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THOMAS DRUMMOND

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By EMORY H. ENGLISH

Outstanding among the younger men in early Iowa public affairs, who gave evidence of having exceptional ability and promise of great usefulness, was Tom Drummond, of Vinton, editor of the *Eagle*, and a member of the Iowa senate in the Eighth General Assembly. Few now recall the name, or ever heard of him, but in his brief career this forceful man greatly impressed all who knew him. A summation of the activities of his short life at least will be informative.

The slavery issue was uppermost in the political struggles of the day, and the anti-slavery cause had no more vigorous nor valiant advocate than Tom Drummond. With Grimes, Kirkwood, Rankin, McCrary and other Iowans of prominence, he rendered service in the organization of the Republican party in this state. And, as an alternate delegate from Iowa, he participated in the proceedings of the first National Republican convention in 1856, held at Philadelphia, which nominated Gen. John C. Fremont for president.

With aggressiveness, tact and ability, and a fearlessness that amounted almost to audacity, he possessed elements that made for a brilliant public career, which most unfortunately was cut off by his being mortally wounded in a charge at the head of his cavalry regiment at the close of the Civil war, in the battle of Five Forks, Virginia, April 1, 1865.

In the Seventh Iowa General Assembly Drummond was the member of the house from Benton county, and quickly recognized for his sterling qualities. Clear-headed and farsighted he was said to easily dominate committees upon which he served, besides being an effective orator always to be reckoned with in debate. Already prominent he ably supported favored measures in the turbulent first legislative session held at the new frontier capitol in Des Moines. Governor Grimes was just retiring and his ringing message had sounded the keynote for the new Republican party which he helped to organize, for it was the openly declared opponent of the hated American system of slavery. The general assembly sustained the position so ably taken by the governor in choosing him for six years to represent Iowa in the United States senate, although Drummond favored a northern Iowa candidate.

EXCEPTIONAL LEGISLATIVE PERSONNEL

In Lathrop's "Life of Governor Kirkwood" it is said:

Never in the history of the state has there been an abler general assembly than the Seventh, which was the first one to meet at Des Moines, the new capitol. . . . It was the first to assemble under the new constitution, adapting laws to its new provisions, enacting them for the creation of banks, passing upon measures for the relief of the people from great financial embarrassment—reorganization of our system of popular education . . . remodeling the judiciary system, settling the problem of the Des Moines River Improvement enterprise, rescuing our magnificent school fund from waste caused by an unfaithful public officer, providing for a more prompt collection of taxes, and building up our reformatory, charitable and higher educational institutions.

To perform these labors there were in the senate such men as Rankin, Brigham, Coolbaugh, Trimble, Saunders, Pusey, Anderson, Patterson, Kirkwood, Cattell, Grinnell and their associates; in the house such men of age and experience as Lincoln Clark, Shelledy, Ayers and Streeter, with men younger in years but equal in ability, like Casady, Seevers, Edwards and Bradley, while it contained a galaxy of sixteen young men the equal of whom are rarely found in any legislative body. They were Belknap, McCrary, Wilson, Gue, Wright, Bates, Carpenter, Drummond, Jackson, Curtis, Clune, Sprague, Woodward, Beal, Bennett, and Casady of Woodbury. Some were but a few years out of their "teens," McCrary

being but twenty-two, and all were in "twenties," but there were giants among them.

Of these Belknap afterwards became secretary of war and afterwards a judge of the United States circuit court, Wilson a United States senator, Carpenter a governor of the state, Gue, lieutenant governor, Wright a brigadier general, while others of them attained high and responsible positions. Few brighter stars have shown in the intellectual firmament than Tom Drummond and T. Walter Jackson. It is a noteworthy fact that two of these youngsters, Gue and Wright, fought through and procured the passage of a bill establishing the Agricultural college, in the face of an adverse report upon it from the committee of ways and means. Eight years later these same two youngsters, as presiding officers of the two branches of the Eleventh General Assembly, one as lieutenant governor and the other as speaker of the house, certified to the election to the United States senate of Samuel J. Kirkwood, one of their co-lawmakers at this session.

