



Yours very truly
Cyrus C. Carpenter

GOV. CYRUS C. CARPENTER.

This engraving was copied from a photograph of Mr. Carpenter some years before his election as Governor, and near the time he served as a private in the Spirit Lake Expedition.

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3D SERIES.

THE SPIRIT LAKE EXPEDITION.

In the summer of 1887, thirty years after the events transpired, the idea was agitated at Webster City of placing in the Hamilton County Court House a brass tablet in memory of Co. C, of the Spirit Lake Expedition. Petitions were circulated praying for the appropriation by the Board of Supervisors of \$300 for this purpose. Nearly all to whom they were presented signed them. The names included most of the bankers, merchants and other leading men, with such representative farmers as happened to come into town while the petition was in circulation. The petition was granted at once upon its presentation, largely through the hearty good will of the chairman of the board, the late Hon. Charles T. Fenton. A committee was chosen to procure the tablet and otherwise carry into effect the prayer of the petitioners. August 12 was fixed as the date for unveiling the tablet. Gov. William Larrabee kindly consented to be present and occupy the chair. Seven participants in the Expedition accepted invitations to narrate their recollections of the weary march and its attendant circumstances. These persons were Capt. John F. Duncombe, Capt. Charles B. Richards, Lieut. John N. Maxwell, Lieut. Frank R. Mason, and privates Cyrus C. Carpenter, W. K. Laughlin and Michael Sweeney. When the great concourse of people assembled at the Court House it was found that it would not hold half of the 2,000 present. An out door meeting was therefore organized on the east front of the edifice, where a part of the speeches were delivered. These speeches had quite a run in the daily and weekly press at that time, but it is believed that they possess much historical value and should be gathered into these pages in order to insure their permanent preservation. They present the best possible history of the Expedition.

Ex-Gov. Cyrus C. Carpenter, whose remarks were revised by himself, spoke as follows to the people out-of-doors.

THE ADDRESS OF EX-GOVERNOR CARPENTER.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN: Others will give in detail the organization, the marches, and the disbandment of the Spirit Lake Expedition of 1857. I shall confine myself to a few reminiscences of the campaign, and to a personal mention of some of the conspicuous characters in the command. Previous to any knowledge of the massacre at Spirit Lake, I had gone with Mr. Angus McBane on some business to Al-

gona, in Kossuth county, from which place we walked across the prairie to Medium Lake in Palo Alto county, near which was a temporary settlement known as "The Irish Colony." This settlement consisted of some fifteen or twenty families who had made preemptions in different localities along the Des Moines river in Palo Alto county, but had built rude cabins in a grove near Medium Lake, and about a mile from the present location of Emmetsburg, where they had wintered, with the purpose of entering upon their claims in the early spring. Mr. McBane was the owner of some land in the county, and had proposed to employ me to do a small job of surveying for him. Upon our arrival, however, we found the snow so deep that nothing could be done in the way of finding corners or running lines. So, after I had sufficiently recovered from a snow-blindness, brought on by walking over the vast fields of glistening snow between Algona and Medium Lake, to travel, we started for home. When about twelve miles south of the Irish colony we met the advance of the Expedition, and then for the first time learned the story of the terrible massacre at Spirit Lake. We were invited to join the Expedition, but as neither of us had a gun, we suggested that we would be more ornamental than useful. This objection, however, was obviated when we were told that four or five of the boys had given out and returned, leaving their guns for recruits that might be picked up along the route. So we enlisted. We were assigned to Capt. Richards' Company (A), shouldered our arms, faced about, and began the march with our comrades for Spirit Lake.

During the remainder of the day we toiled along the road back to the Irish colony. In doing so we marched over a route along which no team had been able to pass for weeks. Every foot of the way was covered with snow, and in places, where there was a depression in the surface of the prairie, or an elevation like a bluff or knoll, were drifts which seemed absolutely fathomless. At such points we would resort to various expedients to get the team and the few horses in the command across the drifts. Sometimes all the men in the command would form in two files, about the distance apart

of two wagon tracks, and would march and countermarch back and forth over the snow, until paths were trodden sufficiently hard to bear up the team and horses. Again we would shovel a channel where the drift was so shallow and short as to render this expedient practicable; and then at other times we would hitch our long rope to the wagon and by sheer force of muscle and numbers pull it through the drift, and throwing the animals upon their sides, pull them, one by one, across the drifts; and each day's march, until after we had crossed Cylinder Creek upon our return, was but a constant repetition of these expedients.

Our first night with the command was spent in camp near Medium Lake. The next morning we ate our scanty meal, struck camp, and were on the march shortly after sunrise, toiling through the snows which were growing deeper as we went northward. We found ourselves at night in camp near Mud Lakes. Here was an opportunity for the officers to show their interest in their commands and their good judgment in a most commendable manner. Many of the men were so exhausted that on coming into camp they threw themselves upon their blankets and were determined to sleep without a mouthful of food; and the picture is before me until this day, of Capt. Charles B. Richards and Lieutenant F. A. Stratton, of our company, with two or three of the men, cutting wood, punching the fire, and baking pancakes, until long after midnight; and as they would get enough baked for a meal they would waken some tired and hungry man and give him his supper: and the exercises in Company A were but a sample of what was in progress in each of the companies.

The next morning we resumed our march. When volunteers were called for to go forward as an advance guard, I was among the number who volunteered. The scouting party consisted of some dozen or fifteen men. I only remember distinctly five of the number, viz.: John N. Maxwell, William K. Laughlin, Wm. Defore, a young man from Boone county, Albert H. Johnson of Webster county, and myself. I was young, of slender physique, but as wiry, vigorous and persistent as most men. I never had seen a day so cold or

so warm as to prevent me from undertaking any duty that lay in my pathway. But I shall never forget a sort of discouragement that crept over me, after we had started that morning, at seeing the ease and celerity with which Lieut. Maxwell, who commanded the squad, and Wm. K. Laughlin, with their long legs and wiry frames, pulled through the snow and across the snow-drifts; and how, to keep up with them, tried my every muscle.

A little after noon one of the party on ascending an elevation in the prairie, and looking off to the northwest, turned to those somewhat in the rear and exclaimed: "Indians!" In a moment the squad had assembled upon the elevation. Each man had an opinion as to what the moving objects were that could be seen in the distance. It was finally agreed that there was but one way to determine the question, and that was, to go forward. So forward we went. But I remember we marched closer together, talked less, and in lower tones than before. I remember, too, that by a natural impulse we followed the ridges, keeping on the high ground, so as not to lose sight of the approaching party more than a few minutes at a time. Finally we saw that they had stopped. They had evidently discovered us. Going a short distance further, some one said: "I see an ox-team and sled." Others looked and saw the oxen, and the question was settled that they were not Indians. As we approached them, we found they had surrounded the sled in an attitude of defence, as they had supposed we were Indians, and had resolved, if overpowered, never to fall into the hands of the savages alive. On the discovery, however, that we were friends, their fears turned into joy. In the party were Mrs. William L. Church and a sister (Miss Drusilla Swanger), whom I had met in Hamilton county. The sister, a young girl, had been wounded in the attack upon Springfield, Minnesota. One of the men, Mr. Thomas (father of Frank Thomas, of Marshalltown, who was a gallant soldier in the civil war, and died a few years ago while temporarily stopping in Washington, D. C.), had lost an arm, and another, a Mr. Carver, had been severely wounded. If the Expedition had accomplished

nothing more, every man would have felt himself repaid for his share in its toil and suffering by the relief it was able to afford these suffering refugees. In the haste of their departure from Springfield, they had taken but little provision and scanty clothing. The women, in wading through the drifted snow, had worn out their shoes, their gowns were worn to fringes at the bottom; and all in all, a more forlorn and needy company of men and women were never succored by the hands of friends. They cried and laughed, and laughed and cried, alternately. A part of our squad then returned to the main command with the information of our discovery, and the residue conducted the worn and weary party to the nearest grove on the Des Moines river, where the main body joined them later in the afternoon, and where we spent the night. The next morning we divided our scanty rations and blankets with them, and they went forward toward safety and friends, whilst we pushed towards the scene of the massacre.

That night we arrived at Granger's Grove, a short distance above the present site of Estherville, where we learned that Capt. Bee (subsequently killed in the rebel army at the first battle of Bull Run), then in command of the United States troops at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, had been with his command at Spirit Lake, and finding the Indians had fled from the scene of their depredations, had returned to Fort Ridgely. Knowing that we could be of no further service, except to bury the dead at Spirit Lake, and as our supplies were nearly exhausted, it was determined that most of the men composing the command should turn over everything in the way of food, except barely enough to last to the nearest settlement, to a detachment, which was to go forward and bury the dead, and that the main body should return as best they could, to Fort Dodge. The trials and fate of the detachment which went to Spirit Lake will be told by others.

The third day after commencing our return march, we left Medium Lake, in a hazy, cloudy atmosphere, and in a drizzling rain. By the time we reached Cylinder Creek, between the descending rain overhead, and the melting snow beneath our feet, the prairies were a flood of water. On ar-

iving at Cylinder Creek we found the channel not only full, but the water covering the entire bottom bordering the creek to a depth of from three to four feet. When we found that it would be impossible to cross at the point where the road intersected the creek, we resolved to send a party up the stream to see if a better crossing could not be found. But in less time than I have occupied in telling this story the wind began to blow from the north, the rain turned into snow, and as every thread of clothing in the entire command was saturated with water, our clothing began to freeze upon our limbs. I had still not given up the hope of either crossing the stream, or finding a more comfortable place to camp, to await the result of the now freezing and blinding storm. So, with one or two others, I followed down the creek a mile or more, until we came to the bluffs overlooking the bottoms bordering the Des Moines river. I had hoped that we might discover some elevated ridge through the bottom, over which we could pass and reach the timber that fringed the river. But on reaching the bluffs and looking out over the bottom lands, which fell back from the river from one to two miles on either side, to their base, it was one wide waste of water. So we concluded our only hope was to remain right where we were until the storm abated.

