

ANNALS OF IOWA.



VOL. II.

OCTOBER.

1883.

EARLY JOURNALISM IN IOWA.

NO. I.

BY A. R. FULTON.

Written for The Printer's Auxiliary.

AS Dubuque enjoys the distinction of being the locality of the first settlement by white men in Iowa, so it also has the honor of being the place where Iowa journalism had its birth. The extinction of the Indian title to the lands in the eastern part of the Territory, in 1833, was followed by the establishment, the same year, of a number of settlements along the Mississippi, and considering the difficulties in the way of emigration at that day the population of the Territory increased rapidly. Then even Chicago was but a small village, where people had not yet dreamed of a railroad. Dubuque was a mining

camp, but was attracting hardy adventurers, and very soon the reported wealth of its lead mines caused the name and fame of Dubuque to be heard far and wide. Among others attracted to the embryo city on the west branch of the Mississippi, was John King, of Chilicothe, Ohio. The exact date of his coming West I cannot state, but the most important act of his career in his new home was that which made him the founder of journalism in Iowa. On the 11th day of May, 1836, he issued the first number of a weekly paper called the Dubuque *Visitor*. Mr. King was the editor, and associated with him was William C. Jones, as printer. In politics the *Visitor* was neutral, its motto being—"Truth our Guide; the Public Good our Aim." Six months after its first appearance Mr. King sold the paper to W. W. Chapman, who three months later sold it to William H. Turner. In April, 1837, it was again disposed of, this time to W. W. Coriell, John King, and John B. Russell. At the end of the first volume, in May, 1837, the name was changed to *The Iowa News*, and the paper became democratic in politics. In 1838 Coriell sold his interest to Edwin Reeves, and the publication was continued by Russel, King & Reeves, until 1840, when it became the property of W. W. Coriell. The next year (1841) the *Iowa News* gave place to the *Miners' Express*, which continued for ten years as the leading exponent of democracy in Iowa, but in 1851 it was swallowed up by the Dubuque *Herald*. The first number of this paper appeared April 19th, 1851, and on the 4th of July of the same year it was first issued as a daily. It was started as a democratic paper, and has always remained such. Among the names connected with its publication we recall the following: Dr. Harrison H. Holt, D. A. Mahoney, W. A. Adams, A. A. White, J. B. Dorr, F. J. Stanton, Wm. H. Merritt, John Hodnott, James Brown, Patrick Robb, F. M. Zeibach, M. M. Ham, and D. D. W. Carver. The *Herald* and its democratic predecessors in Dubuque have always been recognized as among the ablest exponents of the principles of the party in Iowa.

Soon after the commencement of the publication of the *Visitor* at Dubuque, papers were started in other parts of the

Territory, but as we have traced the line of democratic papers in that place, it may be well now to refer to those of the opposite political faith. Among the earliest papers of the Whig type of politics was the Dubuque *Transcript*. This paper made its appearance in 1843 under the editorship of H. H. Houghton, who had previously published a paper in Galena. Mr. Houghton published the *Transcript* about one year, when he sold it to Hill & Wharton. It was discontinued in 1845. The Whigs of Dubuque, though hopelessly in the minority, were not to remain long without an organ, for on December 21st of the next year, A. P. Wood commenced the publication of a weekly paper called the Dubuque *Tribune*. February 22d, 1848, it appeared as semi-weekly, and on the 26th of March, 1851, it was issued as a daily, continuing such one year. Then again it became only a weekly, until March 1854, when Mr. Wood transferred it to Wm. A. Adams and A. W. Hackney. In 1858 the *Tribune* was discontinued. During its publication, to-wit, in October, 1850, it had absorbed a rival paper called the *Democratic Telegraph*. The latter had been started in 1848 by a coterie of Whig politicians. The name chosen did not indicate its political spirit and purpose, for the *Democratic Telegraph* was a Whig organ of the most radical type.

