

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



May 8, 1856.
Sun shines out beautifully to
season is about 20 days.
last was here.
importance happens here to
shift and Butlerworth
to lay out their addition to
for which they squandered
of Allen and committed
of vilest frauds.
D. E. Gosnell.

day. The trees just begin
signs of approach.

J. F. Duncombe

Solomons and others
had a very strange time for
the Sabbath. Rode all night.

Mon Aug 24. 57
At daylight had a pitched
battle between two of our
stage passengers. D. C. Finch
and myself. Both were well
after a long time. Both were well
scratched. Arrived at Iowa city
this day.

Tue Aug 25. 57.
Solomon and
with time. We have
out side
constitution
the

Wed. Aug. 26. 57.
To day we hold a full
Democratic State convention.
to nominate Gov. & Sen. Gov. under
the new constitution just
adopted by the people.
We have a warm time.
I got a resolution passed
for my friend Geo. Jones
as Senator. Also a
resolution against certain
fractures in the new constitution.
Ben. M. Samuels as Gov.
+ Geo. Gillack as Sen.
I think we have an
excellent platform. And rather
think we may be a match for
the Black Republican

Front Porch

Dear Readers,

I love a good diary. Is there any better way to get to know someone from the past? And I promise that as you read this special double issue, featuring a diary never before published, you'll come to know the diarist, John Duncombe, very well.

Duncombe was only 24 when he came to Fort Dodge, Iowa, in 1855. This is someone who will later become prominent and influential, but as the diary opens, he is just a young man with legal training, watching for opportunities. In the next few years, as he notes in two small leather volumes, he plays his first card game, takes his first deposition, buys his first horse, and tests his courage for the first time. He experiences the emotions familiar to all of us. Sometimes he is achingly lonely. Or bored and restless. Or cocky and elated. Now and then, just plain embarrassed.

Consider the time, for instance, in late June 1857, when Duncombe offers to drive a very important mover and shaker, Senator George Wallace Jones, from Fort Dodge to Sioux City. Of course, first Duncombe must go buy a carriage, for \$200—but here is an opportunity to do a favor for and spend time with the influential and powerful Jones. Here is Duncombe's chance to make a good impression on the senator, to demonstrate his good judgment, his intelligence and maturity—maybe even to land a job offer. So they start out for Sioux City. But on the way one of Duncombe's horses gets away. Our young hero surely winced as he wrote this in his diary:

[Senator] Jones advises me to catch him immediately as he suggests he might run off. I have no fears and do not attend to the matter. After breakfast I go out to the door and see my horse about 2 miles away on the keen run.

I look rather blank for a short time.

There is a rhythm to reading a diary, weaving through the weeks and months, one day's entry after another. You begin to pick up the threads and patterns, the personality and preoccupations of the diarist. Humor appears, unexpectedly. Certain characters gain shape and dimension as they show up again and again.

Like the diarist, you, as reader, don't know what lies ahead, what small incident will turn into something big, what promising plan will simply wither away, what people will matter in the end. There is no skilled novelist writing a diary, plotting and foreshadowing and building towards a crisis. The writer is just living life day by day, and (lucky for us) writing

something about each one. One day, for instance, Duncombe is meeting with a judge about serving a writ (and, as always, remarking upon the weather he must travel through to meet the judge). Two days later he is helping organize a rescue party for a settlement 75 miles to the northwest where violence has exploded between white settlers and Indians.

The map that begins this issue shows Iowa in 1855. The state is youthful, a work in progress, still deliberating over a few county names, still squabbling over county seats, just settling on the state capital. In 1855, Iowa is a land of, well, *land* — and we often picture this time as one of harnessed oxen breaking sod, of weary settlers laboring to cultivate and harvest that land. But there is another slow and steady change happening on that land. Surveyors, land agents, and lawyers are also "breaking" that land, imposing order on it, dividing undulating prairies into portions of land with legal and financial meaning. Settlers on the prairie come into town for supplies; the elite "town building" citizens like Duncombe go out into the country to gather signatures on legal petitions, discuss lawsuits, plat towns, meet railroad surveyors, stump for political office.

Duncombe also travels for business up the Missouri and Mississippi by steamboat; across Iowa in stagecoach and sleigh, on horseback and on foot; and by train to New York, Boston, Washington, and his home in northwestern Pennsylvania. These travels, along with the national periodicals he reads and the political passions he keeps fueled, give him a view of a world much larger than Fort Dodge.

That is another wonder of this particular diary: Through it we enter Duncombe's internal world — his dreams and ambitions, his longing for a wife, his "prison of monotony" — but we also experience his external world, a world of camaraderie and competition, of political rumors and favors, of "Bleeding Kansas" and national elections and railroad speculators. Reading the diary of this young professional during Iowa's formative years is like sitting in a cold, drafty law office in the late 1850s and hearing the locals rattle on about politics and gossip and intrigue. Listen and watch closely: the young state of Iowa is taking shape, and young Duncombe is growing up.

So if this issue seems particularly heavy, it's because you are holding the record of a young man's life — as Duncombe himself termed it, his "reckless life of three years in Iowa."

—The Editor

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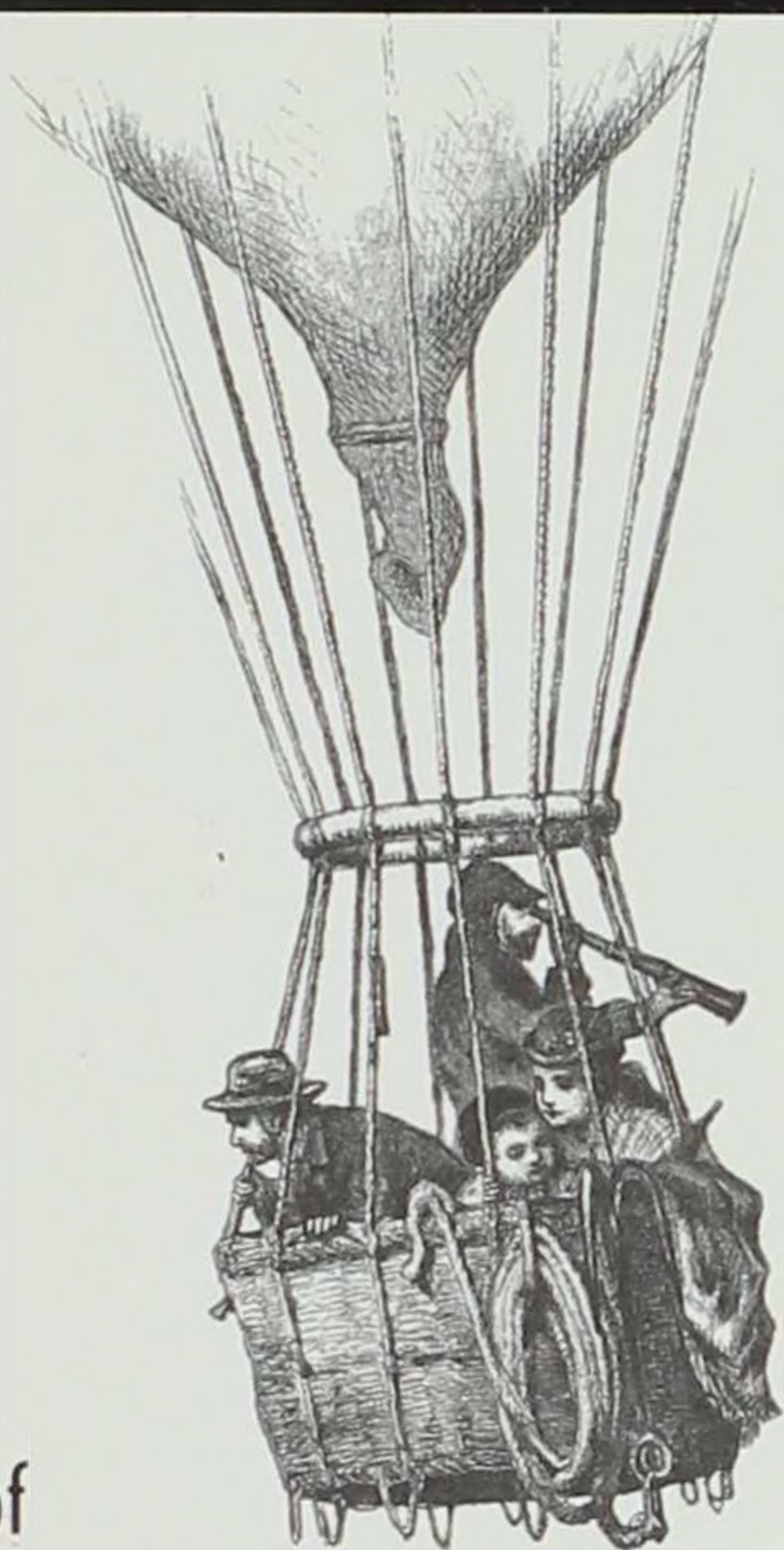
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Heritage

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2002, Vol. 83, Nos. 2 & 3

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**FREEMEN ATTEND
CIVIL WAR IN KANSAS!
LAWRENCE IN ASHES!
BORDER RUFFIANS!**

Great Wars
Speculators?

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81

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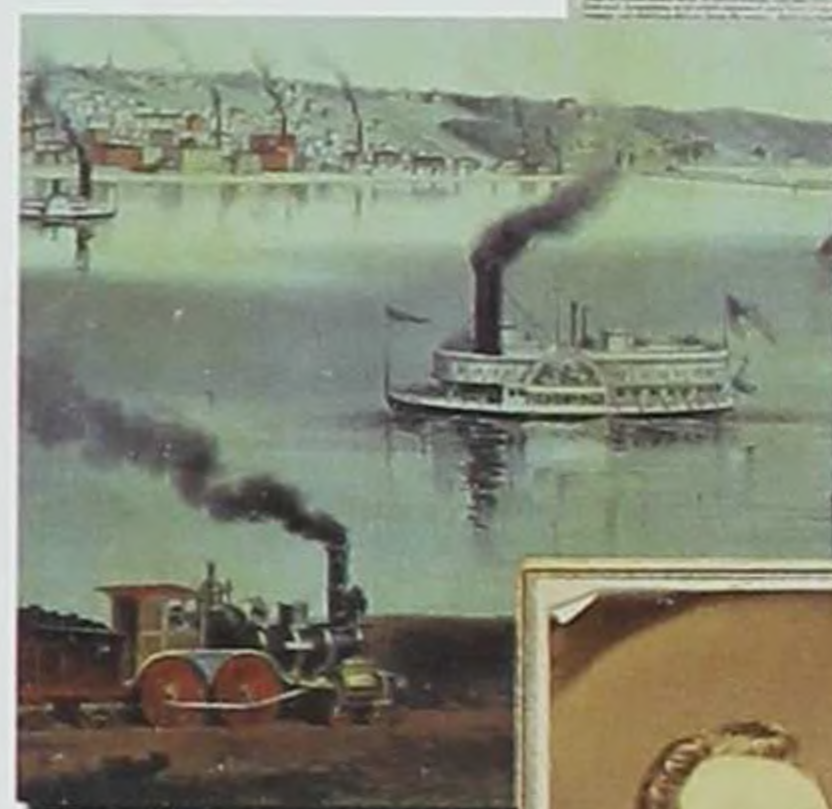
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116

126

134

142



South Carolina,
FOR BLOOD!
DAY, MAY 21, 1862.
SOME ALL!
FOR BLOOD!
FOR BLOOD!
FOR BLOOD!



of 1850s Iowa, the two-
mbe reveals an Iowa of
s, claim clubs and court-
dges. Duncombe came
ey in 1855. His image
and his diary fills this

Iowa Heritage

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Formerly The Palimpsest

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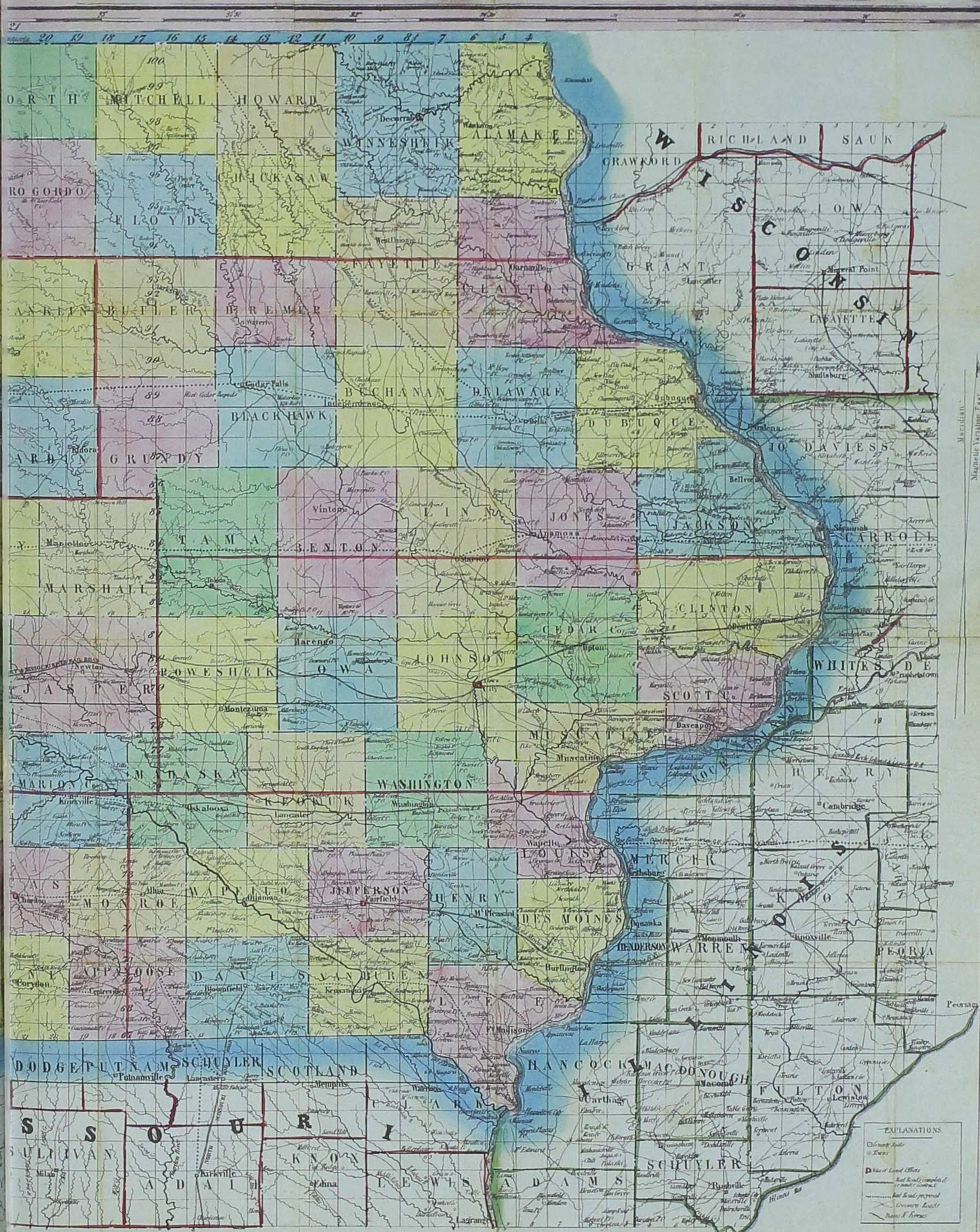