On getting back to the road we found our comrades improvising a cover, by taking the wagon-sheet and one or two tents which we had along, and stretching them over the wagon-wheels and staking them down as best they could to the frozen ground, leaving a small opening on the south side for a doorway. This done, we moved the animals to the south side of our tent, on ground sloping to the south, in order to afford them all the protection possible. Then we put all our blankets together, made a common bed upon the ground, and all crawled into it without removing our clothes, every thread of which was wet, and most of which were frozen as stiff as boards. There we lay through that long Saturday night, and all the succeeding Sunday, and the following Sunday night. The air outside was full of fine snow. At different times during the night three or four of us crept out of

our nests and went around our tent, banking it with snow on the north, east and west sides. And when the fierce winds would blow the banking away so as to open a new air-hole, we would repeat the operation. To add to the horrors of the situation during this more than thirty-six hours of absolute imprisonment, we were without food.

By daylight, on Monday morning, we were on the move; and to our joy found the ice, which had formed over Cylinder Creek the day before, would bear us up. The severity of the weather cannot be better attested than by stating the fact that all the men, our wagon, loaded with the little baggage of the camp, and the few horses belonging to the command, were crossed upon this bridge of ice with perfect ease and safety. Since that experience upon Cylinder Creek, I have marched with armies engaged in actual war. During three and a half years' service, the army with which I was connected, marched from Cairo to Chattanooga, from Chattanooga to Atlanta, from Atlanta to the Sea, and from the Sea through the Carolinas to Richmond. These campaigns were made under southern suns and in the cold rains and not infrequent snow storms of southern winters. The marches were sometimes continued without intermission three or four days and nights in succession, with only an occasional halt to give the weary, foot-sore soldier a chance to boil a cup of coffee. But I never in those weary years experienced a conflict with the elements that could be compared with the two nights and one day on Cylinder Creek.

After crossing the creek on Monday morning, we went to the Shippey house, some two miles south, where we cooked our breakfast. From this time forward no order of march was observed, but each man found his way home to suit himself. I followed down the river, in company with several comrades, to McKnight's Point, where we got our dinner. After dinner Lieut. Stratton, Smith E. Stevens, and myself, determined we would go on to Dakota, in Humboldt county, that afternoon and evening, and accordingly we started. We had gone but a short distance when Geo. W. Brizee came on after us. We tried as delicately as possible to dissuade him

from attempting to go further that evening, but go he would, and so we pushed on. Night found us on the wide prairie some eight or ten miles southeast of McKnight's Point, and at least eight miles from Dakota.

It became very dark, so that it was difficult to follow the track. Soon Brizee began to complain, declaring he could go no further and would have to take his chances on the prairie. As I had been over the road several times, Stratton and Stevens suggested that they would depend upon me to guide them through; so I kept ahead, looking and feeling out the path. I could hear them encouraging Brizee, while he persistently declared his inability to go a step further. Stevens finally took his blanket and carried it for him, and soon after Stratton was carrying his gun. I now told them that Henry Cramer and Judge Hutchison (subsequently Major Hutchison of the 32d Iowa Infantry) lived about a mile south of our road, and some three miles west of Dakota, and that we would go in there and spend the night. Brizee thought he could pull through that far. At last I thought we had arrived at a point nearly opposite Cramer's, and we left the road and struck across the prairie. We had scarcely started before Brizee began to aver that we were lost; that I, like a fool, was leading them a wild-goose chase, and that we would all have to lie on the prairie. I kept on, however, fixing my course as well as possible, and shouting back to "come on, that we were all right." Finally we were greeted by the barking of a dog, and in a few moments were in Mr. Cramer's house. Then it was Brizee's turn to rejoice. After poor Cramer and his wife had gotten out of bed and made us a bunk on the floor, and Cramer had pulled off Brizee's boots, Brizee began to repeat in various forms the adventures of the evening, emphasizing the persistency and pluck it had required in us to pull through; and the hearty manner in which he commended my skill as a guide, over a trackless prairie, was hardly consistent with his upbraiding whilst we were plodding along in the darkness. The next morning Mrs. Cramer prepared the best breakfast I ever ate. My "mouth waters" today in memory of the biscuits which were

piled up on that breakfast table. I have often thought since that there could have been little left in the house for the family dinner. That evening found us in Fort Dodge, and our connection with the Expedition had ended.

I have frequently thought in later years of the good discipline preserved in a command where there was absolutely no legal power to enforce authority. This fact is really the highest compliment that could be paid the officers. Had they not possessed the characteristics which gained and maintained the respect of these men, no shadow of discipline could have been enforced. On the contrary, during those trying days, on the march and in the bivouac, there was complete order. Of the three captains, two are living—Messrs. C. B. Richards and John F. Duncombe. Their subsequent careers in civil life have been but a fulfillment of the prophecy of the men who followed them through the snow-banks of north-western Iowa in 1857. With Capt. J. C. Johnson I was but little acquainted, but I watched him with interest and with admiration during the few days of our march. He was a man of fine physique, was deliberate, quiet almost to reticence, with a handsome face and manly eye. In short, from what I saw of him, I may say, that the marble and brass, which we have come here today to unveil in commemoration of him and his company's virtues and heroism, are not of a more solid and enduring character than were the noble and generous traits of his nature. His cruel death, and that of his no less noble and promising comrade, Wm. E. Burkholder, was the one circumstance which veiled the results of the Expedition in a lasting sorrow.

The First Lieutenant of Company A, Franklin A. Stratton, was perhaps more fully endowed with all the qualities which constitute a soldier than any other man of the company, or perhaps of the command. He was quiet, prompt, uncomplaining, methodical, and in the line of his duty, exacting. Remembering my comradeship with him on the Spirit Lake Expedition, when he went into the war of the rebellion, I prophesied for him a successful career. He rose

to be the Colonel of his regiment, and died a few years ago a Captain in the regular army.

But time fails me to name all who deserve honorable mention. I cannot close, however, without paying a few words of tribute to Maj. William Williams, who commanded the Expedition. Having been the sutler of the batallion of regulars which was stationed at Fort Dodge, he knew something of the movement and sustenance of troops. He had the ability to make that knowledge available, and on the Expedition illustrated his competency to command. There was a quiet, confident air in his deportment that commanded respect; and he moved those undisciplined men as quietly and as orderly as would have been possible by an experienced soldier. I have never thought that full justice had been done to the man who led this Expedition, and who in many ways proved his interest and faith in the pioneers of northwestern Iowa. So I have turned aside, here and now, to say a tardy word in recognition of his many noble qualities. He was born in Westmoreland county, Pa., December 5, 1796, and died at Fort Dodge, February 26, 1874, and at the date of these events was in the sixty-second year of his age. He was reared a banker, and for years was cashier of the branch of the Exchange Bank of Pittsburg, located at Hollidaysburg. But he had been an open-handed, generous giver; had no innate love of gain; so he lost money instead of making accumulations, and sought the great west to rebuild his broken fortunes. Now he was a man well advanced in years, but true to his impulses, where there was a blow to be struck to protect the weak, he found his place at the front. Though small of stature and not physically strong, during this entire campaign he was seldom seen on horseback. It was not easy for younger men to complain of the hardships of the march, when, day by day, they saw him resolutely pushing forward. I met him, and talked with him many times during the campaign, frequently advised him to favor himself, but he always answered with a twinkle in his eye, that he had none of the infirmities of age! The action of Hamilton county in thus inscribing his name upon an enduring tablet



John F. Duncombe

JOHN F. DUNCOMBE, CAPTAIN CO. B.

is a silent protest against the neglect and oversight of his own county, and of the town which was the idol of his affection. Emerson has said that "They who forget the battles of their country will have to fight them over again." So they who forget the unselfish deeds of their countrymen will themselves be unworthy of a place in history. Next to the hero is the man who can appreciate a hero. All honor, then, to the citizens of a county that in these "piping times of peace," can pause for a day and step out of the busy channel of commerce to gather up some of the names of a generation of self-sacrificing pioneers into history's golden urn.

MR. DUNCOMBE'S ADDRESS.

Hon. John F. Duncombe,* of Fort Dodge, Captain of Co. B, read a paper at this gathering, but re-wrote and read it at the meeting of the Pioneer Law Makers' Association of Iowa at Des Moines, in February, 1898. The language is somewhat different, but he goes over the same ground and sets forth substantially the same facts as in his first paper.

I have been requested to write my recollections of the relief expedition under Major Williams, better known as "The Spirit Lake Expedition of 1857," to be read at your meeting today.

To do this with the care and attention it deserves requires more time than I am able to devote to that important event in the history of Iowa.

I suppose the request is made of me as the only officer of that expedition above a lieutenant, now remaining in this State.