BLIND ASYLUM LOCATED AT VINTON

During his term in the senate Drummond secured the establishment of the State Asylum for the Blind at Vinton, with an appropriation for the erection of a substantial building for the home. The bill was passed, and the institution erected and occupied, though the work was threatened with stoppage at one time when the asylum for the insane at Mount Pleasant was under contemplation.

Senators Kirkwood, Loughridge and Rankin, and Representatives James F. Wilson, Thomas Drummond, E. E. Cooley, T. W. Jackson and George W. McCrary made aggressive war in debate upon slavery encroachments by introducing, supporting and passing resolutions denouncing the slave traffic, including the following declarations:

Resolved, That we still recognize and sustain the time-honored doctrines taught by the early fathers of our political faith, that freedom is the great cardinal principle which underlies, pervades and exalts our whole political system; that the constitution of the United States does not in any way recognize the right of property in man; that slavery as a system is exceptional and purely local, deriving its existence and support wholly from local law.

Resolved, That the state of Iowa will not allow slavery within her borders, in any form or under any pretext, for any time, however short, be the consequences what they may.

Long and exciting political debates incited partisan feeling which was intense, and Drummond was at home in these proceedings, with all the fire and force of his personality. The Grimes leadership suited Drummond, himself a tireless, brilliant, hard-boiled realist in public affairs, with deep convictions and influential in his official and personal relations.

DRUMMOND COMBATTED GREELEY'S VIEWS

From the very beginning of the Republic the slavery question had been an overshadowing issue. In the forming of the new American government, through compromise the differences between leaders in the North and South had been composed, but the cleavage was apparent, continuing down through the long years until culminating in the deadly rebellion of the sixties.

Drummond participated in the arguments within the Republican party and indulged most heatedly in the discussions with respect to how vigorously should the party oppose or seek to completely wipe out slavery—for there was a sizable group that still thought it was the part of wisdom not to unduly disturb the detestable institution, seeking its containment within the area wherein it existed, but not permitting extension into new states created. Iowa had been admitted as the first free state carved from the area of the Louisiana Purchase, and was greatly proud of the distinction.

Horace Greeley headed a group of Republicans who asked for a consolidation or alliance of all those who opposed the Democrats, who were strong in some of the states of the North. Drummond wanted no such combination and favored outright anti-slavery declarations. In an article by Frank I. Herriott on "Iowa and the First Nomination of Abraham Lincoln," the author in outlining the maneuvering within the Republican group of leaders, referred to the attitude of Drummond in combatting the views of Greeley, saying in part:

Greeley's views, however, met immediately with direct and emphatic rejoinders. One of the most interesting and vigorous came from the pen of Thomas Drummond of Vinton, a veritable Hotspur in journalism and politics of the period. He was a Virginian by birth and education, and this fact no doubt accounts in considerable measure for the vigor and vivacity of his utterances. He took direct issue with Greeley's proposal for an alliance of the "opposition." His expressions are typical of the sentiments of the aggressive opponents of slavery, who were at the same time staunch Republican partisans.

VIGOROUS EDITORIAL EXPRESSION

In his *Vinton Eagle* he expressed his satisfaction anent the fact that "the persistent efforts of certain eastern Republicans and their organs to pave the way for a coalition of all the odds and ends . . . are meeting with small favor in the great Northwest," which sentiment was endorsed in similar vein by Frank W. Palmer, correspondent to the *Dubuque Times*, saying:

Conservative men everywhere North as well as South, may plot and plan as much as they please. There will be no half-and-half ticket in 1860 . . . If the old Whigs and Americans are ready to co-operate with Republicans . . . there may be a Union . . . but any attempt by a lot of conservative old fogies to patch up a platform in which northern Republicans will occupy an indifferent or even a secondary position, will prove a disgraceful failure.

In an editorial in the *Eagle*' entitled "Spoils or Principles in 1860," the position of Drummond was outlined in detail, as follows, and his literary style indicated:

The Republican party is not yet quite four years old . . . Unfortunately the party is just now cursed with a lot of officious political midwives . . . who, when it is in perfect health and only awaits its appointed time, are throwing themselves into an agony of apprehension about its safety and insist upon doctoring and prescribing for it. Their headquarters are in New York and Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* is their chief. It really seems to us the deliberate purpose of that paper is to prevent a Republican victory if possible . . .

