, with shells bursting plentifully around, and tremendous excitement prevailing. Or worse yet, suppose he had been left behind, shorn of the strength he possessed an hour before, and must lie helpless on his blood-drenched couch with screaming missiles rending his tent to tatters, and inflicting additional wounds. I did not see the result, but great numbers of those men must have been killed on the cots where they were lying.

We had no sooner reached the line of battle than a shell came shrieking through the air, and fell not twenty feet in front of us. It whirled there a moment and exploded. A soldier fell forward on his breast, and a comrade ran to his side, and taking him by the shoulders, lifted him up. Then we saw that his face and throat were blown or cut off, and the blood spurted in great jets or streams from the veins and arteries of his neck, and his friend dropped the quivering trunk to the ground with a look of horror. It was the ghastliest sight I saw in the war. We hear orators rant about men spilling



their blood on the altar of their country. That man literally poured out all the blood in his veins on the barren soil of a Tennessee hill, that the flag that floats in triumph today might continue an emblem of nationality and power.

Immediately after the repulse of the foe, and when triumphal cheers were ceasing, we began to hear different and more piteous sounds. They were the moans of the wounded and dying. I even heard horses sending forth sounds that seemed like appeals for human sympathy and assistance. Indistinctly seen, but all around us, was blood — on the ground, on the trees, on the guns that had swept the foe so terribly, on the prostrate forms of the slain, and even on men who were walking about, glowing with the enthusiasm of victory.

Troops were pouring up the road from the landing. They were soldiers of Buell's army. The steamers were ferrying them across the river as fast as possible, and bands of music were playing on the steamers. These men had been in the service some little time, and betrayed evidence of training and discipline. They passed us, and deployed in line of battle some distance beyond us, for the enemy's forces had retired about half a mile. The Buell troops that got into action that evening numbered only a few thousand, but they rendered invaluable aid at a critical moment.<sup>8</sup> They were led by the im-

<sup>8</sup> Only a part of Colonel Ammen's brigade of General Nelson's division actually got into the fight on Sunday evening. These troops

petuous General Nelson, who was afterwards killed in a Louisville hotel by one of our own generals. Nelson was a proud, arrogant, overbearing man, but he was a most heroic military leader — utterly without fear. I saw him on horseback at the road, under the full fire of the enemy, but did not know until the next morning who he was.

A rapid re-organization of Grant's forces ensued; the rolls were called, arms were stacked in line; those of us who had any rations, ate them, after which, exhausted with the day's toils and intense excitement, we spread our blankets on the ground and were soon sleeping soundly.

Our bugles sang truce — for the night cloud had lowered,  
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky;  
And thousands had sunk to the ground over-powered,  
The weary to sleep and the wounded to die.

CLINTON PARKHURST,  
Co. C, 16th Iowa Infantry.

could doubtless be numbered in hundreds rather than thousands.—  
*War of the Rebellion: Official Records, Series I, Vol. X, Pt. II, pp.*  
328, 333-334, 337.— The Editor.

## Comment by the Editor

### A MOSAIC

History is made up of mosaics with many pieces gone. For some days we have been trying to put together the fragments of a biographical mosaic, but there are still more vacant places than there are colored stones. Probably some of the readers of **THE PALIMPSEST** can supply the missing pieces. Back in the thirties, when the name of Antoine Le Claire was one to conjure with, the town of Le Claire was laid out on the bank of the Mississippi above Davenport. And alongside of it, about the same time, Eleazer Parkhurst and T. C. Eads began another village. It was named Parkhurst after Eleazer who was its first settler, its first postmaster, and its leading citizen. After him came Lemuel Parkhurst and Waldo Parkhurst and others of the clan who built houses and opened stores and helped keep up the rivalry with the adjacent village of Le Claire.

After various fortunes and misfortunes, including the change of the name of their town to Berlin, the followers of Eleazer agreed to join the rivals across the way, and in 1855 a new town of Le Claire was incorporated which included the original Parkhurst.

From the town of Le Claire on February 12, 1862, an eighteen year old boy, Clinton Parkhurst, en-

listed in the Sixteenth Iowa Infantry. It was a new regiment and did not receive ammunition until the morning of April 6, when it entered the Battle of Shiloh. Clinton Parkhurst's impressions of this conflict are told in *A Few Martial Memories* in this number.

Other battles followed, and between the times of desperate fighting there was foraging and skirmishing, long days in camp and on the march, and weary night watches. A year passed — two years — then, one summer day in 1864 in the Atlanta campaign, the gallant Sixteenth Iowa, fighting to the last, was surrounded and practically the entire regiment was forced to surrender. So Clinton Parkhurst, after swinging his rifle against a tree to put it out of commission, ceased fighting for a time and became an inmate of Andersonville Prison. But after a few months the men of the Sixteenth were exchanged and returned to combat service.

In the summer of 1865, Parkhurst was mustered out at Clinton, Iowa. He was still hardly more than a boy, but the years in camp and battle line and prison had deepened his life and given him a heritage of experiences which he never lost.

More than fifty years had gone by since the Battle of Shiloh. The lusty young soldiers who had gathered at reunions after the war and sung "We're Tenting Tonight on the Old Camp Ground"—just as the boys of the American Legion today sing

“Pack Up Your Troubles in Your Old Kit Bag”—were fewer in number and their voices were beginning to quaver as they sang. Their blue uniforms which had been the emblem of youth were now the garments of age. In June, 1913, there came to the State Historical Society an envelope containing the manuscript of *A Few Martial Memories* written out painstakingly in longhand and signed by “Clint Parkhurst, 16th Iowa Infantry”. There was something almost startling in the fresh vividness of the account coming to light a half century after the event. No letter accompanied the manuscript. The only clue to an address was the postmark on the envelope: “Marshalltown, Iowa”. A letter addressed to Mr. Clint Parkhurst at that place brought no reply. A friend living in Marshalltown reported no trace of such a person. Sometime afterward a letter written to the Commandant of the Iowa Soldiers’ Home at Marshalltown was answered as follows:

“Clinton Parkhurst was admitted to this Home November 15, 1895 and he deserted this Home on August 22, 1913, and we have heard nothing of him since.”

The rest of the mosaic is missing. What did he do in those thirty years between his mustering out in 1865 and his entering the Soldiers’ Home in 1895? They were the prime of his life — from his twenty-first to his fifty-first years. The *List of Ex-Soldiers, Sailors and Marines Living in Iowa*, published in

1886 by the Adjutant General of the State, does not contain his name. Probably he had moved out of the State. He served throughout the war as a private and perhaps took similar rank in civil life. The chances are that his comings and goings were little noted. Yet we have not had from the pen of any officer on either side any more vivid glimpses of Shiloh than these *Few Martial Memories* by Clinton Parkhurst.

And then, after eighteen years in the Iowa Soldiers' Home, he "deserted". Somewhere, still, he may be alive, dreaming oftentimes perhaps of the beauty of the Sabbath morning when the long roll stirred the air at Pittsburg Landing, of the calmness of the Tennessee River lying "like a sheet of glass" between the highlands where the battle was raging, and the opposite shore where "the lowlands were basking in the sunshine that streamed through the fresh foliage of the trees, and blossoms and flowers were plainly discernible." The boy who listened that day to the increasing roar of the conflict and thought of the ringing of the Sabbath morning church bells in his native State would now be seventy-six years old. We hope he is still living and we take this means of thanking him for the opportunity to preserve his impressions of Shiloh.

J. C. P.

# The ALMPPSEST

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN NOVEMBER 1920

No. 5

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## A Geological Palimpsest

Iowa is very, very old — as old as the hills, and older. So old, in truth, is this fair land that no matter at what period the story is begun whole eternities of time stretch back to ages still more remote. Seasons without number have come and gone. Soft winds of spring have caressed a dormant nature into consciousness; things have lived in the warmth of summer suns; then the green of youth has invariably changed to the brown and gold of a spent cycle; and winter winds have thrown a counterpane of snow over the dead and useless refuse of departed life. For some creatures the span of life has been but a single day; others have witnessed the passing of a hundred seasons; a few giant plants have weathered the gales of four thousand years; but only the rocks have endured since the earth was formed. To the hills and valleys the seasons of man are as night and day, while the ages of ice are as winter, and the millions of years intervening as summer.

Through stately periods of time the earth has evolved. Mud has turned to stone, the sea has given place to land, mountains and molehills have raised their heights, and tiny clams have laid down their shells to form the limestone and the marble for the future dwellings of a nobler race. Since the first soft protozoan form emerged in the distant dawn of life, myriads of types from amoebas to men have spread their kind through endless generations. By far the greater number have lived true to form; but a few have varied from the normal type the better to maintain themselves; and slowly, as eons of time elapsed, old species died and new ones came into existence. Thus mice and mastodons evolved.

“All the world’s a stage” for the drama of life wherein creatures of every kind — large and small, spined and spineless, chinned and finned — have had “their exits and their entrances” along the streams, on the plains, among the mountains, in the forests, and on the floor of the ocean. The theme of the play has been strife, and all through the acts, be they comic or tragic, two great forces have always contended. The one has aimed at construction, the other has sought to destroy. The air and the water were ever at odds with the earth, while the principal objects of animal life have always been to eat and escape being eaten. No one knows when the play began, no one knows the end; but the story as told by the rocks is as vivid as though it were written by human hand. This drama of life is the history of Iowa before the advent of man.

