

ANNALS OF IOWA.

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THIRD SERIES.

RECOLLECTIONS OF IOWA MEN AND AFFAIRS.

BY HIRAM PRICE.

I am in receipt of your printed circular, and letter of a recent date, asking for such answers as I may be able to give in reference to the early settlement of Iowa, both before and after her admission as one of the States of the Union. To many of these questions I am unable to give such answers as would be of much use for the purpose you have in contemplation. But in relation to some items referring to men and things in the Hawkeye State, I may be able to say something worthy a place in your collection. My personal knowledge of Iowa commenced in 1844, when I first set foot upon her soil.

Iowa was then a country of "magnificent distances," with plenty of room for all who were then there, and for the thousands who were to follow. It may be of some interest to those who may occupy Iowa soil in the years of the coming future, to know *why* and *when* certain things were done, and the origin of some names of some places.

One historian says that "the Black Hawk purchase was divided into two counties," and that a line beginning on the Mississippi River at Rock Island, and extending west to the Missouri River, divided them. The north side of this line was called "Julian Township and Dubuque County." And that the south side of this line was called "Flint Hills Township and Des Moines County." The *then* small village, now the city of Davenport, was in the latter jurisdiction.

The founders of the city of Davenport were Antoine Le Claire and Col. Davenport; the former furnished the land, and

the latter name. " 'Twas ever thus since childhood's hour"; one man sows and another reaps.

The selection and location of the county seat for this county was the cause of much friendly strife, and some strife not so friendly. The small village of Rockingham, a few miles below Davenport, was ambitious for this distinction. Rockingham was on the Mississippi River, immediately opposite the mouth of Rock River, and the citizens of that place claimed that Rock River was navigable for steamboats for more than 200 miles toward Chicago, and that because of this fact Rockingham was a very desirable location for a county seat. The contest over this county seat question was warm and exciting, and charges of fraud, bribery and other unfair means to secure success were freely indulged in by the contestants on either side. The location of this county seat was to be decided by the voters of the county, at an election to be held for that purpose, and consequently the friends of each location were exceedingly anxious to secure votes *somehow, somewhere*, so as to win. It is said (but for the truth of which I do not vouch) that both Rockingham and Davenport had seven hundred more citizens and voters on the day of election than for seven years thereafter!

The active participants in this county seat war were all men of considerable note in their day and generation.

Possibly it may not be amiss to place on record the names of some of the principal actors in this memorable contest, nearly all of whom have passed into "the beyond" where there are no county seat questions to cause rivalry or contention.

On the Davenport side of the controversy were G. C. R. Mitchell, George L. Davenport, Levi S. Colton, D. C. Eldridge, Antoine Le Claire and James McIntosh. On the Rockingham side were Dr. E. S. Barrows, Willard Barrows, Geo. B. Sargent, John Sullivan, Ebenezer Cook and John P. Cook.

On canvassing the votes Davenport appeared to have a majority and was accordingly declared to be the county seat, and has remained so ever since, and is now an incorporated city of some 30,000 or 40,000 inhabitants with churches, schools, banks and manufacturing establishments of various kinds, with

railroad communications east, west, north and south. Rockingham has long since ceased to be enumerated in the list of towns or cities.

As already intimated, my *personal* knowledge of Iowa and the men and measures, moral, social and political, of her citizens commenced in 1844 when I first set foot upon her soil. Davenport, where I first landed and where I lived until a few years ago, when fortune or fate landed me in Washington, was my home during all those years. What is now the city of Davenport was then a very small village, beautiful for location but sleeping a Rip Van Winkle slumber. Communication with the outer world was only possible by river, when not frozen in the winter, or rendered unnavigable in summer by rocks at low water on the upper and lower rapids. These rocks gave occasion for several meetings to devise ways and means for the improvement of river navigation. Sometimes over one hundred delegates being present from Burlington, Muscatine, Dubuque and Davenport. One of these meetings was held at Davenport in the summer of 1846 (I think), but about all that was done at any of these gatherings was to make speeches, pass resolutions, relate anecdotes and have a good time generally. But the rocks were not disturbed. They were old settlers. They had been there since the first "morning stars sang together" and they did not propose to be disturbed by long speeches or resolutions upon paper. And many times since then it has been demonstrated that resolutions are powerless either to move rocks or to make political parties virtuous.

