

Choosing a Place-Name

By AVA JOHNSON

Records seem to show that in the early days frequently there was a good deal of confusion about what name should be given a place. And there's nearly always a good deal of haziness about change of names, why a change was made, and what decided which name was better.

There's one town in the northeastern part of the state that tried hard to change its name. But the old one hung on until the citizens finally gave up the idea of changing it. The name on the water tower is still the fine old Indian name, Quasqueton.

Quasqueton means "Swiftly Running Water." And Quasqueton is what the Indians had called their village, that stood on this very site of the white man's pretty town of the same name. Quasqueton on the Wapsipinicon; it sounds like music.

It was the waters of that river which gave the Indians the name for their village. The current runs very swiftly at this spot, and the Indians had a flair for taking nature into their lives. Naturally their village would become, Quasqueton, — "Swiftly Running Water."

Early white settlers in that region decided that was all very well for the Indians, but they'd rather live in Trenton. Trenton was the official name for quite a while — only almost nobody used it. Finally the citizens of the place got together to find out what name people *would* use.

Some one suggested translating the old Indian name into English and calling their town Rapid City. That seemed like a good idea, so Trenton officially became Rapid City. Only, people kept calling it Quasqueton. There seemed to be something about the mu-

sic of that name that wouldn't "let go." At last the citizens of the town gave it all up and legalized the Indian name. So, Quasqueton on the Wapsipicon it is to this day.

INDIAN NAMES ARE RETAINED

Several towns in Iowa are still called by their original Indian names, or rather by the names that the Indians first gave the sites. Villisca is one of them, and the name means "Pretty Trees." Ottumwa, Mahaska, Keokuk, Pottawattamie, Maquoketa, Onawa, Cherokee, Wapello, Osceola, Winneshiek, are only a few of the Indian names we've taken over.

Red Oak, like Villisca, was named for the trees that were there. But that was years ago. There's scarcely a red oak left in that vicinity. And yet when the early settlers came, there were so many oaks and they were so beautiful, that no other name seemed appropriate for the new town.

It seems a little strange those red oaks could have been allowed to disappear without replanting them. And still, we did the same way with other things. Where are the wild turkeys that gave the name to Turkey river? And what became of the raccoons along the Raccoon river? There must have been elk at Elk Lake, and Elk Run; and eagles at Eagles Lake and Eagle Grove. And where are the mills along Mill Creek?

Woolstock, up in the same direction as Mill Creek, was named by the Northwestern Railroad. The railroad was heading that way, but before it could come through, huge flocks of sheep that belonged to L. I. Estis of Webster City had to be cleared off the land. So the new town that was set up to serve the company as a railroad junction, was named "Woolstock" to honor those sheep.

Of all the names I've ever found, none can yet outdo the Nishnabotna River, of southwest Iowa. Is

that name Indian? Who knows? But on the other hand, how could it help being?

Have you noticed how often romance went into the name? Nora Springs, the story goes, was named by a young engineer who came out into Iowa in 1857. His job was to survey land and plot new towns for this area. He'd been carrying the thoughts of a pretty girl around in his mind, so, when he found a town he liked he wanted to name it for her.

To be sure, the town had a name; the citizens called it Woodstock. But Woodstock, the young surveyor said, didn't mean anything. If they'd call it Nora Springs, that would always stand for the beautiful girl he loved. The surveyor must have been a nice young man and a good persuader, for the citizens of Woodstock did just that. They changed the name of their town to Nora Springs.

Of course, the engineer and his bride were supposed to come back and make their home there. When he went for her, the girl had changed her mind. The young man couldn't face it, so he moved off to another county. But there stands Nora Springs, a monument to a romantic young man and a changeable girl.

Several towns in Iowa are named for women. Belmond is a combination of one young woman's two names, Belle Du Mond. Mr. and Mrs. Archie Du Mond, her father and mother, were early settlers. When the town site was granted in the year of 1856, there was talk of naming the place Du Mond for the fine early family. But the young people around the town were fond of Du Mond's pretty daughter, "Belle"; and they finally won out with their suggestion to name the place Belmond for her. Geneva is named for the wife of H. C. Cook, one of the pioneers of Franklin county. Frederika in Bremer county honors Frederika Bremer, a Scandinavian novelist.

MUSICAL NAME — BUT IS IT?

Ladora sounds romantic enough to be some wom-

an's name, but it has a better story than that. A committee was finally appointed to find a name for the town because it was going and thriving but had never been named. The citizens had never been able to agree on a name; that was why a committee had to be selected to settle it. But the members of the committee couldn't agree either.

They met in one of the "front parlors" of the town and badgered and harangued and "yes'd" and "no'd" and bickered and argued, but couldn't get any place. In the "back" parlor of this same home, one of the girls was trying to blot out the noise of the committee with some noise of her own. She practiced her vocal lessons by running the scales.

"La-do-re, la-do-re," the young woman kept singing, over and over. Finally one of the men in the parlor pounded the table. "There it is," he shouted, "That's it. Let's call the town 'Ladora.'" And they did. At least that's the story.

Lineville obviously couldn't be named much of anything else. The Missouri-Iowa state line runs right down the middle of Main street. Business houses on the north side of the street pay taxes in Iowa, those on the south, in Missouri.

Correctionville, on the other hand, isn't what you might think from the word at all. In the western part of the state, there was quite a bit of confusion for awhile because of some mistakes that had been made by engineers whose instruments were off plumb. But Correctionville was laid out on the correction line that was finally established by Federal surveyors in 1850. And it took its name from that fact.

FROM A RAILROAD'S NICKNAME

Diagonal, too, refers to a fact; and, like Woolstock, got its name from the railroad. The Great Western was being built diagonally across the state. At one railroad junction a town named Diagonal was to be set up. Nearly two miles away was another town that had first been named Goshen, then later New

Goshen. The settlers must have come from Indiana, it would seem. And they kept on coming. When Diagonal was finally set up on the railroad line, the citizens of New Goshen picked up their houses, stores, church, and hitching posts, and moved over to the vicinity of the new station.

More than one town moved, or just died, when a railroad came through a few miles away. Out west of Ames there was an early town, and a pretty one, called New Philadelphia. Now, it's only a few foundation stones in somebody's pasture. The Northwestern went through a half mile north and slowly everything moved over there. The new place was called Ontario — I've never heard why.

A large sign at the edge of the town of Primghar reads, "The Only Primghar in the World." That's probably right. The men on the committee that had to name that town, stirred together the letters of each member's last name, until they came up with Primghar. If that ever happened any place else in the world, it would be interesting to know about it.

Duncombe and Kenyon Memorials

By FREDERIC LARRABEE

When Mrs. Mary J. Kenyon, wife of Judge William S. Kenyon, passed away February 22, 1939, in her will she left a bequest of \$20,000.00 to be used in the construction of two bronze memorial drinking fountains — one, a memorial to her father, John F. Duncombe, to be placed in the public square in Fort Dodge, and one, a memorial to her husband, Senator William S. Kenyon, to be located near the court house at Fort Dodge in Webster county.

The memorial to John F. Duncombe is a bronze statue about nine feet three inches in height, resting on a base of North Dakota granite. This statue represents Mr. Duncombe as an attorney when he was

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