

Cedar Brakes and Hamilton Prairie

A Century of Change in Iowa Pioneer Life

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Between two worlds life hovers as a star,
‘Twi’xt night and morn. Upon the horizon’s verge
How little do we know that which we are;
How less, what we may be. The eternal surge
Of time and tide rolls on and bears afar
Our bubbles. As the old burst, new emerge
Lashed from the foam of ages; while the graves
Of empires heave, but as some swelling waves.

—From “Don Juan” by Lord George Gordon Byron

We shall call the small community with which we are here concerned, Cedar Brakes and Hamilton Prairie. Located on about twenty sections of land lying between Cedar creek and Coal creek, the area is approximately six miles long and four miles wide and extends from the old inland town of Hamilton to the Des Moines river, and diagonally crosses the eighteenth meridian that lies east of the present town of Bussey. It is half in Liberty township, Marion county, and half in Jefferson township, Mahaska county, Iowa.

It was originally settled by Protestant English, Scotch and Irish families who came west overland or by way of the Ohio river about the time the remaining Sac and Fox lands in Iowa were opened to settlement. Cedar Brakes and Hamilton Prairie may be defined as a single region geographically and socially. But its two parts differed considerably in their political and sectarian doctrines.

No matter from whence the early settlers came or what their political and religious faith, they were all bound for the cheap lands and free life which the Iowa prairie offered as soon as the Indians vacated.

Their history is a new Odyssey of pioneer families who grubbed, cleared, plowed and tamed their farms on the brakes and prairies. To them and their children

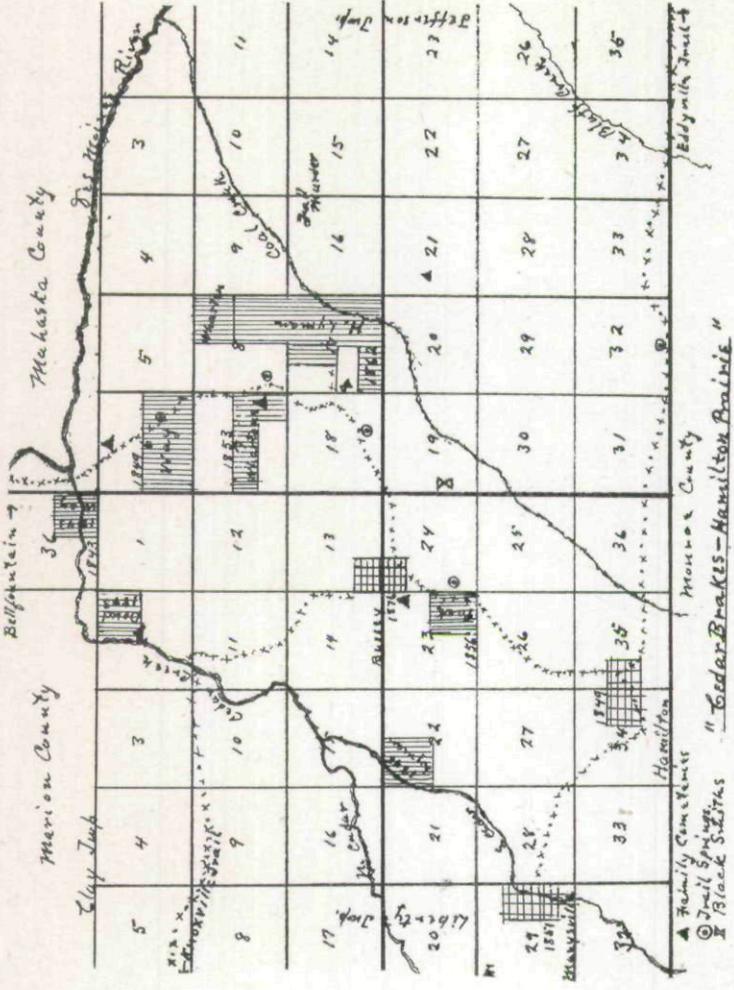
Range 18 west on Parallel 74 north between Coal creek and Cedar creek was to become a fixed meridian for the next half century.

