

George Wallace Jones



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John Duncombe's fawning treatment of "Gen'l Jones" is understandable in light of George Wallace Jones's prominence in state and national Democratic politics in the 1850s. Indeed, Iowa's frontier townbuilders probably had no greater friend in Washington during the 1840s and 1850s than the senator from Dubuque. A strong proponent of what were then called "internal improvements," Jones pushed hard for legislation to fund road construction, enhance navigation on the Mississippi River, and establish the legal machinery — govern-

ment surveys, U.S. land offices, and so on — needed to facilitate Iowa's economic development.

Born in Indiana in 1804, Jones earned a law degree at Transylvania University in Kentucky before moving to western Wisconsin in 1827. He served under Gen. Grenville Dodge in the Black Hawk War and, at the conclusion of the fighting, he was appointed colonel of the militia. Political appointments followed. In 1833 Jones was chosen to be judge of the U.S. District Court. In 1835 and 1837 he was selected as Michigan Territory's delegate to Congress, where he helped organize the territories of Wisconsin and Iowa. He was appointed surveyor-general in 1840 by Democratic president Martin Van

Buren, removed from office "for political reasons" in 1843, and reappointed in 1845 by Democratic president James K. Polk. Through it all, Jones was a loyal party man whose ties with Democrats around the nation only strengthened with each passing year.

No wonder an ambitious local business and political leader like John Duncombe treated Senator Jones with such deference. In the 1850s, Jones was at the height of his political power, having won election in 1848 as one of Iowa's first two U.S. senators. (Burlington's Augustus Caesar Dodge, also a Democrat, was the other.) In addition, Jones was a principal in the Dubuque & Pacific Railroad and therefore had a personal stake in the commercial development of Fort Dodge and other towns along the railroad's proposed route. Certainly Jones and Duncombe had plenty to talk about whenever they met.

Jones was re-elected to the Senate in 1852, but his career was ultimately doomed by the rise of Iowa Republicanism. When Jones stood for re-election again in 1858, Iowa was well along in its transformation from the old-line Democratic politics of the Jacksonian era into the Republican ascendancy that marked the Civil War era. Defeated at the polls by Republican James Grimes, Jones accepted an appointment by Democratic president James Buchanan as ambassador to Colombia, a post he filled until Republican president Abraham Lincoln's inauguration in 1861. With the outbreak of civil war, Jones was jailed on account of his close friendship with Virginia's Jefferson Davis, a former Senate colleague who had become president of the Confederacy. Released from prison within a few months, Jones returned to private life in Dubuque, where he lived with his family for the next 35 years. In July 1896, he died at age 92.

— by Bill Silag

preserved in the most perfect state exposed to the sun except the protection of the saw dust.

Sac City has just had the dictum of Judge McFarland that it is not a county seat. Whether the cause will be taken to the Supreme Court I do not know. But I think injustice has been done the town for speculation.

We see some wild elk & Chris promises Gen'l Jones a pair of them. I mean by wild elk that they are tamed.

Thurs June 25th 57. Beautiful day. We leave Sac City a town just started for Woolseys, a place on the valley of the Maple.

We pass over the most rugged country between the Mississippi and the Missouri river. This is about 10 miles in breadth. The grass looks rather feeble. We get to J H Moorhead's for our dinner. He lives at Ida Grove on the Maple. He is alone in his glory. We have a very pleasant dinner here, and really enjoy our-

selves very well indeed. We leave here at 15 minutes past four o'clock and go twenty five miles down the Maple where we stay all night.

We take a bath in the Maple. The Gen'l caught a fine fish. We did not sleep first rate tonight.

Friday June 26th 57. Start this beautiful morning at sun rise for Sioux City. Cross over the hills and nine miles travel before breakfast to Smithland on the Little Sioux River. Here we take breakfast at Todds. This is a little town in the timber just started. Here Todd tells Gen'l Jones to his great amusement that Henn Williams & Co own millions & millions of acres of land. We go to Sargents Bluffs. Here we find a little town, a complete humbug. We get a miserable dinner. Have nothing good to eat. We are ready and off for Sioux City after dinner.

