

American Home Missionary Letters From Iowa

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THE ORIGINALS OF THIS COLLECTION OF LETTERS ARE NOW IN THE POSSESSION OF MR. FLOYD E. RISVOLD, EDINA, MINN.

(Part I)

A large portion of the history of the United States prior to 1900 involves the movement of Americans westward from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific coast. Americans were frontiersmen and expansionists from the time they set foot on this continent. Almost as soon as they had established themselves, many of them were looking beyond the settled areas to the uncleared and unexplored forest.

Usually the mention of the American frontier stirs up visions of hunters and trappers, and of traders who obtained their treasures in furs from the Indians in exchange for trinkets, blankets, firearms and whiskey. Within this image of the frontier are sturdy pioneers who possessed a number of talents and abilities; the men who trapped and hunted when possible or necessary, who farmed when time allowed, who cut trees, wrestled out the stumps or broke the prairie sod to plant crops.

Within the standard view of the frontier, there is also the belief in the existence of lawlessness and disorder, of raw communities in which few of the ingredients of genteel society could be found, of crude living conditions, of brawling men, of an unstable, transient population lacking the dependability upon which to build lasting communities and a secure life.

It is true that the American frontier, whether it be the backwoods areas of the original 13 states, the log cabin setting of the hunter-farmer, the villages of the prairie and plains or the bleak mining and cattle centers of the far West, included some raw, untamed elements. But, some of the settlers who moved westward did not migrate there seeking lawlessness and an absence of the social niceties. While they went

west for the opportunity it offered, they preferred to have that opportunity in an atmosphere of stability and order, in surroundings much like those which they had left behind.

Those migrants to the frontier who wanted an orderly society had their counterparts in the older areas of the nation. For some of the men who remained behind in the East, felt that the newly-settled regions should establish a way of life which would include and preserve their values and culture. Some easterners felt that they should furnish the guidance and leadership for the newer portion of the nation; they thought that if it were left to itself it would sink into disorder and immorality which could prove to be a detriment to the whole country.

The older portion of the nation provided political guidance for the new areas with the Ordinance of 1787. That statute outlined the method and procedures through which the western area could be carved into territories, governments organized, maturity achieved and statehood granted. The enactment, basically conservative in nature, enabled the established part of the nation to guide and control the new areas on the road to full political participation in the federal system, thus partially accomplishing the eastern desire to order the lives of the turbulent westerners.

Society, however, includes more than the way in which men are governed, so the other facets of the frontiersman's life required attention too. To the easterner, who concerned himself with the future of the West, the nonpolitical aspects of the settlers activities had to be supervised when and if possible. Religion falls into this category, and some men of the East thought that if they did not take action, religion in the West would either be ignored or develop along the wrong lines.

From this concern about religion in the newly-settled areas, emerged domestic or home missionary activity which sought to provide religious sustenance to the spiritually destitute and guidance to the religious deviants on the frontier. Interest in religious conditions in the West appeared in the late Eighteenth Century, especially among the Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists of New England. At first,

missionaries just made brief tours of the backlands of their own states, then they ventured farther and farther westward until by the early years of the Nineteenth Century they had reached the area around the Great Lakes and as far as St. Louis.

The early home missionary activity was carried on by small organizations, local in nature, such as the Missionary Society of Connecticut and the Massachusetts Missionary Society. As time passed, the work of these groups became broader in scope with the territory covered by their agents encompassing a larger and larger area. With the field of each society expanded, the possibility of duplication of efforts increased. Consequently, a coordination of activities seemed advisable, especially since the major denominations engaged in this missionary work were similar in beliefs and thus were preaching much the same doctrine.

Because of this, there eventually developed a national home missionary body called the American Home Missionary Society, formed in 1826. This organization stood out as the most important single home missionary agency among Protestants in the pre-Civil War period. Although it had no denominational label, the Congregationalists and Presbyterians became the dominant, if not the sole sects represented, and financial support came mainly from those groups. Furthermore, the ministers aided by the body and the churches formed by its representatives seemed to be Presbyterian or Congregational in nature.

The Society carried on its work by subsidizing a minister in a western community. Usually the minister found a place where a Congregational or Presbyterian church existed or could be formed. Then the congregation applied to the Society for help in providing the salary for the cleric. Sometimes, if a single church could not support a full-time minister, he would serve several and each would contribute what it could to maintain him. At first the Society provided 100 dollars, with the local people furnishing 300, since 400 dollars a year was considered adequate compensation for a minister in the West. As time passed, it became apparent that many

congregations could not raise 300 dollars per year, so the aid of the Society had to be increased.

As might be expected, the agents of the American Home Missionary Society tended to settle and work in the northern part of the West. This resulted from the fact that they were primarily New Englanders, so they followed the migratory routes of the New Englanders westward. In addition, their New England origin caused them to disapprove of slavery, thus steering them away from the southern portion of the United States.¹

When the federal government opened Iowa to settlement, the American Home Missionary Society took note of the rapid influx of people there and the body began to direct some of its representatives into the area. These missionaries, following the procedure of the Society, made periodic reports of their work to the organization headquarters.

The following is a collection of letters written by H. M. S. missionaries from April, 1839 to July, 1854. Most of these are quarterly reports addressed either to Rev. Charles Hall or Rev. Milton Badger, officials of the organization whose office was located at 150 Nassua Street, New York City. There are a few letters from Wisconsin in the collection, but they are not included in this article because of their point of origin. Some letters or parts of letters have been omitted because of excessive repetition and because they do not fit in with the general nature of the material.

The collection is valuable and of interest for several reasons. First, the letters are good examples of the sort of reports made by the missionaries from their frontier posts. Also, the letters contain an enormous amount of raw material on religious conditions and attitudes in a newly-settled western area. A large share of the letters contain statistics of various sorts, such as the number of members composing particular churches, the number of children attending Sabbath Schools, the prices of certain goods in the outposts of society, the approximate number of inhabitants in certain towns and the

¹ Information for this general discussion of the Home Missionary movement is drawn from Colin B. Goodykoontz, *Home Missions on the American Frontier* (Caldwell, Idaho, 1939).

number of residents in certain counties. Beyond this, the letters are the products of intelligent, educated men who were capable observers of living conditions in Iowa at the time. Other than the fact that parts of some of the letters have been omitted, the letters are hereby printed exactly as they were written, including spelling and punctuation.

