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HISTORY OF DAVIS COUNTY, IOWA.

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CHAPTER 11.

A DANCE.

The squatters on this disputed ground as well as the early pioneers of our county, were generous and hospitable to a fault, and the sport of their social gatherings none the less keenly relished for springing from the cabins of the west, in an almost unsettled region. And our people were always ready, at any time, to engage in whatever sports were thought best calculated to amuse the neighborhood. Some amusing accounts could be given of the way in which our pioneers conducted their social and public gatherings. An account of a *regular dance*, which took place some twenty years ago at the house of Frederick Atchison, we think will do to record. To Judge McAttee, who was at that time an unmarried man, residing on his claim in this county, we are indebted for the particulars. It seems that all the folks in the settlement had collected at Mr. Atchi-

son's cabin, it being central, for the purpose of having a dance, &c.; and in order that no time should be lost, the evening meal was served at an early hour. All things being in readiness, the evening exercises began, ere the twilight hours had departed. But a few (the Judge among the number) who lived some ten miles distant, arrived just in time to be classed with that ancient gentleman, *Mr Tucker*, who stands so prominent in the songs of our country. Musicians were not so numerous, perhaps, in those days as at present, so that the services of all whose talent had inclined them toward cat gut and horse hair, was called into requisition. Mc, being one of that class of individuals who "hath music in his soul," and who "is moved by a concord of sweet sounds," having bolted a cup of hot coffee, immediately began the task of making "music for the million!" The party went on, and on went the dance for several hours, without intermission, except an occasional halt to consult the contents of an old stone jug, which had lost its handle, and which, from its black, greasy appearance, evidently had seen some service. This jug, Mr. Atchison, the host, passed around, first serving the ladies and then the gentlemen. For convenience sake, as Mr. Atchison passed along with the jug, he also carried a tin cup. As he stopped at each guest, he placed the jug upon his right knee, and held the cup in his left hand, and in order to pour the whiskey into the cup, he raised the leg upon which the jug was placed. Thus everything went on finely to all outward appearances for several hours; but McAtee who had been laboring hard on his own "claim" all day, and had rode some eight miles to participate in the amusements of the evening began to feel that something more nourishing than the contents of the aforementioned jug, would do *that* portion of the party no material injury. He therefore mentioned his wants to some friend who made a promise to supply his wants with a *pie* as soon as the *set* then on the floor should have completed certain *figures*. Pleased with such a prospect, our musician, with renewed energy brought into requisition his whole musical talent and skill in

the production of "a concord of sweet sounds," in the well known song,

"When I went down to the kitchen door," &c.,

and when the *reel* was out, Mr. Samuel Riggs went in search of the promised pie. Mac's already sharpened appetite assumed a keener tone, and his mouth had already begun to water at the prospect before him. No doubt he thought as the poet hath said,

"I am giddy; expectation whirls me round,
The imaginary relish is so sweet,
That it enchants my sense."

But O! horrible! just then friend Riggs appeared with a huge frozen corn *dodger*! and the sad intelligence that he could find nothing else about the premises! The extra tone given to his craving appetite while viewing the promised delicacy through the mind's eye, had so increased his appetite that he made several attempts to *pitch into* the frozen morsel, but with poor success. All his efforts in that direction having proved ineffectual, he applied to a young lady acquaintance, who said she thought there was something to eat under the bed, as she had noticed Mrs. Atchison, the hostess, crawl under it several times during the evening, and get something for the children. "There is no use in having long legs unless you make use of them," thought Mac. He therefore invited the lady to take a seat with him on the side of the bed, and while thus seated, under the similitude of a *western spark*, he poked his long leg under the bed, and got the toe of his boot into a box of sweet cakes! He dragged the box forward, and by proper use of a long arm, managed to fill his bosom with its contents without being detected. Replacing the box, he excused himself to the lady, and having given several of the boys the wink, they retired without the cabin. and in a proper manner disposed of his booty. Feeling materially refreshed, Mac returned to his instrument, and when the grey of morn began to peep, the light fantastic toe ceased to keep time with the music. The ball now closed. All had enjoyed themselves in a most satisfactory manner. A parting dram from the jug and cup, with a few