In 1844 Davenport seemed to be, if not the outer edge of civilization, very near to it. The "noble red man" lingered in the vicinity, painted his face, smoked his kinckenik, drank what fire water he could procure, wrapped himself in his blanket, and strutted in fancied independence as the only true type of nature's nobleman.

Wheat in those days at Davenport was worth to the farmer from 35 to 40 cents per bushel, corn 10 cents, potatoes 5 to 12½ cents, pork \$1.50 to \$2 per 100 pounds, quails 37½ cents per dozen, and as a general rule all payable in trade. In those days labor was plenty and cheap. Money was scarce

and dear. The law of supply and demand regulated both, and I do not remember to have heard much complaint of a serious character. Men sold their labor, or the product of their labor, for the best price they could get, and if from either of these sources one could save a dollar, he was allowed to lend it to another for such return for its use as was mutually agreed upon. I have myself paid 20 per cent for money, and by careful and judicious investment made more out of it than the person of whom I borrowed it. The days were longer then than now, and that, too, without any Joshua to make the sun stand still. In those days men could work 12 or 15 hours a day and be considered good citizens, and nobody thought of looking in a law book to find out how many hours he *dare work*. But I have probably said as much on this line as is advisable in a communication of this kind.

In the days of which I am speaking, and in the locality I am trying to describe, fish and potatoes were *plenty* and *cheap*, and were staple articles of commerce. Fish is said to be good food for the brain, and potatoes for the accumulation of adipose, and so may have been good substitutes for the "milk and honey" which were said to be abundant in a certain land spoken of in an old Book (not as much read as it should be).

A few words in reference to my personal experience will demonstrate what I mean by "plenty and cheap." One day in the summer of 1845 a man came to my house, which was then on Front street, near to the river, and inquired if I would buy a catfish. Now what knowledge I had had in reference to that species of the finny tribe was confined to specimens about 6 or 8 inches long taken from the waters of the "Blue Juniata," and were considered as fairly good "pan fish" for food. I asked him where his fish were, to which he replied: "*It* is down there by my skiff in the river." I said "Bring it up and I'll look at it." "But," said he, "*it* is too heavy for one man to carry." So I went to the river with him to see what kind of a fish he had that he could not carry, and there in the water, tied with a rope to the stern of the skiff, was, as the darkies say, a "shure nuff" catfish of a size that astonished me. The

price asked was 62½ cents (there were no dimes in those days.) I purchased it and we dragged it up to my house, and in order to satisfy my curiosity and also to be certain of telling the truth when relating this "*fish story*," we weighed it and found its weight to be just 105 pounds! I had it cleaned and dressed in regulation order. Salted it away in a vessel, changed the brine on it twice in the next 24 hours, then took a fair-sized piece, had it carefully and properly cooked, took one bite, and threw the whole cargo into the river. I had often heard it said that if a little was good a larger quantity was better. But I am now satisfied that the rule does not hold good when applied to catfish. A small one is fairly good for food, but a large one is abominable. So much for fish. Now about potatoes. In the fall of 1846 I purchased 500 bushels of very fine potatoes at 12½ cents per bushel, intending to keep them until spring and then ship them to St. Louis; and in the spring I did sack and ship 375 bushels and the proceeds did not quite pay the freight and charges. The other 125 bushels I gave to a man provided he would at his own expense remove them from my premises. In both these transactions the balance was on the wrong side of the cash account. But the lesson was of use to me in the years which followed, particularly when dealing in fish and potatoes. In those days in Iowa, dry goods stores sold groceries, hardware, queensware, boots and shoes and *whisky*. I had taken with me to Iowa a small stock of general merchandise, but *no whisky*, and was told by my customers that I need not hope to succeed in business there, unless I added whisky to my stock in trade. But I lived long enough to demonstrate to the entire satisfaction of all concerned that they were mistaken, and that it was possible for a man to live and enjoy good health and a reasonable degree of financial prosperity without either selling or drinking whisky. All of my competitors in business in those days differed with me on this question, and all of them are dead except one, and most of them died bankrupt. The outlook for financial success or the securing of bonanzas of wealth in Iowa in those days was by no means luminously encour-

