

ORIGIN OF THE MISSOURI WAR (1839) IN A LAND GRAB.

FRAUDULENT TITLES—NUMEROUS CLAIMS—SCHEME OF THE SPECULATORS TO ENLARGE THEIR HALF-BREED RESERVE BY REMOVING THE BOUNDARY OF MISSOURI FARTHER NORTH—
THE SCHEME FAILS.

BY SUEL FOSTER.

[Continued from page 447.]

CHAPTER II.

AFTER Davenport, Le Claire, & Co. had at that time bought all the half-breed owners they could then find conveniently, being some one hundred and twenty thousand acres of choice land in the south part of Lee county, lying in the fork of the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers, there were yet remaining a few owners not bought out.

It was soon noised abroad what a grand speculation there was in these half-breed lands, so a similar scramble, as for California gold, was made, to find and buy out the remaining six or eight shares. Very fortunate for the wild schemes of the speculators, some of the rightful owners had died in these four years since the reserve was made, and their heirs were numerous.

Some of the half-breeds thought it a fine thing to sell their right to that little country, which was not much of a hunting land after all, so they sold a *second*, and *third* time. Like intoxication (and they generally went together) they liked to sell "early and often."

In this way these titles were multiplied from between

forty and fifty, or as it was afterwards admitted that there might be over sixty true titles, they were increased up to over three hundred. Fine picking for lawyers, to further mystify such a snarl of titles.

Some hundred or so of these unscrupulous "land grabbers," finding their stock considerably "watered," next went to work to see what their purchases consisted of. It was all that parcel of land from the mouth of the Des Moines river as far up as where the north line of the state of Missouri meets that river; thence east to the Mississippi river; thence with the shore of said river to the place of beginning. It was discovered that the north line of Missouri was rather indefinitely fixed, by the wording of the act of congress, running from the northwest corner of the state, in a due line towards the head of the "Des Moines river rapids." There were two rock rapids in the Mississippi river, the lower, known as the "Des Moines river rapids," and the upper as the "Rock river rapids." About this time it was discovered that there was a rapids in the Des Moines river, in Van Buren county, some fifteen miles further up than where the line of the state of Missouri met the river, or by a direct north line from Missouri about ten miles. These land speculators at once concluded that everybody had been mistaken in supposing that the northern boundary of Missouri had any reference to a rapids in the Mississippi, when the fact was that there was a rapids in the Des Moines river, and that was the Des Moines river rapids intended by the act of congress. This would add about ten miles in width right through the middle of Lee county, and more than double the quantity of land in the half-breed tract. This was a splendid scheme for those sixty genuine rights, which had been so liberally "watered" by two hundred spurious titles.

Notice was immediately given to the good people of Missouri, that they had a beautiful strip of country in the southern part of Iowa Territory. Clark county, Missouri, lay immediately south of Van Buren county, Iowa, and the

northern counties of Missouri extended north to the north line of the state. There were a good many settlers in that part of Van Buren county, now claimed by Missouri. Additions were speedily made to the tax books of Clark county, and their sheriff was sent up into their newly discovered country to collect taxes. The people of Van Buren county resisted, and the Clark county sheriff distrained some cattle, and was driving them south, when a *posse*, under the Van Buren county sheriff, took Mr. Clark county sheriff, and for fear the Missourians would rescue him, they kept him moving north. At Burlington Governor Lucas ordered the Missouri sheriff to be taken further north, up to Muscatine, for the Governor of Missouri had ordered out the militia to go and retake their sheriff, who had been kidnapped from their own state while in discharge of his official duties. Governor Lucas now made haste in ordering out the Iowa militia to go into Van Buren county to defend the southern borders of our territory from the invasion of the "Pukes" from Missouri.

Messengers were sent by the Governor in every direction, with orders to enroll the militia, bring them into line, and march immediately for the "seat of war." The drums rattled, the fifes whistled, and the bugles blowed,—“To arms, boys, to arms!” Volunteers came forward, captains were made, the draft began, and stout men quailed and hid away for fear of death.

J. E. Fletcher, of Muscatine, was commissioned brigadier general, and ordered to call out his entire brigade. The country at that time was very thinly settled, and all the soldiers of his brigade who appeared did not amount to over five or six companies. They were put under command of Col. John Vanater. A company of cavalry was organized, called the Muscatine dragoons, and S. C. Hastings chosen captain, and J. W. Brady lieutenant.