Some of their descendants, now scattered widely from the Atlantic to the Pacific, have preserved commendable records of their families and have made them available to the author, who remembers almost everyone of them from the first through the third generation.

The style of presentation is not new. It follows the pattern used by the Greeks in recording the marvelous feats of their gods and heroes, and our Germanic forebears who related in verse the traditional tales with which their minnesingers flattered the vanities of regal lords throughout the feudal period. They sang of the yearning loves and gallant devotion of young knights in an age of chivalry; while we shall record the simpler joys of creative labor, seasoned and salted with the sweat, tears and loneliness of the early Iowa pioneer. They both reflect a new age.

The Des Moines river roughly divides the state of Iowa in half, flowing in a southeasterly direction. The roof of the drainage system in the southwestern half lies about fifty miles west of the river. The streams that come into the lower Des Moines from the west are creeks rather than rivers. They flow between prairie ridges running from southwest to northeast. Two of the larger streams are Soap creek and Cedar creek, the former coming into the Des Moines river at Eldon and the latter just below the old boat landing at Bellfountain near the present town of Tracy.

These two creeks seem to have been early Indian routes from the Des Moines to the Chariton river which flows south to the big bend in the Missouri above Jefferson City. Between the forks of the Cedar west of the old town of Marysville, the Indians had an early Stone-age industry, judging by the great number of stemmed spear and arrow points, heavy pottery and stone axes that have been found there. From the earliest historic times the Des Moines river and Cedar creek seem to have been the defense line of the Sac and Fox against the sedentary



Marion County

Hamilton County

" Cedar Brakes - Hamilton Bridge "

Sioux in Missouri who carried on a traffic with the prairie Sioux as far north as the Pipestone quarries in Minnesota. The Sac and Fox had well-traveled trails on both sides of the Des Moines river below Red Rock. They controlled the race course on the east bottom below Ottumwa and the much coveted hard maple forest near Eldon where they camped in the spring to make maple sugar.

It was from this region that Keokuk and the Sac and Fox nations were removed to Fort Des Moines when they ceded their land to the settlers May 1, 1843, to await final removal to the prairie of Kansas. This Second Sac and Fox purchase comprised an area of about twenty thousand sections from which later were established twenty or more counties, of which Mahaska and Marion were among the first showing purchase.

As the first pioneer families covered the last lap of their long trek from Ohio or Indiana, they must have noted the broad valley of the Des Moines when they forded the river at Eddyville and the coal measure that jutted into the ravines as they wound along the prairie ridge trail to Hamilton. Their interests, however, were centered on the surface of the soil and what they hoped to raise there. Along the margins of the hills they must have seen the boggy, smelly ooze out of which bubbled sluggish springs, quite unlike those they had known along the roads of the Cumberland mountains. It looked like the land of promise but the smell of the mud after the spring rains was more like that of the swamp lands of Indiana than the fragrance of the hills of New England and Pennsylvania. Some of the old ridge roads wound past springs on the prairie where as late as the early seventies, truckers and farmers halted their teams to drink and to feed on the lush grasses. (See Map.)

When the settlers began to sink wells in the prairie, they soon discovered that they rarely struck water until they reached a depth corresponding to the springs on the hillsides. At this level they often discovered a layer of gumbo or sand, sometimes interspersed with boulders, leaves and twigs and occasionally logs of spruce, several

inches in diameter. Since these were quite foreign to this region, the question was asked, "How did they get there?" The answer was often a theological one, "If God could make a tree, why could he not make a log under the earth as well as grow a forest upon it?"

When geologists later began to make their surveys of southern Iowa, they discovered that the rugged surface had been several times covered by huge polar ice sheets that edged their way southward from the Hudson Bay region, carrying exotic relics along for hundreds of miles. They noted, too, that it was the melting of these glacial ice sheets over a period of thousands of years that inundated the marginal lands and ground narrow frozen channels into broad undulating river valleys such as the Des Moines and its larger tributaries. By a trip of a few hundred miles into the forests and lakes of the Canadian border, geologists can still see this marvelous phenomenon after a hundred thousand years of lifeless frigidity.

