



Yours Truly
Mrs. H. B. Quinton,

MRS. HARLAN B. QUINTON.

Born July 2, 1832, at Utica, N. Y.; removed to Wisconsin, 1855; graduated from Denmark Academy, 1871.

ANNALS OF IOWA.

VOL. VII, No. 1.

DES MOINES, IOWA, APRIL, 1905.

3D SERIES.

EARLY DENMARK AND DENMARK ACADEMY.

BY MRS. H. B. QUINTON.

The town of Denmark, Iowa, consisting of twenty square miles, lies in the original Black Hawk Purchase, nine miles north of Ft. Madison. The first white inhabitant was John O. Smith, a native of North Carolina, who made a claim to land in 1835. The first child born in the place was his son.

In the spring of 1836, Lewis Epps, Timothy Fox and Curtis Shedd, with their families, and four unmarried men, journeyed from Providence, R. I., by water, to Quincy, Ill. They bought for two hundred dollars a squatter's claim one half-mile from the center of Denmark. This consisted of land sufficient for four farms, with a small fenced field and a double log cabin sixteen by eighteen feet. It had two half-windows, a puncheon floor, a clay hearth and a sod chimney. This cabin in October received a fourth family, that of William Brown, consisting of five persons more. They had come by wagon fourteen hundred miles, and had been seven weeks on the way. Eighteen persons occupied the cabin through the winter, and at night the greater part of the floor space was used for beds. The bill of fare that winter consisted of pork and cornmeal, varied by cornmeal and pork. The hogs for butchering were obtained in Illinois, and the meal was ground at a mill in Augusta, Iowa, in 1835.

The original name of Denmark was "The Haystack," so called from the custom of several neighbors putting hay in a common stack, which, standing on the open prairie, was conspicuous for some distance. By whom and when the

name of Denmark was conferred is uncertain, but a survey under that name was made in 1837.

That same year a school house was built and Miss Eliza Houston, of Lyndeborough, N. H., was installed as teacher. This school house, which was used for church as well, was originally twenty by twenty-four feet, but was soon lengthened to forty feet. It had a loose floor partly of slabs, the walls were unplastered and covered with oak splits, the seats were slabs with no backs, and the desk consisted of two upright boards faced with cottonwood and with a six inch strip nailed on top, all of native Iowa wood. This building was used for church purposes as well as school for eight years.

During the summer of 1837 and the winter of 1837-38, Rev. W. P. Apthorp preached at times to the few living near "The Haystack." In the spring of 1838 measures were taken to secure church organization and Rev. Julius A. Reed, of Warsaw, Ill., and Rev. Asa Turner, Jr., of Quincy, Ill., were invited to assist. On May 5, 1838, thirty-two individuals assented to the "Articles of Faith" and covenanted with one another to serve the Lord. They were the first to unfurl that banner in Iowa, which, more than two hundred years before, their fathers unfurled over Plymouth Rock. Denmark church is the oldest existing church west of the Mississippi river, and the first Congregational church west of the Alleghanies.

After the church was organized, the Rev. Asa Turner was invited to become its pastor, and in July he removed to Denmark with his wife and three children.

The "Home Missionary" found Denmark, his future home, consisting of three houses and the school house, and the first night was passed in the historic cabin that had sheltered so many of Denmark's first settlers. But Mr. Turner soon had a small shanty built east of the present church edifice. The town proprietors gave him two lots for building; this house was the fifth erected from sawed lumber.