Fort Madison, April 9th 1839

Br. Hall, I have not heard from you since I wrote you at the close of my third quarter requesting a check. My foreth quarter will be nearly completed before I can receive a communication from you. So in your next I shall be much accommodated if you will forward to me two checks.

I remember the proposal I made when I left N.Y. & shall not complain if you adhere to that but we have been at \$60 extra expense [and if] you should send me two hundred dollars it would be merely adiquate to my necessities.

Many solemn reflections crowd upon my mind as I sit to render to the H.[ome] M.[issionary] S.[ociety] an account of my labors for the last year.

When I look over the field of my labors & compare the apparent results of them with what I anticipated they would be at first I confess I am some disheartened. But encouraging thought the whole is to appear hereafter.

Still owing to a want of adequate qualifications skill & enlarged purposes of doing good & in part to the peculiar character of my field of labor I feel that I have accomplished but little. There is everything to be done at the west & nothing to do with. Could the religious pioneer bring to bear upon his work such an array of means as can a minister at the east—had he well trained laymen to cooperate—his sabbath School teachers & library, his bibles & tracts & distributors—& an adiquate support so that he might give himself wholly to the work what would be more effectual than every thing else except the strength of Jehovah, a living exhibition of the

gospel in the lives of a little band of faithful soldiers of the cross, soon would he see his work in such a state that it would require but a little faith to anticipate the day when the best wishes of his heart would be consummated.

Nothing but a personal account of the difficulties of a missionary will qualify one to appreciate his tale of sorrows. We have endeavored to prosecute our work with cheerfulness & fidelity & we hope that our labors have not been in vain in the Lord.

The little church at Ft. M. still exists—a feeble inefficient band. Our present number is 13. There has been an addition of four since I have been here on profession. I can not say I am anxious to see the church at the west increasing in numbers while the tone of piety is very *low*. Sectarianism & worldliness are the prevalent sins of the chh. at the west. Nothing do we need so much at the west as fresh applications of the Spirit to the hearts of professors that their slumbers might be broken & a becoming concern for Christ could be awakened in their hearts & their dormant energies aroused & brought into vigorous harmonious action to advance the interests of truth & righteousness. O will you not pray that the Lord will revive religion in the church that our western lion may rise & shine her light . . . & the glory of the Lord having arisen upon her. We have a Sabb School which has averaged about 15. During the Summer probably we may have 40. In this we can accomplish but little till we have more assistance and a library. There has been a territorial Bible Sc. formed auxiliary to which we have formed a County Sc. & have raised \$30 in our place to father [further] the Bible cause. We have formed several other Societies which we hope will have a salutary influence on the community.—a sewing sc & Ft. M. [smudged] Sc. We have an interesting circle of ladies who have a weekly meeting where they offer prayers which I trust the Lord will remember & answer in his own good time.

At Burlington I have made some endeavors to do good. I have [a] church there which consists of 11 members. They have a prosperous Sabbath School. The members of the chh are young & enterprising & would principally if not entirely support a minister. They are as other chhs without a Spiritual guide. Can you not send them a good man? I should have remarked concerning the Temperance cause at Ft. M — We have a society which has made encouraging progress during the year—having double[d] its numbers & it now embraces 100 members. Among other means of doing good as I have been moving about I endeavored to circulate the tract vols. given away some & sold to the amount of \$40. The people at Ft. M. are kind to us and are anxious we should continue among them. They are poor so that if we stay we shall have to depend on you for support. They have subscribed \$450 for a house of worship but I am in doubt whether the enterprise will succeed. We can raise some more but the main burden will rest on my shoulders. I wish I had an enterprising good man to assist me he would be worth more than his weight in gold. I believe such a layman could do as much good here as myself.

In the little space I have left I must remark concerning Dubuque I have spoken concerning it before. I expect to visit there soon & form a chh. They are anxious to have the constant labors of a minister. As an inducement to me to go there they have proposed to complete a house of worship & contribute some to my support. It is an important post as well as Ft. M. more so. Am anxious to know what to do. Shall be better able to determine when I have visited there. I regret that ministers are so slow to come to Iowa. The field is open & to my mind presents as many inducements as any other. Does any one wish to make some sacrifices for Him who has died for us & have the satisfaction of doing great good let him come to Iowa. We do not ask particularly for men taught either at Andover New Haven or Princeton but taught some where especially in the school of Christ. We want men of intelligent heads & holy hearts.

J. A. Clark

Mt. Pleasant Henry County
Iowa Ter. June 5 1839

Dear Brother

Through the mercy of a kind Providence I am now permitted to write my second quaterly report. I continue to preach at the same places as when I wrote my last report, viz: Mt Pleasant, Balitmore, and New London. At the first half of the time and a quarter at each of the other places. My prospects in [marked out] are not so flattering as I could wish. The class of settlers that are coming in is not such as is calculated to improve society very much. Those that are coming are mostly men of the world who do not seem disposed to do much for the establishment of good society and religious privileges. My congregation is increasing gradually and becoming more permanent but there is very little foundation for impressions to be made by sound substantial preaching. An appeal to the passions will arouse them some times to tears; but it is as evanescent as the morning dew. They need to be taught many of the first principles of Christianity. At Baltimore my congregation has increased to some 50 and good attention is given to preaching. I organized a sabbath school there the last time I preached there. At New London my congregation has increased very considerably and the settlement in almost every respect presents a more favorable aspect. Several families from Ohio have stopped there and it is hoped that they will settle there. There a goodly number of professors among them. I preach occassionally at Danville 14 miles from this [place] a good settlement and I am expecting to organize a church in the course of this month. There will be 12 to 20 members. I also expect to organize a church at Zenith . . . on Skunk river about 12 miles distant in the course of a few weeks. There are 10 professors there and 2 or three at [illegible] about 3 miles distant. They meet together when I preach. I have organized a sabbath school in this place. It has not gone into very effecient operation yet but I think promises well. I delivered a temperance address at Danville and several additions

were made to the society which now comprises more than sixty members.

I have not received anything from the people yet neither have I attempted a thing. I expect to place the subject before the people [so] that they may do what they can. They will not do much I expect this year. In my last report I requested you to send me the Home Missionary and charge me for it. I have not received it will you send it on the receipt of this. The tide of immigration to this Territory this spring is immense. The country is full back to the Indian line, and more are coming every day. Send some ministers along with the multitude.