The record begins at a time when Iowa was under the sea. The only inhabitants were plants and animals that lived in the water. Very simple in structure they were: it was the age of the algae in plant life while in the animal kingdom the noblest creatures were worms. The duration of time that the sea remained is altogether beyond comprehension. Slowly, ever so slowly, the dashing waves crumbled the rocks on the shore and the rivers brought down from the land great volumes of sand to be laid on the floor of the ocean. Ten millions of years elapsed, perhaps more, until at the bottom of the sea there lay the sediment for thousands of feet of proterozoic rock. This is the story as told by the Sioux Falls "granite" in northwestern Iowa.

After a great while the sea over Iowa receded. Then, for possibly two million years, the rocky surface of the land was exposed to wind and rain. Over the vast expanse of barren territory not a sign of life appeared. No carpet of grass protected the earth from the savage attacks of the water; no clump of trees broke the monotony of the level horizon: the whole plateau was a desert. As the centuries passed deep gorges were carved by the streams, and at last the down-tearing forces succeeded in reducing the land almost to the sea level.

Gradually from the south the sea encroached upon the land until all of Iowa was again submerged. Its history during the next ten thousand centuries or more is told by sandstone cliffs in Allamakee County.

All sorts of spineless creatures lived in the water. Crab-like trilobites swam to and fro, ugly sea worms crawled in the slime of Cambrian fens, the primitive nautilus "spread his lustrous coil" and left his "outgrown shell by life's unresting sea", while jellyfish and sponges dwelt in quiet places near the shore.

At last a new age dawned. The all-pervading sea still held dominion over nearly all of North America. So small was the area of land that the sand carried away by the streams was lost on the bed of the ocean. The principal upbuilding forces were the primeval molluscs that deposited their calcium carbonate shells in the shallow arms of the ocean. By imperceptible accretions the Ordovician limestones of northeastern Iowa were formed. Gradually the water receded and the newly made rocks were exposed to the weather. As the floods from summer showers trickled into the earth during the ages that followed some of the minerals were dissolved and carried away to be stored in cavities and crevices to form the lead mines for Julien Dubuque. That was millions of years ago.

Centuries elapsed while the Iowa country was a desert-like waste. Then again the sea invaded with its hosts of crabs, corals, and worms. Thousands of years fled by while shell by shell the Anamosa limestone grew. But as the world "turned on in the lathe of time" the sea crept back to its former haunts and the land once more emerged.

No longer was Iowa a desert. The time had arrived when living things came out of the water and found a home on the land. The ferns were among the first of the plants to venture ashore and then came the rushes. Forests of gigantic horsetails and clubmosses grew in the lowlands. Slimy snails moved sluggishly along the stems of leafless weeds, while thousand-legged worms scooted in and out of the mold. Dread scorpions were abroad in the land.

It was the age of the fishes when the ocean returned and the process of rockmaking was resumed. Endless varieties of fish there were, some of them twenty feet long, and armed with terrible mandibles. Enormous sharks infested the sea where now are the prairies of Iowa. The crinoids and molluscs were also abundant. It is they, indeed, that have preserved the record of their times in the bluffs of the Cedar and Iowa rivers. He who will may read the chronicles of those prehistoric days in the limestone walls of the Old Stone Capitol.

Then came a time when the climate of Iowa was tropical. Vast salt marshes were filled with rank vegetation. Ugly amphibians, scaled and tailed, croaked beneath the dripping boughs and left their trail in the hardened sand as they fed on the primitive dragonflies millions of centuries ago. Cockroaches and spiders were plentiful, but not a fly or a bee had appeared. Giant trees, enormous ferns, and ever-present rushes stored up the heat of summer suns and dying, fell into the water. As thousands of

years went by, the reedy tarns turned into peat bogs and slowly decomposition continued until little but carbon remained. Such is the story the coal mines tell.

But the old earth heaved amain, the Appalachian mountains arose, and here and there a great salt lake or an inland sea was formed. The supply of fresh water was exceeded by evaporation and so at the end of a long period of time only a salt bed remained or an extensive deposit of gypsum. So it has come to pass that in the age of man stucco comes from the Fort Dodge gypsum mines that were prepared at the end of the Paleozoic era.

Enormous segments of geologic time elapsed during which the sea had receded and Iowa was exposed to erosion. At first the climate was arid so that plant life was scarce, but as humidity increased vegetation developed apace. In the animal kingdom the reptiles were dominant. Crocodiles, lizards, and queer looking turtles were here in abundance. Gigantic and ungainly monsters called dinosaurs roamed over the land, while from the flying Jurassic saurians the birds were slowly evolving.

During countless ages the wind and water were engaged in their persistent work of destruction. Gradually the land was reduced to the sea level and the ocean crept in over Iowa. This time the water was muddy and shale and sandstone resulted. As sedimentation progressed great marshes appeared by the seashore and finally the ocean receded, never

again to encroach upon Iowa. In the west the lofty peaks of the Rockies were rising.

Permanently disenthralled from the sea and possessed of a favorable climate Iowa became the abode of the flora and fauna of Tertiary times. To the east the Mississippi River probably followed its present course, though its mouth was much farther north, but the streams of interior Iowa were not in all cases where we find them at present. The valleys were young and the drainage was very imperfect. Luxuriant forests of oak, poplar, hickory, fig, willow, chestnut, and palm trees covered the hills, while moss-mantled cypresses grew in the marshes. There were flowers for the first time in Iowa, and with them came the bees and the butterflies. The ancestors of squirrels and opossums busied themselves among the branches while below on the ground there were creatures that took the place of beavers and gophers. Giant razor-back swine and something akin to rhinoceroses haunted the banks of the streams. In the open spaces there were species that closely resembled cattle, while from others deer have descended. An insignificant creature with three-toed hoofs passed himself off for a horse. All sorts of dog-like animals prowled through the forests and howled in the moonlit wastes. Stealthy panthers and fierce saber-toothed tigers quietly stalked their prey, while above in the branches large families of monkeys chattered defiance to all. Bright colored birds flitted in the sunny

glades or among the shadowy recesses. Snakes, lizards, and turtles basked on half-submerged logs or fed upon insects.

The majestic sweep of geologic ages finally brought to an end the era of temperate climate in Iowa, and after hundreds of thousands of years ushered in the era of ice. It may have been more than two million years ago that the climate began to grow rigorous. All through the long, bleak winters the snow fell and the summers were too cool to melt it. So year by year and century after century the snow piled higher and higher, until the land was covered with a solid sheet of ice. The plants and animals suffered extinction or migrated southward.

As this ponderous glacier moved over the surface of Iowa it ground down the hills and filled up the valleys. Slowly the ice sheet moved southward, crushing the rocks into fragments and grinding the fragments to powder. At length there came a time when the climate grew milder and the ice was gradually melted. Swollen and turbid streams carried away the water and with it some of the earth that was frozen into the glacier, but much of the debris was left where it lay. Even with the slow movement of glaciers, still there was time during the ice age for huge granite boulders to be carried from central Canada to the prairies of Iowa.

The first glaciation was followed by an interval of temperate climate when vegetation flourished and the animals returned as before. But the age of the



glaciers was only beginning. Again and again the ice crept down from the north and as often disappeared. Twice the glacier extended all over Iowa, but the three other invasions covered only a part of this region. Rivers were turned out of their courses. At one time an ice sheet from Labrador pushed the Mississippi about fifty miles to the westward, but in time the river returned to its old course, and the abandoned channel was partly appropriated by the Maquoketa, Wapsipinicon, Cedar, and Iowa. Again, as the ice retreated great lakes were formed, and once for hundreds of years the waters of Lake Michigan flowed into the Mississippi along the course of the Chicago drainage canal.

The earliest glaciers laid down the impervious subsoil of clay while the later ones mingled powdered rock with the muck and peat of the inter-glacial periods to form the loam of the fertile Iowa farms. Probably a hundred thousand years have fled since the last glacier visited north-central Iowa, but the region is still too young to be properly drained, so nature is assisted by dredges and tile. It was during the glacial period that mankind came into existence, but no man trod Iowa soil until after the last glacier was gone. Compared with the inconceivable eons of time since the first Iowa rocks were formed, it was only as yesterday that the ancient mound builders flourished.

Such is the geological history of Iowa. No one can say when the first record was made, but the

story through all of the ages is indelibly carved in rock by the feet and forms of the mummied dead that lie where they lived. Age after age, as the sea and the land contended and the species struggled to live, the drama of the world was faithfully recorded. Sometimes, to be sure, the story is partly erased, sometimes it is lost beneath subsequent records, but at some place or other in Iowa a fragment of each act may be found. The surface of Iowa is a palimpsest of the ages.

JOHN E. BRIGGS

## The Iowa Home Note

Hark! the meadow-lark is singing  
From the weathered haycock's ledge,  
And the robin in the orchard  
Blithely carols forth his joy;  
While the turtle-dove is calling  
From the tangled osage hedge,  
And the cardinal is whistling  
Like a happy barefoot boy.

And the song that floats triumphant  
From the meadow and the lane  
Is the song of rustling cornfields  
Where the winds of midday sigh,  
'Tis the song of Iowa prairies —  
Gilded seas of waving grain  
When the round red sun is setting  
In a glowing opal sky.

'Tis the song of Iowa rivers  
With their sunlit wooded hills,  
And of roadsides decked with blossoms  
That would grace a hallowed shrine.  
'Tis the throbbing Iowa Home Note  
That reverberates and thrills  
In the farm and village echoes —  
Just as in your heart and mine.

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

## Through European Eyes

An exiled Italian traveller, an English master of the Queen's household, a Swedish novelist, and a Scotch writer known the world over, are among the many who have visited the Iowa country and written their impressions. And since it is well to "see ourselves as others see us", we are presenting here the comments of Giacomo Constantino Beltrami, Charles Augustus Murray, Fredrika Bremer, and Robert Louis Stevenson.