COVER PHOTO BY CHARLES SCOTT

On the Cover

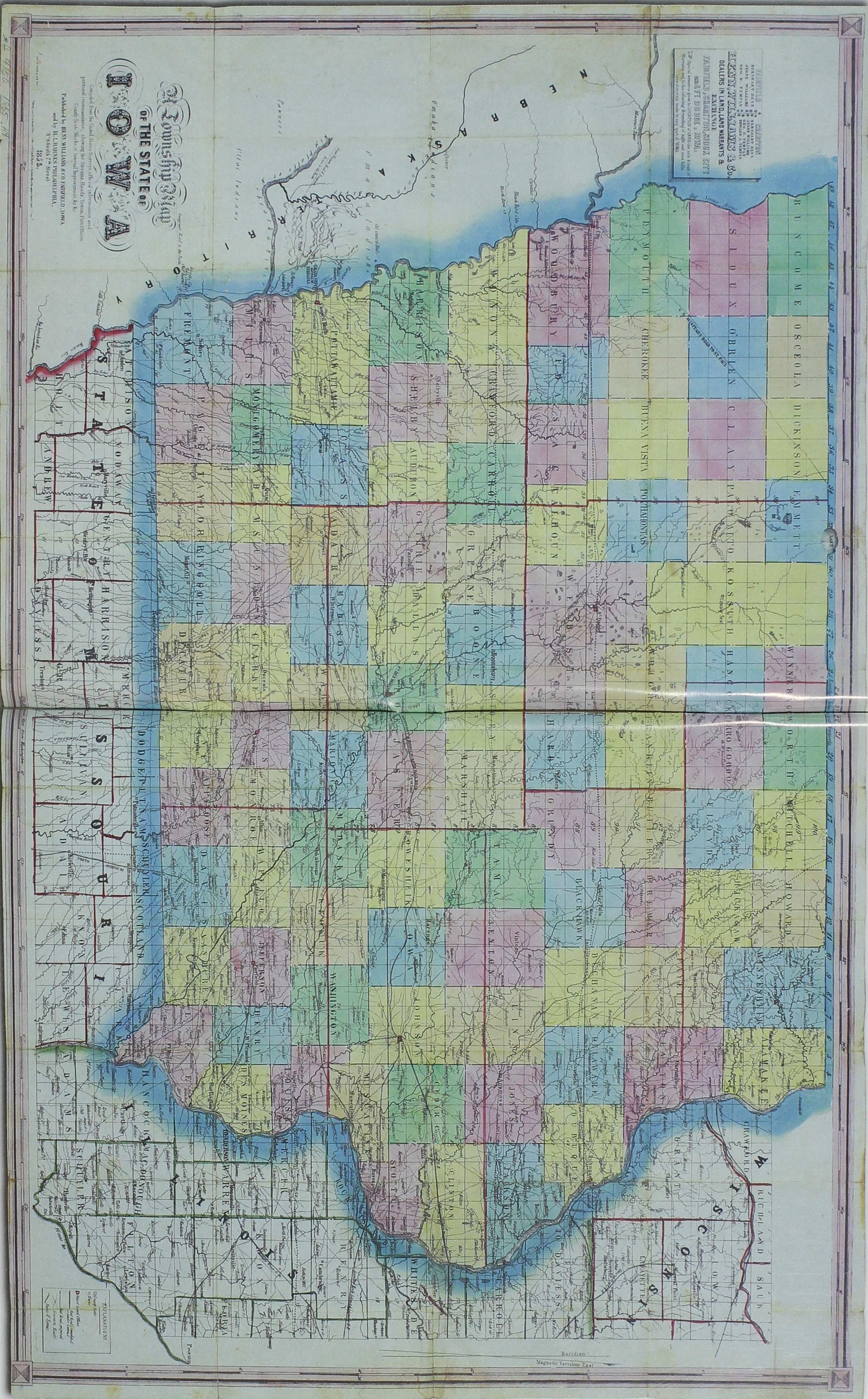
Set against the backdrop of a map of 1850s Iowa, the two-volume diary of John F. Duncombe reveals an Iowa of stagecoaches and literary societies, claim clubs and courtships, land agents and circuit judges. Duncombe came to Fort Dodge as a young attorney in 1855. His image (undated) appears on the cover, and his diary fills this issue.

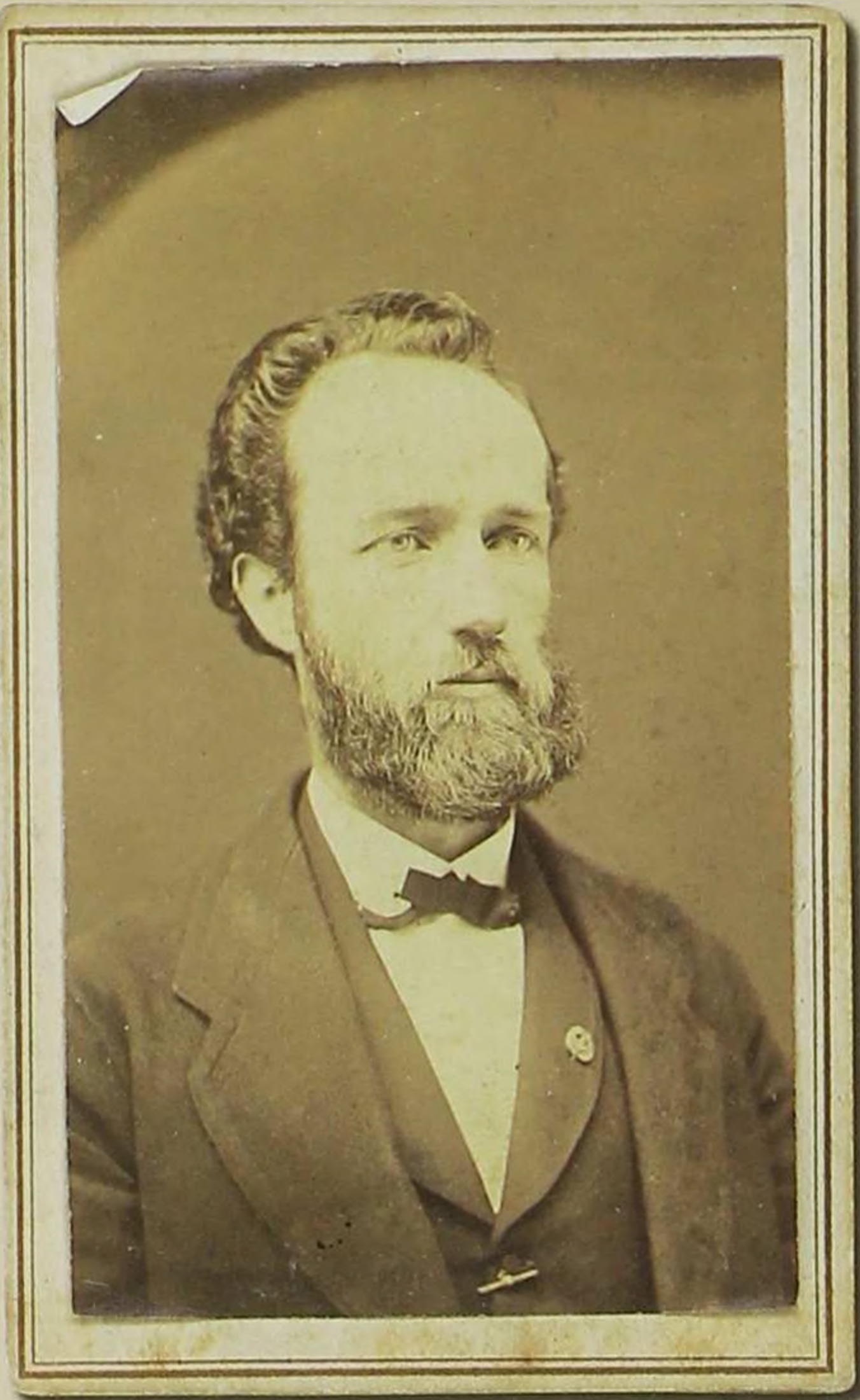
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Meridian.
Magnetic Variation East.

Iowa in 1855





John F. Duncombe (undated photograph, probably 1860s or early 1870s)

"A reckless life of three years in Iowa"

**The diary of a young attorney,
John Duncombe, 1856–1859**

*Prologue and Diary Transcription
by Roger B. Natte*

When John Francis Duncombe first arrived in Fort Dodge in 1855, he brought with him a sound education, a driving ambition, and the sorrow of a new marriage cut short.

Born October 22, 1831, on a farm in Erie County, Pennsylvania, Duncombe began his education in a country school. By age 22 he had diplomas and high honors from Centre College (in Danville, Kentucky) and Allegheny College (in Meadville, Pennsylvania), had read law with area attorneys, had been admitted to the bar, and had entered into private practice in Erie. He had also married Carrie Perkins, of Erie, on December 29, 1852.

After Carrie died on November 19, 1854, Duncombe set out for the West. Borrowing \$300 from his father, he headed for frontier Iowa, where opportunities in land investment promised great rewards.

In April 1855 Duncombe arrived in Fort Dodge. The abandoned military post was now a settlement of only several dozen people, but the future promised rapid growth. The town was to be the site of

the next U.S. land office and was also on the proposed route of a railroad originating in Chicago, which would pass through Dubuque, Fort Dodge, and other cities in northern Iowa as it headed west.

With boundless enthusiasm and drive, John F. Duncombe soon became a dominant force in Fort Dodge. What motivated him to keep a diary in those early years? No reason is clear. It may have been simply to record and reflect on his activities, ideas, and feelings. What is obvious is that he fully expected someone in the future to read his diary, as he specifically indicates in one of his entries. Yet Duncombe wrote without inhibition. His journal entries are characterized by a plainspoken and often blunt candor. He was not afraid to describe situations that may have been embarrassing and even legally incriminating, had they come to light when he was writing. Certainly it would appear that Duncombe included in his journal all personal situations and public events that had any importance to him.

Maybe Duncombe also wrote because he had

the time to write. Life in frontier Fort Dodge did not follow a frantic pace. On some days, as the journal indicates, there was not much to keep him busy. He had time to reflect.

Duncombe's roles in Fort Dodge — attorney, land agent, speculator, newspaper owner and editor — were among those likely to lead to greater opportunities in 1850s Iowa. But even though Duncombe, on most days, had great confidence and aspirations, for himself and for his town and county, success was not guaranteed. The economic panic of 1857 affected railroads and land speculation in Iowa as well as in the rest of the United States. Locally Duncombe was competing with nearly two dozen other land agents and attorneys serving Fort Dodge and Webster County in 1858. His third challenge to success was his deep commitment to the Democratic Party at a time when Iowa was becoming a strong Republican state. And then there was the matter of personal happiness. Would that ever be his, he wondered often enough in his diary.

John Francis Duncombe's entire two-volume diary — from January 1, 1856, through early February of 1859 — is published here for the first time. The epilogue summarizes Duncombe's life in later decades. Commentary accompanying the diary fleshes out some of the individuals he encounters and explains the issues and controversies swirling around Duncombe in these heady days of early statehood.

Certainly no single individual had more influence in molding the future of Fort Dodge. But this is not a diary about the life of one man, or the development of one town, or the organization of one county. Like the 1855 map that opens this issue, the diary covers the breadth of Iowa, as Duncombe travels across the young state, diving into politics, rubbing shoulders with the powerful, wishing for a wife, platting land for settlers and speculators, and endeavoring to earn himself a good name.

Welcome to the world of John Duncombe and Iowa in the late 1850s.

Notes on the Diary

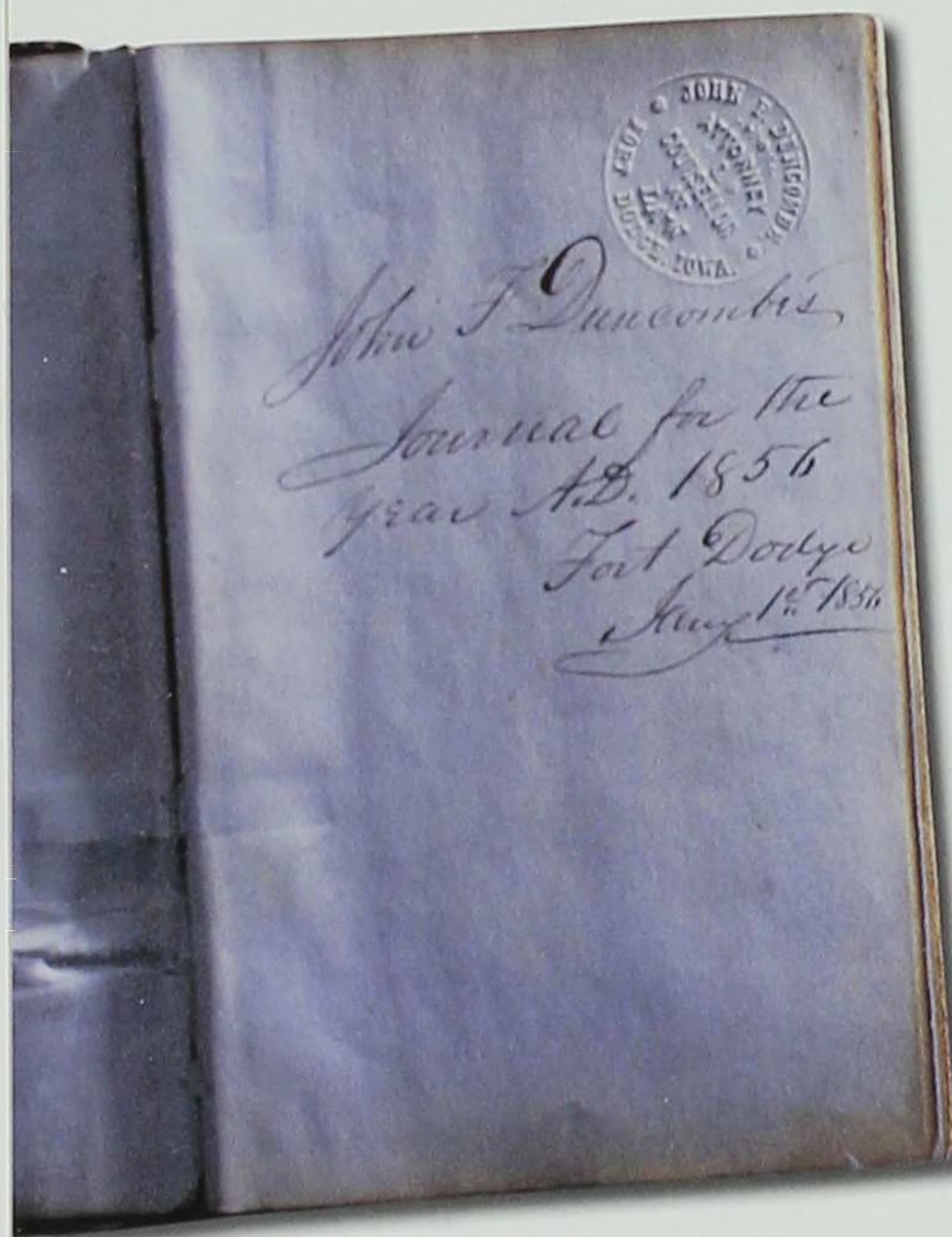
Because the John Duncombe diary is a significant primary source for Iowa history, and because Duncombe wrote about numerous individuals and places in Iowa history, we believe it's essential that the published transcription reproduce the original handwritten document as accurately as possible. Therefore, we have retained Duncombe's occasional slips of the pen or interrupted thoughts, his underlining or striking out of certain words, and his inconsistent or nonstandard spelling, capitalization, and punctuation (or lack of punctuation). Two spaces indicate where Duncombe appeared to be starting a new sentence, but without benefit of a preceding period or a capitalized first word. Where Duncombe drew a small hand with a finger pointing to an entry,

we use the typographical hand symbol used by 19th-century printers. We have, however, standardized the dateline of each entry by setting it in italics and flush left.

