

congratulate you; but for me there is no consolation, for, by G—d, the fiddler beat me.”

In relation to myself, I have to say that I am not quite as old as your report makes me; and you might have added to your history of my career as a politician, that I was twice elected recorder of the city of Burlington, and was twice elected to represent the county of Marion, and other counties attached to it, in the state legislature.

With the slight exception of misspelling names, and a few other unimportant mistakes, you have given a very correct history of the early settlement of Marion county, and I take this occasion to congratulate you upon your remarkable success.

Respectfully yours,

LYSANDER W. BABBITT.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THIRTY-FOUR YEARS AGO.

BY HAWKINS TAYLOR.

On Saturday, in early May, 1836, in company with Col. Wm. Patterson, A. H. Walker, and Green Carey (the two latter now dead), we crossed the Mississippi river from Appanoose to Fort Madison, Wisconsin (then spelled Ouisconsin). Appanoose was then the larger town, and aspired to be a great city very soon. The old man White and his son-in-law, Doolittle, owned the ferry, and they had but a day or two before returned from the Ohio river with an old steam ferry-boat. We landed at the point below the mouth of the branch below the present penitentiary. The first thing that presented itself to our view was the wreck of a board frame house that had been capsized and thrown over the high bank down into the river, the day before. On inquiry, we learned

that a man by the name of Martin Chany claimed, by squatter right, a tract of land above the town plat of Fort Madison, and now mainly occupied by the penitentiary grounds, and in accordance with claim laws, had built a house on it to hold his claim. Col. E. D. Ayres and others, claiming the same ground under an older "squat," as they said, came to town in force and capsized Mr. Chany's house, and would have capsized him if they could have found him. We found that public sentiment was with Ayres. Chany left and went to Iowa City. Years after this, I believe, and the last I heard of him, he was still claiming the land, and may be now for aught I know.

At that time the whole of the town of Fort Madison was above the off-set in Front street, with the exception of a few whisky shanties along the bank of the river below. The principal men of the town at that time were, Gen. John H. Knapp, his cousin, Col. Knapp, and Judge Cutter. The General was a man universally respected and loved. He was at that time building the Madison House, on the site of the old fort that had been burnt in 1816. Many of the charred remains of the fire were still in sight.

Col. Knapp had a store at the second corner below. The Colonel was a great friend of the Indians, and especially was he Black Hawk's chief friend. Black Hawk then wintered on Devil creek; his lodge was near the old bridge across Devil creek, on the old Fort Madison and Montrose road. His band wintered, and made sugar in the spring, for several years, in the Devil creek bottom. One spring they got up above the "half-breed" line, and commenced tapping the sugar-trees belonging to the settlers. This raised quite a row; the settlers complained to Black Hawk; Black Hawk said, "Big white chief give us leave," meaning Col. Knapp. As soon as the Colonel heard of the trouble, he told Black Hawk that he must not go above the line of the "half-breed tract." The Indians at once left, as directed. The Colonel was soon afterwards killed by Hendershot, at Bentonsport.

Old Judge Cutter had a store on the bank of the river. As the town plat was originally laid out, there were fractional lots between Front street and the river, for three blocks, opposite and below the old fort. On one of these was Cutter's store. At that time, these fractional lots were considered the most valuable lots in the town; but afterwards, when the government laid off the town under act of Congress, giving the owners of lots a pre-emption right to three lots to five towns in the territory—Fort Madison, Burlington, Bellevue, Dubuque, and Mineral Point—these fractional lots were made public property. The upper part of the town was covered with black jack, except a few acres above and back of the old fort, and that was smooth and covered with a most luxuriant growth of blue grass. The lower part of the town was covered with as fine a growth of large oak timber as I ever saw; the lower bottom mixed with linn, hickory, walnut, and other rich growth timber, and the pea-vine was as high as our heads on horseback.

Speculation was running high at that time, and everybody we met had a town plat. There were then more towns in what is Lee county now, than there are now, if paper plats constituted a town; and every man that had a town, had the map of a county marked out to suit his town as a county seat. At that time, or soon after, there was West Point; then Johnson Chapman had Franklin; then, a few miles south, Wm. Skinner had Leesburgh; then the old man Perkins had a town a few miles west of West Point, I forget its name; all to be in the exact centre of the new county that was to be made.

We went out to Dr. Gilmer's that night, and spent the Sabbath there. The doctor was an old Kentucky friend of ours; had fought under Jackson, at New Orleans; a kind, noble, good, generous, honest man, now in heaven.

