

JUDGE ORLANDO C. HOWE  
SOMEWHAT OF HIS LIFE AND LETTERS

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[Continued]

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PART II—CORRESPONDENCE—1855—1863

I

Orlando C. Howe's letters to Mrs. Howe were with few exceptions matter-of-fact in narrative, free from all flippancy or smartness, and with no attempts at rhetorical finesse or flare. They give us accounts of business trips with descriptions of scenery that attracted him which he thinks will interest those in the home circle. Inquiries about the domestic needs and perplexities and observations upon the common serious concerns of daily life abound. Now and then, but rarely, he comments upon matters and men within his business connections or professional circuit. Throughout, his letters are remarkably free from animadversion, or any adverse reflections upon business competitors or professional associates. They relate none of the common current gossip that constitutes so much of the daily conversation of ordinary mortals.

Here and there he indulges in mild facetiousness. In his first letter written from Iowa, penned at Dubuque, sometime in November, 1855, he hits off effectively the mushroom growth of new towns on the frontier, and the fantastic creations and expectations of western land boomers:

Now, Maria, I am mad. While eating my breakfast somebody stole my town; for on looking on the map for 1856!! (folks get early starts out this way) I find two cities at the south bend [of the Minnesota River] Mankato City and South Bend City, probably started by some enterprising capitalist like myself, perhaps not so rich in money as I am, but having a few spare  $\$ \frac{1}{4}$  instead of halves, but having more energy, he worked while I *dreamed* and *wished* over the stove at home.

Captain Howe's letters from barracks or camp while in

service with the Ninth Iowa Cavalry in Missouri and Arkansas, were of the same general character—earnest in purpose, serious in narrative, direct and simple in style. As they constitute a clearly marked group they will be characterized later.

Mrs. Howe's letters are like her husband's, direct in expression and concerned with the prosaic every-day affairs of her family and connections. She sees the humor in the doings of those roundabout; but she does not forget that life is always a serious matter when children and health, income and education are to be insured.



MARIA WHEELOCK HOWE  
(Mrs. Orlando C. Howe).  
From a tintype furnished by her daughter,  
Mrs. Evelyn H. Porter, Lynn Haven, Florida.

The letters of Mr. and Mrs. Howe give us two sets of contemporary pictures that are of present-day interest:

First, Mr. Howe's letters enable us to see somewhat of the industrial conditions in Iowa just before the panic of 1857 prostrated business enterprise, and Mrs. Howe's letters show us some of the depression and distress in New York that preceded the panic which impelled the Howes to leave their old

home in western New York. The decade following the Mexican War witnessed the same sort of variable reactions in trade and finance and industry that the present generation have endured since the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918.

Second, Captain Howe's letters written from the southern camps during the Civil War, partly from Missouri but mainly from Arkansas, and Mrs. Howe's letters from Newton during the same period, afford us intimate and vivid accounts of some of the trying conditions that affected the family life of the average citizen whose family at home was striving to make both ends meet when the unpredictable disturbances of war disorganized ordinary business, and monetary inflation made stationary and uncertain incomes shrink in buying power.

The letters of Judge and Mrs. Howe give us effective and vivid narratives of the feelings, opinions and experiences of the average family that came west to Iowa in the middle years of the last century. They afford us a picture of the general level of life. They were not of the frontiersman type, neither the hunter nor the trapper, nor the restless "squatter" species who "move on" when the neighbors become too numerous. Neither were they of the so-called "upper crust" or of the "capitalistic class" that generally follow the pioneers, and with their surplus capital or credit acquire many of the best holdings of the men who first break the virgin soil, in consequence of financial distress, which usually compelled the occupiers or owners to sell or abandon their rights.

Another noticeable fact in the letters of each of the correspondents mainly quoted is that neither one comments on local or national politics in their earlier letters. Each one merely refers once or twice to the existence of the "American" party; Mr. Howe at the outset was of that party. You would not know that there was such a matter as the "Slavery Question," the "Fugitive Slave Law," or "Bleeding Kansas" splitting the heavens. In the later letters written during the Civil War Mrs. Howe now and then refers to local political drifts or national events, but always in the way of conveying news to her husband who was distant from the common sources of information. We find almost no "social philosophy," no "views" expressed on burning issues disturbing the public mind. And in this respect the Howe letters probably represent

the vast majority of the average citizenship of the two decades comprehended in the letters, to wit—1850–1860.

The correspondence of Judge Howe, received from the daughters and deposited in the Historical Department, relates to five general periods:

1—Letters written in New York by him or by members of his family, prior to his coming to Iowa in 1855, several by Maria Wheelock, then a teacher in the public schools of Buffalo, later his wife;

2—Letters written from Iowa by Mr. Howe to Mrs. Howe, incident to his coming to Iowa and settling in Newton, in Jasper County;

3—Letters written chiefly by Mr. Howe preceding and following the Indian Massacre at Spirit Lake, between 1856 and 1858;

4—Letters written between 1858 and the Sioux outbreak of 1862 which caused him to remove with his family from Spirit Lake to Newton; and

5—Letters by Captain Howe while in Missouri and Arkansas with the Ninth Iowa Cavalry during the Civil War, 1863–1864, to Mrs. Howe, and various letters of Mrs. Howe to Captain Howe.

Many more letters might have been available but for their destruction by rain, in whole or in part, or their dispersion in one of the storms that so frequently in recent years have devastated various sections of Florida. Several of those in possession have some portions obliterated, and some pages are missing in others.

With the foregoing there is a considerable number of letters written by Judge's Howe's father and mother, and his sisters and brothers- and sisters-in-law, before and after their removal from New York to Iowa; but only a few of them are reproduced in what follows.

The letters which follow relate mainly to three periods, namely:

First, Mr. Howe's experiences in Iowa in 1855–56, giving his first impressions of the state and its landscapes, and descriptions of its life in the rush of the middle years of the '50s;

Second, the doings of Mr. Howe and his partners in forwarding their Spirit Lake venture and their experiences after

discovering the victims of Inkpaduta's attack upon the settlement on the shores of the Obobojs; and,

Third, the correspondence of Captain and Mrs. Howe while the former was in service as captain of Company L of the Ninth Iowa Cavalry in Missouri and Arkansas in 1863-1864.

## II

Mr. Howe left his family in Alden, New York, sometime in the middle or latter part of October, or possibly in the forepart of November, 1855. The first letter that we have was written at Dubuque, Iowa, on the evening of the first day of his arrival, but the date of the month is not stated.

From various items in Mrs. Howe's letters it seems clear that she was engaged in teaching school at the same time that she was attending to her household duties. The letters of the sisters of Mr. Howe indicate that they were all more or less engaged in studies, learning German, among other scholarly pursuits.

The full names, addresses, occupations, and connections of various persons referred to in Mrs. Howe's letters penned in Alden, New York, before she departed for Iowa, other than the brothers and sisters of Mr. and Mrs. Howe, have not been traced, nor any attempt made to show them.

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Dubuque, Iowa, [1855]. Wednesday, 9½ P. M.

My dear Wife:

Here I am in Iowa at last. Have just arrived and not seen anything for it is as dark as the "Lancaster Ride from Institute Night." A stirring city this. I am at the Peaselee House, cheap house comparatively, though nothing is cheap in this state. Do you know what I-O-W-A-H means in Indian? A book here tells me it is "I have found the happy land."<sup>40</sup> The ride today after getting a few miles from Chicago is through a most beautiful and rich country. The houses look very few and scattered but are of fine appearance. Some places appear like

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<sup>40</sup> Mr. Howe apparently had just read the first edition of *Iowa As It Is in 1855: A Gazetteer for Citizens and a Handbook for Emigrants, etc.*, by N. Howe Parker, wherein he was informed:

"A home can be had by the poorest, with prudence and economy. *No place in the wide world can offer greater inducements to the immigrant than Iowa; but he must look at it as it is* [Italics by Parker] \* \* \* He may fancy Iowa a garden, and, roaming over its prairies, gather flowers from its rich soil, and exclaim with the Indian, in ecstasies of delight, 'I-o-wah'—'I have found the beautiful land!' but it will never make him rich, nor create him a happy home, without toil and labor."—p. 68.

The local poets and romantics have a sorry controversy with the prosaic realists who dwell in the matter-of-fact. The latter insist that the true meaning of "Iowa" was either "This is the place," or "The Crossing" or "Dirty noses" or "Dusty Faces."

elegant country seats in the midst of the most fertile land. Every[thing] whirls fast in this country. It most makes me dizzy, railroads and railroad schemes are so thick that no one can keep track of them. Four distinct routes are projected (and all commenced but one), that lead from the Mississippi to the Missouri.

I made up my mind when leaving Buffalo and seeing the number of persons going to "look up a home in Iowa or Minnesota" that I would preempt a farm as soon as I could get back a hundred miles or so from the river and find plenty of timber. I do not believe there are twenty lots in market in the state that have good timber on them, and in the extreme northwest counties squatter claims cover every good location of timber and can be bought for from \$50.00 to \$10,000.00 a claim of 320 acres. Pretty profitable squatting that.

The towns in the country that were just heard of last year have from 500 to 1500 inhabitants. Sioux City was started last year by some one who guessed out my idea of a great place at the mouth of the Great Sioux on the Missouri and went there. "Eligible city lots near the wharf contiguous to the market and on the college square, and containing from  $\frac{1}{8}$  to a whole acre can be bought for from \$50.00 to \$1,000.00, one half done, the rest in one year." The railroad from Dubuque *will be built* there in a few years. "Good timber claims can be bought reasonably within a few miles, and plenty of the best of prairie at government price, and north and northwest it is supposed that some vacant timber may be found that can be claimed but is not in market."

All the lumber except oak for this city has to be brought from St. Louis, transportation from 1 to 2 dollars a hundred. Think of buying pine and then paying "2 cents a pound" for taking it home, rather expensive I guess. You had better send Linnie<sup>41</sup> along with a handful of Katie's shingles.<sup>42</sup>

You may remember that I spoke of Fort Dodge on the Des Moines as a good site. It is some 180 miles west of here, and the railroad *is* going through it. Last winter there was a fort there, now some 30 houses and the old fort full of settlers, 2 stores, a blacksmith shop, government land office, &c. The houses are logs or built of *oak* boards hauled 30 miles from the nearest mill where they were thirty dollars a thousand. You must know that I mean by now, three months ago probably the city has doubled two or three times since then.

I have received a good deal of information from a man living in Sandusky who has been looking up land on a large scale. Last May they hired a surveyor and his team took a tent and provisions and started paying their surveyor ten dollars a day for him and team, and boarded both.

They traveled through 20 counties in the middle and northern part of the state, and bought over 20,000 acres of land best of prairie but did not find forty acres of timber in the whole tract visited that was not

<sup>41</sup> Evelyn Howe, now Mrs. Ezra F. Porter of Lynn Haven, Florida, older daughter of Judge Howe.

<sup>42</sup> Refers either to Katherine Howe, or Katherine Wheelock.

bought or claimed. Their land is worth double what they paid for it, and within two years they can, I don't doubt, sell most of it at that and a greater advance. I rode from Chicago with him and kept him busy talking. He is a fine man, plainly one of the "first citizens" and gave me more useful information than I could have found by a month of travel.

I will tell you of an instance he gave of the way they are settling the northern part of Iowa. A man moved from Pennsylvania *last spring* or fall, I forget which, and found a place in Howard County 15 miles from any house that he liked, (I mean he liked the location, not the house) and built a house of sod and roofed it with hay cut in prairie. The day after it was done three men called for meals and lodging, so he turned tavern keeper. He paid \$200 for his 160 acres and paid \$2.25 per acre for breaking up 50 acres. When my informant was there last spring, he was breaking and planting corn and potatoes in the sod. This fall he was there again, he had a good block tavern and neighbors all around had been selling off his crops as fast as he could harvest, had received after paying everything, labor, land, and all, \$300 profit. I have no doubt he will do better next year. This was without counting his tavern proceeds, only his crops.

The emigration is beyond all precedent. The cars are full of men coming on in the spring.

I have not found what to do. I know of a place where there is probably timber to be claimed (that is, put stakes at the corners of the claim). It is in the southern part of Minnesota, 150 miles from the river, and a railroad is doubtless to be built in that region. If I could make a claim this winter it would be worth next spring more than double a winter's wages, and I think of going that way, and if settlements extend near enough to make traveling safe I shall try it. If not, I shall start a school or something else and wait till spring. If I get time I will write more before putting this in the office.

