

THE NEGRO SUFFRAGE ISSUE IN IOWA — 1865-1868*

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Most historians who have studied the Negro suffrage issue in the United States during the immediate post-Civil War period have focused chiefly on the plight of the freedmen in the South. General histories of the Reconstruction era typically touch upon the Negro in the North only incidentally, while the best study of Northern Negroes is limited to the period before 1860.¹

Studies of the Negro suffrage movement in the North after the Civil War have generally neglected the states west of the Mississippi River in favor of the more populous Northeast and the Ohio Valley.² Scholars have noted the failure of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Connecticut to adopt Negro suffrage in 1865³, but have not generally considered the Iowa election of that year, which was fought largely on the sole issue of Negro suffrage. Histories of Iowa have not developed the subsequent impact of this contest on national policy.⁴ Yet the Iowa legislature elected that October initiated the amendment process which led to a popular vote in 1868 endorsing the elimination of the word "white" from the suffrage article and other provisions of the state's constitution.

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¹ William A. Dunning, *Reconstruction, Political and Economic, 1865-1877* (New York, 1907), 125; Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Era of Reconstruction, 1865-1877* (New York, 1965), 47n.; Leon F. Litwack, *North of Slavery; The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860* (Chicago, 1961).

² Leslie H. Fishel, Jr., "Northern Prejudice and Negro Suffrage, 1865-1870." *Journal of Negro History*, XXXIX (January, 1954), 8-26; James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality; Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton, 1964).

³ Eric L. McKittrick, *Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1960), 58n., 59n.; Fishel, 22-24; McPherson, 333-334; 382.

⁴ Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* (New York, 1903), III, 1-2; Cyrenus Cole, *A History of the People of Iowa* (Cedar Rapids, 1921), 378; Edgar R. Harlan, *A Narrative History of the People of Iowa* (Chicago, 1931), II, 23.

Since the adoption of Negro suffrage by substantial majorities in Iowa and Minnesota in 1868 was a major boost to the movement for a Fifteenth Amendment,⁵ the story of how this came about deserves to be told.

The problem of civil and political rights for Negroes in Iowa preceded statehood. In 1838, the territorial legislature required Negroes entering Iowa after April 1, 1839, to have a "certificate of freedom" and post a \$500 bond as proof they would not become a public charge. A law prohibiting interracial marriages was passed on Jan. 6, 1840.⁶ The constitutional conventions of 1844 and 1846 debated and rejected Negro suffrage, refrained from prohibiting Negro immigration only because they feared doing so would jeopardize Iowa's admission to statehood, and barred Negroes from holding office or serving in the militia.⁷ In 1851, the legislature passed a law prohibiting immigration of Negroes, but it was not enforced, and the Negro population of Iowa trebled, from 333 in 1850 to 1,069 in 1860.⁸

Iowa's present constitution was adopted in 1857, when Negro suffrage again occasioned extensive debate. The convention voted to submit to the people the question of striking the word "white" from the suffrage article as a separate proposition, together with the new constitution. The voters narrowly approved the constitution, but Negro suffrage was overwhelmingly defeated.⁹ A proposal to prohibit Negro immigration was tabled by the convention, but the new constitution permitted segregated schools and continued to ex-

⁵ McPherson, 424.

⁶ Louis Pelzer, "The Negro and Slavery in Early Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, II (October, 1904), 471; Leola N. Bergmann, "The Negro in Iowa," *I.J.H.P.*, XLVI (January, 1948), 9; Litwack, 70n.

⁷ Carl H. Erbe, "Constitutional Provisions for the Suffrage in Iowa," *I.J.H.P.*, XXII (April, 1924), 164-185; Bergmann, 12-14.

⁸ Bergmann, 15; Litwack, 263.

⁹ Erbe, 185-206, gives the constitution a margin of 1,460 votes, 49,316 for and 38,856 against, and Negro suffrage 8,489 for and 49,387 against, a margin of 41,182. But Iowa, Secretary of State, *Election Records, 1839-1890* (3 reels, microfilm, University of Iowa Libraries), Reel 1, 78-81, gives the constitution a margin of 1,630 votes, 40,311 for and 38,681 against, and Negro suffrage 8,207 for and 49,564 against, a margin of 41,357.

clude Negroes from the militia.¹⁰ However, Iowa Negroes did secure one small advance in 1857. In 1838, the territorial legislature excluded the testimony of Negroes in court and the Iowa Code of 1851 continued this prohibition. But in 1857, the state legislature repealed the law, and the new constitution permitted Negro testimony, chiefly to ensure that white criminals did not go unpunished for lack of qualified witnesses.¹¹

Iowa in 1857, under Governor James W. Grimes, was "antislavery but not abolitionist,"¹² and the fledgling Republican party was not yet willing to countenance Negro suffrage. That would not come until after the Civil War, the impact of which was felt in every Iowa community. Governor William M. Stone's message to the legislature in January, 1866, put Iowa's contribution to the Union armies at 78,059 men: "Our average population during the war has not exceeded 700,000, and of this we have furnished *one-ninth* to the national armies."¹³ Among these were the 911 officers and men of the First Regiment, Iowa African Infantry, six companies of which were actually recruited in Iowa "and comprised within their ranks almost every man of African descent in the State who was capable of performing military service."¹⁴ The First Iowa African saw little combat and was only a tiny fraction of the Iowans in arms, but the fact it existed at all was of symbolic value. In 1865, Lieutenant Governor Enoch W. Eastman asked the Republican State Convention "how can you insist that loyal negroes shall vote in South Carolina when you refuse to allow the colored soldiers of your own Iowa colored regiment to vote here?"¹⁵

This paradox bedeviled Republicans throughout the

¹⁰ Benjamin F. Shambaugh, *The Constitutions of Iowa*, rev. ed. (Iowa City, 1934), 247-250; Erbe, 203; Litwack, 116.