It is the professed aim of the *Tribune* and its co-laborers to bring about an alliance of what is termed the "entire opposition" to the Democrat party which would embrace Republicans, Know

¹*Vinton Eagle*, May 10, 1859.

Nothings, Southern Whigs, and Douglas Democrats . . . This we hold is impossible and, if possible, unwise and foolish in the extreme. Success at such a price would be barren of good results. .

What is the position, what are the doctrines of that body of so-called Conservatives, for whose cooperation with them, such strenuous efforts are now being made by eastern Republicans? We leave out of account the Douglas Democrats, as a miserable Falstaffian rabble, not worth looking after, and answer, they are mainly a class of men who are wedded to the past, old fogies who cling like Crittenden and Bates to the recollections and teachings of a former age. . . .

The basis of Republicanism is its recognitions and advocacy of the "inalienable rights of man" and its purpose, a steady and unceasing opposition to slavery extension, and to the very existence of the institution itself. . . . This at least is Western Republicanism, and the party in the west is not to be sold out by its professed brethren in the east. The attempt to do so met with a signal rebuke last fall in Illinois and will fail as signally if attempted a year hence. The nomination of Bates or Crittenden or any of their associates as candidates for the presidency, or any emasculation of its platform will be the signal for a revolt of the old genuine anti-slavery element of the party, that which has been its very life blood; and its organization upon the platform of eternal antagonism to slavery in the territories or elsewhere.

The Republican party adopts what the *New York Herald* terms "the bloody, brutal manifesto" of Abraham Lincoln, as re-echoed by Senator Seward, that there is and must be a steady conflict between Slavery and Freedom until one or the other goes to the wall—until this Union becomes all slave or all free.

UNIT RULE SOUGHT IN 1860

Drummond was prominent among the delegates attending the Republican state convention held at Sherman's Hall, Des Moines, January 18, 1860, and took active part in its deliberations. Having been an alternate Iowa delegate to the Republican national convention in 1856 at Philadelphia and a member of the Iowa senate, he was regarded as one of the leaders in the Republican party in Iowa. Later he became one of the eight members of the 1860 Iowa convention who attained a lieutenant colonelcy in the Civil war.

As soon as the delegates to the Chicago convention were decided upon Senator Drummond introduced the following resolution:

Resolved, That the delegation from Iowa are hereby instructed to cast the vote of the state as a unit, and that a majority of the delegates determine the action of the delegation.

The motion to adopt the resolution was lost, but Frank I. Herriott, in his article on the Chicago convention,² said:

The significance of the resolution, the design of the mover, and the real purport of the action of the convention in refusing thus to control the course of their delegates at the national convention, can only be surmised. The mover was an able and tried tactician in practical politics. He had attended the first national convention of the Republican party at Philadelphia in 1856 as a delegate and he was an influential editor and leader in the party's councils in the state.

It is hardly probable that his resolution was unpremeditated, introduced on the spur of the moment on a vagrant impulse. He knew that in the national party conventions, a delegation or its leaders are potent when they have their delegates well in hand and can "count on them" and can swing them to the right or to the left at critical junctures in maneuvers. Divided delegations, like dis severed army corps, are usually impotent. . . .

Senator Drummond probably had the avoidance of such inefficiency in mind. Moreover, it is not unlikely that he expected the resolution, if adopted, to operate in favor of the candidacy of Senator Seward. Senator Drummond, as we have seen, entertained radical anti-slavery views, sympathizing frankly with John Brown.

He was also a staunch friend and supporter of Senator Harlan, who was a known friend and admirer of the senator from New York, and then or very soon thereafter becoming an advocate of his nomination at Chicago. The activity of Governor Seward's friends in all the northern states, straight west of New York, on behalf of his candidacy and their success in securing instructions for him in all, save Iowa, gives color to the surmise here ventured. It is the recollection of Judge C. C. Nourse that it was the opinion in the lobbies that Governor Seward was to be the beneficiary of the resolution . . . Whatever may have been the facts we shall see that the rejection of Senator Drummond's resolution providing for the unit rule was subsequently considered as equivalent to refusal to instruct for Senator Seward.

