

The Conquest of the Hinterland: Railroads and Capitalists in Northwest Iowa after the Civil War

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THE AGRICULTURAL SETTLEMENT of northwest Iowa followed a pattern set earlier in the nineteenth century in the Ohio and Mississippi river valleys: scattered pioneer farmers pursued near-subsistence agriculture until linked to commodity markets via interregional transportation systems. Without a transportation link—to the Missouri River, to the Chicago market, to the industrial northeast—the vast potential of the million-acre Sioux City Land District would remain untapped. No one was more keenly aware of this at the time than the ambitious capitalists of frontier Sioux City. Beginning in the mid-1850s, these local entrepreneurs worked hard to develop the commercial viability of their community on the basis of steamboat transportation, which served the extensive outfitting trade of the upper Missouri region to the north and west of Sioux City. But from the outset their sights were set on a larger vision—one in which farmers in northwest Iowa were linked via rail to consumers and suppliers in other parts of the country.¹

The Sioux City men could not fulfill their vision of a thriving agricultural region without a good deal of help out in the rural hinterland itself. Promotional efforts in Sioux City—and in the state and national legislatures—had to be complemented by parallel campaigns in northwest Iowa's smaller communities

1. Robert Larry Higgs, "The Growth of Cities in the Midwestern Region, 1870-1900," *Journal of Regional Science* 9 (1969), 369-75, is a succinct statement of the model of urbanization that informs this essay.

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to induce settlement in the countryside. Never an explicit, coordinated plan of regional development, a tacit understanding nonetheless appears to have existed between the Sioux Citians and their smaller-scale counterparts in scores of fledgling agricultural villages that sprouted in northwest Iowa after the Civil War. While the urban business leaders devoted themselves to the larger task of linking the region to the national network of commerce, less powerful groups of entrepreneurs in the hinterland concentrated on developing the institutional framework for agricultural settlement on the local level.

These small-town and rural business leaders established banks in county-seat towns, directed real-estate operations in rural areas, and built grain elevators and feed mills in farm villages as soon as the railroad opened the Sioux City Land District to settlement. Their activities varied in intensity according to proximity to the route of the railroad, distance from Sioux City itself, and other locational factors, but the overall result of their efforts in the dozen years from 1868 to 1880 was to bring the land district's ten thousand square miles into the mainstream of commercial agriculture in the United States. Their leadership styles also varied from place to place, giving local communities distinctive social or cultural identities that marked them from this frontier period forward through time. This local distinctiveness is a key theme in the communities' own published local histories written during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But to trace the early development of selected hinterland communities in northwest Iowa, as this essay does, is to find that the economic similarities among them balance and perhaps even outweigh their cultural or social differences.

AN IMPORTANT STEP toward developing the required transportation links between northwest Iowa and other parts of the country was to establish a rail connection to the great transcontinental lines planned in the decade before the Civil War. To do so Sioux City founder and United States Senator George Wallace Jones launched the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad. Typical of the development schemes of the prewar boom years, the railroad was designed to encourage and then exploit com-

mercial growth in urban areas and agricultural settlement in the rural hinterland. But Jones's undercapitalized rail line had barely begun construction from its eastern terminus on the Mississippi River when the nationwide financial panic of 1857 brought the Iowa land boom to a sudden halt.²

The recovery of the state's economy, and Sioux City's railroad hopes, would wait until after the Civil War, when the release of capital from the Union war effort, the resumption of westward migration, and—most specifically—the completion of the first transcontinental railroad in 1868 would stimulate an unprecedented surge of economic development in the state of Iowa. In five years, from 1865 to 1870, the state's population rose nearly 58 percent, from 756,209 to 1,194,020. Growth was just as dramatic in the Sioux City Land District; an increase of fifteen thousand people in these five years was enough to restore a good measure of the business confidence lost a decade earlier in the financial panic of 1857.³

No one better embodied the renewed business confidence of the postwar years than railroad promoter John I. Blair, a man many Sioux City residents came to see as their community's latter-day redeemer. Completion of the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad (SC&P) in 1868, for which Blair received "the warmest thanks and kindest feelings of the entire community," represented just the beginning of the railroad capitalist's association with the development of Sioux City and its hinterland. Blair earned a fortune supervising the construction of local roads and feeder lines in the trans-Mississippi West in the 1860s and 1870s. Traveling on the heels of the great transcontinentals, Blair helped western communities organize capital and manpower for the work needed to bring the big shippers directly to their doors.⁴ Even before the SC&P opened for service, he was already at work on a larger project,

2. The impact of the financial panic of 1857 on frontier Sioux City is described in William Silag, "Sioux City: An Iowa Boom Town," *Annals of Iowa* 44 (1979), 587-601.

3. John A. T. Hull, comp., *Iowa Historical and Comparative Census, 1836-1880* (Des Moines, 1883), 196-99; Leland L. Sage, *A History of Iowa* (Ames, 1974), 310-11.

4. B. L. Wick, "John I. Blair and His Associates in Railway Building in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* 11 (1914), 489-96.

the Iowa Falls and Sioux City line (IF&SC), which would link those cities and, by arrangement with the Illinois Central Railroad, also provide direct access to the hub of western commerce in Chicago.

By 1868 Blair's crews had set to work. In the next decade Blair and other railroad builders would build additional lines throughout the upper Missouri region and connect Sioux City to an area of northwestern Iowa, southern Dakota, and northern Nebraska that formed a semicircle with a radius of about one hundred miles. As one *Sioux City Journal* correspondent declared in the midst of the building boom, "Sioux City holds the portals to the Upper Missouri country. . . . Let us open our empire!"⁵

THE SETTLEMENT of Sioux City's hinterland began directly along the route of the IF&SC railroad in Plymouth and Cherokee counties, located north and east of the town. Although local historians typically date both counties' "frontier" periods as those few months just prior to the arrival of the steel rails, there were in fact sporadic attempts to farm in the area some years before the railroad arrived. In Cherokee County, for example, a pioneer community formed more than a decade earlier, during the land boom of the 1850s. The experience of its founders illustrates the trials faced by settlers who attempted to farm in the upper Missouri country before Sioux City's entrepreneurs prepared the area for commercial cultivation, and also suggests the influence of urban economic objectives in shaping rural society on the western grasslands.

A less likely group of frontier farmers can hardly be imagined than the fifty New Englanders who entered the valley of the Little Sioux River in the summer of 1856. Shoemakers by trade, Cherokee County's pioneers, according to a contemporary, "had long since tired of working at the bench" in their native region and had set their sights on "the wealth and freedom of the endless prairies."⁶ In the central Massachusetts

5. *Sioux City Journal*, 22 December 1875.

6. Thomas McCulla, *History of Cherokee County, Iowa*, 2 vols. (Chicago, 1914), 1:60, 87.

industrial town of Milford, a boot manufacturing center, they had pooled their resources to form a joint-stock company, the Milford Emigration Society, through which they purchased a tract of farmland large enough to support the company's two dozen members and their families. In March 1856 Carlton Corbett and Lemuel Parkhurst, acting as agents for the society, traveled to Sioux City, where they filed a claim at the United States District Land Office on several thousand acres of land in Cherokee County. Six weeks later, Corbett and Parkhurst pitched tents on the east bank of the Little Sioux River, about fifty miles northeast of Sioux City. In May the remainder of the Milford Emigration Society arrived in Cherokee County. According to the reminiscences of some of their number, the shoemakers and their families were woefully ill prepared for grasslands pioneering. Few had farmed before, the prairie climate proved unexpectedly harsh, and bands of wandering Indians presented a constant menace. For many, the arctic winter of 1856-57 was the final calamity. With the spring's first thaw, more than half of the pioneers returned to Massachusetts.⁷

Those who remained gradually adjusted to their new environment. The families of Corbett, Parkhurst, and another dozen of the society's original members spent the prewar years breaking sod and experimenting with crop combinations. Whatever communal objective the shoemakers may have had before they left Massachusetts apparently dissipated as they took on the tasks of prairie farming. Except at harvest time, each family tended its own acreage. By 1860 the seven farms that constituted the whole of Cherokee County's agricultural economy contained seventy-five improved acres, which yielded corn, wheat, potatoes, and a few garden vegetables.⁸ Although Corbett and his neighbors had hoped to supply all of their own needs, they found self-sufficiency impossible. Many

7. *Ibid.*, 1:57-100; W. S. Dunbar and Co., *Biographical History of Cherokee County, Iowa* (Chicago, 1889), 233-45. On nineteenth-century Milford, Massachusetts, see Ray Bearse, ed., *Massachusetts: A Guide to the Pilgrim State*, 2d ed. (Boston, 1971), 332.