aging. But we remembered it had been said by Bishop Berkeley, that

“In happy climes the seat of innocence,
Where nature guides and virtue rules,
Where men shall not impose for truth and sense
The pedantry of courts and schools.”

And we who occupied the sun-down side of the “Father of Waters” believed that this was the “happy clime” because this same bishop had said in connection with the above—

“Westward the course of Empire takes its way.”

(Allow me to say here, parenthetically, that I am aware that most people say “star of empire,” but Bishop Berkeley said “*course of empire*,” and I do not propose to change his words without his consent.)

I remember no event of sufficient public importance in Scott county to entitle it to be recorded in the “Historical Department of Iowa” until the summer of 1853. Early in that year there was a general awakening as to the importance and necessity of some means of communication with the balance of mankind.

A railroad was then in course of construction from Chicago westward, and we hoped to induce the eastern capitalists who were building that road to have it strike the Mississippi River in Illinois opposite the town of Davenport, and then if possible have it continued west from there to Council Bluffs on the Missouri River. In furtherance of this plan, a conference was held at Davenport, between the eastern railroad men and some of the citizens of Iowa, the first week in August, 1853, and I was persuaded to undertake the task of canvassing the State on the line of the proposed road across Iowa, on a line as nearly direct as possible from Davenport to Council Bluffs. My special business was to see the people at their homes or at their places of business, and where practicable call public meetings at different points along the contemplated line of the road, and to so present the advantages to result from the construction of a railroad as to interest them in the enterprise. By agreement I was to continue in this work along the line of the proposed road for sixty days. My experience during those

sixty days, between the 12th of August and the 12th of October, was not such as to make me anxious to renew it.

One of the surprises with which I met was the large number of people on that proposed line of road who had never seen a railroad, and many of whom did not seem to have any wish to see one. This was to me a strange idea, and one that rendered my task more difficult, because when men are satisfied with their condition and surroundings, it is very difficult to induce them to change them. I could only account for these strange notions on the supposition that this class of persons had read and were in sympathy with the man described by Pollock in his "Course of Time,"

" Who thought the moon that nightly o'er him rolled
No larger than his father's shield;
Lived where his father lived, died where he died,
Lived happy, died happy, and was saved."

And inasmuch as this had been the result in his case they were willing to take their chances with him in this world and in the next. When I told them that *with* a railroad the product of their farms would be worth from 50 to 100 per cent more than without one, they simply disposed of the case in a summary manner by informing me in a manner more energetic than polite that I was not telling the truth. One case of this kind which occurred in Des Moines is a fair sample of several others. I had called a meeting at the Court House one night to present the enterprise to the citizens.

The Court House at that time was not a palatial structure. The meeting was held on the ground floor, which I believe was the court room. The weather was warm, the windows were all raised, and those who could not find room on the inside crowded the windows on the outside and were attentive listeners. While I was making the best presentation of my case that I could truthfully do, and trying to persuade the people that a railroad to Des Moines would be a great benefit to all concerned, some man on the outside, who must have been a near relative of Ananias, crowded his way to the window, listened for a few moments, and then turning away said to those on the outside, "Oh! that is Judge Rice who is speaking, and