GIACOMO CONSTANTINO BELTRAMI — 1823

Of these four, Beltrami was first upon the scene. In 1823 he came into the Upper Mississippi Valley by the route best known in those days — down the Ohio River and up the Mississippi. His Latin imagination was stirred and in his writings he waxed eloquent over the Mississippi River, even while he was voyaging along that stretch of water lying between Cairo and St. Louis which Charles Dickens later spoke of as "the hateful Mississippi" and "a slimy monster hideous to behold".

William Clark, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, was a boat companion as far as St. Louis, and Major Taliaferro, Indian agent at Fort St. Anthony, accompanied Beltrami up the river to that pioneer post. After brief sojourns at St. Louis and Fort Edwards the travellers reached the rapids near the

mouth of the Des Moines River and began their observation of the edge of the land that was to be Iowa, but whereon at the time there was not a solitary white settlement. Beltrami's account follows:<sup>1</sup>

“The next day we ascended, though not without difficulty, these rapids, which continue for the space of twenty-one miles, when we saw another encampment of Saukis upon the eastern bank.

“Nine miles higher, on the western bank, are the ruins of the old Fort Madison.

“The president of that name had established an *entrepôt* of the most necessary articles for the Indians, to be exchanged for their peltry. The object of the government was not speculation, but, by its example, to fix reasonable prices among the traders; for, in the United States, everybody traffics *except* the government. Fearing, however, the effect of any restraint on the trade of private individuals, it has withdrawn its factories and agents, and left the field open to the South West Company, which has been joined by a rival company, and now monopolizes the commerce of almost the whole savage region of the valleys of the Mississippi and the Missouri. Its two principal centres of operations are St. Louis and Michilimakinac, on lake Huron.

“At a short distance from this fort, on the same side, is the river of the *Bête Puante*, and farther on, that of the Yahowas, so called from the name of the

<sup>1</sup> Beltrami's *A Pilgrimage in Europe and America*, Vol. II, pp. 150-152.

savage tribes which inhabited its banks. It is ninety-seven miles from Fort Edward, and three hundred from St. Louis.

“The fields were beginning to resume their verdure; the meadows, groves, and forests were reviving at the return of spring. Never had I seen nature more beautiful, more majestic, than in this vast domain of silence and solitude. Never did the warbling of the birds so expressively declare the renewal of their innocent loves. Every object was as new to my imagination as to my eye.

“All around me breathed that melancholy, which, by turns sweet and bitter, exercises so powerful an influence over minds endowed with sensibility. How ardently, how often, did I long to be alone!

“Wooded islands, disposed in beautiful order by the hand of nature, continually varied the picture: the course of the river, which had become calm and smooth, reflected the dazzling rays of the sun like glass; smiling hills formed a delightful contrast with the immense prairies, which are like oceans, and the monotony of which is relieved by isolated clusters of thick and massy trees. These enchanting scenes lasted from the river Yahowa till we reached a place which presents a distant and exquisitely blended view of what is called Rocky Island, three hundred and seventy-two miles from St. Louis, and one hundred and sixty from Fort Edward. Fort Armstrong, at this spot, is constructed upon a *plateau*, at an elevation of about fifty feet above the level of the river,

and rewards the spectator who ascends it with the most magical variety of scenery. It takes its name from Mr. Armstrong, who was secretary at war at the time of its construction.

“The eastern bank at the mouth of Rocky River was lined with an encampment of Indians, called Foxes. Their features, dress, weapons, customs, and language, are similar to those of the Saukis, whose allies they are, in peace and war. On the western shore of the Mississippi, a semicircular hill, clothed with trees and underwood, encloses a fertile spot carefully cultivated by the garrison, and formed into fields and kitchen gardens. The fort saluted us on our arrival with four discharges of cannon, and the Indians paid us the same compliment with their muskets. The echo, which repeated them a thousand times, was most striking from its contrast with the deep repose of these deserts.”

A day was spent with the polite “gentlemen of the garrison” and in visiting the Sac Indians on the Illinois shore. As the voyagers proceeded northward, they passed a Fox village on the western bank. At one point Beltrami went ashore and succeeded in shooting a rattlesnake. He visited Galena and then passed on to “the mines of Dubuques”.<sup>2</sup>

“A Canadian of that name was the friend of a tribe of the Foxes, who have a kind of village here.

<sup>2</sup> Beltrami's *A Pilgrimage in Europe and America*, Vol. II, pp. 163-165.

In 1788, these Indians granted him permission to work the mines. His establishment flourished; but the fatal sisters cut the thread of his days and of his fortune.

“He had no children. The attachment of the Indians was confined to him; and, to get rid as soon as possible of the importunities of those who wanted to succeed him, they burnt his furnaces, warehouses, and dwelling-house; and by this energetic measure, expressed the determination of the red people to have no other whites among them than such as they liked. . . .

“The Indians still keep exclusive possession of these mines, and with such jealousy, that I was obliged to have recourse to the all-powerful whiskey to obtain permission to see them.

“They melt the lead into holes which they dig in the rock, to reduce it into pigs. They exchange it with the traders for articles of the greatest necessity; but they carry it themselves to the other side of the river, which they will not suffer them to pass. Notwithstanding these precautions, the mines are so valuable, and the Americans so enterprising, that I much question whether the Indians will long retain possession of them.

“Dubuques reposes, with royal state, in a leaden chest contained in a mausoleum of wood, which the Indians erected to him upon the summit of a small hill that overlooks their camps and commands the river.



“This man was become their idol, because he possessed, or pretended to possess, an antidote to the bite of the rattle-snake. Nothing but artifice and delusion can render the red people friendly to the whites; for, both from instinct, and from feelings transmitted from father to son, they cordially despise and hate them.”

CHARLES AUGUSTUS MURRAY — 1835

A dozen years later the Honorable Charles Augustus Murray, who announced his English blood in every line of his charming “Travels in North America”, came up the Mississippi. According to Thwaites, Murray was a “grandson of Lord Dunmore, last colonial governor of Virginia, and himself master of the Queen’s household”. At the foot of the rapids which Beltrami had noted, he found a white settlement. He comments as follows:<sup>3</sup>

“This village of Keokuk is the lowest and most blackguard place that I have yet visited: its population is composed chiefly of the watermen who assist in loading and unloading the keel-boats, and in towing them up when the rapids are too strong for the steam-engines. They are a coarse and ferocious caricature of the London bargemen, and their chief occupation seems to consist in drinking, fighting, and gambling. One fellow who was half drunk, (or in western language ‘corned’) was relating with great satisfaction how he had hid himself in a wood that

<sup>3</sup> Murray’s *Travels in North America*, Vol. II, pp. 96-97.

skirted the road, and (in time of peace) had shot an unsuspecting and inoffensive Indian who was passing with a wild turkey over his shoulder: he concluded by saying that he had thrown the body into a thicket, and had taken the bird home for his own dinner. He seemed quite proud of this exploit, and said that he would as soon shoot an Indian as a fox or an otter. I thought he was only making an idle boast; but some of the bystanders assured me it was a well-known fact, and yet he had never been either tried or punished. This murderer is called a Christian, and his victim a heathen! It must, however, be remembered, that the feelings of the border settlers in the West were frequently exasperated by the robberies, cruelties, and outrages of neighbouring Indians; their childhood was terrified by tales of the scalping-knife, sometimes but too well founded, and they have thus been brought to consider the Indian rather as a wild beast than as a fellow-creature.”

At Keokuk three-fourths of the cargo was transferred to a keel boat to lighten the load so that the boat could ascend the rapids. Murray continues:

“The rapids are about fourteen miles long, and at the top of them is a military post or cantonment called Fort des Moines.<sup>4</sup> This site appears to me to have been chosen with singularly bad judgment; it is low, unhealthy, and quite unimportant in a military point of view: moreover, if it had been placed at the

<sup>4</sup> Murray's *Travels in North America*, Vol. II, pp. 98-100.

lower, instead of the upper end of the rapids, an immense and useless expense would have been spared to the government, inasmuch as the freighting of every article conveyed thither is now doubled. The freight on board the steamer, from which I made these observations, was twenty-five cents per hundred weight from St. Louis to Keokuk, being one hundred and seventy miles, and from St. Louis to the fort, being only fourteen miles farther, it was fifty cents.

“I landed at Fort des Moines only for a few minutes, and had but just time to remark the pale and sickly countenances of such soldiers as were loitering about the beach; indeed, I was told by a young man who was sutler at this post, that when he had left it a few weeks before, there was only one officer on duty out of seven or eight, who were stationed there. The number of desertions from this post was said to be greater than from any other in the United States. The reason is probably this: the dragoons who are posted there and at Fort Leavenworth, were formed out of a corps, called during the last Indian war ‘The Rangers;’ they have been recruited chiefly in the Eastern States, where young men of some property and enterprise were induced to join, by the flattering picture drawn of the service, and by the advantageous opportunity promised of seeing the ‘Far West.’ They were taught to expect an easy life in a country abounding with game, and that the only hardships to which they would be exposed,

would be in the exciting novelty of a yearly tour or circuit made during the spring and summer, among the wild tribes on the Missouri, Arkansas, Platte, &c.; but on arriving at their respective stations, they found a very different state of things: they were obliged to build their own barracks, store-rooms, stables, &c.; to haul and cut wood, and to perform a hundred other menial or mechanical offices, so repugnant to the prejudices of an American. If we take into consideration the facilities of escape in a steamboat, by which a deserter may place himself in a few days in the recesses of Canada, Texas, or the mines, and at the same time bear in mind the feebleness with which the American military laws and customs follow or punish deserters, we shall only wonder that the ranks can be kept as full as they are.”