Besides the stony bottomed fords and pebbled boat landings of the Des Moines river's tributaries, such streams as Cedar creek offered many advantages to the early settlers. A next to never failing water supply, the lower Cedar remained for half a century a remarkably good fishing stream, particularly during the spring months. With hook and bait a patient farmer might catch a few scale fish and a catfish on a rainy morning to break the monotony of corn bread, molasses and pickled pork diet with at least an occasional Friday fish dinner.

The pools of this stream were well suited to the washing of sheep before spring shearing. They were the rendezvous of the housewife's flock of ducks about the time their down was plucked for the baby's pillow. Cedar bottom was sufficiently forested to furnish posts, logs, rails and saw timber for the new rural community, and in its native state the creek provided water power for the operation of saw and grist mills. In fall and winter the woods were full of fur and game animals, and in the copses and thickets the prairie chickens

and the quail huddled together for protection throughout the long stormy winter. As late as the seventies a good hunter with a caller and a bird dog might get a turkey for Christmas.

There were hazelnuts, hickory nuts, butternuts, walnuts, wild berries, grapes, chokecherries, black haws, and an endless variety of wild plums and crab apples, some of which could be gathered and eaten almost any time from June till Thanksgiving. With a rifle, an ax, a few tools, a cow, some sheep and domestic fowls, a couple with good health and a will to work need not go hungry.

With an apprenticeship in practical living on their farm homes, young people on the frontier learned to do most tasks well, and soon after marriage became particularly resourceful in adapting themselves to the simple arts of living. They were generally thrifty and of good sturdy stock, else they would not have been pioneering on the prairie. It might be said of them, "The cowards never started and the weak died along the way."

The life they were undertaking was not to be easy but neither had it been for their ancestors, many of whom lived through the gloomy years of the Revolution and the frontier wars that followed. It had been a century in which Americans lived by work, not by wages and now they were ready for the great epic. It was an essence of the same spirit that prompted them to spill out over the Cumberland road into the Ohio valley almost before the smoke of the Revolutionary cannon cleared away; and to make their way into Kentucky and Indiana about the time Boone, Wayne and Harrison were driving the Indians beyond the Wabash. They were then to take the final leap across the Mississippi and establish homes on the prairie.

AN EPOCHAL ADVENTURE

The moon rose full over the eastern horizon of Hamilton Prairie on the evening of April 30, 1843. A few adventurers of the Iowa frontier had been scouting about

Cedar creek and the surrounding hills for a year or two, searching for the most suitable lands to build future homes for their families. Since the ice had broken in the spring three young men from a considerable distance down the river had been chopping down trees and hewing out logs with which to build their cabins as soon as the government at Washington would permit settlers to enter.

Iowa was at that time a huge territory extending from the Missouri line north to the Canadian border, including part of what later became the Dakotas. The little responsible law enforcement it possessed was administered by military units, commonly called Dragoons, and a few federal judges. For southern Iowa the seat of this jurisdiction was at Burlington.

The oldest of three adventurers was Stanford Doud, a square-shouldered man in his late thirties. He was widely experienced for his day, having been a frontiersman, a farmer and a small businessman in Pennsylvania and Ohio before he came west. He could trace his lineage in America to a reform Christian colony that settled in New England about the middle of the seventeenth century.

The next older man was Horace Lyman, a married man of English extraction whose ancestors had come to Massachusetts colony about 1640. He was born in the Finger Lake district of western New York soon after the War of 1812, not far from the Erie canal over which thousands of easterners a few years later made their way by the Great Lakes to the frontiers along the Mississippi. Horace was a muscular, angular-jawed six-footer with prominent ears that gave him an air of awareness of what was going on about him throughout his long and busy life.

The youngest of the three was Joshua Way, a spare, daring, hard-working man without formal education who had just rounded his twenty-first year. He was born in the wilderness of Wayne county, Indiana, in 1822, only a few years after General William Henry Harrison had finally defeated the Shawnee on the Wabash. In

company with his parents he had made his way to Van Buren county, Iowa, in 1837, the same year that Abraham Lincoln moved to Springfield. Joshua was only fifteen when the family reached Iowa.