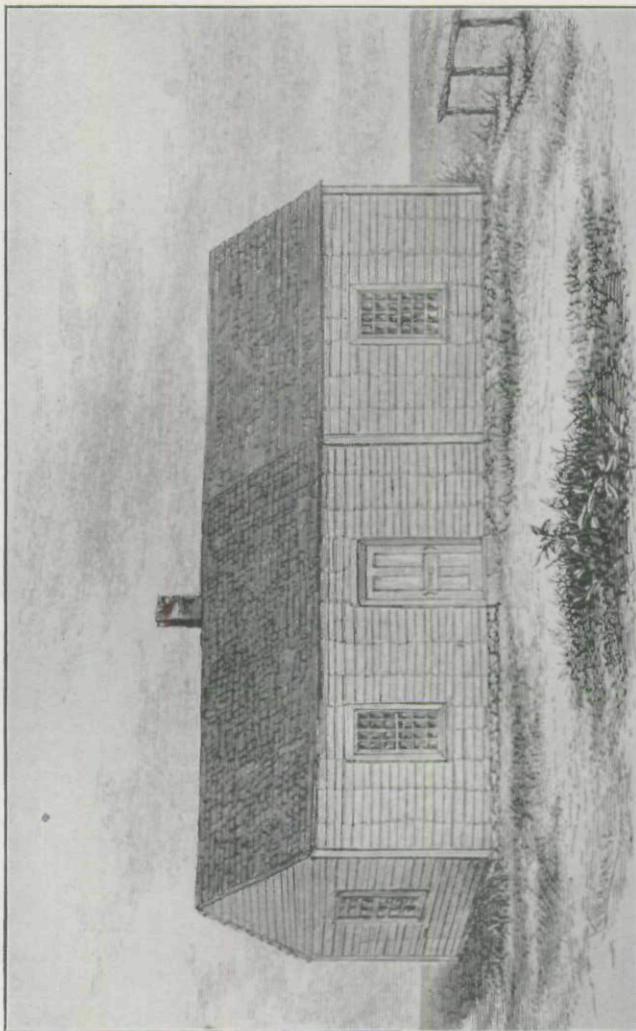
One of the Denmark "girls" of that time contributes a

realistic picture of the hardships and life of the pioneers. Her father was born in London; "pressed" on board a British man-of-war when ten years old, he followed the seas, becoming a sea captain. Living on the coast of Maine and fearing for his sons the temptation of the Maine coast to a seafaring life, he decided to come west with his wife and ten children. Their destination was Illinois, but on their journey westward they heard of the Purchase and reached it on October 4, 1837. His daughter says: "As we drew near Burlington, in front of a little hut on the river bank, sat a girl and a boy—most pitiable looking objects, uncared for, hollow-eyed, sallow-faced; they had crawled out into the warm sun with chattering teeth to see the boat pass. To mother's inquiries the Captain said: 'If you've never seen that kind of sickness I reckon you must be a Yankee; that's the ager. I'm afraid you'll see plenty of it if you stay long in these parts. They call it here the swamp devil, and it will take the roses out of the cheeks of those plump little ones of yours mighty quick. Cure it! No, Madam. No cure for it; have to wear it out. I had it a year when I first went on the river.'

"We then decided not to locate near the river. We stopped in a cabin while father 'prospected.' He heard of a Yankee settlement back from the river. Hastening to it he found two small cabins; the families of Messrs. Epps and Shedd were living in one, and Mr. Fox's family in the other. Also a mile to the west lived William Brown. They divided with us their claim, and helped get the logs for our house. During the fortnight it was being built we lived in a cabin near Moffat's Mill (now Augusta), by the river. Father, our brother of sixteen, and a young man who came with us, being made welcome in the cabin of Messrs. Epps, Shedd, Hill and Houston. That they were all in the body we know, but how they all lived I cannot tell; those little pioneer cabins had extensive possibilities, as did also the heads and hearts of their occupants.

"Every night mother suffered from fear of being scalped by the Indians, not knowing where they were prowling about. But she kept her fears from us at that time. Wolves we sometimes saw in daytime, and often heard them sniffing around the door at night and setting up blood-curdling howls. Father had a massive sea chest and it took the united strength of our family to drag it before the door at night and pile others on top; we then felt secure from Indians and wolves. Once sister and I went to the mill, as we had nothing for bread but hulled or parched corn pounded in a mortar or ground in a coffee-mill. Mr. Moffat said the water was too high for grinding, but he went to his house and kindly divided with us their meal.

"When our cabin was finished, father and Mr. Smith came for us with an ox-team. It was dreadfully muddy and some of us had to walk. The distance was two miles, mostly up hill, and as far as we could see one long stretch of black mud. For the first time one little fellow cried to go home and see his grandmother. Mrs. Smith had delayed her dinner for us; mother wouldn't think for a moment of making her so much trouble, but Mr. Smith had already stopped the team at the door, saying he had got the least ones and mother would have to follow. Turning to us children, Mrs. Smith said, 'You are tired, aren't you honeys?' and looking in mother's face, 'Rest a bit; then you'll feel better to fix up your house, and I reckon you'll find right smart to do there.' Except Mr. Moffat's, mother had not seen a face during the last fortnight, and kind Mrs. Smith, our nearest neighbor, never lost a warm place in her heart. It somewhat dampened our ardor when we saw our mite of a cabin standing on the bare prairie alone, and to our eager inquiries where the beds and tables and other articles could be put, mother's cheerful answer would be, 'Oh, we'll find a place or make one.' Yet I overheard her tell Mrs. Shedd that when she came to that dark little cabin on the prairie, with such desolate dreariness all around, it looked so unlike home that



CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND DENMARK ACADEMY, 1843.

for a moment all she had given up rushed through her mind with crushing force.