jokes and quaint remarks on the incidents of the night, together with the compliments of the morning, prepared the *squatters* for a separation. When it was fully daylight, Mac happened to notice the frozen *pone* he had encountered during the night, and on examination found that, in his efforts to penetrate it, had bruised his gums so much that he had left the marks of blood upon it! The cabin of Mr. Atchison, like all others of its time in this meridian, had a puncheon floor; and the greatest trouble and annoyance of the party was a narrow puncheon, which was put in to fill up a crack in the floor. This puncheon was not as thick as the others, and when trod upon gave way, so as to cause the unlucky one to fall! Hence, at a certain stage of the dance, notice was many times given during the evening by the exclamation, "Look out for the narrow puncheon!"

HOW THEY FARED.

The pioneers of our county were a hardy, industrious sort of people, most of whom had been raised to labor and industry. The first settlers were from Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana principally—about one-half of the population, for the first three or four years, being from the slaveholding States. At the present time, there are about 3,000 of our population whose place of nativity is south of Mason and Dixon's line. Early impressed with the necessity of earning their bread with their own hands, the early settlers were well adapted to the toils and privations incident to the new country they had chosen for their homes. By the terms of a treaty between the United States Government and the Indians, on the first day of **May** in this year, the "White Man" was permitted to enter upon the *Purchase*, as this part of the country was called by the pioneers. Some, however, in violation of the law, had already crossed the forbidden line and entered upon the Indian territory in order to seek out the most desirable locations for claims. Many were the hardships and privations endured by the early settlers of our county, and many incidents might be

related in illustration. Among the first to enter here without permission before the time had arrived, was Mr. John Lang. He, with others, having taken a tour through the "Purchase," with a view of "staking out claims" whereon to *squat* for a home, the Dragoons were put upon their trail by the Indians—came upon their camp—destroyed it, and pursued the invading pioneers to the brush in that region of our country now known as "Hacklebarny." Here the fleeing adventurers took refuge among the abundance of undergrowth in that locality, and thus escaped an arrest by Uncle Sam's boys. Having remained secreted for several days, they at length came forth and made their way to Van Buren County for safety. Others had built cabins, made rails, and other improvements preparatory to bringing their families to the "Purchase" at the earliest possible moment after the first of May, had the same burnt by the Dragoons or Indians, or both.

On first entering the "Purchase" in May, 1843, many of the families of the pioneers camped upon their "claims" without a shelter, other than that made by poles stuck in the ground, with an old quilt stretched over the top, and here remained, in order to hold their "claims" until a cabin could be put up. The cabins built that spring were generally about from 10 by 12, to 12 by 16 feet, low, made of small round logs, and variously covered. Some with clapboards, some with prairie sod, and others with quilts or wagon covers. The manners of the settlers among themselves were affectionate and familiar. The possession of wealth, or even property, was not then as now, evidence of high moral and intellectual capacity, and, therefore, a passport to the confidence and favor of society. There were none of the vexations and heart burnings, generated by rival grades or casts in their small communities; but in their intercourse, sincere friendship and confidence cemented them together as a true and generous band of brothers. An eloquent writer has said: "No people of any country or age made greater sacrifices for the benefit of their posterity, than those which were made by the first settlers of the western region." What people ever left such noble legacies to pos-

terity as those transmitted by our forefathers to their descendants?

A BEAR HUNT.