We arrive at Sioux City, passing by Sargent Floyds

grave about Six P.M. and stop at Dr S P Yeomans See Col Bacon & lady. Have the pleasure of making the acquaintance of a great number of most excellent friends.

Sat June 27th 1857 Start in the forenoon on board the Steamer Omaha to go to Fort Randall about 275 miles

The Missouri River is the most muddy filthy mean looking River that I ever saw.

up the Missouri river, and have a pleasure party of about 50 to accompany us on our journey Capt A Wine-land is an excellent captain and I hope to have with my most excellent friend Senator Jones a delightful trip.

Col Benton Dr Yeomans and lady and a larger number more go with us.

Sun. June 28th 1857. Beautiful day. The Missouri River is the most muddy filthy mean looking River that I ever saw. It is filled with a redish sand and gravel and it appears like one immense mad wild River, filled with sand bars, sawyers snags &c to numerous to mention. The channel is very crooked. Everything seems to show that this river is a changeable fickle stream. The bottoms are broad and low, and where the water has washed it away every thing seems to indicate a made soil 15 or 20 layers of different colors can be counted in many places The timber is scarce. Cotton Wood is about the only timber worth noting. It is quite plenty A few places on the River we find abundance of hard wood timber. The first sawmill above Sioux City after leaving the little town of Logan is 35 miles from Sioux City. A very good steam mill at Iowa Creek. The best body of good oak timber I find about 100 miles above Sioux City and about 10 miles above the mouth of the Vermilion River. At the mouth of James River there is some hard wood timber. Also at St Johns and St James.

Mon. June 29th 1857 Have beautiful weather. It is getting rather warm

Pass the lodges of old Strikerie [Pa-la-nea-pa-pe], the principal chief & Smuty Bear [Mea-to-sa-bi-tchi-a], who claims the position among the Sioux.

The country between the big Sioux & the Missouri River is beautiful.

Pass the camp of 65 lodges of the Ponca indians. The tribe are at the mouth of the Running water.

Tues. June 30th To day at eight oclock we arived at Fort Randall, 275 miles above Sioux City on the Missouri River. Col Lee was in command of the Fort. This Fort is a new post and the houses are made of logs and the walls are chinked and daubed. It is situate on a very pretty plateau of land and is really a pleasant place

We were here at a very favorable time to get incidents. It is the day of the monthly muster and inspection and our company from the steam boat go up and hear the fine music and see the six companies perform their various evolutions.

We are treated very finely by the quarter master Page who gave a fine treat of excellent wines and took all pains to make our visit comfortable and pleasant. In the afternoon a deserter had his head shaved and under the Rogues March was drummed out of the town. Some of our deck hands who were amused and laughed at the transaction got a sound drubbing from the soldiers who were irritated. One of our passengers Frank West, a reckless fellow got into a mellee and got so much excited that he drew his revolver and snapped at one of the soldiers and the second time he snapped his pistol went off and had not some one knocked his hand down he would certainly have killed the soldier. Three or four of the guards aimed their rifles at his head but did not fire as good luck would have it.

We intended to remain here all night, but fearing further disturbances, we started at six oclock and

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Wednesday July 1st 1857 We started from the mouth of the Running Water for Sioux City and arive there in the evening.

Here we all guess on the no of inhabitants that

will be in Sioux City in five years, which is as follows.

I guess 9,000 Genl Jones 15,000 Dr S P Yeomans 10,000 Wm N Buchanan 11,000 H.C. Bacon 20,000 Mrs Dr Yeomans 13000, Miss Margaret Yeomans 7,000 Judge [M?] 16,000

It is agreed that the party who guesses nearest the no. shall have furnished by the other guessers a suit of clothing of the value of one hundred dollars.

This evening with my friend I take supper with Dr Yeomans. We have a party tonight on board our boat and drinking. We passed resolutions today complementing Capt A. Wineland for his good conduct on our trip. We start the evening for Council Bluffs and go a very short distance. The town of Sioux City has about 800 inhabitants and about 150 buildings of all kinds.