I will give some of my recollections of the event which occurred at the time when the cruel, treacherous Sioux came

*John F. Duncombe was born in Erie county, Pennsylvania, October 22, 1831, and was educated at Allegheny College, Meadville, in that State. He settled in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in 1855, and was the pioneer lawyer of that town. He was for a time editor of *The Fort Dodge Sentinel*, the first journal established in that county. He raised and commanded Co. B in the Spirit Lake Expedition. He has served six sessions in the State Legislature, as representative and senator, and for eighteen years was one of the regents of the State University. Aside from his continuous work as a lawyer he has been a large operator in coal and gypsum. He has made several voyages to Europe. Mr. Duncombe is still (1898) a resident of Fort Dodge.

down from their wild northern homes in Minnesota and Dakota into our beautiful land to harass, insult and murder our peaceable citizens.

This hostile Indian raid originated, as I fully believe, in a desire for revenge on the part of Inkpadutah, the leader of this renegade band of Sioux, and his followers, for murders committed a few years before by a white man named Lot, at a point near the line of Humboldt and Kossuth counties, at the mouth of what is now called Lot's creek.

The Indians came down the Little Sioux river to a place where there were quite a number of settlers, where the prosperous village of Smithland is now located, and there these settlers refused to permit the Indians to go further, and turned them back up the river.

As the Indians came down the river no depredations were committed upon the few scattering settlers. But on their return a change was very soon observed in the savage sullenness of the band. Their insolence and bad temper broke out finally in acts of waste, violence and cruelty.

The settlers were insulted, their provisions taken, their stock shot down, their children abused and their women outraged. This was continued until the band of renegades, half-breeds, robbers and murderers left the head waters of the Little Sioux and arrived at the southerly part of West Okoboji. At this point the cruelty of these savages increased, ending in the utter annihilation of all the settlers at the time on the borders of these lakes, except three men absent at the time from the settlement, and four captive women. Only one of these women now survives, (unless Mrs. Marble is still living, which is not certainly known), Mrs. Abbie Gardner Sharp, author of the "History of the Spirit Lake Massacre," then Miss Abbie Gardner, whose father and mother were murdered at the point where a beautiful monument erected by the State now marks the spot where fell the first victims of this cruel slaughter.

Having tasted blood these fiends continued their murderous work until they were checked and repulsed at what was then called Springfield—now Jackson, Minnesota.

In January, 1857, word was brought to Fort Dodge that a large band of Indians under the lead of Inkpadutah had followed down the Little Sioux river to a point near Smithland, that this band was composed of Sioux, half-breeds and straggling renegades of the Sioux tribe, and that they had become exceedingly insolent and ugly. The next information received at Fort Dodge was in the latter part of February, when Abner Bell, a Mr. Weaver and a Mr. Wilcox came to Fort Dodge and gave Major Williams and myself the startling intelligence of acts and depredations of these scoundrels, said to be about seventy in number, including about thirty warriors.

These three men had left the Little Sioux river and coming through the awful storms and almost impassable snows for sixty miles, without a house or landmark on the way, sought aid from our people. They gave a sad and vivid description of the shooting down of their cattle and horses, of the abuse of their children, the violation of their women and other acts of brutishness and cruelty too savage to be repeated. They pictured in simple but eloquent words the exposures of the dear wife, mother and children, their starving condition and their utter helplessness.

These reports were repeated from day to day by other settlers from the Little Sioux, who from time to time came straggling into Fort Dodge. These repeated accounts of the acts of the Indians led every one familiar with the Indian character to become fully satisfied that they were determined on some great purpose of revenge against the exposed frontier settlements, and this caused much alarm among the people. Among the number giving this information were Ambrose S. Mead, L. F. Finch, G. M. and W. S. Gillett and John A. Kirchner, father of John C. and Jacob Kirchner, who are now citizens of Fort Dodge.

These depredations commenced at the house of Abner Bell, on the 21st day of February, 1857. On the 24th of February, 1857, the house occupied by James Gillett was suddenly entered by ten or more armed warriors, and the two families living under the same roof, consisting of the

heads of each family and five small children, were terrorized and most villianously abused. After enduring outrages there, they managed to escape at midnight, and late the following evening arrived at the residence of Bell, poorly clad, and having been without food for over thirty-six hours. The suffering of these people and their little children will be appreciated by those who remember the driving storms, piercing winds and intense cold of the unparalleled winter of 1856-7, to my knowledge the longest and most severe of any winter for the last forty-three years.

From Gillett's grove, near the present beautiful and prosperous city of Spencer, the Indians proceeded to Spirit Lake and the lakes near by. No preparation could be made for resistance on account of the sparsity of the population and the scattered homes. In fact, it is improbable that any family knew that depredations were being committed by these red devils until they were themselves attacked, and that they were wholly unprepared for any such event.

As soon as the few people in Fort Dodge learned of these depredations and outrages, an effort was made to organize a rescue party to go to the relief of these suffering, starving settlers. The distance was over seventy miles, across an unbroken, treeless, trackless prairie, constantly visited that winter by storms, wholly unknown in Iowa since the State has become dotted with buildings and beautified and protected by thousands of thrifty groves. Much of the distance was covered with snow from eighteen inches to three feet in depth, and in the beds of streams and ravines from ten to fifteen feet deep, all of which cut off any hope that such a party would be successful and would expose the lives of the brave men who volunteered to go to very great peril.

The first attack was made, as before stated, at the Gardner cabin, now occupied by Mrs. Sharp. This was followed by attacks on every cabin then located around this beautiful chain of lakes, now delightful summer resorts well known and highly appreciated by the people of the State.

As before stated these attacks completely annihilated the

settlements in Dickinson county with the exception of the three men before referred to, and the four women who were taken prisoners, two of whom were murdered afterwards by the Indians and two of whom were rescued, Miss Abbie Gardner, then about 14 or 15 years of age, and Mrs. Marble, supposed to be living in California.

Information of the destruction of the settlements around Spirit Lake was brought to Fort Dodge by O. C. Howe, afterwards law professor in our State University, and a companion, R. U. Wheelock, and another gentleman whose name has passed from my memory (I think it was Parmenter), who was absent from the settlement at the time of the massacre. This information was given to the people of Fort Dodge on Saturday night the 21st day of March. On Sunday, the 22d, a public meeting was called in the old brick school house (since torn down) in Fort Dodge, and on Monday, the 23d, two companies were organized in the town—Company A, commanded by Captain C. B. Richards, and Company B, of which I was chosen captain.

Word had been before sent to Webster City and a company commanded by Captain J. C. Johnson was organized there and now joined our companies. Major William Williams, who had been with the United States soldiers at Fort Dodge until 1853, when they were ordered to Fort Ridgely, was unanimously given the command of the three companies.

These three companies were furnished with teams and wagons and with the supposed necessary supply of provisions, clothing and blankets, and with such arms and ammunition as could be furnished at the time, consisting of nearly every kind of gun from double-barrelled shotguns to the finest rifles, and all started from Fort Dodge on the 24th day of March, less than three days after the first news of the massacre had been received.

The Fort Dodge Sentinel, the first newspaper published in the northwest quarter of Iowa, stated that this expedition left Fort Dodge on the 17th of March. This was an error. The editor evidently had enjoyed a long rest after St. Pat-

rick's day and had that day in mind above all others, and thus failed to remember the correct date, which was one week later!

The first day, the companies, after a hard fight with great drifts and enormous snow-banks, made only a distance of six or seven miles and camped close to the timber on the banks of Badger creek. The men rolled themselves in their blankets, covered their heads and lay down on the snow.

When I left Fort Dodge I had a very stiff neck and a badly inflamed ear, which propped my head over to one side at an angle of about forty-five degrees and required careful handling, as the slightest jar caused intense pain. My first night on this expedition will never pass from my memory. It is as vivid now as it was at the time. I, too, slept on a snow-bank and had as my next neighbor one of those horrible snorers who could make a danger signal louder than a locomotive whistle and more musical than a calliope in the procession of a circus.

The following day we shoveled snow, tramped it down for our teams, and when no other plan was possible, fastened a long heavy rope to a wagon and, every man taking hold, hauled the wagon through banks so deep that the snow would pile up in front until it reached the top of the dashboard. After getting our wagons through such a bank we would haul our oxen and horses through places where it was impossible for them to travel.

In this way we reached the point now known as Dakota City, after wading the Des Moines river fifteen or twenty times where there were places to drag our wagons over, as we could not get down to the river at any place where it was sufficiently frozen to carry our heavy loads. We had made about ten miles on this day, by dark.

A few of the men found places to lodge in houses and sheds; others rolled in their blankets, sought the shelter of the groves or lay on the snow as on the preceding night.

This night was planted in my memory so vividly that nothing but death can drive away the recollections. During the night the pain in my ear was excruciating. Before

morning the gathering broke, giving some relief from pain, but causing great inconvenience. The hardships suffered in these two days caused two of the men to be discharged on account of snow-blindness and severely frozen feet, and one or two faint hearts to desert.

The following day the command started for McKnight's Point, a distance of about eighteen miles in a direct line northwesterly from Dakota City. Our course lay over a rather low, flat prairie, which had gathered and retained the great bulk of the accumulation of the earlier winter storms. We were without guide, landmarks or tracks of any kind to direct us. This necessitated having some one go ahead and find the best places for crossing the deep and almost impassable drifts.

This duty was assigned to me and it necessitated double the amount of travel required of the command. During all the forenoon I kept two or three miles in advance of the companies, signaling back from high points the direction to be taken to avoid, so far as possible, the depressions in the ground which were filled with snow, in many places ten or twelve feet in depth. All this distance there was a crust on the snow on which a light man could sometimes walk five or six rods, but a heavier man would break through and go in to his hips, thus making the march exceedingly difficult and tiresome.