Although bears were not numerous in this part of the country at this date, in the winter of 1841-2, Mr. W. T. Johnson discovered that one had been passing through his premises. He took the track, which led toward the north, in the direction of a very brushy part of the county in which he was not very well acquainted. Not being accustomed to hunting bears, he was not altogether willing to risk himself alone in the pursuit of bruin. He therefore called on Wau-pe-keak-ke, (White Hawk,) to accompany him. This Indian being fond of sport, and especially fond of bear's meat, at once set out with Mr. Johnson, and having traveled some fifteen miles, about dark came upon his bearship about eight miles from home, and in one of the worst thickets of brush on Jaquest. Mr. Johnson remained at the margin of the thicket, to take care of the horses, while Waa-pe-keak-ke followed after the bear. Having shot him with three heavy rifle balls, he succeeded, in capturing him about ten o'clock at night. When bruin was dead, Mr. Johnson joined his companion, and the beast being cut in twain each took a-half before him on his horse and started homeward. The night drew darker about the time they were ready to return, there were no roads in those days, and the hunters had to pass through a rough country and cross Fox river. Hence they made but slow time, and having encountered many difficulties on the way, reached the cabin of Johnson next morning about light. This was Mr. Johnson's first and last hunt, and had it not been for his friend, and companion in this chase, Wau-pe-keak-ke, he would not have succeeded in taking his game. This Indian was quite a favorite in the settlement, and took much delight in hunting with the whites. Like others of his tribe, he would get drunk whenever he could get whiskey, and was, at one time, rescued from death by freezing when intoxicated, by the timely aid of Charles Evans and Shelby Farris.

THEY EAT A COON.

In 1841, a Mr. Cornelius, from Boone county, Missouri, made a claim, north-east of where Bloomfield now is, on the farm now owned by Joseph V. Evans. He made things ready for raising a cabin, and invited his neighbors, (none of whom lived nearer than six miles,) to assist him. On the day appointed, six *settlers* repaired to the spot, raised the house and put on the roof. By the time the job was completed it was night, and Mr. Cornelius had nothing to offer his fellow *squatters* to eat. He had a first rate coon dog, however, and all hands turned out, and in less than an hour had taken a very large fat coon. This they carried to the newly raised cabin and roasted without salt or any other seasoning, and had a regular feast! Soon after Mr. Cornelius got into his new house, and about the time the house and property of Mr. Culver was destroyed by the Dragoons, this house was also set on fire. Mr. Cornelius did not like to see his cabin burn, and as soon as the Dragoons had left the house, he tore it down and thus saved it from burning; at the time thinking, no doubt, that he would have it put up again. In a few days, however, he took his family and returned to Missouri. About this time the attention of a good many of the citizens of Van Buren county was attracted in this direction, and Mr. Israel Kister, Mr. Hale and McMains made a tour up this way. They examined the place where Bloomfield now stands, and all the country "round about," and being from a timbered country, concluded that there was not sufficient timber in this neighborhood to support three farms! They "returned home," says Mr. Kister, after laying in Fox bottom, or rather sitting against a large elm tree one night, without any kind of bedding" Their horses tied to trees with but sixteen ears of corn to divide between three horses. It snowed all night, and as soon as day peeped, we divided our corn-dodger with our horses and evacuated the new purchase!

THE TREASURER LOVES HIS BOOKS AND PAPERS.

For some time after our county was organized, the county

officers did not reside at the county seat, but were ready to transact business at all times—when and wherever called upon. And that they might not be unprepared, the books and papers of their respective offices were carried in their hats. Maj. Calvin Taylor, our first Treasurer, during the term of his office, was engaged in the business of breaking prairie, and as the custom is, in the evening the oxen were set at liberty to graze during the night, and some times under such circumstances they stray away. Our Treasurer's team having done so upon one occasion, he was in search of them, and while looking after the motive power of his occupation, some where in the brush along Fox river, he had the misfortune to lose all the books and papers belonging to his office, which at that time he was carrying in his hat! He made diligent search for the lost *Treasure*, and as we learn, found part of it, but we understand that some important papers were never recovered.

FIRST LAWSUIT.