8. Manuscripts of the United States Census of Agriculture, 1860, for Cherokee County, Iowa.

years later Luther Phipps regaled his children with stories of the arduous fifty-mile journey to Sioux City, made every autumn, to exchange Cherokee County wheat for groceries, hardware, and dry goods. These laborious shopping trips continued through the 1860s, except in 1862 when the entire community took temporary refuge at the Sioux City garrison during the great Sioux uprising in southern Minnesota.⁹

For all of their hardships, the pioneers of 1856 secured for themselves a prominent place in the future growth of Cherokee County. In the decade after their arrival they ran the county's political affairs as they saw fit, annually exchanging public offices with one another as easily as they swapped Christmas gifts. County election returns of the 1860s show that young Carlton Corbett, still in his twenties, had become the community's leading politician as well as its resident business expert in the early years, but nearly every one of the Milford men served as justice of the peace, treasurer, recorder, supervisor, or county judge. By the time John Blair's construction crews entered Cherokee County in 1868, the former New England craftsmen were a hardened band of prairie proprietors who constituted the local socioeconomic elite.¹⁰

Because they dominated county politics, owned land at strategic locations along the Little Sioux River, and knew the entire area better than even the surveyors of the United States Land Office, the Cherokee County pioneers eagerly took advantage of every opportunity for personal gain created by the builders of the IF&SC Railroad. Some men simply watched their land values spiral as the railroad's movement attracted a rush of new settlers into the Little Sioux Valley. Local real estate prices, which rarely exceeded \$2.50 per acre in the county's first decade, jumped to \$5.00 and more in 1868 and 1869.¹¹ Other pioneers turned their farms over to their sons so that they themselves could pursue new interests as land agents and speculators. Few proved so capable at this as the man who had brought them all to Cherokee County a dozen years earlier, Carlton Corbett.

9. McCulla, *Cherokee County*, 1:84, 88.

10. *Ibid.*, 114-31.

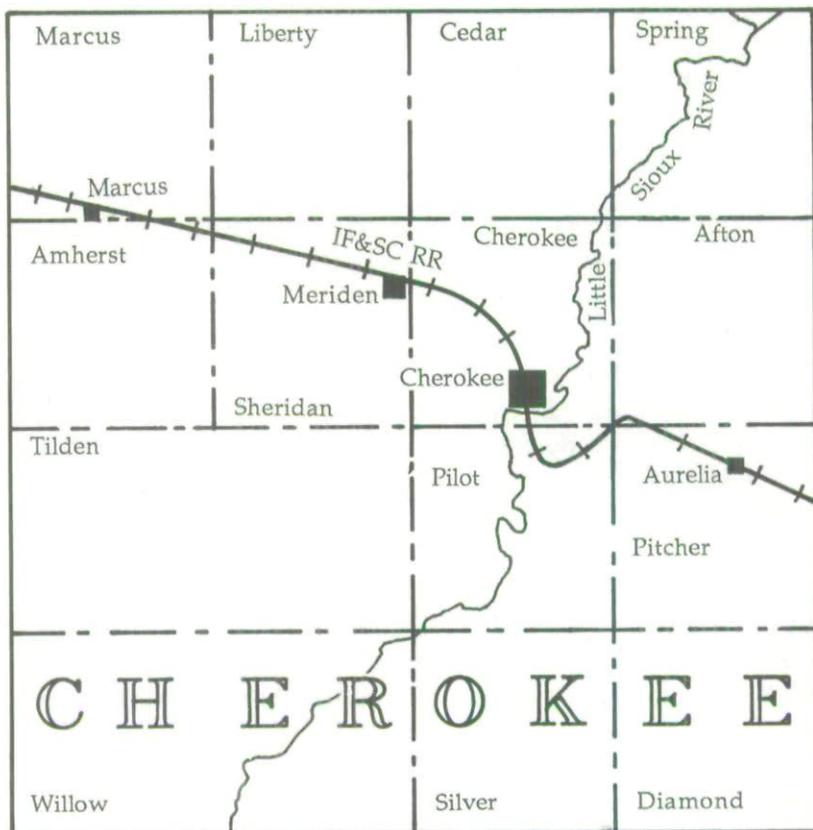
11. *Ibid.*, 1:161-63, 2:6; *Sioux City Journal*, 17 July 1870.

Corbett was not yet forty years old in 1869, but he had served as county treasurer and recorder for more than a decade. His supervision of the county's financial affairs made him a close observer of the IF&SC's progress as its builders pushed eastward from Sioux City. Corbett owned some river frontage and had recently arranged to file a claim on more land along the railroad's projected route as soon as the IF&SC confirmed its construction plans. In March 1870 Corbett apparently gained enough assurance of the company's route to plat a townsite, which he named "New Cherokee," at the proposed intersection of the railway and the Little Sioux River, near the center of Cherokee County. Throughout the spring, New Cherokee remained unoccupied save for Corbett's real estate office, which subsisted for the time being on rural land sales, and a rustic boarding house built by his old Milford colleague Albert Phipps to accommodate John Blair's railroad crews.¹²

As Corbett no doubt expected, New Cherokee emerged as the center of life in Cherokee County as soon as the IF&SC began operating in July 1870. In the first month of railroad service, a variety of businesses opened in the village. A short-lived rivalry flared between the town's shopkeepers and the merchants of Blair City, a nearby townsite so named to attract John Blair's favor, but in August the IF&SC's decision to build its depot within the boundaries of Corbett's village prompted the Blair City men to move their businesses, buildings and all, to New Cherokee at once. By the end of the year, nearly five hundred people lived in the depot town, which contained five grocery stores, two hardware stores, two butcher shops, three hotels, three lumber yards, an agricultural implement dealership, a harness shop, two shoemakers' shops, three blacksmiths' forges, three law offices, three churches, three doctors' offices, three saloons, and a schoolhouse. In the election of 1871, Corbett had no trouble convincing county voters that New Cherokee—soon referred to simply as Cherokee—was the appropriate location for the county seat. That fall the people of Cherokee also celebrated a major economic event. As Robert Buchanan wrote in the fledgling *Cherokee Times* on November

12. McCulla, *Cherokee County*, 1:51, 464; Dunbar, *Cherokee County*, 247.

MAP 1
CHEROKEE COUNTY



21, "Last Thursday marked a new era in the history of Cherokee, second in importance to the arrival of the first locomotive that sounded its shrill whistle up and down the Little Sioux Valley. The era was not marked or welcomed by sounding drums or thundering cannon, but by a humble horse team bearing the first load of flour ever ground at home mills."¹³

13. McCulla, *Cherokee County*, 1:465-74; Iowa Writers' Program of the Works Progress Administration, *Cherokee County History* (Cherokee, 1940), 36.