At about noon the men stopped a few moments and took a cold lunch, but as I was too far in advance to return, I had no dinner, and from my weakened condition and from lack of sleep the two preceding nights, I became much fatigued. Shortly before dark I was joined by Lieutenant Maxwell of Company C and Private R. U. Wheelock of my own company, who had been engaged a part of the afternoon in the same work as myself.

At dark the companies were together about three or four miles back, and we were about the same distance from a grove of timber at McKnight's Point, on the west fork of the Des Moines river. We held a consultation and concluded it would be as easy to reach this timber as to return to the

command, and immediately started for it. One of our number would go ahead for a few rods and the other two follow in his footsteps, at one time on the crust of the snow and at another time sinking down two or three or more feet into the snow, wedged in by the hard crust which made it almost impossible to extricate ourselves for another plunge. Then another would change with the leader. We continued on in this way until we were about two miles from the grove, when Mr. Wheelock took from his pocket a small vial of medicine, which he said Dr. Olney had given him at Fort Dodge to prevent his taking cold. He took a little himself and asked me to take some, which I did. This medicine proved to be almost entirely composed of that deadly drug, laudanum.

Within two minutes from the time I took this medicine I was seriously affected, on account of the weakened condition of my system from lack of food. I bit my lips until they bled to keep up, supposing that I was becoming exhausted and not thinking of the medicine I had taken, but I was compelled to surrender. I could not stand alone nor take a single step, and would instantly fall asleep unless violently shaken. I urged Lieutenant Maxwell and Mr. Wheelock to leave me and try to save themselves, as they were too much exhausted to have any possible chance of getting me to the timber. The night was cold and we had not even a blanket for protection and I could see no hope for myself. In my dazed condition I distinctly remember thinking that my time had come. But Lieutenant Maxwell and R. U. Wheelock were made of material that would never permit a companion when helpless to cross the dark river alone, and they would consent to nothing of the kind. To their manly, courageous and self-sacrificing spirit I undoubtedly owe my life.

Lieutenant Maxwell started to walk, but too much exhausted he lay down on the crust of that cruel snow and rolled over and over that two miles, to a cabin in the grove, suffering injuries from which he never fully recovered. Wheelock kept himself from freezing by his violent efforts to keep me awake, refusing to leave me for a moment and

faithfully staying by me for hours until help came. At the cabin Maxwell found the old pioneer, Jeremiah Evans, and William Church, and these two men followed back the tracks he had made, to where Wheelock had remained with me, busily engaged in keeping me from that sleep that knows no waking.

By almost superhuman efforts these two brave men dragged me to the cabin, and my faithful protector, Wheelock, walking, falling and plunging along, sometimes lying down and rolling on the crust of the snow, succeeded in making the cabin about the same time, late in the night. I immediately went to sleep, not to awake from the effects of the dose of laudanum I had taken until late the following day, after the command had reached the grove.

Dr. Bissell, the surgeon of the command, examined the contents of the vial, pronounced it almost entirely composed of laudanum and told me that it was a miracle that in my condition it had not killed me, and that my chance of living had not been over one in a thousand, which chance fortunately I was permitted to take.

In the afternoon the men succeeded in making their way over the snow to the Evans cabin. Here they remained until the following morning, having traveled by the most desperate exertions a little more than thirty miles in four days. Here several men became faint-hearted from exhaustion and suffering, to which most of them were unaccustomed, and refused to continue the march.

One brave man whose courage had been tested in the Mexican war and who was the third soldier to enter the Mexican fort when Cherubusco was stormed, declared that it was suicidal to continue the march, that it would result in the destruction of the entire command, and refused to go farther.

But this was not the spirit of the officers and of nearly all of the men. They had started to rescue the survivors of the Spirit Lake settlement, if any were left, to bury the dead, and if possible to overtake the Indians, and nothing but absolute impossibility could induce them to give up their purpose.

From McKnight's Point, the command, led by that brave, intrepid old soldier, Major William Williams, continued on, each day being a repetition of the preceding one, until we reached what was then called the West Bend and beyond that the Irish Colony, located a few miles northwesterly from what is now the flourishing city of Emmetsburg, the growing capital of Palo Alto county. Here we rested for a short time and were joined by several persons living in the settlement and by Hon. C. C. Carpenter and Angus McBane and others who happened to be there on business, but resided at Fort Dodge.

During the march from McKnight's Point, a tar box on one of the wagons was lost by a man named Brizee and found by one who was not blessed by an extra supply of brains.

To divert the minds of those who were suffering from the severe exposure of the march, it was determined that Brizee should be tried for losing the tar box. A court martial was organized, witnesses examined and a formal finding was had and verdict rendered holding Brizee guilty, and sentence was pronounced against him that he be shot, and the man with but few brains was selected as the executioner.

He took the proceedings in dead earnest and undoubtedly would have carried out the sentence, only he was informed that he must wait until he received his orders, and until the time was set for the solemn execution. The result was that Brizee was in great terror, fearing that his executioner would carry out the sentence without further notice or order. Finally, however, Brizee was pardoned and released from the peril which he considered so imminent.

After the command moved on from the Irish Colony signs of Indians were found around the lakes in that neighborhood. A few cattle had been shot, and what appeared like moccasin tracks were seen and every little grove was searched.

It was considered quite likely that the savages, after killing the people at Spirit Lake, would cross over to the Des Moines river and kill the few settlers there. I have always believed that some of the band did this, for unless such

was the case it would be very difficult to account for the signs of the Indian depredations that we found east of the west fork of the river, around the lakes.

Near the lakes we saw in the distance some objects which seemed to be moving and were supposed to be Indians. A detail was sent ahead to investigate, and a nearer view revealed an ox-team and a sled.

This showed plainly the presence of white people. As we approached we found that they had mistaken us for Indians. They had put themselves in an attitude of defense, evidently intending to sell their lives as dearly as possible and determined never to fall into the hands of the savages alive. When they found us friends, the joy of these people, about seventeen or eighteen in number, can be better imagined than described. They were trying to escape from the town of Springfield, in Minnesota, where the Indians had been repulsed, but at the cost of one killed and several wounded.

The leader of this band was a Mr. Thomas whose son had been killed at the door of his own cabin, and whose arm was broken by a rifle ball and amputated on his arrival at Fort Dodge. Mrs. Church, whose husband had found us at McKnight's Point, a woman of fine presence and who, in the Thomas cabin, had used a rifle with as unerring aim as the best rifle shot in that company; a sister of hers, Miss Swanger, who had been severely wounded in the fight; a Mr. Garver, who had also been severely wounded; two boys whose relatives had all been killed in that fight, except the father of one of the boys, and others whom I cannot now call to mind, were with the company.

While we were at the lakes and after supplying these refugees with food, the appetites of our men, on account of the cold and severe labor, had nearly exhausted the amount of food supplied for the march, and we were reduced to half rations. Much of the time, however, we were supplied with raw meat, some of it beavers' meat, which was cooked by our night fires, each one furnishing a stick, fastening to it a piece of meat and holding it over the coals until ready for supper. When there was no stick handy a ramrod answered the purpose.

For the last few days of the march we were constantly in expectation of meeting Indians, of whom every settler gave such information as best suited his fancy. This constant watchfulness which required the stationing of guards at night, permitted but few hours of good, sound, restful sleep during the entire march. The labors of the men were of the most severe character. They were almost constantly shoveling snow and dragging our teams and wagons by ropes through the deep banks, traveling with sore, wet and swollen feet; to add to the difficulty several became snow-blind.

The men, however, showed themselves worthy of all praise, for they endured their sufferings without a murmur.

No trained veterans, thoroughly equipped and armed, ever did duty more willingly, more cheerfully or more faithfully.

Few of the men were accustomed to such hardships. None of them were fully prepared for what they had to endure, but not a man shirked his duty.

After meeting the refugees from Springfield, who would have perished but for our timely aid, all believed the Indians would follow them. This necessitated double diligence and vigilance. All were constantly on the watch after we left Mud lakes. In order not to be taken by surprise a body of scouts was dispatched ahead of the main company to carefully examine the timber bordering on the lakes, and report any further signs of Indians that might be discovered.

The scouts were given strict orders by our commander not to fire a gun unless they saw Indians, and this was to be the signal for the main body to hasten to their relief. The scouts had gone three or four miles ahead and had just passed through a grove of timber bordering on one of the lakes. At the same time I was on horseback about half way between the command and the scouts, looking out a safe place to cross some creeks and ravines.

Suddenly I heard the crack of a dozen or more rifles (at least, it sounded to me as many) and saw two persons running out of the timber about two miles beyond. I was well armed and as I knew the orders given the scouts not to fire

unless Indians were discovered, I supposed the men I saw were Indians driven from the timber by the scouts whom I had seen enter the grove. After carefully examining the caps on my double-barreled gun and revolver, I started my horse on a full run, where he was not prevented by snow-banks, hoping to head off the supposed Indians. When near enough to see plainer, I found that the men were two of our own scouts, and learned that in passing through the grove the old hunters had suddenly come upon a number of beavers lying on the ice sunning themselves. The temptation to these old hunters was too great for them to resist and forgetting their orders and their duty they fired at the beavers. The two men I had seen running from the timber were chasing beavers.

Immediately upon finding out the facts and knowing the men would be anxious to learn the cause of the firing, I started back and found everybody preparing for a fight.