Though a well-educated man, Duncombe did not always spell the names of places or individuals consistently (even within the same diary entry) or correctly (if we use county histories and other historical records as the standard). Consider, for instance, his five different spellings of "Mississippi." Some of these variant spellings might be explained by the circumstances—writing while traveling on a steamboat, scrawling hurried notes before bed—or his own uncertainty or carelessness, or our own difficulty in reading his handwriting. Words or initials that we could not decipher are indicated by a question mark within brackets [?]. Brackets around a word indicate a reasonably certain guess of what Duncombe meant.

Both volumes of the diary are in the collections of the Webster County Historical Society in Fort Dodge. (One was donated by Thomas Gilligan, whose wife, Katherine, was a private nurse for Mary, wife of William Duncombe, one of John Duncombe's sons.) There is no indication in the diary or in Duncombe's other records that additional journals either preceded or followed these two volumes, although, as diary transcriber Roger Natte points out, the abrupt way in which the entries start on January 1, 1856, suggests that keeping a journal was not a new experience for Duncombe. —The Editor





Opening page of the two-volume diary begun by 24-year-old John Duncombe.

JANY 1st 1856

Another year has rolled away. Its gone. Its memory is all that remains. Good and Evil are strangely mingled in the past. But the Good deeds of men can be made no better and what wicked persons have done cannot be undone.

My own life for the year past I must say has been one of far greater pleasure than I anticipated it would be one year ago to day. Then the future seemed dark. It was mingled with the painful recollections of the past. But my own experience teaches me not to anticipate troubles.

I spend my time in the office this first and second day of January 1856

Thursday Jany 3d 1856 I start in an open waggon with Cady, McBane, Gower and Bagg with \$100,000 gold to take to St Louis for the land office. The Thermometer is 26° degrees below zero. We ride in an open lumber waggon with mules

Jany 4th 1856 Stayed last night at Hardins Slept around the Stove. Poor McBane froze his ear yesterday and Poor Bagg came very near freezing last night. We keep good watch over the 4 boxes of gold in our charge. We sleep with the boxes under our heads. Stay to night at Hendersons 20 miles North of Ft Des Moines

Jany 5th, 1856 The weather still continues very cold — most of the time below zero at least ten degrees. Cross over a big prairie and stay to night at Keith's 14 miles East of Ft Des Moines

Jany 6th 1856 Sunday — Ride all day in the cold Snow flies. Stay in a new house colder than Greenland. Got my back out in the weather and found the marrow nearly frozen up. I was so bad off from a cold that I could scarcely speak loud. Got dinner — felt quite poorly to day.

Jany 7th 1856. Rode all day in the cold very cold, it is difficult to keep from freezing.

Jany 8th 1856 Rode all day to Iowa City. This is the coldest day I ever saw. Mercury 32° degrees below zero. Iowa Democratic State Convention meet here to day. I attend the convention at night. Stay at the Tremont house — Sleep on the floor Have hard time to keep from freezing.

Jany 9th 1856 Started from Iowa City — Rather intended to start. did not start. waited for the cars.

The Rail Road from here to Davenport is the first built in the State of Iowa. This is just commenced to run. Has no regular time yet. No depot here yet — all very new — An important Era in the history of this State

Jany 10th 1856 Yesterday the Mercury stood at 29° below zero. Horrible cold weather for a pleasure ride! To day it is a trifle warmer about 20 below zero. Travel to Muscatine in the waggon. Stay at the Oglevie House. A very fine ball here Splendid ladies. How like human it made me feel. We have a bottle of brandy — Bad — Bad — Bad. —

Jany 11th 1856 This morning had a spree with Bagg. Came near whipping him — Glad I did not.

Cold — Rode to Davenport Much of the time on the ice on the Mississippi river.

Crossed over the river on the ice to Rock Island. Stopped at the Island City House. This is an excellent house kept by Arnold and Lacksburry.

Rock Island and Davenport contains about 9000 inhabitants each. Burlington, Keokuk and Dubuque about 1200. Dubuque is a little the largest of the three. I think Keokuk will eventually be the largest town in this Stat. Its prospects have been excellent.

Jany 12th 1856 Took the cars at 9 o'clock A.M. for LaSalle. Thence on the central R.Road to Sandoval 60 miles East of St. Louis. Stopped by a train of cars running off the track. The Engineer killed. An awful Smash up.

Jany 13th 1856 Got to St Louis today. Stay over night.

in the morning we deposit our Gold with the assistant sub-treasurer all right.

Jany 14th 1856 Buy 25\$ worth of clothing and start for Pennsylvania with Baggs. Get an awful ducking by the water tank being let loose about $1\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 o'clock.

Jany 15th 1856 Go from Vincennes to Indianapolis in Indiana. I visit the State house. Go through the Town. I call it rather a pretty Town. Contains about 10,000 inhabitants. Go to Crestline 75. miles from Cleveland. The Snow is very deep here. about 2 feet.

Jany 16th 1856 Start from Crestline for Cleveland Go on to Erie Arrive there in the Evening. Stay at Mr. Otis house. Just nine months from Erie. I am quite a hawk Eye!

Jany 17th. 1856. I start for fathers in the Stage I stop at old Hathaways. he charges me ten cents for warming Rich! Wasnt it?

I get home to day. Meet father and mother on their way to Wattsburg. They did not recognize me. That was funny (?) All the folks were well and I was very glad.

Jany 18th 1856 At house — happy

Jany 19th 1856 At home — Start for quarterly meeting at Bever dam. Stay with Lester Perkins tonight.

Jany 20th 1856 At quarterly meeting. Get dinner at Mr Crooks. Ride home — Finest kind of sleighing.

Jany 21st 22d, 23d 1856 At home — bid friends "good by" Stay with Old Judge Vincents in Waterford.

Jany 24th, 1856. Go to Erie. Stay tonight at Mr [Janes?].

Jany 25th 26th Visit in Erie — have a pleasant time indeed.

Jany 27th 1856 At quarterly meeting hear two excellent Sermons from Leslie & Lyon

Jany 28, 1856 Messrs Janes and Berst give me six dollars which will make me square with them in their land entries for all my fees. I now have enough of their money to pay for entering one quarter section of land and have the fees paid for doing it. R. T. Sterrett gives me \$10.50 to give to A.J. Sterrett. I give him a receipt for his money Start for Iowa at 2. P.M.

Jany 29th 1856 I stayed last night with John A Vincent No. 242. Superior Street Cleveland. The cars did not make their connexion.

Jany. 30. 1856 I start at 8. o'clock A.M. for Chicago. About ten miles East of Chicago get blocked in with the snow.

Jany 31st 1856 Stayed blocked in with the snow from about 2 or 3 o'clock last night until about one or two o'clock to day. Get hauled out. The paddys dig out a Road. We were compelled to dig a Road or stay in the snow. We burned up board fence for fuel and Eat Skunk.

I saw two very loving ones in the seat ahead of me They were both of Illinois Or at least the man had lived there as he told me Every little while when he had carefully surveyed the premises in the dark he ~~would place his lips to the lips of the lady~~ and "Suck" hence the name of "Suckers" I was amused! Guess anyone would have been. They both looked as if they ~~would like to but could not~~ under the circumstances.

Feby 1st 1856 Started for Dubuque. Saw one clinch and almost a fight. Both parties showed their teeth if not their courage.

Crossed the Mississippi on the ice after dark.

Feb 2d 1856 Stayed at the Peasly house until 4 o'clock A.M. Then started with ten passengers, a very cold blustery day for Ft Dodge. I rode 30 miles on the outside of the stage — like to froze. Then I got in at Rockway and of course some body must ride on the outside. A little Englishman tried it and like to froze up.

Stopped to night at Independence 75 miles from Dubuque Had a very good supper and comfortable bed. Then went on to Cedar falls one hundred miles. I guess we stopped here to stay over Sunday.

Feb 3d 1856 Stayed at Cedar Falls today with my old College friend B.R. Speer. I contented myself by going to church.

A. Mullarky is the wealthiest man in the town now This place and Waterloo are now at logger heads about the County seat [?]

Waterloo is the County seat.

Feb 4th 1856 Started and rode to Reles for dinner 12 miles then 14 to Parrotts. Old Parrott is rich if he only knew it.

Feb 5th 1856 Rode 20 miles to Iowa Falls Here are ledges of rock some of them a very good quality of

marble. here I got dinner then rode to Pilgrims grove where I saw a tall [?] and stage drivers get drunk.

Feb 6th 1856 Rode 50 miles to Ft Dodge home again after an absence of one month and three days.

7th Stayed in the office nearly all day and talked and rested.

8th Stayed in the office. Today first spoke of agitating the subject of County seat. Some thought it doubtful. Some premature.

9th In the office today. Wrote letters

10th Sunday Started with Vincents team in company with Sewall Gower for Willsons at Newcastle. Had a talk with them about the county seat. They wanted it at their town if possible but finally consented that if we would go in with them for a division of the Counties North and South on the old line between Risley and Yell and for a tier of Townships off of Wright County they would go in with us for a division of the County North and South and assist us in the removal of the County seat of Webster Co from Homer where it is now located to our place — so we agreed and stayed there all night.

11th Started with Gower for Homer. Went to Messervey Co Judge and showed him our petition for the removal of the County seat. Also the notices for the removal of the County seat. Said they were sufficient. Said that if we got a majority of the voters in the county according to the last Poll Book he would issue an order of Election for the purpose of taking the vote at the April Election. Put up a notice in Newcastle — 3 in Homer and one at Hardins, sent Gower Home with one for Tolmans one for [Bentleys?] one for Fort Dodge.

Febry 12th 1856. Stayed last night with old man West. He is Sheriff of Webster Co. He is drunk about half of the time. Great shame to himself and the County.

This morning I started down the river a foot for Bells to get signers to my petition I was to get Isaac Bells at his two sons, Jackques and finally stopped at Jacob Bells. Stayed here all night. Slept very comfortably. He lives in a cabin about four or five miles below the mouth of the Boone River

13th Went from Bells to Hursts, Richies and finally to Paines. Here I saw a frozen Elk and lots of deer. The old man and his son were great hunters. Their cabin

was without a window, and the light come in through a little hole about 3 inches acrost over the door. The chimney was only about half built up and when the wind blowed over the house it was filled with smoke. This was the state of the case this night, and I was compelled to cry until the fire went out. Corn cakes — hoe cake, fat pork and venison — with strong coffee constitutes the diet of these pioneers.

I travelled about 2 or 3 miles over the snow where it was about knee deep and So badly crusted that about every fifth step would bear me. I like to have tired out. But I am here writing hearty as ever for all that I see.

14th This morning it was storming. I found the walking terrible. I got to Willsons about noon. He agreed to go for Fort Dodge in the Election I wrote him a petition. He agreed to circulate it for me. I went on to B.H. Allison's and got my dinner.

I stayed at Allison's all night He would not tell what he would do. I dont know whether he will be for or against us but prospects are that he will be against us unless we buy him in some way.

Febry 15th 1856. Started from Allison's went to John Beams at the mouth of Crooked Creek, Old Johnny promised to go for us. I went to Humphreys. He said He would go for us. Then to old man Johns and he said he would go for us. Then I went down on to the River and in crossing I got in and got a good soaking. Rather a narrow escape from going under the ice. Then I went up to Nettleton's place of drawing logs to his saw mill. Then I went to Esq Johnsons. I labored hard with Tolman and some others who had signed the remonstrance, but I used every argument. And he agreed to do no more against us. To day for the first time in ten weeks it thawed

16th To day I started for Fort Dodge But the wind was directly in my face and it was the stormiest day that I ever saw. I went two miles, a good part of the way backwards to Barnes. Here I concluded that discretion was the better part of valor and therefore I stayed here all day and all night. I found Mrs Barnes a very pleasant woman. She looked quite tidy herself and kept her house so.

17th Sunday I started for Barnes afoot and got up to Bentleys and stoped Then I got a chance to ride to the Fort with Mr Rist. I spent my day in the office writing — I was interrupted by Powell Bush coming in to find out about his law suit with McBride. Nettleton the Justice had issued an execution against the said Bush

"We Have Beaten Homer" — County Seat Wars

Legend has it that the relocation of the Webster County seat from Homer to Fort Dodge in late 1856 was determined by the outcome of a wrestling match. The story has been repeated several times in print. A 1922 *Des Moines Register* article by Harold Andrews gives a detailed account of the event, in which Homer lawyer John D. Maxwell challenged John Duncombe to a fight to settle the county seat issue. The story also appears in Jacob Swisher's extensive review of Iowa county seats in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* in 1924, though Swisher downplays the fight's significance. Roger B. Natte's *Frontier Foundations: Creating an Iowa County* disputes the legend altogether, noting that Duncombe's own detailed journal (transcribed by Natte) makes no reference to a wrestling match. Still, even without the fight, the story of the rivalry between Fort Dodge and Homer is a remarkable tale of political intrigue and conspiracy.

When the original boundary lines of Webster County were drawn up in 1853, Homer was selected as county seat because of its central location. At the time the county was twice as big as present-day Webster County, extending several dozen miles to the east across much of what is now Hamilton County. The county was sparsely settled, but there was plenty of activity in the county seat among the lawyers, outfitters, and land agents who formed the core of the local business community. Especially important was the presence of the U.S. Land Office in Homer, for at this stage of the county's development, the land office business sustained the commercial life of the community as a whole.

Twenty miles northwest of Homer was Fort Dodge, established in 1850 to protect white settlers from Indian attack in the territory surrounding the fort. During the three years the garrison operated, the fort was home to about 125 people, including officers, soldiers, and a few civilians employed by or trading with military personnel. William Williams was the sutler, or chief supplier, at the fort, and in 1853 when the fort shut down and the troops moved on, Williams stayed behind to take advantage of the commercial head-start the military supply trade had given the place. In January 1854 Williams purchased the fort site from the federal government on behalf of the Fort Dodge [Townsite] Company, whose principals included big-time Iowa land speculators Bernhart Henn and Jesse Williams (no relation).

The Fort Dodge town site sat astride the Des Moines River, about 75 miles upriver from Fort Des Moines, which the army had abandoned in 1846 and which had since grown into a thriving frontier community of about 2,000 people. Attempts to establish a river trade route from Fort Des Moines to Fort Dodge proved futile — the river's channel above Fort Des Moines was simply too shallow to permit commercial navigation. Shippers and travelers resigned themselves to wagons and stagecoaches for the time being, since railroad service

was not expected this far west for another several years.

In 1855 the federal government announced removal of the land office from Homer to Fort Dodge. Reasons for the move remain uncertain, though the investments of Rep. Bernhart Henn in the Fort Dodge Townsite Company and Sen. George Wallace Jones in the Dubuque & Pacific Railroad, whose planned route would go through Fort Dodge, suggest that Iowa's congressmen used their influence in Washington to protect their business interests back home in Iowa. Whatever the explanation, the land office's move to Fort Dodge threw Homer's future in doubt, and there was more trouble to come.