²ANNALS OF IOWA, Vol IX, pp. 420-421.

ALDRICH'S EARLY ACQUAINTANCE

One time Charles Aldrich was down from Webster City, where he had started the *Freeman* newspaper the previous summer, and looked in on the legislature—it was in February, 1858. At that time this was the only legislative body he had ever seen in session, and later confessed his awe and interest. In an address before the Iowa Pioneer Lawmakers in later life he told of the incident and gave color to the event by describing the various prominent members and state officials. The member from his home district was Cyrus C. Carpenter, later governor of Iowa. Drummond was in the house at the time, and Aldrich told of his acquaintance then formed, as follows:

Next to our own representative, the man of whom my memory is clearest, was Thomas Drummond of Benton county. He was then editing the *Eagle*, which was one of the best known county-seat papers in the state. Tom, as everybody called him, could not have been older than twenty-five, and he may have lacked even a year or two of that. He was of slender build, rather above the medium height; his hair was as black as a raven's wing; his complexion rather dark, and his eyes like jet; he had a bright, laughing eye, but it flashed like fire when provoked to anger. I have often heard it said that he claimed descent from Pocahontas, though I never heard him allude to the matter. I remember, however, that he was occasionally mentioned by editors with whom he had tilts, as "Mr. Pocahontas." I met him at the Scott house, a favorite boarding-place with the members. I believe it stood on the ground now occupied by the gas works. It was kept by Alexander Scott, who donated to the state a portion of the ground upon which our beautiful capitol now stands.

Tom freely used what Gen. Fitz Henry Warren afterwards called the "energetic idiom"—in fact, he "swore like a trooper." When I was first introduced to him he gave me a "piece of his mind," and with a degree of emphasis which I have never forgotten. The point was this: I had warmly supported Governor Grimes for United States senator, believing—and I have never changed my mind on that point—that he was the greatest man in Iowa, and for that matter, in the northwest. Tom had supported F. E. Bissell, of Dubuque, largely upon the ground that he was a *northern man*, while Grimes lived in Burlington, not far from Mt. Pleasant, the home of Senator Harlan. Tom deprecated the idea of giving all these offices to men living "down in the pocket." I did not

care where the senators lived—if they were the two ablest representative men in our State. I will not try to reproduce his language, but he gave me a “cussing” for not “standing up” with him for a northern Iowa United States senator. “But for you and two or three other newspaper men,” said he, “we would have had a northern Iowa senator.” We both freed our minds on this topic of the day, neither convincing the other that he was wrong. I was under the distinct impression that I had “stood up.”

But I had a good time with Tom, and from that time until his death we were fast friends. I can scarcely account for this even now, for our habits were totally different. He was a wild youngster, indulging in sundry dissipations which I will not stop to particularize. But he was an impulsive, large-hearted, breezy, good fellow, whose eccentricities of behavior were always freely forgiven. Actions which would have irreparably ruined an average good character never affected him in the least. A cold bath in the morning banished all traces of a night’s hilarities, and he came into the house in the morning in all the glory of high spirits, clear complexion, sparkling eyes and pearly teeth. Even the staid old Quaker members who only saw him on the floor, deemed him a model of all the proprieties. At the very worst, they only regarded him as a “little wild,” but not more so than could be readily condoned in one whose other qualities made him so genial and companionable. He was a ready speaker and popular debater. Graceful in action, handsome in person, a born orator, thoroughly informed, as became a journalist, he was a man of mark, easily a leading member of the legislature, as I believe he would have been of the congress of the United States, had he been chosen to that theater of usefulness.

PREVENTED DELAY ON ASYLUM WORK

During this session he secured the passage of the bill for the location of the Blind Asylum at Vinton. He may be regarded as the founder of that institution, and it certainly never had a more vigilant supporter or so eloquent a defender.

At the next session—1860—Drummond came to the senate. Unusual efforts were put forth to build the insane asylum at Mt. Pleasant, and it was determined by the Republican majority to suspend work for the present on the blind asylum; in fact, to “sit down upon Tom Drummond.” This awoke all the wrath that was in him. But his party counted its chickens before they were hatched. It had a majority of but three, including Tom Drummond. There were two members who would today be styled “mug-wumps.” They voted with their party when it suited them, but could not be counted on at all times. They favored the appropriation for the blind asylum and were opposed to the other in-

stitution, unless both should be treated alike. The Democrats stood solidly by Tom, and he was therefore able to bring things to a dead-lock.