Major Williams gave me a severe reprimand for needlessly exposing my life. If this reprimand could have been taken by a phonograph, and the picture of the scene with a kodak, it would have been more amusing than I thought it was at the time. Some things he said to me seemed comical. He was at the boiling point with rage, and those who ever knew him will understand what that implies. I remember, after saying a few severe things to me in a loud, angry tone of voice, he demanded, "Did you expect to whip all the damned Indians yourself?" I received my reprimand in silence and two years after took my revenge by marrying his daughter.

From this point no particular incident occurred worth relating until we reached Granger's cabin, near the Minnesota line, several miles above Estherville, where our reception was very chilly. When the scouts returned to the command Major Williams gave them, in his forcible style and emphatic language, his ideas of the duty of a soldier and their disgraceful conduct and the great outrage they had perpetrated in violating his commands.

At the Granger cabin a soldier from Fort Ridgely met

us and reported what the soldiers from that point had done, and gave us what information he had relating to the Indians and the direction they had taken. He said that after their repulse at Springfield, they had hastily fled and were then probably a hundred miles northwest of the place where we were encamped for the night.

The officers then held a council and all concluded the Indians had such a start that we could not overtake them, and by this time the sun had melted the snow to such an extent that the streams were rising rapidly and in many places were almost impassable.

It was then decided to send a detail to bury the dead and find whether any were yet alive around the lakes. Volunteers were called for, and Captain Johnson of Company C, and many others, more than could go, volunteered. The names of this party, about twenty in all, have been preserved and it will be unnecessary for me to repeat them. Captain Johnson was placed in command by Major Williams, and we parted with these brave men expecting to meet them on our return to the Irish Colony.

The balance of the command then started on the return march. The fast melting snow had raised the streams and in places they were almost impassable. After a hard, toilsome march we finally reached the Irish Colony, expecting to meet our men who had been sent to bury the dead. Captain Johnson never returned. William Burkholder never returned. The night before our arrival it turned cold and there was quite a blizzard. Captain Johnson and his detachment, as soon as they had buried the dead, started to cross from the lakes to our place of meeting. They became bewildered and disagreed as to the proper course to take, remaining all night with their frozen clothing and wet feet on the open prairie without shelter or food. In the morning those who had taken off their wet boots were unable to get them on. They separated into squads, each party taking the course that it considered right, and during the day most of them reached the place of meeting. Captain Johnson and William Burkholder, two as noble men as ever lived, were

frozen to death, and though for weeks a search was made, their bones were not found until years after, when they were identified by the rifle which Burkholder carried and had with him when he died. Many of those who came in were actually crazy, so that they did not recognize their companions for some time after. It has always been a mystery to me that any of the detachment survived that terrible night. On the open prairie, in the neighborhood of the lakes, the storm was the worst that we had experienced up to that time and one of the worst ever known in Iowa. The hardships which these brave men experienced and endured on the march undoubtedly accustomed them to greater hardships and increased their powers of endurance, or not one would have been left to tell the tale of their sufferings. At the Irish Colony, as we had but little food, we tried to purchase a steer to be killed to aid our commissary, George B. Sherman. The people refused to sell without the cash and we were compelled to take the animal by force.

We then started down the Des Moines river, keeping on the hills to avoid the water, which by this time covered the bottom lands. About two hours before dark we arrived at Cylinder creek, which we found had risen so rapidly that it covered the flat land for nearly half a mile in width, for a depth of from two to four feet, while the main channel of the stream was fifty or sixty feet wide and very deep.

Captain Richards and myself concluded to rig up a boat from a new wagon box, which we caulked with the cotton from a bed-quilt, and taking Guernsey Smith from my company and Mr. Mason from his, we started across, hoping in this way to be able to get the remainder over. The wind, however, rose suddenly from the northwest and blew so hard that although we baled constantly we barely reached the other shore before our boat was swamped and sunk, all getting more or less wet.

Captain Richards, Smith and myself tried to reach the men on the other side by calling to them, but failed. We were exhausted and knew unless we could reach the cabin about three miles away the chances for the night would be

poor indeed, as all our blankets were left with the men. As we could accomplish nothing more we started as rapidly as we could go, with our wet feet, frozen boots and clothing, for the Shippey cabin, which we reached after dark. We secured a little bread, bacon and coffee and then sat around the fire drying our clothing, looking out of the door to see if there was any change for the better in the awful storm and wondering how it would be possible for the men to live through the night. This was one of the longest nights I ever experienced. It seemed like a month to me.

As soon as we could see we started back to the point where we had left the men. Captain Richards and myself reached the place through the blinding storm with the mercury away below zero and the wind blowing at a fifty mile rate, but the other men did not.

When we reached Cylinder creek we could see that the men were all hidden from sight by the blankets and canvas coverings of the wagons and we were in great fear that all were frozen to death as there was not the least sign of life. We remained as long as we could stand it and then returned to Shippey's cabin. About three o'clock we again faced the storm and reached the place a second time opposite our men. Captain Richards and myself had brought a rope with us when we crossed over, and on our first trip had made great exertions to reach the men. We renewed our efforts at this time. I tied the rope around my body, Captain Richards taking the other end, and finding two boards of the wagon-box, put them on the ice, and by moving one and then the other ahead of me while lying flat down tried to cross the stream, but on account of my weight constantly breaking the thin ice over the rapid portion of the stream, I found it impossible. Then Captain Richards, who was lighter than myself, tried the same experiment, I holding the end of the rope, but with no better success.

At this time, however, I saw and talked with two of the men, who informed me that all were safe. With great coolness and presence of mind the men piled up as close together as they could lie, covered themselves all over with the blank-

ets, scarcely a person moving from Saturday evening until Monday morning, when the ice had frozen over so solidly that the loaded wagons and horses as well as the men crossed over in perfect safety.

That was the most remarkable freeze and the worst storm I have ever seen in April in the forty-three winters I have lived in Iowa. It lasted from the fourth until the morning of the sixth.

Owing to the lack of food the men at this point separated somewhat, going in squads with a view to securing sufficient supplies to last them until they should reach home.

Thomas Calligan, a powerful, big-hearted Irishman of my company, whenever we reached a stream, would throw me on his shoulders as easily as if I had been a child, and carry me over in spite of my protests against his doing so.

When the storm came to Cylinder creek, Major Williams rode back on a wagon to the Irish Colony to look after the men of the detail sent to Spirit Lake to bury the dead who had not yet arrived. He and the remainder of the company arrived at Fort Dodge on the 10th or 11th of April. All of those we had rescued arrived safely in as good form as could have been hoped for in their destitute and wounded condition.

All of the command finally arrived safely except Captain Johnson and Wm. Burkholder, who perished in the awful storm not far from the Irish Colony, on the west side of the west fork of the Des Moines river. Some of the party, however, received injuries from the exposure on the march from which they never recovered.

I have doubts whether any body of men for the same length of time, on any march, ever suffered greater hardships, more constant exposure, more severe bodily labor, than these who composed the Spirit Lake Expedition.

Many accounts of this Expedition have been published, written by different persons who belonged to this command, by Major Williams, Captain Richards, Lieutenant Maxwell, ex-Governor Carpenter, Frank R. Mason, Michael Sweeney, Harry Hoover and others, but while these several accounts

differ in some slight particulars, they do not with two or three exceptions, give in detail the incidents of this entire march, and I have tried to put in form for a part of the history of Iowa, the most important events. My recollection has been aided by a former account written by me and by such memoranda as I have before me.

Forty-one years have passed since the events herein recited took place, but my memory of them is as distinct, on nearly every point, as it was the year after they occurred.

After a residence at Fort Dodge of about forty-three years, during which time I was constantly associated with pioneers, men who had gone hundreds of miles beyond railroads, friends, relatives and home, I say without fear of contradiction, that these men and their wives have made Iowa what it is today and deserve the grateful remembrance of all her people, deserve to be honored and loved by those who now enjoy the rich rewards of their labors.

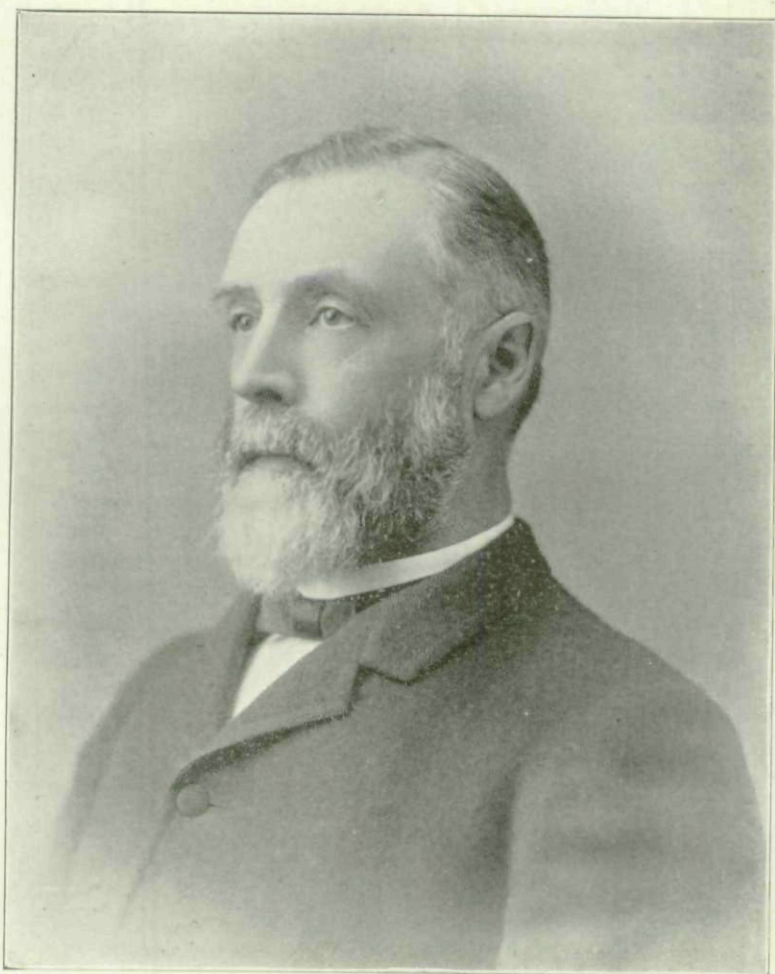
I never meet one of these old pioneers, I never think of one of them, without my heart warming with genuine affection and kindly regard for them and for their welfare.