Thurs. July 2d 1857. We go down the Missouri river. I sent my horses & carriage back to Fort Dodge by C C Carpenter.

The towns along the Missouri to Council Bluffs are all insignificant. Not worthy of noticing.

Perhaps Florence is an exception near Omaha City, but even Florence is a very new place just commenced, and I hardly think it will amount to much.

I am of the opinion the Nebraska [?] is a very good country.

The Upper Missouri has about five towns to one farm. It looks like wild speculation and it most certainly is without a single doubt. To night we arrive about 4 P.M. at the city of Council Bluffs.

Go and see L Babbitt and Dr Lowe's lady.

I see my old school mate Larimer.

Stop at the Pacific House

Friday July 3d 1857 Mr W C Baker took his fine horses and carriage and took us over to Omaha City from Council Bluffs. At the river we found a hand cart company of about 500 Mormons on their way to Utah. They had seventy carts draw by hand. They were principally Danes. A [Yankee?] had charge of them of course. They were a miserable set of beings to all appearances. We also met another company of about 30 waggons running away from that "h[?]" of corruption. I took a ride with my excellent friend Genl Jones to the capitol of Nebraska, which is built up but not yet enclosed. It is to be a very fine building of brick. Situated on one of the most commanding points that I ever saw. We went up the ladders to the top of the building. Here we had an admiral view of the surrounding country.

I took dinner with Genl. Esterbrook, Col Saml Black, Judge of the territory, and [?] Gov Cummings and some others.

Went back to the Bluffs and stayed all night, got a copy of the first no. of the Daily Bugle to be issued tomorrow

Saturday July 4th 1857 I had promised to be at Webster City today. to make a speech but could not be there. We start to day on our way down the Missouri on the splendid steamer Minehaha Capt Baker. This is a splendid steamer one of the finest I ever saw. I find on the boat an old college mate, Hopkins

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Nebraska City is a beautiful town. Here I find my old college mate Boydston, and my friend Irish of Erie, Pa., who gets on board our boat.

Irish lost his trunk here. He sent it to the river and it was stolen and he looking all around for it, saw a white object on the opposite side of the river which he thought might be the trunk and sure enough it was.

Nebraska will make a great State. "The "cap fellow" here"

Sund July 5th 57 At the half breed reserve we are detained nearly all day making repairs as one or both our wheels got broken in the night on a snag. Iowa Point is a pretty town. St Josephs is a rapidly growing town at present and will make one of the best towns in the State of Missouri, if not the best except St Louis. Here for the first time I see Judge Joseph Williams, the Judge of Kansas under Mr Buchanan and have an introduction to him, also Judge Lecompton. We pass Doniphan, Atchison & Kickapoo Weston. Stop at Ft Levenworth. Am introduced by my excellent friend to Gov R.J. Walker of Kansas, Genl Harney and some other men. Gov. Walker is a little man phisically but a giant in intellect. I hope he will fix matters in Kansas. We go by Levenworth City. This is one of the fastest towns I ever saw. We go up and go through the town. I should guess that its population is now between two and three thousand. It will be the St Louis of Kansas. It is beautifully situate, has an excellent natural stone landing &c. Everything indicates to me that Kansas will be a free state.

The troops are collecting for Utah. Some have started and some will start in a few days.

Genl Harney is a giant in build and a very great man as a soldier.

Monday July 6th 1857 Pass down the River, am delighted with the country. See Gov Cummings appointed Gov of Utah. He will weigh about 300 or 350 lbs. he is a giant physically. I think he is the man for the place.

Get acquainted with one Secretary [Hough?] of Jefferson City. our Saxe, brother of John G Saxe.

Tues July 7 57. Very warm day. I am getting a little weary of steamboating. Pass Lexington. This is the first place up the Missouri, or rather the farthest place up this river where coal has been found. Here they dig a 20 inch vein, and it yields first rate profit. It costs to mine 6 cts per bush. Sell at the mines for 15. to steamboats.