"That fall we were beset with difficulty to get bread. The water was so high the mills couldn't grind. Messrs. Fox, Epps and father took their oxen and went to West Point (perhaps Lowell) to grind corn with the oxen. Five days they were gone, the three families living meantime on hulled corn. Mother said she thought she would never get so tired of corn but that we should be thankful we had enough of that. On the day of their return she tried to grind wheat in the coffee-mill as she wanted to surprise father with a flour biscuit. We all took turns grinding, and ran it through a number of times, mother keeping at it at intervals most of the day, but the wheat was tough. When it was baked there was a small show for all our hard work, and it required mother's deft skill to make it go around."

In those days bacon, corn bread and potatoes were the staple articles of food; pumpkin pies and pumpkin butter, and native crab apples and plums were the delicacies of the table. The bill of fare was sometimes supplemented with wild honey, grouse, quail, partridges and deer. Besides the family whose representative experience has been given, there came in 1837, those of William B. Cooper, Ira Houston, David Wilson, and Charles Whitmarsh, with Messrs. Hartwell J. Taylor, Francis and Timothy Sawyer, John E. Leeper, Orson Newton, Alonzo Burton and J. Gilman Field. These, with the former residents, formed a church organization in 1838. Meantime lands and homesteads had to be secured. How? Let the family story already quoted relate:

"The next fall (1838), one year after we came, occurred the first government sale of land in Burlington. Much excitement prevailed, and some felt great anxiety, as they might now lose their homes, or in order to get money to buy them, have to pay fifty per cent to speculators or land-grabbers who stood ready to bid their homes from under them.

"Father knew that the money he brought with him had dwindled so it would not be sufficient; the money coming to us back east was not due, and to borrow it at that time would necessitate his going there. The journey there and back might consume two or three months' time, and to be sure of being in season for the sale, father started for Maine in August. He got the money, but coming back the river was low, and he was delayed. As the time drew near the all-absorbing topic at home was father's return. Many had been getting ready for a week to go to the sale, taking food, cooking utensils, and blankets, expecting to camp out several days, and not knowing, with thousands of others, when their turn to bid would come.

"A few days before the sale mother became so troubled she went to Mr. Epps and Mr. Fox. They told her that if possible they would bid in our land, or otherwise protect it, but she grew so anxious she could neither eat nor sleep. Mr. Fox called the morning the sale opened on his way to Burlington to reassure her that we should not lose our home.

"In those days we were not only waiting and looking for father's return from the east, not knowing what had happened, but we constantly exercised an anxious vigilance towards the west for the Indians. They had made a treaty, but we knew of their treacherous attacks. Large companies of them passed to Burlington from their camping-ground a little west of us, and would stop on the way for something to eat, asking first for doughnuts and 'cows' grease' (butter). Mrs. Epps had given Black Hawk and a few of his braves some doughnuts, so they learned the word and always asked for them. The Indians were always hungry, and at first, though their capacious stomachs seemed limitless, and everything cooked in the house quickly disappeared, mother dared not refuse them.

"Mr. Epps and Mr. Fox bid in our land, and in a few days father arrived with the money, to the joy and relief of all. At Pittsburg he had met with two other families bound

for the Purchase and Denmark, Isaac Field's and Oliver Brooks'; both men afterwards became deacons, the latter served as clerk of the church and kept remarkably full and accurate records for more than fifty years."

The original owners, Messrs. Epps, Fox, Shedd and Brown, laid off the town in January, 1840, in twenty-four blocks, enclosing a park of four blocks. One-half of the town lots were donated for school purposes. These original settlers of Denmark brought with them the spirit and principles which led their ancestors in New England to provide among the first things for churches and schools.