Murray made little comment on Fort Armstrong but the lead mines of Galena and Dubuque interested him greatly. Since Beltrami's trip the whites had crossed to the west bank of the river and had begun a vigorous young mining settlement at Dubuque.

“I reached Dubuques without accident, and proceeded to the only tavern of which it can boast.<sup>5</sup> The landlord, whom I had met in the steamer, on ascending the Mississippi, promised me a bed to myself; a luxury that is by no means easily obtained by travellers in the West. The bar-room, which was indeed

<sup>5</sup> Murray's *Travels in North America*, Vol. II, pp. 151-157.

the only public sitting-room, was crowded with a parcel of blackguard noisy miners, from whom the most experienced and notorious blasphemers in Portsmouth or Wapping might have taken a lesson; and I felt more than ever annoyed by that absurd custom, so prevalent in America, of forcing travellers of quiet and respectable habits into the society of ruffians, by giving them no alternative but sitting in the bar-room or walking the street.

“It may be said that I am illiberal in censuring the customs of a country, by reference to those of a small infant village; but the custom to which I allude, is not confined to villages; it is common to most towns in the West, and is partially applicable to the hotels in the eastern cities. They may have dining-rooms of enormous extent, tables groaning under hundreds of dishes; but of comfort, quiet, and privacy, they know but little. It is doubtless true, that the bar of a small village tavern in England may be crowded with guests little, if at all, more refined or orderly than those Dubuques miners, but I never found a tavern in England so small or mean, that I could not have the comfort of a little room to myself, where I might read, write, or follow my own pursuits without annoyance.

“I sat by the fireside watching the strange and rough-looking characters who successively entered to drink a glass of the nauseous dilution of alcohol, variously coloured, according as they asked for brandy, whisky, or rum, when a voice from the door

inquiring of the landlord, whether accommodations for the night were to be had, struck my ear as familiar to me. I rose to look at the speaker, and our astonishment was mutual, when I recognized Dr. M. of the United States army, who is a relative of its commander-in-chief. He is a very pleasant gentlemanly man, from the state of New York, whose acquaintance I had made in my trip to Fort Leavenworth, to which place he was now on his return. After an exchange of the first expressions of pleasure and surprise, I assisted him in getting up his baggage from the canoe in which he had come down the river, and in despatching a supper that was set before him. We then returned to the bar; and after talking over some of our adventures since we parted, requested to be shown to our dormitory. This was a large room, occupying the whole of the first floor, and containing about eight or nine beds; the doctor selected one in the centre of the wall opposite the door; I chose one next to him, and the nearest to me was given to an officer who accompanied the doctor. The other beds contained two or three persons, according to the number of guests requiring accommodation.

“The doctor, his friend, and I, resolutely refused to admit any partner into our beds; and, notwithstanding the noise and oaths still prevalent in the bar, we fell asleep. I was awakened by voices close to my bed-side, and turned round to listen to the following dialogue:—

*Doctor* (to a drunken fellow who was taking off his coat and waistcoat close to the doctor's bed).—  
'Halloo! where the devil are you coming to?'

*Drunkard*.—'To bed, to be sure!'

*Doctor*.—'Where?'

*Drunkard*.—'Why, with you.'

*Doctor* (raising his voice angrily).—'I'll be d—d if you come into this bed!'

*Drunkard* (walking off with an air of dignity).—  
'Well, you need not be so d—d particular;— I'm as particular as you, I assure you!'

"Three other tipsy fellows staggered into the room, soon after midnight, and slept somewhere: they went off again before daylight without paying for their lodging, and the landlord did not even know that they had entered his house.

"It certainly appears at first sight to be a strange anomaly in human nature, that at Dubuques, Galena, and other rising towns on the Mississippi, containing in proportion to their size as profligate, turbulent, and abandoned a population as any in the world, theft is almost unknown; and though dirks are frequently drawn, and pistols fired in savage and drunken brawls, by ruffians who regard neither the laws of God nor man, I do not believe that an instance of larceny or housebreaking has occurred. So easily are money and food here obtained by labour, that it seems scarcely worth a man's while to steal. Thus, the solution of the apparent anomaly is to be found in this, that theft is a naughty

child, of which idleness is the father and want the mother.

“I spent the following day in examining the mines near Dubuques, which are not generally so rich in lead as those hitherto found on the opposite shore, towards Galena. However, the whole country in the neighbourhood contains mineral, and I have no doubt that diggings at a little distance from the town will be productive of great profits; at all events, it will be, in my opinion, a greater and more populous town than Galena ever will become.

“The next day being Sunday, I attended religious service, which was performed in a small low room, scarcely capable of containing a hundred persons. The minister was a pale, ascetic, sallow-looking man, and delivered a lecture dull and sombre as his countenance. However, it was pleasant to see even this small assemblage, who thought of divine worship in such a place as Dubuques. In the evening, there was more drunkenness and noise than usual about the bar, and one young man was pointed out to me as ‘the bully’ *par excellence*. He was a tall stout fellow, on whose countenance the evil passions had already set their indelible seal. He was said to be a great boxer, and had stabbed two or three men with his dirk during the last ten days. He had two companions with him, who acted, I suppose, as myrmidons in his brawls. When he first entered, I was sitting in the bar reading; he desired me, in a harsh imperative tone, to move out of the way, as he



wanted to get something to drink. There was plenty of room for him to go round my chair, without disturbing me; so I told him to go round if he wished a dram. He looked somewhat surprised, but he went round, and I resumed my book. Then it was that the landlord whispered to me the particulars respecting him as given above. I confess, I almost wished that he would insult me, that I might try to break his head with my good cudgel which was at hand; so incensed and disgusted was I at finding myself in the company of such a villain. However, he soon after left the room, and gave me no chance either of cracking his crown, or, what is much more probable, of getting five or six inches of his dirk into my body.

“I could not resist laughing at the absurdity of one of his companions, who was very drunk, and finding that his head was burning from the quantity of whisky that he had swallowed, an idea came into it that would never have entered the brain of any man except an Irishman, or a Kentuckian: he fancied that his *hat* was hot, and occasioned the sensation above mentioned; accordingly, he would not be satisfied till the landlord put it into a tub of cold water, and filled it; he then desired it might be soaked there till morning, and left the house contented and bare-headed.

“I was obliged to remain here yet another day, as no steamboat appeared. At length the Warrior touched, and took us off to Galena. We stopped a

short time at a large smelting establishment a mile or two below the town: on a high bluff which overlooks it is the tomb of Dubuques, a Spanish miner from whom the place derives its name. The spot is marked by a cross, and I clambered up to see it. With a disregard of sepulchral sanctity, which I have before noticed as being too prevalent in America, I found that it had been broken down in one or two places; I picked up the skull and some other bones. The grave had been built of brick, and had on one side a stone slab, bearing a simple Latin inscription, announcing that the tenant had come from the Spanish mines, and giving the usual data respecting his age, birth, death, &c. The view from this bold high bluff is very fine, but unfortunately the day on which I visited it was cloudy."

FREDRIKA BREMER — 1850

The Swedish novelist, Fredrika Bremer, made a trip to America in 1849 and spent nearly two years in this country. Her impressions, embodied in letters written at the time, were published in Sweden and also in an English translation in New York under the title *The Homes of the New World*. In the fall of 1850 she took a steamer from Buffalo to Detroit, and reached Chicago by rail. From here she went by steamer to Milwaukee and then travelled by stage across Wisconsin and south to Galena, Illinois. In a letter written from this town she gave

the following hearsay account of the inhabitants of the land on the other side of the Mississippi:<sup>6</sup>

“I heard an interesting account from a married couple whom I received in my room, and who are just now come from the wilderness beyond the Mississippi, of the so-called Squatters, a kind of white people who constitute a portion of the first colonists of the Western country. They settle themselves down here and there in the wilderness, cultivate the earth, and cultivate freedom, but will not become acquainted with any other kind of cultivation. They pay no taxes, and will not acknowledge either law or church. They live in families, have no social life, but are extremely peaceable, and no way guilty of any violation of law. All that they desire is to be at peace, and to have free elbow-room. They live very amicably with the Indians, not so well with the American whites. When these latter come with their schools, their churches, and their shops, then the Squatters withdraw themselves further and still further into the wilderness, in order to be able, as they say, to live in innocence and freedom. The whole of the Western country beyond the Mississippi and as far as the Pacific Ocean, is said to be inhabited by patches with these Squatters, or tillers of the land, the origin of whom is said to be as much unknown as that of the Clay-eaters of South Carolina and Georgia. Their way of life has also a resemblance. The Squatters, however, evince more power

<sup>6</sup> Bremer's *The Homes of the New World*, Vol. I, pp. 650-651.

and impulse of labor; the Clay-eaters subject the life of nature. The Squatters are the representatives of the wilderness, and stand as such in stiff opposition to cultivation.”

Later, however, when Miss Bremer had crossed the river and travelled in the land of the “squatters”, she wrote her own impressions:<sup>7</sup>

“The journey across the Iowa prairie in a half-covered wagon was very pleasant. The weather was as warm as a summer’s day, and the sun shone above a fertile, billowy plain, which extended far, far into the distance. Three fourths of the land of Iowa are said to be of this billowy prairie-land. The country did not appear to be cultivated, but looked extremely beautiful and home-like, an immense pasture-meadow. The scenery of the Mississippi is of a bright, cheerful character.