Within a year of his arrival in Fort Dodge in April 1855, John Duncombe began working for removal of the county seat from Homer to Fort Dodge. On February 10, 1856, he recorded in his journal his basic strategy: "Started with Vincents team in company with Sewall Gower for Willsons at Newcastle [Webster City]. Had a talk with them about the county seat. They wanted it at their town if possible but finally consented . . . they would go in with us for a division of the County . . . and assist us in the removal of the County seat."

An Iowa legislative act of 1855 had provided for the relocation of county seats by petition and referendum, and the following day, February 11, found Duncombe meeting with county judge William Meservey: "Showed him our petition" and he "said that if we got a majority of the voters in the county according to the last Poll Book he would issue an order of Election." By March 2, Duncombe and Walter C. Willson had gathered enough signatures. By April 11, victory was theirs.

Duncombe, Willson, and their supporters next moved to have Webster County divided in two, and by legislative act in December 1856, the eastern half was renamed Hamilton County, with Webster City (formerly named Newcastle) the county seat. The western half remained Webster County, with its new county seat at Fort Dodge. In the months after the April election, many of Homer's business and professional people had left for Fort Dodge. Now straddling the newly drawn boundary line between Hamilton and Webster Counties, Homer all but disappeared from the map of Iowa.

Historian Jacob Swisher estimated that about two-thirds of Iowa's county seats had been involved in struggles with neighboring towns before securing their positions as the political capitals of their respective counties. Many of these struggles developed when changes in population, transportation, or commerce prompted a rethinking of initial decisions regarding county-seat location. Based on the evidence at hand, however, none of these conditions pertained to the struggle in Webster County, which was still pretty much barren prairie. More significant, it would appear, was John Duncombe's vision of the county's future — and his tenacity in establishing for the Fort Dodge Townsite Company every possible advantage for growth and prosperity in the years ahead. — by Bill Silag

for 70\$ and forty nine dollars and forty cents costs on a second judgment rendered the 14th day of December the suit having been tried on the 19th day of October before at which time he had rendered a judgment for costs merely, as I saw him do with my own Eyes I told Bush that in the morning I would go and attend to it for him

Feb. 18th 1856. I started early in the morning and went down with Bush to Nettletons. I told Nettleton that if he did not make out his Docket according to the facts in this case I would sue him for a false return. I did not direct him how to do it. Bush and Lundy were present He made out his Docket and then he took a Bond, approved our surety and let us have a chance of a writ of error.

The paper upon which he first rendered judgment for costs he could not find. I have not the least doubt that Berkley carried it away and he knew it. Not the least doubt. Bushes horse run away and I was compelled to remain here all night. Johnsons saw mill is getting on as fast as they can push it. The boiler will be on the spot in a few days.

19th Started for Bushes this morning. Met Bush about half way Went to Homer. Then to Sheriff Wests. There met Sheriff with Jones and James Hook taken with a warrant for a breach of the peace by old Isaac Hook. They wanted me to take their case. We all started for Homer. I tried their cases before old Esq Parker and got Jones clear. But Hook was put under 200\$ bonds to appear at the next term of Court. I charged them \$5.00 for my trouble. Jones paid me 2.50 and said he would see that the balance was paid. I then got Bushes writ of error and we started for home. Stayed at Bushes all night. Lay on the floor under a blanket with two men ones name was [lane?] Slept very cold — caught cold.

20th Went to Fort Dodge. Started for Old Johnny Beams to be at a river club meeting. Got there about 3 P.M.

Feb. 20th 1856 Rode nearly all the way on the Jump on the ice, on the river Got lost from the road. nearly a mile off before I new where I was so busy thinking about County seat got to Beams made a speech got some 12 signers. Stayed all night at Beams. He told me how the Homerites had robbed him of about \$20 Had eggs here this evening the first I have had this season

Feb 21st Went to Allison's then to Wilsons then to Skinners and Wares. Then to Collins — then to Harts there I stayed all night. One Hart would not sign my petition

22d Came to Fort Dodge on the ice This day for the first time this winter a kind of mist falls. It is said here that through the month of January the Thermometer averaged 7 degrees below zero.

23d Stay in the office to day. I write a petition for the organization of our township. Commence getting signers. Take Mr Vincent out to show him our out Lots. He seems pleased. The snow banks in some places is waist deep.

24th Pleasant to day. It verily begins to look as if Spring might be coming slowly. The air is clear and pure the [sun?] is bright the roads begin to grow a little muddy in places. And one of the surest signs is — I begin to feel lazy — a very unusual occurrence indeed!

I have written several letters as shown by my letter book.

25 Spent my time in the office. wrote 8 letters. sent off a deed to HB Meyers. Sold an out Lot to Humphreys The weather is warm and pleasant The Streets are muddy and very sloppy. I feel quite disagreeable to much so to have my mind on a State of Real activity I begin to feel a slight spiny head ache — a little lazy. The most important feature of the day is Robbins and his dog wolf. Morrison and Garahity's quarrel. About excelling as artists and poets. Mr. Ruggles has gone this evening to Garahity's to see the girls. Garahity lives in a little one roofed cabin just a hovel. All our town live but little better. The best dwelling house in the county is C.H. Vincents There are but two Brick buildings in this county as it now stands containing nearly 1,000,000 acres of land viz Morgan's and old Hooks Dawley sells goods in one and old Hook sells whiskey in the other.

George M Dallas is appointed Minister to England in place of James Buchanan recalled at his own request

Feb. 26, 1856 The weather is pleasant — plenty of mud under foot — Snow leaving Spent my time in the office writing notices. Selling and showing lots Sold a lot to H.B. Martin for \$75.00 \$25.00 in hand. Rather dull to day. Berkley here. Good business in the land office —

The most remarkable thing in the news is that the Mississippi is closed by ice its whole length and that Banks was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives after nine weeks balloting on the last day.

Also the President issues a Special Message on the Kansas difficulties and a proclamation to keep peace there.

27th Spent my time in the office but little profit to my self or any one Wrote a few letters. Card playing with all the et ceteras is the business that is most generally carried on I will try to keep as clear as possible of all these things.

Feb. 28th 1856 Warm pleasant day — muddy underfoot Streets are covered with mud —

I spent my time in the office. Wrote a long letter to Sister Martha.

I feel a little soreness in my throat caused by dampness in my feet.

Sold 1½ blocks to Rees for \$550. I agree to let Miller have a chance to purchase my share in his Town if Gaylord thought best to purchase.

29 Cold chilly day. I spend the forenoon in my office and the afternoon in running out Maj William's land. Very tired tonight. I never saw worse travelling in the snow I had with us a bottle of brandy of which we tasted when we began to feel tired but now I am the worse for it. I will now go to bed and resolve to do better but how very unlikely that I will do it!

March 1st 1856. Spent the forenoon in the office Started about noon to go to Allison's down the River. Cold. The Snow flies. I cross the Des Moines River below Tolmans Stop at Beams — go to Allison's —

I have heard that they intend to mob me at Homer. I am armed with a huge Bowie knife.

then to Willsons — then to Thos Landers I have two horses and Shaffners Sleigh. Spend the night at Landers have a long talk about the removal of the County Seat. O how little do I spend the Sabbath as I did only one short year since. What a change in me for the two past years. I hope I may not entirely lose my self and lose all my good feelings and good desires.

2d I sleep under a feather bed Don't rest well. It is quite cold 5° degrees below zero this morning. I start early for Homer My friends have gone by the way of New Castle. I drive to Homer by old Frank McGuire's. He is just building a ferry boat. The first one I

believe under way this side of Fort Des Moines.

I get to Homer early. I turn out my horses at old man Parker. I have heard that they intend to mob me at Homer. I am armed with a huge Bowie knife. We meet here for the purpose of presenting a petition for the removal of the County seat from Homer to Fort Dodge. The Court opens at nine o'clock Our petition is presented. I made a speech. About 50 or 60 in the room. The Court decides contrary to the law against us but we beat them on his own decision I and W.C. Willson swore to the petition. Others swore to the Remonstrance. We had on our petition 359 and they had 348 as the judge counted and as I counted 344. The Court decided that he would grant an order for the Election So we come off victorious.

After the Election is over we all go over to the hotel The New Castle men leave first. There are six of them After they have left we are sitting around the stove (Six in No) and a ruffian begins to abuse Maj Williams a man then over 60 years. The most shameful abuse is perpetrated Oathes and low vulgar slang constitutes the order. Some 20 men are present besides our crowd. I smile — but inside I am mad and like the Indian I feel as if I weighed a Ton

I resolve if a single blow is struck to split open the man's head who does it. I was the only one of our crowd armed I stay in the house until all my friends are in their sleigh then I get into mine and we drive home safe and sound and by my own part not the least scared.

A terrible sleet falls on our way! Oh Bowie knives and human depravity

March 3d 1856 Cold after the shower. Spend my time in the office.

4th Cold but thaws during the day Spend my time in the office.

5th Cold in the morning but thaws during the day. Spend my time in the office. Maj Williams effects a loan for Tod to the amount of 1500\$ at 5 per cent per month to assist him in the erection of a Steam Saw Mill. Tod agrees with us that if any thing should happen so that we should be in danger that we shall have a mortgage. And the first lien on the property. Have a meeting this evening to determine what we will do in relation to the Election for our County seat. And to determine what we will do in relation to the organization of our Township and other matters.

6th Cold in the morning — below zero Warm in an hour or two.

7 Cold in the morning — thaws after noon — in my office

8 Cold in the morning — Evening cold wind —
Snows a little tonight — about 1½ inches

9 Cold — Thermometer 13° below zero. Countinues cold all day — I attend church Congregational church organized — Two Haverlands, Plumb and wife — Dr Olneys wife and one other lady constitute the church. Skinner is the preacher. He administered the Sacrament to his church Text — "God is love"

I have read newspaper all day nearly — Feel a little tired — War news — [most?] important item — England is quite [saucy?]

March 10. 1856 Cold 18° below zero. I go to Homer on County business. They have threatened to mob me. I go ready to be mobbed. They do not interfere with me. I go to old Parkers tavern. Stay all night at Pembertons store with Henry Martin. Have a long talk with him and with

11 Cold — hard wind from the North Went to Thos Landreth's, Willsons, Allison's, Tolmans thence home to Fort Dodge. Got money \$164.15 from Tolman

12 Cold but pleasant — at my office

13 Cold Snowed Enough to cover the ground afresh

14 Cold but pleasant day

15 Cold but pleasant. Today we hold a caucus to nominate officers for the first Township organization in this Township of Wahkonsa All passed off quietly

16th Pleasant day. John Roche bored me all day to day to buy a Lot although it was Sabbath.

17th Warm pleasant day. I sold Roche Block No 10. in Morrison & Duncombes Addition for \$400 — he paid 100\$ down and gave his note for \$300, payable on the first day of Feby 1857, and secured it by a mortgage on the property.

18 Pleasant day — Yesterday I saw Wm Church stabled by Wm Hill in a drunken Spree in Homer He was stabled in the lower part of the Abdomen.

Last night I stayed with Judge Maxwell we talked over County seat. I then went to Webster City Saw Willson. Saw Cass township was [organized?] Willson and I went to work to get the boundaries

changed back We circulated a petition and got it signed by over 4/5 of the voters in Cass Township and not one refused to sign the petition that we presented it to except N.L. Osborn The petition was to have the original boundaries restored as they were.

19 Willson and I go to Homer with his mule and jumper We call on his Hon Judge Messervy Judge promises to restore the Boundary of the original Township of Boone if Willson will return his warrant now in the hands of L. N. Osborn Willson starts immediately. The Judge sends [?] Pemberton ahead and orders Mr. Osborn not to give up the warrant although he had made his agreement and that to specifically in writing in his official capacity as Co Judge I called on Mr. Dawson and got my supper

March 20th 1856 I stayed all night with Squire Parker. Slept with G.W. Willson on the West Side of the river He pretended to be in favor of Fort Dodge. Said that the only thing that he regretted was that the Legislature met to soon so that they could not make capital enough out of county seat. He talked of having a Rail Road run up Skillet.

Mr Willson last mentioned is what I call a treachorous man Good enough when he is with you but to Easily turned. Very passionate — a man of high temper and one that does not understand honesty well enough to practice it if it is not his interest. This is my present opinion Let time prove it.

20 Start to Fort Dodge early in the morning — with Mr Dawson. He gets to the Fort about noon I stay at the Fort over night Mr Walter C. Willson from New Castle (name now changed to Webster City) comes here to get up a petition to have a direct line of mail from Cedar Falls to this point

21 I go with Mr W.C. Willson and Mr Lash to Webster City — Stay around Webster City all night. It is a warm sunny day. Snow thaws very fast. Sleighing going

22d I go with Willson to N.L Osborn's to see him in relation to voting for us and working for us in our election campaign. He gives us plainly to understand that he will do it. I go to Willson's and stay all night

23d I came to Fort Dodge last night A Storm was up. The snow blowed and it rained hard all the evening or rather sleeted. I arrived safely and slept soundly. Nothing in my way, all passes off quietly

This is the Sabbath. But I am so thronged with

business that it seems almost impossible to spend the day as I ought to do it.

March. 24. 1856. Spent this day at home in my office. All goes along pleasantly. I wish our Election was over for County Seat. I am tired of Electioneering I think we will beat Homer but I cannot tell.

25 Warm pleasant day. The sun shines beautifully. I spend my time in my office

26 Warm pleasant day. The stages begin to run on wheels. We have had a very extraordinary winter in all parts of the Country. At Otego N.Y. the snow in the woods on a level has been from 6 to 8 feet in depth. The deepest snow on a level here has been only about 1½ feet But we have not had a thaw from the 7th day of December until this time — Sleighing continuing from the 7th day of December until now a period of 110 days, almost one third of the year!

Board with us is very high, from \$4.00 per week to \$5.00 without lodging and from \$5.00 per week to \$6.00 with lodging, washing \$1.00 per Doz Extra. Making a cost of about \$1.00 per day — cost of living too much to make money at.

I have spent my time very busily all winter. I think I never spent it more constantly employed.

Morally — I think I have not improved any. I am Sorry for it. I wish I might. But I have very little restraint thrown around me. The truth is I have for a long time felt as if ministers of the gospel preached more politicks than Religion — This has to a very great extent destroyed their influence over me They pray now for negroes more than white men — They preach Anti Slavery in the South while they let worse Slavery — Slavery to passion, appetite and the Devil go unnoticed. They petition Congress as a body of Ministers and not as citizens — So they did in the case of the passage of the Kansas & Nebraska Act. The result of all this is, vital religion is becoming very Scarce — Real honest piety is read about I fear more than felt — Honor is giving away before a lax easy State of Morals that threatens to take the place of old established rules. Men in this Country and particularly in the Great West are giving their attention almost exclusively to gain — hoarding wealth

I wonder if I too am not falling into the same state? I wonder if I too am not losing ground in virtuous feelings and virtuous principles? I wonder if I too am not losing my taste for refined Society — the Society of high minded men — virtuous and lovely women — guardians of Virtue for the masculine

human race? I wonder if I am as good a man as I was one year ago today? I wonder if I should be called to settle up all my accounts in life if I could settle them and strike a balance in my favor over the last year? These are serious thoughts. I don't think that I am as good a man as I was last year at this time. I don't turn my attention so directly to the great source of all virtue. I depend more on my feeble self. I look more for

Reader — whoever you are whenever you read this — you have a copy of my reflections.

enjoyment to the present. I have once learned that it was worse than folly to turn my attention to the future for enjoyment in this life — and yet I am now striving for what? Why I hope to lay the foundation of a fortune worth about \$20,000 in at least 20 years. Then I hope to get me a comfortable home. Then to get me a pleasant wife who will assist me to be happy True I have had such a wife once and she slumbers in the cold cold ground, but yet I will hope. I hope to raise me a small family that shall cheer my old age if I live to be old. I hope to spend some of my time in reading and reviewing my Books in calling back the pleasant recollections of my college life. In getting ready to die by living a just and honest life. I mean to be useful. I mean to be benevolent. I mean that no man whom I can aid without real injury to myself shall go unaided. I mean to have it never justly said of me "that man has done dishonorably".