To their first pastor, Rev. Asa Turner, familiarly called "Father Turner" justly belongs the title "Father of Denmark Academy." There is a tradition that Father Turner conditioned his coming to Denmark upon the founding of an institution of learning. For several years the purpose to establish a school did not take definite shape. There was talk of a college and the name "Philandrian College," to be located in Denmark, with the names of seven trustees, figure in the early laws of the Territory of Wisconsin, 1837-38, but from lack of funds the institution failed to materialize.

The charter of Denmark Academy was granted by the Territorial Legislative Assembly, February 3, 1843; it is, therefore, the oldest incorporated institution in Iowa. The original trustees were Asa Turner, Jr., Reuben Brackett, Isaac Field, Oliver Brooks, and Hartwell J. Taylor. The proceeds of the undivided half of the town site yielded the first stock for the Academy. Instruction was begun in September, 1845, by Albert A. Sturges, who was afterwards for thirty years a missionary in Micronesia. Mr. Sturges taught from 1845 to 1848, the first year at a salary of fifty dollars per year, which was subsequently raised to twenty dollars per term.

For several years after the birth of the Academy it made but little progress; in fact, it was merely a select school for the people of Denmark. There was no Academy building,

the old historic Congregational church being occupied during the first few years. In 1848 a new building was erected by the people of Denmark on the Academy lands at a cost of four thousand dollars. It was a neat two-story structure of limestone twenty-eight by fifty-two feet, and is a portion of the present Academy building. In the lower only finished room of this building Mr. Drake taught until the summer of 1852. At that time the trustees engaged Rev. Henry K. Edson to take charge of the school; he had been for five years the successful principal of Hopkins Academy in Hadley, Mass.

The Academy opened in 1852 with eighteen pupils, one from abroad, and increased to one hundred and five the first year, forty-four being from abroad; the second year a total of one hundred and forty-four, with eighty-eight from abroad; the third year two hundred and one, one hundred and forty-four from abroad.

The village only fifteen years old, which greeted the teachers from New England, was still in the rough. Blue sky and green prairie furnished all the natural scenery. The few houses were mostly of one story, or one and a half; few lots were fenced and everything seemed out of doors.

The Academy stood alone and unsheltered by trees upon the open prairie; it had no doorsteps, nor was there in the whole place a sign of board or stone walks to keep one from sinking in the seas of mud. Pupils of that early time came to Denmark in "prairie schooners" from a distance of one hundred to two hundred miles, and, in some instances, drawn by ox-teams. The driver of one of these, a woman taking her children to school, relieved the tedium of the way by smoking a clay pipe.

At this time the mails reached Denmark but once a week. The students were accommodated with board in private families, or with rooms where they boarded themselves, or in the Academy boarding or club house. Comfortable rooms with board, fuel, lights and washing were furnished from



MISS EMMA P. COOPER.

Who received the first diploma from Denmark Academy. She taught for several years in the institution as Lady Principal and half of the year 1886 served as Principal.

\$1.50 to \$1.75 per week. The tuition at the Academy was from \$18 to \$24 per year.

The first catalogue was issued in August, 1853. Two names only appear upon the teachers' page, those of Mr. and Mrs. Edson. In 1858 the first diplomas were awarded to Miss Emma Cooper and Miss Fanny Fox. During the years 1856-57, eight gentlemen students took studies equivalent to the course and were accounted alumni. All became men of note; one was Charles K. Adams, President for some time of Cornell University of New York and also of the State University of Wisconsin from 1892 until his death in 1902. In 1855 Miss B. M. White of New York became Lady Principal, which position she filled satisfactorily for seven years.

Blacksmith shops were established in Denmark previous to 1840, Mr. James Cooper being the first blacksmith. In 1849 Mr. Bassett made twenty-five reapers for cutting grain, one of which was used on the farm of William Brown, and driven by his son Edward. The year before, 1848, Mr. Bassett made two threshing machines, one of which was taken by teams overland to Salt Lake City, Utah, the other was purchased and used by William Brown.

About 1850, Messrs. Fox, Epps and Shedd began the pork packing business, which they continued for several years. The buildings used for this purpose are now standing east of town near the place where the first cabins stood.