Many of those who marched with us on this Expedition have crossed the silent river; many are still on this side of that river, near its shore; but so long as the people of Iowa admire pluck and true courage; so long as Americans are freemen, the story of the Spirit Lake Expedition will be told with pride by every true man of our State and by all who are familiar with her history.

THE ADDRESS OF CAPT. CHARLES B. RICHARDS.*

You have met today to formally unveil this beautiful Memorial Tablet, which is to commemorate for all time the heroic part taken by the citizens of your county in one of the

*Charles B. Richards was born at Warrensburg, Warren county, New York, August



*I Am Very Truly Yours
Chas. B. Richards*

CHARLES B. RICHARDS, CAPTAIN OF CO. A.

most remarkable marches, through untrodden snows and over and across treeless and trackless prairies, in the midst of one of the coldest and most inhospitable winters ever known in this latitude, with only such arms and ammunition as each man happened to own or could borrow from some neighbor, without tents, adequate transportation or commissary supplies. And first let me compliment the authorities of your county who have given the first public recognition of the bravery, heroism, pluck and endurance which the men whose names are inscribed on this enduring brass have ever received. Costly monuments of marble and granite have been reared in many places for far less noble and self-sacrificing public services.

In the latter part of March, 1857, the then frontier town of Fort Dodge was aroused by the arrival of Orlando C. Howe and R. U. Wheelock, two of the pioneer settlers at Spirit Lake, on the extreme northern border of the State and nearly one hundred miles distant, who had just returned from a trip to their claims at the Lakes, and who related what they had there seen. A meeting of the citizens was at once called at the school-house, at which Maj. William Williams was chairman and myself secretary. Messrs. Howe and Wheelock stated that on arriving at the Lakes, near dark three nights before, they had found the houses all deserted, the dead and mutilated bodies of entire families, men, women and children lying around, the cattle killed in the stables; in fact, that the Indians had killed, destroyed, or taken captive every living thing in the settlement, and that the probability was that having accomplished so much here, they would follow up the Des Moines river and destroy the settlements known to exist there.

13, 1833. He was educated at the Kinderhook and Glen Falls Academy and the Polytechnic Institute, Troy, New York. He studied law with Hon. Joshua Spencer of Utica, where he was admitted to the bar. He came to Iowa in 1855, locating at Fort Dodge. He was elected Captain of Co. B in the organization of the Spirit Lake Expedition. For some years afterward he practiced law in Fort Dodge, also holding the position of register of the U. S. Land Office at that place from 1861 to 1869. He was one of the founders of the First National Bank of Fort Dodge, and also became a large coal operator. He was subsequently very fortunate in mining operations in the Rocky Mountains, and removed to San Diego, California, where he resided at the time this publication was going through the press.

As soon as the facts were known, it was resolved to call for volunteers to go to the relief of the exposed settlements. Nearly one hundred men enrolled their names and signified their readiness to march. It was here determined to organize the force into two companies. This was done and the officers elected by the companies. It was also resolved to send a messenger to Webster City, Homer and Border Plains, for assistance.*

The next day was spent in getting together such arms, ammunition and clothing, blankets and commissary supplies as could be obtained near the end of a severe winter in a frontier town one hundred and fifty miles from any source of supply. Two teams were engaged to haul the bedding, camp equipage and provisions—one for each company—and everything made ready to start. The next day, in the evening, the men whose names are engraved on this beautiful Tablet arrived from Webster City and were organized as a separate company, known as Company C. The three companies were under command of Maj. William Williams. All the preparation which our limited means and resources would permit having been made, we set out on our march.

The next morning, the snow being nearly three feet deep, and no track, it was very hard work for the men who were put ahead to break the road. After six hours marching we arrived at Badger creek, six miles from Fort Dodge, and went into camp near some hay stacks, cooking our first meal. But little sleep was obtained by any one, not having learned to lie close together and make the most of our blankets. All were up and breakfast cooked and eaten soon after daylight, and ready to resume the march. The day was bright and warm, making the snow soft and wet. Many of the men suffered from snow-blindness, and the exposed skin of hands or face was burned so as to be very sore; but by hard marching and assisting the teams by means of a long rope, with twenty to thirty men on each rope, we managed to reach

*The roster of the Expedition is omitted here, but may be found on page 71, Vol. II of THE ANNALS. Daniel Okeson, Co. A, and John O'Laughlin, Co. B, were discharged on the third day out for disabilities arising from hardship and exposure.

Dakota near night and went into camp. We had now been out two days, and to some the romance had worn off. Some, by walking all day in the wet snow, had made their feet so sore that they were unable to continue the march, and some were nearly blind from the effect of the bright sun on the snow. Those who were suffering from either cause were discharged. . . . The third day was bright and warm and our way lay across the prairie in the direction of McKnight's Point. Traveling as we were, nearly parallel with the west branch of the Des Moines river, we were frequently crossing the heads of small streams and ravines, all of which were level full with the drifted snow. When one of these was reached all of the men were put in line to tramp a road across, if the depression was not too deep; after going over this several times until the snow was well packed the teams by the help of the men could cross. But we found several places where the ravine was full of snow from fifteen to twenty feet deep, and on these no amount of tramping that we could do would make a road that would bear the teams and wagons, and our only way was to tramp the road as well as we could, separate the horses and lead them over, then carry the loads across, and by fastening our long ropes to the empty wagons, drag them through. The snow frequently gathered so deep and hard in front of the wagons that we had to shovel it out, and then with the teams and men and long ropes drag them across, load up and go on until we found another similar obstruction. Early in the afternoon it became apparent that we would not be able to reach the timber at McKnight's Point. Capt. Duncombe, Lieut. Maxwell and R. U. Wheelock were sent ahead to look out a road, and if possible get to timber and water. These succeeded in reaching the Point late in the evening, being assisted by some settlers, who having guns came to their assistance and made beacon fires to guide any that might still be out. The main body, tired out with the hard day's work and wet and hungry, went into camp when it became so dark that it was impossible to keep their direction, on a ridge where the snow had blown off. Here on the frozen ground, with such rations as we had, we

spent the night with no camp fires and no water, except from the melted snow. As soon as daylight appeared we started and reached Evans' claim soon after noon, where we went into camp, having made six miles. Here we found Capt. Duncombe and others who had arrived the previous night, the Captain suffering much from neuralgia and from an overdose of medicine, taken when exhausted, before getting in the previous night, and which proved to be mostly laudanum. It was determined to go no further that day but to give the men a rest and cook up sufficient provisions to last the next day. Here several men turned back being unable to endure the hardships of the march. The next morning the command started early and by hard and constant work reached Shippey's at dark. At McCormick's, a mile below Shippey's, we found Angus McBane, Cyrus C. Carpenter, William P. Pollock and Andrew Hood, who joined Co. A, and went on with us from that point. We also found at Shippey's a part of a load of flour which A. M. Luce had left some weeks before, having got thus far when the deep snow had rendered it impossible to proceed with his load. He had taken what he could haul on a hand sled and gone on to his family at the Lakes. With this we replenished our meager supplies and the next day reached the Irish Colony in Palo Alto county, where we were able to get some hay for a bed and sleep under the cattle sheds. Our teams being nearly worn out we got an ox-team here to help us along (starting out in the morning, first having sent on an advance guard—as nothing had been heard from the settlements above—it was feared the Indians had destroyed them and would follow down the river) and reached Mud Lakes at night. About noon the advance saw on the prairie in the distance, a number of persons moving slowly, stopping and consulting, evidently having discovered us. Each party at first feared the other was Indians. But our men soon discovered that there were white women and children and an ox-team in the party and at once suspected they were settlers and went to them and found they were the sole survivors of the settlement at Springfield, Minnesota. This was a small settlement on the Des Moines,

a few miles north of the State line, which had been attacked by the same band of Indians who had destroyed the colony at the Lakes a few days before, and all but this party who had escaped in the night had been murdered. They were a very dilapidated looking company. First was an ox-team carrying Mr. Thomas and Miss Swanger, both wounded in the fight at Springfield, driven by the only able bodied man in the party. This was followed by the women and children, wet, hungry, cold and nearly exhausted, having been for two nights and nearly two days on the open prairie without fire and with no food, except a little raw corn. I doubt very much if all or any of them had lived to reach the Colony alive but for this accidental meeting. The men at once divided the cooked rations with the sufferers, the surgeon, Dr. C. A. Bissell, doing all in his power to alleviate the sufferings of the wounded. On consultation it was determined to go to the nearest timber, some two miles distant, and camp for the night. The men built good fires, improvised a tent from blankets, and made them as comfortable as possible. The surgeon dressed the wounds and the party obtained some much needed rest. Not knowing but that the Indians might be in the vicinity, guards were placed in all directions around the camp, and the night being very dark and the men nearly worn out, they were changed hourly, so that, with keeping up a supply of wood for the fires, but little rest was obtained by the men. In the morning we sent the rescued party back under the charge of the surgeon to the Irish Colony and resumed our march, hoping to overtake the Indians at Springfield, having learned from Mrs. Church, one of the party, that the Wood Bros. store contained many things that would detain the Indians, and that probably they would find whiskey enough to keep them drunk for several days.