Yours in Christian [?]
Reuben Gaylord

Fort Madison April 6th 1840

Brother Hall

Considerable time has elapsed since I should have written you. I might now fill up my sheet with a recital of past trials. But my own judgement says [no]. It might effect the hearts of others—but for me the trials of a Domestic Missionary are enough without the pain of recounting them.

And in fact such a recital is not necessary to affect suitable any intelligent Christian community. No one can contemplate his circumstances laboring where at best there are but the materials of society & these materials in many cases no affinity—with a salary which is but a poor apology for support and not know that a Domestic Missionary has trials.

The sphere of my labor has been somewhat enlarged the last year. I have preached at this place three Sabbaths in four. I have during the winter attended a bible class which I trust has been profitable. usually present from 10-15. The Sabbath School is attended with growing interest—varies from 25 to 40. Most of the families are quite young.

Our Temperance [society] has been considerably effe-

cient, it has held meetings monthly & has constantly been increasing in numbers—at present rising 100. Through its instrumentality a Territorial Tem[perance] So[ciety] has been formed which promises good. There have been Sabbath Schools at various places where I have labored, sustained more or less [all] of the year—number of scholars in all perhaps 150.

We have here also as very effecient auxiliaries of doing good a number of female associations which are prosperous. Our little church has been encreased by an addition of eight members—one by profession. Three have removed to other places & one, an Elder a good man during the year has been permitted I trust to unite with [the] Church Triumphant. Our present number 16. Very discouraging work building up in a new country & especially in our river towns. If all had remained in connection our present number would have been about 40.

I have been able to attend to the church at Burlington but very little. This I very much regret for it is peculiarly important. It is [a] place of more influence than any in the Territ. And if any hear & can make us worthy of the gospel they are so [illegible]. They are able and willing to support it. The church is composed of persons of influence & all that is wanting to make it an instrument of great good is [a] faithful intellegent pastor.

I long since told you that it was of the first importance that you send them a minister. If you do not soon the Church will become extinct. I hope if they are not otherwise supported to attend to them more the coming year as I have lately [gone into] *debt* for a horse. I have also form[ed] a church at Dubuque of which you have had an account.

To both of these chs. I have received calls, but I have no sympathy for the man who can find [it] easy to lead a people for whose Salvation [he] has labored because he may hope to obtain a large salary etc.

Yours in the bonds of the gospel
James A Clark

Danville July 3rd 1840

Dear brother

. . . My time has been considerably broken in upon by unpleasant sabbaths of which we have had a large share during the quarter. I stated in my last that I was under the necessity of building in the spring. We moved into our cabin about the last of March in a very unfinished state and the very first night we were visited with a violent rain which completely drenched us and every thing in the house. I took a violent cold and the next Sabbath I was unable to go out and the weather was so extremely unpleasant that the congregation did not assemble. One other sabbath it was so rainy that not one individual bravely ventured [out]. The next day however I addressed the people assembled to attend the funeral of a young man who had recently become pious. I have been under a constant pressure being under the necessity of stealing every moment I can to render my family comfortable. With the exception above I have been in the enjoyment of usual health pursuing the accustomed task of ministerial labor with very little to report that would be interesting to any one. I have been to Farifield once and find the field flourishing. We have a sabbath school commenced under very encouraging circumstances—attended by old and young. We have removed our meeting from a private house to a very comfortable school house. We have two log schools within the limits of our congregation. We are making steady but slow progress. Farmers have most cheering prospects for crops of every kind but they can [illegible] no price for money. Times are hard—hard—and the land sales drink up all the money in the country. I have managed to keep money enough by me to take the next letter out of the post office. Your draft came very seasonably indeed I will assure you and I acknowledge it as from the Lord. I have a payment to make in October and I wish to ask of you the favor to write me so that I may receive the letter by the middle of Sept. informing me whether it will be convenient for you to send

me a draft for what will be due me up to the first of Oct. so that I can use it by the 15th of the same month. My reason for wishing you to write me is that I may know definitely what to rely upon. The money must be [paid] out and if you have not the funds to furnish me by that time I must borrow and I wish to look out in season. I attended our [illegible] meeting at Payson and the reports from our churches were very cheering. Many were reported as having passed from death to life. Here we have for the most part to sow the seed and lay the foundation for future success. I might state many of the trials of a new country but you . . . have heard the sad tale enough.

Hoping for an interest in your prayers I remain yours in the bonds of the gospel

Rueben Gaylord

Denmark Dec. 14 1840

Brother Badger

Brother Reed has arrived and located at Fairfield. He brought his family to my house and visited (illegible) an Keosauqua (printed wrong in my report.) At the former place he felt there was an [illegible] demand for a minister forthwith. One man not a member of the church, who owns a steam mill offered to give him lumber enough to build a house 26 by 40 if he would come and settle there. That would be worth at least \$200 in this country—(by the way that is on a larger scale than we Missionaries go) I have a house 18 by 36 with a back part, partly finished; and the building of one of this size is enough to kill soul and body of one of no better materials than myself. The church at [illegible] also felt very anxious to have him stay. Keosauqua also—he felt to be equally important. But on visiting Fairfield, altho he could have no pecuniary motive held out before him, he felt had the first claim on his labors. I have learnt incidentally that he has made a very favorable impression on the people.

I commenced this letter in behalf of Mr. [illegible] of Keosauqua. A Rev. Wm. W. Woods of Putnam [Putnam] Co. Indiana, wishes to come out to the Territory and spend six months as a missionary with a view of sittling if he

shall see a door of usefulness open. And he wishes a commission from your society for this object the time specified & Br. [illegible] says he is a very useful man and has been a number of years in the employment of your society. This is the amount of the request. [inserted from margin]

I learnt yesterday that Br. Hocker [?] of Bloomington had joined the old school presy.² I think he may as well look to them for support. I suppose howev[er] that you will be bound for his present commission. Br. Bell the agent of the Asy Board told me that they would feel constrained to organize another church at B.[loomington] unless the church should take some stand [and] join old or new school presy This they refuse to do. I design to write immediately to the Elders both New School—one a man of a good deal of influence in the Territory—a lawyer, distinguished in his profession. His name is Wicker [?].