The business of Cherokee was to serve the farmers who began to arrive at its depot by the trainload in the early 1870s. The county's population increase of more than a thousand residents in the two years of railroad construction was just a prelude to the massive migration initiated by the opening of the IF&SC in 1870. By 1880 eight thousand persons lived in Cherokee County, some 75 percent of them on farms.¹⁴ The earliest settlers found cheap acreage in townships close to Carlton Corbett's townsite, where Sioux City newspapers reported a price range of three to twelve dollars per acre. As real estate values mounted in the Little Sioux valley in the early 1870s, however, many newcomers discovered that they had to travel ten or fifteen miles from Cherokee to buy land within their means. Still they clustered close to the route of the rails and within a day's ride by wagon to the county seat. The nationwide business slump and crop-destroying grasshopper invasions of the mid-seventies slowed settlement for a time, but the pioneers' own accounts of prairie homesteading suggest that even hard times on the frontier were better than their lives back east or in Europe.¹⁵ By 1880 Cherokee County's northern and southern extremes had begun to fill up, and during the next decade the rural population approached a fairly even distribution throughout the county (see fig. 1).

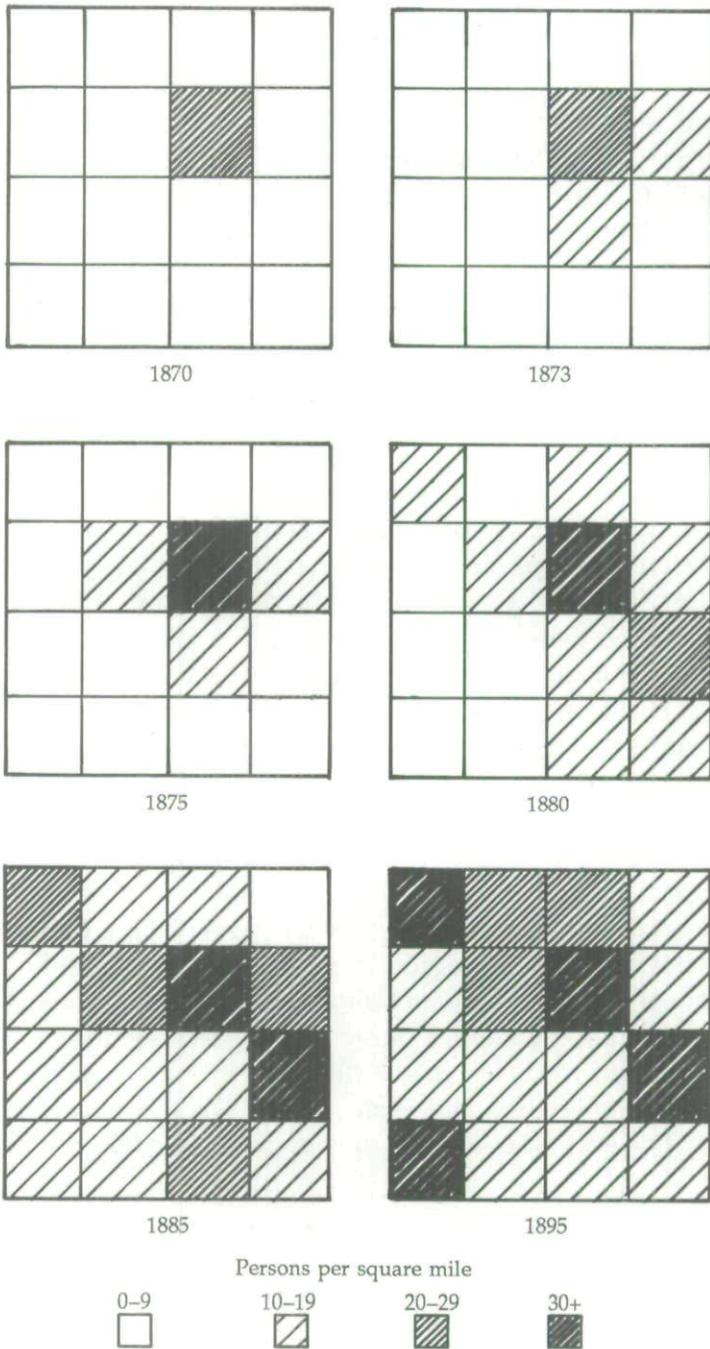
Most Cherokee County pioneers were native-born Americans, but a few concentrations of European immigrants developed to the west of Cherokee. Nearly half of the farmers in Amherst Township came from Sweden, while Tilden Township contained several hundred German families, probably the outliers of the large German farming community then forming in neighboring Plymouth County. Liberty and Sheridan townships also included elements of these two ethnic groups, plus a sprinkling of English and Irish natives. For the county as a whole, however, 84 percent of the population in 1880 had been

14. John A. T. Hull, comp., *Iowa Historical and Comparative Census, 1836-1880* (Des Moines, 1883), 453-54.

15. *Sioux City Journal*, 16 July 1870; McCulla, *Cherokee County*, vol. 2, passim; Dunbar, *Cherokee County*, 233-40, 257-60.

FIGURE 1

POPULATION DENSITY, CHEROKEE COUNTY, 1870-1895



born in the United States, and in no other township was the proportion under 75 percent.¹⁶

Ethnic background appears to have influenced frontier farming patterns in some areas of the trans-Mississippi West, but no such relationship existed in Cherokee County. Judging by measures of investment and production, the organization of farmsteads remained uniform throughout the county. Regardless of the proportion of foreign-born in the population, all townships showed comparable levels of improved acreage, value of machinery, and livestock during the 1870s. Similarly, only negligible variations existed in the proportions of corn to wheat and swine to cattle in the various townships.¹⁷ As for the economic fortunes of individual farmers, no consistent relationship between ethnicity and earnings appeared in the early years. Townships with high concentrations of foreign-born residents manifested neither excessive prosperity nor deprivation. The German farmers of Tilden Township, for example, enjoyed returns on their output averaging \$117 per person in 1875; the Cherokee County average for the same year was \$101. The Swedes in relatively remote Amherst Township did better on the average than natives of New England and New York in Cedar and Spring townships, by about \$25 per person, but even these minor differences disappeared after a few seasons. A check of selected townships in 1880 revealed no relationship between ethnicity and a variety of economic indicators.¹⁸ Whatever their backgrounds, Cherokee County's farmers adapted readily to the commercial

16. Executive Council of the State of Iowa, *The Census of Iowa as Returned in the Year 1875* (Des Moines, 1875), 13; U.S. Census Office, *Tenth Census of the United States*, vol. 23, *Compendium* (Washington, DC, 1883), 419; Frank D. Jackson, comp., *Census of Iowa for the Year 1885* (Des Moines, 1885), 15.

17. *Census of Iowa for 1885*, 80, 255.

18. Figures on farm earnings per capita were calculated using the formula, FARM EARNINGS = VALUE OF FARM PRODUCE / POPULATION. The value of farm products for each township in 1875 was compiled from lists in *Census of Iowa, 1875*, 315-16. Figures for 1880 were compiled from manuscript U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1880, Cherokee County, Iowa. The selected townships were Liberty (German and Swedish), Afton (German), Amherst (Swedish), Pilot (English and American), Cherokee (English and American), and Silver (English and American).

orientation of grasslands agriculture and enjoyed equal measures of personal success.

By the end of the first decade of railroad service, Cherokee County contained twelve hundred farms, which annually shipped grain and livestock valued in excess of eight hundred thousand dollars to the nation's commodity markets.¹⁹ The businessmen of Cherokee organized the bulk of this output for export, but commercial and transportation agents in outlying villages assisted them. As commercial farming spread outward from the Little Sioux valley in the 1870s, three such villages grew up around IF&SC depots at the eastern and western extremes of the county. These villages—Meriden, Marcus, and Aurelia—hardly competed with the county seat for the farm dollar; they functioned principally as collecting stations during the harvest season and as simple retail centers throughout the year. In contrast to Cherokee, which boasted a population of about two thousand in 1880, the smaller depot towns numbered no more than a few hundred residents. Each typically contained a grain elevator, a general store, a blacksmith shop, and perhaps a law office. For most farm and household supplies, the people of Cherokee County continued to rely on merchants at the county seat.²⁰

From the 1870s onward, Cherokee remained the economic and political center of the county's rural social order and linked its farmers to the larger commercial world of the trans-Mississippi West. The town's pioneer businessmen, including founder Carlton Corbett and his friends George Lebourveau and Albert Phipps, parlayed their initial real estate profits into the formation of land agencies and mortgage companies that financed scores of prairie farmsteads and business ventures in the county. Through these credit institutions, and of course through their continued political preeminence, the men of the old Milford Emigration Society perpetuated their influence on local life for decades after the IF&SC Railroad threw open their wilderness refuge to thousands of equally ambitious frontier

19. Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 240, 248.