¹¹ Shambaugh, *Constitutions*, 244-246; Harlan, I, 355-357; Litwack, 93.

¹² Joel H. Silbey, "Proslavery Sentiment in Iowa, 1838-1861," *Iowa Journal of History*, LV (October, 1957), 314.

¹³ Benjamin F. Shambaugh (ed.), *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, III (Iowa City, 1903), 59.

¹⁴ *Roster and Record of Iowa Soldiers in the War of the Rebellion* (Des Moines, 1911), V, 1585-1586. Four companies were Missourians.

¹⁵ *Davenport Weekly Gazette*, Apr. 17, 1867.

North in 1865. Many could cheerfully advocate Negro suffrage in the South who would hesitate to do so at home. Republican politicians were fully aware that "color prejudice in some form, in the North as well as in the South, was all but universal . . . and were not overly anxious to run afoul of it."¹⁶ But here and there an occasional Republican could be found who would take the risk, among them Edward Russell of Davenport. Russell, "a radical anti-slavery man and Abolitionist," was born in London, England, Oct. 6, 1830, and came to Scott County, Iowa in 1859. He was active in the Republican organization there the following year, became editor of the *Davenport Gazette* in 1862, and by 1865 was postmaster as well.¹⁷

In the spring of 1865 Russell urged the forthcoming Republican State Convention to make an emphatic declaration in favor of Negro suffrage. "Let us meet the question now fully and frankly" and if need be fight the coming campaign on the issue.¹⁸ Benjamin F. Gue, another strong anti-slavery Republican soon to be nominated for Lieutenant Governor, also deplored the color bar at the polls,¹⁹ but elsewhere the press reaction was notably less enthusiastic. Democratic editor Edward Thayer of Muscatine warned that Radical Republicans were preparing to use the Negro suffrage question as an opening wedge to force upon Iowans the doctrine of racial equality.²⁰ Nathan H. Brainerd of Iowa City, a close associate of former Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood, joined the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* in urging the convention to stick to "well-defined principles" and avoid "starting any new issues" which might divide the party.²¹ But Russell continued to urge the convention to undo the wrong done in 1857, since "it is morally certain that the next legislature will thus refuse or neglect to act unless *previously unequivocally instructed by*

¹⁶ McKittrick, 57-58.

¹⁷ *History of Scott County, Iowa* (Chicago, 1882), 578-580, 582; Gue, IV, 226-227.

¹⁸ *Davenport Weekly Gazette*, May 17, 1865.

¹⁹ Gue, IV, 111-112; *Fort Dodge Iowa North West*, May 30, 1865.

²⁰ *Muscatine Courier*, June 9, 1865.

²¹ Gue, IV, 28; *Iowa City Republican*, May 31, 1865; *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, May 23, 1865.

the people."²²

Edward Russell attended the Republican Convention in Des Moines on June 14 as a delegate from Scott County and served on the resolutions committee. When a majority of that committee agreed to report out an innocuous resolution on the right of suffrage, Russell took the floor of the convention and proposed as an addition the words "therefore, we are in favor of amending the Constitution of our State by striking the word *white* in the article on suffrage." The convention would have gladly tabled Russell's amendment had not the presiding officer ruled that a move to do so would table the entire report of the resolutions committee as well. Since the convention did not wish to go on record even *appearing* to oppose Negro suffrage, the amendment carried by a vote of 513½ to 242½, and the delegates consoled themselves with the observation that "in as much as the issue must be squarely met, it might as well be met this year as next."²³

The convention divided three ways on the Negro suffrage issue. One group had favored emancipation, but flatly opposed Negro suffrage. A second group favored it in principle, but feared its open advocacy would cause defeat in the fall election, while Russell's supporters were willing to lose some votes for the sake of principle but were confident Republicans would triumph anyway. As Congressman Hiram Price put it, "we shall carry the election and have the satisfaction of wiping out the last vestige of the black code that has long been a disgrace to our State."²⁴

Several Republican newspapers failed to share Price's optimism. The *Sioux City Journal* felt Iowans were not yet ready for Negro suffrage and considered "the agitation of the subject as being premature," while James B. Howell of Keokuk questioned the propriety of Russell's amendment and feared it would "distract" the voters in October. Brainerd

²² Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, June 7, 1865.

²³ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, June 21, 1865.

²⁴ Gue, III, 1-2; Cole, 378.

observed that some of the opponents of the amendment were "willing to say 'vote' to the black man, but did not wish to say it so loudly and plainly as to be heard too far." One Democratic editor, young John P. Irish of Iowa City, noted that "many of the journals that fairly smelt of nigger equality before, are beginning to mend their manners," but Russell published examples of editorial support from a dozen newspapers and the *Sioux City Journal* conceded that most of the Republican press endorsed his stand.²⁵

At least three important Republican journals—the Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, the Muscatine *Journal*, the Brainerd's Iowa *City Republican*—refused to acknowledge that the Fourth Resolution of the Republican platform in any way committed the party to Negro suffrage, or even that it was at issue in the election. Russell never flagged in his zeal to show them the error of their ways, but they remained unmoved. In an editorial beginning "We are asked 'why do you not say more about the negro question?'" Brainerd professed his inability to see in it any "great absorbing question" and insisted that Negro suffrage was not a party question, but one for the people to decide. In response to Russell's strictures, Brainerd asserted that he had voted for Negro suffrage — presumably in 1857 — "long before we heard of Mr. Russell or his resolution." If all Republicans were to take the stand advocated by the *Gazette*, they would lose the coming election by 10,000 votes. Brainerd was confident that most Republican papers in Iowa shared his views and would not be misled by "indiscreet and impractical men" who would "swamp our cause by misdirected zeal or overweening confidence in their own ability."²⁶

²⁵ *Sioux City Journal*, July 1, 1865; *Keokuk Daily Gate City*, June 21, 1865; *Iowa City Republican*, June 21, 1865.