Thursday before daylight.

I am most ready for starting. The place I have selected is near the south bend of the Minnesota River about 40 miles from the Iowa line, and 150 above, that is, south of St. Paul. I am *confidentially* informed that a railroad will run from here to the south bend in less than five years. I hope to find a place 20 or 30 miles from settlements, and if so I will stake as good a claim as I can and pay for it when it comes into market, or sell part for enough to purchase the rest.

Don't be alarmed about my taking you into the woods to live. I am in doubt whether to find a school now and teach one quarter and get you here before looking [for] my location, or to look it up, then go to some town in the spring, start a school for you and sisters while I play gentleman and watch the claim. Without joking, I think I can make more money and easier within a year by settling than either schools or law, but don't want to travel in the winter north, though there is but little snow at any time there.

What I want is to be near by in spring. Now, Maria, I am mad.

While eating breakfast somebody stole my town; for on look[ing] at the map for 1856!! (folks get early starts out this way) I find *two* cities at the south bend, Mankato City and South Bend City, probably started by some enterprising capitalist like myself, perhaps not so rich in money as I am, but having a few spare \$¼ instead of halves, but having more energy, he worked while I *dreamed* and *wished* over the stove at home.

My informant's information was three months old, so useless here. Now the western people sha'n't steal my ideas in this way. I'll start. Don't be scared again. I sha'n't go far. I'll work my way in the settlements and as soon as winter breaks up will *try* to hit near where the railroad I speak of will cross the road from Superior City on Lake Superior to Saint Paul, will when extended southwest reach somewhere on the Pacific or Missouri or somewhere else. The last railroad is sure to be built, for the last named place is to be a great city.

Now as soon as you read this rhapsody or whatever you call it, just write me a letter directed "West Union, Fayette County, Iowa." I shall remain near that place long enough to get a letter from you, perhaps two or three. Kiss dear Linnie for me. Don't let her forget me. Read my letter to our folks. I think of you all the time but have no regrets at leaving, and am full of hope. May our God protect thee and all ours.

Orlando C. Howe.

P. S. The great defect of Northern Iowa is want of timber. The great west a thousand miles beyond have the same. All the roads projected from Wisconsin westward will find transportation of timber enough to pay all expenses.

The informant, I have found, is Rice Harper of Sandusky, Ohio. He is some acquainted with Mr. Estabrook. He came to Alden with Dr. Bronson when Eliza was buried. He appears to be a fine man and though a "speculator" will do more to build up the country than most men.

My pet city at the mouth of the Sioux River that you have heard me project so often, has a rival, "Sergeant's Bluffs," a few miles below. I don't think a very great city will grow up this century in that region, but enough to form a good sized city and enrich the proprietors.

O. C. H.

The following is a fragment of a letter of Mrs. Howe, the first pages of which are lost. It is not quite clear whether it was written before or after she had received her first letter from Mr. Howe.

[Alden N. Y. ?]

The weather has been so horrible that the scholars were very unsteady last week and the week before. I dunned them Thursday and have received 12 dollars up to last night so that you see, we are well provided with funds. I wish to bring with me in the spring (if I have money enough to pay transportation) six chairs and one rocking chair, one table, one stand, one bedstead and if I could possibly get a cheap bureau to



pack clothes in instead of box it would cost but little more to bring and be indescribably convenient.

If I can sell the looking-glass I will, if not, may be it could be sold after we got there if we wished it. Mr. Maples returned two or three weeks ago. He liked the country but thinks he cannot stand the huts and want of barns and conveniences. Likes Wisconsin better, but thinks Iowa is the place to make money. Says he spoke to the minister at Clinton about your coming there; and living and teaching together. He (the minister) thought it would be a fine place for a school, but I do not like his description of the place at all. Mr. Maples says before he went this winter he intended if he moved in the spring to take only a little furniture and that the best; now he says all, everything you will need to use if you can possibly pay transportation, if you do not have place for it it will sell so as to pay well.

I spoke with your father about (that apple butter). We concluded that the trouble and expense would be too much to bring it, and so use it to save butter this winter and take a couple bushels extra dried apples. They will dry for me next week racks twice full, (I will prepare them in the evening going down there with all hands).

James is a very good boy this winter and very useful. Lavinia is just as usual, always kind; she says she has no brother in the world so near to her by any approach as yourself, and would rather go with me than be left with all the others, poor girl she will miss us very much.

I have not seen any of Henry's<sup>43</sup> people nor heard from them since you left. Winspear<sup>44</sup> and all the family of five children and one very extensive wife were her New Years. I have been at mothers once, on Christmas. Robert<sup>45</sup> came after me the night before.

Linnie says she don't like cow horses, they have such slow legs. In regard to bringing roots and shrubs, never fear but that I will bring all we can pay for.

I wish I knew something about what it will cost to get there. What if I don't have money enough, what is to be done then? I hope I shall and had supposed it certain until in your last letter you say it cost you three times what you expected. Did it cost you over fifty dollars to go there? I don't think I shall have any more, perhaps not that. Tell me how it costs a great deal to live, and my wood bill will be some.

\* \* \*

Write me all the particulars of places and people of yourself, and your employment, your board, mending, and everything in connection with your prospects, dark or bright as they may be. Have they any Sabbath where you are, and if so how do they keep it? Or does the hurry and whirl of speculation and improvement confine thought to this life only and the things "that perish with the using"? When you think

<sup>43</sup> John Henry Schuneman.

<sup>44</sup> John Winspear, husband of Katherine Wheelock; later residents of Webster City, Iowa.

<sup>45</sup> Robert Wheelock, brother of Mrs. Howe.

of home my dear husband is it sometimes with the prayer that He in whose hand are the appointed times, will bring us all together in health and love? Does absence make your home still dearer? Or, does your heart wander with your footsteps? I trust not, I do not fear it, and believe that when we meet, we will be better prepared to live lovingly, bearing and forbearing tenderly with one another, having learned how necessary we are to each other's happiness. Good-bye for the present.  
Wife.

The first sheets of the letter which follows contained letters from Mr. Howe's sisters, Mary and Sarah, who later came to Spirit Lake and became respectively Mrs. Alfred Arthur, and Mrs. David Weaver, but omitted here.

[Alden, N. Y.], Wednesday, Dec. 17, 1855.

My Dear Husband:

This is quite a family letter you see, the girls commencing what the old ladies must finish. I am glad that you are so well pleased with the "far west" for to me it seems as if you were almost there. It is Friday night just after the scholars are gone and before Linnie has been brought home from your mother's. I am tired for the girls are very wild and sometimes I am discouraged with them and think I will let them act just as they please and learn or not without caring for their interest any more.

It seems a long two weeks since you went away but I know spring will come by and by and Linnie is very impatient to see her new log house. James had a letter from home a few days ago. Catherine is very unwell with a troublesome cough and very low spirited, she does not think she will ever be better, but I cannot think of such a probability. I suppose your next letter will give a description of your new home if that can be home to you without wife and baby.

Be particualar in your description of houses, inhabitants, and scenery, so that I may become acquainted with the place, through your eyes. Bob Kelly called here last night and left an order with me for five dollars worth of goods from Sander's store. He said he had no money, he could not raise any and all his whining stories as usual, I took it to your father who said he would have Sanders — so much on your account at the store. He said he would keep me agoing in groceries or orders of any kind at [the] store *if there was any more coming to* [torn off].

I told him it was a very small part of your account against him but would not tell him how much it was for fear he would stop doing altogether.

Your father wants to know what the account is. Do you know? I have not looked for it. There has been no money sent by mail yet, and so Van Buren has not been paid but he does not seem troubled at all.

I must finish this for the post tonight. Take care of yourself and do not worry about us at home. Write often and tell the particulars.

Your Wife.

Orlando C. Howe,  
Newton, Iowa Falls,  
Jasper, Co. Hardin Co. Iowa.

[Alden N. Y.] Dec. 20th, 1855.

My Husband:

It is Sunday afternoon and the snow so deep there is no going to church today, it lies in great drifts all around. I find upon a survey that my stationery is in a dilapidated condition, no paper, no pen, but will write today with such materials as are on hand since I do not feel that greatest want of time. Jimmy has gone home to stay a few days. I expect him back New Year's Day with his mother, who is better than formerly. I received your letter yesterday after waiting many anxious days in vain. If it will not cost too much I will try and bring a post office up with me in the spring for the accommodation of friends left behind. It was a long time without a letter almost two weeks but when it came at last it was two, both letters coming in, in the same mail. Things move on here about as usual, dull very, and lonesome, but I do not wish you here, oh, no, no, no. I feel that we have stayed here too long already, where a poor man can do nothing unless \* \* \* Last week Mr. Grimes brought that long expected crock of butter for which I paid 25 cts. a pound. How much in Iowa? The weather was very fine until last Wednesday but now it is ferocious, so cold and windy. I hope you will soon find something to do that suits you but I do not mean to worry about you as long as you write you are well, and employment so plenty. I am sure you will earn as much as you could here for there is no law business at all this winter and if you had not gone in the fall I do not think you would in the spring.

Corlett sent a letter with notice of trial in the Johnson suit. I gave it to your father who sent it to Parmenter, was it right? Robert says if you will send him your account against Eggleston and Pat Smith with their assignment he will certainly collect them both or any other accounts that are left unsettled. He will do it I think. Mr. Case (I don't know what one) saw Robert a few days ago and asked when you were coming back, he said he wondered you did not see him before you left, that he had a note of 20 dollars which had been due sometime he had always felt as if you would pay it he said and never wanted to press it, and now he supposed he was safe enough for your father was on the note. I think you had better write to him.

Robert wishes very much to go to Iowa and I sometimes think it would be better for Mother to let him go and see what he could do, but don't know and will not say anything about it.

Aside from the trial of leaving friends I do not in the least shrink from the prospect of hardship, I know that although of a different kind they cannot be worse than we have suffered here. Of a kind more apparent to the stranger's eye perhaps, but without the bitterness of the continually disappointed, and hearts forever wearied by a necessary strife for food and clothing. Oh, no, I do not dread it, the prospect is full of joy. I am so tired of being where the necessity to do is so great and the ability so limited.

Alden, January 2, [1856].

My dear Husband:

Yesterday I wrote a few lines to you promising both you and myself a long letter today, but today, has brought with it the sick headache so that although now four o'clock I have just got up. I was very sorry to hear that you have not heard from home. Truly your heart has wandered with your footsteps. I know that you have suffered much from anxiety and suspense. Before this you have I hope received letters informing that we were well and have been so through the winter. My eyes are about as usual, very weak and painful in the evening, no worse than last winter I think. Eveline is well, and grows fast; she does not improve much in morals or deportment, but physically is in excellent condition. Your mother pronounces her uncommonly good, rather mischievous sometimes but very good. I have written you so many letters none of which you have received that I don't know what to say in this without going over as it were with all the others. I have no doubt that your preemption of a farm was the best thing you could do for the future, and the best for the present probably. Although attended with many hardships, I cannot say that I fear them much, of a different kind from those we have endured but not attended with such heartbreaking, courage-deadening hopelessness.

I have never regretted the decision to go to Iowa and if you can live through the winter, have no doubt it was better to go when you did than to have waited until spring. Alden is duller than ever, positively nothing doing here, no law business, no blacksmithing, nothing at all. Your father wishes much to go and I know he wants to go with us but mother leans strongly towards Galva. They had a letter from there yesterday. Babcock and Kate are both in school.<sup>46</sup> He has let the job of building a new house on his village lot to be finished the first of April, a very pretty plan, two stories high and 18 by 22 on the inside. Expects to do the inside work himself. Kate writes that she is happy with her husband, in fact their letters seem to be each a laudatory panegyric of the other.

I do not know what kind of a farmer you will make, nor what kind of a farmer's wife I will be, but we have long wanted a farm to own as a dependence in sickness, or hard times of any kind. I shall not certainly like living four miles from neighbors, and hope if you succeed in getting the adjoining farm you will sell it to some good family man. Lavinia<sup>47</sup> is almost insane in regard to going with me, but I do not think it best and discourage it entirely. She wants to know if you could get her a school within a few miles. She went home yesterday after her money, has had not a cent yet. Robert<sup>48</sup> wishes much to go west but says little about it. Unless something unforeseen prevents Sarah will go as far as Kate's with me in the spring, that is, if you think it best for me to come that way, for I am coming the very next day after school is out. In my

<sup>46</sup> B. F. Babcock and Katherine Howe, later married and residents of Webster City, Iowa.

