

the following story brings to light still another talent. Mrs. Anna (Grover) Hubbell told me about two old oil portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Isaac Cooper. Isaac Cooper was a nephew of James Fennimore Cooper and the father of three girls—one of which became the wife of F. M. Hubbell. In the oil painting Mrs. Cooper's facial expression was as dour and somber as any could be. In fact, it was so bad that no one wanted to hang it. Today the two portraits hang proudly in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Barshell. Mrs. Barshell is a daughter of Mrs. Grover Hubbell. A friend had suggested to Mrs. Hubbell that she ask George Rackelmann if he could alter the dour look to something more pleasant. George said he could and he did. Today the expression reminds one of the Mona Lisa's smile.

MR. STEPHAN'S TRUNK

BY LIDA L. GREENE

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Redding out is a good, strong, grandmother phrase smelling of lye soap and bonfires. There is a drive about it that signifies clearing away clutter to arrive at essentials. Yet when I hear the phrase, it no longer reminds me of household chores, but of Mr. Stephan's trunk.

In the twenties and mid-thirties, Mr. Stephan was a banker in a small mid-Iowa town. Although Rob Stephan was a man of many interests, he had a special sense of history. When the local Quaker meeting was *laid down* and their meeting house sold, it was Rob who rescued the record books from the lath

and plaster dust and sent them to Yearly Meeting headquarters in Oskaloosa.

Saturday afternoon was Rob's sleuthing time. If he started out with a spade over his shoulder and a half dozen boys whipping after him like the tail of a kite in a March wind, you could be sure they were en route to locate the ford over Minerva creek or the probable camp site of the Mormons on the Ridge. Times like these, with the boys relaxing over lunch, Rob would start talking about the sword in the trunk and the Civil War.

The contents of the trunk were probably Rob's most treasured possession. It was one of the reasons he saw life in depth. It was the Civil War in miniscule.

The trunk held the letters of a young Union officer to his bride and her letters in return, in addition to clippings, official papers, and journals in fading script. An officer's dress sword was there, along with a swatch of blue worsted and a slim-waisted green silk dress a young woman had worn to the victory ball in Washington, D. C. The officer had been Rob's grandfather.

After Rob's death there was a hurried, well-meaning *redding out* of bits and pieces including much of the memorabilia in the historic trunk. There was a bonfire. I was one day too late to save the Civil War letters.

The story of Rob and the trunk is meant as a reminder. If there are documents in your attic that would contribute to the history of the state or nation, invite a state depository to borrow the material long enough to make a microfilm copy. Important papers have a much better chance of surviving if there are two records in two different places.

Householders, if you feel a strong *redding out* mood coming on, we beg you to keep your eyes wide open for anything that might mirror an earlier decade or another phase of our culture. Old pictures, theatre and chautauqua programs, railroad time tables, Montgomery Ward catalogs, Civil War letters, business records, year books of organizations, brochures on church and local history . . . all these are grist in the historian's mill. Rather than throwing them away, please send them to the Iowa Department of History. We promise an Iowa librarian's welcome!

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