Apparently not entirely satisfied with all that he had seen on the way west, he soon set out on the Indian trail north along the Des Moines river to possibly explore for himself the region about the mouth of the Cedar. It was at that time the land of the Sac and Fox Indians with government headquarters at Agency, near which the greatest of their chiefs and warriors, Black Hawk, was still living. This was five or six years before settlers were allowed on the lands and so Joshua soon returned to Keosauqua.

A few years later the two older men, Stanford Doud and Horace Lyman, arrived to establish their families in temporary quarters there. The new town was a friendly frontier village consisting chiefly of recent immigrants with common backgrounds and experiences. It is highly probable that the enthusiastic young Way regaled the Douds and the Lymans with what he had discovered up the river five years before.

It is known that Lyman and Doud came up the trail in 1842, built themselves a wickiup with poles and bark on the section where an Indian path crossed Cedar creek, and determined as soon as legally possible to establish their homes near there. They had been threatened by a small band of armed Indians who found Doud and a fellow adventurer, named Polly, hewing a canoe out of a log in the forest, and they had been chased by the United States Dragoons for trespassing on Indian lands before they were opened for settlement. Doud qualified for a homestead at the territorial land office at Fairfield in 1842, though he could not legally settle on it before the following year. No doubt Lyman and Way had secured like documents when the three came north on the trail in the spring of 1843.

When the hour of midnight struck, these three men made their way through the paths of the forest to stake out their homesteads in Section 36, Clay township,

and 2 and 22 in what later became Liberty township, Marion county, Iowa. The great era had arrived when history was to begin anew in south central Iowa. The first legal settlement on land of the Second Sac and Fox Purchase occurred by moonlight a few minutes after midnight, May the first, 1843.

Within a day or two the two older men made their way down the Indian trail to Keosauqua and their anxious families, while Josua Way remained on the brakes of the Cedar to defend their claims against all contenders. It was a tramp of three or four days with several streams to ford which might be roaring torrents in uncertain spring weather. There were perhaps a few squatters at the Ottumwa crossing, but they were probably otherwise alone in the wilderness. It required several months to fit out the two families for the return trip to the Promised Land.

It must have been a trying journey for the young wives and their children. The Dragoon trail from Agency to Fort Des Moines followed the east bottom of the river up past the old Hard Fish village where Eddy had his post. It then veered off to the ridge, not far from the present town of Pella, and came into Fort Des Moines from the east by way of Prairie City. Our pioneer families could follow this trail as far as Eddyville without difficulty and ford the rock bottomed river into Hamilton Prairie along the ridge of the Mahaska-Monroe county lines. How Stanford Doud and Horace Lyman got their families, teams, and belongings from Eddyville ford to their farm homesteads on Cedar Brakes we have no record. The terrain is terribly hilly and broken across Jefferson township, Mahaska county, and as late as the eighties was hardly passable with team and wagon.

A few other families were trying to get into Cedar Brakes about the time Lyman, Doud and Way were settling down on their homesteads. These pioneers probably assisted each other as the Mormon trains did a few years later when they crossed southern Iowa. A younger brother of Stanford Doud, Eliab, came with him to Van Buren county in 1842 and was with him and Horace Lyman in

one or two of their adventures on Cedar creek before they filed claim to their lands. Once when they were returning to Keosauqua on horseback, they narrowly escaped drowning when they swam their horses across Soap creek. Whether Eliab accompanied the Doud and Lyman families when they returned up the river to their new farms is not known.

Joshua Way married Elois Doud, Stanford's oldest daughter, soon after the DouDs moved into their new log cabin. Later he became the richest farmer in Jefferson township. His possessions were in land and livestock, and no one ever accused him of having a dishonest dollar. At the end of his life about the close of the century, there was a tradition that when he first appeared in the community, he had an ax on his shoulder and only two bits in his pocket. Of the three men on the border of the prairie who went out at midnight May 1, 1843, to win the golden fleece, Joshua Way was the daring Jason.