James Edwards opened a store about 1840 in the north part of town, the building is now used as a dwelling house. He soon sold his store to Mr. Alvord, who, in 1850, after having charge of it for some time, sold to Mr. Day, and went to California. In 1851 Mr. Day was joined by Mr. Ingalls, and they built the store which is still standing. In a few years Mr. Alvord returned from California and built what is now Mr. Fisher's store.

Of the old settlers few remain. Mr. Edward Brown of Denmark, and his brother Charles Brown, are the sole survivors of the eighteen who wintered in the log cabin in 1836

and 1837. Mr. Edward Brown was six months old when his parents reached Denmark. The Denmark "girl" who gives the story of pioneer experiences in this article is still living, with three other members of the same family. Mr. Ingalls, mentioned above, has retired from business, but still lives in Denmark. Deacon Trowbridge, who for over fifty years was sexton of the Congregational church, passed away last year.

For a number of years Denmark was an important station of the "underground railroad"; escaped slaves considered themselves safe on reaching the place. Parson Turner and Edward Turner were the principal ones who secreted and helped the contrabands. One, Philip James, made baskets and took them to Burlington. Slaves who reached Denmark were secreted under these baskets and Mr. James, on reaching Burlington, would drive around the town with them but did not sell them, and when night came the hidden slaves would be taken to the house of some party friendly to the cause and helped across the river.

A slave once came to a house two miles from Denmark and asked for shelter. He was secreted and shortly followed by his pursuers who were instructed to go in the opposite direction from the town and under cover of night the negro reached Denmark in safety.

On account of anti-slavery principles Denmark was a marked town during the civil war. A home guard was organized and the people were in constant fear of guerrillas, as they had threatened to burn the town; at one time a party of them crossed the river and headed for Denmark but were frightened away.

During the civil war the Academy suffered from loss of students and consequent pecuniary embarrassment, but her gallant sons performed their full share of patriotic service on many a battlefield. Over one hundred students were enrolled as defenders of their country. Some attained high command, some laid down their lives. Following is a list of

the students who enlisted as soldiers: George Bristow, Pierson H. Bristow, Hiram Brown, S. Brown, Horatio Case, Tobeski Coggeshall, Oscar Dudley, Baron Edwards, James Edwards, Henry A. Field, Elmer Hall, Homer Hall, Amos Hill, Amos Howard, Henry Howard, George Lockett, Theodore Loomis, T. J. Matlack, O. V. Montgomery, George Shedd*, H. H. Shedd, James A. Shedd, Fred Spencer, Jasper Spencer, John Starr, Asa Turner, Robert Turner, Watson Turner, Eugene F. Ware, George Whitmarsh, Timothy Whitmarsh, Alfred Wilder*.

The greater number of those who returned resumed their studies in the Academy. The catalogue of 1865-66 shows two hundred and seventy students, two hundred of whom were from abroad, gathered from sixteen different states, and including twenty children of the first pupils of Prof. and Mrs. Edson.

At this time the people of Denmark met with a problem difficult to solve. The Academy building was altogether too small to accommodate such a number of students. Help from abroad had never been asked or received, but it was now decided that such an addition to the Academy as was needed could not be built without outside assistance. Mr. Edson was sent east to solicit funds and while there he obtained about half the amount required. Within two years the new building was completed at a cost of seventeen thousand dollars.