The towns along the Missouri far surpass my expectation.

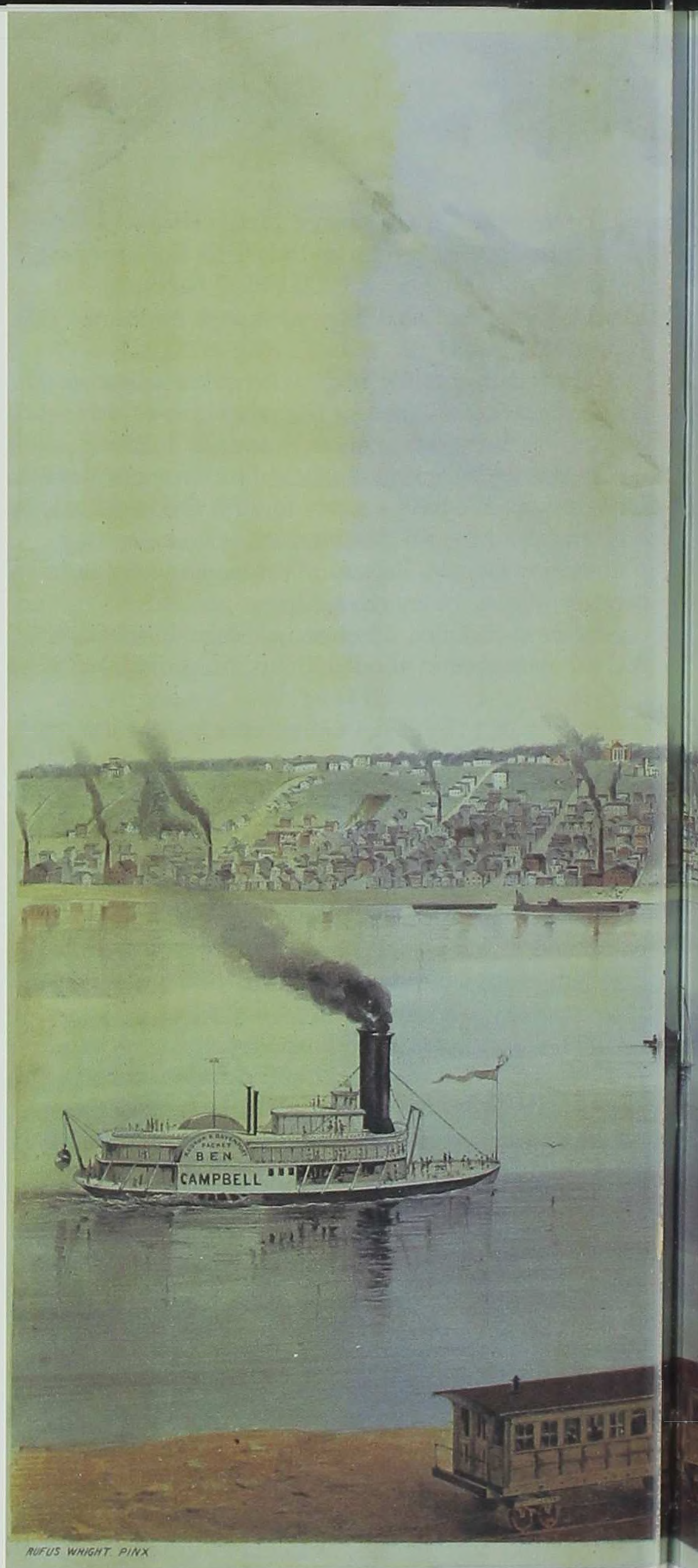
Fifty seven excellent steamers run on this river, and cannot do all the business.

