

# ANNALS OF IOWA

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## EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

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WILLIAM CLARK

The Historical Department of Iowa has from its inception held that facts related to persons and events of the region of which our state is part not only are pertinent to our history but are indispensable thereto. The department has sedulously regarded its responsibility of providing for the inquiring mind every possible aid of this character. It has not much concerned itself with nice discriminations, as between history and geography, or as between civil history and natural history.

It has deemed it essential to have at hand the aids with which one may thread his way back to where white men mingled in Indian life and where that depended upon other animate and inanimate life. It takes all this to form the picture of life in what is now our state.

It is with the purpose of augmenting the aids to the student of Iowa in all these phases that our museum and library materials are selected and acquired. It is with the view of facilitating such labor that we gather materials in the ANNALS, some already in print elsewhere but in remote and scattered repositories. We leave largely to our indexes and to the ingenuity of the student the assembling of these into series, disquisitions and connected histories.

Many names and events in American history reach us in unbalanced values. Often the book or publication through which they are preserved is strong, accurate, universal in its reach and so has brought to us a great name which, had it come through some poor, weak or restricted voice or journal, would have reached us with quite different force and meaning.

Press agents have existed in all ages and among all peoples, operating through clay tablets, pictographs, and town criers as well as modern channels.

To us as students of American history, William Clark came upon our vision and has held our attention largely through his honorable and intrepid relation to the Jeffersonian adventure of 1804-1806. The wide and prompt dissemination of the prospectus of that adventure, almost as much as its restricted and delayed report, advanced in public estimate the name and attainment of William Clark. That adventure first identified him with Iowa history and geography.

But after full use had been made of both prospectus and report of the spectacular pilgrimage and after Thomas Jefferson had ceased to need, for himself or his associates, the prestige of that great achievement, William Clark really began the life which should make of his name a household word in Iowa and of him a classroom idol throughout the Middle West. He, more than any other figure in American annals, directed the pressure of Caucasian life and society against Indian life and savagery across the area now bounded by Ohio on the east and Kansas and the Dakotas on the west, and through the era from 1806 to 1846, full ten years after his death.

This specific service of Clark, easily learned and understood, but not often remarked with adequate appreciation, was as Indian agent and later as superintendent of Indian affairs under the War Department. That service long continued uninterrupted in tenure, but broken and buffeted in policy by changing federal administrations. He was constant in his understanding of Indian and white man and unaltered in his sympathy with both. His mind was suited to dealing with the questions among the Indians themselves and with the rasping and heartless relations of mercenary enterprise with aboriginal artlessness.

We have undertaken to assemble in copy or original the documentary history of the era of Iowa up to 1847. These materials afford a better understanding than is otherwise obtained of the relations between our government and the Iowa, Sauk and Fox, Sioux, Winnebagoes, Pottawattamies and other tribes and these tribes with one another. They bring to us the long, laborious missives of William Clark to his subagents, Forsythe, Street and others, and to William H. Crawford and other secretaries of war; of subagents to the War Department and from traders and other

agencies of business and of government. We will possess all and more than Longfellow ever had.

It is not possible to handle these materials and not increase our interest in the time prior to 1847; it is not possible thus to become more sensitive to the relations of Indian and white man and remain oblivious to the influence of William Clark. Our collections as they approach completeness will form a merited and adequate memorial to William Clark.

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#### LAST FIGURE OF THE SPIRIT LAKE TRAGEDY

At the time and place where civilization has come into contact with savagery, suffering and sacrifice have seemed to us ennobled. Wherever types of life have differed, as our race came up, the adjustments of type against type, have had results comparable with the adjustments which geology explains through slips and faults as causes of earth tremors. With differing ideals, motives, and traditions among the types and races of mankind, both these phenomena appear elements of creation itself.

As the wrinkled face of weathered earth was smoothed by glaciers whose paths were weathered down and smoothed again, so race tore over and through other races. But it has been one of the mercies to mankind that wars have often left with both victor and vanquished the best that either brought into the field of conflict.

As the Caucasian lobe of humanity advanced across the Mississippi Valley it met, melted and absorbed obstruction and was met, bruised and shredded in the process. At the sanguine, sutured edge, as it worked westward, one cannot tell the Indian's from the white man's blood. In what is now Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas, the last impediment was the nation of the Sioux, its bands and braves. That great, vigorous, aboriginal family of man came up through Revolutionary times allies of the British and trade subjects of the British fur companies. Their southern borderlands were the same as the northern borderlands of allies of the French and trade subjects of the French fur companies. No line or zone separating the great masses was marked or fixed. The serrated fracture varied with the varying pressure and resist-

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