At that time there were no settlements, scarcely, on the prairies; almost all the settlements were in the timber, and in what is now south-eastern Iowa. They were mainly on

the Mississippi, Des Moines, and Skunk rivers, and the smaller streams. The Des Moines was settled, more or less, up to Iowaville, at the Indian line. After there was a steam ferry-boat at Fort Madison, almost the entire immigration to this whole section crossed at that point, and the traveled road followed up the divide between the timber of Skunk and Sugar creek, passing along about half-way between West Point and the Skunk timber, Pilot grove, a little grove of a few acres about four miles east of Saline, the big mound, and there branching off to any point on the Des Moines or Skunk rivers, or Cedar creek, or keeping up the divide to the agency, or to Phelps's trading-house, where Eddyville is now located.

Phelps had an Indian trading place, and did a large business, and much after the fashion of the present day, except that the rule with Phelps was, to have each clerk charge the same blanket, and then have the Indian pay for it besides, if they could. Now, they buy genuine articles for the Indians, at the highest price, and furnish shoddy articles, bought at the cheapest rates; at least that has been the charge.

At that time there was not, in what is now Lee county, a single house on that trail, or road; yet teams were never out of sight of each other that summer.

Messrs. Walker and Carey, on Monday morning, located a claim each of one hundred and sixty acres, on this road, and had ten acres of ground broken, to hold their claims; but they were considered so far out on the prairies and from any settlements, that they virtually abandoned them, and they were afterwards taken up by I. L. and Elijah T. Estes, who sowed locust seed on the broken ground, and since that time the place has been known as the "Locust Grove."

Col. Patterson and myself went on to West Point, stopping for dinner with Lewis Pitman, who was the first settler in all that section. He was a Kentuckian, a most worthy citizen, and a good methodist. His wife was everything a wife and mother should be, and that included being a first-rate cook. I am sure it is safe to say, she has had more chickens cooked for methodist preachers, in her house, than any other person

in the state ever had or will have. They lived on the great thoroughfare from either Fort Madison or Burlington, going west, had a fine farm, the first orchard in the county, plenty of everything, and the latch-string was known to be always out for all preachers and, in fact, for everybody that wanted to come to the country and settle. The old man lived to an advanced age, surrounded with all the comforts of life, and raised a large and worthy family.

That day we bought the town of West Point, Walker and Carey joining us in the purchase. At that time there were but three or four log shanties on the town plat. John L. Cotton had the only store. The house was about 12 by 16, made out of peeled hickory logs, the split part inside, and rough boards nailed over the cracks, no ceiling, and the roof steep enough to please any Hollander. The stock in trade was one barrel red-eye, said to be of approved quality, about a dozen pieces of calico, and as many more pieces of domestics, some fancy articles, sugar, tea, coffee, and tobacco, all amounting in value to a couple hundred dollars. At that time there were not twenty acres of ground fenced in sight of West Point. A good deal more was broken up and planted; but the first object of the settlers was, to get in their corn and then fence their ground.

Within a few days after our purchase, my associates returned to Illinois, leaving me to put up a frame house for each of us, 18 by 32 feet, one story high. I had not a foot of plank to use in any of them; the studding was rails straightened; the siding, split boards; and the floors, puncheons. The front doors and window sash were brought round from Pittsburgh, and bought at Fort Madison. At that day, the only lumber used on the Mississippi was brought from Pittsburgh. These houses are still standing, I believe, and occupied.

On the fourth of July, I attended the first sale of lots in Salem, now in Henry county. There was then not a shanty on the town plat. At that time, Father Aaron Street, one of

the most intelligent, worthy men that I ever met, the proprietor of the town, lived in the edge of the timber south-west from the proposed town.

From there I went, that afternoon, to "Round Prairie," now in Jefferson county. There was not even a trail to follow. Scott Walker, and one or two other families, had moved there in the spring, but the trail they made had grown up. I, however, found my way to Walker's. There were two or three families then in Round Prairie: James Gilmer, S. C. Walker, and, probably, a Hardin and Butler and their families. That was the western settlement then.