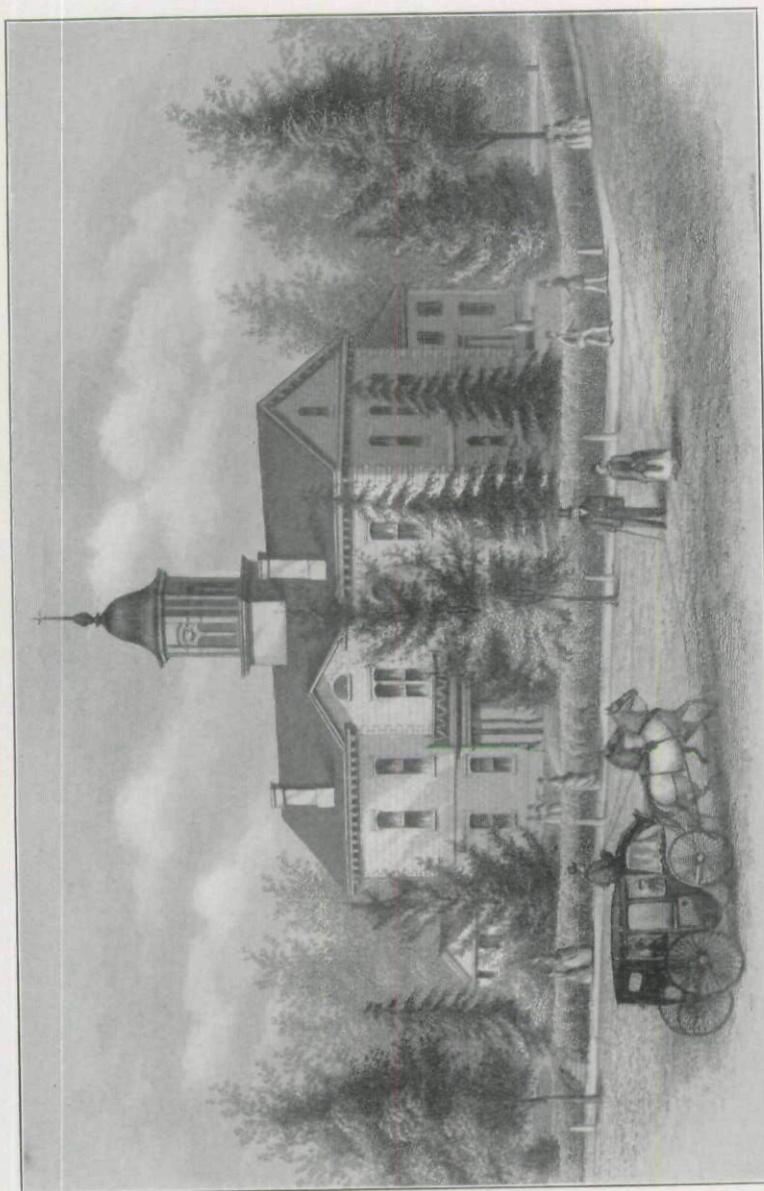
A word here should be said concerning the generosity of the people of Denmark. Such a school as the Academy, without endowment, could never have existed without the generous support of the Denmark residents. Father Turner, a poor man with large family, gave liberally of his substance to both church and school. He was a farmer-preacher—without the produce of his land he could not have lived, as his salary, supposed to be three hundred dollars, was rarely paid in full, and after twenty years of labor it reached only six hundred dollars.

*Killed in battle.

The church edifice was destroyed by fire in 1861. Rebuilding the church and adding to the Academy made a hard financial strain for the people of Denmark. They took pride in wearing sunbonnets and plain clothes "to meeting", preferring to do so that they might have more with which to help the church and school. When the work of building was hindered by lack of funds, one of the Trustees replied thus to his pastor's urgency, "We have given until we can give no more. This is the best coat I have in the world, and it is not fit to wear to church. You must give us a rest and let us do something for ourselves."

For twenty-six years Professor Edson received tuitions and paid the salaries of teachers therefrom, contenting himself with the remainder. A part of the time this remainder was equivalent to a moderate salary and part of the time to a bare living, \$400 a year for both himself and Mrs. Edson. In 1874 a small endowment was received—\$10,000, part of it from the sale of lands given by Mr. Reed, the balance by subscription from friends of the Academy at home and abroad. This endowment now amounts to \$18,000. Mr. Edson never received any part of the income of endowment funds.

In 1878 Mr. and Mrs. Edson had leave of absence for a year in Europe, to rest, study, travel and regain health. Father Turner advised it. The next year Mr. Edson sent from Geneva, Switzerland, his resignation. The year before, the Board of Trustees, now enlarged to fifteen, had put on record their testimony that he had "labored with the strictest integrity, with Christian honor and self-sacrificing zeal," and their appreciation of his "signal fidelity, energy and success." In accepting his resignation they expressed their "deep sense of the value of his services as Principal of the Academy for twenty-six years," and their "affectionate sympathies and fervent prayers for his continued usefulness." Mrs. Edson, who served as Lady Principal for many years, will be long remembered by the graduates of the Academy.



DENMARK ACADEMY.