²⁶ *Davenport Weekly Gazette*, June 28; July 5; Aug. 9, 23, 1865; *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, June 26, 1865; *Davenport Daily Democrat*, Aug. 9, 1865; *Iowa City Republican*, Aug. 9, 16, 1865.

Democrats did not hesitate to acknowledge the "in-discreet and impractical" Russell as the spokesman of Iowa Republicans. Irish scorned Brainerd's "We are asked" editorial as evasion and commended the *Gazette's* views "to all those who wish to understand the issues involved in this campaign." Since Russell had proposed the Negro suffrage amendment, "the fair presumption would be that in doing so he knew for what purpose he did it." Edward Thayer, and Lysander Babbitt of Council Bluffs, equally scornful of Republican "dodging," touted the *Gazette* as one of the leading Republican journals of the state and reprinted Russell's editorials to prove that "negro equality" had become the cardinal principle of Iowa Republicans.²⁷

Campaign of 1865

Race prejudice has been called the Northern Democrats' greatest asset in 1865. Negro suffrage was the "exposed flank" of the Republicans, who "were denounced as the 'nigger party.'" This strategy was expected to appeal especially to veterans of the Union armies, who were believed to be particularly hostile to Negro voting.²⁸ There is no better illustration of this racist appeal to the "soldier vote" than the Iowa election campaign of 1865.

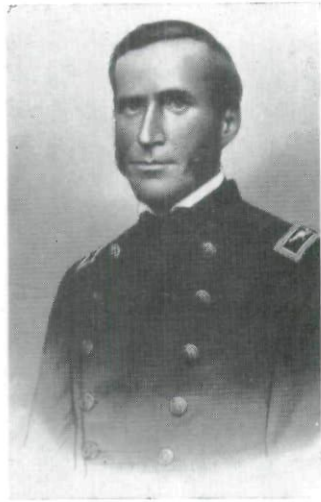
David N. ("Dick") Richardson of Davenport estimated that nine-tenths of Iowa's returning soldiers would join Democrats and conservative Republicans in opposing Negro suffrage. He cited brawling between veterans and Negroes as evidence that "the Iowa soldier is not going to vote the negro suffrage ticket." He quoted Edward Thayer's assertion that 40,000 Iowa soldiers, who would hold the balance of power in the coming election, had seen the Negro at his worst in the South, could not "be counted upon to make Iowa the black state of the nation" and would support an anti-Negro suffrage ticket made up chiefly of Iowa soldiers.²⁹

²⁷ Iowa City *State Press*, Aug. 9, 16, 23, 1865; Muscatine *Courier*, Aug. 11, 18, 25, 1865; Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Aug. 24, 1865.

²⁸ McKittrick, 58.

²⁹ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Aug. 1, 3, 8, 18, 1865.

The movement to nominate a "Soldier's Ticket" began in Keokuk. One convention in the "Gate City" on July 12 refused to repudiate the Republicans, but a second on July 29 called upon all "soldiers and other loyal citizens opposed to Negro suffrage and Governor Stone" to attend a "Soldier's Convention" in Des Moines, August 23, to nominate a "WHITE MAN'S TICKET." Meanwhile, another call emanated from Davenport for persons opposed to Negro suffrage and supporting President Johnson's reconstruction policy to attend a convention in Des Moines a day later.³⁰ The soldier's convention adopted a resolution denouncing Negro suffrage and nominated Gen. Thomas H. Benton, Jr.—a nominal Republican and nephew of the famous Democratic Senator from Missouri—for governor on a "Union Anti-Negro Suffrage" ticket. The next day the Democratic convention also denounced Negro suffrage and endorsed the "Soldier's Ticket."³¹



Thomas H. Benton, Jr.

The Republican press acknowledged this strategy was shrewdly designed to appeal to those who could not accept Negro suffrage. Perhaps Iowa soldiers *had* returned "with prejudices against the Negro rather than otherwise," but were the "Copperheads," who the previous year "were as much opposed to soldier-suffrage as they now are to negro suffrage," really the soldiers' friends?³² Some soldiers did

³⁰ Keokuk *Daily Gate City*, July 12, 14; Aug. 1, 1865; Davenport *Daily Democrat*, July 15; Aug. 9, 1865.

³¹ Gue, IV, 18-19; Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Aug. 26, 29, 1865. Benton subsequently returned to the Democrats. The August 24 convention did not call itself "Democratic," but was generally recognized as such.

³² Sioux City *Journal*, July 29, 1865; Dubuque *Daily Times*, Aug. 24, 29, 1865.

not think so; Col. Van Anda declined the "Soldier's" nomination for lieutenant governor, preferring instead to oppose Negro suffrage from within the Republican ranks, while some county soldier's conventions refused to break with the Republicans "and affiliate with our enemies, merely because we do not all see the Negro question in the same light."³³

Not all Democrats were pleased with the new strategy. Party leaders in Dubuque, perhaps smarting from Republican taunts that their party was "playing possum," regretted no avowedly Democratic ticket had been nominated. Lysander Babbitt vigorously denied the August 24 convention was truly Democratic and accepted the nomination for lieutenant governor on a maverick "Democratic" ticket put together by LeGrand Byington of Iowa City.³⁴ But most Iowa Democrats saw in the Negro suffrage issue the formula for winning enough votes of conservative Republicans and soldiers to unseat Governor Stone in October.