I was an invalid at that time, just recovering from a bilious attack, and was at the boarding house of Mr. Josiah Parvin, the father of Professor T. S. Parvin, at the same

house where the sheriff prisoner from Missouri was boarding, who had his liberty on parole of honor. I had a sort of stupid dumb ague lingering about me, and thought I needed action and excitement, and told my friends I thought of enlisting in the dragoons. Mr. and Mrs. Parvin remonstrated strongly, and said it would be the death of me to go out in camp that cold winter weather in December, the snow being about six inches deep, and the thermometer down to zero; but my country called me. I found a nice little black pony, and a good messmate, in the person of D. R. Warfield, who had a splendid coon robe, and I furnished the blankets. So we mounted and formed into the line of Captain Hastings' company of dragoons, and I was immediately made second corporal. This raised me above the privates, and raised my ambition some, and improved my health.

Fire arms were scarce, and if we should stop to look them up it would delay us in getting to the seat of war, besides they would be troublesome to carry. I got hold of a little crooked sword, about the shape of a half of a barrel hoop, and buckled that on to support the dignity of my office.

The infantry, baggage wagons, and military stores, with a barrel marked "*vinegar*," started on some two hours ahead of the dragoons, for we had considerable delay, in consequence of some of our drafted men deserting, and we had a good deal of trouble to get our company out of town. Captain Hastings had a long Indian spear, with a few red and blue ribbons tied to it, a formidable looking weapon. He succeeded in getting his company out of town, and took the road in the rear, and swore he would run the first man through who attempted to desert.

We rode briskly on about twenty miles, to the Iowa river, below opposite Wapello, where a halt was called to camp for the night. The infantry, baggage wagons, dragoons, and all came up in good order. Supper was got, consisting of fried pork and short-cake; the snow was scraped away,

and the blankets and robes spread down ready for camping. We had a little drum major, who had for some time been honored by the title of "The Duke." Well, that evening, by some unaccountable mistake, the Duke's drum-head was broken in, and the drum used as a vessel of dishonor. Dr. Eli Reynolds, the surgeon of the regiment, in crossing the Iowa river that evening on the ice, broke in, but was pulled out, having taken a cool bath in a zero night. A few hours' sound sleep that night drove away all stupidity and dumb ague. Breakfast over, the camp was raised, the river crossed in safety, by dragging the loaded wagons over by hand, and we were soon on our line of march.

This night we halted at Flint creek bottom. We were building fires and preparing for camping, when the drum and fife was heard coming over the Flint hills, and soon the Iowa grays, under command of Captain J. W. Grimes, who bore the sad news that peace was declared. But our ambition and courage was raised even higher at the news of peace, and we were ordered to reload our wagons and take up our line of march to Burlington, about three miles.

I believe I never saw a wilder set of men and greater carousal than there was that night in the city of Burlington. It was then the capital of the territory. The legislature was then in session, occupying the new brick Methodist church for the house of representatives, on the floor of which most of our soldiers were permitted to camp that night.

The two high contending parties agreed to submit their difficulty to congress, and stop the effusion of blood, just before blood was shed. Congress appointed a commissioner and authorized the Governor of Missouri to appoint one, and the Governor of Iowa to appoint one, to run the boundary line between the state and territory, in conformity with the act of congress for the admission of Missouri into the Union. Dr. James Davis was the commissioner for Iowa. These commissioners had no difficulty in agreeing to settle

it upon the old original line, which had been accepted as the true line for nearly twenty years.

Thus ended the Missouri war and the foolish scheme of the half-breed land speculators, who should have been indicted for getting up a riot, sedition, and mutiny, and imprisoned until their rights to the half-breed lands were outlawed.

INCIDENTS CONNECTED WITH THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF
MARION COUNTY.

BY WM. M. DONNEL.

DURING the year 1848 a saw and grist mill was erected on South Cedar river, on what is now the site of the pleasant and flourishing town of Marysville, in Liberty township. It was built, owned, and operated by Josiah Brobst, and was at times resorted to by persons from a great distance for breadstuffs. Particularly during the spring and summer of 1851 many came from Warren, Lucas, Jasper, and Mahaska counties, some with ox teams, and waited many tedious days and nights to get a supply of corn ground for their needy families at home. The flood of that season had thrown many other mills out of repair, or otherwise rendered them useless for the time being, compelling a resort to this, under extreme difficulties, and for some time the mill ran constantly day and night to supply the urgent demand. Then it was no pleasant situation to be the proprietor of this establishment, and Mr. Brobst was not the man to feel the responsibility less than any other. When customers would come from afar with their limited supply of

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