Wednes July 8th 57 Arrive at St Louis at daylight. Run around town about half a day. Take the steamer Keokuk for Keokuk. It is the hottest day of the season. Get acquainted with Judge Youngs daughter through Genl Jones. See her and Miss Tilson off at the town of Quincy. ~~Arrive at Keokuk and run over the~~

Thurs July 9th Arrive at Keokuk. Run over the town. Don't find it as fine a town as I had expected. The buildings are too much scattered. I go with my excellent friend to see Mrs Genl Van Antwerp, and Judge Loves. (U.S. Judge of Iowa) wife. She is a beautiful little lady. I loved her at first sight. So plain and simple. She was not in full dress, and she showed the better for it.

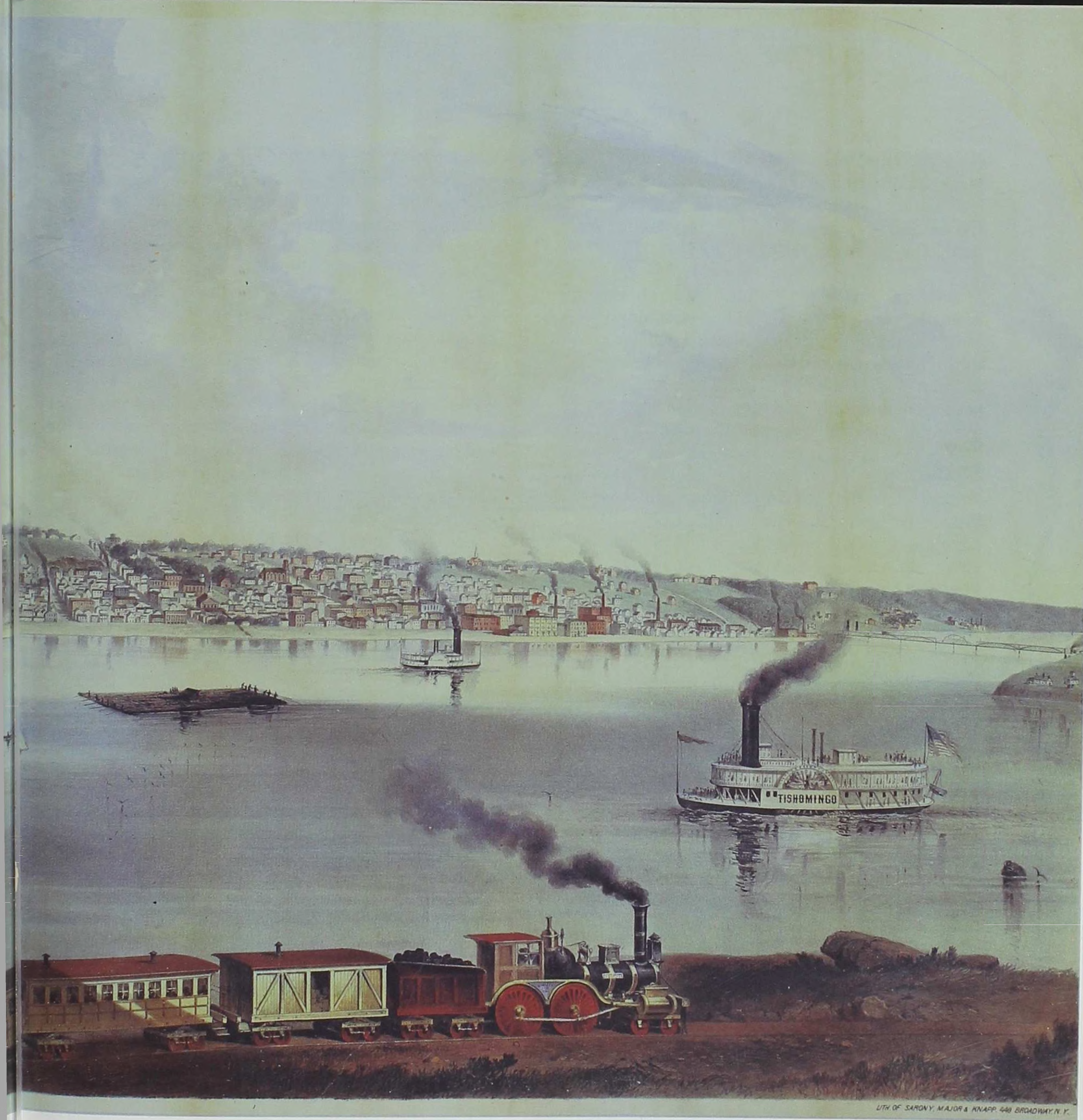
We get on board the Ben Campbell and start for Davenport. Get to Burlington. Go out to Mr Henns house. Get there about 3 oclock tomorrow. Rode on cars to Mt. Pleasant.