On the 10th of September, 1836, the proprietors of West Point made a sale of lots, after pretty full advertisement. The proprietors were all temperance men, and one or two of them elders in the old blue stocking Presbyterian church, and they had set apart a liberal plat of ground to their late minister, and he was coming to settle there, and they had arranged to build a meeting house and organize a church. To be a "hard shell" Baptist was then respectable with the settlers; to be a Campbellite, was passable; and to be a Methodist, could be tolerated; but they felt that it was asking rather too much to come among them and propagate temperance and blue stocking Presbyterianism. It was strongly whispered that this was a bad set to settle a new country—in fact, it was whispered pretty loudly. The proprietors were very anxious to have their sale a success. They were all Kentuckians, and at that time had seen but few Yankees; still, they had picked up some Yankee ideas, and as nearly all the settlers were from the south, they concluded to make, on the day of sale, a regular old-fashioned barbecue. No sooner was this known, than the hard shells themselves softened, and offers from all quarters were made to take charge of the roasting department of the barbecue, and the worst of enemies became the best of friends. Both the sale and barbecue were a grand success; plenty to eat for all, and well cooked, no one intoxicated, everything cheerful and pleasant. The sale amounted to about \$2,300.

Now, reader, do not say, "that is no sum at all." You must recollect that this was before most of you were born, and long before the days of army sutlers, commissaries, quartermasters, and shoddy contractors during a great war.

There were about two hundred people at the sale; many brought their families. Among others, there were a dozen or so of candidates for the legislature. The territory of Wisconsin had then just been organized, and an election for the legislature ordered. There were then but two counties in the territory, west of the Mississippi—Des Moines and Dubuque—Pine river, between Bloomington (now Muscatine) and Davenport, being the dividing line on the river. Des Moines county was entitled to three members of the Council and six members in the House. The main question at that election was the county line. Almost everybody had a town, and they wanted the new counties made to suit their towns as county seats. All the candidates at this sale were, of course, in favor of making a county that would make West Point the county seat; but I suspect the promise was forgotten, much after the fashion of the present day.

There was a very great immigration to the territory in that year, and scarcely any grain raised. The result was, short rations; and to add to this, it was an early winter, closing the river with ice, and cutting off supplies from that quarter. The town of Denmark had been located that season by an enterprising company of Yankees, headed by Fox, Epps, and Shed. Taking time in advance, they had gone into Illinois and bought a small drove of hogs to drive on foot, expecting to get back before the river closed; but when they got to the river it was full of ice, so that the ferry could not run, but fortune favored them, by the ice blocking so that they drove over their hogs on the ice the next day. This pork almost literally kept the people from starving until other supplies could be got from Illinois. The winter was long, cold, and dreary, and almost the entire supplies of every kind had to come from Illinois, and had to be hauled more than one hundred miles, and were sold at enormous prices.

But during that whole, long, dreary winter, a methodist preacher by the name of Cartwright, living a few miles west of Burlington, traveled the circuit of what is now Des Moines, Lee, and Van Buren counties, never missing an appointment. From West Point to Keosauqua there was nothing but a trail, and that covered with snow and ice, and few settlers; yet, rain or snow, he was always on time. I fear that there are few preachers, Methodist or otherwise, now in that circuit, who would be willing to go through such trials, with the same fare and same pay. If alive, I hope this noble man has an easy place now; if dead, he has his reward.

West Point itself, and immediate vicinity, up to its being cursed with getting the county seat, for which it struggled so long, was a model town for sobriety and moral character. By nature it is one of the handsomest places in the state; but it has now, by railroads, been thrown into an eddy, and has settled down into a quiet, democratic, Dutch town. When first settled, it was a sort of half-way place of meeting between a clan that lived on the Skunk, headed by a notorious rough by the name of Hamp Raltan, and an almost equally hard set that lived on Sugar creek, headed by a family by the name of Point. These parties would regularly meet in West Point on Saturdays, run scrub races, drink whiskey, and make themselves generally disagreeable to the good citizens. The Raltan crowd were horse thieves and regular desperadoes. They finally became so bad that the citizens encouraged the Points party, and they, one Saturday, drove the Raltan party out of the town, and finally out of the country; and as the county settled up, the Points party naturally drifted off. John Points was known as the bully of his section, although not at all quarrelsome.

At that time there was a man by the name of Allan living near where Charleston is situated now. Allen was from Maine, and prided himself on being a Yankee — an article scarce at that time in that section. Allan had heard of Points as the bully of West Point. Points was a Kentuckian. Allan sent him word that he would meet him in

West Point on a certain Saturday; that he was from Maine, and that he believed a Maine man could whip any Kentuckian. With the Saturday Allan and Points met, for the first time. Their friends formed a ring, and the two men went to work. Points had ten friends to Allan's one, but no one said a word; perfect fair play was observed, until Allan said he was whipped. It was a rough and tumble fight, and never were two men more evenly matched, and seldom better men. The fight was long and desperate; both men were a mangled mass when through. Old Father Brand, a *Virginia gentleman of the old school*, who had graduated into a justice of the peace, commanded the peace, and commanded the power of the commonwealth to stop the fight; but it was to no purpose, no one obeyed, and the commonwealth stood still until the fight was all over, when he had them both arrested. Each one pleaded that the fight was merely in fun; no harm whatever was intended; that it was merely to test the fighting qualities of Maine and Kentucky. Allan was very eloquent that Points, at least, should not be fined, as he was the victor; but the justice could not be convinced that it was legal for men to fight in fun. He fined them five dollars each, but I never heard of the fine being collected.