<sup>47</sup> Lavinia Wheelock, wife of B. F. Parmenter, later of Spirit Lake, Iowa. She is usually referred to as "Vine" in the letters which follow.

<sup>48</sup> Robert B. Wheelock came west and was with Mr. Howe in the journey to the Lakes when they discovered massacred settlers.

last letter I asked a great many questions many of which related to our new home and many to yourself, your victuals, clothes, health, employment, and things too numerous to mention. Answer all which you have not answered in past letters, you do not know how much I am interested in the minutia. Had you any money left to live on? Are you all ragged? How are your frozen parts? What are you doing and what are your wages? If you can make enough to pay expenses of your board this winter, your father says it is more than you could have done here. How much did it cost to Dubuque from here? How much from there to Hardin County? Oh, if you had only been where we could have exchanged letters regularly and often it would not have been so hard, but I do not allow myself to think much about these things. I feel enough without thought. For days after you left it seemed as if each five o'clock train would surely bring you home and when at last the reality of the separation was pressed home it came so heavy, and so cold, so death like, it was dreadful. Linnie has not forgotten you, and is very much pleased with the description of the house always excepting the hay top which she insists the cows will eat all up. I am glad that you think of two rooms, it will be much better in the end if a little harder to build, I shall bring paper for the walls with me, and with carpets and Linnie I think we shall find it very comfortable and tidy inside, and we will cover up the outside with vines, (now for business).

Bob Kelly gave me an order on Sanders for five dollars the week after you went off and said if there was any more due you he would keep me in orders, but that is the last of it. There was no money came by mail after you left. Bob's brother says if you will send him the transferred account against Pat Smith, Eggleston or anybody else he will certainly collect them for me (try him, do). . . . Linnie is sleepy and cross.

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Newton, January 10, 1856.

My dear Wife:

I do not like to write so often without having anything to write respecting being in business. I have found no employment yet. I have been to several school districts but either there is no schoolhouse or it is not warm enough this cold winter, and hardly any one will work this weather. I have worked southward to find it some warmer, but it is really colder than in Hardin County.

I tried a lawsuit yesterday and got beat. Received no blame and considerable praise.

This town is larger than Lancaster [N. Y.] but has no schoolhouse. There are two select schools kept in small rooms. I intend to try to get up a class in elocution, but don't know [how] well I shall succeed.

There is a fine opening for me as a lawyer if it was not for my old complaint, want of capital. I do not like the country as well as further north, and I have found no place that promises to be so good a point for school-teaching as Iowa Falls will be in a year.

I am in a fit of the blues almost today by imagining every possible evil as having befallen you or Linnie . . .

After writing so far this morning I was interrupted by some men who wanted to use the room by themselves. It turned out to be a caucus preparatory to the April election. Before I could find a place to write the mail left, so this can not go until tomorrow. A deputation from the caucus requested me to accept the nomination for *judge*, provided I was eligible and would run on a Know-Nothing ticket. Unfortunately, I shall want two months of residence to make me eligible. I am sorry, as I think I could easily carry the county, the party being in the majority, and *timber* for judges scarce.

This dissipated the blues, but on commencing writing to *you* how plain I see your image. I am *homesick*, no mistake about it, and should start tomorrow for Iowa Falls (70 miles) to get a letter which I hope to find there from you, if a sense of duty did not compel me to try a course of lectures next week.

A strange state is Iowa, employment so easy to get, but still I can't get any. The simple fact is the cold weather has paralyzed everything. Nobody *can* work. Most of the mechanics refuse to work. Everybody is too independent to work in cold weather, and I have found but two buildings to work in, and I am as adverse as the rest to outdoor work. All waiting for spring. That word spring; that is to bring my loved ones to me *if* some great evil does not befall us, but perhaps you have already written that my description of the hardships has so terrified you that you wish to wait. If so I can stand [it], I suppose. Don't know, though.

Saturday Morning, January 11, 1856.

Well, this morning write to me at Jasper, Newton County, Iowa, also to Iowa Falls, Hardin County. I may stay here long enough to get a letter, as the prospect is fair for forming a class in elocution.

May God protect all at home, and bring our little family together again.

Your Husband,

Orlando C. Howe.

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[Alden N Y] January 12th, 1856.

My dear Husband:

It is Sabbath afternoon and such a depth of snow on the ground as I hope never to see again in New York.

Your father came up on the pony this morning and had a hard time getting here. He says the snow is 2 and a half feet everywhere. We had only two mails last week, one on Monday, the other yesterday. The wind has blown tremendously all the past week, and the thermometer stood 23 dgs. below zero. Before last Sabbath it had never been to zero this winter. We are all well and have been since you left. I was alarmed upon reading that you were frost bitten, not so much from the fear of injury from those bites, but it made me think you were not careful about exposing yourself and I fear some cold snowstorm will find you bewildered on the prairie, a terrible situation in which it would be very wrong to place yourself. I was glad to learn that you were settled, where you are

so much pleased with the country and the people. I have no doubt I shall like them both as well as Alden society or scenery, better I hope.

Do not be ensnared by the spirit of speculation into taking up or buying more land than you can pay for. We leave Alden to avoid incurring debts we cannot pay, and it would be a sad thing to go so far, only to become more involved than here, with no better prospect of extricating yourself. Do not think I am only a croaker, seeing the difficulty, and not the way to surmount it, but remember I am used only to the day of small things, and such large figures frighten me, acres by the hundred, and bushels by the thousand, are a novelty among my thoughts accustomed as you know, to measure land by the foot and potatoes by the half peck.

Are there no houses between your farm and the village? How far to the next house, or as you call them, hut? Where do you live? With whom? What kind of creatures are they? Where did they come from? Where are the settlers principally from? Are they married generally or not? are there any children there, and if so do they learn to speak English? How do the people live and look? What do you have to eat, and what are you doing? What are you going down the river for? I want to know all these things and dozens more. You see I mean to keep track of you, and not find the slab house occupied by some lady with whom I am unacquainted. As to the hardships I say again I do not fear them, although they will be of a different description from those expected. I do think it will be frightfully lonely living on a prairie, four miles from houses one way and I dont know how far the others, yet more agreeable than living away from you. If you bargain for that other 160 acres I hope you will sell it to some one who will live on it. The idea of farming is hardly what we intended but I have no doubt it is the best thing at present prices, and prospects, but how can you get money to buy seed, farming tools, pay for breaking, building, and all these things? To say nothing of provisions through the summer. The last was a hard job here. I do think Robert and Henry<sup>49</sup> ought to come with me in the spring. It appears to be just the kind of place we wanted to find, new and growing, and I am quite delighted with the thought of coming to you, only that terrible distance from neighbors frightens me, no wonder. Where will you get the slabs to make the house? And, how in the world can you make a hay roof? I think if we have two rooms plastered we shall be very comfortable. I will bring paper to paper the walls, one room at least, and then we will have a fine yard around it and the sides covered with vines. I dont like the thought of sodding it winters. I think it would be like a cellar, damp and unhealthy, perhaps not. I wish it was built and Linnie and I were in it. I dare not think of the long, long time before spring. The mind recoils from the prospect, but each day will come I know with its own cares and blessings and be no harder than the previous ones. It is a very long time between your letters, I wish you would write oftener if you can. I would have written without

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<sup>49</sup> Robert B. Wheelock and Henry Schuneman. Mr. Schuneman married Euphenia Wheelock in 1849 and they came to Spirit Lake in 1859. Mr. S. died in Boone, Iowa, August 4, 1908.

waiting but did not know but you had moved. Now I have [put] every thing into this and have nothing left for the other letter. Linnie does not forget her Pa. Vine wants to come with me in the spring but I do not want her. Perhaps Sarah will come as far as Kate's. Write to Kate, she wishes you would. I think your father<sup>50</sup> will go west within a year. He has written to [Babcock] to look [for] him a small farm near their village, he says Alden never was so dull.

M. H.

I wish you would set the house up from the ground if you can. Mr. Hendee says Mr. Brewer says building so near the ground is the first and only cause of sickness at the west.

\* \* \*

Vine has not got her money yet. Winspear, wife and all the children were here New Year's day. They brought me one crock of apple butter which we were eating, and it hardly seems as if I could bring it without so much risk of losing if it was alone or of spoiling other things if packed with them. Do you have any apples or apple sauce, what do you have?

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Newton, January 22, 1856.

My dear Wife:

No news from you yet but I live in hope. Have had an opportunity to send to Iowa Falls and Eldora, so if any letters are there I shall get them in about two weeks. I have found work for the rest of the winter, and might do very well here permanently. I have had some talk of going into law and "banking" and land agency business, and might do so if I could be sure that the person who wishes to be a partner could raise sufficient capital, that is \$500 which would make a good start. On that if I had that amount alone I could easily clear from \$1000 to two or three times that amount. The difficulty here would be to get a place to live in. Such a house as the old shell you are in would rent here for \$400 a year.

I do not think that this is as good place to live in as Hardin County will soon be, nor will the country improve so fast but it is older and more settled, though one or two years will make Iowa Falls a more desirable place for you than here. The people there are New York and New England people. I pay \$4.00 per week for board.

Have given a lecture before the "Newton Literary Society," and have obtained some reputation as a lawyer. There is no one in the county to compete with me in that business, although it is more than supplied with lawyers, and some are men of promise and ability, but lack study and practice.

Schools will not pay quite well enough to make up for the high price of board. If I should conclude to live here it would throw away my "prairie home" in Hardin County without any pay, and I have, since coming here and looking over the state, and seeing how places are grow-

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<sup>50</sup> James D. Howe, later resident of Webster City, Iowa.



ing, been more and more convinced of the advantages of the place, and think all of my estimates of the value of the farm next fall have been too low. But if I go on the farm I shall soon have an office and school in some of the villages and make money in land business. You can have no idea how easily and surely money can be made here with a small capital. If father would come out here with a few hundred dollars in money or warrants we could get *rich* in a year or two, and the security would, in my opinion, be as good as mortgages on any farm in Alden [N. Y.]. If I find no other way of speculating I shall enter a few *thousand* acres of land on time, at the moderate interest of 40% and upwards, and shall only lose, in case of failure, a few years' hard labor. I have not found a man of ordinary intelligence who has invested \$200 in land business, and been in it two years, who is worth less than \$2,000, and from that to \$10,000. *All* make money.

Excuse my apparent exclusiveness of thought about money. I *cannot* bear to think and write about the folks at home, most of all you and Linnie. Write to Newton, Jasper County, Iowa.

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, January 24, '56.

My dear Wife:

No letter from you yet, but hope for one today, but dread disappointment, and then what news it may bring after so long an absence, for the time is long. If you are lonesome you still hear from me often, and long before this know that I am settled for the winter. But Maria, it is only for the winter. If another place presents as good inducements for immediate business, and should be a better country than this, I shall leave in the spring.

I can hardly give up beautiful Hardin County, and especially around Iowa Falls, and have found nothing to equal it, either in beauty or advantages, but if there we go I shall necessarily work on a farm next summer. I yesterday sent for  $\frac{1}{2}$  a section of land to be entered on time in Greene or Carroll County. This adds 320 acres to my landed interest. I owe for this last *farm* \$560. If I should not be able to pay for it in one year it will go back, and my note will be canceled, so that all the risk is the loss of \$10.00 sent to begin with. I'll risk it.

The weather is milder. It is now fair winter weather. You have doubtless read terrible stories about people freezing to death on the prairies. They are all true, and half do not reach you. The mercury has been 30 below zero near here, when it is much further south than you are. But anything like such a winter was never before known here. It is just as cold as far south as Missouri. I think it has been *colder* here than in the northern part of the state and in Minnesota. The cold is the excuse why I have done so little this winter. No work was to be done. No one would work at buildings, and usually much is left to be done during the pleasant winters.

I have written to Kate. While in Iowa Falls I wrote you a detailed

account of some incidents relative to the climate as far as it had affected me, but had no chance to send the letters till they were worn out in my pocket. I will repeat them here.