The author's ancestors, the John Whartons, were pioneering in the bogs and forests of eastern and southern Indiana at the time Hamilton Prairie was being settled. They were the middle-aged parents of twelve sons and daughters, about half of whom were married and had young children of their own. The two older sons left their families in Indiana and joined the great overland rush to California in the summer of 1850.

Stanford Doud also went west to the diggings over the Oregon trail and John Lyman, a younger brother of Horace, sailed out of New York harbor and around the Horn to seek his fortune in the Golden West. These four enterprising souls, who within the next five years became pioneering neighbors on the Iowa prairie, may have met by accident near the Golden Gate and decided that Iowa, the beautiful, with its golden corn and autumn oaks and maples was, after all, the best place for free and honest men.

In the spring of 1853 Robert, the oldest of the ten living Wharton children, appeared at Hamilton Prairie and bought a homestead in Jefferson township before a fur-

row had been turned on Sections 7, 8, 9, 17, or 18. Within the next few years his parents and his nine brothers and sisters with their growing families, followed him.

During the great immigration into Iowa in 1856, another Indiana family appeared on the prairies and established its home on a beautiful ridge farm about two miles north of the new inland town of Hamilton. They were of Virginia extraction. The father, Abraham Pack, was born in Kentucky two days after Abraham Lincoln, February 14, 1809. He married his bride at Portsmouth, Ohio. Her parents, a Lee family from Virginia, lived near there. The Packs had eleven children who attained maturity, most of whom were born after they reached Iowa. They came overland by wagan train from near Edinburg, Indiana, and entered Iowa at Keokuk.

The Pack families that remained in the settlement were thrifty people who lived comfortably in the better farm houses and gave one the impression that they were more concerned with good and decent living than in growing rich. They seemed to have retained something of the plantation family spirit. All of the First Families made large and lasting contributions to the society of Hamilton Prairie.

The romantic historian will always be thrilled by the heroic spirit of the pioneers who surged into the western prairies before the Indian war whoop had fairly died away. They had all the courage and endured most of the hardships of the French fur traders in the forests and on the plains, and of the British commercialists who established their posts along the Atlantic and gulf coasts and the inland waterways of North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet they were not of the same piece. The Iowa prairie pioneers came to make homes.

They imagined their families would eventually become a middle class gentry, a miniature replica of the English landed class. Something akin to this had already been realized by the Dutch in New York and Pennsylvania, and by the colonial fathers along the Atlantic seaboard. It was a legitimate ambition as long as land remained the

basis of wealth. It had had the blessing of the church and the sanction of kings since the age of chivalry. Nothing was to be too good for the new sovereign citizen.

The primary sources of power continued to be, as had been true since the beginning of the early Iron age, the ox yoke, the water wheel, man himself and the soil. Supplemented by the skills of craft guilds and individual handicraft this might, as far as anyone could foresee, go on unchanged for centuries. With an established pattern of living and a vast new region beyond the Mississippi awaiting the coming of civilized man, nothing seemed impossible. With these sources of power at hand and the bounteous gifts of nature awaiting them, it is not surprising that young men and women of courage should have joined the great wave of migration now flowing into the West.

Since the close of the War of 1812 an ambitious young nation had crossed the continent to the Pacific; established its northern border at Parallel 39 and its southern at Key West and the Rio Grande; driven the Indians off two and one-fourth million square miles of land; successfully invaded and defeated its sister republic of Mexico, outsmarted the king of Spain in the trade for Florida; admitted two of its most promising possessions, Texas and California, into the new Union of sovereign states; and driven the Mormons beyond the western mountains to the shores of Great Salt Lake.

With these astounding national achievements taking place in a single generation, it would seem that an Anglo-Saxon people who had won their independence from the mother country by revolution and confirmed it by a second war, should have felt themselves secure any place the Stars and Stripes unfurled in the breeze.

SOCIAL PATTERNS OF A CENTURY

In this broad earth of ours. . .
 Nestles the seed perfection. . .
 Yet again, lo! the soul, above all science,
 For it has history gathered like husks around the globe
 For it the entire star myriads roll through the sky. . .
 For it the real to the ideal tends. . .

their long history in America, they had a family background to maintain.