There was no incident to break the monotony of the march, and on the evening of the next day we arrived at Granger's Point near the State line, where we found one of the Grangers and a boy occupying a small cabin. They treated us with indifference, in fact, we could get little in-

formation from them and no assistance. They said they had no food and locked up the cabin, showing the most inhospitable spirit of any pioneers it has ever been my fortune to meet. We did learn from them that the government troops from Fort Ridgely had been down to Springfield two days before, and had sent a detachment over to the Lakes, but that it had only been to one place on Spirit Lake where they found one body which they buried, and then returned to the Fort on account of the rough weather, bad roads and short supply of rations. From this we determined that pursuit of the Indians would be useless, even had it been possible, but we had subsisted for two days on "slap jacks" made from flour and water, with neither salt nor anything to make them light, with hardly enough bacon to grease the pan in which they were fried. We managed to spend a very uncomfortable night. It took till very late to cook enough "slap jacks" to go around, and many of the men preferred to lie down and rest rather than to cook them; but knowing the necessity of eating, I insisted on all my company taking their coffee and "slap jacks," and I cooked far into the night until all had been supplied.

A consultation of the officers was held during the night, and it was determined to send six or eight men from each company (if they would volunteer) with all the provisions we could spare, to the Lakes to make a thorough examination and bury the dead. In the morning the command was drawn up and volunteers called for that purpose. Capt. J. C. Johnson of Co. C, who lost his life on this trip, and myself, with Lieut. Maxwell of Co. C, and privates Henry Carse, Wm. E. Burkholder, Wm. Ford, H. E. Dalley, O. C. Howe, Geo. P. Smith, O. S. Spencer, C. Stebbins, S. Vancleave, R. U. Wheelock, R. A. Smith and B. F. Parmenter of Co. A; Jesse Addington, R. McCormick, J. M. Thatcher, W. R. Wilson, Jonas Murray and A. Burch of Co. B; with Wm. K. Laughlin and E. D. Kellogg of Co. C, volunteered for this trip and constituted the Spirit Lake detachment. Having cooked a couple of days' rations and selected such bedding and clothing as could be carried by each man, as-

sisted by my Indian pony, we were ready to start by nine in the morning, the main body having started on the return trip an hour before.

On coming to the river we found a channel open in the middle and the water very high. By getting a log across, the men were able to get over, but after spending nearly an hour it was found impossible to get the pony across, and as time was important I turned over the command to Capt. Johnson, divided the load on the pony among the men, gave to Wm. E. Burkholder of my company and one of my intimate personal friends—who, with Lieut. Stratton, had shared the same blankets with me since starting—my rations and a veil to protect his face and eyes, and a small shawl, and bade him good-bye, little thinking it would be forever.

Wm. E. Burkholder was a young man of rare promise; educated, brave, generous, unselfish. He volunteered for this Expedition knowing that it would be at great personal sacrifice, having been nominated by the Republicans of his county as their candidate for treasurer and recorder,* and knowing that his absence during the election might, and probably would, result in his defeat; but he never gave it a regretful thought. His patriotism and his manhood called him, and he went to lay down his young life that he might protect his fellow-citizens and their frontier homes from the merciless savage.

Being unable to get the pony across the river, and the entire command having been some two hours on the return march, there was no one to take the pony back and I was obliged to follow on and overtake the main body before night, which I did before they left the mid-day camp.

We camped for the night at a small trapper's cabin at Mud Lakes, where the men found the frozen carcasses of some beavers, which they tried to cook to piece out their scanty rations. The excitement and hope of accomplishing some good having ceased, all were anxious to get where they

*At that time the functions of treasurer and recorder were discharged by one officer. Afterwards the two offices of county treasurer and county recorder were created and the work divided between them.

could find food and rest. Many were foot-sore, and several had entirely worn out their boots, and all were nearly used up by the constant exposure, poor food and hard marching through the melting snow and water.

I shall always remember the night we spent at this place. George W. Brizee, a young lawyer and member of my company, had been suffering from toothache, and had thrown away his heavy boots, having left them too near the camp-fire when wet, which shrunk them so that they were useless. He had put on the only ones he had left, a light pair, and marching all day in the melting snow and water had made his feet so sore that he could only relieve them by cutting holes in many places in the boots. Several of our company built a fire in one corner of the trapper's cabin and spread our blankets on the dirt floor to sleep; but poor Brizee could not get his boots off, and feared if he cut them so that he could remove them, he would have nothing to keep his feet from the ground. As the pain in his feet was relieved, his tooth reminded him that it needed his attention; and after lying down and trying to sleep, frequently reiterating that he knew he should die, he got up and went out and returned with a hind-quarter of beaver and began to roast it over the coals; and in a half-reclining position he spent the entire night roasting and trying to eat the tough, leathery meat, first consigning his feet to a warmer climate, and then as his toothache for a time attracted most of his attention, giving us a lecture on dentistry; when his tooth was relieved for a short time he would, with both hands holding on to the partially roasted quarter of beaver, get hold with his teeth and try to tear off a piece! The picture by the weird light of the fire was a striking one and left a lasting impression on my mind.

While the rapid melting of the snow made it much easier for both men and teams most of the way, the waterways and creeks were rendered nearly impassable and so much time was consumed in crossing that we could only make about the same distance per day as when the snow was deepest. I remember that on leaving Mud Lakes we got along rapidly

until we came to Prairie Creek, at the point where we had crossed on our way up. The tramping and shoveling had caused the water to settle so as to be impassable for either men or teams. Attempts to cross above or below proved on trial impracticable, and it was necessary to tramp a path and then put down a board from the wagon-box and get over the main creek, the snow being very hollow and the water under many feet deep. In this way the men were able to cross and carry all the luggage. The long ropes were then taken over, one end having been fastened to the wagon, and all hands starting on a run dragged the wagon through. We then fastened the rope to the yoke of oxen and they were dragged through. The rope was next fastened to the end of the halter on my pony, and pushing him in, the men started on a run. The pony disappeared under the slush and water and for twenty feet did not come to the surface, but striking the bank he came out at last shaking his head and snorting, much to the amusement of all parties.

The Irish Colony was reached in the evening. Here the officers were called together to consult as to ways and means to get food to keep the men together until we could reach Fort Dodge. The settlers at the Colony were on short rations and could spare nothing. We decided to buy a steer and kill for the party, but we had no money and the owner refused to sell without pay. We offered to give the personal obligation of all the officers, and assured him the State would pay a good price; but this was not satisfactory. We therefore decided to take one *vi et armis*, and detailed several men to kill and dress the steer. They were met by men, women and children, armed with pitchforks to resist the sacrifice, and not being able to convince them either of the necessity of the case or that they would get pay for the steer, I ordered Lieut. Stratton and a squad of men with loaded guns to go and take the steer; when, seeing we were determined, and that farther resistance would be useless, the hostile party retired. The animal was soon dressed and distributed to the men, and for the first time in ten days they had a full meal.

Here we had hoped the detachment sent to the Lakes might overtake us, but as they did not come we left what meat had not been used for the men, and resumed our march. The day was warm until about noon when a cold rain began, making it dreary and dismal. We found several small creeks and all the ravines full of water, but crossed all without much detention until we arrived at Cylinder Creek about twelve or fifteen miles from the Colony and two from Shippey's, where we expected to camp for the night. This point we reached about 3 p. m. when we found the bottom on the west side one vast sheet of water fully half a mile wide. We had become accustomed to overcoming obstructions and at once sent two men with poles to wade out as far as possible and ascertain the depth of the water. Their report was that the men could wade for nearly half a mile in water from two to five feet deep, when they would reach the channel proper of the creek which was from sixty to eighty feet wide and very deep, with a swift current. We determined to make a boat from our wagon-box by calking the cracks with cotton taken from our comforters and with this (first stretching a rope across the deep water) we could wade the men out to that point and run them across in the wagon-box. Capt. Duncombe selected Guernsey Smith a man of great strength and endurance, and I selected Solon Mason from my company, a man of equal strength and courage. They waded one on each side of the improvised boat, while Capt. Duncombe and myself bailed the water which found its way in nearly as fast as we could dip it out. When we arrived at the bank of the creek proper, within some eighty or one hundred feet of the farther shore, we took Smith and Mason in. We stationed two men, who had waded out for that purpose, near the bank where they found a place with not more than three and a half to four feet of water, to hold one end of our long pole while we pushed across uncoiling the rope as we went. When we struck the swift current we were carried rapidly down stream, but by all using our poles we managed to get across. As we struck the farther shore where the bank was steep and a lot of ice piled up, our boat shut up like a jack-

knife, there being no braces at the corners. Every man jumped for shore and by getting hold of some willows all got out, Mason losing his overcoat and hat, and all getting wet. When the boat which went under in the collapse came up, it was only separate boards floating down the rapid stream, and the rope was gone. The men who had come out to hold one end could not stand the cold water longer and had waded back to the main body. We had hoped to stretch this rope across the deep water and ferry over the men.