While there a Mr. Shaw and an old gentleman and myself hired a teamster to take us on the prairie to make our preemptions. We did not get started till late and I saw a storm was coming, but thought we could go five or six miles and back without any trouble. We first came to the old man's preemption, when he left us to go back across the prairie, while we went on to finish ours. Shaw led off for his a mile or so, when I noticed that our driver looked rather queer, he soon began to complain that there was danger of freezing on the prairie, the storm having come on so that we could not see a very great distance, but I had a compass and felt safe. Shaw soon became slightly puzzled in his route, which so alarmed our driver that he (Shaw) concluded to give up going to his claim, and told me to strike off for mine, and he got in the sleigh with the driver.

Looking at the compass I started directly into the wind, but soon looking around saw there was something wrong in the sleigh, so I concluded to humor the fears of the driver, and changed my course for the timber about three miles off and on our way home. Looking round again and Shaw was calling and motioning to me, so I waited for them to come up, when I found the driver was freezing. I pointed Shaw the direction to the timber, told him to lay on the whip while I took care of the driver, who soon became in a pretty bad state. I kept rubbing him, pounding and arousing him, but just before reaching timber he had become faint, or insensible, so as to lie in the bottom of the sleigh. But the horses were on the full run, and we reached timber and soon aroused him. I think fifteen minutes longer and he certainly would have frozen to death. He was a large, robust man, and more warmly clothed than either of us. I froze my ear very little while attending him, but neither Shaw nor myself thought it at all an uncomfortable day, but fear and want of resolution was the main trouble. I wonder there are not more deaths from cold than there are.

I will tomorrow or next day give you another instance of exposure wherein I did not come off quite so well. Do not be alarmed, I have quite recovered from the frost bites I wrote about some time ago, excepting that there is still on my mind a warning not to go on the prairie in a winter storm.

But I must work now, for traveling, lying still, and speculating has emptied my pocket, and the chances are that I shall keep it empty for some time, that is, if I find entering land on time so promising a spec.

When I hear how many of our folks have been affected with western mania by my rhapsodies, then I shall know what to do. If Henry and Bob or John<sup>51</sup> or Father have concluded to come, we will make a rush. Tell Father that if emigration is as great next summer as it was last,

<sup>51</sup> John T. Wheelock, brother of Mrs. Howe.

he could come here with \$500, spend the summer with us, and so invest it as to make it worth four or fives times as much.

Love to all. Good-bye. Kiss Linnie. Does she talk about me? Will she forget me? I know there is *one* at home who will not.

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, January 28, 1856.

My dear Wife:

At last I have heard from home by Father's letter, and expect tomorrow to receive yours, and in a day or two a host that you have sent to Iowa Falls, as I have ordered them remailed to this place. What a feast when they all come!

If you *could* know all my feelings while alone among strangers, then you could imagine how I hope and fear for every mail that arrives.

I went to church yesterday. It was in a private house, the society will have their house finished as soon as the weather is warm enough for plastering. It is Old School Presbyterian. There are also societies of N. S. Presbyterians, and "Free" Presbyterians, Baptists, Disciples, and Methodists. The last have a church.

Village lots here are as high as in Buffalo, though there is no water power and no natural advantage in this point over any other in the state. But county seats will necessarily be flourishing business places in this country. Father writes as though he might leave Alden, and I have strong hopes that he will come up in the spring. I will go into any sure business that he likes, if he will come, but have sent him word that I want to start a law office with him. He would be at the head of the profession in a week's study of "The Code of Iowa," if those I have met are good specimens, but all make money. I have seen none of two years' standing but who have something laid up, principally by speculating. But *every* kind of business pays well. Farming next to speculating. Vine, Sarah and Mary<sup>51a</sup> could in a few years earn a farm, a house, and a husband, all by school-teaching. If Father comes I think Iowa Falls or some of the villages near my place will be as good points as any, but am not particular as to a hundred or two miles in a location for our headquarters. My boss has gone to Franklin County to locate a county seat by order of the state. There are three commissioners to decide upon the point, and a fellow clerk here is anxiously expecting his return, so as to know whether his land there is the favored spot. This clerk has been here seven months, with a capital of \$500, and has now over \$4,000. Pretty fair, is it not! If his land is selected for county seat he will call it about \$15,000 addition to his property.

If Father should come and go into law and land business with me (and farm it too so as to make sure of a living) and emigration be as large as the last five years, I would not ask to be insured \$10,000 between us in three years. Indeed, I should hate now to work for the sum of \$5,000 for three years, and agree not to earn any more in that time.

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<sup>51a</sup> Sarah and Mary Howe, sisters of O. C. H.

The only ones who fail are those that allow sharpers to cheat them outrageously. All are doing big business here. I have seen no such thing as a cent here, a few three-cents I had went for half dimes, but I have seen but two or three instances of half dimes being used in this county. Dimes and bits ( $12\frac{1}{2}$ ) are the coppers, and quarters and halves and gold dollars are the small change.

To show what a face I have got I will mention that I was at the hotel a week before any one had seen any money of mine, and I could stay any where without money till it was earned. But perhaps if there was *nothing* in my pocket, that assurance would be wanting. Are you tired of my writing so much about money matters? You would have the fever too if every day some acquaintance should speak of a sale by which hundreds had been gained in a few months.

I did not get the 320 acres I wrote about, but have a thing in view for which I am going to risk about \$25.00 next May, and expect to make several hundred on it by September.

If Bob or Henry will not come here in the spring tell them to send a little money to me to enter land on time for them. The fees are from \$5.00 to \$10.00 for 160 acres. I shall pay the \$10.00 for mine, as I can by that secure a personal selection by an acquaintance whom I can trust. Tell them to send \$10.00 or \$20.00 apiece, and give me a written consent to sign their name to a note, or I will give my note for the land, just as they wish. If at the end of the year they do not want the land, *the notes are canceled*, so nothing but the ten is risked. But I promised to write some more personal instances and narratives, so here goes.

On Christmas the stage driver from the west told us at the tavern at Iowa Falls that he had seen a large drove of elk on the road. Mr. Larkin,<sup>52</sup> who is a fine old hunter, started for a Mr. Yates of Illinois, who had been slaying the deer awhile, and was going back next day, but he came up and council of war was held, and two sleighs were found with teams to carry three each, and so those who could get rifles soon engaged places, but I was out, as I could find nothing but a shot gun. At last it was thought that a good horse and a light but reckless rider would be wanted to run the elk down. That was my only chance, so I offered at once, and was of course elected by several *pounds under* all others. We started about 2 a. m., mercury ten below zero, but clear, rode ten miles and breakfasted, then started, struck the trail eight miles off and followed more than 25 miles and came in sight of the elk about noon. More than fifty of them, looked like a drove of mules or young cattle.

To my great satisfaction the owner of the riding horse concluded to ride himself, so I stayed in one sleigh while the horseman and Larkin and Yates went at 'em. In less than two hours they had nearly a dozen down, while we followed to pick them up. Found eight of them, and it was time to quit. So we loaded up the two sleighs and started for the grove where we breakfasted. Thinking that we were about twelve miles

<sup>52</sup> James R. Larkin.

off as we had come partly towards it, we followed till dark, and soon mistook a stream for another, and got puzzled, and at last gave up that we were lost. As not one knew anything about the country, so we concluded to unload the elk, take some direct course by the stars. We came to the best estimate we could as to our whereabouts, and started east by south, knowing that if we were right we should find timber in two or three miles, if wrong, in forty miles! But that was better than a chance of 400! After going a mile or two we saw timber on the north, and reached our breakfasting tavern before midnight. The next day Yates and Larkin went after the live elk and we got the killed ones, and then broke down so we could not start again. At night the hunters did not come, and we were alarmed, especially a son of Mr. Larkin. The morning was stormy and cold, but we had a compass, and we felt compelled to hunt up the hunters, so we took their track and followed it some forty miles, till it turned and then struck for the tavern, 25 miles off in a straight line, and reached it and found the hunters there with seven more elk. Every one of us were frozen, but none seriously, and all felt thankful for our escape, and wondered at our rashness. But the elk were different game from Alden sporting, some would weigh over 500 apiece! Think of fifteen shot in two days, making two large sleigh loads of beef. But you don't catch me on the prairie again this winter away from houses.

I meant to write a different kind of a letter but will send again. I saw two or three children at meeting about Linnie's age, but none like darling Linnie. When shall I see her again? If my wife and child were here it would be easy working. How I long for spring. And will it bring us all together again? And shall we not have other friends, Father, Mother, and our sisters, all four of them, Robert, Henry, your mother, why will they not *all* come? For Iowa will make a happy home for all. Work, and leaving off some of the comforts of life for a year or two, and then comfort, independence, competence and even wealth for all. God bring us together in peace.

O. C. Howe.

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[Alden, N. Y.] Monday Feb. 10th, [1856].

Dear Husband:

While one is at the black board working a long algebraical problem I commence a letter to you, intending to finish it as soon as possible. We have had no mail here for 9 days, previous to Saturday.

Such piles of snow were never seen in Alden as line every fence and hide the houses.

(This is as far as I could write in school.) This morning's mail brought me this very welcome letter long looked for but not so long as you had looked in vain for news from home.

It has more than doubled the trials of the winter to be unable to exchange letters but, I have had the best of it I know. With such horrid accounts of freezing I was sometimes almost terrified for fear you would

be or were among the frozen ones, and it seems by your letter you were very near freezing. How could you be so careless when only in search of land. That other time when hunting I should expect of course you would get it until you were an icicle. But your game was worth something to be sure. An account of the hunt was published so that your father read it last week. I did not see the paper. We are all well and school goes off every well, and if the scholars all pay I shall have considerable money, a good many will leave at the end of this quarter but I shall keep one month more, and that will bring it to the last days of March and I hope to start very soon after. Your Father wants very much to go west and with us, but I don't think he can sell his place so as to go in the spring. He does not think he can and says he has not — to go with without selling, it is very dull here, nothing doing. I am very anxious to get away and feel as if I could hardly wait the time out but now I begin to count it by weeks instead of months and that seems much better. Mr. Maxon says he saw a friend from New York City who had just returned from Iowa west of Dubuque, near where you have located. He said New York people were fools and was going to close up his business as fast as possible and start for Iowa as soon as possible. I was very glad to hear that there would be some one nearer than the village, for until your letter to your father I thought we should be alone on the prairie, but better alone with each other than separated. I have not seen John or Henry's family since you were here. I wish you would write to Henry urging him to come up. I think he would. Vine wants to come very much but I think it is not best now, in fact she could not for want of money. Do tell me what it will cost for Linnie and me to get there? I have asked so many times in letters unrecieved that it seems as if I never would know. You must have written letters we have not received, a number I think. I will send this half sheet now and another this week. I wish you would write twice a week if the letters were short they would be so comfortable. Linnie is waiting to write to her Pa. Yours always,

Maria.

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Newton, February 14, 1856.

My dear Wife:

I have received nothing since those two letters that came at one time with Linnie's enclosed in one of them. How glad I was to hear at last from you. The mail comes here from the east three times a week, but today there was nothing farther east than Iowa City. The railroad from Davenport was blocked up two days with snow.

I can not definitely conclude where I am to locate in the spring, till I hear from Father as to whether he is to come or not. Here I can have a salary of about \$400 a year, but board is \$4.00 a week and till within a week I have only had enough to pay for my board. Rents are very high, still I think we could get along well here, and I am in office being deputy recorder and treasurer of Jasper County.

Dr. Ault,<sup>53</sup> my principal, and a Mr. Preston<sup>54</sup> of Illinois and another person have just laid out a new town joining this and are trying to locate the courthouse upon it. If they succeed they will realize a large fortune, and there is considerable talk about removing the capital of the state here. I think Newton stands as good a chance as any other place.

The Dr. and Preston are also laying a town about nine miles from here, and I can get good employment there and probably make more for a few years than here. It would also be a first rate place for Father.