The first lawsuit in our county was between Joseph Carter, as plaintiff, and Aaron Earnest, as defendant, for the price of a "claim." The particulars of this suit, we obtained from Judge McAtee, who was present, and acted as one of the arbitrators in settling the case. It was at an early day in our history, and before we had any Iowa officers in our county, but the county had been honored with one of those important functionaries called a county justice, who held his office by appointment from the "Governor of Missouri." Reuben Riggs, Esq., was the justice, and when the plaintiff's grievances could no longer be borne, he called at the cabin of the Squire and put in his cause of action, by telling him that he had been badly treated by Earnest, and that he wished the justice "to warrant him." A writing was made out by the justice, called a "summons," which informed the defendant that he had been "warranted," and the cause set for trial on a certain day. On the day named for investigation the whole neighborhood, as well as the parties to the action, appeared to witness the

trial, swap horses, drink whiskey, &c. As the time approached for the trial to begin, the parties became alarmed,—didn't know what might be the result if the matter was once fairly in law, both being disposed to do what was right, a proposition was made and accepted to compromise the matter by leaving it to three of the settlers to say how much, if any thing, the defendant should pay. This mode of settlement was not entirely new, for as long ago as 1748 an order of the Superior council of the ancient territory of Louisiana of which our county formed a part, had been made, declaring that in future whenever there were no officers of justice, two responsible inhabitants should be authorized to draw up the necessary writings, to be attested by two witnesses, and the same should be valid. Whether the pioneers of our county in attendance before the county justice of Missouri in this case had a knowledge of this ancient decree, I am not prepared to say, but upon that principle they acted, and made a selection of three settlers to decide the dispute. The *squatters* designated to settle the case, having canvassed the whole matter, and given it due consideration, decided that the defendant should pay the plaintiff one hundred and fifty dollars *in trade*.

This decision being satisfactory to both parties, and all hands, including the Court, having liquored up, the same arbitrators were called upon to value the property to be received by the plaintiff in payment of the judgment. The property was valued, paid over and the judgment satisfied—the plaintiff and defendant both being required to *treat*, which was done, and the parties and settlers all returned to their homes well pleased with the turn the suit had taken. Thus was begun and ended, the first lawsuit within the limits of our county.

SENT TO THE PENITENTIARY.

The first person sent to the State's Prison from our county, was John Wright, a Mormon, who was found guilty of stealing a pair of work cattle, belonging to one Jesse Day. He was arrested by Flemming Mize, John Masters and others, and

brought before the writer, then one of the Justices of the Peace, for examination on the charge of Grand Larceny. This was in 1847. Albeit, there was no law authorizing it, in those days it was the custom among the Justices on the trial or investigation of a case of much importance, to call to their aid any other justice in the county to sit and give advice upon matters and things in general. This being a case of some magnitude, we called to our aid John H. Zimmer, one of the justices of the "Hairy Nation," who, as all the old settlers can bear witness, was fully competent to render material aid in matters of law.

The accused had been prowling through the county for some time, under the names of John Jones and John Smith, as well as John Wright, so that the information on which he was arraigned, charged one John Wright, *alias* Jones, *alias* Smith, with stealing the cattle. The charge having been read to the prisoner, and a plea of "not guilty" put in, we were about to proceed with the investigation, when Justice Zimmer, with anxiety depicted on his countenance, turned to the principal justice, and in a very low tone of voice remarked :

"Squire, hadn't we better try the *two women* first?"

The principal justice not comprehending what the "Hairy Nation" Justice meant by this remark, hesitated for an instant, when the assistant, perceiving that he was not understood, continued :

"Have the constable bring in *Alice* Jones, and try her first."

The accused was held to bail, in default of which he was placed in the jail of Van Buren county, for safe keeping until the next term of the Court. Meanwhile he pretended to have become crazed, and when about to be put upon his trial, before the District Court, of which Cyrus Olin was Judge, an investigation was had as to the sanity of the prisoner. All the physicians of our county, and some from a distance were subpoenaed to examine the accused, and give testimony. Among the physicians was Dr. John D. Elbert, of Van Buren county, a gentleman of very dark complexion. In giving his opinion of the condition of the prisoner, he referred to the vibrations of

the pulse, and said that it would be a difficult matter to arrive at a correct conclusion as to a person's sanity by that means; for, said he, "the pulse of a dark skinned man, like my friend Knapp here, is much slower than one of a fair complexion, like your Honor." Judge Knapp, not being quite as dark as the witness, immediately suggested in an inquiring manner, that perhaps the pulse of the doctor ceased to beat altogether, at times! This being such a capital hit, it was some minutes before an attempt was made to restore order.