The Iowa campaign of 1865 furnishes ample evidence that some degree of race prejudice was practically universal in the North. Richardson's Davenport *Daily Democrat* avowed that "no leading politician in the country has been more active and zealous for negro equality than Gov. Stone for the past three years," that "the negro is no more fitted to vote than the Comanches and Apaches of our western deserts," that "there is an impulse implanted in the breast of every white man, that repels the thought that a negro is his equal," and that "if a soldier is fanatically in favor of making a negro his equal he *may* receive some party nomination [from the Republicans]," but "if he honestly believes that a negro is his inferior, he is at once the recipient of all manner of abuse."³⁵ Lysander Babbitt argued the Republicans "propose to place the negro on an equality with the white man at the ballot box, and their next step will be to confer upon him absolute equality in *all respects*, with white men,

³³ Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Sept. 21, 1865; Iowa City *Republican*, Sept. 20, 1865.

³⁴ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Sept. 6, 24, 1865; Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Sept. 7, 28; Oct. 5, 1865.

³⁵ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Aug. 5, 30; Sept. 20; Oct. 4, 1865.

so far as legislation can make a negro the equal of a white man."³⁶

Republicans answered in no uncertain terms that political equality for Negroes did not, in their view, imply social equality. James Howell offered a long list of arguments "proving" Negroes were inferior to whites, with or without the ballot. In Iowa, he observed, Negroes testified in court, paid taxes, and were subject to the draft, "but we have seen no growing evidence of negro equality, no increase of amalgamation or miscegenation." Benjamin Gue believed "the white race to be superior to the negro race in intellect, in refinement, and in enterprise" and insisted that "political equality does not necessar[il]y carry with it social equality." Even Edward Russell, who usually occupied the lofty heights of devotion to high ideals and noble principles, felt called upon to state emphatically that "*there is not and cannot be any such thing as social equality.*"³⁷

In a debate at Des Moines near the end of the campaign, Governor Stone ridiculed the notion that Negro suffrage led to social equality when he asked Benton:

Don't you thereby admit . . . that the only difference between yourself and a nigger, is, that you have a right to vote, and the nigger don't? (Uproarious laughter.) If that is all the difference between you and the negro, in God's name, let him *vote*, for he ought to be your equal as soon as possible. (Continued laughter and applause.) If the only difference between that gentleman and a negro is that the negro has a black skin instead of a white one, I say that if that is all the difference between them [sic] and the nigger, what an almighty mean white man he must be. (Cheers.) And what a pity he hadn't been created with a black skin! If he had been so created, God Almighty would have refused the right of suffrage. (Cheers.)³⁸

After the election Nathan Brainerd chided his Democratic rival for fearing the Negro would become his equal

³⁶ Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Aug. 24, 1865.

³⁷ Keokuk *Daily Gate City*, July 6, 1865; Fort Dodge *Iowa North West*, Sept. 12, 1865; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1865.

³⁸ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Oct. 11, 1865.

and cited "anthropological evidence" supposedly "proving" the Negro incapable of becoming "an intellectual man." John Irish heartily concurred with the "evidence," upon which he claimed to have based his opposition to Negro suffrage. Brainerd in turn replied that he was "willing to risk competition with the black man, . . . and rely on the superior endowments that God has given the white race to keep them ahead."³⁹

Many Iowans, however, were clearly not "willing to risk competition with the black man." Fear of massive Negro immigration was as much a factor in anti-Negro suffrage sentiment in 1865 as it had been in 1857. "A Voter" asked how Republicans could allow "an ignorant manumitted Negro" to vote after only six months residence while an intelligent white immigrant from Europe was required to wait five years. Irish also argued the folly of granting ignorant Negroes a privilege denied women and immigrants, however intelligent, warning it would encourage Negro immigration.⁴⁰ Richardson warned, "pass the *suffrage* act, and next summer our white men will be invited to share the labors of the harvest field with negroes, to eat with, and to associate with them as equals." Edward Thayer developed the thesis that suffrage would attract hordes of freed Negroes from the South to Iowa, where they would compete with, and depress the wages of, white workers. If Negro suffrage had been unwise in 1857, when the danger of such immigration was slight, arguments used then "apply with a tenfold force now."⁴¹

Democrats were forced to conjure up this spectre of hordes of incoming Negroes, since none could dispute the fact that, as the following table shows, at no time in the 1860's did Negroes comprise more than about one-half of one per cent of Iowa's population:

³⁹ Iowa City *Republican*, Nov. 15, 29, 1865; Iowa City *State Press*, Nov. 22, 1865.

⁴⁰ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Aug. 16, 1865; Iowa City *State Press*, Oct. 4, 1865.

⁴¹ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Aug. 15, 1865; Muscatine *Courier*, June 23; July 14, 1865.