20. *Ibid.*, 453-54; A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa*, 1875 (Chicago, 1875), 454; McCulla, *Cherokee County*, 1:509-11, 519-21, 532-33.

folk. In neighboring Plymouth County, no such capable pioneer community existed prior to the entry of the railroad builders. Instead, IF&SC president John Blair himself assumed the entrepreneurial role played so successfully by the New England shoemakers in the early history of Cherokee.

PLYMOUTH COUNTY contains more than eight hundred square miles of land, about 50 percent more than the typical Iowa county. Bordered on the west by the Big Sioux River and bisected by the Floyd, the county lies immediately north of Sioux City. Despite its proximity to the steamboat port, however, Plymouth County remained sparsely inhabited for more than a decade after its first settlers filed claims on land in the Floyd and Big Sioux valleys in the summer of 1856. The pioneers numbered about a hundred American- and German-born farmers at the outset, but most of them returned to the relative comfort of frontier Sioux City in the cold winter of 1856-57. Those who stayed remained scattered across Plymouth County's southern townships and found themselves hard-pressed to maintain the semblance of political organization required of Iowa counties by the state legislature. The pioneers' situation declined steadily in the early 1860s, when military duty, the Little Crow uprising in Minnesota, and poor crops encouraged a few more to abandon their farmsteads each year. In 1864 the county board of supervisors declared one of Plymouth County's four townships out of business entirely when its last remaining farmer packed up his family and moved away.²¹

The end of the Civil War brought no immediate improvement to life on this stretch of the prairie. Overall, from 1859 to 1869 the county's population never exceeded two hundred people, or one person for every three square miles of land. Periodic efforts to organize townsites in these years failed miserably; at the end of the decade, the total value of townlots in the whole county remained a paltry one hundred dollars. Even the Plymouth County seat at Melbourne was nothing more than a

21. Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 411-23.

paper town: except for a wood-frame courthouse, the Big Sioux townsite showed no sign of human habitation.²²

In the absence of local entrepreneurial interest, the opportunity to prepare Plymouth County for extensive settlement fell to railroad builder John Blair and his Sioux City sponsors. Their plan for the county included two railroads—Blair's IF&SC and a second line, the Sioux City and St. Paul (SC&SP), which would connect the Missouri River port with the Twin Cities of Minnesota. Organized in 1866, the latter road was far from completion a year later. Although in 1867 its Sioux City officers won approval of municipal bonds to finance construction, a year later they had not yet found a builder to supervise the work. Blair, however, was ready to begin at once. As soon as the federal courts turned over the old Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad right-of-way to the IF&SC in the spring of 1868, Blair's crews entered Plymouth County. They followed the Floyd River valley northward for about twenty-five miles to a point near the county's geographic center (where the IF&SC and the SC&SP would eventually meet), then veered sharply east and headed toward adjoining Cherokee County. Blair expected that the junction of the two roads would require large-scale switching facilities, so he chose to build the IF&SC's shops and storage yards there at the railroad's great bend in Plymouth County rather than at its western terminus in Sioux City. With the help of John Cleghorn, register of the Sioux City District Land Office, Blair secured an option on several hundred acres along the Floyd River in America Township, more than enough for his train yards. The excess he staked off as town lots, which he planned to sell through his own land company as soon as the railroad had been completed and he could legally claim title to the tract.²³

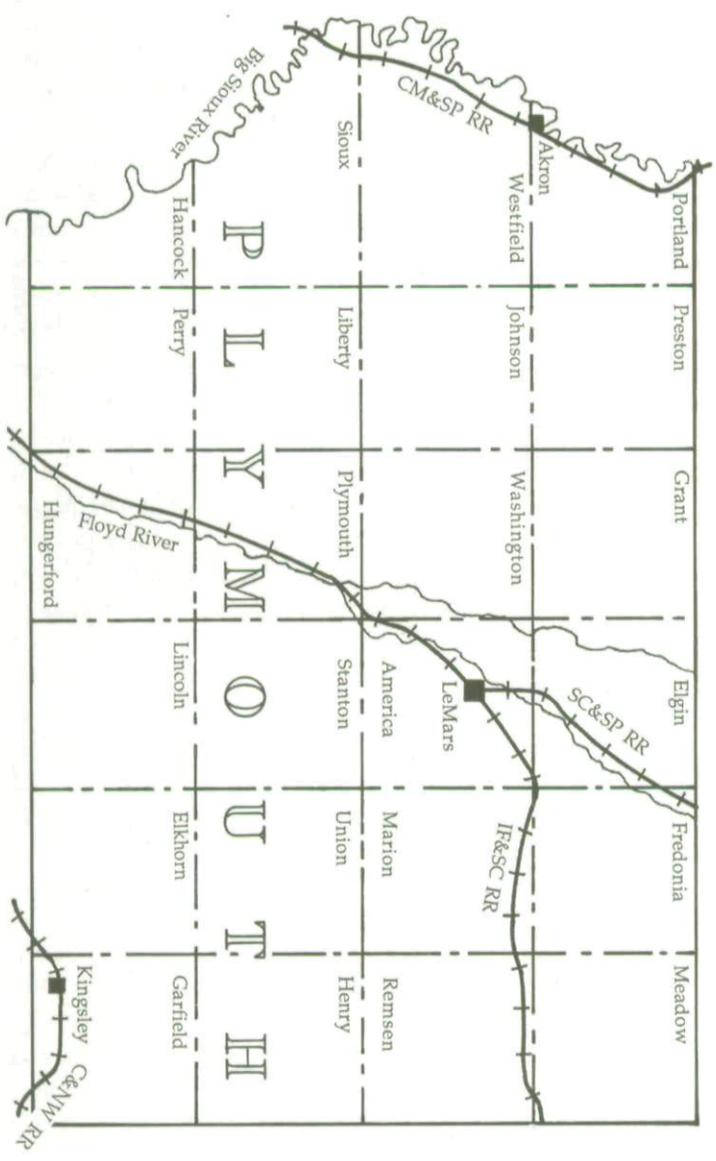
The IF&SC crews worked quickly. By Christmas 1868 they had reached Blair's townsite, called St. Paul Junction, where the

22. Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 199; Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 411-23.

23. Arthur Larsen, *LeMars: The Story of a Prairie Town* (LeMars, 1969), 6-7; *Sioux City Journal*, 9 December 1869; *LeMars Sentinel*, 4 January 1877; W. S. Freeman, ed., *History of Plymouth County, Iowa: Her People, Industries, and Institutions* (Indianapolis, 1917), 103, 409.

PLYMOUTH COUNTY

MAP 2



IF&SC had established temporary headquarters. That spring, short-line trains began journeying up the Floyd valley from Sioux City, and farm families began to settle along its route. Since Blair's town lots remained off the market, St. Paul Junction itself attracted only a few pioneer businessmen. Those who came in 1869 were squatters, most of them Sioux Citizens drawn to the townsite by Blair's record of success in western commercial development. Grocer William Johnson, for example, had worked two years earlier as a contractor with Blair on the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad. Liveryman Andrew Forbes and lumber dealer J. W. Young each operated branch offices of Sioux City firms owned by relatives who were prospering as a result of Blair's speedy completion of the region's first railroad.²⁴

Some newcomers to Plymouth County seemed less certain of Blair's management of commercial development in the immediate area. One of them wrote to the *Sioux City Journal* in December 1869, charging that "it has been a serious drawback to the interests of this region that [Blair] has not made some kind of disposal of [his] town lots here, for as it is now parties build temporarily and expect to run their risk on what will have to be paid for lots [when the railroad is finished] next spring." The *Journal's* correspondent evidently shared the railroad builder's optimism, for he admitted that townlots would probably be a good buy even at high prices. Over the previous twelve months, Blair's stock of town lots had increased to about five hundred acres, a sign of his own confidence in the economic future of St. Paul Junction. Already the townsite's stores drew customers from all points in the county, and a recent visit by a pair of Dubuque flour merchants had resulted in plans to build a mill the following year.²⁵

To be sure, Blair's notoriety in the upper Missouri country gave rise to dozens of rumors about his investments, his profits, and his plans for the future. One such rumor proved especially troublesome to Sioux City businessmen as the IF&SC neared completion in the spring of 1870. Word reached the steamboat town that Blair was considering an extension of east-west rail service from St. Paul Junction into Dakota Territory along a

24. *Sioux City Journal*, 9 December 1869.