“In the afternoon we reached the little town of Keokuk, on a high bank by the river. We ate a good dinner at a good inn; tea was served for soup, which is a general practice at dinners in the Western inns. It was not till late in the evening that the vessel came by which we were to continue our journey, and in the mean time I set off alone on a journey of discovery. I left behind me the young city of the Mississippi, which has a good situation, and followed a path which led up the hill along the river side. The sun was descending, and clouds of a pale crimson

<sup>7</sup> Bremer’s *The Homes of the New World*, Vol. II, pp. 81-83.

tint covered the western heavens. The air was mild and calm, the whole scene expansive, bright, and calm, an idyllian landscape on a large scale.

“Small houses, at short distances from each other, studded this hill by the river side; they were neatly built of wood, of good proportions, and with that appropriateness and cleverness which distinguishes the work of the Americans. They were each one like the other, and seemed to be the habitations of work-people. Most of the doors stood open, probably to admit the mild evening air. I availed myself of this circumstance to gain a sight of the interior, and fell into discourse with two of the good women of the houses. They were, as I had imagined, the dwellings of artisans who had work in the town. There was no luxury in these small habitations, but every thing was so neat and orderly, so ornamental, and there was such a holiday calm over every thing, from the mistress of the family down to the very furniture, that it did one good to see it. It was also Sunday evening, and the peace of the Sabbath rested within the home as well as over the country.

“When I returned to my herberg in the town it was quite dusk; but it had, in the mean time, been noised abroad that some sort of Scandinavian animal was to be seen at the inn, and it was now requested to come and show itself.

“I went down, accordingly, into the large saloon, and found a great number of people there, principally of the male sex, who increased more and more

until there was a regular throng, and I had to shake hands with many most extraordinary figures. But one often sees such here in the West. The men work hard, and are careless regarding their toilet; they do not give themselves time to attend to it; but their unkemmed outsides are no type of that which is within, as I frequently observed this evening. I also made a somewhat closer acquaintance, to my real pleasure, with a little company of more refined people; I say *refined* intentionally, not *better*, because those phrases, better and worse, are always indefinite, and less suitable in this country than in any other; I mean well-bred and well-dressed ladies and gentlemen, the aristocracy of Keokuk. Not being myself of a reserved disposition, I like the American open, frank, and friendly manner. It is easy to become acquainted, and it is very soon evident whether there is reciprocity of feeling or not.”

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON — 1879

It was nearly thirty years later that Robert Louis Stevenson visited Iowa. In 1879 he crossed the ocean in an emigrant ship, and started across the continent toward San Francisco in an emigrant train, loaded down with a valise, a knapsack, and — in the bag of his railway rug — six fat volumes of Bancroft's *History of the United States*. He left the following record of a day of travel between Burlington and Council Bluffs.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Stevenson's *Across the Plains* (Scribner Edition, 1912), pp. 24-28.

“*Thursday*.—I suppose there must be a cycle in the fatigue of travelling, for when I awoke next morning, I was entirely renewed in spirits and ate a hearty breakfast of porridge, with sweet milk, and coffee and hot cakes, at Burlington upon the Mississippi. Another long day’s ride followed, with but one feature worthy of remark. At a place called Creston, a drunken man got in. He was aggressively friendly, but, according to English notions, not at all unpresentable upon a train. For one stage he eluded the notice of the officials; but just as we were beginning to move out of the next station, Cromwell by name, by came the conductor. There was a word or two of talk; and then the official had the man by the shoulders, twitched him from his seat, marched him through the car, and sent him flying on to the track. It was done in three motions, as exact as a piece of drill. The train was still moving slowly, although beginning to mend her pace, and the drunkard got his feet without a fall. He carried a red bundle, though not so red as his cheeks; and he shook this menacingly in the air with one hand, while the other stole behind him to the region of the kidneys. It was the first indication that I had come among revolvers, and I observed it with some emotion. The conductor stood on the steps with one hand on his hip, looking back at him; and perhaps this attitude imposed upon the creature, for he turned without further ado, and went off staggering along the track towards Cromwell, followed by a peal of laughter from the cars. They were speaking

English all about me, but I knew I was in a foreign land.

“Twenty minutes before nine that night, we were deposited at the Pacific Transfer Station near Council Bluffs, on the eastern bank of the Missouri River. Here we were to stay the night at a kind of caravanserai, set apart for emigrants. But I gave way to a thirst for luxury, separated myself from my companions, and marched with my effects into the Union Pacific Hotel. A white clerk and a coloured gentleman whom, in my plain European way, I should call the boots, were installed behind a counter like bank tellers. They took my name, assigned me a number, and proceeded to deal with my packages. And here came the tug of war. I wished to give up my packages into safe keeping; but I did not wish to go to bed. And this, it appeared, was impossible in an American hotel.

“It was, of course, some inane misunderstanding, and sprang from my unfamiliarity with the language. For although two nations use the same words and read the same books, intercourse is not conducted by the dictionary. The business of life is not carried on by words, but in set phrases, each with a special and almost a slang signification. Some international obscurity prevailed between me and the coloured gentleman at Council Bluffs; so that what I was asking, which seemed very natural to me, appeared to him a monstrous exigency. He refused, and that with the plainness of the West. This American manner of conducting matters of business is, at



first, highly unpalatable to the European. When we approach a man in the way of his calling, and for those services by which he earns his bread, we consider him for the time being our hired servant. But in the American opinion, two gentlemen meet and have a friendly talk with a view to exchanging favours if they shall agree to please. I know not which is the more convenient, nor even which is the more truly courteous. The English stiffness unfortunately tends to be continued after the particular transaction is at an end, and thus favours class separations. But on the other hand, these equalitarian plainnesses leave an open field for the insolence of Jack-in-office.

“I was nettled by the coloured gentleman’s refusal, and unbuttoned my wrath under the similitude of ironical submission. I knew nothing, I said, of the ways of American hotels; but I had no desire to give trouble. If there was nothing for it but to get to bed immediately, let him say the word, and though it was not my habit, I should cheerfully obey.

“He burst into a shout of laughter. ‘Ah!’ said he, ‘you do not know about America. They are fine people in America. Oh! you will like them very well. But you mustn’t get mad. I know what you want. You come along with me.’

“And issuing from behind the counter, and taking me by the arm like an old acquaintance, he led me to the bar of the hotel.

“‘There,’ said he, pushing me from him by the shoulder, ‘go and have a drink!’ ”

## Comment by the Editor

### THE MEANING OF IOWA

Why should Iowa mean anything to us? It is not the greatest State in the Union in size, in numbers, or in wealth. It has no large city — no mecca for the pilgrimages of mankind. Its shores are not washed by the sea as are those of California and Florida. Its hills do not rise into the blue like the mountains of Colorado. It does not look out toward the island empire of either Great Britain or Japan. Its people can not talk across the fence to the Canadians or feel the stir of excitement along the prickly border of Mexico.

But it is the heart of America. Its shores are the two greatest rivers of the continent. Its rolling hills and fertile plains smile in the sun — well content with the task of making manna for millions. It has woods and winding streams and blue lakes, and towns with shady streets and green lawns and alert and friendly people.

And it has traditions. We are young in the land, but the land is old. Its story runs back of the days when glaciers slipped down across it; back to the times when the sea covered the Mississippi Basin. Into the long story come the red men, and after many generations the whites. The songs of French boatmen echo upon its streams; Spanish fur traders trail its western shore. Julien Dubuque and Manuel Lisa move through the misty past. Builders of

homes arrive and out of the border land a State comes into the Union. Congressmen, soldiers, and farmers, lawyers, business men, and wide-visioned women play their parts; and so our heritage has grown.

And yet, probably it is the associations of a more immediate past, the memory of more intimate and homely things that makes up for us the thought of Iowa. It is where we live — perhaps where we have always lived. Its people are our people, and Iowa is our State. We frame its laws and try to obey them. It is we who build its institutions and make its history and look forward to the enjoyment of its future. The familiar scenes of the land between the rivers have woven themselves into our lives. And so Iowa means a thousand things to us — the rush of water in the gutters in the spring time, and the smell of burning leaves in the fall; the tang of early frost and the sight of oaks still clinging to their rusty foliage on the hill tops; the sound of birds in the early summer morning, and the stillness graven on the marble of a winter night. It means black mud in the bottom road and red sumac along the fence; small towns and large corn fields; *Wallace's Farmer* and Ding's cartoons; the clack of the mower and the memory of boys going off to war.

Iowa has its faults; but so, perhaps, have our parents, our wives, and our children — to say nothing of ourselves. And after all, we can not explain the charm of the things we love. Let us then not so

much boast of Iowa as be happy in it. Let us look with seeing eyes upon its beauties, and with friendly eyes upon its people — our neighbors. Let us know its story and make sure that we ourselves play in it a worthy part; for what we make it mean to us, that will it mean to those who come hereafter.

J. C. P.

# The ALMPPSEST

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

The PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by The State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

*Superintendent*

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. I

ISSUED IN DECEMBER 1920

No. 6

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## Crossing the Mississippi

In the early movement of settlers to Iowa, the Mississippi River played a double rôle. To the emigrants from Virginia, Kentucky, and other States bordering on the Ohio and Mississippi, it served as an invaluable highway. To those who came overland from Chicago, Milwaukee, or any point in Illinois, on the other hand, it loomed up as an almost impassable barrier. Either as an aid or a hindrance to travel, it was a factor all early emigrants had to reckon with.