Population of Iowa, 1863-1869⁴²

Year	1863	1865	1867	1869
White	700,842	751,125	897,325	1,035,474
Negro	1,320	3,607	4,715	5,345
Total	702,162	754,732	902,040	1,040,819

The largest concentration of Negroes, in Lee County (Keokuk), numbered a little over 1,000 in 1865 and somewhat less than 1,500 in 1869.⁴³ James Howell, noting that Keokuk had more Negroes than other Iowa towns, urged the "Copperhead Possum leaders" to "load them up and travel round the State with them that all the faithful may have a chance to see and smell a nigger, even if they cannot get a slice of the 'critter.'" Using the census returns for 1860, he calculated that a suffrage amendment would produce no more than 250 Negro voters in Iowa.⁴⁴

Republican politicians assured the voters Iowa would not be inundated by Negroes. In a letter widely reprinted in Republican newspapers, Associate Judge Chester C. Cole of the Iowa Supreme Court asserted few Negroes would move to the state but would instead "seek, what they prefer and by nature seem adapted to — a warmer climate and one nearer their tropical nativity." In a speech at Keokuk, July 1, Governor Stone echoed Cole's view: "The negro is better suited to a warmer climate than ours," and if he gets the ballot in the South he will stay there.⁴⁵ But the Democrats were not so easily reassured. Thayer thought Keokuk had been overrun with Negroes the past three years, but the Republicans wished to attract even more because "*the negro works cheap.*" General Benton warned of the unfitness of *Southern Negroes* for suffrage: "To bring the matter directly

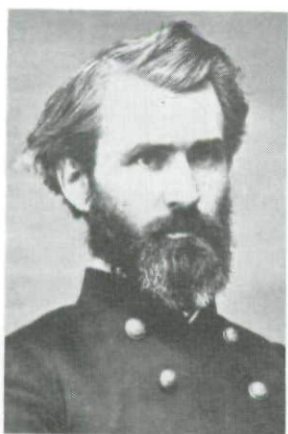
⁴² Shambaugh, *Messages and Proclamation*, III, 41; *Census of Iowa*, 1865, 154-157; 1867, 64-67; 1869, 70-73.

⁴³ *Ibid.* The figures for Lee County are: 1865, 1,042 Negroes and 27,021 whites; 1867, 1,365 and 30,052; 1869, 1,479 and 32,648. Counties with 200 to 400 Negroes each in 1869 were Des Moines, Henry, Muscatine, Polk and Scott.

⁴⁴ Keokuk *Daily Gate City*, July 18; Sept. 7, 1865.

⁴⁵ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, July 19; Aug. 16, 1865.

home, should the 450,000 freedmen of Georgia be transferred to Iowa in their present condition, would we invest them with the right of suffrage?" Russell responded to Benton's "scarecrow of '450,000 freedmen of Georgia'" by calculating that not more than one-eighth—56,250—could become voters, while Congressman Josiah B. Grinnell assured Benton that in Iowa "negro voters, poor and degraded, would stand to white voters, intelligent and favored, as one in eight hundred."⁴⁶



Gov. W. M. Stone

W. Grimes considered it "uncalled for and impolitic." Russell scornfully replied that "we hold that it is *always safe to do right*" and the *Dubuque Times* took the position that, although "votes would be lost by attempting to lead public opinion," votes were "of less value than principles."⁴⁷

Some Republican newspapers endeavored to educate the voters in the process by which the Iowa Constitution was amended, stressing that proposed amendments must be approved by two successive legislatures before their submission to a popular vote. Thus Negro suffrage could not *really*

⁴⁶ Muscatine *Courier*, July 14, 1865; Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Sept. 15, 1865; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 13, 20, 1865.

⁴⁷ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, July 19, 1865; Keokuk *Daily Gate City*, Aug. 19; Sept. 19, 1865; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Sept. 27, 1865; Dubuque *Daily Times*, Sept. 3, 1865.

come before the people until 1868. Lysander Babbitt called the Republicans "cowards" for adopting such evasive tactics and professed to believe that, if victorious, they might convene a constitutional convention and effect Negro suffrage within ten months!⁴⁸ Richardson charged the Republicans were trying "to blind voters of our State to the fact that the question of Negro suffrage is squarely before them" and quoted Thayer's appeal to defeat Stone and put "a perpetual and everlasting quietus upon the negro question." With notable perception Thayer warned that Negro suffrage must be defeated when it was weakest; many Republicans would vote against it in 1865 on principle but would support it in future elections as a matter of party loyalty. Its opponents must nip it in the bud then, for "if one legislature approves of the amendment, it will be the next thing to impossible to afterwards defeat the measure." Thayer was right; Governor Stone was also tired of "the nigger question" and promised to recommend the next legislature take steps "to submit it [Negro suffrage] to the people, that this infernal 'nigger' question may finally be disposed of."⁴⁹

Governor Stone won re-election October 3 with 70,445 votes to Benton's 54,070, but his margin of victory was only 16,375 votes, while Gue's, for lieutenant governor, was 20,526. Foes of Negro suffrage also noted that the Republican vote was down 18,521 from the 88,966 votes won by Lincoln in 1864, while their opponents were up 4,484 votes from the preceding year. The *State Register* admitted that Governor Stone's vote was reduced, at least in part, by "whatever odium attached in localities to the amendment to the Fourth Resolution of the Republican platform." Gue was sure, thirty-eight years later, that "the campaign of 1865 was fought on the one issue of negro suffrage," but cautioned that "as the previous election had been for President, when usually a much larger vote is polled than at an ordinary State election,

⁴⁸ Keokuk *Daily Gate City*, June 27, 1865; Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Sept. 20, 27, 1865; Fort Dodge *Iowa North West*, Oct. 2, 1865; Council Bluffs *Bugle*, Aug. 31, 1865.