25. *Ibid.*, 9 December 1869, 13 July 1870.

route that would bypass Sioux City by about twenty-five miles. This sudden prospect horrified the city's merchants, who would thus be cut off from the major avenue of trade through the region. Since local taxpayers and private investors had underwritten so much of the IF&SC's building cost, the city's press demanded that Blair either abandon the idea of an extension or deny the rumor. In response, Blair expressed surprise. Soon after the railroad began operations in July 1870, he welcomed to his townsite a delegation of Sioux Citizens sent to settle the matter. Blair assured his guests, led by banker George Weare and realtor William Smith, that they had nothing to fear. Their visit turned into a celebration of the impending rail traffic that would soon make their city "the monarch of the northwest." In a show of goodwill to his Sioux City associates, Blair generously invited the delegates' spouses to choose a more charming name for his newly platted townsite. LeMars, an acronym formed from the spouses' initials, was the result of a lighthearted deliberation by the assembled guests. After the meeting, Weare and Smith apparently journeyed home with their faith in Blair restored; not another word of the Dakota extension appeared in print again.²⁶

Actually, a direct route to Dakota might have done just as much harm to Blair's townsite as to Sioux City, for it would have made LeMars just another whistle stop on the right-of-way from the western grasslands to Chicago and St. Paul. As it happened, however, LeMars became a marketing and milling center for the thousands of farmers who poured into Plymouth County in the early 1870s. During the first year the trains ran, a business district took shape near the LeMars depot and section house on the west bank of the Floyd River. The town's earliest proprietors, in addition to those mentioned already, included blacksmiths John Kuhry and James Green, hardware merchant O. W. Bennett, hotel keeper Charles Hoffman, and butcher C. G. Norris. Unlike the pioneers of 1869, these businessmen built firms on land to which they held title; now that the rail-

26. Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 462-69; C. R. Marks, "Railroads in Northwestern Iowa," MS in *Reminiscences of Sioux City Pioneers*, C. R. Marks Collection, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries, Iowa City.

road had been finished, the IF&SC was free to dispose of its land grants at any price the booming real estate market would bear. Blair's original townlots sold quickly, encouraging other local men to plat townsite additions in order to meet the increasing demand for commercial and residential locations. Benjamin Foster, the first storekeeper to take an option from Blair in 1869, left his drygoods business in the care of partner John Blodgett and spent the early 1870s supervising land sales in the town's Southside Addition, a tract nearly as large as Blair's original townsite.²⁷

Despite the competition of these new speculators, the railroad builder himself remained the premier realtor in LeMars in the early years. Among his buyers in 1870 were Peter and David Gehlen, the Dubuque grain dealers, who invested fifty thousand dollars in a flour mill that rose beside the Floyd River a few hundred yards downstream from the railroad depot. Completion of the Gehlens' mill in November 1870 signaled the beginning of Plymouth County's rapid evolution as a commodity producer.²⁸ Here, as in neighboring Cherokee County, urban business development and rural farm production represented two sides of the same coin.

A *Sioux City Journal* correspondent who traveled through Plymouth County in 1870 marveled at the speed with which pioneers peopled the area. "Towns and villages are springing up like the work of genii," he exclaimed, "and all along the road are to be seen the dwellings of the settler and the patches of new breaking, averaging from 20 to 200 acres in extent."²⁹ Land in the Floyd River valley between LeMars and Sioux City cost the frontier farmer between three and ten dollars per acre, depending on the distance from the railroad right-of-way. Pioneers who ventured farther from the IF&SC route enjoyed lower land prices but faced the yearly trial of getting their grain to market on roads that were still little more than surveyors' paths. Interest in these outlying areas stimulated additional railroad construction, however, and by 1880 five different lines

27. *Sioux City Journal*, 14 July 1870; Freeman, *Plymouth County*, 417-18.

28. Freeman, *Plymouth County*, 409; *LeMars Sentinel*, 4 June 1877; *Sioux City Journal*, 12 December 1875.

29. *Sioux City Journal*, 19 July 1870.

served farmers and townspeople in various parts of Plymouth County.³⁰

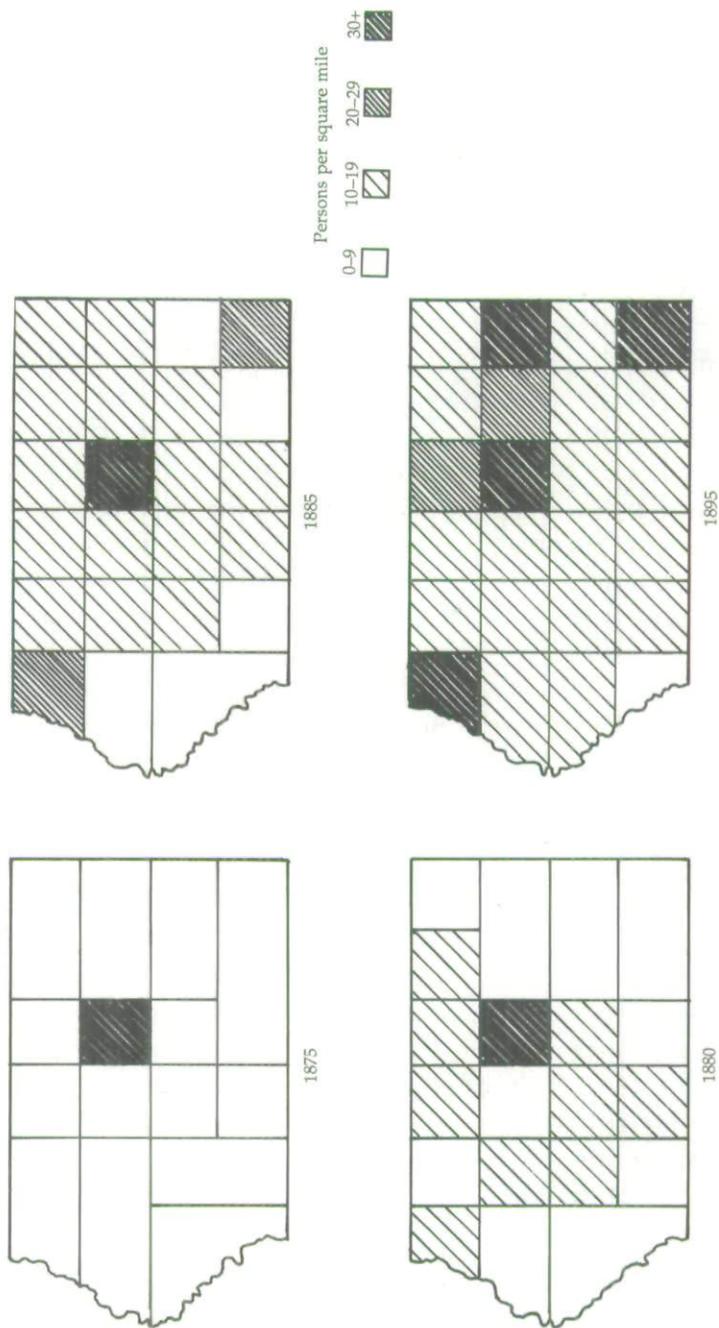
As in Cherokee County, the railroad exerted an important influence on Plymouth County's geographic development. Distance to market, represented by remoteness from the nearest railroad depot, determined the density of settlement in nearly all of the county's twenty-four townships from the 1870s through the 1890s. In Cherokee County the IF&SC route generated a densely settled corridor running roughly east to west across the center of the county, and most of the smaller towns appeared in a single tier, along which demographic and economic growth flowed outward from the nucleus of trade at the village of Cherokee. Plymouth County's geographic evolution proved to be more complex. Because the county contained more than one transportation route, and perhaps also because the county covered such a large territory, several distinctive population clusters appeared in the wake of railroad construction (see fig. 2). In the early 1880s the villages of Akron in the northwestern corner of the county and Kingsley in the southeastern corner emerged as nuclei of rural settlements after Sioux City feeder lines opened these areas to commercial agriculture. The new railroads circumscribed the business influence of the county seat, for they drew many of Plymouth County's townships into direct communication with Sioux City dealers.³¹