The difficulties to be encountered by travel in a white-topped emigrant wagon in those early days can hardly be over-emphasized. There were few roads and no bridges. Broken traces and mired wheels were the common happenings of a day's journey. Rivers proved to be an unfailing source of trouble. The small streams were crossed by fording; the larger ones by swimming the teams, wagons and all. But when the Father of Waters was reached, these methods were out of the question:

here apparently was an insurmountable obstacle. However, these eager home seekers were not willing to be deprived of the hard earned fruits of their trying journey — now lying within sight — by a mere river. And out of this situation came the ferry.

The earliest type of ferry to operate on the Mississippi River was the canoe. It served the Indians as a means of crossing long before the whites penetrated as far west as the Mississippi. When the white explorers finally reached the valley region, they also adopted the customary mode of crossing long followed by their red predecessors. At a still later period, the canoe answered the more frequent and pressing demands of the hunters and trappers on their way to and from the country then regarded as the far west. It even survived till the day when occasional homeseekers in their emigrant wagons found their way into that pioneer region.

Only the ordinary difficulties and risks of canoeing attended the crossing of the river by the Indians, white explorers, and trappers; but with the emigrants it was different. For as a pioneer account relates, "wagons had to be unloaded and taken to pieces, and both they and their loads shipped in small cargoes at a voyage, till all were over; then the teams had to be unharnessed or unyoked and made to swim, the horses being led by the halter at the side of the canoe, and the oxen by the horns." A still more hazardous undertaking was the crossing



in winter, and in the springtime when huge cakes of ice raced along on the swift current, ready to smash into splinters any luckless craft that might get in the way. But this was not always taken into account by travellers eager to reach their destination, and sometimes, in the face of imminent peril, they insisted on being ferried over.

An example of this is afforded by the story of a New Englander — a young college graduate wholly unfamiliar with the stern conditions of pioneer life. He arrived at a point on the Illinois shore opposite Burlington, in December, 1840. Being very anxious to get across the river that evening, he tried to engage the services of the ferryman, who, however, flatly refused to venture on the river in the dark, giving as his reason that the floating ice made it far too perilous. Nothing daunted by the ferryman's dark and foreboding picture, the easterner still demanded to be taken over, but it proved futile. So instead of the hoped for conveniences of a Burlington hotel, he was forced to accept the more scant offerings of a one-roomed cabin, and submit to the discomfort of sleeping in the same room with thirty others — men, women, and children. But the next day when the canoe landed him safely on the Burlington side of the river after an hour's trying struggle among the floating cakes of ice, he probably felt less bitter toward the stubborn ferryman.

While the canoe met very satisfactorily the needs of the early explorers, stray travellers, and occa-

sional homeseekers, it proved wholly inadequate for the stream of emigrants which followed the opening of the Black Hawk Purchase. Imagine the situation when a group of twelve or more emigrant wagons lined up on the Illinois shore to be ferried over — the confusion, the frenzied haste to get the wagons unloaded and taken to pieces, the long disheartening wait while the total tonnage of the wagons was being taken over, bit by bit, when the hours dragged and even the best natured grew surly. Hence, to meet this situation brought about by the onrush of settlers to the Iowa country, regular public ferries equipped to carry whole wagonloads at a time came into use.

The regular public ferries passed through several well defined stages of evolution, easily distinguished by the type of motive power. Flat-boats and skiffs marked the initial stage. The craft generally spoken of as "flat-boats" were huge barge-like affairs, so constructed as to hold wagon, team, and other equipment. They were steered by huge sweeps, often as long as the boats themselves. By some these boats were designated as "mud scows". The distinguishing characteristic of this type was that man supplied the motive power. Propelled in some cases by oars, in others by poles, in still others by huge sweeps, it was nevertheless human strength that furnished the moving force.

Although a marked improvement over the canoe, the flat-boat did not do away with the trials of

ferrying. A large element of risk still remained: the craft was always at the mercy of the current and was carried well down stream. After dark the hazards of crossing multiplied and ferrymen charged accordingly. And in many cases it still took an hour or more to cross the river.

While it is very likely that the first flat-boat ferry to operate on the Mississippi within the borders of Iowa was one established at Keokuk to serve the early settlers in the Half Breed Tract, there appears to be no recorded evidence to show it. So far as can be gathered from available records, Clark's Ferry at Buffalo marks the opening of flat-boat ferrying in Iowa. The ferry was established by Captain Benjamin W. Clark in 1833 while he was still living at Andalusia, Illinois. For a number of years it held the distinction of being the most noted ferry between Burlington and Dubuque. Indeed, one writer went so far as to state that it was "the most convenient place to cross the Mississippi . . . anywhere between Balize and Prairie du Chien." And probably a major portion of the traffic passing from the direction of the Illinois River to the mining region west of the Mississippi, or toward the interior, crossed the river at this point.

However, this reputation was short lived, and later developments lead one to believe that it was based more on the conspicuous absence of other ferries than on any intrinsic qualities. In 1836, Antoine Le Claire established a ferry at Davenport — a few

miles below Buffalo — and he gradually drew away most of the travel that had heretofore passed over Clark's Ferry.

As the stream of emigrants heading for the Iowa country increased in volume, the process of carrying it over the Mississippi in man-propelled craft soon became inadequate. Probably some ingenious individual saw the absurdity in having humans sweat and toil away at the poles and oars while veritable reservoirs of power rested on the ferry boat, and struck upon the happy idea of making the horses furnish the power. At any rate, a transition did take place wherein the crude flat-boat gave way to the horse ferry, an affair moved by horse power rather than by man power. However, the transition was not a complete one; in many cases this stage was not present, the flat-boat being directly followed by the steam ferry.

In a newspaper published in Bloomington (Muscatine) in 1841 the following notice appears:

“A new boat, propelled by horse power, has lately been placed upon the river at this place, for the accommodation of the ferry; and, though hastily made, all of green oak, and clumsy in its exterior, it swims like a swan and will cross in eight minutes with ease and safety. We may flatter ourselves that a ferry is now permanently established.”

The third, and by far the most vital step, was the introduction of steam as a motive power. And while very little record is to be had of the actual results of

the change from human to horse strength, evidence as to the effects of the transition to steam is abundant. Whole streams of immigration were diverted from their customary avenues of travel to seek the conveniences offered by steam ferries. Nor is this to be wondered at. Regular trips were now made every hour, in some cases every fifteen minutes. Moreover, in sharp contrast to the time it took to cross in a flat-boat — sometimes several hours — the crossing could now be made in five minutes. This spurt in speed of crossing was closely paralleled by a tremendous leap in carrying capacity. For as a matter of fact, the crude flat-boat capable of carrying a single wagon had now grown to a gigantic affair which could carry eighteen or more teams at once, and even whole trains. As in other industries, the introduction of steam marked a new era in the ferry business.

The extent to which steam power revolutionized ferrying is also revealed in the following comment from a Dubuque newspaper: “Bogy’s splendid new steam ferryboat is doing the most rushing business of the season. She is puffing and blowing all the time. She is a perfect Godsend to California emigrants. If the number of wagons that she brings across in a day had to abide the tardiness of the old-fashioned horse boat, they would not reach this side in a week.”

Probably the first steam ferry to operate on the Mississippi within the borders of Iowa was estab-

lished by Captain John Wilson in 1852. It is said that he launched the steam ferry as early as 1843, but it was found to be too far in advance of the times and so was taken off the river until 1852. This ferry plied across the river at Davenport.

John Wilson was unusually energetic, enterprising, and capable, as a ferryman. In 1837 he purchased Antoine Le Claire's ferry business, and immediately began building new flat-boats. By 1841 he had a horse ferry boat in operation and his steam ferry was launched in 1843. Moreover, he made an arrangement with the Rock River ferry located at the mouth of the Green River, whereby one fare paid the way over both ferries.

A more novel contribution to ferrying at Davenport accredited to the enterprising Wilson was the ferry alarm. The conditions leading to the adoption of the alarm have been ably told by a contemporary writer as follows: "In primitive times in order to arouse the ferryman on the opposite shore the Stephensonites (now Rock Islanders) who had been over here in Davenport to attend evening services and overstayed their time, or zealous Davenporters who after dark had occasion to visit Stephenson in a missionary cause, had to raise the 'war-whoop'. In order to discourage relics of barbarism Mr. Wilson introduced the ferry triangle, an ungainly piece of triangular steel which, when vigorously pounded with a club, sent forth from its gallows tree a most wretched clanging noise. But it brought the skiff though it awakened the whole town."

No account of ferries in Iowa would be complete without some mention at least of tolls, and cost of franchises. As a matter of fact, these are but special phases of the general subject, and they illuminate it materially. In the early days when the Mississippi was crossed in ferries, money was not so plentiful as it is to-day. Hence, ferry fees were often paid with goods. The circumstances under which Clark collected his first ferriage afford an instance, and they also show something of the man's temper. A company of French traders on their way from the Iowa River to the Trading Post on Rock Island encamped one evening at Buffalo. The information that Clark intended to establish a ferry across the river at this point, they received as a huge joke, ridiculing the whole enterprise. Nevertheless, they called loudly for the ferry-boat to carry their drove of cattle across, little dreaming that it would appear. Nor is it very likely that they realized the type of man they were dealing with.