⁴⁹ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Sept. 22; Oct. 2, 1865; Muscatine *Courier*, Aug. 4; Sept. 8, 22, 1865; Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Oct. 11, 1865.

it is difficult to estimate how many Republicans voted the 'Anti-Negro Suffrage' ticket and how many refrained from voting to show their disapproval of negro suffrage."⁵⁰

The Republican press disagreed on whether Stone's victory represented a popular endorsement of Negro suffrage. The *Sioux City Journal* thought it was, but the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* was sure "thousands voted the Republican ticket, who would not now vote to give the negro the ballot" and attributed reduced Republican majorities in Scott County "to the course taken by the *Gazette* and its friends." Brainerd agreed that Benton would have won had not many Republicans ignored the Negro suffrage issue; otherwise, they could not have carried Johnson County (Iowa City). "We do not see why the *Gazette* should iterate and reiterate so often that a majority of the people of Iowa have declared in favor of free suffrage."⁵¹

Of course he had not "advocated *immediate* negro suffrage," Russell replied, and cited other Republican journals which had joined the *Gazette* in advocating Negro suffrage as soon as the state constitution could be so amended. He paid wry tribute to the "more quiet yet practical endorsement given by almost the entire Republican press" and blamed the reduced Republican margin in Scott County on an anti-prohibition "People's Ticket" well-financed by local liquor dealers. "We do not insist that every vote to the Republican ticket was intended as a special endorsement of the desired suffrage reform in Iowa," Russell wrote, but he insisted the Republican party *did* declare in favor of it, and the voters had known a Republican controlled legislature would initiate the amendment process. As to why the *Gazette* had spoken out so frequently and fervently for Negro suffrage, Russell argued the South could not be expected to permit Negroes to vote if the North refused to do likewise.

⁵⁰ *Election Records*, Reel 1, 286-288; Gue, III, 2-3; Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Oct. 18, 1865. Iowa's popular vote for President, 1852-1868, by counties, is conveniently summarized in *Census of Iowa, 1869*, 259-263. A decline in the vote of the majority party in an off-year election is not unusual, and might well have occurred even if Negro suffrage had not been the main issue.

⁵¹ *Sioux City Journal*, Oct. 28, 1865; *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye*, Oct. 14, 20, 26, 1865; *Iowa City Republican*, Nov. 8, 15, 1865.

It was easy to berate the South, but Russell preferred to "direct Iowa readers to Iowa sins." The work had to begin at home; it was only right to give the ballot to *all* citizens of Iowa, Negro or white. This was why Russell regretted the silence of so many Iowa newspapers, since "these truths ought to be advocated, and reiterated, and insisted upon all over this State until their acceptance becomes universal and the right fully triumphs."⁵²

Iowans thought their stand on Negro suffrage would be noted elsewhere in the North, and in turn followed with interest developments in other states. Pro-Negro suffrage papers urged Iowans to follow the example of New York and most of New England by permitting Negroes to vote, censured Republicans in Ohio and Wisconsin for evading the issue, and regretted its defeat by 6,000 votes in Connecticut.⁵³ But Democratic journals applauded Ohio and Wisconsin Republicans, as well as the failure of Negro suffrage amendments to carry in Connecticut, Wisconsin and Minnesota, while the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* and the Iowa City *Republican* interpreted these defeats as vindication of their own stand on the issue in Iowa.⁵⁴

In the context of national events the Iowa election of 1865 was an early skirmish in the developing battle between Andrew Johnson and the Radicals—a battle in which Negro suffrage became a major issue. Edward Thayer "predicted" quite early that the adoption of the Negro suffrage resolution was the first step toward an open break between Iowa Radicals and the President.⁵⁵ When Johnson dismissed Edward Russell from his Davenport postmastership shortly after

⁵² Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Oct. 18, 25; Nov. 15, 1865.

⁵³ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Aug. 2, 1865; Dubuque *Daily Times*, Aug. 16, 1865; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Oct. 4, 18, 1865.

⁵⁴ Davenport *Daily Democrat*, Sept. 9; Oct. 9; Nov. 18; Dec. 2, 1865; Iowa City *Republican*, Oct. 11, 1865; Burlington *Daily Hawk-Eye*, Nov. 10, 1865.

⁵⁵ Muscatine *Courier*, June 30, 1865. Such Democratic "prophecies" had little to support them at the time; "there were not many [Republicans] whose suspicions of the President's plans, this early, were in pointed enough form to express to others," and "the Democrats were of course predicting that which they most desired to see." McKittrick, 64, 67.

the election — one of the first Federal officeholders to be “purged” — Thayer appreciated more readily than did such Republicans as Benjamin Gue that Russell’s chief offense had been his persistent advocacy of Negro suffrage.⁵⁶

Early in 1866 the Iowa legislature began the process of amending the state’s constitution to strike the word “white” not only from the suffrage article but also from those concerning the census, apportionment of representatives to the legislature, and the state militia. At the end of March, House File 138 passed the lower house by a vote of 69 to 16 and the Senate by 38 to 7. Voting closely followed party lines, with only three Republican representatives and two senators joining the small Democratic contingent to vote against it.⁵⁷ Of course, the legislature elected in the fall of 1867 would have to endorse the proposed amendments before they could be submitted to a popular vote in 1868. The Republican platform endorsed Negro suffrage again and the Democrats opposed it, but the issue was little discussed in the campaign, although the Davenport *Gazette* periodically endorsed the suggested amendments as part of the national campaign for what was increasingly coming to be called “impartial suffrage.”⁵⁸

The Twelfth General Assembly continued the amendment process begun by the Eleventh. A joint resolution endorsing the proposed amendments passed March 31, 1868, and legislation to submit them to a popular vote followed shortly, on April 2. Again voting followed party lines; in the House, where the vote on the joint resolution was 72 to 18, virtually all the “ayes” were Republican and the “nays” Democratic. In the Senate, where the vote stood 40 to 7, one of eight Democratic senators—Benjamin Richards of

⁵⁶ *History of Scott County, Iowa*, 580; *Muscatine Courier*, Oct. 20, 1865; *Fort Dodge Iowa North West*, Oct. 24, 1865. Russell was reappointed postmaster at Davenport by President Grant in 1869.