I can get 20 or 30 acres of land near the village there for \$20 or \$30 an acre and have time to pay for it in work in the office or a store or something, for the founders are friends of mine and seem to value my services. I can probably do something, in the meantime speculating but must wait till I get you here before letting a dime go for anything unnecessary. It will cost about \$30.00 apiece for you and Levinia to reach Galva with Linnie, and I can not bear the thought that you should come alone. I hope Father will be coming too. It will be a great disappointment to me if he does not come here early in the spring. John T. would make a fortune anywhere here in a short time, and I hope some time that he will come. I am sorry that Mother thinks more of Illinois than Iowa for it is certain that they would do better here than at Galva<sup>55</sup> and would find it equally comfortable and Father and I could do so much better together than alone, either in farming or in law business or blacksmithing.

I hear that land is rising in price about Iowa Falls and do not want to give up my home there. You say that you have written for a description of the farm and many other matters. I have not yet received the letters. The "farm" is nearly as rolling as the Ferris farm, it has two or three sink holes on it, but not to hurt it in the least. There are neighbors about three miles off and will be several near by before we can get there. The nearest timber is about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles off. You have probably seen a rough draft of the township that I sent Father.

If I had the means to purchase timber and prairie adjoining and stock a farm it would be a sufficient fortune to me for farming here is not much like work after the land is fenced and broken up. Land is high here, prairie in this county is from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 40 dollars an acre, according to quality and location.

If Father or Robert comes probably some considerable time will be taken up for a year or two in traveling in the western part of the state and in Nebraska. I would like to send some money next week to have some land entered for me on time in Monona County, may send for 160 or 320 acres. The 160 acres joining me in Hardin County is for Father so you need not wish me to sell it, even if I am able to get it. I am glad to see you so resolute about enduring the hardships of Iowa life and think you will be agreeably disappointed in many respects.

<sup>53</sup> Dr. A. T. Ault.

<sup>54</sup> Probably Edwin D. Preston who came to Jasper County in 1855 and engaged in surveying.

<sup>55</sup> Galva, in Henry County, Illinois.

I think Levinia had better come and Sarah too *and all the rest*. Schools could be got for all.

I will meet you in Galva and you will need to send me *several* letters for five or six weeks before starting to let me know when to come after you. I have not heard from Katie yet. You know how I wish to see you all. Kiss Linnie for me.

Your husband,  
O. C. Howe.

The letters which follow were written on the same sheet of paper by the parents of Mr. Howe, the first one by John D. Howe, and the second by Sarah F. Howe. They came west in 1858 with John Henry Schuneman and Euphemia Wheelock Schuneman, and settled in Spirit Lake.

Alden [N. Y.], Feb 17, 1856.

Yesterday was a comfortable wintry day but snowed some and last evening just at dark mother and myself went up to your house, wind in the south, warm and soft balmy air but we had not been there more than 20 minutes before the wind chopped round suddenly to the north and blew hard and the snow flew merrily and through the night grew colder and more cold and to day as severe a day as we have had this winter, so that we are all at home trying to keep warm and do not think of going to church it is so boisterous. Such a winter, that respectable individual, the oldest inhabitant, never knew before. No business doing anywhere. No work in the shop. The farmer has all that he can do to get wood and take care of his stock. Roads almost completely blocked up. Railroad cars don't run scarcely at all on our road or on some others. It has cost much more than their receipts to try to keep them open. It has been for 2 or 3 times that we have not had a mail from three to 9 days at a time and today the prospect is that the track may be filled as bad as ever. So it goes, and I sometimes think that I should like to live where there was no snow at all, at all. We have all enjoyed comfortable health so far except bad colds. Maria stands it better than we supposed she could as the winter has been. Mr. Vandervent keeps a supply of wood but says that he would not draw for any body else for \$3.00 per cord but says I am bound to keep her in wood and shall do so. \* \* \* As to our town meeting not much said as yet, but there are symptoms that things are working among the fusion as Fullerton and Durkee and Slater, Jacobs, Brake and others are together some. Who they are intending to support for town officers has not transpired. E. H. Ewell wants to be the candidate of the American party for supervisor but whether he will get the nomination I don't know, but he is as usual anxious. As it respects my coming or rather going west all is very uncertain as I cannot go without selling to raise money to go with and I do not know of any chance of selling. You wrote in your last to Maria that you thought you should make a strike soon. All I can say is strike as you



have nothing to lose and may gain and if anything turns up so that I can help you by and by I will do so, but I do not see any better way for you than to keep the ball in motion. You wrote to Kate you say and now write to Ira and Rosalia lest they should find fault.<sup>56</sup>

L. P. Jacobs inquired a day or two ago for your address, what his object was I do not know, but you must remember that he is like the Indian's White Man, very uncertain. Many inquiries concerning you and when you are coming back are made, but I have but one answer, that is, I do not know. When the mail will go out is uncertain as it continues blowing hard.

(Sig.) J. D. Howe.

Orlando, your father has left room for me to write some and I will try you need not fear of being forgotten by us I think more about you than I do the girls on account of your being alone and from your wife and child but they will not suffer as long as we can stir and Linnie is happy with us days and then goes home nights to comfort her mother she generally wants something to carry to her dear ma and she is put in mind of you often and says she is going west and will cook prairie hens for her poor pa she thinks she can't go without granpa and granma go. We have all felt better about you after we learned you was in some business this winter for it has been so cold and hard. I should [have] worried all the time if you had not fare, I was afraid you would see very hard times and it seems you did when out preempting and hunting I do hope you will be more careful in time to come and try to preserve your health we got a letter from Ira and Rosalia last week were well and anxious to hear from you have not heard from Katie since the fore part of January it seems lonely to have you and Kate both gone at once but hope it is for the best I hope you will succeed in getting along and do better than you could here but we know but little what is before us we must do what we can and trust in God. I hope you will have your dear wife and child in the spring to comfort you be assured you are ever in our minds and pray for your prosperity.

[Sig] S. F. Howe.

Feb. 21st. The prospect is for a mail to go out tonight C. Dodge was buried this afternoon.

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Newton, February 22, 1856.

My dear Wife:

I send you a few lines in haste as I am about starting on a trip stumping for moving the county seat. I have been to one place with Dr. Ault and we give 'em some, I reckon. There is not much chance in succeeding in the effort.

You have probably received my last, in which I spoke of the various employments offering to me. None will pay very well, but can make

<sup>56</sup> Kattie Howe later Mrs. B. F. Babcock. Ira was Ira Tremaine, husband of Rosalie Howe, sister or daughter of J. D. Howe, writer of the letter quoted, all later residents of Webster City, Iowa.

something out of most. I have failed of receiving anything since your first two from you, but have seen by the papers that the R Roads are blocked up with snow.

If we conclude to stop here or near here it will be best to ship goods to Burlington rather than Davenport, as I can get from here to Burlington with a team in two days and come back with a load in three.

Ault and Preston have made me a good offer in building a village out in the country. I can take an undivided  $\frac{1}{3}$  with them of 80, 160, or 240 acres of a most beautiful location for a village, and directly on a coal bank of superior quality.

Price about \$18 an acre on good time, and I can pay for my share by selling village lots, and have considerable left, besides reserving the coal. It is my opinion that a large manufacturing town must some time or other spring up there. Write oftener.

In haste,

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, March 8, 1856.

My dear Wife:

I received your letter dated February 28 last night, and am sorry to find you are sick. You do not tell *how sick*, only I find by the letter that Linnie is not at home, but at Mother's. I am glad that you are out of school and are coming here *so soon*, for I am homesick, too. I am tired of fighting my way alone, though I do not mean to have you help do the *fighting*, but intend to become peaceable and let all matters go easy, though Fillmore's nomination may set me agoing again. By the way, that nomination takes remarkably well here with the true Americans, and will draw from every other party a strong vote.

About our county seat matter. The county judge has decided not to order an election, but I am going to get a mandamus from the district judge and put the matter through. My friends are sometimes astonished at my way of finding the way to do legal matters. There are several practicing attorneys here, but only one has any great amount of knowledge. John T.<sup>57</sup> is a much better lawyer than most of them, including the prosecuting attorney. Law business will pay soon, but at present not more than enough to make a living. Circumstances have prevented my speculating yet, and I shall want all I can get hold of to get you and the furniture here. Can you raise \$30? If not, can you sell furniture enough to raise it? Unless you can, write and I will send some to you, for I do not think you and Linnie can come for less than that to Galva and be prepared for slight accidents and detentions. The fare will be \$14 to Chicago, and perhaps \$6 to Galva, making \$20. Linnie goes free, and I think that if Sarah is with you she can come at half price by coming as servant and nurse for Linnie, but I am not certain as to that. At Chicago you will stay all night, and I think you had better stop at

<sup>57</sup> A New York lawyer referred to in O. C. H.'s letter, Feb. 14, 1856. *Ante.*

the Matteson House, price \$2.00 a day. Then take the "Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Rail Road" to Galva.

I shall go to Ft. Desmoine the 16th of March, as I have business there, and I shall then get admitted to practice, and I want you to start as soon after that time as you think a letter can reach me, and then you will get to Galva a day before me.

I now think you had better get Father to send the furniture as soon as possible to me at Newton, directed in care of "Salsbury, Daniels & Co. Iowa City." I shall not be at the expense of getting a team to go for them till I hear they have arrived. Ask Father to get a receipt from some forwarder in Buffalo and send it by you. I think you had better send as little furniture as you can get along with. I suppose you will not be able to get the cheap bureau you wrote about. I wish I was able to send the money for it, but cannot yet.

I wish you could be able to start by the 24th if you get this in time to send a letter to me by the 17th, giving seven days for a letter to reach me.

Write a letter every day for four days at least, sending the date you intend starting, and do come as soon as you can.

I am writing in the dark and must wait for a light.

Monday morning.

Have no time to write now. Good-by.

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, March 15, '56.

My dear Wife:

I received from the west last night your long letter of the 24th of February, it having been missent. I will try and see if the postmaster will send this east today, although it is not the day for the through mail.

I see that you were sick at the time, but hope that you are better now, for the journey to Galva will be tedious. I do hope Sarah will come with you, and wish Schuneman would send his family along, and then come himself as soon as he can sell. If he were here I think that we should all conclude to go to the Missouri River.

Don't be afraid of my going into too wild a place, but the whole of Iowa is nearly alike, the northern part newer, but settled by Eastern people, and having more schools, churches, better houses, &c than the southern. I think Sioux City (at the mouth of the Big Sioux River) one of the best places to commence in that now offers, but shall not go there unless Father or Schuneman go with us. It being on the Missouri where steamboats land, it is not so far from all the conveniences of civilization as the interior of the state. Were you and one of the other home families here, I would think it best to go this spring, but now think it best to postpone till fall, when *we* will take a pleasure journey there to see how it will work.

A friend, Mr. Spencer of New York City,<sup>58</sup> who has been here a few

<sup>58</sup> George E. Spencer, see footnote 11, *ante*.

weeks, says he will go there and put us up a house if we will move there in the summer.

I can do very well here, and you may perhaps like it as being so far south. The weather this winter has been very cold, but the old residents say that it never has been so before.

Do be careful on your journey and not expose yourself to accident. Take good care of Linnie. I wrote that Sarah can come at one half fare if she would condescend to be Linnie's nurse for the trip. Linnie will come free probably. I sent you the rate of fare (\$14 to Chicago and 5 or 6 to Galva). I see that you and Father have thought that twenty would be enough, but the ten extra will be needed, as there are numerous expenses you will find unavoidable. You will be compelled to stop over night at Chicago.

How I long to see you. How much I fear accidents, all imaginable trouble for you is haunting me. You can only tell by your own feelings my solicitude. I can only hope for the best. The time is soon to come. I shall expect a letter by next Tuesday telling me when you start.

Good-by till Monday.

Yours in hope and love,  
Orlando.

Love to all.

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Newton, March 17, '56.

My dear Wife:

I did not get a letter from you Saturday and as usual am hoping for the next mail Tuesday. I fear that your letter telling me when you start will not reach me in time but you must not be disappointed if I should be delayed two or three days in getting to Galva. I guess Kate and Frank<sup>59</sup> will see that you are taken care of till I get there.

In my last I wrote you something about Sioux City. I do not know whether you would take from the letter that I was intending to go and settle or not. What I meant is that I shall take several trips in different directions in speculating tours as soon as I can get any one of our acquaintances to go with me, and if it *should* turn up that I find a good place to start a large town may think it best to move there but not unless you are willing.

I have had good health all the time except two days past and am well again. I think it a healthy state except on the bottom lands on the rivers.

