

until late in the afternoon, when a final adjournment was made by singing "Auld Lang Syne," in which the whole company heartily joined.

HENRY HARDMAN, President.

WM. H. TUTHILL, Secretary.

THE VANISHED STAGE-COACH.

THE first vehicle of the Western Stage Company that ever left Des Moines rolled away from before the City Hotel in the early gray of the morning of July 1, 1854. The company had just succeeded to the franchise of Frink & Walker's stage line, a corporation that ran the first public wagons to Des Moines. Wagons—wagons without springs and with white muslin tops, drawn by two horses, arriving with great regularity semi-occasionally. Their route was to Oskaloosa the first day, to Fairfield the second day, and the third to Keokuk, where they made close connections with America. The fare was ten dollars a passenger, and the programme provided for a tri-weekly line. In bad weather the programme was frequently "more honored in the breach than in the observance." When the Western Stage Company became proprietors of the route, they put on two-horse "jerkeys," and operated two lines from Des Moines—one to Keokuk, the other to Davenport. It was a mammoth corporation. One of the founders was Mr. E. S. Alvord, well-known to many of our citizens. Commencing with a few two-horse vehicles, running out from Indianapolis, it spread throughout eight great states, numbering its employes by thousands, its property by millions, and making its influence felt in all the important political and business projects of the territory wherein it operated.

The old corporation was organized in 1840, and ceased to exist on the 1st day of July, 1870, when the last stage was dispatched from Des Moines to Indianola. Some time in 1855 Concord coaches were substituted for jerkeys, and henceforth, till the rushing railroad trains caused the banishment of the stage variety of travel, the four-horse coach was an important item in Des Moines life. Daily lines were established to Keokuk and Davenport, and it was not an infrequent occurrence for trains of from six to twelve coaches to arrive and depart between sun and sun. The busiest time was from 1861 to 1865, when the boys were marching to the front. The twenty-third Iowa infantry, numbering one thousand men, with all their accoutrements and camp equipage, were furnished transportation from here to Iowa City in three days, without delaying the regular travel. During state convention times, stages were started every two hours, and three or four hundred men were frequently shipped in a single night by these bi-hourly trains. The coaches cost, on an average, one thousand dollars each; since the dissolution of the company, they have been sold as low as ten dollars, and for the worth of the old irons. Skunk bottom was the great bane of the Des Moines traveler. It was a bottom without a bottom, and the bottom of that had fallen out. The company kept yokes of cattle, with broad tire wagons, stationed there during the wet season, and even then the gentle exercise of carrying rails to pry up the coach was not an unusual experience. But, notwithstanding the bad roads, break-downs, and all the varied drawbacks that awaited the operations of the Western Stage Company, their stock advanced from one hundred dollars a share to two thousand, and at that price it was never put on the market. Of the men who were once employed by the company, one old driver is now a prominent member of the Iowa senate; another, whom tradition cites as the Jehu on the first stage that came to Des Moines, held for many years an important office under the general government,

and is now noted as a railroad builder on a gigantic scale. One, who handled the reins in Ohio, has since been governor of Iowa, and still another is a member of congress from Indiana.—*Des Moines Register*.

AN IOWA NEWSPAPER RELIO.

THE *Dubuque Herald* says: "There is hanging, under glass, in the room of the early settlers' association, in charge of Mr. Childs, secretary, the original of the first contract referring to the first newspaper in our state. In addition to the matter stated in the contract, it is known that the late Andrew Keesecker was the compositor and printer of the first Iowa paper issued, May 11, 1836, and that he was one of the few men who could "set up" an editorial from his own brain without reducing it to manuscript, though in the last fifteen years of his work at the "case," continued for fifty years, and to the last hour of his life, he worked at nothing but setting type. Mr. Jones became a ready writer and a successful editor and publisher in New Orleans, and died several years since, in San Francisco. Judge King survived these associates, and one of them only a year. The following is a copy of the contract alluded to: 'Articles of agreement, made this 31st day of March, A. D. 1836, between John King, of Dubuque, Michigan Territory, and Wm. C. Jones, of Chillicothe, Ohio, witnesseth: that the said John King hereby binds himself to pay to the said Wm. C. Jones the sum of three hundred and fifty dollars, fifty dollars of which to be in hand paid, and the balance in sums as they become due, on demand, and further to provide the said Wm. C. Jones with suitable boarding and lodging during one year, from and after the 20th day of April proximo—in consideration that the said Wm. C.

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.