⁵⁷ Benjamin F. Shambaugh (ed.), *Documentary Material Relating to the History of Iowa*, I (Iowa City, 1897), 249-250, 260-261; *Iowa House Journal*, 1866, 649; *Iowa Senate Journal*, 1866, 637; *Des Moines Iowa State Weekly Register*, Dec. 6, 1865 (for party affiliations).

⁵⁸ *Davenport Weekly Democrat*, July 4, 1867; *Davenport Weekly Gazette*, May 22; June 30; July 31; Oct. 2, 1867.

Dubuque—joined the Republicans to support the resolution.⁵⁹ If Negro suffrage was not universally viewed as a party issue in 1865, it clearly became one in the 1866 and 1868 legislatures, and it was as a party issue that it was submitted to the people.

Once again the Republicans endorsed Negro suffrage, while Democrats opposed it, and once again Edward Russell worked tirelessly in its behalf. This time, he wrote, no side issues would distract voters from the main question.⁶⁰ In late September and early October, when it was quite apparent that both General Grant and the Republican state ticket would carry Iowa by large majorities, Republican newspapers began a campaign to rally a large vote as well for the proposed amendments. Editorials appeared exhorting Republican voters to do their duty, and Russell instructed election officials concerning the proper location of the amendments on the ballot. Grant said he "hoped the people of Iowa . . . would be the first State to carry impartial suffrage through unfalteringly."⁶¹

The people of Iowa did not disappoint the General, although their support for Negro suffrage lagged behind their endorsement of him. Grant won nearly 62 per cent of the popular vote and carried all but six counties, while Negro suffrage carried by 56.5 per cent and lost in twenty counties.⁶² Negro suffrage generally did best in those counties which went most heavily for Grant, while the twenty counties

⁵⁹ Shambaugh, *Documentary Material*, I, 261-264; *Iowa House Journal*, 1868, 401-402, 405; *Iowa Senate Journal*, 1868, 384-385; Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Jan. 15, 1868 (for party affiliations). Of three "People's Party" Representatives from Scott County, two voted for the amendments and one against them. For Richards' explanation of his vote, see Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Apr. 8, 1868.

⁶⁰ Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Mar. 4; May 13, 1868; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Apr. 29; May 13, 1868.

⁶¹ Dubuque *Daily Times*, Oct. 13, 20, 23, 1868; Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Oct. 21, 28, 1868; Des Moines *Iowa State Weekly Register*, Sept. 30; Oct. 7, 14, 21; Nov. 4, 1868.

⁶² *Election Records*, Reel I, 355-357, 369-373. The vote for Grant, 120,399; for Seymour, 74,040. The vote for Negro suffrage, 105,384; against, 81,119. The other four amendments carried by slightly greater majorities. No votes were recorded from Lyon and Osceola counties, which were not yet organized.

which rejected it either went for Seymour or were carried for Grant by relatively slender majorities. (See table).

Iowa's Vote for President and for Negro Suffrage, 1868⁶³

County	% Grant	% Negro	Dif.	County	% Grant	% Negro	Dif.
Clay°	95.0	94.6	-0.6	Fayette	66.9	63.4	-3.5
Buena Vista°	93.4	81.7	-11.7	Ringgold	66.9	60.8	-6.1
Dickinson°	92.4	84.4	-8.0	Delaware	66.6	63.3	-3.3
Kossuth	91.7	92.0	0.3	Page	66.4	57.4	-9.0
Winnebago°	91.0	80.2	-10.8	Chickasaw	65.7	61.3	-4.4
O'Brien°	90.9	60.0	-30.9	Carroll°	65.5	36.7	-28.8
Grundy	88.3	80.6	-7.7	Jones	65.3	62.4	-2.9
Franklin	86.9	81.1	-5.8	Greene	64.7	51.0	-13.7
Worth	86.3	75.3	-11.0	Cedar	64.1	58.3	-5.8
Cerro Gordo	85.8	79.1	-6.7	Howard	63.9	59.9	-4.0
Pocahontas°	83.0	91.1	8.1	Mahaska	63.7	58.2	-5.5
Emmett°	82.9	79.3	-3.6	Washington	63.6	59.8	-3.8
Wright	82.5	66.0	-16.5	Polk	63.2	59.4	-3.8
Ida°	82.1	59.1	-23.0	Cass	63.1	53.7	-9.4
Mitchell	80.1	74.6	-5.5	IOWA TOTAL:	61.9	56.5	-5.4
Cherokee°	80.0	73.4	-6.6	Muscatine	61.7	55.6	-6.1
Plymouth°	79.8	57.8	-22.0	Madison	61.5	55.3	-6.2
Hamilton	79.3	72.1	-7.2	Montgomery	61.3	54.9	-6.4
Marshall	79.3	75.7	-3.6	Jefferson	61.2	55.0	-6.2
Hancock°	77.4	72.1	-5.3	Calhoun°	60.8	55.9	-4.9
Humboldt	77.2	65.2	-12.0	Dallas	60.4	63.9	3.5
Floyd	75.5	71.4	-4.1	Mills	60.4	52.9	-7.5
Blackhawk	75.4	71.0	-4.4	Lucas	59.2	49.7	-9.5
Hardin	74.7	69.5	-5.2	Clayton	58.8	54.0	-4.8
Sac°	74.6	65.5	-9.1	Clinton	58.6	54.6	-4.0
Adams	74.1	67.3	-6.8	Monroe	58.5	55.9	-2.6
Henry	72.9	62.6	-10.3	Wayne	58.3	51.7	-6.6
Butler	72.5	66.2	-6.3	Union	58.0	52.5	-5.5
Bremer	71.8	69.3	-2.5	Boone	57.8	53.0	-4.8
Clarke	71.4	62.8	-8.6	Crawford	57.5	51.5	-6.2
Story	71.4	63.9	-7.5	Webster	57.3	54.2	-3.1
Tama	69.8	64.0	-5.8	Woodbury	57.0	46.6	-10.4
Scott	69.6	65.1	-4.5	Guthrie	56.9	54.6	-2.3
Jasper	69.5	65.3	-4.2	Des Moines	56.8	48.1	-8.7
Adair	69.3	63.6	-5.7	Keokuk	56.3	60.6	4.3
Monona	69.3	57.5	-11.8	Iowa	56.2	51.1	-5.1