Captain Clark, his flat-boat completed and ready for service, gathered enough men and boys to operate the boat, and in no pleasant frame of mind set out into the dark to offer his services to the noisy Frenchmen. When the traders noticed the flat-boat approaching, however, they burst into uproarious laughter, aiming to turn the whole matter off as a joke; and they told the Captain they had nothing to ferry and that he might return. But he was not so easily disposed of, for his temper was now thor-

oughly aroused. He landed his boat, marched into the camp of the Frenchmen with his small crew, and angrily demanded ten dollars as his ferriage fee. The whole affair speedily lost its comical aspects, and the traders saw that the infuriated Captain would brook no further trifling. But to their great embarrassment, they had not ten dollars in money among them. So they offered him two bolts of calico which he accepted.

Another incident arising out of the scarcity of money is related of Antoine Le Claire who established his ferry at Davenport in 1836. As his fee for ferrying a number of sheep over the river, he accepted their fleeces, the owner having had them sheared prior to the crossing. This wool he kept for a while, but failing to find any particular use for it, he finally burned it to get rid of it.

But it must not be understood that it was the daily occurrence for a party to pay its way over the river in calico or in raw wool. These were the unusual and striking incidents. Ordinarily, of course, fares were paid in money. The County Commissioner's Court at Rockingham in May, 1838, fixed the following ferriage rates for the Mississippi River:

Footmen	\$ .18 $\frac{3}{4}$
Man and horse	.50
One vehicle and driver	.75
Two horses, vehicle and driver	1.00
Each additional horse or mule	.18 $\frac{3}{4}$



Meat cattle, per head	.12½
Sheep or hogs	.05
Freight per hundred	.06¼

From sunset to sunrise, double rates were allowed.

The puzzling feature of this table stands out in the apparent difficulty of making change in ½ cents and ¼ cents. And for both explanation and solution one must go back to a day when money was nearly non-existent. Says a writer of that early day, "During all this time there was no money of any description. Talk about scarcity now a days! Then the only change aside from barter consisted of bits and picayunes—the former a piece of the eighth part of a Spanish milled dollar, cut with a chisel into eight equal parts when the operation was fairly and honestly done, but the skilful and designing often made nine bits and even ten out of one dollar piece. The picayune in like manner was a Spanish quarter cut into four equal parts, hence the origin of these two terms bits and picayunes."

The table then, was based on the actual circulation of the crude bits of chiseled coin which survived a day when money was very scarce. Not infrequently, however, one party or the other had to surrender the half or fourth cent in making change.

While the ferries of early days rendered practically the same public service that the bridges of to-day do, they were, for the most part, established for private profit. And when one considers the striking similarity between crossing the Mississippi

in a ferry-boat and crossing it over a bridge, it seems odd that a toll should have to be paid in the one case and not in the other. Nevertheless, free ferries were as conspicuously absent then as free bridges are prevalent to-day.

On the other hand, the idea of a free public ferry was not altogether unheard of. By legislative act the commissioners of Louisa County were authorized to establish and keep a ferry across the Iowa River which was to render its services free to all the citizens of the county. And at the extra session of the First General Assembly the Mayor and Aldermen of Ft. Madison were authorized to provide for "the free carriage across the Mississippi river for one year, of all persons with their property coming to Ft. Madison for the purpose of trading with its inhabitants, and bringing marketing and produce to the place". Moreover, there was considerable agitation for the free ferry in a number of the larger towns.

License fees kept pace with the rapid development of the ferries in general — the increase in carrying capacity, the substitution of steam in the place of horse or man power, and the increase in volume of business. Beginning with the humble figure of \$2.00 per year or less, the cost of franchises leaped, in the course of time, to the striking figure of \$1000 annually. Before the formal granting of ferry franchises through legislative action, licenses were not required. There appears to be no written evidence

that either Captain Clark or Antoine Le Claire or Captain John Wilson paid license fees. But with the establishing of ferries through legal processes, charges were made for the right to carry on the business.

The County Commissioner's Court which met at Rockingham in May, 1838, fixed the following schedules for licenses on the Mississippi: Davenport, \$20.00; Buffalo, \$10.00; Rockingham, \$8.00; and all others \$5.00. How long these schedules remained in force we are not told; very likely it was not many years. Gregoire's ferry established at Dubuque was required to pay \$100.00 annually. And the Council Bluffs and Nebraska Ferry Company was charged \$1000 annually for the right to operate on the Missouri at Council Bluffs.

In the course of time the steamboat replaced the steam ferry, and this marked the last stage of water transportation. Then came the bridges and wherever they appeared the ferries became an insignificant factor in crossing the Mississippi. In 1855 the first bridge across the Mississippi at Davenport was completed; eighteen years later a second bridge followed. The Illinois shore was linked to the Iowa shore at Clinton in 1864. Four years later work was in full sway on a bridge at Dubuque. And in 1891 the so called "high bridge" was opened at Muscatine.

It is needless to further catalogue these Mississippi crossings. Suffice it to say that since the nine-

ties all the important river towns have built bridges. And although water crossings still exist and doubtless always will, it is apparent that the spanning of the Mississippi with mighty bridges sounded the death knell of the once prosperous trade of ferrying.

WILLIAM S. JOHNSON

## Clint Parkhurst

Henry Clinton Parkhurst, a man of brilliant mind, a prolific author of fine prose and poetry productions, has in consequence of a tangle of circumstances, almost sunk into oblivion, yet the memory of him is fresh in the minds of a few of his former acquaintances who have made unavailing efforts to learn his recent whereabouts.

It was a happy incident that *THE PALIMPSEST* published in a recent number a few of Parkhurst's *Martial Memories*, in which the private of the Sixteenth Iowa Infantry tells the graphic details — spiced with humor and some self-mockery — of the terrific Battle of Shiloh where he received his first and lasting impressions of war, for by that publication the interest in the author has been revived.

Where Clinton Parkhurst is living — at an age of 76 or 77 — the present writer does not know. Neither has he much knowledge of his doings after he left the Iowa Soldiers' Home at Marshalltown, of which he is reported to have been an inmate since 1895. As a matter of fact he probably spent comparatively few years at the Home for during that period he was for a longer or shorter time in various parts of the country — East, West, and South. But of the earlier years much can be told and the following account is an attempt to contribute some of the missing fragments of the "biographical mosaic".

The village of Parkhurst in Scott County, where Clint was born in 1844, and the neighboring village of LeClaire, which in 1855 were consolidated under the name of LeClaire, have been centers of intellectual life from their earliest days, and Mr. and Mrs. Lemuel Parkhurst, the parents of Clinton, were prominent in that society. His mother early recognized the bright qualities of her son and granted him every advantage for their cultivation. In later years he wrote of his mother :

Ignore the common goal, she said,  
Leave fools to gather rubbish vile;  
Lift thou thine eyes to heights o'erhead,  
And seek to bask in Glory's smile.  
The sluggard perishes in shame,  
The Shylock's pomps with him expire.  
The hero leaves a deathless name  
For countless ages to admire.  
Strong be thy will — as iron strong,  
To cleave a path to grand renown,  
And, peerless in the fields of song,  
To millions shall thy name go down.  
Let proud ambition sway thy mind, —  
To live, that when thy race is o'er,  
Resplendent tracks shall glow behind.

Clint had his early training in a select school in LeClaire, taught by a Mrs. Mary Marks, a highly educated English lady, the wife of an Episcopal minister. In Davenport he first attended the public

school, then Iowa College, and after its removal to Grinnell, the Griswold College. He is said — and probably truthfully — to have been full of harmless pranks. He had a peculiar way of translating phonetically some silly Latin sentences: for instance, “Pastor ridebit” he would give in English “Pastor, ride a bit”, and for “Puer juraverat” he would say “The poor jury ’ve a rat”. This sort of linguistic sport, however, was not always appreciated by the teacher. From early youth he evinced a remarkable gift for beautiful prose writing and also for versification which augured a great future.

In February, 1862, at a little over seventeen years of age, he enlisted in Co. C of the Sixteenth Iowa Infantry and on March 20th was sent with his regiment to St. Louis. There the raw recruit was equipped with a glittering rifle and other paraphernalia and was sent a few days later to war, the horrors of which he immediately experienced in the bloody Battle of Shiloh. Never shirking from duty, or avoiding the perils of battle, he participated in all the important events of the various campaigns up to the battles around Atlanta, when he with the greater portion of the gallant regiment was captured and held a prisoner by the Confederates.

From the beginning of his military service he kept a daily record of all he saw and participated in, continuing it till the war ended, not ceasing to write secretly in the deadly stockades of Andersonville, Millen, and Florence. Thus he accumulated much

highly valuable material which was later elaborated in a large number of war sketches and also furnished a delicate coloring for his different epical works.

Parkhurst was mustered out of service in July, 1865, and became a reporter on the *Davenport Democrat*, but soon shifted to a paper in Le Claire, thence to Rock Island, Moline, Muscatine, Des Moines, and other places. In one or two of these papers he had even acquired a pecuniary interest. He never stayed long in one position, nowhere finding an opportunity that would suit his particular ideals of journalism, and he quit. He turned to writing magazine articles and other forms of literary work. For, as he says of himself:

From his very boyhood days  
*Fame* had been his constant dream.

It is difficult, almost to the verge of impossibility, to follow Clint Parkhurst's much twisted meanderings. One month he might be in Chicago or New York, and the next in San Francisco, St. Louis, or Tacoma, doing for a short time some editorial or other literary work, or he would spend weeks and months in the Sierras to gather new inspirations. In 1874 and 1875 he was in Mexico and Nicaragua, and the fruit of this jaunt was an extensive epos entitled "Sun Worship Shores". In 1876 he came from California back to Davenport, where in De-



ember of that year he was admitted to the bar of Scott County.

