

NOTES ON THE SALTER-SHACKFORD
CORRESPONDENCE

BY PHILIP D. JORDAN

Dr. William Salter,¹ together with those other members of the Andover Band who were to impress so strongly Congregational theology and education upon Iowa, first arrived in Burlington on the morning of October 24, 1843,² was received at the landing by James G. Edwards,³ founder of an unsuccessful string of Whig newspapers from Jacksonville, Illinois, to Burlington, where he established the *Iowa Patriot* on June 6, 1839,⁴ found himself confronted by a rival newspaper, the *Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, established in the year 1837 by James Clarke,⁵ and then earnestly devoted himself to temperance, the Whig party, and Congregationalism. Mr. Edwards, a deacon in the small Burlington church,⁶ put his hospitable home at the disposal of the young men only recently from the theological seminaries of the East and just commissioned by the American Home Missionary Society to preach the Gospel in the Territory of Iowa.⁷

On Sunday, November 5, 1843, young Salter "received ordination at Denmark",⁸ and soon after went up the Mississippi River, prepared to begin his ecclesiastical duties in Jackson County, near the junction of the South and North Forks of the Maquoketa River, and in the vicinity of the villages of Maquoketa and Andrew.⁹ After working here for a little more

¹See the indexes of the ANNALS OF IOWA, issued under dates of 1912 and 1931, for citations to William Salter, the Andover Band, Denmark Association, and Horace Hutchinson.

²*Forty Years' Ministry/ A Sermon/ Preached in/ The Congregational Church/ Burlington, Iowa / April 4, 1886/ By William Salter/ Published by the Church and Society./ Burlington, Iowa:/ James Love, 316 Jefferson street./ pp. 10-11. n.d.*

³See "Life and Works of James Gardiner Edwards". *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, October, 1930, and "Portrait of a Pioneer Printer" in same journal, Vol. XXIII, No. 1, April, 1930. Also: Salter: *Mrs. Eleanor T. Broadwell, 1804-1886*. Published by the Church. Love's Book Store, Burlington, 1887. Compare Salter: *A Sermon With Reference to the Death of J. Gardiner Edwards*, Preached August 10, 1851, in the Congregational Church, Burlington, Iowa. Printed at the Hawk-Eye Office, 1851.

⁴ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. XVI, No. 3, January, 1928, pp. 175-176.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶*Forty Years' Ministry*, pp. 10-11. *et A Sermon/ Preached in/ The Congregational Church/ of/ Burlington, Iowa/ in Commemoration of the Fiftieth Anniversary/ of Its Original Formation/ By William Salter/ Minister of the Church and Society./ n.d. pp. 8-9.*

⁷See the language of any of the commissions issued by the American Home Missionary Society, New York. The commission referred to here bears the date: November 1, 1844.

⁸ANNALS OF IOWA, Third Series, Vol. VII, p. 592.

⁹*Ibid.*

than two years, Dr. Salter wrote as follows: "I received an urgent request 'to come to Burlington, and see its condition, and ascertain if I could not be more widely useful here than anywhere else in Iowa'".¹⁰

These words, continued Dr. Salter, composed the "language of a letter, dated January 3, 1846, addressed to me by Deacon Shackford."¹¹

Dr. Salter did come to Burlington in February, preached three Sabbaths, and was then invited by the Church and Society to become their minister. His parish duties began the second Sunday in April, 1846, and continued until his death August 15, 1910.

Until this time, there has been only the testimony of Dr. Salter (quoted above) which has related to the series of occurrences finally to culminate in his removal from Maquoketa to Burlington. Now, however, we have the correspondence which passed between Albert S. Shackford and William Salter. This correspondence consists only of three letters written by Shackford himself (with a note affixed by Horace Hutchinson to the communication written under date of January 25, 1844), and Dr. Salter's acceptance of the call from the Burlington Church, written under date of March 25, 1846. I am printing this entire correspondence, so that it may not again be lost, and so that this additional biographical material may be readily accessible to the researcher and historiographer. The complete correspondence (with the exception of Dr. Salter's letter of acceptance) is holographic.