In the speculation in which I am engaged I shall have many difficulties to encounter. One of the worst — yes the very worst will be that of governing myself. My mottoes are "keep cool" "think before you speak" "least said soonest mended" "to him that wills nothing is impossible". "Care not for what your inferior may say in slander" but ask was it just.

Reader — whoever you are whenever you read this — you have a copy of my reflections. undigested just as they are for the moment with me. I believe that I am better for stopping to think and I will try to pause often in my life to ask such questions to self as will be likely to make me better in every way

Now at 9 P.M. I will fix my lone cot in my office and if so it is decreed I will lie down and sleep





pleasantly and dream pleasantly of Heaven of my loved one gone, of all that is joyful — and pause in my onward course

March 27th 1856 Warm pleasant day. The river is rising quite fast — heavy snow banks are melting away It is almost impassible to the forks. I make an entry of land for H. Janes for which I paid \$200, cash Gold which settles our accounts to this date in full in every respect.

28 Beautiful spring day. The snow is thawing very fast. The gulches are filled with snow and impassible I spend this day in my office.

29 I start from Fort Dodge go to Tolmans. Take the tickets for the County Seat — go to Homer. go to Saml Osborns. Go to Winsteads Talk to the people about County Seat. also go to John D. Maxwell — See about and fix all our land deal with Osborn Maxwell. Stay all night at Maxwells. Sleep in his cabin. Cabin has no window the light is admitted through a hole over the door.

March 30. 1856 Sabbath day — I rest today at Maxwells. Spend my time in reading and conversation.

I think this is a very long day to me. I am used to a more active business life. The day is warm and pleasant.

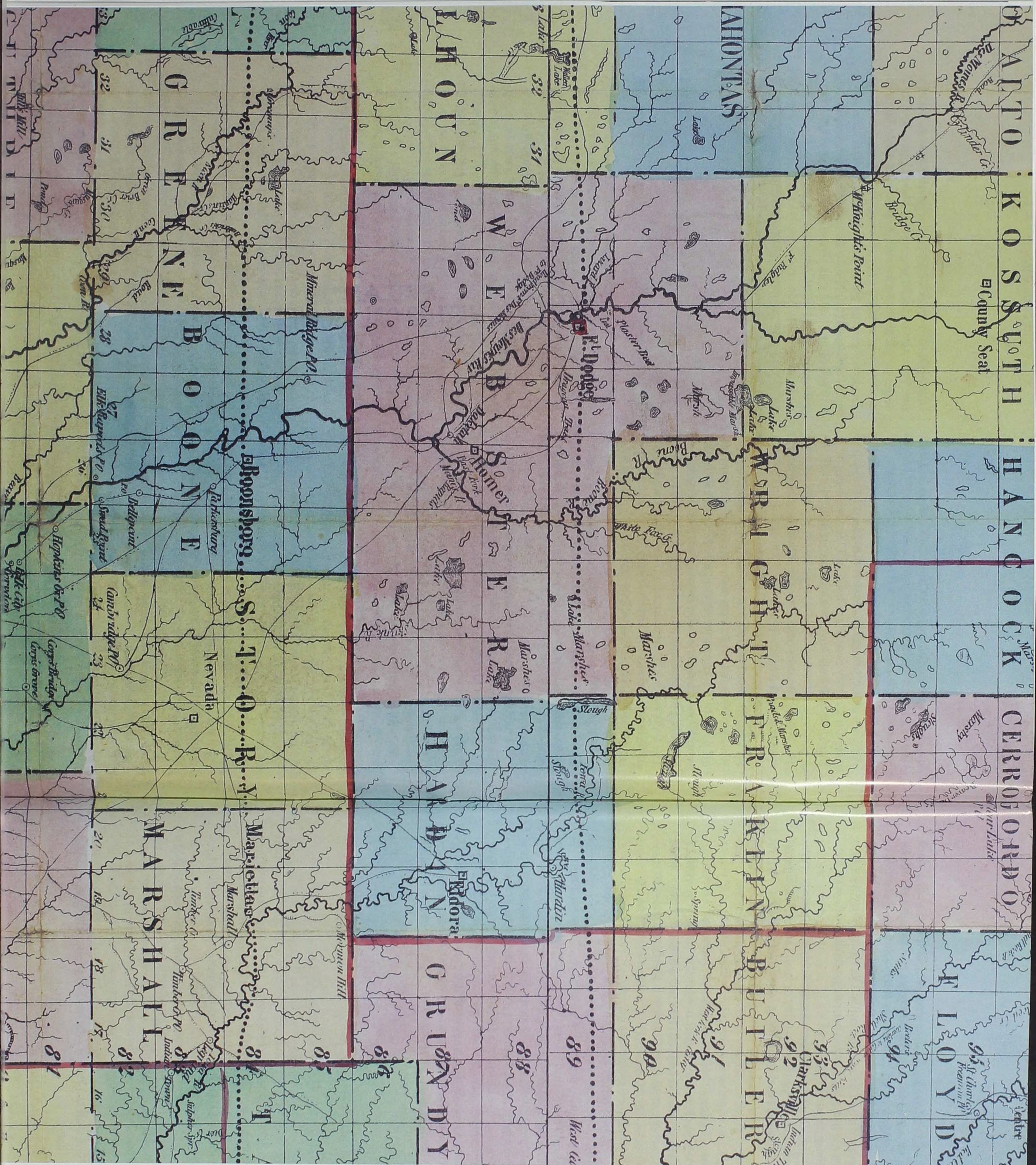
O! This is rather a hard world but I am not discouraged. Hurrah! Good pluck my lad.

31 Cool morning — A severe wind is blowing. I start for the settlements on the Skunk river I go by the head of Wall lake. The streams that run into the lake are flooded. The ice in the streams (which are belly deep to my horse) is about one inch thick making them all most impassible. O my poor horse did I not pity him! Some time the ice would bare but generally it broke This with my facing a very severe East wind made me tie up my face but I was compelled to get along without the handkerchief as there was no road. The land north of this lake also East is very good.

I think it will nearly all be settled in about ten years.

April 1st 1856 Last evening at got to Elisha Lakin who lives in Section 23. T.87. R.24 Saw McCowan, Everett, and S[?] then rode down the river to Alex Starey who lives about 1½ miles from Story Co line. Stayed at Stareys all night He seemed to be

Detail of 1855 map shows sloughs, marshes, and streams — and Webster County before it was halved.



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Detail of 1855 map shows sloughs, marshes, and streams — and Webster County before it was halved.

favorable to the Removal of the County Seat

Apr 2. Went to Halls, who lives in Sec 31. T.86. R.23. about a $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from Story Co. To day it commences raining about 9 A.M. This is the first rain that we have had since Dec 7, 1855, not a drop according to my recollection. A period of almost 4 months. I go from Halls to Mr. Lakins. I get wet to the skin. I dry off. About 2 oclock P.M. I start for New Castle for the purpose of crossing Boon river. The river I find is very high I swim my horse across the river. Go to Willsons. Stay all night Willson has just got his steam saw mill on. The water is very high. [Moon?] from Iowa City is on at Willsons. Willson has sold out to him. Webster City bids fair to be one of the finest towns in the County of Webster.

Apr 3 The wind blows very severely from the North West. It rains a very little One of the disagreeable days that gives a man the blues. I get very cold riding from Webster City to Ft Dodge The water is very deep between those two points. In one of the Sloughs the water is up to my stirup Irons in my Saddle — almost swimming deep. I get to Fort Dodge about 1. oclock P.M.

Apr 3 Made a mistake in the date of my diary on Apr 1st Apr 1st being March 31. Cool day. I am rather down spirited. I see every thing wrong side up to day. I feel very cross I scarcely know why.

Apr 4. 1856 Go down to Tolmans. See the people and tell them we will give them from 75. to 100. votes for their man John Tolman for school fund commissioner. It pleases them first rate well. I stay at John Tolmans to night

Apr 5. Start for Hardins. Beautiful day the snow is nearly all gone. I cross Brush creek just acrost below McBrides house. The water is deep but does not swim my horse I go to Homer See Martin Give Martin & Shurry tickets for election. Go on to Old E.H. West. He is a bag of wind — one of those awful shrewd fellows who know a thing or two. I have no confidence in the man especially behind my back.

Apr 6. Sabbath — try to cross Boon river It is over its banks — I go down to Leonards, oposite B[?] mill. He has a canoe But it is in an inland pond I offer Leonard \$3.00 to take tickets into Hardins precinct. He agrees to do it I to pay when the tickets are delivered. I then go to Wests and get my horse — go down to Boon at the old ford cross over in a split canoe and carry some

tickets a foot to Hardins precinct. Coming back I meet Leonard — he does as he agrees and of course I am in for the pay. I go back acrost the Boon thence Home to Fort Dodge — Stop on my way at Old John States I go get a dish of bread and milk, a perfect luxury. Get my horse fed a little corn thence I go to the Fort, arriving there about 8. P.M. tired.

Rather to much work for the Sabbath expressly commanded by God to be a day of rest. O this world how it misleads me! I will try to keep the Sabbath better

Apr 7th 1856. To day is Election day. To day we decide whether we are to have the County Seat yea or nay. To day I shall have it decided whether I have been working in vain or not for the last seven weeks. I get up and stir around. Rist a man whom I paid 10\$ to stay here until after Election is the first man who votes. I am the second in the organization of the Township of Wahkonsa

Last year an attempt was made to organize the Township but it utterly failed.

About 10 oclock A.M. I start for Tolmans Township. There I find every thing going right. I send Irwin Crouse over to Rosses and I go $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles after his father. The old man is a complete specimen from North Carolina. I tell him to take my horse and I will walk to the Election. I tell him if he wont go I will go on my hands and knees back to the election. Finally he concludes to go. I stay at Tolmans until the Poll is counted. We get 29 votes for us and Homer gets 8 votes for them I run my horse to Fort Dodge. We give in Fort Dodge 210 votes 2 for Homer 1 in blank and the balance for Fort Dodge. I have no doubt there are a great many illegal votes cast at Fort Dodge and Homer today. News seems very favorable in every quarter we will beat Homer by eighty votes — Hurrah! Good!

Apr. 8. Beautiful day. News comes in Boon Tp casts 76 votes, for us 75 — one in blank. I go over to Gowers office. I have some words with him in relation to School fund Commissioner He charges me with backing out. I tell him he lies and any man who says I back out lies. Fool that I was — I got mad — mad at Gower. O Shame! I would have pounded him if he had dared to take it up. Oh Shame!

Doc Pease told me what was absolutely false. He told me that I said that I had sent out tickets to Woodard, before I had. He accused me of using "duplicity" when he wanted — and repeatedly said we must pledge everything to everybody at the last end of the race. I would not do it but he wanted me to. I look at Doc L.L. Pease as a dishonest man — not

to be trusted. One that will do lots of talking but no work. One that is cap[ab]le of All the political intrigue of any man who has no more brains. But I will keep on friendly terms with him. But I will ever closely watch him.

Gower — I look at as a babler of no account. I will pay no attention to him in the future. He is a rascal and a fool to boot. And I am as big a fool for noticing him at all. In the future I will work my card to thwart all his plans that do not agree with what is honorable and what is just. He is not worthy of decent treatment, from a rational man

Apr. 9. Beautiful day. I feel much better pleased on account of the fine weather — and the good election news than I did yesterday. I am in better spirits every way. Hurrah! I'll not let trifles trouble me. Not I. Be a man I'll say. Let my mottos be "keep cool" "Think before you speak." "Least said soonest mended" "To him that wills nothing is impossible." "Care not for slander ask is it just" "Be diligent in business"

We'll beat the Homer boys about 90 votes — guess 100.

Apr 10 Beautiful day. Never finer. The streets are dry and the sun shines so warm and lovely. I feel in excellent spirits and excellent health. Good I'll beat the Homer boys 110 votes. Stock is rising

Apr 11th 1856. A very rainy stormy day. Mr Beecher and I start in the rain for Homer to take home our Election returns to the County seat. We have an awful

I go to bed tired and feverish. No whiskey drunk this evening

time. rain & mud — the sloughs are just opening up and we find our light ponies are better than heavy horses. The Homer people are quiet. Not a word said — they all seem glad to get rid of the county seat. We leave Homer about 5 oclock P.M. About half way home it thunders and lightens terrifically. What a time we have! It is so dark that we cant see anything. When we get home to the Fort, and bring the news that we have beaten Homer about 150 majority what a time the boys have. We get out our revolvers, pistols, rifles shot guns &c And we make night hideous by our huzzas and firing of guns. The boys give me three

cheers for my services in this matter then they give cheers for the balance. I go to bed tired and feverish. No whiskey drunk this evening

Apr 12th 1856. A pleasant day. Maj Williams claim is jumped by Busy & Karr. I dont know what is best to do. If we take them off that will not [?] for they have been removed once by force and once legally. If we dont remove them we acknowledge at once that our club is of no account. I am willing to go if the balance are. I am not willing to go unless the club is united.

This evening we have a meeting of the Democrats of our Town. 34 are present. Everything seems to indicate that we will have a pretty stirring time about 3 months from this time. I am with W.H. Merritt & Saml Robbins appointed a committee to draf Articles of Association for our club. To prepare for the coming contest. We have rotten Democrats in our ranks. Those that do not join us are against us. We will try our strength if there are not one dozzen of us. I had rather be governed by principal alone, than to have a regiment at my heels with no principal

Apr 13th 1856. Beautiful Sabbath day. I wish my heart was as happy as it once was. But I am determined to do the best I can. I will not be down spirited. Let what will come I will try to be an honorable man. If I was alone doing nothing — no one would complain on my account. But I am in the employ of Williams Henn & Co and every body seems down on them the hardest kind of a way, for no other reason than because they got the best hold at Fort Dodge. Let them work who are enemies to the plan. [They?] undoubtedly will greatly injure us. But the day will come when men will do what is honorable and right. For my own part I will stand entirely aloof. I will keep my own secrets. I will watch carefully a clique who are now working in Fort Dodge for the purpose of gaining their own selfish ends. I will say all that I can for my town and her interests. Let what will come. I will try to be a patriot on this ground at least

14 Remained in my office. Great talk about title. Dr Pease tells me there is no use to talk any more about title for there is no title. "Let her rip"

15 Remain in the office, it rains all day nearly — Nothing of importance. Except yesterday I learned that Gower was trying to find out whether I was a whig (ha! ha! ha) before I came here

16 Beautiful morning. Started today to hunt for land.

Went as far as Saml Osburns. Went to look at a piece of land that [unites?] Boon river at the horse shoe bend.