Friday July 10th 57 ~~Go up the river find a beautiful~~ Got to the house of Mr. Henn about 3 A.M. He has a beautiful house as complete as any in the State. His family, I like very much indeed. His little daughter about six years old is a beautiful little girl. We have a very pleasant time here. I enjoy my stay very much. I never see Mr Henn without feeling that he is a perfect gentleman. We remain here until tomorrow morning.



The Ben Campbell steams past a thriving Davenport, which grew from 11,000 in 1856 to nearly 17,000 in 1858.

Saturday July 11th 1857 Bid good by to Mr Henn & family & Col Williams & ourselves start for Dubuque. We stop at Mt Pleasant a very fine town of about 6000 inhabitants. Take dinner with Senator Harlan. I like him very much for a Black Republican.



LITH OF SARONY, MAJOR & KNAPP, 440 BROADWAY, N. Y.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)

The great State Lunatic assylum is up about 12 ft. It is to be the largest in the United States. It is cased with stone. We take the cars. I pass on the Road as the atty of the D & P.R.R. We get to Burlington and remain there a short time and then start for Davenport on the Ben Campbell.

Sunday, July 12 A.D. 1857. Beautiful day. I rode on

board the Steamer Ben Campbell, with our United States Senator Genl Geo W Jones, up the River to the Beautiful city of Davenport. I forgot to say that my partner Col Jesse Williams of Fairfield, was one of the number. We admired the scenery very much along the river, and the new and thriving towns. We arived at Davenport about 11 oclock A.M. and had a very pleasant time there. Col Williams and I went in the

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evening to the house of Mr Mackelot, of the firm of Mackelot & Corbin, Bankers and had a delightful call. It rained this evening. We saw a good no. of friends and I was highly impressed with Davenport. We remain here all night at the Leclair House.

Monday July 13th 1857 We spend a part of the forenoon in the city of Davenport and start about 11. A.M. for Dubuque in the Steamer Kate Cassel. We pass through the great Rail Road bridge on our way, without any accident and have a pleasant trip in the afternoon, and in the morning of tomorrow find ourselves up the [?] river at the town of Galena

Tuesday July 14th 1857. We take breakfast at Galena, and then take the Cars for Dubuque, where we arrive a little before noon, and I go with the Col Williams in company with Genl Jones Himself to his own house. He would not allow me to stop at a hotel. He was very kind and hospital with me. I shall certainly feel under very great obligation to him for his kindness. I have traveled with him for the last four weeks nearly, and in no instance has he in any way neglected me, although he is a United States Senator and I a poor young man.

I remain at his house tonight. I am introduced to his daughters Maria & Lynn one 18, the other sixteen. Maria I like very much. She is a sweet girl and really a good girl without the slightest air of affectation about her. Lynn is more affected. His daughters friend Miss Fanny Clark, daughter of Governor Clark is here also. I like her very much. She too is a sweet girl and very

I spend my time in Dubuque making friends and getting a chance to talk about the D & P R R of which I am one of the attys.

agreeable in appearance. She is 16 years of age.

Mrs Genl Jones, I think is an excellent lady. I believe she is just right. She is so deaf that I am compelled to yell out when I expect her to hear me.