About this time the wind suddenly changed to the north-west and was blowing fiercely and very cold, so that our wet clothes began to freeze and stiffen. Capt. Duncombe and myself at once concluded to send Smith and Mason to Shippey's for an ox-team and a load of poles with which to construct a raft on which to cross the men, in the meantime going up and down the banks of the creek to see if there were any better place to cross. By the time they returned the wind was blowing a gale and the air full of snow and the cold becoming intense. Mr. Mason was without overcoat or hat, only a handkerchief around his head. The Shippey boys at once loaded a wagon with poles and with these, on their arrival, we tried to construct a raft, but in the face of that blizzard, for such it had now become, we could do nothing. By this time it had grown so dark that nothing could be seen of the other shore, neither, on account of the noise of the wind, could we get any reply to our frequent calls. We were utterly incapable of further exertion. The howling wind and drifting snow was fast obliterating the track. We consulted together and determined that it was as utterly impossible for us to render any assistance to our men as it would have been had they been in mid-ocean, and that our only safety lay in getting to Shippey's before the darkness and drifting snow made it impossible. It was a terrible walk with our frozen clothes and it was nine o'clock in the evening when we reached the cabin. Here we passed a night which no lapse of time will ever obliterate from my memory, so small was the cabin and so cold, and we had only our wet clothes. We warmed ourselves by the open fire, had some bacon and

bread and a cup of coffee—the best thing to revive exhausted nature I have ever found. We had no blankets but borrowed what the Shippeys could spare from their scanty store and spent the night, some trying to sleep, some drying their clothes by turning first one side to the fire, then the other, all anxious, and making frequent visits to the door hoping the storm would abate, but each time only to find the wind and cold increasing. I well remember finding an old black pipe and some strong plug tobacco which under the excitement and anxiety I smoked every time I was up—which was most of the time—without feeling any effects from it. At any other time it would have made me sick in two minutes. I remember that it seemed as if the light of day would never come. The image of each man in the command out in this terrible night, with neither food, fire nor even the protection of a tent, was constantly before me. And what they would do to save themselves was ever in my thoughts; but I had great faith in their ability and judgment. I had seen them for the last twelve days tried as few men ever are, with no shrinking and no fear, and full of expedients to meet every demand on their courage, bravery and endurance, and believed they would be equal to this trying occasion; but still I had fears. So terrible was the wind and cold and so penetrating the drifting snow that the terrible thought would come that we might find them huddled together in one frozen mass—or realizing that they could not live where they were, they would try to get back to the Irish Colony and that we would find them scattered on the prairie, each where exhausted nature had succumbed to the fierce wind, the biting cold and blinding snow. It was a terrible dream I had while wide awake and with every faculty acute and strained to the highest tension, and thus we passed the night. But then came as a relief the thought that Carpenter, Stratton, Stevens, and others, were fully capable of saving the party by their coolness, experience and good judgment.

With early dawn Capt. Duncombe, Smith, Mason and myself started for the creek, the blizzard at its height, if not increasing. Mason had borrowed an old coat, but his under-

clothes had not become entirely dry during the night and the cold, penetrating wind soon found its way to his very bones, and so chilled him that he shook as if with the ague. He seemed completely dazed and wanted to lie down. I saw it was impossible for him to go on, and with difficulty got him back to the cabin. Leaving him, I went on and overtook the others before they arrived at the creek. It was a hard tramp, right in the face of the blizzard and with the drifts many feet deep, and the snow perfectly blinding.

On reaching the creek we were unable to see across, or much more than across the channel. The ice had formed and would bear us near the shore, but it was very thin farther out and would not bear our weight. We wandered up and down the creek hoping to find a place where we could cross, but in vain. We did find two of the boards from the wagon-box we had used as a boat the previous night. With these, one lying flat on the center of the board, the other holding the end of a rope fastened about him, we tried for an hour to cross the thin ice, but the wind was against us and we were so cold and benumbed that it was impossible, and we were obliged in order to prevent freezing to return to Shippey's. I froze my cheeks so that the scar still remains while lying on a board trying to make my way across.

We spent the time till afternoon watching the weather, and the thermometer which marked 28° below zero that morning, and in drying our clothes preparatory to making another effort to reach our men towards night, when we thought the ice would be thick enough to bear our weight. We made the trip again about 3 p. m. and worked until dark with no better success, and wended our way back to Shippey's, all hope of ever finding the party alive having nearly departed, as the storm if anything had been constantly increasing all day, and the mercury showed that it was getting colder. But soon after we had returned Sergeant Harris Hoover and two of the men came in. They had traveled several miles up the creek and had found a place where they crossed, but not without breaking through the ice and getting wet. From them we learned that the men were all living,

and having improvised a windbreak by stretching a wagon-sheet and blankets over the wheels of the wagon had crawled in so close together that the animal heat had kept them alive, although suffering much from hunger and their cramped position. This news was like a stimulant to us, and we ate our bacon and bread with a relish, and obtained some much needed sleep during the night, although still anxious for our Spirit Lake detachment, but believing they must have arrived at the Colony before the storm. We had many fears for our teamster, Mr. Dawson, an old man then seventy years of age, who from the start had never spared himself or flinched from his severe duties, and for Maj. Williams, then 60 years of age. When there was no probability of crossing Cylinder Creek on Saturday night, they started back in the face of the storm, with one team, for the Colony, on the skeleton of the wagon, we having used the box as a boat.

At early dawn Monday morning (34° below zero) we went to the creek and saw the men on the other side getting ready to cross. We found the ice even over the current strong enough to bear a team and our loaded wagon, which we assisted across. I found my pony alive, though he had been exposed to the storm, with nothing to break the wind and no food or water for two days and nights. The men all reached Shippey's by 8 o'clock, and there had the first food they had eaten since Saturday noon. How they lived through those two terrible nights, wet, cold and hungry as they were, has always been a wonder to me, and still is. How the men spent those two days and nights only those who were there can tell, and no one can relate their experience better than my friend, Ex-Gov. Carpenter, whose advice and cool, deliberate judgment had much to do with saving the lives of the entire party.

A detailed and correct report of how the detachment went to the Lakes can only be made by some of those brave men who endured that terrible march, and I know of no one so well qualified to relate the incidents, following the time I left them at the crossing of the west fork of the Des Moines, as Lieut. Maxwell and Wm. K. Laughlin, whose names are

engraved on this Tablet. They can tell how after marching across the divide from the river to the lakes they visited one cabin after another only to find the dead and mutilated bodies of entire families where they had fallen when shot or brained with hatchet or club, or impaled and slashed with the knife of the heartless and cruel savage; how they as best they could collected the bodies of the slain and buried them; how, tired and hungry, they started on their return march to be met, when far out on the inhospitable prairie, by the relentless blizzard; how they passed that terrible Saturday night, wet, cold and nearly starved, with no shelter from the cutting wind and driving snow; how, when all hope was nearly gone they each made a final effort to reach the timber and shelter; how Capt. J. C. Johnson and Wm. E. Burkholder, differing with the others as to the best way to get around a pond, separated from the party, never again to see a friendly face this side of eternity; how the survivors, a few at a time, reached the protecting timber, or dug a hole in a snow-drift and there sheltered from the wind sat out the storm, and how the friends who were out from the Colony looking for them found them so exhausted, frozen and dazed, as hardly to know them; in fact a full recital of all the facts can only be given by those who experienced them.

As soon as the men had eaten their breakfast they started again on the homeward march, leaving all they could not carry for the teams to bring when they followed. We spent the first night at McKnight's Point, where Maj. Williams and our teams overtook us. From this point there was but little to do but get to the nearest settlement where food and shelter could be had, and many left the main body and made for the nearest cabins at Dakota, and on the west fork, a sufficient number remaining to assist in bad places—and thus we arrived at Fort Dodge, and for the first time in several days I removed my overcoat and had a night's rest. We had heard that some of the party who went to the Lakes had reached the Irish Colony and some had come into the river above and did not know that they were still missing—and as some were coming in individually or in small parties

for several days, we still hoped that all might have escaped. As soon as it was learned that Capt. Johnson and Wm. E. Burkholder were missing, parties were sent out who scoured the country for weeks, but without finding any trace of them, and it was years before the bones and guns of those two brave men were found where they had lain down when overcome by the piercing wind and blinding snow of that terrible blizzard, having made a desperate fight for life and traveled many miles nearly parallel with the river and timber in their vain efforts to reach the settlements.

To Maj. William Williams, an old man with wonderful powers of endurance and nerves of steel, all were attached. He endured all the hardships of the march and all the exposure and want, the same as any private, with no word of complaint. George B. Sherman of Co. A, was chosen commissary of the Expedition, and a more thankless task or one requiring more hard work no one had. To keep a hundred men from eating up all the stores for a two weeks' trip in three days was almost impossible, but he did his duty and tried to piece out our scanty rations and give each man his just share.

For the entire Expedition I have ever had a warm and brotherly feeling, but particularly for Co. A, from whom I received so many kind words, and for Lieut. John N. Maxwell, Angus McBane, Ex-Gov. C. C. Carpenter, Wm. E. Burkholder, O. C. Howe, and Rodney Smith, to whom I so often went for advice. All of them were ready and willing to do everything possible for each other and for the success of the Expedition. Many of them were then and have been through life my warm personal friends. These men, whose unselfish, generous, energetic, hard-working, toiling days and sleepless nights were spent in assisting entire strangers, could not be otherwise than good citizens, most valuable to the State and community in which they lived.

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