I see by the letters that Father and Sarah have written that Father will come as soon as he can sell. I hope he will find a purchaser soon and think he will before summer is out. What a settlement we could start with [if] those would come soon.

But even if we are here alone, I think we can be happy, here or anywhere in the state. You can hardly imagine how much I think of you and Linnie, all the time you are before me. Father's family I think about most. It is hard at times living here alone and you have no idea

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<sup>59</sup> Kate Wheelock, wife of B. F. Parmenter.

how disagreeable hotel life in Iowa is. We will soon be together and soon keeping house, then what a pleasure it will be to have a home. I am sorry I did not send ten dollars home to you and would now were I sure you would receive this before starting. Probably tomorrow I shall know when you start and hope that it will be necessary for me to go the day after. If so you will not get this.

Good-bye till we meet.

Your husband,  
Orlando C. Howe.

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Newton, March 19, 1856.

My dear Wife:

Again much disappointed as last night's mail brought me no letter. I am afraid that some of you are sick and do not write though I lay the fault to the mails. It troubles me to think you may start before I get word as to the day. I will direct this to Father as well as you, as probably you will be on the way before this reaches Alden.

Am in good health and my greatest trouble is being away from my friends but hope soon that we shall meet.

The weather is fine now, but everybody complains that it is a very backward spring. The frost is not out of the ground but it does not break up in the mud as in New York. The roads are dusty on top while it is thawing below.

I suppose that this letter ought to be addressed to the folks at home as Maria, Linnie and Sarah are probably on the way. Mary, you must write often as most of the "foreign correspondence" will rest on you. If you will write once a day to each of the families abroad, I will consent to take my turn with the rest. You must write to me once a week anyway.

O. C. Howe.

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Newton, April 1, 1856.

Brother Lester,  
Wife and Daughter, if there:

At last I have word that Maria is to start the 7th of April, and I intended then to change my proposition that I wrote you, and go for her, but I *can not* very well leave till after the 18th, and perhaps not then. Besides, if Maria can afford the hardship of another journey alone, the expense to take me there and back is quite an item, not much less than \$40.00, which at this time we shall need to commence house-keeping with. I have made no arrangements yet about a house, as I can not tell when the furniture will come, but think we had better go to housekeeping *without it* rather than wait. I am sorry they were shipped to Burlington, as I wished they would go rather to Iowa City. I send \$5.00 and will keep sending every mail till there is enough. If you can raise enough to start with \$20 for here, do it, and if by borrowing I will send the amount back. I shall not start till I hear from you that Maria

is there. The route here is by railroad to Rock Island, then to Iowa City on the cars, and then by stage to Newton.

Yours in haste,  
O. C. Howe.

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Ypsilanti, Mich.  
Aug. 25th, 1856

My Dear Howe:

I arrived here on Saturday evening after a pleasant trip by the way of Dubuque. I have had a pleasant time thus far and a very pleasant visit here. I leave here today for "home". Please write me on receipt of this at Watertown all about Ault, what you have done learned and think and I will await yours at Watertown and then go to New York and have all of those a/e's sent to you the matter troubles me very much, but I have confidence in your discretion and judgment. The excitement on the Presidential question is intense. My faith and confidence in Fremont increases every day. He is certain of Success. We took a vote on the Mich. Cent. cars on Saturday the vote was Fremont 88, Buch 31, Fillmore 17, it is the general topic of conversation every where. Fremont meetings are being held in every town. I never saw such enthusiasm exhibited before. Write me the kind and description of shawl Mrs. Howe wants and I will get it with great pleasure. I am making my uncle here a visit but leave today. Give Mr. Parmenter and Lady and Mrs. Howe my compliments I am

Faithfully yours  
George E. Spencer

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Senate Chamber. Iowa City, Dec 14th, 1856.

My Dear Howe:

I received a letter today from Parmenter stating that you had returned also one from our friend Skiff stating that he and many others were in favor of your nomination for the Judgeship of the 11th Judicial District he wanted to know how I stood on the Goose question & I wrote him I was allright there will be several candidates to wit, Stone of Knoxville, Loughridge of Oskaloosa, Williamson and Jewett of Fort Des Moines.<sup>60</sup> I dont see but that your chances would be as good as any of them but it will require sharp figuring. One important thing is when the convention is called is to have the delegation in ratio to the Republican votes cast at the last election and not in ratio to the whole number cast. In case it was in ratio to the republican votes we would have as large a delegation as any county in the District in the other case we would have about the 4th. I will do all I can here. Stone will probably get Marion and Warren Co. delegations and perhaps Madison. Williamson will get Polk and Dallas, Loughridge will get Mahaska, and you had [sic] ought to have Jasper and Poweshiek.

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<sup>60</sup> Refers to Wm. M. Stone, Wm. Loughridge, W. W. Williamson, and J. E. Jewett.

Please write me all about your northern trip, did you prove up your pre-emption and did you sell it.

Tell me all the news at Newton &c. What do you think of Kellogg and my trade with Powell. That bet of mine with the Dr. I committed and gave him an order on you for \$75. the remaining \$25 please place to my credit.

Please give my kind regards to your wife.

Faithfully yours

George E. Spencer

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Iowa City, Jan'y 14th, 1857.

Dear Howe:

I saw Foster from Montezuma<sup>61</sup> a few days ago and he said that he was in favor of Stone for Judge, you had better see some of the politicians and fix things then don't have the convention held at Monroe, but have it held at Keith's, I should prefer Fort Des Moines to Monroe. Keith's would be the most central place.

In haste yours

George E. Spencer.

### III

Mr. Howe's letters after leaving Newton in February, 1857, on their journey to the Lakes, thence for six years to be his home, have more than ordinary interest for those interested in the pioneer days of Iowa because of their relation to the impending tragedy between the shores of the Okobojis, then in the making. They serve as road or trail marks of their journey, as the wayfarers slowly proceeded towards their destination, only to come upon death and desolation. Save the letters of Dr. Isaac H. Harriott, one of the victims of the Massacre, Mr. Howe's letters constitute the only contemporary correspondence extant by any of the dramatis personae in the dark drama on the shores of Mini-Wakan.<sup>62</sup>

Some of the Howe letters and documents or papers bearing upon the Spirit Lake Massacre and its Aftermath have been published in previous issues of the ANNALS OF IOWA; and they are not reproduced in their chronological order in what follows. Footnotes will indicate where they may be found by those wishing to learn their contents and purport.

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<sup>61</sup> C. L. J. Foster, representative of Poweshieck County in the Seventh General Assembly.

<sup>62</sup> F. I. Herriott, "Dr. Isaac H. Harriott: One of the Victims of the Spirit Lake Massacre, etc.," ANNALS OF IOWA (Third series), Vol. XVIII, pp. 276-87.

At Manns, Feb. 22, 1857.

My dear Wife:

We have traveled the full distance of ten miles but find the Nevada road is not passable so we must turn for Ft Demoine route, we hope to get to Ft. Demoine Tuesday.

We will probably trade the old mare off for a yoke of cattle as we have a good chance here to do it and it will not do to work her hard and she was sick yesterday. We hear that we are to have good roads after reaching Ft. Demoine all the way. We are in good health and spirits and none feel disheartened though the difficulties in the way of reaching our place in eight days are yet wholly imaginary.

Do not send Potter<sup>62a</sup> with the load as we wrote as we must get through as we can and have heard from Ft. Dodge and provisions and horse feed etc. have not raised in price since we were there. We will not try to get things up till settled weather except ourselves and we have enough means, men and provisions, and find that there is no danger at all for all the high water is over when we get to Demoine.

Good-bye my dear wife and child. Parmenter was going to write but has not time just now as the man is starting soon.

O. C. Howe.

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Ft Demoine, February 24, '57.

My dear Wife:

We have at last reached the capital of Iowa, after a quick passage of four days. We are well and in good spirits and will go on as fast as possible without incurring danger. Do not be alarmed at any reports of the state of the roads or high water. It is not half as bad as represented.

I do not wish to see any of my acquaintances here and am in too much of a hurry to wait for the 26th to see the result of that.<sup>63</sup> Write the result to Ft. Dodge the day you hear of it. I expect by the time I get to Ft. Dodge to find a letter or two that you have written by this time.

We swapped the old mare for a yoke of cattle and can go with less trouble and expense and save corn when we get there. Jule is the best horse we had and R. begins to own it. Old Spot was well got rid of and I urged the trade and all agreed to it.

There is going to [be] some strong efforts made by others to start a town at Spirit Lake but we will get the start if possible.

Good-bye, Linnie and all.

Your husband,  
Orlando C. Howe.

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Boonsboro, February 27, 1857

My dear Wife:

We have stopped the teams here long enough to write a line. The

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<sup>62a</sup> Thomas Potter of Newton.

<sup>63</sup> Refers to the Convention held in Fort Des Moines to select a nominee for district judge, when George E. Spencer and others hoped to secure the nomination for Mr. Howe.



roads have now become better and we make more progress. There is no trouble here or north of here with high water, though we expect to be shut up at Spirit Lake till the middle of April after it once breaks up.

Do write often to Ft Dodge.

We heard yesterday from the settlement on the Demoin River in Minnesota twelve miles north of Spirit Lake. The weather there has been no worse than here and there is plenty of hay and provisions and *no Sioux*, so do not let Indians trouble you at all.

Good-bye again till we get to Ft Dodge.

Your husband,  
Orlando C. Howe.

At Casters, Palo Alto County, March 5, 1857.

My dear Wife:

We are now within two days' journey of the lakes and begin to feel quite contented. It was so cold and windy and Robert's<sup>64</sup> eyes are sore and Laura is some lame, so we waited here today.

When we hear from you is uncertain as the Demoin will rise so high that it will be impassable until June or longer, though I shall go down to Ft. Dodge for letters by the first of April or soon after. How I wish to hear from you. The winter has been hard here for the settlers though I find none who are going to leave. The prospect is fair and the accounts of the country encourage Parmenter & Snyder very much. You will have plenty of eggs here and at the lakes, for geese and ducks without number build their nests on the shores. Provisions of the game kind will all be plenty. I have no further light tonight.

Good-bye again to both.

Orlando C. Howe.

[In pencil on back of letter]  
Saturday, March 6,

We have laid by on account of the storm and are now starting. We shall travel about twelve miles and stop over Sunday and get there next day. Robert's eyes are better. Adieu.

Orlando.

Here may be mentioned Mr. Howe's draft of the affidavit setting forth the gruesome details of the Massacre which he and Messrs. Snyder, Parmenter and Wheelock came upon at the Lakes on March 16, which Mr. Howe penned on the afternoon or evening of March 21 at Fort Dodge, on their return from the Lakes to notify that community of the catastrophe to the Spirit Lake Settlement, which affidavit was forwarded

<sup>64</sup> Robert Wheelock.

to Gov. James W. Grimes at Burlington. It has been given in previous pages.<sup>65</sup>

Ft Dodge, March 22, 1857.

My dear Wife:

Since you last heard from me what strange events have taken place, but by the mercy of God we are all spared though through many apparent dangers. After leaving here we were much hindered and at last left our horses and went with the oxen to Dr. Bidwell's claim in Palo Alto County about twenty-five or thirty miles from Spirit Lake.<sup>66</sup> Here we waited for several days as the cattle were lame and we were nearly tired out but at last started again. On the 16th (last Monday) we reached within three miles of the Lakes with the teams and then got fast in the snow drifts. So we took a hand sled with a little provisions and bedding and went to Mr. Joel Howe's house, the same place where Robert and I stopped last fall.

We remarked that no one appeared to be on the lookout and thought it strange, but a dog came out barking at us. As we approached nearer, the house appeared deserted and on the outside there was much confusion, things being thrown out and scattered around. We looked into the house through the window and saw the bedding &c piled up on the floor.

Robert and I then went on to Mr. Thatcher's<sup>67</sup> to see if they were at home, thinking that actual starvation had driven away Howe's family. As we came to Thatcher's, we saw that things were in worse confusion there, the beds having been ripped open and feathers scattered out and cattle killed at the door and saw moccasins tracks about and suspected that Indians had been at mischief. We did not break into the house, but went back to Howe's where Parmenter and Snyder had remained. They had built a fire in the stove and told us they had seen a corpse in the house and so had come out doors to wait for us. We did not like to stay in the house but concluded it was necessary, so we went in and stayed all night as it was too dark to travel.