Charles Jones the Elder Son I like very much. He is fine looking, intelligent, and I have not the slightest doubt a smart excellent young gentleman. I like him very much indeed. I hope he may succeed. The two younger sons Wm & Geo. I do not fancy so much. They are a little odd. All the Genls family are musicians. They are all getting along finely. The Genl lives in a splendid house, splendidly furnished and everything about it indicates success and taste. His rooms are supplied with marble wash bowls, from a cistern, his bedroom with a wash room near at hand. His yard is beautifully adorned with fine shrubs and trees, and a beautiful garden, all right. Every thing looks like life and happiness. And I really believe that the family of Senator Jones is a happy family, and well trained. The Genl himself is one of those free open hearted honorable freemen, who loves his friends like Angels, and hates his enemies like Devils. He has an untiring spirit and boundless energy. He has good hard common sense, but is rather impetuous. He is not a great orator but a shrewd careful, yet fearless manager. One to whom you can trust the smallest and greatest business with the perfect assurance that it will be attended too.

He is my friend, I love him and I love his family, and I will be his friend whether in prosperity or adversity.

Wednesday July 15th 1857 Beautiful day. I spend my time in Dubuque making friends and getting a chance to talk about the D & P R R of which I am one of the attys.

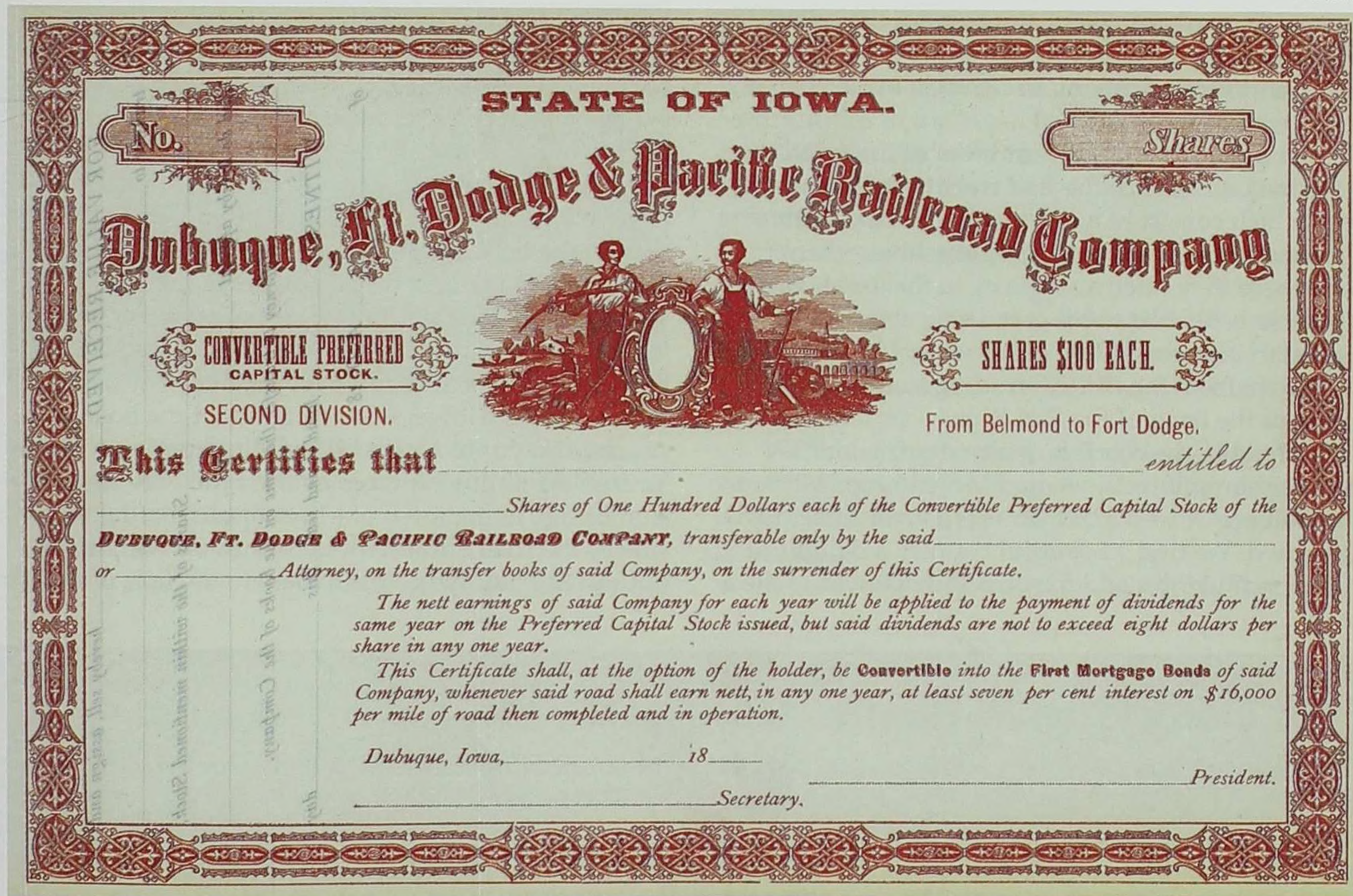
Thurs July 16th 1857 Beautiful weather. I still remain at the house of Senator Jones. I find Thos Sargent, Colburn, Booth, and some more of the Fort Dodge boys at Dubuque. We have a fine time.