Not all their contemporaries or even their neighbors were so fortunate. Codes of morals and manners are the social distillates of an endless number of trials and errors in group living. They are basically subjective; even when formulated into laws and ordinances, they must respect the common will and enlightenment of their people.

The relationships of people, even in rural society, are quite different under modern industrial conditions from what they were a century ago on the fringe of the open range. Intemperate indulgences where they existed then were excused as personal vices; whereas now in broad segments of society they are accepted as social sophistications and give rise to jokes and laughter. To dip snuff and chew tobacco is now a social vulgarity, but cigarette smoking by both men and women, the cocktail lounge and drive-in theaters are relaxations from the stresses of modern living.

THE 1843-1875 GENERATION

By the middle of the fifties pioneer citizens were looking forward with assurance to a rich future in a peaceful society under law. The Whigs, the Democrats and the neo-Republicans all had panaceas for the many social ills that were arising in the new republic. The South with its plantations, debts, cotton, tobacco and Negroes, was clamoring for cheap money, states rights and slave labor. Free homesteads threatened to entice industrial workers to abandon their machines to enter the new landed gentry. The political fate of Kansas was held up for years, while the new state of Missouri permitted slavery. Folks of good will were beginning to wonder whether the individual state rather than the expanded sprawling nation might not better handle some of its social problems.

The population doubled in the second generation. New means of travel and freedom of association brought other changes. Men wielded hand tools when this period began. The same hand that dressed the grinding stones

for the grist mill set the water wheels in the mill race. It prodded the lazy ox along Indian trails and urged him forward as he turned the first furrow on the prairie. The same strong hand that swung the heavy ax that brought down trees to build the frontier cabin, soothed the crying child and blessed the flaxen head with a benediction. The same voice that greeted the neighbor on the road comforted the friend when in sorrow and, as a frontier magistrate, administered marriage vows to the new generation growing up on the prairie.

It was a harsh rude world but the pioneers living in it could be gentle and kindly. The same sense of mutual helpfulness prevailed among women as well as among men. A house raising, a husking, a threshing, a shearing, or a butchering had a community social value in which neighbors often shared. It was a moneyless economy based on barter and exchange of services and skills in which certain people excelled. It served to get things done without wages and it bound together the community as a whole. It provided a self-reliant people with subsistence needs, as well as shelter, care and entertainment without the strictures of class divisions.

During this first period the interest of the community in legal processes was pretty much limited to civil action involving small debts or minor damages. Most of these were handled by country squires as justices of the peace, who like the school director and the road supervisor, were chosen by their peers.

Justices of the peace and township trustees were provided with a copy of the code which if consistently followed through might lead these officers to new political offices in the state. Joseph Brobst, the first township clerk in Liberty township, in about two years became the first county judge in Marion county. He was a miller by trade and it would be interesting to review his decisions. John F. Lacey, brevet major, who represented the old Sixth Iowa district in Congress for more than twenty years, was a farmer and bricklayer before he enlisted in the Civil war.

One notes that through the embryonic period of frontier

society counties in Iowa were administered by magistrates with meager professional training. The clergy, the doctor, the jurist and the statesman were largely trained in the school of experience.

The first public road approved by the territorial commission was only eight miles, along the ridge from somewhere near the town of Attica to Knoxville. It seems to have been the route now followed by that lap of Highway 60. There was no provision for financing it. Like many of the early roads in the state it perhaps acquired legal status by statute of limitations.

A census of the newly formed territory of Iowa was made in 1838. The total population at that time was 22,859. Eight years later in 1846 when Iowa became the twenty-ninth state in the Union, the population had increased to 102,388.

Jefferson and Liberty townships were probably not definitely defined until 1845. This was two years after pioneers arrived and took possession of their homesteads. Voting precincts were established for the two counties, Mahaska and Marion, during the summer of 1846, but Iowa did not actually become a state until three days before the end of that year. In the first Liberty township election of which there is a record preserved, Horace Lyman was chosen township treasurer.