he is the greatest liar in the State of Iowa." My name was not Rice and the title of Judge did not belong to me, but it answered the purpose of the anti-railroad men, and was a "good enough Morgan" for the time. This is a sample of the manner in which my mission was received in what is now the city of Des Moines, and a great railroad center for the State of Iowa and of the Northwest. The crucial test of time and trial has relegated the obstructionists and dwellers in "Sleepy Hollow" to the rear of the army of progress. Only in a *very* few instances did a little sunshine of encouragement fleck my pathway while on this railroad mission, but even a very little was gratefully received. I give one such case: I reached Council Bluffs on Saturday, which I think was the 20th of August, and at a meeting that night, after I had made the best presentation of my case of which I was capable, without the slightest token of appreciation or approval, I sat down feeling that (in the language of the colored brother in reference to his prayer) I had had "my labor for my reward," and that the people of Council Bluffs did not think a railroad of much consequence, but rather an unjustifiable interference with the Divine plan, and therefore not to be encouraged because when the Supreme Architect finished the world He pronounced it good without a railroad.

However, while such thoughts as these were passing rapidly through my mind a gentleman in one of the back seats arose and broke the (to me) awful silence, in a speech not longer than a Lacedemonian letter, which gave me some hope that possibly all was not lost.

His speech was neither long, learned, nor classic, but it seemed to inspire in me a hope that possibly my mission might not result in a total failure. Many things in my past life that I ought to remember have been forgotten. But that speech I never will forget, and I *here* and *now* place it on record as some encouragement for those who may be called upon in the future to lead forlorn hopes. It was as follows: "My friends, I have listened to this man's railroad speech, and while I am free to confess that I have grave doubts as to the practicability of the project, yet it may be wise to give it a fair trial, and

possibly some day we may see the locomotive coming across these prairies head and tail up like a bedbug." That was his speech, and it is very safe to say that it was original. I am glad to be able to say that I afterwards met this man at Council Bluffs, when the road was finished to that place, and the iron horse was there to speak for himself.

The Iowa of to-day is very different from the Iowa of 1844 and 1853. Now a magnificent bridge spans the Mississippi River at Davenport and another the Missouri River at Council Bluffs, making connections with railroads east and west that unite with bands of iron the states of the rising and the setting sun. Farms, villages, towns and cities have sprung up and flourished where 40 years ago the prairie wolf held undisputed sway, and on beyond the sun-down boundary of Iowa the iron horse speeds in his onward course, proclaiming the march of empire toward the setting sun, and Iowa has become the half-way house between the rock-bound coast of the Atlantic and the golden sands of the Pacific.

Among the citizens of Iowa whose names ought not and will not be forgotten are those of Gov. Kirkwood and Gen. N. B. Baker. The first is familiarly and affectionately remembered by all Iowa people as the "old war Governor." A man of clear head and kind heart, with an honesty of purpose never questioned, that ever guided him in all his movements in public and in private life. Cool and deliberate, and aiming to be just to all parties, his counsel in all public matters was sought and relied upon by all who came in contact with him in public affairs. As one of the directors of the State Bank of Iowa (a bank which gave the State a safe and reliable currency and never failed), he was careful, industrious and painstaking in seeing that the interests of all concerned were carefully guarded.

At the meetings of the board, whether general or special, his presence could always be counted on to aid by his advice in the direction of its affairs.

As Governor, during the stormy days of the Southern Rebellion, when wild war's deadly blast was spreading death and desolation over the land, and when men and money were absolute necessities to stay the desolating sweep of the simoom of

treason, the Governor, without any of the means and appliances of war to rely upon, and with a State treasury as empty as a church contribution box, managed to promptly put three regiments of Iowa troops in the field in answer to the first call of the President for 90 days' men. And again, a few months later, when it had been demonstrated that 90 days was not the end, but only the beginning, of the simoom of attempted rule or ruin of demagogues and traitors, I have personal and somewhat expensive knowledge of *how* and *why* a camp was established at Davenport, where from the 12th day of August until the 12th of November, 1861, thousands of troops of infantry and cavalry were quartered and subsisted without any aid or assistance of any kind from the State or General Government. All these things, which were contributing forces in the colossal structure of a restored Union, either do not appear in the National Records, or are only referred to in an indefinite or incidental manner.

