

ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

HARD TIMES IN IOWA TERRITORY

The city of Muscatine was one time called Bloomington. In 1841 and after, it had a weekly newspaper, the *Bloomington Herald*. That paper depended for its news on such items as its proprietor gathered from the neighborhood or quoted from its exchanges. It quoted the *Davenport Gazette* price list of commodities of August 10, 1842. Among these are winter wheat 31 $\frac{1}{4}$ cents per bushel; shelled corn 20 cents; oats 18 cents; flour \$5.00 per barrel; wood \$2.50 per cord; butter 8 cents per pound; eggs 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ cents per dozen; chickens \$1.50 per dozen. In its issue the *Herald* for May 10, 1841, fifteen months earlier than the date of the market quoted, is to be seen an item attributed anonymously to "Exchange," but it is to be safely inferred the *Herald* thought it would be of interest to its readers who were paying their subscriptions and getting money for taxes from these market sources.

It is interesting to state that the items were brought to our desk exactly ninety-four years after their appearance in the *Herald*, by Mrs. Sadie Feder, of Muskogee, Oklahoma. She was searching for items in our collections on her Iowa ancestors, Chiefs Wapello and Hard Fish.

A SHORT SERMON FROM A LAY PREACHER

Text: "Owe No Man Anything"

Keep out of debt. Avoid it as you would war, pestilence, and famine. Shun it as you would the devil. Hate it with a perfect hatred. Abhor it with an entire and absolute abhorrence. Dig potatoes, lay stone wall, peddle tin ware, do anything that is honest and useful, rather than run in debt. As you value comfort, quiet, independence, keep out of debt. As you value digestion, a healthy appetite, a placid temper, a smooth pillow, sweet sleep, pleasant dreams and happy awakenings, keep out of debt. Debt is the hardest of all task-masters, the cruellest of all oppressors. It is a millstone about the neck. It is an incubus on the heart. It eclipses the sun, it blots out the stars, it dims and defaces the beautiful blue of the sky. It breaks up the harmony of nature,

and turns to dissonance all the voices of its melody. It furrows the forehead with premature wrinkles, it plucks the eye of its light, it drags all nobleness and kingliness out of the port and bearing of a man. It takes the soul out of his laugh, and all stateliness and freedom from his walk. Come not under its accursed dominion. Pass it by as you would pass by a leper, or one smitten by the plague. Touch it not. Taste not of its fruit, for it shall turn to bitterness and ashes on your lips. Finally, we say, to each and to all, but we speak especially, to you young men, KEEP OUT OF DEBT.—Exchange paper.—*Bloomington* (now Muscatine) *Herald*, May 21, 1841, p. 3, c. 1. In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.

GETTING OFF FROM IOWA TO CALIFORNIA IN THE SPRING OF 1850

The letter herewith published was presented by Mr. H. S. Cresswell of Ottumwa. It was addressed to his father, Robert Cresswell, by a brother. All names employed in it are of persons from families of neighbors in and near the home of Robert Cresswell in Van Buren County, Iowa.

Camp Near Austen¹ Fremont County Iowa Apr 26/50

Dear Brother

after I left you I went down to Soap Creek Mill² rods varey bad. Met the Boys there staid their over Sunday Started 8th Munday & drove 15 Miles tusday 9th 20 miles 10th Wednesday Passed where Calen's lives called & Seen them drove 20 all day windy & Cold. 11th Thursday Cold drove 28 miles 12 Friday cold & spitting snow passed lost camps drove 30 miles Saturday 13 cold & windy passed through Pisga paid \$1.00 pr bus for corn drove 22 miles Sunday 14 Snow fell 3 in deep drove 25 miles & camped in the Prairie without wood that night Monday 15th cold drove 8 miles to cook breckfast camped on little Plat³ in all drove 25 miles 16 Tuesday cold & very windy camped on Nishnebotano drove 30 miles today two horses died of the cholic Wednesday 17th Snow drove 17 miles camped on Silver Creek. fine country considerable settlement of Mormons up & down the creek paid \$1.50 Pr bus for corn. 18 Thursday windy & cold drove 15 miles to

¹Austin, at this date, was on the west bank of the Nishnabotna River in Fremont County, Iowa, in the northwest corner of the present Washington Township, and was a post office from 1850 to 1859. It was then the county seat in 1850. Good roads, for that time, led north and south which were crossed here by another east and west, which Mr. Cresswell and many other California-bound travelers followed. We are following the spelling, capitalizing, punctuation, etc., as they appear in the original letter.

²Soap Creek Mill was then in Section 3, Salt Creek Township, Davis County, owned by James C. Jordan of Iowaville, who lived on the left bank of Des Moines River in Section 1, Salt Creek Township, Davis County. Roads from this mill radiated in different directions, one southward to Bloomfield, crossed the one running east and west, which Mr. Cresswell followed.

³In Taylor County, Iowa.

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