About the time of the completion of the new log Court house mentioned in another place, our town consisted of three stores, one grocery, one black-smith shop, and some eight or ten families. The hotel under the name of the "Bloomfield Hotel," was kept by Lloyd A. Nelson, in a log house, one story and a half high, recently standing on the South side of the Public Square. The grocery was kept by James M. Paris (commonly called "Jimmer,") Hardin D. Paris, (called "hardened sinner,") and Joel G. Paris, in what was called "Jimmer's Rat Row," now no more. The sitting of the District court about this time was reckoned to be one of the most important events that could take place. And in order that the "big bugs" from a distance should be well cared for, our hotel accommodations were looked to by our landlord with great care, and extra preparation made in advance of the time. At the second or third session of the court in our county, all things were favorable for a "big time," and hence the hotel was full to overflowing. And as was the custom in those days, the *settlers* were not wanting in sports to amuse themselves, and pass off the evenings. The attorneys from all the surrounding counties were in attendance, and by a judicious use of their time during the day, they had a portion towards evening left, which was divided between the Bloomfield House and Jimmer's Rat Row. Jimmer, (as he kept the liquor,) generally claimed their attendance first; hence, by the time the hotel came in for its portion, the guests were in a very proper plight to make each a very full hand.

A HIGH TIME.

At the time we allude to, Hon. George G. Wright, Hon. J. C. Knapp, Hon. A. Hail, deceased, Col. J. W. Minor of Mo., Hon. Chas. Negus and many other distinguished attorneys from abroad as well as all the prominent *Settlers* of the "Hairy Nation" were attending court, and stopping at the hotel and grocery. The business of the court for the second or third day having ended, some repaired to the hotel and some to "Jimmer's" (who by the way also entertained strangers.) And when the exercises of the evening had advanced so that night stole in apace, those at the hotel having had their *board*, sought a bed also. By the time the no inconsiderable number that "mine host" had "taken in" were stowed away for the night, every bed in the hotel was occupied, and half a score or upwards safely lodged on the floor both above and below stairs! About the time Morpheus had clasped the greater number of them in his embrace, a platoon from "Jimmer's" arrived, with the late Chief Justice Hall, at the head, who sought to obtain a place whereon "to rest and refresh themselves." Finding farther accommodations in that line out of the landlord's power to furnish, they determined to have some sport. Those out side of the pale of sleeping quarters, proceeded to disturb the dreams of those within, by taking them by their pedal extremities and dragging them from their sleeping places. In the shortest time imaginable, the hotel presented a scene of greatest confusion. None were so lucky as to escape being hauled out of bed, and when thus ousted, none were noticed whose modesty prevented them taking a hand in the fun (?) Some one of the company was bound up in a sheet, a bed cord attached between the roof and the rafters of the building, and several persons at the end of the rope, going through a *sea-saw* motion continued to draw the bound attorney up to the roof, and then let him down again, until at length he was drawn up with so much force that he broke the rope, giving him such a fall as almost to make the foundation of the hotel tremble! The beds were all taken to pieces and scattered

over the rooms, and several gentlemen were put out of the upper windows and let down to the ground with the bed cords! After the attack was made, no one made a halt to dress himself, but "pitched in" as he was. As confusion reigned nearly all night, of course no one received much rest or sleep, and all were more or less bruised and scratched, but none took offense. At the calling of the court next morning, each man was at his post ready, as good citizens, to discharge the duties imposed upon him by his obligations as a *squatter*, under the rules of court or the provisions of the "Blue Back."

A WEDDING.