Albert S. Shackford was not a stranger to William Salter when this correspondence between them began on January 25, 1844; nor did this acquaintanceship have its inception in the Territory of Iowa. The friendship had begun when Salter, as a young boy, was visiting at his grandmother's home at Portsmouth, New Hampshire.¹² Shackford had left his New England home sometime in the early '40's and had set up a flouring mill in Burlington.¹³ He had been accompanied to the far West by

¹⁰*Forty Years' Ministry*, in the place cited.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²Salter: *Address to the Sunday School Children on the Fiftieth Anniversary of His Pastorate*. April 12th. A.D. 1896. Burlington, Iowa. n. d.

¹³See *History of Des Moines County, Iowa*, Western Historical Society, Chicago, 1879, p. 504: "On the 27th of April, 1845, Shackford & Co's. flouring mill was burned." Salter named Shackford as a merchant. Compare *Burlington Hawk-Eye*. August 29, 1909.)

his brother, Rev. C. C. Shackford, at whose ordination Theodore Parker preached his famous sermon on "The Transient and Permanent in Christianity."¹⁴ It is this brother whom Shackford mentions in his letter under date of January 3, 1846, here printed. When the Congregational Church was organized at Burlington, December 28, 1843, it is recorded that Albert S. Shackford acted as secretary,¹⁵ and when the Sixth Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa incorporated and approved the Church, February 12, 1844, Shackford is mentioned in the articles of incorporation.¹⁶ And when the constitution of the Church was adopted on December 28, 1843, Shackford's name is among those who affixed their signatures.¹⁷ When the Denmark Association of Congregational Churches convened in 1843, Shackford was named the Burlington delegate,¹⁸ and in that same year, he was named superintendent of the Sabbath school.¹⁹ Dr. Salter, in one instance, made a record of a journey which he and Deacon Shackford took to an associational meeting at Farmington, Iowa, in 1846. Dr. Salter writes: "The spring of forty years ago in this immediate vicinity was also marked by the Mormon exodus from Nauvoo. . . . We saw their camp fires on the edge of the woods along the streams, and met their long wagon-trains."²⁰ As superintendent of the Sabbath school, Deacon Shackford introduced into the opening exercises the responsive reading of the Scriptures.²¹

The friendship between Salter and Shackford was not to continue for long. Shackford, while returning to Portsmouth for a visit, took ill at Auburn, New York, and died there August 17, 1846, just about four months after Dr. Salter had taken up his duties in Burlington.²² Dr. Salter has written of Deacon Shackford as one who "carried into every department of Christian activity, the sweet and gentle courtesy and kindness and quick intelligence that were his uniform characteristics,"²³ and said

¹⁴*Burlington Hawk-Eye*, August 29, 1909.

¹⁵Antrobus, A.M. *History of Des Moines County*. S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1915, Vol. I, p. 556.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 557.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 472-473.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 562.

²⁰*Forty Years' Ministry*, pp. 7-8.

²¹Salter's *Sermon* preached November 25, 1888, pp. 8-9. (Fully cited in footnote 6.)

²²*Ibid.*

²³*Ibid.*

further, "Few young laymen acquire such maturity and consistency of character as Mr. Shackford possessed."²⁴

This, then, in as much detail as is available, indicates the Salter-Shackford relationship. The correspondence follows:

Rev. William Salter
Springfield
Jackson County
Iowa Territory

Burlington. January 25, 1844

Dear sir:

Your favor reached me a few days since, and it gives me pleasure to inform you that the miniature with the accompanying letter, has been obtained from Mr. Thompson, who reached this place only a day or two since, and is now in the hands of Mr. Bradley who will no doubt forward it to you by the stage which leaves this place tomorrow morning, and I trust it will safely reach you.