But the *particulars*, the *embarrassments* and *discouragements*, financial and otherwise, that had to be met to accomplish this work will never be fully known or appreciated, except by those who were the personal actors in accomplishing the work. How many men now in Iowa know that 3,000 muskets sent by the General Government and landed at Burlington for use to repel rebels from Missouri, who were killing and stealing Iowa cattle, were held by the express company for \$900 charges, and their delivery refused until the charges were paid? And how many know of the bales of blankets for use of Iowa troops landed at Davenport and *held* for \$500 charges until payment was made? And how many know *who* paid all these charges and took the risk of reimbursement? How many know who furnished the \$33,000 paid to the 1st, 2d and 3d Iowa regiments, when neither the General Government nor the State of Iowa had one dollar? All these things and hundreds of others of a similar character belong to the unwritten history of Iowa. Governor Kirkwood probably knows as much about these things as any man now living, and some of these may possibly be referred to in his history, which I understand is now being written. The Governor was a prom-

inent actor in the successful management of the work of those days, and to his sagacity in selecting men to aid him is largely to be attributed the good results which followed. He favored no cliques and had no favorites to be pensioned at public expense. Honesty and capacity were the only prerequisites required. He believed in and practiced the doctrine expressed by the poet who said,

"A wit's a feather, and a chief a rod;
An honest man's the noblest work of God."

N. B. Baker was Iowa's Adjutant General during the war of the rebellion, and was well qualified in many respects for the position, and in his administration of the affairs of that office answered in some respects the description given by a French historian of Marshal Ney, who commanded the rear guard of the royal army, in that disastrous retreat from Russia after the burning of Moscow, to wit, "He was full six feet high and had an iron frame."

General Baker was genial, generous and intensely enthusiastic in his devotion to the Union cause, and in his love for "my boys," as he called the soldiers. Honest and unselfish in all his plans, he had the confidence of all who knew him, and it is very doubtful if a better man could have been found for that office. In many respects he was very different in his make-up from Gov. Kirkwood. But the Governor might have said of him as Napoleon I said of one of his marshals (Desaix, I think), "When *with me* he was my right arm."

The Iowa soldiers had no better or more unselfish friend than Gen. Baker, and all of them who came within his influence were his friends. He had, so far as I know, but one enemy, and that was himself. His convivial habits undermined his splendid constitution, and his iron frame succumbed to the insidious destroyer, resulting in the sun of his life going down when only a little past the meridian hour. I have a personal knowledge of many incidents in relation to his habits and financial transactions, all of which indicated a noble nature, and a high sense of honor, but which I am probably not justified in publishing to the world.

There is much in the record which he made that is worthy

of careful consideration by some, who may read these lines, and whose personal habits may be similar to his. Doubtless all who pass the spot where now rests all that was mortal of N. B. Baker will be willing to say,

"Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,
None named thee but to praise."

And so I close this brief and imperfect sketch of two of my friends, one on this and one on the *other shore*, both of whom will be long and favorably remembered by the State in which they lived and labored.

One of the important facts connected with the early history of Iowa, which has, and is now attracting much attention at home and abroad, is the prohibitory liquor law. Most people know something about Magna Charta, and *when* and *where* and *why* the people of England obtained that charter of rights; but a great many people do not know *how* and *when* and *why* Iowa citizens triumphed over the whisky barons, by securing the passage of that law by a Democratic Legislature. It may therefore not be out of place to let the records of the "Historical Department of Iowa" show that the first law of that kind that the State had was conceived and put in proper legal form in Davenport, by David S. True, John L. Davies and one other man. No other person than these three had anything to do with originating it. True and Davies have long since crossed the dark river, but the "other man" is still on the time side of that river, with his face to the foe, and the words "No Surrender" inscribed upon his banner. * * *