We expected to find the whole family dead in the house either by starvation or violence but concluded to make no examination till we left. When ready to start we found such a scene as I hope never to see again. Mr. Howe's family<sup>68</sup> had all been murdered and probably by the Indians. We did not wait long to examine the bodies, but only saw a few, I recollect seven, there were probably more, one child younger than Linnie.

We went back to the Des Moines River at the Irish Colony as soon as possible, leaving all the load in the prairie by the Lakes except our clothing, arms and some provisions to last us through.

On reaching the settlements we found that people had given us up for murdered as we had gone on and not been heard from and several others

<sup>65</sup> F. I. Herriott, "The Aftermath of the Spirit Lake Massacre," *ANNALS OF IOWA* (Third Series), Vol. XVIII, pp. 439-40.

<sup>66</sup> The location not known.

<sup>67</sup> J. M. Thatcher, whose wife was one of the four women taken captive by Inkpaduta's band and later murdered on the way up to Dakota.

<sup>68</sup> Joel Howe.

had within a few weeks gone to the Lakes and only one, a Mr. Morris Markham, had escaped.<sup>69</sup> He was there some ten days previous to us and went to Mr. Gardner's house<sup>70</sup> and found the people all murdered and then he went to Mr. Thatcher's and found it plundered, but Mrs. Thatcher and child missing. We found Thatcher at the settlements nearly distracted at the loss of his family and especially the uncertainty as to their fate. They may be prisoners, but I fear they are dead. From twelve to twenty of the bodies at the Lakes have been seen by Markham and ourselves but the other persons have not been heard from. There were about forty in all.

My dear wife how I now wish to come to you for a short time, but I cannot. I am impelled by a sense of duty too strong to be resisted to assist in finding those missing persons. Robert, Snyder<sup>71</sup> and myself came here to raise a company and look for them and we shall start Tuesday with a very strong force.

Parmenter waited at the colony for us to return with the company as he could not walk fast enough for the emergency. Snyder has heard his child is sick and has today concluded to go back to Newton but promises to come up again and perhaps will bring some help.

How I have dreaded to write so much that will pain and alarm you but I have no wish to conceal my intentions if I could. It may be some consolation to you that there is not much probability of our overtaking the Indians though I think and hope you will rather wish we should succeed even at such danger. Had I not seen those murdered children and heard Thatcher's appeal for help to find his family I might not think it right to leave you and Linnie to go back; but God in his providence placed me there, and has most mercifully and almost miraculously spared our lives and you will agree with me that it would be wrong for me to leave this work to others. We intend to go to the Lakes and pursue the Indians as far as any prospect of success appears and then will build a strong block house on our claim that will be a defence in future from any aggressions. Of course we do not think of ever taking our families into a place of danger but this terrible massacre will probably be the occasion of driving the Sioux out of the country and in a few years if God so will it we may be spared to think over his many mercies and praise his goodness in safety in that country now so gloomy.

I hope to return to Newton in two months or less and will have several opportunities of writing to you. Continue to write to Dacotah<sup>72</sup> and Ft. Dodge. How I love those letters you sent me.

Have good courage, we will do our duty and leave the result with God

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<sup>69</sup> Morris Markham was the one who first carried the news of the Spirit Lake Massacre to Fort Ridgely, Minn.

<sup>70</sup> Rowland Gardner. One of his daughters was not present at the time of the attack, and the other, Abbie, was taken to Dakota and later released through the good offices of the authorities of Minnesota Territory. See Herriott, *Op. cit.*, pp. 483-88.

<sup>71</sup> Cyrus Snyder of Newton.

<sup>72</sup> Now Dakota City in Humboldt County, Iowa.

and you need not fear if the hour of trial comes that I will cause you or Linnie to be ashamed of me.

Tell Linnie that I must go to drive away the Indians that killed the little children.

Have not you and Linnie been wonderfully preserved from being there?

Your husband

Orlando C. Howe.

March 23

Snyder starts now

Goodby and God protect you

Orlando.

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Ft. Dodge, March 26, 1857.

My dear Wife:

We start today with a very strong force and shall have about one hundred men in our army. This will make our effort successful without doubt and will prevent all danger or nearly so. Do not be unnecessarily alarmed. Write to Father's folks, I have written a short letter. We will try to get some work done this summer on our place but unless a large settlement is formed will not think of staying in the winter. Of course you will not have the pleasure of seeing that most beautiful of countries for a long time as I shall not ask you to go while there is possibility of danger if at all.

God protect you both.

Orlando C. Howe.

I send an order for you to sign with one that may satisfy Upton.<sup>73</sup>

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[Near Spirit Lake?] Wednesday, April 2, 1857.

My dear Wife:

The troops from Fort Ridgeley have arrived one day in advance of us and driven away all the Indians, but not till they had destroyed another settlement. Part of our company return today, the others stay to assist burying the dead. We are all well and will remain for some time, and I shall perhaps go to Sioux City before returning. Will try and write again in a few weeks.

Good-by.

Orlando C. Howe.

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Newton, Jasper Co., Iowa  
March 25th, 1857

Friend Howe:

As your wife has requested me to write you at Fort Dodge thinking perhaps I might be able to give you more news in relation to business matters than herself. I will just write you a few words. Suppose you have heard on this that Stone received the nomination for judge. Jasper

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<sup>73</sup> Name not found in Census of Jasper County for 1856.

was not represented in convention—the river was so high that no one could get there. That affair with Sloan did not amount to anything. I sent to them the proper instructions to take depositions and in the meantime they had sent up an affidavit as to the truth of the claim and upon receiving my instructions sent back word that they had sent up the depositions before as a matter of course had to with draw the papers.

M...on has failed up entirely and is either sneaking about town hid up half of the time or ran away I know not which. Weather warm and nice and farmers soon will be plowing wishing you success

I remain yours truly,  
H. S. Winslow.<sup>75</sup>

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Sioux City, May 15th, 1857.

My dear Howe:

I reached here yesterday 3 days from Spirit Lake, we found everything peaceable and quiet, there was none of the Red Skins in that region. We left your friends all well there and in good spirits. We located Spirit Lake City on the cite you proposed. Forman<sup>76</sup> is now platting the town I expect to sell enough stock in the town to help you start it well.

Bill Granger<sup>77</sup> arrived the day after we did. I don't fear him much. . . . . don't amount to putty he is the most insufficient man I ever saw. He however, agreed with me perfectly in everything. I will write you the particulars be the next mail. We located the town of Spencer in Clay County. There is a perfect rush here. Write me here.

yours, etc.  
Geo. E. Spencer

Here it is to be noted in passing the public protest against the newspaper articles reflecting upon the conduct of Dr. John S. Prescott in respect of the Gardner claim and his alleged desecration of the graves of the victims of the Massacre, penned by Judge Howe, and signed by him and all of his fellow townsmen at the Lakes, already quoted by me in the ANNALS OF IOWA in dealing with the "Aftermath of the Spirit Lake Massacre."<sup>78</sup>

There might be reproduced here properly the appeal of the residents of Spirit Lake and nearby communities to the members of the Seventh General Assembly then in session at Des Moines, asking for provision for protecting the northwestern

<sup>75</sup> H. S. Winslow, who later had a notable career as an attorney and district judge.

<sup>76</sup> S. W. Foreman, then of Newton, later of Spirit Lake.

<sup>77</sup> Wm. H. Granger, member of the Red Wing Company, see ANNALS OF IOWA (Third Series), Vol. XVIII, pp. 247, 264-72, 608-09.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 612-14.

frontier from Indian attacks, the first among the thirty-two signers being Orlando C. Howe, who we may infer was the author of the appeal. It was reproduced some twenty years since by Captain Charles B. Richards in his account of the "Organization and Service of the Frontier Guards" published in these pages in April, 1913.<sup>79</sup>

[Spirit Lake] May 23, 1857.

Brother Howe:

We a party of six are in the Snyder Grove in a small cabin and besides us one man of Dr. Prescott's company<sup>80</sup> is now here putting up a house on his claim. The doctor has about the same number of men and Granger seven or eight, though as I am informed today two of Granger's men left yesterday sick. Granger is absent, having left as he says for Red Wing for recruits.

Granger as you were informed before this claims the Snyder and Mattock Grove and the contest promises to grow hotter and hotter. There is now one cabin completed in the Snyder grove and two bodies of others up that only want roofing and chinking &c. We are laboring under much disadvantages from want of our plow and another ox team, because as it is we shall get only half of the breaking done by the team as we furnish two yoke only and the other yoke is furnished by Markham & Leamont as well as the plow. You can take everything into account and make such arrangements as you think advisable. We are also greatly in want of seed potatoes. Each of our party has a garden broken on as good ground as could be found. I have broken us three-fourths of an acre for a garden on the town site and have made beds and sown them &c. We want *men, men* to keep the balance of the world straight, particularly the Granger portion of it. The black walnut grove is not yet taken and there are any quantity of splendid prairie claims. The Newton boys must come up immediately or they will lose their timber. You will of course have Forman come up as soon as possible, and would it not be a good idea for him to get a sub contract to sectionize a township or two in this county, then we could immediately preempt and it would give us an advantage over the Grangers as they would not suspect Forman to be engaged in that business. I spoke to Dr. Prescott about adopting this plan and he was decidedly pleased with it and said "There should be no difficulty between us respecting the expenses." Please to think of this subject and learn the name of the man who has the contract and see him or have Forman see him, as you think best. Prescott goes to the Fort tomorrow or the next day and will make some inquiry respecting this matter and take our letters along.

I think there is a chance for another timber claim in the grove next north of the Marble grove. When contests arrive among preemptors the

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Dr. John S. Prescott. Herriott, *Op. cit.*, pp. 510, 515, 610-17.

statute provides that he who made the first settlement shall prevail. Query? In determining who made the first settlement are improvements made prior to the sectionizing of the land taken into account? Please to see how the Register of the Ft Dodge office construes the statute. Robert thinks it would be a good plan to get some buckwheat & a seine & salt which he forgot to mention in his letter. I hope you will make haste to come up here and bring as many settlers as possible. Tell Arthur that I am waiting impatiently for him.<sup>81</sup>

Yours,

B. F. Parmenter.

P. S. Our dishes are for the most part missing. Perhaps you will think it best to bring a set. Decidedly the best road to this place is through Clay County. Bob has claimed 320 acres, 80 of timber in Snyder's grove. I have claimed for you 8 more on section south of town, including two small groves.

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Newton, Jany. 12th, 1858.

Messrs Howe & Wheelock:

I confidently expected that Spencer and myself would have got up to the Lakes before this. I was anxious above all to have Spencer go up and take care of his claim that there might be no difficulty about that and that we might arrange everything in a satisfactory manner.

It was announced here last evening that Spencer was appointed Clerk of the Senate and Colonel Shelledy speaker of the House. Spencer hails from Spirit Lake.<sup>81a</sup>

After the adjournment of the legislature I presume Spencer will be on hand and make everything right and meantime he will no doubt labor for the interest of Spirit Lake. Two petitions have been drawn up one to the Senate and House of Representatives for a new land district and land office which petition I have forwarded to the Doctor at the city of Washington, the other petition is addressed to the Senate and House of Representatives of this state for a memorial to Congress for a grant of lands for a railroad from Sioux City to connect with the Mankato road. Spencer will see this through.

Will it not be well for the boys at the Lakes to know that if Spencer is not at work with them he is at work for them, and that too at a point where he can be most serviceable?

The names of the settlers now at the Lakes were signed to these petitions by their friends here for them.

I have never seen so tight times for money as the present. I am positively in want of funds to make my family comfortable. As soon as I can see them comfortable and get money enough to get to the Lakes

<sup>81</sup> May refer to Thomas Arthur of Newton, or to Alfred Arthur, husband of Sarah Howe, sister of O. C. Howe.

<sup>81a</sup> George E. Spencer, chief clerk of Senate, and Col. Stephen B. Shelledy, speaker of the House of Representatives of the Seventh General Assembly.

and back I shall be up there and till such time I will do whatever I can to forward the interests of the settlement.

Money is plenty at the East and the prospect of emigration is good as the Doctor writes and as I am informed from other sources.