⁶³ *Ibid.* The top 24 counties for Grant (74.7 per cent or better) included all but one of the top 20 counties (69 per cent or better) for Negro suffrage, while all but two of the 20 counties which rejected Negro suffrage were in the bottom 24 counties for Grant (less than 57.7 per cent).

TABLE 2, Continued
Iowa's Vote for President and for Negro Suffrage, 1868⁶³

County	% Grant	% Negro	% Dif.	County	% Grant	% Negro	% Dif.
Taylor	69.1	62.6	-6.5	Harrison	56.0	45.2	-10.8
Linn	68.9	66.4	-2.5	Van Buren	55.8	49.6	-6.2
Benton	68.8	62.8	-6.0	Appanoose	55.1	49.2	-5.9
Poweshiek	68.0	63.6	-4.4	Allamakee	52.3	50.6	-1.7
Winneshiek	67.8	66.2	-1.6	Sioux ^o	54.5	54.5	0.0
Louisa	67.7	60.5	-7.2	Shelby	54.3	44.3	-10.0
Warren	67.6	61.6	-6.0	Wapello	53.8	49.4	-4.4
Buchanan	66.9	64.8	-2.1	Johnson	52.0	45.9	-6.1
Davis	51.9	45.3	-6.6	Jackson	49.1	44.2	-4.9
Pottawattamie	51.8	42.6	-9.2	Lee	49.0	40.9	-8.1
Marion	50.9	46.7	-4.2	Fremont	47.5	41.3	-6.2
Decatur	50.1	42.9	-7.2	Palo Alto	39.4	23.2	-16.2
Audubon ^o	50.0	43.4	-6.6	Dubuque	38.7	34.6	-4.1

^oCounties casting a total of fewer than 200 votes on the amendments.

Many Iowans could take satisfaction from the victory, but none had more right to do so than Edward Russell. Shortly after the appearance of Governor Samuel F. Merrill's proclamation that the amendments had been adopted, Russell wrote:

Remembering when . . . we urged . . . the duty of the Republican State Convention of 1865 to meet "the coming question" boldly, and with earnest declarations for the Right, how sage and eminently discreet party counselors deprecated our course, and censured us as a disturber of party peace; recalling . . . the tremor of the eleven prudent men in the Committee on Platform, when one Radical member would not abandon his conviction to their fears, . . . the apologizing, explaining, protesting and dodging which followed from would-be Republican leaders, . . . the progress made and results secured, seems more than wonderful. The world *has* moved, and God's own truth has been the power compelling the onward march to victory.⁶⁴

Perhaps Iowans in 1868 would have endorsed Negro suffrage even if it had not become a party issue, but there can be little doubt that the "excitement of the Presidential canvas" did help carry it in both Iowa and Minnesota.⁶⁵ The

⁶⁴ Davenport *Weekly Gazette*, Dec. 16, 1868.

⁶⁵ Fishel, 24.

referendum in 1868 was no more of an unambiguous triumph of principle over prejudice than Governor Stone's victory three years earlier. But to the extent that principle prevailed over expediency, the credit belongs in no small measure to Edward Russell.

STONE CITY, IOWA

By Joan Muyskens, Editor

Stone City, Iowa, located on the Wapsipinicon River about four miles west of Anamosa, has been described as "the place that refuses to die."¹ Born over a century ago, it has had three significant periods; the first, its founding and flourishing as a quarry town that, in the late 1800s, drew "more money from other states than any (other) town in Iowa;"² the second, its use as an art colony, established by Grant Wood; and, the third and present period, its return as a quarry town. This article will take a brief look at each of these periods and the people that stood behind the vitality of Stone City.



John A. Green

The first period of Stone City's history can be attributed largely to the efforts of John A. Green. Born in Ireland on Dec. 10, 1844, John A. Green came to the United States with his mother and sister in 1852. The family settled in Boston, Mass., where he attended school and, in 1860, began to learn the business of stone cutting. In 1865, he removed to Joliet, Ill., and worked for several years as a journeyman. After that, he worked for the Union Pacific Railroad, cutting stone for bridges. It was in Joliet, that he married Ellen Kane.

¹ *Des Moines Sunday Register*, magazine section, Dec. 6, 1964.

² *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. 20, p. 305.

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