I give in these pages an imperfectly written sketch of my experience in Des Moines nearly 40 years ago, when it was only a village in a sparsely settled country, and when a large number of her citizens doubted the practicability of constructing a railroad through the State of Iowa. Men of intelligence on other subjects ridiculed the idea, because, as one prominent lawyer in Muscatine said at one of our public meetings: "Iowa is an agricultural State. Her principal productions are wheat and corn, cattle and hogs, and live stock *cannot* be taken to

an eastern market, because the distance is too great to carry them on cars. And flour *cannot* be carried such a distance on a railroad without shaking the barrels to pieces, unless the barrels are strong and heavy as pork barrels, and that would be so expensive as to make it unprofitable." Allow me to digress a moment from the thread of my statement to say (as Paul said of Alexander the coppersmith) these lawyers did me and my case "much evil," because some people think that because a man is learned in the law he necessarily knows everything else. They seem to forget the fact that

"One science only will one genius fit,
So vast is art, so narrow human wit."

The argument that railroads could not be utilized to carry agricultural products to an eastern market was the most formidable one with which the railroad enterprise of that early day had to contend. And the fact of these objections coming from men of education and influence in the State blocked the wheels of progress and emphasized the words of one who said—

"Truths would you teach, to save a sinking land,
All fear, none aid you, and few understand."

But, having passed the crucial test of time and trial, Iowa is to-day very different from the Iowa of 40 years ago. The ox team has given place to more modern and rapid means of communication and transportation. The spirit of progress has swept aside the old methods of transit, and seizing upon the heretofore untamable spirits of fire and water, and binding them in an iron harness of man's construction, has yoked them to his triumphal car, and then leaping upon his seat of power, has thrown the free reins upon his courser's neck and bid them outstrip the wind. In obedience to that command their march is now like that of the fabled fated wanderer, onward! onward! still and forever onward, by land and sea, while admiring millions say in shouts of encouragement:

—"Sail on, O Ship of State!
Sail on, O Union, strong and great.
Humanity, with all its fears,
With all the hopes of future years,
Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

* * * * *

In spite of rock and tempest's roar,
 In spite of false lights on the shore,
 Sail on 'nor fear to breast the sea!
 Our hearts, our hopes, are all with thee,
 Our hearts, our hopes, our prayers, our tears,
 Our faith triumphant o'er our fears,
 Are all with thee,—are all with thee!"

WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE IOWA INDIANS.

In May, 1821, the hostility between the Sacs and Foxes and Ioways culminated in a battle near Iowaville, the result of which was the transfer of the sovereignty of that region from the Ioways to the Sacs and Foxes. The Ioways had returned from a hunt and were preparing to celebrate their return by a horse race. A plan previously laid to march against Black Hawk on Rock river had been discovered, and Black Hawk by a forced march reached the village of the Ioways while they were at the height of their carousal. After the first onslaught the battle progressed by detachments of twenty-five to fifty on a side until all the Ioway warriors were slain. The old men were then ruthlessly slaughtered. The Sacs and Foxes had gained supremacy, and after the release of Black Hawk, after the Black Hawk war, he lived upon this battle ground, and died and was buried there. In 1824 the Ioways ceded to the United States all their lands in northern Missouri. Mahaska then lived on the Des Moines river, about one hundred miles from its mouth. Going to Washington he unexpectedly met on his way his lovely wife Rantchewaime, who insisted upon going with him. After his return he settled down to a peaceful cultivation of the soil. His wife was a beautiful woman of true Christian character. Mahaska said of her, "Her hand was closed to those not in need, but was like a strainer full of holes to the needy." She had a remarkable influence over her tribe, but lost her life by being thrown from a horse. Mahaska lost standing with the warlike of his tribe, having aided the United States in arresting some of them. He removed to the vicinity of the Nodaways in Cass county, and was slain in 1834 in the southeast part of the county about sixty miles from his village."—*Lecture on "Iowa Indians," by Dr. J. L. Pickard, before the State Historical Society.*

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