The subjects of his writings were almost exclusively historical — biblical or secular. Numerous sketches from the Civil War have been published in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Chicago News*, the *Davenport Democrat*, the *Davenport Times*, the *Davenport Leader*, the *Omaha Bee*, the *Galveston News*, the *Boston Investigator*, the *Marshalltown Register*, etc., either over his real name or the nom de plume "Free Lance". Several of the above named papers printed also large extracts from his epics, "Shot and Shell", "Judith", "Voyage of Columbus", "In Custer's Honor", "Pauline", "Sun Worship Shores", "Death Speech of Robert Emmett", and others. As a sample of his mode of treatment of biblical themes the following paraphrase, entitled "Solomon's Lament", may find a place:

O Shulamite return, return —  
My heart is lone, no joys can cheer;  
The very stars have ceased to burn  
With wonted rays, and chill and drear  
The breezes come from mountains bare  
To moan to me in low despair.  
They miss thee as the stars have done,  
Thy roses swoon beneath the sun;  
All nature sighs, all fair things yearn  
For thee — O Shulamite return.

Return, return, O Shulamite —  
 I cannot stay my grief with wine;  
 I cannot through the day or night  
 These wasting thoughts of thee resign;  
 No more my wonted joys delight,  
 No more I bow at Pleasure's shrine,  
 Nor bask in halls of glory bright —  
 How long, O sweet, must I repine?

A kindred one I cannot meet  
 'Mong all Judea's joyous throng;  
 O whither stray thy joyous feet,  
 Thou princess of my mournful song?  
 O peerless idol of my mind,  
 Thou sweeter than the breath of dawn;  
 O fairest of all womankind —  
 Queen of my heart, where hast thou gone?  
 Hath love yet lore thou hast not taught,  
 Or lore I have not deigned to learn?  
 Then be all lore save thine forgot —  
 O Shulamite return, return.

Several times Parkhurst lost large parts of his manuscripts, in two instances a whole book. Portions of them he resurrected from newspaper files, and in filling the gaps he also improved these works. In the winter of 1904, in his old home city, and with many of his literary notes and treasures around him, he again prepared his writings, including a new epos of about 1200 lines entitled "Tamerlane Victorious or the World's Desolation", for a book. When com-

pleted, it went up with other matter in flame and smoke.

Newspapers generally are not inclined to print much rhyme, or long poetry. They view original verse with disfavor. But they were generous to Clint Parkhurst, giving much space to extensive extracts from his works, and these, at least, could be lifted out of their graves.

With book publishers he was much less successful. Byron once gave his publisher a splendidly bound Bible, and the recipient was proud of it until he happened to discover that his friend donor had altered the last verse of the 18th chapter of St. John (Now Barrabas was a robber) so as to read: "Now Barrabas was a *publisher*."

Parkhurst came to the conclusion that most of the American publishers were Barrabases. He has named many a publishing house of prominence which has injured him. He has also publicly pilloried several distinguished authors who have appropriated, literally or with slight changes, large portions of his manuscripts when temporarily in their possession. In this respect he fared worse than the poor devils of young Frenchmen who wrote good stories for the great Dumas, who put his name upon their front pages. But they were paid, however miserably, for their slave-work. Clint did not get a cent for the productions stolen from him, but was treated with abuse when he remonstrated.

In newspapers may often be seen advertisements

like this: "Cash paid for bright ideas." When a writer without a name subjects such ideas to the advertiser they are kept for awhile and then courteously declined, but after some little time they appear, somewhat masked, in a book, perhaps, under some famous person's name. Clint once replied to an advertisement in a New York paper offering literary employment, and was invited to an interview, in the course of which a bulky manuscript was produced, which he was only permitted to glance at for a few minutes. He could only gather that it was a maritime narrative. The advertiser said: "The material is good, but the book doesn't suit us exactly. We want it reproduced in a little better style. What can you do the job for?" Clint was very poor and needed a little money badly; but he declined to "do the job"; he did not want to assist a leech to suck another poor fellow's heartblood.

In 1896, in his temporary Tusculum, the Soldiers' Home of Virginia, he wrote an historical romance concerning the Black Hawk War, entitled "A Military Belle". It was a book of love and adventure, and inwoven was the story of the proverbial unlucky man, for whom the author himself was the model. Under disadvantages and persecuted by the management of the Home, who attributed to him certain derogatory newspaper letters which he never wrote, the manuscript was finished after about a year. A publisher was found in New York, and the outlook was fine. Because of some one's blunders several

letters of the publisher did not reach the author who never saw a proof, and the publication was long delayed. Parkhurst finally went to New York, where he learned that the book had already been stereotyped. But it abounded in grievous errors, and numerous plates had to be cut and cast over. At last, in 1899, the Military Belle made her bow, and an encouragingly large number of books were sold. But the publisher failed, and Clint got only about \$9 from the debacle.

The last and probably the greatest of his many literary misfortunes was blended with the one of the city of San Francisco. In Davenport he had gathered from many newspaper columns a large portion of his poetical writings, which he re-arranged, carefully improved, and incorporated in a manuscript ready for the printer. This manuscript he sent in 1905 to his daughter Mabel in San Francisco — as usual without keeping a duplicate. On the 18th day of April, 1906, that beautiful city was visited by earthquake and conflagration. His daughter did well enough to save her life, but all her belongings and the manuscript of her father were destroyed.

Parkhurst outlived this shock as he had many previous minor ones. In January, 1908, a Davenport friend received from him a hopeful letter out of the Missouri mountains. He wrote that he had taken up the life of a literary hermit. "I came to the wilds of the Ozarks last summer," he wrote, "and the venture has been a success. I own an acre

of ground, have a good house on it, have a library of fifty choice volumes, and several dozen magazines and daily papers, and have every want supplied. My pension has been increased to \$12 per month." He was enthused over the "glorious sceneries" and the "incomparable climate." His health was good; for "anybody's health is good here." But the solitude there could not suit him for any great length of time. He returned to the Iowa Soldiers' Home, where he was in company with his old commander, Col. Add. H. Sanders. From that place he disappeared in August, 1913, after having spent there, off and on, periods of various duration. Nothing has of late been heard of any more literary work of his.

AUG. P. RICHTER

## Comment by the Editor

CLINTON PARKHURST

Somewhere on the shore of the Pacific Ocean, Clinton Parkhurst is apparently still living. Since the publication of the October PALIMPSEST we have had many letters about the writer of *A Few Martial Memories*. Some of these letters were from readers who did not know Parkhurst but whose interest was aroused by his graphic descriptive powers. Others have come from men and women who have known Clinton Parkhurst at different times in his career — and they have supplied many of the missing fragments of the mosaic.

We have heard from friends of Clinton Parkhurst in his schoolboy days, from neighbors, from his fellow journalists, from his brother, and from his daughter. We can now definitely connect him with the early Parkhursts of the town of that name. His father, Lemuel Parkhurst, was the son of Sterling Parkhurst and a nephew of Eleazer Parkhurst, the founder of the town. Here he was born in 1844, in the same township where two years later “Buffalo Bill” Cody first saw the light of day.

The most complete account of Parkhurst that has come to us is that of Aug. P. Richter, for many years editor of *Der Demokrat* of Davenport; and it is this story which is printed in the present number of THE

PALIMPSEST. The letters and accounts, however, whether from friend or relative, are alike in one respect. They fail to answer the question: Where is Clinton Parkhurst? With all of them the trails run out and stop. We have heard that two of his friends say, in identical phraseology, that he is "basking on the shores of the Pacific", but they do not say where.

Probably we could find his address by writing to the Pension Department at Washington. But this we do not intend to do. The biographical mosaic is nearly complete. If the subject of the portrait wishes to keep the corner piece in his pocket during his last few years, it is his right and we shall respect it. We are happy to have read some of his writings, and to know something of the man, and we shall wish him many happy days on the sunset shores of America.

#### THE RIVER

It will soon be two hundred and fifty years since the canoes of Marquette and Jolliet swept out of the Wisconsin into the waters of the Mississippi; and in those long years the river has had a wonderful history. Full of romance are the days when explorer and fur trader paddled their slender barks up and down the stream. Upon its broad highway the settlers of the Louisiana Purchase arrived. Primitive steamboats laid their course along the beautiful shores of the prairie land of Iowa, while busy ferries laced their way back and forth across the cur-



rent. Then came the heyday of the paddle wheel — those adventurous times when the roar of the whistle and the sound of the pilot's bell were heard on every bend of the river; when captains and crews raced their boats with a high spirit of sport, feeding the fires with barrels of resin till the flames sometimes blazed from the tops of the stacks. Snags and explosion and fire took a heavy toll, but it was not these accidents that spoiled the game and made Mark Twain's river a thing of the past. Just as the ferries gave way to the bridges, so the steamboat traffic declined with the extension of railroads. The river still runs past our borders. Its banks are as beautiful as ever. The "wooded islands" and "enchanted scenes" of Beltrami's day are still there.

Last summer we wanted to do as Beltrami and so many others had done — travel by boat up the river to the falls of St. Anthony and see the beauties of the Upper Mississippi by night and day from a steamer's deck. But we were told that there was no steamship line now making the trip. Beltrami, nearly a hundred years ago, had the advantage of us. We can only travel alongside and see the river from a car window or catch fleeting, smoke-veiled vistas as we slip across on the bridges. However, if the old adventurous days are denied us in the present and if the scenic highway is closed we can at least enjoy the glories of the past and we intend to tell in *THE PALIMPSEST* during the coming year some of the stories of the days when the Steamboat was King.

J. C. P.



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  - The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
  - The Miscellaneous Publications
  - The Bulletins of Information
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## MEMBERSHIP

Membership in The State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$50.00.

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