17th Started to hunt land Took a few biscuit in my satchel and rolled up my corn for horse — in my over coat and tied it to the saddle travelled all over the country in T. 86. R 25. This is an excellent Township of land — And someday will be thickly settled.

Went through Township 87. 24 & 86. 24. These Townships are rather to wet except close to Skunk River.

Tried to cross Skunk and the outlet of Mud Lake but it was not fordable Stayed — all night at the house of Estelin, Sec. 36 T. 86. R 24. He came to this State with a six horse team. His waggon weighed 3,800 lbs and he had on it 4,000. He killed 3 of his horses and the balance were drawn nearly to death

18 Started afoot for Hardin Co. Went about 5 miles and found that I could not cross the streams. Went back — Got my horse and went to Fort Dodge. A very severe cold raw wind blew in my face all day with occasionally a gust of snow, rain and sleet. A very disagreeable ride. The sloughs I never saw worse Almost impassible. I am very tired tonight

19 Beautiful morning. I spend the day in my office I sell two nos. of land viz S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ sec 6. & S.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ sec. 5. T. 86, R. 25 I sell Block 18 in my addition to Fort Dodge for \$350 — to Geo H Manlove. All is quiet

today. The Claim Club decide to remove the interlopers on James Williams Claim on Monday. That is right. The one who now occupies it is a great scoundrel — while James Williams right is undoubted as far as morality goes he having come here in a very early day and made his improvements and erected his house

Sunday April 20th 1856. Beautiful morning — but large body of fog in the river valley making it quite chilly.

Stayed in my office all day I got but little time to rest

☞ Apr 21st Beautiful day. This day I acted in the capacity of a bone fide rioter. I went with the Claim Club of Fort Dodge to dispossess old Busy & Smith Geo. H. Rogers brother in law. We tore down Old Busys house — carried his traps away — then after taking him and Smith prisoners we went at it to determine whether they should be whipped or tarred and feathered. It was finally decided to tar and feather them. I spoke and voted in favor of giving them a good thrashing, but the tar men beat us about 3 votes to two

It was some time before we could fully determine whether we could find the men to do the tarring. But finally it was done in good stile. The two claim jumpers had a good time of it

The reader may some future day wonder how I with some 100 others could do such an act. But it is no wonder to me. I look at a man who would jump a

Claim Clubs: Protecting Settlers or Speculators?

Readers of John Duncombe's journal may be struck by the harsh treatment accorded local "claim-jumpers" by the members of the Fort Dodge Claim Club — and also by John Duncombe's strenuous effort to defend his club against possible charges of vigilante justice and mob rule. Comparing claim jumping with horse-theft, Duncombe emphasizes the family- and community-building aspects of the club's work. In his journal entry for April 21, 1856, Duncombe suggested that the club was necessary to protect the sweat equity of farmers who settled in the area before the federal government got the land surveyed and on the market for public sale — that is, between the closing of the garrison in 1853 and the opening of the U.S. Land Office in Fort Dodge in 1855.

In describing events at the Busy (Busey) and Smith residence on April 21, 1856, Duncombe holds himself up as a kinder, gentler club member in recommending that the claim-jumpers — in addition to having a house destroyed and traps removed — be whipped rather than tarred and feathered.

Unfortunately, when the issue was put to a vote among the 100 claim-club members attending the eviction of Busy and Smith, Duncombe reports, "the tar men beat us about 3 votes to two."

In time, the courts caught up with the claim clubs and, as Duncombe himself would find out in September 1856, punished those who took the law into their own hands. Historians, however, were slower than the courts to make up their minds about which side of the law to put the clubs on. Frederick Jackson Turner took a benign view, seeing the clubs as expressions of frontier democracy — ordinary citizens banding together to protect their wilderness homes in the years before official government agencies were established.

Historians Jesse Macy and Benjamin Shambaugh shared Turner's view, offering by way of example descriptions of Iowa claim clubs, including clubs operating in frontier Johnson, Poweshiek, Hamilton, and Webster Counties. Echoing Turner's comments about frontier democracy, Shambaugh also pointed to the role of the claim clubs in protecting the working farmer's

claim which was actually improved in the same light as a man who would steal a horse and when Mr Colburn our captain called for volunteers to go and take Smith I was the first one to seize him and another John — McLaughlin the second. This days performance is certainly a very marked Era in the history of Mr Smith and Busy as well as myself.

Apr. 22d 1856 Warm pleasant day. The snow is all gone, except in a few places in the deep gulches. The grass just begins in places to look green.

The roads are drying very fast This day I attended the funeral of Mrs L S Coffin who died of consumption. I was one of the pall bearers — Nothing of particular note exists except that I am very busy and offer to loan for several years without interest one hundred dollars for the purpose of starting a full blooded Democratic paper. Mr White from Syracuse N.Y. is the man who proposes starting the paper. I dont like the locality of his position to be a real sound Democrat However I think we can put him in such a position that he cannot flinch.

April 23, 1856 Remain in my office to day — This is a beautiful day — Nothing of importance happens to day —

24 Spend my time in the office — Beautiful day, the fields just begin to show a green tint as if the ~~bud~~ grass were starting and the trees to change their color

as if the buds were swelling — The last of the old snow in the gulches is just about gone

25 Beautiful day — the wind blows severely and the air is very damp The thermometer in the shade stands at 75° above zero. Maj Williams and I bind ourselves to give A.S. White \$600 — a bonus upon the issue of the first number of his paper in Fort Dodge, his paper to be started by the first day of August next _____

I buy a Gold watch — give \$43.75 A fools business — but I am going to give it to sister if I keep it till I see her

Saturday April 26th 1856 I did not rest well last night. I was very feverish — It rained in the night and is raining this morning This makes the grass look green.

Remain in the office all day to day. I have a little spare time and I am glad to have it.

April 27th This is an extraordinary day The wind blows from the South all day terrifically. My hat is blown clear out of the town into the woods over the hill Occasional showers of rain with the wind. I read Judge Douglasses Report on Kansas and a good amount in the newspapers. Also in Butlers Analogy of Religion. I spend considerable time in reflection which I think will tend to make me a better man

28 This is a beautiful day — I spend my time in the office nearly all day. I take the Deposition of V P Van Antwerp in the case of J C Walker & Bros vs. Wm.

access to federal land against the price-gouging designs of land speculators.

In 1958, University of Iowa professor Allan G. Bogue took another look at the claim club records discussed by Shambaugh and Macy and came up with a more complex — and less flattering — portrait of the clubs' purposes and practices. In an article published in the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* in 1958, Bogue reported that while each Iowa club had its own idiosyncrasies, the clubs' bylaws and proceedings revealed common features as well. First, though defenders of the clubs like John Duncombe talked about the need to protect homes, the clubs' bylaws make clear that the club's primary purpose was to protect land claims. Bogue found no mention of protecting homes in the official paperwork of any of the clubs he studied. Second, Iowa claim clubs often included absentee claimants who depended on the clubs to keep an eye on one or more claims. While some of these absentees undoubtedly bought and settled on their claims, the claim club apparently had no problem with

claimants whose goals were something other than farming Iowa land. Third, and perhaps most contrary to the clubs' traditional image, Bogue's detailed analysis of several clubs — including John Duncombe's Fort Dodge club — indicates the degree to which land speculators could enjoy the benefits of membership. Some club members held claims on more than one parcel of land; others held claims on a total acreage greatly exceeding what a single family could farm. Claims of various sizes were sold by their holders for cash — to buy a farm, to pay for a house and lot in town, or simply to make a real-estate killing later on.

Perhaps the claim clubs helped foster democratic political institutions, as Turner and other historians have argued, and perhaps not. But without doubt, as Bogue has shown, the claim clubs gave both small and large claim-holders an effective means for "extorting tribute from latecomers to the community."

— by Bill Silag

(For more on the Fort Dodge Claim Club, see the inside back cover.)

McKay Commissioner of the Des Moines Improvement — the first deposition that I ever took in any case.

29th This is a pleasant day A great excitement gets up between the land agents and speculators from abroad They hold a meeting and some angry words pass — They call us "Sharks" and we call them "Gudgeons"

They are likely to outnumber the few of us that are present and we "Adjourn ourselves by going out." And then we give three hearty cheers The land officers decide that we shall hand in our applications at the window A great rush is made for the window. I have about 4000 acres on hand to enter. I get it entered or handed in no. 6. I get my hand in the window Window smashed

This evening read Judge Douglass speech in reply to Collamer from Vermont on the "Kansas Report This speech is in the Was-Union of April 17, 1856. It is one of the best speeches. Douglass is a great man. And I have no doubt a true patriot. I hope some day to live to see him President of the United States.

30 A rainy muddy windy day. A great many strangers in town I have about 5000. acres to enter to day. Shall not get it all entered.

I enter about 1500-acres. I am quite busy. I bought 14. 120 acre land warrants yesterday for men here.

Judge Messervy comes up here to Fort Dodge yesterday. And brings the County Seat with him.

May 1st 1856. Cool damp morning. The grass just begins to start finely. Not up enough yet to be good food. The roads are very bad. The sloughs almost impassible. This season, is about ten days behind last season — I mean later.

I spend this day in my office. I am doing the best I can for my employers I dont know what will be the next move. Mr Gower yesterday guaranteed 3 L.W.s one issued to Mrs Donaly which were entered to day also. A. Carpenter did the same with two that I bought of him and Willsons McBane & Co gave me written guarantees of six that I bought of them — All of which warrants are to be and were entered on lands for Robert Sherrard Jr.

2. Hard wind commenced blowing from the East. I spend my time in the office today

3 Hard wind blows from the East. Spend my time in the office and surveying out Lots.

May 4, 1856 Spend my time in the office. Read

Washington's farewell address. Read through the Book of Ecclesiastics. Take tea at Mr Vincents. The wind still continues to blow from the East.

May 5. A very severe storm of wind continues to blow from the East making the chip and gravel stones fly and the houses shake and crack Passed tax $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent to build [school House?]

6 The wind still continues to blow I think this has been the most severe blow that we have had in Iowa since I came.

7 I spend my time in the office I am wasting to much time I have not sufficient regularity in my habits. I will try to do a little better than I have been doing in this respect.

May 8, 1856. The sun shines out beautifully to day. It really seems like spring. I find this season is about 20 days later than the last was here.

Nothing of importance happens here to day. Thrift and Butterworth commence to lay out their addition to Fort Dodge for which they squandered the property of Allen and committed one of the vilest frauds.

Took a Deposition.

9. A lovely day. The trees just begin to show signs of

*A great many strangers
in town I have about
5000. acres to enter to day.*

approaching spring. The early plumb I think it is — just begins to blossom. Mr Tod raises the frame of his steam saw mill yesterday and to day. This will be a great addition to our town when it is erected. I hope that we may have his services for a long time but I fear we shall not get them, as I fear that he will give up the job before he gets through with it.

I pitch a game with \$20 pieces to day with Thos Rees, W.O. Ruggles and Mr Oakerson. The first in my life

May 10th, 1856. A very warm pleasant day. I go out and finish surveying the out lots in Duncombe & Morrisons addition and have the stones set.

I am very tired in deed

11 I spend my time in the office, sleeping a little and reading a little. Mr. Skinner gives the claimants gass about tax and [?]. Mr. Robbins & I go up to Mr Vincents and we have a very pleasant time with Misses Amaret & Nelly Curtis.

12 It is a dark gloomy rainy morning I get cut out of my numbers by the Register setting his time ahead. I feel mad all the forenoon and I have not fairly got over it yet I cant help myself though, so there is no use of grumbling. I dont feel just right tonight. This day has been of very little account to me yet. I mean to try to do better in the future

13. Wet rainy day. I commence entering lands. I have about 10,000 acres to enter for other men. No particular news, except there has been a great Riot at Erie. Johnsons printing office. attacked by a mob and torn down. Tracy and Walkers house attacked

14. Wet cloudy day. Am still entering land. Great talk about president. Hard to tell who will win. I feel certain that the Democratic Party will undoubtedly succeed.

15 Pleasant day. I feel a little unwell. I have a bad cold. I finish entering lands for our office. I feel a little dul, nothing new. Nothing stirring I sell an out lot to Benjamin [Hellere?] of Pa.

May 16th 1856. Warm pleasant day. In the evening it rains a little. I go with W.O. Ruggles and make a tender of \$530, to G.H. Rogers for Henry Williams of Knox Albany Co. New York. He said he supposed I knew what his answer would be, that he intended to law that matter as long as he lived or words to this effect. I told him that the money was ready for him anytime that he would call on me at the office of Williams Henn & Co. that it was deposited with me, for him. Mr Ruggles counted the money and knows that there was \$530.

I today traded watches. Gave 76\$ to boot. This made my present watch cost me \$130.75. But in my trade my present watch cost me only \$49.75. It is a splendid heavy cased hunting gold watch. I never saw one that I liked any better.

May 17, 1856. Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in the office.

18 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in the office.

19 Warm pleasant day I spend my time in the office. Get the news of the R.R grant to Iowa.

20 Warm pleasant day. Spend my time in the office

21. Warm pleasant day Spend my time in the office. This begins to look like spring. Great excitement in regard to land. Preemptors begin to rush in.

May 21st A.D. 1856 Beautiful day. I never saw a finer day.

22 I start up the river to preempt Sec 24, T.91. R. 29. I get Hiram Foster, Washington Clark & Morgan Kelley to go and lay a foundation for me and for Mr Gaylord.

I go to old man Mitters He is very cross at first but he soon gets over it. I take a good swig of his "old rye" as I am very tired and it has been a very hot day The thermometer indicated 90 degrees above zero. This evening the land office closed up on account of the grant of lands to the State of Iowa

The news just reaches us of the shooting of Jones, sheriff in Kansas Territory. The traitor Topeka Constitution is ratified by a vote of only about 700 while there are about 7000 in the Territory

23 This is a pleasant day — very hot. We had fine shower last night. The roads are getting very fine indeed. I cross the Des Moines river just oposite Albers farm. My horse almost swims. I meet Ruggles with his four breaking teams going up to break on his preemption

24 Very hot day. I go up and finish surveying Hintons land making out the 30 acres for him. I today figured out the exact size of the piece, but both parties are perfectly satisfied that it is right and agree to let it go so.

May 25th 1856. A very hot but pleasant growing day. I spend my time in the office

26. Hot pleasant day.

27 Hot pleasant day. I attend suit for Stevens & Phinney, before A.M. Dawley Esq. Phinney gets change venue for prejudice against him. By filing his affidavit to that effect.

This prosecution is made by Geo B. Sherman, J. Allen Spencer & Kelley. Under the prosecution they have seized my clients whiskey; and Jno Garaghty & I are to see justice done. The venue is changed to John P. Van Cleave, over the river.

28. Warm pleasant day.

FREEMEN ATTEND CIVIL WAR IN KANSAS! LAWRENCE IN ASHES!

By late reliable accounts from KANSAS, we learn that the FREE STATE MEN have been attacked by

BORDER RUFFIANS!

from Missouri, under Gen. WHITEFIELD, and that Gov. SHANNON supplied the invaders with U. S. Muskets and Ammunition, with which unarmed men have been shot down in the streets of Lawrence, and innocent women and children driven from the town; their husbands and parents murdered and their houses destroyed. The U. S. Troops not permitted by the authorities to interfere.

While these outrageous tragedies are being perpetrated in Kansas, by authority of the U. S., a UNITED STATES SENATOR is brutally attacked and beaten till almost dead by a

Slave Bully of South Carolina,

in the United States Senate. Such outrages unparalleled in the history of our Government, call upon all who love their country better than the chains of bondage, to speak in tones of thunder, that shall cause the SLAVE OLIGARCHY to tremble. The North should arouse! The cause is ours! Shall the bloody tyrant "subdue us?"