The ambition of West Point, in the early day of its greatness, was to be the county seat, and after many trials and many failures, it finally succeeded in getting the court house. Up to that time Solomon had had a monopoly of selling whiskey for the thirsty and the traveling man; but during court, John Kennedy, of Fort Madison, opened out a caboose, where he was supposed to sell "choice" red eye. Near the town lived a noble old man by the name of Creel, an old-fashioned Kentuckian, who kept up the Kentucky rule of taking a dram when he went to town. During court week Creel came to town, and meeting a friend, they went to Kennedy's and took a couple of drinks. Creel then went into the court house, and, not liking something that was said or done, very emphatically objected. Judge Mason

was on the bench at the time, and he fined Creel \$5.00. The next morning the old man went to Mason's boarding-house and told the judge that he did not object to or complain of the fine, but that he really thought the fine should have been put on Kenneday, and not him. The judge, in his kind way, asked, "Why so?" "Why," says the old man, "I go to town generally about once a week, or once in two weeks, and, according to my old custom, I go to Solomon's and take two drinks, I treating some one and he treating me. We are used to Solomon's whiskey; it is not strong, and does not hurt us, we understand it; but here comes this man Kenneday, from Fort Madison, with his new kind of whiskey, that we know nothing about, and I take only my two drinks, and it intoxicates me, so that I am fined; now, it was not me, but Kenneday, that was to blame." The judge at once agreed to, and did, remit the fine.

Another fighting scene of that day was laughable in the extreme. Among the early settlers in West Point was a family of Dodds, the old man a little nob of a man that did not weigh more than one hundred and twenty-five pounds, but who had been a celebrated fighter, in Tennessee, in his day, and two sons, Orrin and Warren, both now good citizens of Arkansas. Orrin had a store on the south-east corner of the town, the doggery was on the north-west corner. There was a little path from the grocery up to Dodd's store, beat through the grass. One beautiful evening, just about sunset, a big, blustering man by the name of Driscoll, from Kentucky, was boasting at the grocery of how many men he had whipped, and declaring, with boisterous oaths, that he could whip any man of his age. Dodd was by, but he had lost his voice, so that he could only whisper; but he goes up to Driscoll, who was twice as big as he was, and asked him how old he was. Driscoll said he was sixty-five. Dodd, without saying a word, started slowly up the path to his son's store, who was, at the time, sitting out by the door. When he got there he whispered: "Orrin, old Driscoll says that he can whip any man of his age. He is sixty-five; I am

seventy-two. Will I whip him?" Orrin answered, "If you can make anything by it." The old man, without saying another word, turned, and deliberately walked back the same path, to the grocery, and goes up to Driscoll and says: "You say you can whip any man of your age. You are sixty-five; I am seventy-two;" and diff he took him, knocking him down, when he jumped on him. Driscoll commenced hallooing "Murder! murder!!" The bystanders took off Dodd, when he again slowly and quietly marched up the same path to his son's store, and said, "I whipped him," and that was the last of it. Driscoll was badly hurt, and never got drunk in town after that. It made him a good citizen.

The article of my old friend Toole, and your article giving Gov. Lucas credit for his efforts in favor of public schools, made me recollect an incident of the first Iowa legislature. Toole was a member from Louisa county and I from Lee, and we both wanted to get some territory from Des Moines county. Toole wanted three miles from the north tier of townships of the county, and I wanted to get the fractional township across Skunk river, embracing Denmark. We had both introduced bills for that purpose, and we then went one evening to see the governor, to urge him not to veto the bills if we could pass them. Toole, in his most oily manner, introduced the subject of his wants. The governor, at once, with his hair stiffer than I thought I had ever seen it, said: "No, sir; I will not sign any bill that divides townships." Then, pointing to my bill, which had just come in and been put on his hook, "There is a bill I will veto if it passes. Township organizations and public schools are the life and protection of a free people. Of all things, public schools are the most important to the people, and they can only be properly organized by townships. No, sir, I will allow no township to be divided."

No man ever exerted himself more for public schools, temperance, and Christianity than did Lucas during his administration as governor. All honor to him for his noble stand at that time.

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