

THE PASSING OF AN IOWA INDUSTRY.

Dispatches from Clinton which a few days ago announced the demolition of the last lumber mill in South Clinton will bring reminiscences to many middle aged people of the flush days of a great Iowa industry. Older travelers over the Northwestern railroad will recall the monstrous piles of sawed lumber that covered the river front, and the long banks of logs that lay inside their booms for miles along the shores of the river. Now the passer-by sees only scattered piles of worm eaten and weather beaten lumber. The long herds of saw logs have disappeared from the river sides, and the lumber industry which was once the business of Clinton, has become a mere memory.

There were millions in it in the earlier days when the river ran from Beef Slough south to Davenport untrammelled by bridges, and offered a clear passage for the monstrous rafts manned by their crews of turbulent river drivers who guided and controlled the massed acres of logs by long sweeps at bow and stern. The current furnished the motive power. The untamable raftsmen steered by day and rioted by night. They owned the towns where they tied up by right of physical conquest. They were the remnant of the old flat boat type of the early river days, the successors of Mike McCool and the goths of the lower river. There were dead men drifting in the turbid currents of the river and lying along shore where the old raftsmen held their sway. But they brought the logs for the lumber that built the early homes and fenced the prairies of Illinois and Iowa. Every town had its lumber mill. The river front was rife with the screams of big seven foot rotaries tearing away the slabs and rush of the gangs as they turned solid logs into boards and dimension timbers. Later the band saws took the place of the big frame work of the gang saws, and raft boats displaced the roaring drunken crews of raftsmen. Still the logs came

down the river, the saws hummed and the mill owners and the mill hands profited.

Tens of thousands of working men came marching up the main streets of Clinton, Dubuque, Davenport and the other river cities while the logs lasted, each with his dinner pail on his arm, and the fresh, clean smell of pine sawdust on his garments. Money was plenty in the river towns, because every man was busy. The mill men became millionaires. Whole cities were built upon the sawdust. But the lumber industry in Iowa has gone where the pine forests of Wisconsin went years ago. Clinton where Young's great mill was the largest in the world has been forced to find other employment. Not one thousand feet of pine lumber is produced in Iowa today where a million feet were cut twenty-five years ago. The raft boats have fallen to the excursion business. The mills are being torn down and a great Iowa industry has gone south to the long leaf pine forests.—*Marshalltown Times-Republican, November 25, 1904.*

ABOUT a mile below our encampment we passed Floyd's bluff and river, fourteen miles from the Maha village. Sergeant Floyd was of the party of Lewis and Clark, and was highly esteemed by them and his loss much regretted. The place of his interment is marked by a wooden cross, which may be seen by navigators at a considerable distance. The grave occupies a beautiful rising ground, now covered with grass and wild flowers. The pretty little river, which bears his name, is neatly fringed with willow and shrubbery. Involuntary tribute was paid to the spot, by the feelings even of the most thoughtless as we passed by. It is several years since he was buried there; no one has disturbed the cross which marks the grave; even the Indians who pass venerate the place, and often leave a present or offering near it. Brave, adventurous youth! thou art not forgotten—for

although thy bones are deposited far from thy native home,
in the desert-waste, yet the eternal silence of the plain shall
mourn thee, and memory will dwell upon thy grave!

* * * In the evening we passed the grave of
Floyd, and for a moment we thought it proper to

“.....suspend the dashing oar,
To bid his gentle spirit rest”.

—*Early Western Travels, Brackenridge, vol. 6, pp. 85
and 150.*

THE EASTERN SHORE OF IOWA, AS SEEN FROM ROCK ISLAND, IN 1829.

The Mississippi is here a clear and rapid river, flowing over beds of rock and gravel, and bordered by the most lovely shores. Nothing of the kind can be more attractive than the scenery on the Upper Rapids, in the vicinity of the Sauk and Fox village. On the western shore, a series of slopes are seen commencing at the gravelly edge of the water, rising one above another with a barely perceptible acclivity for a considerable distance, until the background is terminated by a chain of beautifully rounded hills, over which trees are thinly scattered as if planted by the hand of art. This is the charm of prairie scenery; although a wilderness, as nature made it, it has no savage nor repulsive feature; the verdant carpet, the gracefully waving outlines of the surface, the clumps, the groves, the scattered trees, give it the appearance of a noble park, boundless in extent, adorned with exquisite taste. It is a wild but blooming desert, that does not awe by its gloom, but is gay and cheerful, winning by its social aspect, as well as by its variety and intrinsic gracefulness.—*Thomas L. McKenney, History of the Indian Tribes, Phil. 1855, vol. 2, p. 14.*

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.