LeMars businessmen probably suffered little from the spread of Sioux City's railroad network, however, for the volume of trade throughout Plymouth County grew fast enough to assure continued prosperity for all. Although the national economic depression of the 1870s produced a substantial decrease in the annual rate of population growth, migration into the area continued at levels high enough to sustain a respectable measure of commercial expansion. Until 1875 population increased by 28 percent each year; after 1875 the yearly rate of growth

30. *LeMars Sentinel*, 3 February 1871; Freeman, *Plymouth County*, 418; Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 464-68.

31. Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 434, 597; R. L. Polk and Co., *Iowa State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1880-1881* (Detroit, 1880), 461-62.

FIGURE 2
 POPULATION DENSITY, PLYMOUTH COUNTY, 1875-1895



dipped to 12 percent. Still, by 1880 Plymouth County contained 8,500 people, about three-fourths of them on farms.³²

Reports from the LeMars depot show that most of the early rail traffic involved delivery of supplies to the countryside, where farm-building activity rather than commercial cultivation remained the rule. In 1873, for example, the depot handled imports including 18 carloads of grain, 505 of lumber, 1,204 of coal, 64 of farm implements, 92 of livestock, and 4.8 million pounds of wholesale merchandise to be sold by the town's retailers. Within a few years, however, Plymouth County farmers began to right the balance between imports and exports. As early as 1875, they shipped 170,000 bushels of corn, 443,000 of wheat, 120,000 of oats, 600 head of cattle, and 3,000 hogs to processors in Sioux City and other interior terminals. Peter Gehlen milled a good deal of the grain in LeMars, of course, but his plant could not handle all of the county's output, much of which was shipped on to other milling centers. The wheat surpluses alone filled 800 boxcars.³³ In some parts of the county, at least, the lean years of frontier farm building had given way to a golden age of agriculture.

European immigrants, arriving in the upper Missouri country close on the heels of railroad construction crews, made up an unusually large proportion of Plymouth County's pioneers. Unlike Cherokee County, where distinctive ethnic concentrations appeared in just four of sixteen townships in the 1870s, more than half of Plymouth's townships contained sizable clusters of the foreign-born. Most of these immigrants were Germans who came to the county by way of Sioux City, where German shopkeepers made up an important segment of the local business community in the Civil War era. Those who entered Plymouth County in the early 1870s settled on cheaper land at some distance from the railroad, chiefly in sparsely inhabited areas along the county's northern and southern borders. In the next few years, however, German farmers spread across the county, producing a more even distribution of American- and foreign-born settlers. Throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century, immigrants constituted at least 15 per-

32. Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 560-61.

33. Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 472; Freeman, *Plymouth County*, 415.

cent of each township's population and in some cases upwards of 40 percent. For Plymouth County as a whole, the proportion of foreign-born residents remained above 20 percent from the first years of settlement until the turn of the century.³⁴

As in Cherokee County, ethnic background exerted no apparent influence on rural settlers' adaptation to grasslands farming. Once again, a variety of economic indicators—farm size, crop yields, value of machinery, and so forth—show similar agricultural practices and comparable levels of individual success regardless of national origin in all parts of Plymouth County served by the region's railroads.³⁵ The only exception appears to have been a relatively small group of British farmers who arrived in the LeMars area in the late 1870s. This remarkable community originated as a colonization effort devised by a pair of London realtors, William and Frederick Close, who bought up large tracts of land in Grant, Elgin, and America townships. The Close brothers were big operators; rumor had it that in a single busy week their firm might buy or sell one hundred thousand acres. For the most part, their clients consisted of young London gentlemen who embarked for Plymouth County more for the sake of adventure than to earn livings.³⁶

Some contemporaries viewed these Englishmen as a frivolous lot, sportsmen who disdained work in the fields, but in reality they played an important role in shaping the county's economic future. Ignoring field crops, they concentrated on livestock production, chiefly horses but also fine breeds of cattle and hogs, and soon earned a collective reputation as some of the best stock breeders in the upper Missouri country. Their success in raising large herds of shorthorn cattle and Poland-

34. Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 217; W. M. McFarland, comp., *Census of Iowa for the Year 1895* (Des Moines, 1896), 306-7; U.S. Census Office, *Twelfth Census of the United States: Population*, vol. 1, part 1 (Washington, DC, 1901), 502.

35. For the basis of the calculations, see n. 20 above. Plymouth County data are from *Census of Iowa, 1875*, 337. The selected 1880 townships are Grant (German), America (English and German), Washington (English and German), Lincoln (German), Stanton (German and Irish), and Elkhorn (English). Manuscript U.S. Census of Agriculture, 1880, Plymouth County, Iowa.

36. Larsen, *LeMars*, 21-27; *LeMars Sentinel*, 24 June 1938; *Sioux City Journal*, 26 June 1938; Curtis Harnack, *Gentlemen on the Prairie* (Ames, 1985).

China hogs, which found a ready market in Sioux City slaughterhouses, convinced many of their neighbors to abandon wheat in favor of livestock as a major crop investment. Stock raising required larger initial cash outlays than grain farming, but the returns justified the costs: beef and pork markets had proven steadier than grains, and livestock suffered little damage as a result of hailstones, locusts, or frost. A local historian reported in 1890 that stock raising had eclipsed wheat and corn as the county's chief moneymaker, a trend for which the London gentlemen were principally responsible.³⁷

John Blair had already departed LeMars for new fortunes in Nebraska when the Englishmen arrived in Plymouth County. Indeed, the Close brothers bought a good deal of land from the railroad builder as he divested himself of local holdings in preparation for his move west. Upon his departure, leadership of the county seat's business community devolved upon realtor Benjamin Foster, miller Peter Gehlen, banker Patrick Dalton, and a few other men who directed the larger business firms of LeMars. Like the Milford pioneers of Cherokee, these small-town entrepreneurs linked the region's farmers to the mainstream of American commerce. Economically at least, such entrepreneurs formed the cores of the communities that emerged in the upper Missouri country after the Civil War. In Sioux County to the north of LeMars, however, Dutch immigrants established a community in the 1870s whose nucleus embraced men of exceptional religious idealism as well as conventional economic ambitions. The experience of these patriarchs illustrates another model of pioneer community, a type that combined the virtual one-man domination of early LeMars with the communalism of the original settlement in Cherokee County.

DUTCH IMMIGRATION into the trans-Mississippi West began when groups of Hollanders, most of them Seceders from the state church, left the Netherlands with the onset of eco-

37. Warner, *Woodbury and Plymouth*, 469; Jacob Van der Zee, *The British in Iowa* (Iowa City, 1922), 57-252. Allan G. Bogue discusses the rise of corn feeding in this region in *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Iowa and Illinois Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago, 1963), 86-102.

conomic depression in the late 1840s. Seeking to establish a religiously homogeneous community free from problems of overpopulation, scarcity of work, and ecclesiastical controversy, some one thousand emigrants sailed from Rotterdam in the spring of 1847 to the United States, where wages for a day's labor were said to equal a week's earnings in Holland.