The facts I suppose to be that there are many Congregationalists in the place and some in the church—and the Elders take this course perhaps to suit them. There may be some old school men, meek by the representations of the old school Presy. that met there on the 6th of Nov. Br. Hocker [?] may be able to carry a few:—but he nor the *old school party* can carry many. The place has too much Yankee [illegible] & [illegible.] However like every other point it must be contested. As good *brother Bell* told me, if he found a few two or three jewels of *his order* out in the prairie with me—he would feel it his duty to come and organize them into a church. I told him what had been the result of such operations pointed him to fields when it was in my power to do the same as he is doing and begged of him to desist, but his *conscience* and his *Presy* compel him to do as he does and I was forced to

² The schism within Presbyterianism leading to the Old and New schools often creeps into the statements of the missionaries. This split which culminated in 1837-38, divided Presbyterians over polity and doctrine. The New School group leaned toward a congregational organization and placed less emphasis upon strict Calvinism. The Old School element adhered more closely to Calvin's views and frowned upon the congregational system of church administration.

tell him that this scism in head & tail was the work of the Devil. I asked him upon what ground they would receive into their church by members embracing all the heresy of "[illegible]" When he would cut a ministers head off, if he happened to think like him. The amount of the answer was that such would do for *members* but not for *officers* (i e) would do to be scavengers in the conf. and half support the orthodox purse, hew wood & draw water but must not come near the alter.

I beg pardon I had forgotten myself. I was only putting my wicked heart onto paper.

I wish to turn your eye toward Bloomington. It is the most important commercial point in the Territory. It must be a great place—and I do wish to see a church there built on the noble pure Holy liberal principles of the gospel not on any one of the six sides of the Hexagon. I have written a line to Br. Owen Lovejoy of Princeton Buren Co Illinos. He is a very able devoted [illegible] man I do not think it would take much to induce him to come [to] this (place).

I need not repeat to you we are suffering for the want of men—such is the fact. I hope in the spring you will send us on a fresh supply. But let all understand that in Iowa they will not find towering steeples pointing to heaven—nor parsonages all fitted for their reception—nor a people that will come round a minister and ask him what he wants. If he is cold he may be obliged to put his axe into the root or stump of the tree, if he is hungry to lay his corn onto his "critter[?]" and "git" [it] cracked for even *money* will not always supply all his wants. The people are all at work, and hard at it too—but those who have any standard above a log cabin and a "corn patch" have many weary months before them, of hard labor, before houses and barns and roads—will make comforts abound as in the land of our Fathers. Such has been my lot—and my hea[l]th has not been adequate the past year to do the things necessary, it has been very expensive to hire [it] all done.

[Rev. Asa Turner]

Fairfield, Iowa, Aug. 28, 1841

Rev. Dear Sir,

During the quarter ending this day, I find little to report of unusual interest. I have been constantly employed with varied encouragement.

I have visited Keosauqua only once, but expect to aid Br. Turner tomorrow week in organizing a church & holding a sacramental meeting at that place.

Br. Gaylord and myself constituted a Cong. Ch. at Brighton in Washington Co. on 1st instant of 10 members, with rather encouraging prospects. It contains some praying spirits & will soon increase to 15 or thereabouts. I have devoted one third of my time to two settlements composed in part of O.[ld] S.[chool] Presbyterians & I have reason to believe my labors have been acceptable—but Br. Cole, (Br. Bells companion) will undermine me in one of the settlements. I shall try to do my duty & leave the result with the Lord. In the other settlement that influence will, I trust, not prevail. In both of these settlements I have had interesting congregations.

In Fairfield I have met with less encouragement than usual. I have been, providentially, called elsewhere on several occasions when I ought to have been at home. Camp meetings have been held within a few miles several times, & of course the mass has flocked to them. For them reasons the attendance has been less than usual. The same causes have injured our Sabbath School which usually numbers 30 scholars. The influence of camp meetings this season on this place has been bad, benefitting not one.

Intemperance has been on the increase since the commencement of the electioneering campaign. Whisky has been brought out in buckets as in the time of Davy Crockett—and cursing and fighting have been excessive.

I have sometimes thought my reports have been too favorable. My soul has been stirred within me by what I have seen & heard & I recently determined to preach upon the subject. The attendance was rather thin—many

being employed in selecting ground for a race track, making bets etc. in full view of the Court House. The truth made a favorable impression, & several young men put their names to the pledge & several more were almost persuaded. I expect to conclude the subject tomorrow. Our Temp. Soc. numbers 106. The truth with the blessing of Heaven will prevail even here.

The expectation of a purchase of land from the Indians is unsettling the minds of the people & while such a purchase will draw off the Leather Stockings, it will also be the engrossing theme with the sober & will turn their minds from religion.

We hope our expectations of aid this fall will not be disappointed. The interests of the Redeemer will & must suffer unless more laborers are sent into this field.

Yours in the Gospel
Julius A. Reeder

Marion I. T. Oct. 13th, 1841

Dear Brother;

Yours of July 8th came safe to hand. I need not inform you that it was thankfully received. I perceive that the misrepresentations you have received might awaken apprehensions not altogether favorable to myself which might terminate in my exclusion from your sympathy & patronage.

Previous to receiving your commission I had made arrangements with a brother who labored at Davenport the last year to take possession of a large field in this part of the Ter. extending from the Buffalo forks where the Mississippi [illegible] to the Mississippi at the [illegible].

In surveying this field, we found not only heart-rending desolation; but also points of religious interest, equal to and we have yet heard of in the Ter. At Charleston we found materials for a Ch which we hope to organize soon. We found the same also at Vandenburg [now De Witt] the new county seat of Clinton County. The same

we found to be true of two or three other points. We knew of nothing to hinder us to organize three chhs. before the close of our year. Our plan of operation will be to hold a two day meeting at these several points, to visit them previously from house to house. I preach evenings through the region around them to invite the people together at the two day meeting. We all labor to bring the subject of personal responsibility before them nightly & for reaching as it must be to all who are to need foundations for many generations. By the blessing of God.