The next paper in the Whig line at Dubuque was the *Observer*, commenced as a daily and weekly in the spring of 1854. After a career of about eighteen months it died of Know-nothingism, a disease that assumed a very fatal type in that locality. Its publishers were C. J. Chapline & Co. Dr. R. I. Thomas was the editor. The Dubuque *Republican* was commenced as a daily and weekly in 1855, by C. C. Flint. In April, 1857, it was suspended, but in June of the same year was revived, and until October 20th was issued as a daily and weekly by A. P. Wood. Then it was absorbed by the *Tribune*, a paper which died in 1858. In the meantime the Dubuque *Times* had been started as a Republican paper, June 15th, 1857, by a joint stock company, with G. G. Lyon as editor. In fifteen months the *Times* expired, but about the beginning of 1859 it was resurrected, in time

to make a gallant fight for Lincoln in the campaign of 1860. After various changes of proprietorship and editorship it certainly now appears to be a healthy and vigorous journal. Among those connected with its publication have been the following: Palmer, Upham & Gilmore, G. T. Stewart, Charles Aldrich, W. S. Peterson, J. K. Graves, J. L. McCreery, Barnes, Tompkins & Newcomb, Barnes & Ryan, Rich & Ryan, and Rich & Woodruff.

The second journalistic venture in Iowa, I believe, was a paper called the *Iowa Patriot*, started at Ft. Madison early in the year 1837. It was published by J. G. Edwards, and George Paul, now of Iowa City, was a printer in the office when the first issue was worked off. Black Hawk and his two sons were standing by to witness the strange operation. After this Keokuk and other chiefs visited the office, especially on press days. Mr. Edwards subsequently removed his paper to Burlington. It was in the columns of the *Patriot*, about the year 1838, that the first suggestion appeared that the people of Iowa appropriate to themselves the nick-name of *Hawkeyes*. The suggestion did not take readily at first. Sometime after, however, by an arrangement which was understood and agreed to by several of the pioneer settlers, including the editor of the *Patriot*, James W. Grimes, and David Rorer, the last named gentleman, under the guise of a visitor to the territory, contributed several letters to the paper at Dubuque and one or two to the *Patriot*, sketching the character of the territory and its inhabitants, and designating the latter by the nick-name of *Hawkeyes*. Some of these letters were copied or referred to by papers outside of the State, and in a short time Iowans were known at home and abroad as *Hawkeyes*, an epithet, or nick-name, which has ever since remained, and is doubtless destined to be a permanent one. Mr. Paul, whom we have referred to as a printer in the office of the *Patriot*, is probably now the oldest newspaper man in the State. He once edited a democratic paper at Iowa City while that place was the capital of the State. Subsequently he became a farmer in Johnson county, but has generally been an active politician of the democratic faith,

has been a member of the General Assembly, and held other important positions of trust.

Another of the very early papers of the Territory was called the *Western Adventurer*, and was published at Montrose, in Lee county, by Dr. Isaac Galland. It appeared as early as 1837, and contained many interesting sketches of border life, details of the habits, customs, religion and traditions of the Indians, especially of the Sac and Fox tribes, among whom its editor had lived many years. Much of our knowledge of these Indians was contributed to Mr. Schoolcraft's volumes by the editor of the *Western Adventurer*. In August, 1837, Ka-la-we-quois, a half-breed damsel of the Sac tribe, died near Montrose, and her remains were followed to the grave by a single mourner—her mother. Dr. Galland penned and published in his paper a very pathetic obituary notice. This chanced to meet the eye of the distinguished poetess of Hartford, Conn., Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney, and suggested the subject of one of her finest and most beautiful poems, "The Indian Girl's Burial." The poem was sent by its authoress to Dr. Galland's paper, in which it originally appeared, a few weeks after the death of Ka-la-we-quois. Dr. Galland located at Montrose in 1829—four years before any portion of Iowa passed out of the possession of the Indians. His daughter Eleanor was born there in 1830, and lived to become Mrs. McPherson, residing at Fort Madison. At the time Dr. Galland published his paper he was acting as the agent of what was known as the "New York Land Company." He had been impressed with the idea that Montrose was destined to become a great city. He was a man of considerable literary and scientific acquirements, but somewhat erratic, and did not long continue the publication of his paper, afterward becoming interested in the embryo city of Keokuk. He died in Lee county, I believe, many years ago. A complete file of his paper would be an invaluable treasure among the historical collections of our State Library.

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.