Their eventual destinations varied. Some stayed in Baltimore, where the small Dutch fleet landed. Others traveled directly to St. Louis, the rendezvous for Hollanders intending to settle on the farmlands of the Middle West. In St. Louis the immigrants divided into three smaller parties, each of which made plans to build a Dutch colony wherever good land could be had for a just price. One group migrated to western Michigan early in the summer of 1847. Another set off for central Wisconsin soon thereafter. The last group to leave St. Louis was the largest. Led by Henry Scholte and Anthony Betten, the remaining five hundred immigrants boarded steamboats on the Mississippi River bound for Keokuk, Iowa, the first stop on a trek that brought them to Marion County in August 1847. There, on the north bank of the Des Moines River in south central Iowa, Scholte and his compatriots platted the town of Pella, which would serve as the cultural focus of their religious colony and the market center of its agricultural economy.³⁸

Most of the colonists had been farmers prior to emigration, but the economic requirements of the new community prompted many to take up commercial trades and service occupations. As the population of Marion County grew during the 1850s, an increasing number of the colonists abandoned farming in favor of urban employment generated by the area's expanding commercial activity. On the eve of the Civil War, the Hollanders' first Iowa settlement numbered about five hundred persons, while some fifteen hundred farmers had established homesteads in nearby townships.

Pella in the 1860s represented the fulfillment of its founders' ambitions. A pleasant, prosperous town, its agricultural community attracted a steady stream of Dutch immigrants

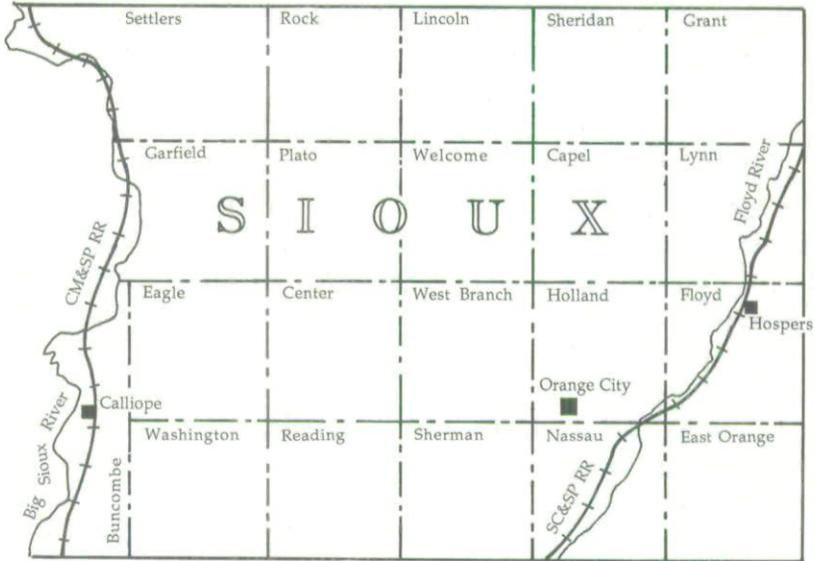
38. Jacob Van der Zee, *The Hollanders of Iowa* (Iowa City, 1912), 41, 65-67.

seeking religious freedom and economic security. After the Civil War, however, the community began to experience demographic pressures similar to those that had compelled the emigration from the Netherlands. With continual settlement in the previous decade, the price of Marion County farmland had risen steadily and alternative employment in Pella had become increasingly scarce. These changing conditions affected the community's returning Union soldiers most severely. Jelle Pelmulder, an army veteran and the son of an original settler, feared for the future of his young family. Like many other second-generation immigrants in the area, he worried that his father's community had no room for the fulfillment of the new generation's ambitions. Yet Pelmulder also retained the communal ideal that had guided Pella's founders two decades earlier. The solution, he realized, lay in the formation of a new community that might replicate the Pella colony's successful combination of ethnocultural solidarity and individual economic prosperity. So in 1869 Pelmulder led a group of his young friends on an expedition in search of open land and fresh opportunities in western Iowa.³⁹

The rich, rolling prairie of northwest Iowa impressed Pelmulder and his friends, but much of the unsettled land in the twelve-county Sioux City Land District had already been taken by speculators when the band from Pella arrived. To obtain a parcel of land large enough to support the members of their proposed settlement, they had to travel to Sioux County, fifty miles north of Sioux City and nearly as far from the nearest operating railroad. The land looked excellent, and the selling price proved within their means. With the help of Henry Hospers, a sophisticated young Pella newspaper editor who acted as their agent in Sioux City, Pelmulder and his associates struck a bargain with Land Office Register John Cleg-horn for the purchase of a half-dozen contiguous sections of Sioux County land. In October 1869 the search party re-

39. Charles L. Dyke, *The Story of Sioux County* (Orange City, 1942), 8-9, 11-14; Van der Zee, *Hollanders of Iowa*, 83, 106; Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 245, 537.

MAP 3
SIOUX COUNTY



turned to Marion County to begin organizing their new colony in earnest.⁴⁰

The Sioux County pioneers, like the previous generation, planned their frontier community prior to actual settlement. Before leaving Pella, the colony's young leaders distributed the Sioux County lands in parcels of 40, 80, and 160 acres according to family size and financial resources. These lots they granted or sold to participants as family heads, not as individuals, and every effort was made to keep kin groups together on adjacent farmsteads. At the center of the colony's tract, Pelmulder and Hoppers reserved a quarter-section for the construction of Orange City, the focal point of the planned community. The leaders completed these arrangements in Pella during the winter of 1869-70. When the first wagon trains entered Sioux County the following spring, each family moved

40. Dyke, *Sioux County*, 24-25; Andreas, *Historical Atlas*, 466.

promptly to its own acreage and began to break ground for planting.⁴¹

Life in Sioux County during the 1870s resembled the Hollanders' first decade in Marion County a quarter-century earlier. The colonists built schools and a church immediately and assisted one another in bringing land into cultivation. In most respects, theirs was a replication of the community they had left behind. But the Dutch settlers made one important break with old-world values of self-sufficiency and community autonomy. They were well aware of their opportunity to participate in the upper Missouri's expanding agricultural trade, and many of the newcomers set their sights on producing surpluses for the regional market as soon as possible.⁴² At first this proved more difficult than expected, since periodic grasshopper invasions and sagging commodity prices during the depression of the mid-1870s added to the considerable burdens of frontier farming. A few discouraged colonists returned to Pella, and many more who had intended to join Pelmulder's group remained behind. The colony contained about five hundred people in 1873, just double the number who had come on the first covered wagons a few years earlier.⁴³

After the slow start of the early 1870s, however, the rate of population increase picked up steadily, and by decade's end Sioux County contained more than five thousand people. In addition to the Pella pioneers, several hundred Dutch immigrant families came to the upper Missouri valley by way of the Dutch colonies in Wisconsin and Michigan. Nearly a thousand German-born settlers also arrived as spillovers from Plymouth County's immigrant settlements to the south, as did an equal number of American-born pioneers. Together the county's frontier farmers harvested grain and livestock valued at \$325,000 in 1879, for a per capita output of \$49, about \$11 higher than that of neighboring Plymouth County, though still

41. Dyke, *Sioux County*, 24; Van der Zee, *Hollanders of Iowa*, 145-46; *Sioux City Journal*, 3 July 1870.

42. *The Centennial Book, Orange City, Iowa, 1870-1970* (Orange City, n.d.), 12; Nelson Nieuwenhuis, "A New Colony in Northwest Iowa," *Palimpsest* 59 (1978), 184.

43. Dyke, *Sioux County*, 178-91; Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 192.

\$45 less than Cherokee County, the regional leader.⁴⁴ All in all, it was a respectable showing for a community whose principal objectives were not commercial but religious.