The cut is a good illustration of the Academy building as it is at present (1905).

and other pupils for her loving kindness, and the grace and beauty of her Christian character and influence. She died at Grinnell, January 16, 1889, aged sixty-two years. Prof. Edson moved to Grinnell and occupied the chair of didactics in Iowa College from 1879 to 1892. Prof. and Mrs. Bingham succeeded Mr. and Mrs. Edson; for three years they were followed by three different professors. Mr. A. S. Johnson served from 1887-90, Mr. J. F. Morse from 1890-94. At this time, under the efficient management of Principal Morse, the Academy received new inspiration, the attendance increased, the course of study was revised and strengthened. Life was felt in all departments.

Miss Emma Cooper, who received the first diploma from Denmark Academy, was the daughter of William B. Cooper and wife, who came to Denmark on their wedding trip. She was the first child born to them. Her life was devoted to teaching, in which profession she was always successful. For a number of years she was principal of one of the city schools in Topeka, Kansas. She taught for several years in the Denmark Academy as Lady Principal and for half of the year 1886 she served as Principal, the former incumbent having resigned during the middle of the year.

Miss Charlotte N. Estabrooke, of East Lebanon, Mass., was secured as Lady Principal from 1888-95. She was a fine scholar, a good and faithful teacher, and a lady in every sense of the word. Her influence over the young women especially was very noticeable for good.

Principals Macomber and Conner from 1894-98 kept up the good work, and were succeeded by Prof. Wing in 1889, who succumbed to pneumonia in the spring of 1900. He was a specimen of noble manhood, whose influence for good will be felt by the youths of the community for a long time.

Arthur Risser, A. B., from Grinnell, a graduate of Denmark Academy in 1895, was assisting Principal Wing at the time of his death; he took charge of the Academy the remainder of the year and for two succeeding years. He

was succeeded by J. Richmond Childs, A. B. (Amherst), under whose administration the Academy will take no backward steps. He is assisted by Miss Willard, A. B. (Knox).

The value of such a school as Denmark Academy, kept up as it has been for fifty-nine years, can never be estimated. Upwards of four thousand students have been enrolled. The graduates numbered two hundred and forty-three up to the year 1904. Eight of these graduates were the children of Denmark Academy alumni. They came from nearly every state in the Union, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Columbia river to Mexico. They are filling pulpits, judges' benches, presidents' and professors' chairs in colleges; they are ministers of the gospel, missionaries, home and foreign, doctors, lawyers, business men and women, school teachers, and fathers and mothers of future Denmark Academy students and graduates.

The environment of Denmark Academy has always been favorable to students. The citizens have been kind and generous to them in opening their houses for board or rooms as needed. There has never been a saloon in Denmark and it is safe to prophesy there never will be. The town is pleasantly situated in a healthful location. The community is an intelligent and cultured one, and its influence upon the students, who are looked upon as members of its society, is lasting and beneficial.

While the Academy was founded by members of the Congregational church it is by no means sectarian. It is open to all. However, the influence brought to bear upon the student is thoroughly Christian.

The government of the Academy is based upon the rules of conduct which ought to be observed by young people assembled for study. The Academy building contains commodious class rooms, library and assembly hall, all in good repair. A new Club House, with large pleasant rooms, is situated in a block adjoining the Academy grounds. Near the Academy stands the Music Hall, containing pianos to be

used by the students for instruction and practice. A beautiful campus of about three acres, with croquet ground and tennis court, surrounds the buildings, while in front lies the large and beautiful village park.

In order to give students the benefit derived from listening to the best talent of the American lecture platform, an annual course of lectures has been given in Academy Hall, to which students can purchase tickets at a reduced price.

At the annual Commencement, June, 1903, twenty-three hundred dollars were subscribed for improvements for the Academy. The amount was used for a steam heating plant, acetylene gas lighting, and some minor improvements. A class of thirteen was graduated in June, 1904.

Much of the work done in Denmark Academy the pen of the historian will never record, it "Seems out of sight like the toil of those who lay foundations upon which will rise stately superstructures to be admired of men."

PERSONS traveling from Fort Dodge to Des Moines, will find a first rate conveyance in the line of stages run by Hatch & Co. They leave three times a week, have good carriages, careful drivers and fast horses, all of which can be readily proven by trial.—*Fort Dodge Republican, February 17, 1864.*

THE ICE.—The Des Moines river which has been snugly bridged for months, began to cave in a few days since. The ice at the crossing above Court Avenue bridge has had a few holes punched into it by the hoofs of horses, and travel is not so free as usual in that direction.—*Daily State Register (Des Moines), March 1, 1862.*

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.