The temperance cause is also well appreciated among us. I formed a Society at the County seat of Clinton in July last. This is a new county seat. There were 30 present at one meeting & I formed a Society of 28 & the other two have committed themselves. I shall form another this week. I have organized one Sabbath School & as soon as we can have comfortable houses I shall organize schools at all of the principle points. I have the people pledged to put up houses of worship at 3 points on one circuit immediately. The people manifest a commendable interest on the subject of common schools. We lecture to them upon this subject.

We need 2 men in this part of the Ter. one is almost indispensable. I think that little could be done at Marion at present. No part of the Ch. or community have any confidence in the officers of the Ch. There will be families into this place in the course of a year of better influence & character.

The people here are uncomfortably poor—yet we will make an effort for the H.M.S. A box of clothes would be graciously received by the Missionaries here. It is hard to be obtained and scarcer than anywhere else in the country. Some coarse cloth & stockings would be of great service.

Yours Respect etc.

T. P. Emerson

Iowa City Oct. 19, 1841

Dear Brethern

I am in this new and flourishing city without house or home. I am truly in a strange land. No church going bell rings to call us to the house of God on the holy Sabbath day. Nor is there yet a meetinghouse or church house for preaching in this place, though the Protestant Methodists will soon have one so they may use it.

I never felt so much before the precious privilege of organized society. Every thing here is at loose ends, unsettled and uncertain; except this one point—the multitude seem to have agreed to forget God. The Sabbath is spent in every possible way, in hunting, fishing, carousing; others wholly indifferent to such pastimes and pleasures, busily lay brick all the Sabbath day. There are others of a different stamp altogether, who are orderly, go-to-meeting people. There are some of almost all the different orders of religionists in the world here and not a great many of any one. There are a few Baptists, Methodists E.[piscopal] & P.[rotestant], Universalists, Roman Catholics, New Lights, Campbellites, Quakers, Hickites, besides many others too.³

³ Several of these labels are not too well known today but they identify some of the groups which grew out of the splits and divisions within American Christianity during the early Nineteenth Century. The Methodist Protestant Church emerged out of the Methodist Episcopal Church and resulted from an objection to the centralized control exerted by the parent body. The seeds of the Methodist Protestant movement appeared as early as 1823 when a group of Methodists met in Cincinnati and called for greater democracy in the church's organization and administration. Protest continued for the next several years but to no avail so that in 1830 the rebels met in Baltimore and established the Methodist Protestant Church. The group gave itself a democratic aura by calling its top officer president instead of bishop. By 1834 the organization had fourteen conferences and claimed a membership of 26,587. Oddly enough, its greatest strength lay in the eastern United States not in the West which has been considered the more democratic portion of the country at that time.

The New Lights appeared in north central Kentucky under the leadership of Barton W. Stone. Stone, a Presbyterian from North Carolina, had itinerated through Tennessee and Kentucky, finally settling in the Cane Ridge-Concord area of Kentucky. His questioning of some of the major elements of Calvinism, such as election and predestination, made his membership in the Presbyterian Church tenuous, and within a few years he and some associates had formed their own Presbytery. Then they adopted the name Christian for their body thus

This day three families from Indiana members of my [former] Church there, arrived in this City, surely I was glad to see them. Two families came with us, making in all six families from Indiana. There are a few New School Pres. in the City besides. We will organize a Church in a few weeks. But what we are to do for a place of worship this winter I am at a loss to know. A small schoolhouse is our only chance at present. The Universalists and Roman Catholics are building their churches. The stone for the foundations is in laying. Why are Christ's friends so slow? There are many here who came here in good standing in the church at home, but have fallen under the influence of the world and have forgotten their first love. I am hunting them up, and bringing to their remembrance their obligations to a holy life. I left Indiana early in September and arrived in Iowa Territory the last day of the same month. I stopped my family at Burlington Iowa until I should make arrangements to remove them to Johnson Co. Iowa the field assigned me by Bro. Turner. I accordingly came on to Iowa City and procured the best house I could at that time. One room at [\$]120 a year in that we sit & cook & eat and sleep. My wife and seven children,

broadening its appeal to other believers. Eventually the followers of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, mostly disenchanting Presbyterians and called Campbellites, merged with Stone's group to lay the foundation of the Disciples of Christ or Christian denomination of today. However, some of the New Lights refused to accept the union and so remained as New Lights on into the 1840's.

The name "Hickites" probably refers to the Hicksite Friends, for even the normally tranquil Quakers were troubled by disagreement during the early Nineteenth Century. Some Quakers had been attracted by evangelical ideas to the extent that they accepted the concepts of the full authority of Scripture and the depravity of man. These views ran contrary to the Quaker belief of religion being an inner experience. The Hicksites, instead of being reformers as was usually the case in the early Nineteenth Century schisms, sought to preserve the older beliefs against the modifications established by the existing body. Their leader, Elias Hicks, put the emphasis upon the Quaker concept of the Inner Light as the final religious authority. During the mid-1820's Hicks and his supporters, after efforts to maintain what they felt was purity of doctrine within the Quaker camp, withdrew, forming their own organization. This action drew off about half of the Quakers from the main body thus completing what has been called the most serious division that has occurred among American Friends. Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J., 1960), pp. 302-310.

without saying any thing about house hold furniture. Yet that is tucked in and shoved away so as to leave the fire place to stand by. We will be compelled to have more house soon & that will be attended with increased expence. I have now in traveling here in hauling me out and expences here expended three eighths of my salary if not one half, it looks at present as if house rent and firewood would take the ballance. Every other necessaries to provide for themselves—and every article of produce is exceedingly high except corn. I will however go forward and trust the Lord. This is suddenly an important field of labor. A Spirit of worldliness and vanity prevades the community, the Christ[ian] needs a double guard and the Christian Minister a portion of Grace. I have this day been creditably informed that there is not a young man in this city a professor of religion publically, and a considerable portion of the population are young men. My preaching however has been well attended for the house we had and I find them easy of access for personal conversation.

I will make my first quarterly report on the first of December. Lastly dont forget us in your prayers.