THE CRY IS FOR BLOOD!

In view of this sad state of affairs, there will be a Meeting of the Citizens of Iowa City, at the

STATE HOUSE, ON SATURDAY, MAY 31, 1856,

At half past Seven o'clock, P. M.

COME ONE! COME ALL!!

S. N. WOOD, Esq., whom Sheriff Jones failed to arrest at the time he was shot, has just arrived from Kansas, and will address the meeting.

SEATS RESERVED FOR LADIES.

Presented by J. S. Templin
March 31st 1883.

IOWA CITY REPUBLICAN PRINT.

MANY CITIZENS.

SHS: (IOWA CITY)

29 Warm pleasant day. I attend a suit for John Hipple in which Wm Hodges is Plaintiff I beat Beecher and get a non suit.

30 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office Hold meeting tonight and nominate delegates to our Democratic County convention.

May 31, 1856 Hot day — but yet very comfortable. D. Oakeson John M Stockdale & W. H. Ringland & myself go to Homer to attend the Convention. We have a most splendid dinner. Best I have had in the State of Iowa. Took dinner at Smiths Everything passed along quietly Our convention passed off harmoniously. Stockdale & self made speeches.

Had plenty of Brandy to drink. In fact I rather think a little more than it is ruleable for me to drink I guess I better stop drinking entirely.

June 1, 1856 Sabbath. I have spent my time in my office reading nearly all day

June 2 A warm pleasant day. I start to go to John Speers to collect a note I hold against him in favor of Evans. I see him. I show him the note. He says he wont pay it. I ask him if we cant make some arrangement in relation to the note. He said he could not pay it at present at any rate, as he had not the means. He said he would like to see Mr Evans. Made particular inquiries about where he lived inquired the distance &c Said he would get his post office address of me at the first opportunity.

I told him that I would write to Evans and should be obliged to follow his directions. He said he would see me at any rate by the time I heard from him. That he could not secure the matter now. The foregoing is the substance of our conversation

3d Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office bringing up my business and writing letters. We get the news of the burning of Lawrence I think the President of the United States ought to have every man hung who resists the United States laws in the Territory of Kansas. Reeder, Robinson Lane, and all the leaders at least ought be hung unless they cease to resist an actual existing government which is a government until it is legally overthrown. The action of the Black Republicans as a mass in relation to Kansas is nothing less than moral treason, and those who are actually engaged in rebellion against the government of Kansas

are guilty of the crime of treason This is my candid opinion And unless the Strong arm of the Laws quells this state of thugs, in a few years perhaps less "our glorious country" and our "model Republic" will be a sordid mass of ungovernable Elements, pregnant with Strife and civil wars A shame to our race, and a damning crime committed by us against the heritage left us by our fathers. May heaven avert the blow.

But the popular prejudices of the masses — led by designing demagogues — will overlap the mark and the "sober second thought" will not have its proper effect until cruel experience has taught a severe lesson

June 4, 1856. Beautiful summer day Everything looks finely. I spend my time in my office reading the news — politics and attending to my law business. Last evening I forgot my supper — but I will try and recollect to night as I pay high for board and dont get more than half the worth of my money at any rate.

5 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office reading and in hard study.

6 Warm shower — Rather cool in the morning. In my office I am studying hard I buy extracts from Punch, and "s[?] Cut Corners." I feel a little [?] and W.C. Safford as strong a man as we have in our town & I have a chi[?]. We tear each others breeches nearly off and I lay him on his back and he lays me on our back. So we are even damages and all considered and "quit" like honorable men. I have a very long talk on polotics with C C Carpenter I am keeping myself posted.

7 Warm pleasant morning. I rise at about 4 oclock I go over to John Van Cleaves to attend a law suit. The suit comes off. Garaghty & I bore Richards awfully. One of the greatest lawsuits! We are for the Defendants 2 barrels of liquor We get the liquor restored. Richards is completely fuddled never saw the like in my life. Emphatically a mix [?] we have

June 8, 1856 A fine rain this morning I feel a little gloomy. I read about 15 chapters in the book of Job. Sleep till about ten oclock after breakfast then write home, a whole sheet, & write 5 other letters which I have this moment finished. I also send prospectuses around the County for subscriptions for the first County paper published in the North Western corner of the State of Iowa, including our full quarter of that state. Maj Williams & I bend ourselves to make the Editor a present of \$600 as soon as he shall publish the first No. of his paper

Broadside for Iowa City rally after the burning of Lawrence.

9 Beautiful day. I spend my time in the office. I am reading law, politics & the history of Russia. To day bought a good deal of land at tax sales. The first investment of that kind I have ever made.

June 10th 1856 Beautiful day. Spend my time in my office.

11th Beautiful day — in my office — in the afternoon go over to Webster City with Willson & Salsbury.

12th Start horse back to Eldora Hardin Co 50 miles to see if I can get Willson nominated for the legislature. Get to Eldora. Stay at the house of Elsworth. In the evening see J.D. Thompson who is the leading Democrat there.

June 13, 1856 See Smith, Thompson & J L Hough. They talk all right. They are Democrats. Get on our way for Webster City about 1/2 past 3 o'clock P.M. Go 50 miles to that place by one o'clock A.M. I have a talk with Willson — the first man I have mentioned it to in relation to acting as District Judge in the new district that we hope to form. This is a profound secret with him & with me. See whether ever this ambition will be satisfied!

14 Stay at Webster City. They today raised the frame for a hotel 60 by 30 feet. They are driving things to a great rate. Bot my first horse for \$130 cash. A gray mare. Good little beast

Sunday 15 Start for Otis Grove in Franklin Co. All right. Craigh shot a plover on the wing riding in a lumber wagon at good gate. Stayed all night at Reys on East side of the Iowa where Willson & Craig is laying of a town to be called "Canterbery".

16 Start with Willson for County seat of Franklin Co. Get things all fixed. Run our horses about 6 1/2 miles in 1/2 hour through the rain. Stay with Dr. Mitchel at Mains Grove.

17 Start for Otis Grove — Thence to Franklin Grove. Find few good democrats. Stay all night with W.E. Rogers on Sec 36 T. 93, R 24.

18 Go to Liberty in Wright Co thence to Newcastle or Webster City here meet Provost the Engineer who is running the R Road out to Dubuque

June 19, 1856 Bring Provost to Fort Dodge
Maj Williams is away to Ft Des Moines. I show Provost the crossings of the Des Moines river at the Fort.

20 In my office — All quiet Hot weather.

21st Hot day. I am in my office most of the day. I go down to Tolmans to show my land to a German. Hot ride. Kansas War Civil War has commenced to rage. What the result will be God only knows. Mr Buchanan

Bleeding Kansas

John Duncombe's faith in the Democratic Party was surely tested during the 1850s. That he remained a Democrat at all through these years of sectional political strife — to be followed by the Civil War, Reconstruction, and Republican hegemony of the late 19th century — indicates the depth of his commitment to partisan tradition and party leadership. In the prewar period covered by his diary, no issue aroused the ire of this party loyalist more than what he saw as the lawless tactics of antislavery forces in frontier Kansas.

In the early 1850s Congress was beginning to feel pressure from railroad promoters, land speculators, and western politicians to officially organize the territories of Kansas and Nebraska. In response, Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas introduced legislation that evolved into the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which provided for the organization of the two new western territories. Addressing the key political issue of the era head-on, Douglas's bill specified that "all questions pertaining to slavery in the Territories . . . are to be left to the people residing therein."

Antislavery forces, Free Soilers, and other elements of

the just-forming Republican Party were livid. The Kansas-Nebraska Act would allow voters in these territories, if they so chose, to establish slavery on Louisiana Purchase land lying north of latitude 36°30' — which runs along the northern border of Arkansas — thereby negating the Missouri Compromise of 1820. By the terms of the 1820 agreement, states formed north of the 36°30' line were to enter the Union as free states; states to the south were to be slave states. (Missouri had been an exception to this rule, entering the Union as a slave state in 1821.) In the view of Civil War historian James M. McPherson, by its wholesale affront to northern sensibilities, the Kansas-Nebraska Act "may have been the most important single event pushing the nation toward civil war."

Once the bill was passed in 1854, the political drama moved from Washington to Kansas, where proslavery and antislavery forces engaged in electioneering techniques that ranged from level-headed speechmaking to armed violence — thus "Bleeding Kansas." Iowa historian Leland Sage cautioned against exaggerating the extent of the violence, attributing to sensationalist reporting much of the hysteria coming out of Kansas in 1854

is the Democratic nominee for President. I have no doubt he will succeed in getting the vote, but it is hard to tell

Sunday, June 22d 1856 Hot day I feel very lazy. I have spent the forenoon in my office reading the News papers. I go to Webster City. Very hot.

June 23. I go out to see Mr Knickerbocker who is running the Rail Road Survey across Boon River. I stay with him all day. He runs the line across Boon river about 20 links north of the correction line. I suffer from heat to day.

24 Start with Mr Knickerbocker to go to Fort Dodge. We look out the route.

Kansas affairs are in a very critical state. The President is doing his best to keep all quiet by the aid of the United States troops

A fine shower of rain today.

June 25, 1856 Hot day. A little shower of rain Stay in my office nearly all day Go to see big saw mill saw for the first time. Karr comes in to prove up his preemption on Maj Williams claim. The time for the decision is fixed on the 25th day of August, 1856, at 9 oclock A.M. Smith & Busy come in to prove up their preemption They are two birds that were feathered out for jumping claims.

The Black Republicans begin to get sick of Kansas

& begin to talk about "ten cent Buck" & "not one drop of Democratic blood &c"

The latest news from Kansas shows that the U.S. troops are doing their best to disarm the fighting men of all sides in Kansas. Several small battles have been fought & in fact we are in the midst of civil war. The notorious Lane is encamped near Iowa City with about 400 men en route to Kansas. Treason stalks abroad. What the result will be no one can tell.

June 26th 1856. Warm day. A fine rain which cools the air and makes it very comfortable I spend my time in my office. I have been trying to attend to the claims of Maj Williams. I bought me a buggy & harness for which I am to pay the Sum of \$125 on — or before the 10th day of September next. Now I own horse saddle bridle buggy & harness. Each the first I ever owned. I am chosen to make the 4th July oration of this County at Webster City I think I have a very short time to do the work I fear I shall make a very poor effort as I have business for almost every day to that time

I have been reading the Democratic Review. It is a very good work now My health is good. And I have a very comfortable living except my board at Dr Olneys is most shamefully bad and has been for the last three months.

It is a great disgrace that we curse

June 27, 1856 Thos Sargent & self start for Boonsboro

and 1855. Most Kansans, said Sage, were just interested in finding land and building homes; few had time to engage in political struggles in an ongoing way.

Still, the nation watched Kansas with growing discomfort. "Border ruffians" were brought in from Missouri to stuff ballot boxes and perform other mischief for proslavery forces. New England philanthropists underwrote the clandestine activities of free-state zealots. Terrorists from both sides rode into Kansas by night to wreak havoc on selected opposition targets, then retreated to safe havens in Missouri (proslavery) or Iowa (anti-slavery). From the start, Kansas politics were hopelessly contentious and conducted with unusual passion, and so they remained until Kansas entered the Union as a free state in 1861.

John Duncombe's observations about the "civil war" in Kansas reveal a young man trying to find a moral basis for his party's position on the issues. Occasionally his defense of the party left him tied up in rhetorical knots, as in his diary on March 26, 1856, when a meditation on the authenticity of his own religious faith set Duncombe off on a rambling diatribe in which he denounced the clergy, called for a restoration of the "old estab-

lished rules," and lamented his neighbors' obsession with material wealth. Somehow in his mind Duncombe connected all this with the dispute over the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Though he wrote very little about slavery itself, he had strong opinions about the tactics of the antislavery forces, as he noted on June 3, 1856: "Unless the Strong arm of the Laws quells this state of thugs, in a few years perhaps less, 'our glorious country' and our 'model republic' will be a sordid mass of ungovernable Elements, pregnant with Strife and civil wars."

Duncombe remained a loyal Democrat all his life, which in Iowa came to mean that his political opportunities were limited. Yet perhaps because of his reputation for integrity and hard work, he survived Iowa's great antebellum political transformation, when the Democratic heritage of early Iowa was eclipsed by the new ideology of Republicanism. Despite these changes in the context of Iowa politics, John Duncombe would remain a prominent public figure in Fort Dodge and in Iowa long after the Democratic Party of George Wallace Jones and Bernhart Henn faded from view.

— by Bill Silag

to attend the Democratic Convention to nominate a member of the Legislature. I run my horse about 2 miles to get out of the way of the stage which tries to run by me but cannot do it. This would be a very hot day but the wind blows very hard.

June 28th We meet in Convention at Boonsboro. The population of these new counties are so sparse that it takes at least two Boone, Story, Greene Webster, Humbolt, Wright Franklin & Hardin to make one Legislative District. W.C. Willson is my man & I succeed in getting him nominated by acclamation. We get through our business & Mr Sargent & I drive through the rain to Homer. Got wet though.

June 29th 1856 Stay all night at Mr Smiths Homer. As I am wet I take a little drink of liquor which makes my head reel a little. I ought to be ashamed. Mr Leffler is nominated in this District for Congress. Warm pleasant day.

June 30 Cool morning. I give in James B. Williams testimony in the case of his claims.

July 1st, 1856 Rather cool day. Spend my time in entering land as the land office is open again for lands in Township No. 93.

July 2d 1856. Warm pleasant day.

July 3 Pleasant day.

July 4th I go over to Webster City to make a speech. D. Okeson is with me. I have a very hot time. I make a speech. I had a written oration but I never had any thing in my way so constantly so that I got there to late. I speak not from my written oration but from my own thoughts. Pres Pierce is toasted by some one & the Black Republicans groan. Grimes Gov, is toasted & though I hate his politics I respond by giving him all the praise I can give him. A large Ball: about 80 couple present.

5th I go with Okeson to Boonsboro.

6 Sunday Go to Nevada by way of New Philadelphia. Jack, — A.J. Detrick, is the best Working Democrat in New Philadelphia. Geo. A. Kellogg & J.S. Frazier in Nevada.

We are greatly bothered by Okeson's baulky nagg. We are compelled to whip him badly. Not a very pleasant trip.

7 Go through the corner of Story & Marshall Cos and

into Hardin. Stay at Providence 8 miles from Eldora Hardin County.

8 Go to Eldora to Senatorial Convention & nominate Geo A Kellogg of Story County for Senator.

9th Go to Point Pleasant before last night where we stayed with Mr Nutt. Started from here early in the morning & went to Webster City. Our old horse is sick & nearly fagged out.

10. Stayed all night at Webster City.

11. Came to Fort Dodge. Old horse nearly gone.

Black Republicans

The term "Black Republicans" was used in the 1850s to refer to the new party's antislavery elements, which were gaining legislative and electoral support in their call to halt the westward extension of slavery. When a Democrat like John Duncombe condemned Congress's Black Republicans, he was voicing Democratic Party opposition to politicians and policies that threatened the interests of the southern Democrats who were becoming the party's dominant faction.

