

ANNALS IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

SETTING UP A STATE

Politics were a-sizzling at the Raccoon forks of the Des Moines just a century ago. Not partisan politics but statehood politics. Iowa was a territory with nearly a hundred thousand people. Other territories had become states with a mere handful of voters. The people of Iowa felt themselves to be discriminated against. They wanted statehood, but they wanted it to be their kind of a state. The bigwigs at the national capital were bungling the job. A majority of Iowa voters were mad. They had sent to Washington the draft of a state constitution, with borders defined as running right across from the Mississippi to the Missouri. The political jugglers had cut off the Missouri slope and sent word that nothing farther west than forty miles from the Raccoon forks would ever be worth taking from the Indians. Iowa voters resented this. They held an election in April, 1845, and rejected the plan for a little state set up edge-wise so that Iowa City, the seat of most territorial politics, could hold on to the capital. Then they called the territorial legislature together and the matter was again submitted to the voters. Again in August the vote was a big "no" to the small state idea. In the end these sturdy Iowa pioneers got what they wanted. In the meantime there was much buzzing about Fort Des Moines. Captain Allen and his dragoons were rounding up the Sacs and Foxes and moving them in bunches off to the southwest. Some of the Indians wanted to stay. Iowa was their beautiful land. They hid in the hills along the Des Moines river and went over to the Iowa and the Skunk and kept still. It took more than civil arguments to convince some of the red men that they would have to depart forever from Iowa. Chief Keokuk and his wife

(or wives) stood upon the hill that is now at the south end of the Des Moines Seventh street bridge, and waved farewell to the beautiful valley that they had known for many years. The settlers were coming. Land buyers, speculators, promoters, adventurers—all home seekers. The rush was great when the doors were opened. The occupation of the Des Moines valley was completed in 1846. The state of Iowa set up in business.

What a marvelous story of progress and prosperity, of pathos, of toil and happiness, of the making of a great commonwealth.

MEN OF A FRONTIER TOWN

Before the War of the Rebellion Des Moines was a small frontier town, where everybody knew everybody. The topics discussed on store boxes on summer evenings were popular sovereignty, Dred Scott and old John Brown. The political parties were about evenly divided. Among the ardent young Republicans were "Hub" Hoxie, S. V. White and John A. Kasson. Hoxie, who, as a boy and man, was in the employ of Tom Mitchell, a noted pioneer of central Iowa, who kept a station on the underground railroad, was pretty well imbued with black Republicanism. At no time before the war did his income probably go beyond \$800. He lived to visit his old home where he had worked hard as a poor boy and man in his own palace car, and a year ago (Nov. 25, 1886) succumbed to the tremendous pressure of his duties as Jay Gould's railroad lieutenant.

S. V. White, a little wiry Yankee attorney, located in Des Moines along about '58 or '59, and very soon gained a reputation as one of the blackest of black Republicans. An industrious, plodding counsellor, he was gradually building up a lucrative practice, but in a few years drifted away to Brooklyn, where, as Beecher's deacon, Wall street magnate and M. C., he has of late years become pretty well known to fame.

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