

"Thank goodness I don't have any newly made bread," she awaited their coming. Over the brave's shoulder was slung a huge wild turkey whose head almost touched the ground. This group walked, for the second time, into the house. Throwing the turkey from his shoulder onto the floor, the Indian announced again, in his broken English, as he pointed to one of his little Indian boys, the squaw and the turkey, "Papoose hungry, squaw take bread. You keep."

With this the Indians trailed out of the door and our grandparents or their family never saw them again. As Grandmother would say when she told this story, "The Indian paid his debt."

DOWN THE ROUND STAIRWAY

By Lida L. Greene
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It was there all the time, really. It started from the basement of the Historical Building, a tiny stair going around and around, until bump—it ran into the dark doorless ceiling. Originally it had connected first floor and basement sections of the Historical Library. When the Newspaper Division began to grow, its great bound volumes piling up endlessly in the tall stacks, papers took over the quarters of books on the lower level. Then, one day, when space was needed on first floor for another secretary, the stair well was ceiled over, a desk lifted into the place and the round-about way to the basement was all but forgotten.

I discovered the stair one day when I was browsing through the Library's inactive collection in the northwest corner of the basement. An antiquarian's delight, those shelves. You find *Nature Displayed*, *Natural History to Excite the Curiosity and Form the Minds of Youth*, London: J. and J.

Pemberton, Fleet Street, MDCCXXXIX, along with ancient herbals brightened by recipes for tisanes and school books inscribed with delicate browning penmanship.

The stair is there, just beyond a book shelf. I recall standing on the second step, watching the circling turns until they ended in dark nothingness above. It was useless, empty, the symbol of frustration—a stairway with no place to go.

You don't really forget a stairway with no place to go. Stairs should be busy and useful. It's foolish and you know it but you feel a little sorry for this kind of unfulfillment. You may tuck away the thought but you do not forget.

I remembered the stairway again when the Newspaper Division, by microfilming, cleared a large section of their southwest stack room for a long-needed museum work shop. Jack Musgrove, curator, and Jon Robison of the filming staff began to talk about starting on the paper collection in the northwest area. This would eventually mean more space for library expansion.

Just last week Mr. Musgrove came striding into the Library with the announcement: "Carpenters will be here in an hour to take up the floor over the stair well." There were three metal files, a book case and four boxes of unprocessed manuscripts to be moved. After that we tiptoed around apologizing to patrons for the unseemly pounding in the stack room. "We're sorry. Renovations, you know." We could hardly explain, could we, that we were rescuing a stairway.

Naturally you understand that uncovering the circular stairs is only one of the *happenings* in the Historical Library. There's the steady flow of books into the library and out from the stacks. There are new genealogists hunting forebears, historians poking into the papers of Dodge and Allison, manuscripts arriving unannounced and, always, the visiting notables.

Two weeks ago it was Mary L. Hoegh, wife of Governor Leo A. Hoegh, who came by to leave additional pictures for our files along with material on the post-Iowa career of our former chief executive. The same day we greeted Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hibbs and Betsy of Waterloo, Iowa, parents and young sister of Robert Hibbs, Iowa's medal of honor recipient in the Viet Nam conflict.

Mrs. Hibbs and I talked while Walter and Betsy made the rounds of the earth science exhibits in the museum. I heard about Robert, the boy who never learned to quit, about Robert, second lieutenant, sure of his duty but agonized with the tragedy of war, about a memorial chapel in the far east named for a man who died too young. If there are accolades for the devotion of military heroes, let there be honest and profound respect for the quiet courage of parents like the Walter Hibbs.

Last week we welcomed Shen Ching-hung, small, polite, translating his story of English into Chinese and back again with careful skill. Mr. Shen is research associate, heading the document section of the National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China. Aloys Gilman of our own manuscripts section, steered the visitor through the maze of cataloguing, indexing and calendaring documents, to the vault with their long rows of storage boxes. Remembering the antiquity of Chinese people I found myself asking, "How old are your papers, Mr. Shen?" Mr. Shen smiled. "Old," he said. "Imperial papers, many centuries." Suddenly Iowa and Iowa history seemed very young.

Vacation time, isn't it? If you are in Des Moines and of that sturdy breed who believes all historical libraries should have circular stairways, come to see us. We'll give you a round trip up and down the winding stairs.

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