Yours in the hands of the Gospel
Wm. W. Woods

Yellow Spring, Des Moines Co., I. Ter.
Dec. the 1st 1841

Dear Brother

I came here under a sense of duty and I shall remain here under a sense of duty and my trust is in God that he will not let his children suffer for want of the things of this world that are for their good if they be found in the way of their duty I started for this place on the sixet of Sept. and arrived safe here on the 22nd of the same Since my arrival here I have been as busily engaged in my ministerial duties as circumstances would admit In our little church there is a good state of feeling I believe I have more confidence in the piety of this church than any little church I have ever been acquainted with and truly I think the Lord has blessed this church for the year past It was

organized the fourth sabbath of Sept a year ago and since this time twelve months ago the Lord has added twenty six nineteen by a profession of their faith and seven by letter It now numbers 40 members There are but very few under fourteen years of age now connected with this church who have not made a profession of religion Besides our sabbath services which consist[ed] formerly in sabbath school but now discontinued for the winter in the exercises of a bible class and the preaching of the Gospel we have a weekly young man's prayer meeting and a weekly congregation prayer meeting and also the monthly concert is observed by a female prayer meeting I have also visited a number of families and prayed with and gave them religious instruction relative to the promotion of family religion

I have also visited several destitute places and preached to them the word of life At Black-Hawk a village 14 miles from here I have organized a Presbyterian church of nine members and expect more will be added soon

My necessities have been such that I have been compelled to sell an order on your Board for the amount of fifty six dollars to Mr. Ewing and son merchants in Burlington which will be forwarded for payment by Christmas I trust the Treasurer will accept it

Your Missionary with brotherly
respect

Wm C Rankin

Brighton, Washington Co., Iowa, T. Feb. 16th, 1842

Sir,

In accordance with rules of your Society, I now make my first quarterly report to the A.H.M.S. I have been in Illinois and Iowa more than five years, but I have not realized the great destitution of the *country* (in a moral point of view) as I have since I commenced laboring as a Missionary. The Territory seems like a great moral Sahara, with only here and there an Oasis to cheer the almost desponding heart of the Missionary as he crosses these moral wastes. Sabbath breaking, [illegible], gam-

bling, and horse racing are common. This place has been somewhat famed for these vices, but a very visible improvement has been made since I came here, we have formed a Temperance Society of more than 50 members, and it is exerting a great influence, many who united were in the habit of taking an occasional glass. One man who united said on the evening that he signed his name to the pledge, that during the last six months he had paid thirty dollars to the grocery six and a fourth cents at a time, he is our Physician, but he is now a temperate man. The grocery keeper has sold out, because, as he says, the cold water men are getting too numerous. In Washington, the county seat, they have formed a large society. The lawyers and even the judge of the circuit have determined to lecture on temperance during the sessions of court. I have preached at three other places beside this, vis. Blue Point, nine miles west of this and within two or three miles of the Indian boundary, the congregations have been very respectable, and attentive, there are but two or three presbyterian families in that settlement, Washington, ten miles north of this, here there are members of presbyterian churches enough to organize a church which I hope to do soon, there is a small church of Seceders⁴ at the place, and a Methodist class. The congregation is quite large, and very attentive, and are exceedingly anxious to have me preach to them, and as it is an important place, I think it expedient to preach there at least one fourth of the time, here I found a family from Schenectady, N.Y. it is four years since they left the east, the lady is a presbyterian professor, and she told me she has not heard a presbyterian preach since she arrived in the country. Backsliders are numerous. The people of God are scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, some of them are hungering and thirsting for the bread of life, others have been so long away from the christian ordinances that they have become indifferent. Crawfordsville, is nearly 18 miles from here in a south easterly course. There is a heavy settlement in that neighborhood, and 10 or 20 pres-

⁴ This was a Scotch-Irish Presbyterian sect.

byterian professors, some of them have united with the Methodists, others contemplate doing so, they have waited a long time for some presbyterian minister to come and break to them the bread of life, "and the heart has become sick through hope deferred." Here also I hope to form a church in a few weeks. At Brighton the church hold[s] reading meetings when I am absent, we sustain two weekly prayer meetings, on Wednesday and Sabbath evenings. Four have been received in the church since I came here, two by profession, and two from other churches. We have in our community some universalists, and some, who if they are not confirmed infidels, are wishing to be, some of these are very regular in attending upon the preaching, and even the prayer meetings, by kind and familiar conversation with them I think I have won their confidence and esteem and may hope by the blessing of God to do them some good. We hope to erect a house of worship during the coming season, our log school-house is too narrow for us. I shall do what I can to collect as large a portion of my salary as may be [possible] among the people with whom I labor, but you know the embarrassment of the times, the farmers cannot exchange produce enough to procure the necessaries of life, and in addition to this groceries and clothing cost from 100 to 200 percent more here, than it does in N.Y. and this too is in the new purchase and the land has not yet come into market, but they are expecting it to come in this season, and every man feels bound to save every dollar to enter his land. I think there is a willingness on the part of the people to do what they can to sustain the institutions of the gospel among them. The church[es] I think are a little more alive to their duty than they have been and it is my ardent prayer that God would remember us for good in these ends of the earth.

Yours Truly Charles Burnham

Burlington, Nov. 11, 1842

Dear Brother

Last month closed the first year of labors under com-

mission from yr. Soc. In surveying the past year, mingled feelings of joy and sadness fill my mind. I cannot but rejoice that God has counted me worthy, putting me into the ministry.

Other things in this review make me sad. One year of labor and effort is gone—its faults and failures cannot be removed. I am sad when I think how little apparent good has resulted from my labors—not one soul hopefully converted in the year. So much to be done—so little religious influence exerted upon this community. [Members of] the church so faulty and imperfect, living so little the *life of godliness*. These things make me sad. And yet they are not [illegible].

The place is so large, it is hard to produce much effect upon the mass of selfishness and sin. Had a faithful minister come here six years since, the whole moral aspect of the place would now be quite different. So that upon our shoulders rests not only all the present work of a church here, but the arrears of the last half a dozen years when nothing was done except by the Methodists.

And I am often reminded of the vast good you are doing by sending ministers so *early* into different places in the West. I firmly believe that a minister in this place seven years since might have done more good in one year than he can now do in four. And this thought will bear expanding, and in its application to all new settlements in this "mighty West" forms one of the most cogent reasons for *immediately* extending the operations of yr. noble Society.

Still I can note progress here. When the weather would admit I have had uniformly a full house, and an attentive audience, often a deeply solemn one. The church has more than doubled its numbers during the year. And the members seem to have made some progress in piety, though I fear less than duty required.