The community's social and market center, Orange City, experienced comparable growth in its first ten years. Completion of the Sioux City and St. Paul Railroad in 1872 put a depot about three miles east of town; a year later Orange City residents campaigned successfully for a relocation of the Sioux County seat.⁴⁵ Both events boosted the town's fortunes considerably, for they secured the Hollanders as the dominant element of Sioux County's frontier population. By luring the county courthouse from its original site in tiny Calliope, the Dutch assumed political control of Sioux County in a manner reminiscent of the New England shoemakers who dominated public affairs in Cherokee County at about the same time. Thereafter, the Dutch community served as the focus of economic as well as political life for the county as a whole, and the Hollanders enjoyed financial rewards on a par with those accruing to Carlton Corbett and his Milford colleagues. By 1880 Orange City numbered some 320 residents and included such businesses as a hardware store, two boot shops, several blacksmith shops, four general stores, and a pair of saloons.⁴⁶

Overseeing this development was Henry Hospers, president of the Orange City Bank, director of the Orange City Townsite Company, and Sioux County's first representative to the Iowa General Assembly in Des Moines. Hospers's career was similar to Corbett's in many respects. Like Corbett, Hospers began as land agent for his fellow colonists and wound up as their principal realtor. Both men parlayed profits from the land business into the formation of local banks that dominated the commercial life of their respective communities for nearly a half-century. The Orange City Bank loaned money at 18 percent, an exorbitant rate perhaps but not high enough to damage Hospers's reputation as "the guiding hand of the enterprise that

44. *Census of Iowa, 1885*, 69; Hull, *Historical and Comparative Census*, 581-82, 274, 276.

45. Andreas, *Historical Atlas*, 466; Dyke, *Sioux County*, 127-39.

46. Polk, *Iowa State Gazetteer*, 1881, 432-33.

peopled most of Sioux County."⁴⁷ Corbett enjoyed similar repute in Cherokee County. Yet the Milford shoemaker, and even Sioux City's Ashbel Hubbard or John Blair of LeMars, might have been embarrassed by the honor and tribute that Sioux County's citizens heaped on Henry Hospers.

Hospers had been born in 1827 in Hoog Blokland, Holland, where his father had long been a schoolmaster. Late in life, the elder Hospers joined the Dutch migration to Iowa but first sent his son ahead to the Pella colony to prepare a new home for the family. Henry arrived in the United States in 1848, made arrangements for his father, and then set about making a career for himself in his new homeland. He read law for a time, then taught school, but it was as a newspaperman that young Hospers made his mark in Pella. Taking the helm of the Dutch-language *Weekblad* in 1849, he began a twenty-year stint as the community's leading publicist and in time emerged as the preeminent spokesman for Iowa's Dutch immigrants. As editor of the *Weekblad*, Hospers served as an important intermediary between his fellow immigrants and English-speaking Iowans, including state government officials. His good favor with the latter won him an appointment from the Iowa State Board of Immigration as agent to the Netherlands, a sinecure that permitted Hospers to recruit settlers for the new Sioux County colony with official state sanction. On his return from Holland in 1870, Hospers rejoined the Pelmulder band in Orange City and organized his bank, his townsite company, and a succession of successful business enterprises.⁴⁸

Hospers's political and economic achievements, along with his aloof manner, won for him a local reputation larger than life. According to his biographer, fellow Hollander Charles Dyke, Hospers "was like a star and dwelt apart[,] an aristocrat" whose presence weakened the knees of small boys like Dyke who ventured to speak with him. Hospers loved politics and rarely faced opposition to the offices he desired. In public life, as in business, "he got everything he wanted without making a campaign and was never defeated." During sessions of the state legislature, Hospers's sons conducted their father's financial

47. Dyke, *Sioux County*, 313.

48. *Ibid.*, 313-14; Andreas, *Historical Atlas*, 466.

enterprises. His worth eventually reached several hundred thousand dollars. No other Orange City businessman commanded such wealth; the Hospers family alone constituted the whole of Sioux County's socioeconomic elite. In Dyke's words, "Henry Hospers' social relations were always one of condescension. His honor never returned a visit or a call."⁴⁹

Dyke's portrait of Henry Hospers may exaggerate the banker's importance to the people of Orange City and Sioux County, but probably not by much. On a smaller scale than their Sioux City counterparts, local entrepreneurs such as Hospers provided essential commercial leadership and necessary capital for the fledgling agricultural economy of the old Sioux City Land District. While Sioux Citians focused on the development of the railroad network in the postwar years, Henry Hospers, Carlton Corbett, and entrepreneurs in scores of other towns throughout the region served the more modest needs of the pioneer retailers and frontier farmers who would make the upper Missouri region a key contributor to the nation's commodity stores and a major outlet for its manufactured goods.

The founders' personal styles varied considerably, and the cultural character of each community would subsequently develop along distinctive lines. The Dutch settlement established by Henry Hospers would retain its ethnic identity for decades to come, well into the twentieth century and after its founder's death. By contrast, in LeMars, founder John Blair did little more in his short stay than to lay out streets surrounding the railroad switching yards and repair shops, but even his work was sufficient to set the course of subsequent development in the Plymouth County seat. Transportation, milling, and other enterprises that reached out to organize the produce of the surrounding countryside—this was Blair's legacy in LeMars. And while the village was strongly German, its economic activity rather than its ethnic origin would give LeMars its community identity in years to come. The same may be said of Cherokee, though as in Orange City the families of the

49. Dyke, *Sioux County*, 315-18.

founders would exercise an important influence in community affairs for generations.

In some ways, Cherokee's early history appears to represent the stereotypical story of an Iowa frontier community—somewhere between the ethnocultural communalism of Orange City and the real estate speculations of John Blair in LeMars. But without systematic research into the origins of the hundreds of small towns that took shape in Iowa in the 1860s and 1870s, such generalizations are risky. What we do know is that the economic growth of northwest Iowa after the Civil War required the energies of entrepreneurs based in the hinterland towns working in harmony with the regional capitalists and railroad builders based in Sioux City. Granted the geographical constraints in which they operated, the role of the small-town entrepreneurs in speeding the process of regional development should not be underestimated.

"THE GROWTH of Sioux City is no mystery," wrote one of the city's publicists several years after the arrival of the railroads. "It has grown because it must grow—because of the mutual relations between the city and the marvellous richness of its immediate agricultural environment; because Corn is King, and because his capitol and throne are at Sioux City."⁵⁰ Some contemporaries may have objected to the writer's claims of inevitability, but none could challenge the accuracy with which he identified the source of the city's growth in the postwar years. As Ashbel Hubbard would remark in 1875, "the agricultural interests are the basis of all other interests here in Sioux City."⁵¹ In northwest Iowa and elsewhere in the American heartland, rural productivity was the source of urban prosperity.

Completion of the Iowa Falls and Sioux City Railroad in the summer of 1870 properly signifies the beginning of Sioux City's passage from frontier wholesaler to commodity exporter. As the new road's tracks penetrated the heart of the Sioux City Land District—still virtually uninhabited when IF&SC crews entered the district a year earlier—they formed the spine of the

50. Edward P. Heizer, ed., *Sioux City Illustrated* (Sioux City, 1886), 20–21.

51. *Sioux City Journal*, 18 July 1875.

agricultural economy that subsequently emerged in Sioux City's hinterland.

John Blair, Ashbel Hubbard, George Perkins, and other Sioux Citians played key roles in this process of regional economic development. But so did business leaders in the smaller towns. Although their roles were secondary in the grand designs of Blair, Hubbard, and Perkins, small-town business leaders such as Carlton Corbett, Peter Gehlen, and Henry Hospers shared in the prosperity of regional development by organizing their local economies for participation in the urban system spawned by the Sioux City capitalists and their railroads. If, by contrast with the Sioux Citians, the influence of men such as Corbett, Gehlen, and Hospers was local rather than regional, the historical record contains no evidence of complaints by the small-town men. Apparently there was plenty for everybody in the conquest of the hinterland.

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