In May, 1847, about the time the last of the Mormons were leaving this part of the country, and making their way to Kane (now the city of Council Bluffs) and other points on the Missouri river, an old gentleman and lady by the name of Jolly, residing just on the State line, started to Salt Lake City. They had an only daughter, whose charms had attracted the attention of one John Paris, the susceptibility of whose heart had yielded to cupid's arrows. Indeed, the lovers had oft times, in shady nooks by sparkling rills, declared their love to each other, and John had gone so far as to consult "Pa" on the subject of matrimony. But the aged parents could not, for a moment, think of leaving their only child behind among the "Gentiles," while they themselves would join the "saints" in the great valley. In short, they said that John could not have Lina Maniza.

One fine morning in May, the family (consisting of the old folks, the girl and a negro boy,) made a start for the west. About ten o'clock in the morning they passed by a field where John was engaged in raking stalks, preparing the ground for the plow. The sight of Lina, coupled with the thought that he might "ne'er look upon her like again," was more than he could bear. He, therefore, after they had gone some distance, unharnessed his horse, and barefooted, without coat or vest, with no saddle or blanket, rode on after them. Passing

through the county seat, telling his errand to a few friends, he overtook the migrating party where they had encamped for the night, on the banks of the Fox river near town. Here he tarried with Mr. Jolly and family till morning, but failed to obtain the old man's consent to a marriage. About sunrise they parted—Mr. Jolly and family resuming their journey westward, and John returning to Bloomfield. Stopping at "Jimmer's" grocery, he told of his ill success. Some one suggested that a company be raised to follow on and see the girl, and in the event that she wished to marry John, bring her back at all hazards, without regard to what her father might say. Accordingly some fifteen of our citizens—the high Sheriff among the number—armed with old rusty muskets without locks, brass pistols out of repair, and other weapons of *offense* and *defense*, started with John in pursuit of the party Salt-Lake-ward bound. About two miles north-west of town on the divide road, the pursuing party was discovered by Mr. Jolly, who was only some 300 or 400 yards in advance. He halted directly, and John and his friends seeing that he took a seat on the ground, calculated his "voice was not for war," and at once stacked their *arms* in the corner of the fence hard by. They approached Mr. and Mrs. Jolly, and made known the object of their visit. A consultation between the old folks took place. While Mr. and Mrs. Jolly were making up their minds as to the best course for them to pursue, John and Lina were also engaged in a conversation. The company were all much interested just then, and by putting in a word occasionally, aided materially in bringing matters to a crisis.

Lina's parents having obtained the consent of their own minds to the marriage, with hearts overflowing with love for their daughter, shed many tears of regret and affection. Being asked by Mr. Johnson, if he consented to the marriage, Mr. Jolly replied that he did; provided they were married before he parted with his daughter. The writer was one of the company, and being a Justice of the Peace, was authorized to solemnize the marriage. We had no license, however, but being a friend of the Clerk, and at that time courting

one of his girls, (she is now our wife,) we felt safe in taking the responsibility of making a license for the occasion. We therefore seated ourself on the sod, and with pencil in hand wrote a marriage license on the leaf of a pass book. By virtue of the old "Blue back" and by this authority, by the road side on the broad prairie, we united them in holy wedlock. To seal this

"Contract of eternal bond of love,
Confirmed by mutual joinder of hands,
Attested by the holy close of lips"

Mr. Jolly drew from his wagon a ten-gallon keg of prime *scu-to-appo*, (vulgarly called old Bourbon,) of which all hands partook. John took Lina Maniza on his horse *behind him*, first having bid farewell to Mr. and Mrs. Jolly, and we parted—the Jolly family going toward Salt Lake, the *jolly crowd* toward Bloomfield. Six years after the marriage, Mr. Paris brought me two bushels and a half of Irish potatoes in payment of my *official interference* on this occasion. Mr. and Mrs. Paris are still residing in our county—have a family of several children and are getting along in the world first rate.

[To be Continued.]

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