In the fall of 1856 when the author's parents ferried across the Mississippi at Burlington, the first steam engine on rails in Iowa ran three miles west from Keokuk to Buena Vista. By the end of the war trains were running on to Eddyville and from Rock Island to Des Moines. The days of the wood carvers, weavers and herb doctors were passing, and Hostetler's almanac was losing its lure.

During the Civil war years the economy was so much eased by good crops and high prices that a few of the better conditioned families were able to send an occasional son or daughter away to college. Two of these turned to the professions and of course left the farm.

THE 1875-1905 GENERATION

By the early eighties life was a little more comfortable on our Iowa brakes and prairies. The infant birth and death rate was falling off. Nutritional diseases among infants and such community scourges as diphtheria and scarlet fever decreased somewhat. Large families became less common. Within one generation the birth rate of the first four families fell off fifty per cent, and it has declined slightly ever since among rural communities of English stock.

Childbirth continued to be generally attended by friendly neighbors or self-acclaimed midwives. It is doubtful whether the maternal or infant death rates would have been improved had there been doctors in attendance as nothing was known of the bacterial cause of disease or the use of antiseptics until about 1890. Tuberculosis continued to be the greatest community killer. Typhoid fever was a regular autumnal scourge.

State laws regulating the practice of medicine were passed in 1881. Thereafter a young man entering the practice of medicine had to be licensed by the state after graduating from an approved school of medicine. Bussey got its first licensed doctor about this time. It had a population of about one hundred but served a community numbering about fifteen hundred.

At the first religious service conducted in the town of Bussey, the young Methodist clergyman, J. H. Hard, chose his text from the book of Zacharia, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" Three years later in 1881 the first church was built and the author's father, Robert Sanders, was one of the trustees. The cost of the frame building was fourteen hundred dollars and it was dedicated free of debt.

Formal schooling during the first thirty years was very limited; both boys and girls married at a young age. The average school attendance increased in the next generation (1875-1905), to possibly the sixth grade and the marriage age to 20-23. It is doubtful whether this extension of formal education and the postponement of marriage influenced favorably or unfavorably the

social morals of youth as it contributed little to an understanding of the physical or spiritual self, although it did give additional time for sophistication. The last school in the one-room building in Bussey was taught by the author in 1891 with an enrollment of about seventy pupils. For this service he received thirty-two dollars per month which was applied on a medical education. The bank of Bussey opened in 1892 and has never closed its doors.

Even before the twenty-four or twenty-five sections of Hamilton Prairie were fenced in, it became apparent that about half of this acreage could never be brought into grain production, and as open land disappeared, stock range became more limited. Utopia was lagging far behind the dream. Blue grass came in about the time the chinch bug did and what was gained in forage was lost in grain. In the mid-seventies the price of grain and meat struck an almost all-time low. Even if there had been produce to sell, there was no market except huckstering among neighbors in an economy with neither credit nor money. It was into this vacuum that the third generation was born. In time it came to doubt the possibility of a Utopia in this realm.

In 1876 the first railroad and telegraph came through the community and put the population in touch with the outside world. When it reached the Des Moines river, white pine sawmills along the Mississippi river shipped train loads of dressed lumber west. The best farms came under cultivation and were fenced in, and the old prairie trails were abandoned for section roads. Frame schoolhouses supplanted the old log schoolhouses, and many farmers replaced their old log cabins with frame buildings. This gave rise to a new society in which carpenters, bricklayers and painters were paid daily wages.

The railroad split Hamilton ridge along the county line, from the margin of the prairie down into the Des Moines valley. The capital city was getting its fourth railroad and it came right through Cedar Brakes and Hamilton Prairie. After a generation it became a part of the world community.

Cedar hill with its high grade fixed the location of the town of Bussey. Locomotives had to divide their trains to get up the grade, and a switch on the summit of the prairie was inevitable. The railroad by-passed the old booming Cedar creek town of Marysville and determined the future of Hamilton. Henceforth the new town of Bussey was to be the metropolis of Liberty and Jefferson townships and much of the countryside beyond. If Bussey had had a good road to Eddyville, it might have become quite a little city.