Respectfully yours,

B. F. Parmenter

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Sioux City, Iowa, Oct. 30th, 1858

O. C. Howe, Esq.

Dear Sir:

The Mankato mail came and went without my knowing it so I will write a few lines and send by the buffalo hunters. If this could reach you before they will I would give you some account of the expedition but as it is I will let each tell his own story.

You probably have already learned that you are elected by nearly 300 majority as near as is now known here.<sup>82</sup>

I leave the mare, saddle and bridle for you, she will be taken to Mr. Hungerford<sup>83</sup> 8 miles above here on Floyd tomorrow eve, or next day. Mr. Charles<sup>84</sup> and others say that is a good place and I think it will not cost much for keeping. He has a field of corn by his house that he wants to use her with his horse to haul in. I think "Bet" will enable you to prosecute the traveling part of the duties of your office to your entire satisfaction.

You can get Mr. Palmer<sup>85</sup> to help you select the twenty lots and you can make me the necessary papers and send them to me at Alden. I expect to start for there next Monday via Omaha and St. Louis.

The boys here had a jubilee last night over the election, using the canon that was brought down from the Ft. to rejoice over the election of those that "couldn't —".

I located two quarters and one 80 in Clay co.

Yours truly,

D. Hathorn.<sup>86</sup>

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Ft Dodge, November, 1858.

C C Carpenter, Esq.

Having seen communication addressed to you by John S. Prescott respecting the sending of troops to the vicinity of Spirit Lake I take the liberty of correcting several gross misstatements in it.

The matter was not "the offspring of fraud" but on the contrary was demanded by nearly every settler in the county, from a belief that the frontier in that vicinity needs protection.

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<sup>82</sup> Refers to O. C. H's election as district attorney of the Fourth Judicial District. See *Ante.*, p. 171.

<sup>83</sup> E. S. Hungerford, after whom Hungerford Township was named.

<sup>84</sup> John H. Charles, banker of Sioux City.

<sup>85</sup> Jared Palmer of Spirit Lake.

<sup>86</sup> Probably David Hawthorne referred to in Jos. H. Taylor, *Twenty Years on the Trap Line.* pp. 29, 40, 42.



The petition was drawn up by myself and for the very object expressed and not to subserve the private interests of George E. Spencer or any other person, and was signed by nearly every inhabitant of the county.

The statement that "not a man or woman in the neighborhood has any fear" is false; and the assertion that "all the known facts show no cause for fear" is untrue.

The citizens of our county have nothing to interest them in any question of veracity between Mr. Spencer and Mr. Prescott, but as the former has in this matter only repeated their message it may be proper for them to inform "all whom it may concern" who is utterly unworthy of credit in [this] matter.

For this reason as one of those citizens I have taken this opportunity to give my opinion. I will further state that the actions of Mr. Prescott seem to indicate that he would prefer the destruction of the whole settlement (excepting himself—perhaps his family) to the stationing of troops there which might pecuniarily injure him.<sup>87</sup>

[O. C. H.]

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Humboldt County, Iowa  
Dakota City, Dec. 19, 1859.

Sir:

The late County Judge of this County was accidentally killed in Fort Dodge last Thursday, leaving his office vacant. At the October election of the present year he was re-elected for the coming term commencing January first, 1860.

The question has arisen,—*Can* the office be filled by the County Clerk acting as Judge, until the next General Election, or will it be *requisite* for me to order a Special Election to fill the vacancy.

If a Special Election is *necessary*, how long will the person elected hold office—till the next October Election, or the balance of the term commencing Jan. 1, 1860.

Will my acts as County Judge until a new Judge be elected be legal.

Your immediate opinion on the above questions would oblige.

Respectfully yours,

Orlando Howe, Esq.  
District Attorney

John E. Cragg  
County Clerk

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Spirit Lake, August 3rd, 1859

My dear Husband:

I have nothing new to write you, all are about as well as usual at home, Katy is better, Henry's family seems stationary only the baby grows weaker.

The mail of Tuesday brought you four letters, one from William Larkin, Iowa Falls, wishing to know whether the surveyors were here and had with them two dogs which he says were stolen from him. He

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<sup>87</sup> See F. I. Herriott, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 509-11, for controversy between Messrs. Howe and Prescott anent the Indian menace.

wished you to get the dogs or tell him how to do it, also to know if it would pay his father to bring flour here to sell. Another from Asa C. Call, Algona, (if I can read the name it is Call)<sup>88</sup> calling your attention "to a suit commenced by him against Amos S. Collins and William A. Wilson". He sends a statement of circumstances and a copy of "Wilson's deposition". Says he has much legal business this fall in all of which he wishes to engage you in connection with Finch, Kasson, and Mitchell but calls your particular attention to this suit.<sup>89</sup>

A third letter from Lewis Smith, of Algona, saying that they would elect delegates for the choice of Representatives the same time that they did for the Senatorial Convention at Sac City, and if the other Counties did the same would go into convention with them there. The fourth from Morris McHenry, Dept. Treasurer, Crawford County, asking in relation to the settlement of delinquent interests due the school fund. He wishes to know whether he shall send you the names of delinquents to commence suit against immediately or whether he shall continue to receive what they can pay in until their next term of court.

Dr. Ball<sup>90</sup> has not returned. Parmenter says Judge C.<sup>91</sup> is very wrathly against George S.<sup>92</sup> and that the water story is true.

If I do not hear anything from you to prevent I will write you by the next mail at Onawa City, Monona.

Wheelock<sup>93</sup> misses you very much and mourns for Perey the singer.

Your wife M. W. Howe

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Algona, May 17th, 1862

My Dear Wife:

I concluded to come this way with Kingman<sup>94</sup> and the mail carrier and camped out on the road. It is raining now and I shall wait for it to clear up before going to Dakotah.

I paid for a sack of flour at Estherville that will arrive there by Monday and Kingman promises to take it over when he goes which will be by the mail that carries this.

Ambrose Call has the mail routes that I bid on at lower rates than I would take them if even now offered the chance.

This mail carries you great news, Norfolk and Porthsmouth taken, the Merrimae blown up by the rebels, Richmond evacuated, rumored intervention of France and England in favor of the rebels and the Homestead Bill passed the senate and awaiting only the President's signature which it will surely receive.

I forgot to get two dollars from Matteson<sup>95</sup> so that Patrick could

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<sup>88</sup> A. C. Call with his brother Ambrose Call, founded the city of Algona.

<sup>89</sup> Daniel O. Finch, John A. Kasson, and John Mitchel, attorneys of Des Moines.

<sup>90</sup> Dr. James Ball.

<sup>91</sup> Possibly A. C. Call of Algona.

<sup>92</sup> George Spencer.

<sup>93</sup> John Wheelock Howe, son of O. C. Howe.

<sup>94</sup> Rosalvo Kingman of Spirit Lake.

<sup>95</sup> Probably M. M. Matheson, a merchant of Spirit Lake.

have it but I think Pat can get some money of him on my account if he or you need it.

Please write by this mail to Algona as I wish much to know whether another warrant has arrived, you need not send the warrant if it has come as I can make my arrangements without if I know whether it has come or not.

Your Husband  
O. C. Howe

#### IV

This Division of the Howe letters may fittingly conclude with the following vivid memoir written by Mrs. Howe of the Sioux outbreak of 1862 which worked such loss of life and indescribable horrors throughout southwestern Minnesota, and terrorized the pioneers of northwestern Iowa. The date of its composition and the occasion for its preparation are not known but it was written while Mrs. Howe was resident in Medicine Lodge, Kansas, some time between 1885 and 1902—probably in commemoration of some anniversary of the outbreak. The narrative discloses the foresightedness, decisive character and courage of Judge Howe when dire catastrophe spread terror about him.

M. W. HOWE

#### A MEMORY OF THE MINNESOTA INDIAN MASSACRE

Those who spend their summers at the pleasant resorts around and at Spirit Lake now seldom think what a comparatively short time it is since the warlike Sioux brought terror and destruction into that quiet neighborhood.

During the spring of 1862 there was a feeling of unrest in northern Iowa. The Indians of Minnesota in the vicinity of Ft Ulm and westward had heard vague rumors of our Civil War, and were only waiting their opportunity to make an attack upon the settlers. I had gone with my husband through his district in Iowa, and when at Onawa we heard of the attack upon Fort Sumpter. Judge Hubbard adjourned his court and gave him permission to return at once to Spirit Lake to be with his family. This was in May and going up the Sioux River we met several small parties of officers on their way homeward. They were all from the South, and had resigned their commissions in the northern army and were hoping for service in their respective states.

They seemed aware of the ill feeling among the Sioux and Dakotas and told us tauntingly we would "have enough to do to manage them, without meddling with the Southerners."

When we reached Spirit Lake all seemed about as usual. The small

squad of soldiers kept there were at that time all away, but no one appeared much afraid. They returned in a few days and reported having been fired upon as they were crossing a small stream, by Indians concealed in the tall grass and thick weeds that bordered all the streams in that country.

So the matter went on, we hearing occasionally of some man shot in his field or of straggling parties of "braves" who were seen in the neighborhood.

They were afraid to come to Spirit Lake as the memory of that terrible massacre of 1857 was still too strong in the minds of that community. On the morning of August 8th [18<sup>th</sup>], 1862, my husband rushed into the house greatly excited saying "They are at it, they are at it." In answer to my questioning he said that a report had just reached town that the entire settlement at Springfield was murdered and a party would start from the Lakes in a few moments to learn the truth. "And leave us all here with no protection" I shrieked in terror. "My darling, my darling" he said, "it is our only way to protect you; be brave as you have always been, and pray that we may get there before all are killed," and he was gone.

I heard some one knocking and found at the door John Nelson, a Norwegian from Springfield, one little child about two years old in his arms and holding by his hand a girl of 6 or 7. The baby kept up a continuous moaning, but was unconscious.

"These all I got now, wife and boys all killed by Indians" said the poor man, as I took the bruised little one from his arms. He had walked 16 miles through the night carrying one or both the children. He took some warm coffee, but would not eat anything.

My sister came in immediately and we put the child into a warm bath. The heat revived it a little but it soon went into spasms and we discontinued it, when it resumed that pitiful moaning. Mr. Nelson took the little girl to a neighbor's and returned himself with the rescue party. All that day and the most of the night we cared for the little one and in the early morning death came.

The soldiers were not there that night and nearly the entire town were in the courthouse, a large brick building surrounded by a strong stockade. My sister remained with me, and a young man, the son of Dr. Prescott, remained with us, watching outside for Indians while we waited for the coming of death. It was a fearful night, husband and brothers all away, we knew not where, nor whether they were then living or had been murdered. The next day some of the party came back, a part remaining to bury the dead. Men, women and children scattered through the fields and groves, or lying in their homes killed and mutilated in every conceivable manner.

Years after my husband told me how happening to look into the oven of a cook stove they found a very young babe in a large dripping pan, prepared as a turkey to roast.

We kept the Norwegian's child until the father returned, when it was laid away in a small grove on the shore of Lake Okoboji. Several of

the neighbors who escaped the savages accompanied Nelson back. They were all at the burial and after the grave was filled up they knelt around it and sang most mournfully a funeral song in their own language.

There were no depredations of any kind committed at Spirit Lake at the time of the fearful massacre at Fort Ulm. The vigilance of the settlers and the presence of the soldiers were doubtless what prevented it.

Now lovely residences adorn the groves and shores of Spirit Lake. Stately hotels offer ample accommodation to crowds of visitors, and the shriek of the locomotive is heard on all sides. The murderous Inkpaduta and his warriors are all creatures of the past, used only to give a wierd touch of romance to the present. But few of the original settlers remain in that vicinity. Most of them are resting in some silent city of the dead, and even the historical facts are fading from the memory of the living.

M. W. Howe

Medicine Lodge, Kansas.

[To be continued]

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## PLENTY AND STARVATION

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This is a great country! Instead of wheat and flour rising, as the politicians promised the farmers a year ago, it will soon be impossible to find a market for the surplus of the West at any price. Millions of pork can be bought for one cent and a half a pound, and no buyers. Yet English artisans are starving by the hundred thousand; and yet its brutal aristocracy keeps up the price of bread by a high duty of foreign grain. See! The millions of England cramped upon their little island, a continent full of bread to overflowing; and a pampered aristocracy, rather than forego a few luxuries, tell Englishmen to starve.—*Bloomington (Muscatine) Herald*, copying from the *New Era*, February 4, 1842. In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.

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