Friday July 17th 1857 Still remain at the house of Genl Jones. I conclude that I will go to St Paul & St Anthony on a pleasure excursion that starts tomorrow, for those places in board of the Northern Light.

Col Williams & Miss Fanny Clark starts for the East, &c.

Saturday July 18th 1857 A pleasure party consisting of Genl Jones, his wife, two daughters and son Charles, Ben Campbell of Galena wife & daughter, son & daughter of Genl Lewis, son of Col Booth, Mr Peirce Mr Evans, Mr Goodrich, Mr Jannis, Mr. Higinbottom and several others, in all about forty persons. Start for St Anthony

It is excessively hot. Mr J.D. Jennings brings a cousin of his wife by the name of Emily Jannis, a very



A stock certificate for the Dubuque, Ft. Dodge & Pacific Railroad, which would hit a rough spot as the 1857 panic spread.

excellent girl in my opinion. I mark her at first sight. We go up the river to Prairie Du Chien this evening. The scenery is most delightful. The day is a little too warm for comfort. The passengers all dance this evening except Mr Jannis & sister and myself. I have an excellent opportunity of becoming acquainted with Miss Jannis and I improve it. I really like the appearance of this young lady. And I make myself so importunate as to find that she lives in the State of Missouri.

I do not retire until about 1 A.M.

I am thinking about my new acquaintance Miss Jannis. I cannot get her out of my thoughts for some reason to this deponent unknown.

Sunday July 19th 1857 I never saw such beautiful scenery as I saw to day. The upper Mississippi, far surpasses all that I have seen that is grand in scenery. The immense bluffs so bold and grand must fill any soul with a single emotion with a thousand deep feelings of delight. So it was with me, and my new, but really dear friend Miss Jannis. Her very soul is filled with feelings of deep sublimity. I am happy. The sweet moments fly away and I cannot stay them. I wish

I could live forever in such enjoyment! Indeed I am much happier than I usually am in any ordinary case.

The town of Winona is growing quite rapidly. But I think it will yet be washed away with some immense freshet. The scenery around lake Pepin cannot be surpassed in any Country in the world. I see the lazy fish jump clear out of the water. But how happy my friend Miss Jannis is. I wish her whole life might be one of pure unalloyed joy. She deserves the best possible treatment for she is a delightful companion. I have stolen her out of the hands of Mr Jennings and I must say that I have a very decidedly high opinion of her as a lady. Very high I rather guess my heart is touched a little with Cupids dul dart.

There is one of the most grand sights a[t] Red Wing that I ever saw. The mountain peek.

Today the young ladies have a great romp after oranges.

Monday July 20th 1857 Beautiful morning. We arrive at St Paul about 9 A.M. This city is a very fast town or I am a little mistaken. It looks like a fast town at least. I should guess that it contained about 8000. It is built