The speech he made against the proposed action of his party, and in favor of "my blind asylum," as he called it, was one of the most powerful and scathing that ever 'woke the echoes of the old capitol. Prominent Republicans—even Governor Kirkwood—besought Tom to give up the fight and not "block the wheels of legislation." But he was immovable and his friends sustained him. He boldly declared on the floor of the senate that the Mt. Pleasant Asylum should not have a dollar, nor should any member have his per diem, unless the Blind Asylum was taken care of. He carried the day and won his point. The senate came down from its high horse and gave him the appropriation he asked. The blind asylum went ahead, though the second story was unreasonably and awkwardly shortened in from the original plan, making the beautiful edifice that Tom Drummond's foresight would have made of it, a deformity. But if it is a benefit to the city of Vinton to have that great charity within its limits, the citizens should place within its grounds an enduring monument to the memory of their first citizen in those pioneer times.

DISTINGUISHED AS A SOLDIER

Drummond had in him all the elements of a soldier. Possibly "he was sudden and quick in quarrel." He certainly would have been had he believed himself imposed upon in any way.

"He bore anger as the flint bears fire,
Which much enforced, shows a hasty spark,
And straight is cold again."

But it was as a soldier that he was destined to crown his life of usefulness and end his days. As soon as the first indications of the great Civil war became visible he told his friends that he was "going into it." In February, 1861, he organized a military company in Vinton—being the first man to enlist. He left for Washington the same month, some two weeks before the inauguration of President Lincoln. Very soon after reaching the Federal city he was offered a second lieutenancy in the United States regular cavalry. He was not long in reaching a captaincy, and at one time his lineal rank in the army was higher than that of General Custer—and they were both in the same regiment. He was appointed lieutenant-colonel of the Fourth Iowa cavalry, in which he served several months. Upon being mustered out of that regiment he returned to his own command only to be detailed for recruiting service, with headquarters at Cleveland, Ohio. He remained at that post, or in this duty, for over a year.

But near the close of the struggle he was ordered into the field with his regiment, just in time to take his part in the battle of Five Forks, Virginia. In this engagement, when the fighting was really over, he was struck by a random shot and so severely wounded that he died during the following night. He was buried in the churchyard at Dinwiddie Courthouse, where his grave was seen by Cyrus C. Carpenter, afterward governor of Iowa, who was a lieutenant colonel and commissary of subsistence in Sherman's army, which marched from Atlanta to the sea. At the time of his death I was taking the *New York Tribune*, and in reading the account of the battle of Five Forks, I saw the announcement that "Captain T. Drummond" had been mortally wounded and was dead. I marked and sent the paper to Honorable Frank W. Palmer, who was then publishing the *Des Moines Register*. In the issue of April 29, 1895, he printed the following paragraph:

DEATH OF CAPTAIN DRUMMOND. — Yesterday we received a copy of a New York daily, sent to us by a friend, containing a list of the killed and wounded in Sheridan's command, during the five days' fighting preceding the fall of Richmond and surrender of Lee. The name of Captain Drummond, Fifth U. S. cavalry, was among the officers reported as mortally wounded, and on the margin of the paper was written: '*That is our poor Tom.*'

Our Iowa readers will remember Thomas Drummond, as editor of the *Vinton Eagle*, member of the house of representatives from Benton county in the first general assembly which convened in this city. He was subsequently elected senator from that county and served during one session. When the war broke out, he was commissioned first lieutenant in the regular army, and when the Fourth Iowa Cavalry was organized, he was commissioned as lieutenant colonel. He served with the regiment several months, and was then transferred to the Fifth Regular cavalry, in which he was promoted to the rank of captain. This is the officer of whose death our friend now notifies us. We *hope* the information may not be well founded, but *fear* that it is. Captain Drummond had his faults—who has not? He was a devoted, self-sacrificing friend, an earnest, able advocate by tongue and pen of just principles, and a gallant defender of his country in the field. Peace to the memory of this brave Iowa soldier.