Our church building has made no progress during the summer. The floods in the Spring have made this a hard year, and our people feel poor. We need a house sadly. We are cramped everywhere for want of one. The [hard times] prevents our people from giving so much for my

support as they otherwise could. We expect to complete our house next summer. Then we will do better.

If the rule of the Soc. is four hundred doll[ar]s, and in no case, more, I can have nothing to say about an application for the last quarter of this year. But if the rule may be departed from; I would suggest that my necessary expenses here are greater than those of any missionary living away from the river. And I am told I can not live comfortably upon four hundred doll[ar]s.

The action of this church and congregation will follow this letter in a few days. Since our return my health has been good. Mrs. H. is well though much worn with the labor incident to getting into "our own hired house."

Aff. Yr. Brother
H. Hutchinson

Washington, Wash. Co. Iowa
[Nov. 8, 1843]

Honored Sirs—I reached this territory accompanied by my wife, on the 21st of July, & commenced labr as a missionary. Many destitute places were pointed out by Br. Turner, among which were Washington & Crawfordswille, which are 10 miles apart, & both in Washington County. Have concluded for the present to divide my labors between these two places.

There have been no additions to either of the churches under my care since our arrival, nor has there been any remarkable change out of these churches, excepting that a Presbyterian church (old school) has been formed in Washington. This church contains several of the most influential citizens of the place. Our Presbyterian brethren had before our arrival determined to effect its organization.

When we came to our field of labor the expectation was that a tenement would be vacated soon, & that we could occupy it. But being disappointed in this, it was judged to be advisable to build a small house. The brethren thought they could make what, in this place, is called

a frolic—a general turn out—& soon put up a frame. It was not long, however, before I ascertained that they had more to do for themselves preparatory for winter than they can perform. In consequence I have been obliged to labor most of the time since our arrival, in procuring materials, & as both carpenter & joiner. The house is not ready for use & may not be until the next spring. I succeeded however, a few weeks since, in my efforts to obtain a house which has but one cold room, where we shall live, if we cannot do better during the winter. Some of the brethren have done considerable on the house which is in progress & would do much more if their circumstances would permit

Such being the facts in the case, I have done but little in my proper calling except to preach on the Sabbath & to deliver a few lectures on the laboring days of the week. I assisted however in the formation of a Bible class in Washington, in which Congregationalists & Presbyterians unite, & some books have been forwarded to us for Sab. schools.

Notwithstanding my time has been occupied in secular affairs, much pastoral labor is needed here, accompanied with great wisdom. In the first place, in each of the places where I preach, there is, as Br. Burham has already informed you, a church of Seceders, as they denominate themselves. (Note. These are seceders from the Scotch Presbyterians, but emigrated to this place from Ohio, Pennsylvania, & Tennessee.) They prohibit their members from hearing any preaching except from their own ministers. Consequently many of them hear but little preaching at all, & are trained up in ignorance & impiety. But there is a prospect of doing them good, from the fact that they are willing to hear addresses (provided they are not called sermons.) & to read books that we may put into their hands.

In the next place, there is a class of professing Christians in this territory, & we have some among us, altho' not in our churches, who are notorious for neglecting the sabbath by attending to secular business, & staying away

from the preached gospel. Much and prudent labor is needed with them

Further, Altho' many, perhaps, come here for worthy objects, still it is evident that Iowa is a place of resort for many restless spirits, who are continually desiring change, & who never have lived long in any place. This characteristic will of course be exhibited in religious matters. There are some of this description among us, & in the church.

Besides; in Washington there is infidelity, & intemperance. Such is the state of things in this part of the territory, that a man who is both an infidel & a drunkard has been elected to represent our county in the legislature.

I am Yours with Respect,
Charles Granger.

Farmington [Iowa] Nov. 29th 1843

Dear Sir

I should have rendered you my report before this if I had not been taken sick about the close of my "Quarter." I have been confined to the house now for 7 weeks and am hardly able to endure the fatigue of writing but I thought my report ought not to be deferred any longer.

So after going to Burlington to see my father before he left for Connecticut and preaching an evening lecture for him I went to Denmark and spent the Sabbath and the next day left for Farmington where I had at this time decided to establish myself permanently. I thought it was a place as important to be occupied as any I had seen. Since that time I have preached in Farmington and Bentonsport in each every other Sabbath. As I preached in these places three Sabbaths in July I fix the beginning of my service under the A.H.M.S. at the third Sabbath in that month.

Farmington is a thickly settled village containing probably 500 inhabitants and the country around is thickly settled in comparison with other parts of Iowa. A great majority of the inhabitants are of western and southern origin and care little for education or those other im-

provements in society which we wish to promote. A great part of them who are of the lower class or Southern and Western people wish to be free from the rules and restraints which the prevalence of religion education and good manners would impose and delight in the poor freedom of the half civilized life they have hitherto led. Still there are among them many men of wakeful and observing minds as might be expected in those who have had the energy to emigrate to a new and distant country There are here a few people of Eastern origin and they are at present our sole dependence.——The great mass of the people have little property. But they easily gain a tolerable subsistence i.e. food coarse clothing and houses that shelter them from storms and cold but the greater part of them do not handle 3 dollars in money during the year. Indeed I know farmers who have large farms and are considered well off who during the last year have not had that amount of money. They cannot get money for their produce but only clothing and the necessary imported provisions. A plasterer told me that in a year and a half he had done 500 dollars worth of work and had not received for it 5 dollars in money.

Of those who attach themselves to any religious denomination the Methodists have by far the greatest number. This sect make no effort to elevate society in point of education and their ministers do not communicate instruction with any system or definiteness but make it their aim in preaching to get into a glow and a frenzy [?] of excitement. They thus give their people a taste for such things and an importance under any address that is fitted to enlighten as well as persuade. I do not think Western society would be elevated at all under the auspices of the Methodists.——The Baptists have 4 or 5 individuals in Farmington who have been members of the Baptist Church. I believe they have formed no church here and they have had preaching but one Sabbath since I came here.