Along the railroad switch, a station house, granaries and a lumber yard sprang up like mushrooms. A town of sixteen square blocks was laid out on the old James Rousseau homestead, at this time the home of Uncle James Bussey. The first train at the end of the switch one dark night was terribly frightening as the giant Cyclops glared down the track coming north from Hamilton. Unlike more familiar animals, this weird creature seemed to have no zoological harmony. A country child did not know but that it might jump the track and chase him over the prairie.

It was only about fifty years ago that the Cedar Brakes and Hamilton Prairie community discovered its greatest resource. The shaft mining of coal was its biggest business until petroleum and gas became a more acceptable source of power. The operation of powerful derricks, trucks and bulldozers by gasoline-powered motors not only transformed the economy of the community, but likewise the face of nature. Strip mining and coal trucking became its biggest business. With the increased use of mechanical power on the prairie, the number of people on farms has greatly decreased. The introduction of new methods of merchandising and accounting, and the widespread use of electricity and rapid transportation have brought all the people into contact with large industrial and commercial centers to which workers and traders can commute and still maintain homes in the rural community.

THE 1905-1945 GENERATION

Twenty years before the second phase of this rural

society came to an end about 1905, farmers had begun to learn that only the most favorably situated among them could do more than decently support a family on a quarter section of land. For the many who had less or none, there seemed no economic future open to their children. Except for the prairie farms, much of the naturally sparse loam on the land had washed away and there seemed no way to restore it.

Throughout its whole history the Liberty and Jefferson township sides of this rural community had been under separate political jurisdictions and the church people under different communions. Even the little town of Bussey could not quite overcome these differences. The fact that the school and highway districts were under different jurisdictions had disadvantages.

There was no bridge across the Des Moines river on the Oskaloosa road until the early eighties. This was a great disadvantage to farm families in Jefferson township. It also unfavorably influenced the education of the young people since Oskaloosa, like Pella, has provided college opportunities for young people since before the Civil War. The one convenience Bussey lacked most was a bridged and graded road into the large and well-to-do farming community beyond Coal creek. Except for the first mile the section line road going east from Bussey for four miles, was so rugged and hilly it was almost impossible for farmers to truck loads over it until the automobile age of the third generation arrived.

About the time of World War I the retirement of farmers and an influx of miners into Bussey brought its population to an all-time high of about a thousand. The inflationary boom of the war years gave a new impetus to community activity. Everybody bought war bonds while the drums beat loudly for the saving of democracy. Bank files accumulated the promissory notes of misguided farmers for the most fantastic schemes of corporate financing and stock promotion the country had experienced since the Mississippi Bubble. When the sifting-down period came in the early twenties,

the financial ruin of many rural communities was almost complete.

The prairie was still poor and, lacking tangible assets to support overlarge loans, escaped most of the catastrophies richer neighborhoods experienced. Conservative commercial banks survived because of good management and a solvent community.

The main thing that saved the third generation was its "black diamond" located in the earth. During and immediately following World War I the railroads and an expanding automobile industry maintained the market for steam coal, and the pay rolls of the miners and the highway workers saved the economy from ruin in the twenties.

In 1916 the Bussey community built a consolidated school with free transportation for students living in the rural areas of Liberty and Jefferson townships.

In 1927 the community united its two communions of Methodism that had split so badly during the emotional tension that preceded the Civil war, and enlarged and modernized its church building. A non-sectarian board administers a well-kept cemetery on the beautiful ridge adjoining the town over which the Red Man roamed a little more than a century ago.

It is here the spirits of the pioneers still keep watch and, when they speak, declare that now, as always, the richest treasure of the prairie ridge is its youth. From them emerge the farmer, the skilled worker, the businessman, the teacher, the soldier, the statesman, and the master craftsman of the arts and professions. Because of them civilization advances.

For the few who remain when Charon shakes the urn and convokes the Council of the Silent, may the bells not toll as they too, join the silent majority.

The wild geese and ducks, and the sandhill cranes with their same well-ordered figure in the gray-blue sky, fly north and south with each succeeding equinox; but the prairie and its people have greatly changed since the first three pioneers staked out their homesteads there, just after midnight, May first, 1843.

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