Thus perished "one of the bravest of the brave," freely giving his young life that our nation might live. He was one of the foremost of our rising Iowa politicians, one of our most able and versatile editors, one of our clearest-headed legislators. If he had glaring faults, he was also possessed of magnificent qualities of head and heart. Had he continued in civil life there can be no doubt that he would have attained higher recognition than that of state senator. His nature was irrepressible, but his aims as a public man were praiseworthy in the highest degree. He contended for progress, improvement, education, substantial sympathy for the unfortunate classes—benevolence, charity, in their highest, noblest manifestation—sympathy for those most deeply afflicted.

RESENTED LAX DISCIPLINE

In the historical sketch by Col. George W. Crossley, of Webster City, historian of the Iowa War Roster Board of the War of the Rebellion, Vol. IV, p. 640, mention was made of a number of regimental officers of the Fourth Iowa cavalry "who had no knowledge of the duties of cavalry soldiers," but spoke of Drummond as follows:

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Drummond was the notable exception in this regard, he having been a lieutenant in the Fifth United States cavalry. Upon joining the regiment he became its instructor in tactics and discipline. He was a man of excellent ability, but somewhat imperious in his manner and bearing, and perhaps over-zealous in his efforts to bring the regiment up to a state of efficiency in drill and discipline before it was called upon to take the field. . . .

Lieutenant Colonel Drummond went into the field with the regiment, but, after a few months, resigned and returned to his former position in the Fifth United States cavalry. He was killed while gallantly leading his men in a charge at the battle of Five Forks, April 1, 1865.

An account of the differences that arose between Col. Asbury B. Porter, commanding the Fourth Iowa Cavalry, and Lieutenant Colonel Drummond, were related by Gue's *History of Iowa*,³ stating in part:

The regiment originally numbered 1,035 men and assembled at Camp Harlan, near Mount Pleasant, and was there mustered into service late in November, 1861 The regiment remained in camp most of the winter, drilling and procuring arms, horses and equipment for active service. The men suffered greatly from the exposure of camp life during the severe weather, which caused a great amount of sickness. Toward the last of February the regiment was sent to St. Louis, soon after to Rolla and from there to Springfield. Here the men were furnished a variety of antiquated arms, at which they were justly indignant. The regiment joined the army of General Curtis which began an invasion of Arkansas and was assigned to General Vandever's brigade. . . .

Colonel Porter was a slack disciplinarian, while Lieutenant Colonel Drummond was a born soldier and knew the value of strict discipline and rigid drill. Their ideas of military requirements were so radically different that frequent misunderstandings en-

³History of Iowa, B. F. Gue, Vol. II, pp. 386-87.

sued. Drummond resigned and returned to his place in the regular army in June 1862; while Colonel Porter left his command, returned home without leave, sent in his resignation in March, 1863; he was however dismissed from the service by order of the president. He was the only Iowa colonel thus dismissed during the war. He had previously served as major of the First Iowa Infantry, made a good officer, and had distinguished himself at the battle of Wilson's creek.

TABLET PLACED AT INSTITUTION

A committee of Benton county citizens, headed by Rep. A. E. Harbert, of Shellsburg, with funds contributed for the purpose, procured from Tiffany & Co., New York, a substantial bronze tablet, and had prepared and inscribed thereon a suitable expression honoring the memory of Captain Drummond. This was placed in a conspicuous position upon the wall of the main corridor of the College for the Blind, at Vinton, on May 26, 1904, with appropriate dedicatory ceremonies.

The presentation address was by Cato Sells, a well-known Iowan and member of the county bar, and the bronze was accepted for the state by Gov. Albert B. Cummins, who expressed himself with feeling and eloquence, for the governor was never common-place in his speaking. Addresses also were made by Sen. W. P. Whipple, Judge L. G. Kinne, Prof. T. F. Tobin and others, several being reproduced in part on following pages.

The occasion was one of great interest, the tributes voicing approbation of the life work and achievements of the honored editor, legislator and soldier, as well as pride in the institution which his successful efforts had made possible of establishment in Vinton. Thus Tom Drummond's name and fame is being perpetuated.

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