There is also a small church of Campbellites having 6 or 7 members. They have had this Fall what they call a "big meeting." They had a good many hearers and baptized 3 individuals whom I include in their 6 church members. Few of the people have right ideas of Campbellism and their meetings are attended more than they ought to be.——There are 2 or 3 families of Mormans here who are hired laborers from Nauvoo. [Illinois, the headquarters for the Mormon Church in the early 1840's] They are however very unpopular and they do not attempt to meet in the building where the Congregationalists and Methodists hold meetings as they did the first part of the Summer. The last time they met in that house they contrived to make their appointment on my regular day. We thought it best not to contend with them so the Congregationalists met in a large private house and the result was that all the people who attended meeting came to ours and left the Mormon preacher alone with 2 or 3 of his followers. He told those present that he was sick and unable to preach and has not been here since. I do not think there is any thing to fear from the Mormans if there be proper action on our part.——There is a considerable body of men here probably fewer in number than the Methodists who are in various degrees infected with infidelity. Atheists Deists Universalists and those who will not deny that the Bible is the word of God but who are not entirely convinced that it is. They have difficulties they have heard plausible objections and therefore they are in doubt and are content to remain so. Abner Kneeland who lives four miles from the village has produced a great part of this scepticism. He has circulated his books he has delivered lectures and formerly established here an infidel society. Indeed he has extended his efforts to most of the settlements on this river so that there is probably more infidelity on the Des Moines river than in any part of Iowa. However Kneeland has been less active for a year past and infidelity is on the wane. A year ago or two years ago (I am not certain which there was a Territorial Election at which the infidels of Farmington felt so strong

that they made infidelity the test question and set up for their candidates the most decided infidels. They over-rated their strength and were defeated by a large majority. Many of the most vicious whom they counted on as their own men turned against them and loudly insulted them on the day of the election and burnt Kneeland.⁵ One of the most profane men in the place being asked why he opposed the infidels being a man of such a character replied that he knew he was a bad man but he had a family of children and he wanted them to grow up in a Christian Community. Since that time Kneeland has limited himself more to private efforts and probably some who are really seceptical have been inclined to conceal their opinions. Rarely do we see one of these infidels at a religious meeting.——The Congregational Church in this place consists of 24 members 19 of whom are heads of families. I cannot report to you that the church is in a good state. Most of them before being gathered into a church here had not for some years been members of any church and in the churches to which they originally belonged they must have been the outside members who took no active part in spiritual things. Not one of them seems to think he can act energetically for Christ i.e. they come no where near devoting themselves with all their energies to the service of their Master. They expect that the minister single handed will build up the church. They have been obliged to employ all their energies in

⁵ During the early 1830's Kneeland established somewhat of a reputation in the East by abandoning the ministry to form a society of unbelievers called "Free Inquirers." His group, centered in Boston, published an organ entitled the *Investigator* in which Kneeland presented material questioning the Christian view of the miraculous birth of Jesus and the effectiveness of prayer. This sort of action led to a trial and conviction. Sentenced to three months imprisonment, Kneeland obtained a reduction to two months and even that was challenged by over 150 petitioners including the notable William Ellery Channing.

In 1837 or 1838 Kneeland devised plans for a colony of his followers to be located near Farmington, Iowa. He and several associates emigrated to the area but disagreement among the members eventually disrupted the enterprise. However, before its disintegration Kneeland felt he had enough strength to offer an infidel ticket for Van Buren County offices in 1841-42. This effort, as Rev. Dutton points out, failed. *History of Van Buren County, Iowa* (The Western Historical Co., Chicago, 1878), pp. 464, 475.

establishing themselves in this new country and they still remain very much absorbed in their worldly business. There have been several other things which have weakened and almost destroyed the influence of this church. Two of the brethern who are neighbors have had a long and most painful quarrel and have talked against each other before others and one of them has been particularly active in slandering the other. Indeed there seems to have been a strong and deep hatred between them. This state of things has all the while been well known throughout the town and made the infidels sneer at the Christian religion. A neighbor of Kneeland's boasting of the harmony that reigned in his neighborhood said "we infidels can live together peaceably enough." These brethern have been labored with both by Mr. Turner and myself and lately at a prayer meeting of the church have forgiven and become reconciled to each other Br. Adams contributing to this result by his suggestions and exhortations. Several members of the church have been loose in their habits of keeping the Sabbath and have thus given their countenance to this Sabbath breaking community. A deacon in this church having been for some time very much embarrassed in his business has been in the habit of making promises and not keeping them until it has come to such a pass that nobody considers his promises of any value and the keeper of the principal grogshop here said in [the] presence of one of the church members that he had rather sell whiskey than be such a liar as the deacon—so that the influence of the church over the minds of the community has been almost destroyed. I have no doubt however from my acquaintance with them that many of these church members are Christians especially most of the female members. And perhaps all are real Christians However from being so long away from regular and well ordered means of grace and living in a loose community they have declined into a very low and back slidden state and it seems exceedingly hard to get them out of it. But nothing is too hard for God and the late reconciliation of those two brethern seems like a

token for good.—There are some things however which I can state which look a little brighter We had a very interesting two days meeting in August when 4 persons joined the church 3 by letter and 1 by profession of faith. Three more who will be valuable members stand ready to present their letters on the next communion Sabbath.

Bentonsport is a small settlement on the Des Moines river embracing perhaps 50 inhabitants. The church there numbers 14 and two very promising young people who give good evidence of piety will join the church at the next celebration of the Lord's Supper. This church embraces the choice part of the inhabitants and wields almost the whole influence in the place. The standard of piety is an high I think as in any church I have been acquainted with.

Rev. Thomas Dutton

To be continued

MUSEUM NOTES

Two field trips to an Indian village site in South Dakota have been made in recent months by Museum personnel. This ancient village, known today as the Swan Creek Site, is located on a terrace overlooking the Missouri River. Unfortunately the site is scheduled to be flooded by the growing Oahe Reservoir and will eventually be as much as 30 feet beneath the surface of the lake.

The village was more or less continuously occupied from about 1450 to 1790 by various tribes of Indians, predominantly the Arikaras and Mandans. All of these tribes existed during the so-called Mississippian Period, which is dated somewhat arbitrarily from about 1200 to 1800. This same culture existed in a number of places in Iowa along the Missouri River and is known as the Mill Creek and Glennwood Cultures.

The Swan Creek village is located on what is now a small island in the Oahe Reservoir. Wave action is rapidly destroying what is left of the site, and artifacts are found by digging and sifting the remaining soil and by surface

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