I am sorry I cannot give you the pleasing intelligence of a revival in our little church. The ministrations of the Holy Spirit seem to be withheld from us, and yet we are not without some tokens of the Divine favor. The number of our members has nearly doubled within the last three months, tho' among the increase, there are no new converts. Our congregations on the Sabbath are full and attentive, and the preaching of our friend Mr. Hutchinson seems to give general satisfaction. I hope good things are in store for us, and I have strong hopes too, we shall be able the coming summer, to finish the house, we have commenced for the worship of the Lord. This is imperiously needed: May Him for whose service it is designed, bless the efforts of his servants. My prayer is for your success in the field of your labors, and for your christian comfort and enjoyment. I should be glad to hear from you, whenever you have leisure from more important labors. Your friends here would unite with me in assurances of affection and regard and wishes for your welfare, did they know of my writing. Accept those of your friend.

Albert S. Shackford

[Here Rev. Hutchinson takes up the letter.]

Brother Salter:

Shackford has given me the rest of the sheet, and I wish I had time to fill it up with news, just such as you most [want] to hear, but our Thursday eve meeting comes on soon—and besides I don't know *what* to write—i.e. what you most wish to hear. I am egotistical enough to suppose you will like to hear that I am well, except a cold, and hard at work. Indeed, after three month's experience, I can testify that Burlington *is* a hard place—not in just the sense that your's is; but in the worst sense of the word—morally, spiritually.

I am sometimes much disheartened, but toil on, in hope, and feel that all its trials our work is a glorious one.

²⁴*Ibid.*

E. Adams was here last Friday, seemed sad, said my situation was so different from his ! Indeed I do feel humbled at the difference as he describes it, and do try to *pray* for him and all our members. Wish you would write me, have heard from all the company except yourself—were all well—if I had time would give you a synopsis of their letters but must defer this till I get your letter.

I think of you and Turner often, in your missionary work. I mourn that I can give you no news of *conversions* here. Three months of my ministry gone and not one soul saved ! O, this ought not to continue. May the Great Head of the church be with you, my brother, and give you many souls in your ministry.

Yours sincerely,
Hutch

Rev. William Salter,
Andrew,
Jackson County,
Iowa

Burlington. January 3rd., 1846

Rev. and dear sir:

It is with deep regret that I have to tell you of the serious illness of your brother in the ministry, the Rev. H. Hutchinson, to whom this field was assigned as the place of his missionary labors. Deprived of his services through the whole summer, we had hoped that with cold weather his health and strength would return, and enable him to do much in this place in the service of his Master during this winter. But the Lord has otherwise ordained. For the last three Sabbaths we have been without preaching, and Mr. H. has signified his wish not to be considered any longer as our minister, nor can we indulge the hope that he will ever preach again.

You know the importance of this place as a center of religious influence; you know something of its rapid growth and heretofore neglected condition; and you realize something of the need there is of a faithful evangelical ministry exhorting its power constantly over this God-forgetting population. The ways of Zion do truly mourn here; error is coming in like a flood, and truth is trodden into the dust, whilst there is no Watchman on its walls able to sound the trumpet loud enough to reach the closed ears of the perishing multitude.

A new establishment has been underway for some months denominated the "Moral and Spiritual Reform Society"—though passing current under the names of the "India Rubber Church" and "Free and Easy Church". To this Society my brother preaches or lectures—and it is made up of Unitarians, Universalists, Deists, Swedonborgians etc. It is now the popular church. Its lecturer is popular and their place of meeting the most comfortable and convenient in town. The class of men which it is most desirable to reach with the preaching of the pure Gospel, are the leading men among these Spirituals. In the meanwhile, our own place of worship is closed, our congregation scattered, and our little church discouraged. Orthodoxy is a reproach, and we

know not which way to look for a ray of hope amidst the moral darkness of this community.

Those of our number who are acquainted with yourself, look to you as perhaps the human instrumentality through which better times may dawn upon the spiritual prospect of Burlington, and at their request I have addressed these lines to you, to press upon your attention the question, whether your master's cause does not require you, if it be consistent with your engagements at home, to come to Burlington, and see its condition and ascertain if here you could not be more widely useful than anywhere else in Iowa.

We sincerely hope it may be in your power to visit us ere long and see for yourself the condition and prospects of Burlington. A short visit even, might [revive] the dying energies of our church and encourage us to hold together and persevere in hope of better days. Will you please inform me as soon as convenient, what we may hope for concerning you?

I am, with much respect and esteem,
truly your friend and servant
Albert S. Shackford

Rev. Wm. Salter,
Maquoketa,
Jackson Co.
Iowa.

Burlington. January 27, 1846

Rev. Wm. Salter,
Dear sir:

Yours of the 21st. is before me. As before I would urge you to come to Burlington as soon as consistent with your engagements at home and we shall therefore look for you at the time you have named.

Mr. Hutchinson's health for a few days seemed to rally a little, and we hoped the favorable symptoms exhibited would prove permanent, but he is again failing and there is great reason to fear he cannot continue long. I deeply regret being deprived of his services as our minister. His situation and that of Mrs. H. call for our deepest sympathy.

As it respects our church, we now number about forty members. The deaths and removals for the last two years have about kept pace with the additions. The male members are few, and fewer still the number disposed to work and bear the burdens of the day. When we have preaching our room, which is small, is generally well filled with attentive and interested listeners. Our House of Worship has made small progress upward the last two years, but preparations are now making to put it up as soon as the opening of Spring will permit. Mr. Starr, upon whom the work mainly depends, assures me it shall go on, and I think myself the prospect of having a House to worship in the next fall, looks brighter than ever before. The greater part of the moral, truth-loving portion of the community, I think sympathize with us. It appears to me that our organization with an efficient ministry is best adapted to meet the wants and feelings of the com-

munity. The Presbyterians stand on old school ground, which is altogether too narrow for many to stand with them, and under its present management it can accomplish little good. They have preaching every other Sabbath. Their preacher makes no impression here and probably will not be long with them. They will probably go on with their church building next Spring.

There is wanted here an energetic, persevering man who can labor hard and preach good sermons all the time. One who will too enlist the feelings of the people in himself. To be efficient here, a minister must calculate upon having a hard time of it.

My brother preaches regularly every Sabbath morning and evening, and his congregation is, I understand, large. His stay here longer than the Spring is rather doubtful.

But the best way is, as I meant to say in my former letter, come and see for yourself. Some of us think you are the man for this field, from what we have gathered of the opinions of others. We have none of us heard for ourselves. We do not like to be the means of removing you from a field in which you have labored so long and doubtless become much interested. It would be well too if we could add one more to the little band of laborers in Iowa by inviting another from the East. But we feel as if this field would suffer by remaining unoccupied for any length of time, and consequently we have looked to you. Therefore, I would in behalf of my brethern invite you to come and visit us that we may know what the Lord would have us all do.

With much respect and esteem

Sincerely your friend

Albert S. Shackford

Maquoketa, Iowa. March 25, 1846

Mr. Henry W. Starr, Mr. A. S. Shackford,
& Dr. S.S. Ransom.

Gentlemen:

Yours of the 16th. inst. inviting me in behalf of the Congregational Church and Society in Burlington to become their Pastor has engaged my serious attention.

Relying on the blessing of God, I accept your invitation, and shall endeavor to commence the public labor of my ministry among you on the second Sabbath in April (if the Lord will).

I am painfully conscious of my insufficiency to meet the solemn responsibilities to which your invitation calls me. And I could not assume them did I not feel assured of the prayers of the church in my behalf and trust in the promised aid of her Great Head.

I desire then to be remembered in the prayers of the church, so when I come with you I may come in the fulness of the blessings of the Gospel of Christ.

I am with great respect,

Your obedient servant in the Gospel.

Wm. Salter

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