Democratic candidates of the era played at will with voters' ambivalence regarding race relations in all parts of the country. For example, historian James M. McPherson notes in *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* that campaigning Democrats "rapidly perfected the technique of tarring 'Black Republicans' with the brush of Negro equality," warning voters that "the Republican policy of limiting the expansion of slavery would inevitably become a program of emancipation, which would let loose 'three to five millions of uncivilized, degraded, and savage men . . . to roam the country' and take bread from the mouths of white laboring men."

John Duncombe's journal does not indicate the extent to which he himself subscribed to such anti-black racism. But his unquestioning support of the Democratic Party in the 1850s suggests tacit approval of party leaders' racist pronouncements—like the one quoted by McPherson, uttered during Ohio's 1855 gubernatorial campaign. Within the Republican Party, in Iowa as in Ohio and emerging Republican strongholds elsewhere, other constituent elements of the new party—temperance advocates and nativists, to name two—mitigated the Black Republicans' influence in the party, at least until the 1860 election. Even then, the Lincoln administration can hardly be said to have had "a program of emancipation" until the exigencies of war made one advisable for military reasons. Thus, as with many campaign statements, the Democrats' characterization of the Black Republican "threat" in all parts of the country in the 1850s was exaggerated, to say the least.

— by Bill Silag

[Use?] up the whip & make myself almost sick trying to get him along.

12. Have County Convention & nominate Mr Beecher for Clerk & Mr. Berkley for Prosecuting Attorney.

Tried a law suit. was for Albee on defense Got judgment [vs us \$9+]

13 Have a bad cold. I am sick all day by a very severe cold in the head. One side of my head feels as if it would nearly split open. I dont know what it is best to do but I think I will try to wear it out. Lie abed nearly all day

14 I am a little better but still have a bad cold. Stay in my office. Politics are getting pretty high. "Kansas" is the humbug of opposition to the Democratic Party as tariff was in forty four & Coon Skin & hard cider in 40 & U.S. Bank in 36, & 32.

15 We who subscribe to give White the editor of the soon to be Ft Dodge Sentinel meet & Mr W.H. Merritt & myself are appointed Political Editors of this paper

This will be the first paper published in the North West quarter of this Land of Iowa & I have the honor of being out of pocket about \$300 for its good.

16 Very hot day. I dont feel well but I must try & go to Homer if I can so as to meet my engagements. At least as soon as tomorrow

17 Warm pleasant day. Had a fine shower last night I go to Homer. Stay at old Smiths. He abuses me about the nomination of W C Willson

18 I go over into Story Co At [J?] Richard Have long talk on Politics. at Fairview Stay at the House of John Keigleys.

19 I make a speech with Judge McFarlands at Mr. Keigleys. Go to Story Co seat Nevada. Make a speech at Nevada. Stay at the house of John McClane, a good Democrat

20 Sabbath. I go down to the river and take a bath.

21 I go with McFarland to Iowa Center & make a speech then return to Nevada & cat haul Mr. Thomas an opponent in debate until after midnight.

22 Go up to sale at [J?] & make a speech. Return to Nevada & make another speech.

23 Go to New Philadelphia & make a speach. Here they raise a Hickory pole & flag. Stayed at Dr Halls

24 Made a speach at Boonsboro to night

25 Made a speach at Sweeds point.

26 Made a speach at a convention at Boonsboro

27 Sabbath Started for fort Dodge. Got there before noon Heard Mr Peet & Bishop Lee preach a very good sermon Subscribed \$20 to build a Pres. Church & 20 to build Episcopalian Church. Saw Mr. Vincent on his return from Pennsylvania.

28 In my office. fix up my business. get a Democratic Club organized, in Fort Dodge.

29 Cool morning. I am in the office a spell — then go up to Millers at the forks of the river. return in the evening.

30st Warm pleasant day. Spend my time in my office. Politics begins to run high. In afternoon go down to Thos Landreths by way of Tolmans Get my dinner at the house of P Bush.

Stayed all night with Landreths.

31st Go down to Bells. Go without my dinner. Stop out on the prairie. lie down & go to sleep. Unharness my horse & let her eat a little grass Get back to Fort Dodge & make my first political speach there. A good audience. One this day the first paper printed in the North Western quarter of the State of Iowa was published. I gave three Hundred Dollars to start it which is more than twice as much as I was worth a year ago, all told, but I got my grit up & it must go.

About one hundred Dollars was made up to me by others

This paper is called the Fort Dodge Sentinel & although A.S. White is the real Editor of the said paper W H Merritt & myself are the Political Editors to govern its political character.

The old Democratic party now stands on its old political principles. The old Whig party has become merged into the Republican party & Know Nothing party, & the sound National Whigs unite with the Democratic Party

The Republican party have nominated J C Freemont who is 43 years old & has had only 21. days legislation experience, which was in the United States Senate from Sept. 10, 1850.

I came home from Homer in 125 minutes with my mare after dark, distance 18 miles in a straight line — about 20 by the road. Good travelling

The Democratic Party have nominated James Buchanan who has been in public life for 43 years, a sound national man, who served in the U.S. house of Representatives from 1820 to 1830. Who under Gen Jackson was appointed Minister to Russia in 1831, & continued until 1835, when he became a U.S. Senator & held his seat until 1845, when Mr Polk made him Secretary of State, for 4 years. Then in 1852 Mr Pierce sent him Minister to Russia. And now he has been nominated by a convention held at Cincinnati, in June & representing every Congressional District in the Whole Union for President of the United States & if I do not very greatly mistake the signs of the times he will be the next president.

But the nomination of J.C. Fremont was made by a convention of 500 delegates from the northern states & only two states of the South Maryland & Virginia Kentucky represented & that by only Eight delegates.

Thus showing that they are a sectional party only and the men who now stand at the head of that party will at some future day be called traitors to their Country, as black as Benedict Arnold. Horace Greely the Editor of the New York Tribune is the man who gave name to the party when it was born last year. This party appeals to the sectional prejudice of all men & harps about the Extention of slavery & calls in its platform every man who supports the Administration of Franklin Pierce Murders, Robbers & guilty of Arson.

All this shows me that the only men who care for the continuance of the Great American Union are the true national Democrats of this day & that these Republicans, who are generally called Know nothing Black Republicans are not in the least worthy of the confidence of the American people & for one I will in candor & honesty do all I can against them

Aug 1st 1856 Warm pleasant day. Spend this day in my office & in Town

Aug 2. Warm pleasant day. I go to Homer with Mr White, the Editor Ft Dodge Sentinel, & we have a great time Democrats & Black Republicans meet. I speak to them for Democrats. Spoke 2½ hours C C Carpenter speaks for Black Rs. 1½ hours. I think B.Rs. are not very well satisfied. I came home from Homer in 125 minutes with my mare after dark, distance 18 miles in a straight line — about 20 by the road. Good travelling

3d Sabbath I sleep & stay in my office as much as I can.

Aug 4, 1856 Election day. Democrats have 107 votes & opposition 57 a fine start at least. Some excitement but all good nature. This in Ft Dodge

Aug 5. Pleasant day. Spend my forenoon in the office In the afternoon attend to the settlement of a suit which I was to try for Julius Conradst.

Afternoon went to Homer Stayed all night with E H West. Went to buy Courier farm for E W Lucas

6th Finished sale for E W Lucas of Courier. Took dinner at I Hooks Went home to Fort Dodge

Aug. Seventh 1856 Stayed in my office until late. at about 4 oclock went up to Humbolt. Stayed all night at W.R. Millers.

8 Surveyed around the Town of Humbolt & measured the river around it. Stayed at Millers

9 Started for Fort Dodge after breakfast All passed off pleasantly. The R R man Mr Hackly is after the right of way.

10 X Sunday. I am not very well this morning. I am quite bilious. I took a portion of pills this morning I have been absent since the 24th of June 26 days and several parts of days over

11th Messrs Henn Williams & Gillaspys come into town. They have a quit claim deed of the river company. This settles the long tedious Strife about title that has made so much trouble about here.

12th Pleasant day In my office I commence plating the Town of Humbolt.

13th Pleasant day. in my office Henn, Williams & Co settling up their business

14th Pleasant day. in my off

Henn, Williams & Co.

John Duncombe's journal never defined with any precision his relationship with the real estate firm of Henn, Williams & Co., but the relationship was central to his rising political and economic standing in the 1850s. In his journal on April 13, 1856, Duncombe reported proudly, "I am in the employ of Williams Henn & Co.," and on August 16 the same year he announced his agreement "to go into partnership with Williams Henn & Co. for five years from the first day of October next." Duncombe was the company's man on the scene in Fort Dodge, keeping an eye on things, and for most of the period covered by his journal Henn, Williams & Co. kept him plenty busy.

Bernhart Henn and Jesse Williams were among the leading land speculators in the trans-Mississippi West before the Civil War. Their company dealt in huge tracts of Iowa land with an eye to encouraging agricultural settlement. Based in Fairfield,

Henn and Williams also platted towns and provided a modicum of expertise in dealing with the state and federal bureaucracies involved in land sales. Both men knew the system well, each having spent a good part of his career in government service of one kind or another.

Henn had been register of the U.S. Land Office in Fairfield and later ran successfully for the U.S. House of Representatives. When Duncombe went to Washington, D.C., in December 1856, he was visited in his hotel room by Congressman Henn

along with Senator George W. Jones, Democrat of Iowa. On subsequent visits to the Capital, Henn would also introduce Duncombe to presidents Pierce and Buchanan.

Jesse Williams was as well known in Democratic Party circles as his business partner, having come to Iowa in 1838 as Democratic territorial governor Robert Lucas's personal assistant. Governor Lucas had put Williams to work choosing quarters for territorial offices, organizing government departments, and traveling throughout the territory on official business. Williams had been employed by the U.S. Surveyor General before he met Governor Lucas, and riding across Iowa in 1838 and 1839 he looked at the territory's landforms and waterways with a surveyor's eye.

In 1840 Williams published a 180-page book titled *A Description of the United States Lands in Iowa*, which included a map drawn by the author and gave "a minute description of every section and quarter section, quality of soil, groves of timber,

FAIRFIELD	CHARITON
BERNHART HENN	BERNHART HENN
JESSE WILLIAMS	JESSE WILLIAMS
GEO. D. TEMPLE	GEO. D. TEMPLE
	EDWARD A. TEMPLE

HENN, WILLIAMS & Co.
DEALERS IN LAND, LAND WARRANTS & EXCHANGE
FAIRFIELD, CHARITON, SIOUX CITY
and FT DODGE, IOWA.

Special attention given to LOCATION of LAND the sale & loan of Warrants and to the collecting & remitting of sight and time bills
 Investments made in any part of IOWA

Detail from an 1855 Iowa map shows the reach of Henn, Williams & Co. (who also published the map; see page 50).

prairies, ledges of rock, coal banks, iron and lead ores, waterfalls, mill-seats, etc." The author assured potential buyers that the "book and the map will furnish the possessor with more information concerning Iowa than can be obtained from any other source." Land speculators on the Iowa frontier rarely knew as much about the property they bought and sold as Jesse Williams did. By 1850 — having held several government jobs, edited a newspaper, and directed a Des Moines River improvement project — Williams was on his way to Fairfield from Iowa City to join Bernhart Henn's real estate company, and ready to make his fortune.

Henn, Williams & Co. was never a small company. Its dealings in land were to be large-scale, and to facilitate its land deals Henn and Williams — along with George D. Temple and Edward A. Temple — organized Fairfield's first bank. (Twenty-year-old Edward Temple, then an employee of Henn, Williams, was just beginning a career in finance that would eventually lead to his founding of the Bankers Life insurance company in Des Moines in 1879.) With the combination of Williams's talents in the field and the bank's help in facilitating land transfers, the firm was able to take full advantage of the surge of settlement that occurred in Iowa in the 1850s.

In 1854 the Fort Dodge Company, in which Henn, Williams & Co. held a majority interest, bought the site of the abandoned garrison as part of a broader plan to lay out towns and sell lots along announced railroad routes, profiting from rising land values once the railroads arrived. At times the interests of the Fort Dodge Company needed daily attention. This was the work John Duncombe did — platting sub-divisions and staking and entering claims. Henn and Williams themselves occasionally visited Fort Dodge, but even when present they relied on him to know whom to see and what to do to meet the company's local objectives. Still in his twenties, John Duncombe worked hard, made money for the company, and got a good start on his own fortune.

— by Bill Silag

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Bernhart Henn

15th Pleasant day, assisting H. W & Co in their business

16th. I agree to go into partnership with Williams Henn & Co for five years from the first day of October next, with the time fixed at 5 years We are to build a banking house in the spring that will cost about \$3000. dollars.

17th Sunday. I go with Ruggels to Webster City & find out about the Election. The probability is that the Black Republicans have whipped us badly. Rains on us

18th I get up a petition for a loan of \$200,000 of the credit of the County of Webster to the Dubuque & Pacific Rail Road Company I doubt the principle & the pol[?], but I think it will do well enough. Go to Homer Butterworth signs the petition

19th Go from Homer to Fort Dodge this morning. All passes off very pleasantly. I get about 150 to 200 signers to my petition & get the proclamation issued

20th Pleasant day. little rain. Time spent in my office

21st Cool cloudy morning.

22nd Cool nights. in my office quite busy.

23d Cool nights. In my office in the forenoon. In the afternoon go over to Webster City.

24th Sabbath — I stayed all night at Mr Willsons. Mr Willson my candidate to the legislature is beaten in this district by 14 votes by rejecting 36 legal votes that were written in the Poll Book Walter Willson instead of Walter C. Got deed for 4 lots in Webster City

25th. Spend my time in my office. Maj Williams suit is put off to the 25th Oct. 1856. Bring suit Bell vs Parker in Replevin. Dont think I have the legal right but I'll try.

26th Garaghty & myself go to Webster City & bring suit against Kellogg, in favor of W C Willson Stay all night at Willsons. I killed 3 prairie chickens. 1st I ever killed

27th The papers are served on Kellogg by H.B. Martin Kill one chicken only Get home to Fort Dodge early in the day, before evening

28th Stay in my office. No news. Seems rather dull times just now

29th W C Willson & Rosenkrans come over from Webster City. They tire out their horse about 8 miles from here & walk in. The Black Republicans held a meeting here a night or two since in which they passed resolutions against Rosenkrans appointing Beecher Democrat, Deputy. dis clerk and sent word to

Shoot a prairie Henn with my revolver.

Mr Rosenkrans that he must oust him So he comes over and "ousts" him and appoints Little "Cape Cod" his deputy. Now look out for fish. — If this is not proscription I dont understand the term.

A beautiful party, & a beautiful man that would obey the dictates of such a party, beautiful indeed!

I took horse & buggy & took Mr Willson & Rosenkrans out and got home to Fort Dodge about 10 or 11 oclock. I acted like a good Samaritan, Mr Rosenkrans observed to me Yes said I for you have "fallen among thieves and Robbers" and I will pour on the oil & dress your wounds.

Aug 30th 1856 I go out with Mr A S White to hunt prairie chickens. It is very hot and we dont find any of any account. The first chicken he shot was a ground squirrel & the last, a blak bird & the fatest one of all a good armful of Messrs Smith & Prindles green corn.

I shot one on the wing the first I ever shot on the wing, & killed several blackbirds and one wood Pecker.

Shame on such "nimrods"

I dont know as there is anything of importance in this weeks newspaper, unless it be that Lane has succeeded in landing his Black Republican allies and I hear that there has been quite a battle in which several of them have been killed and a good many more out to be and will be if they succeed in making civil war general

Sunday Aug. 31st 1856 Warm, pleasant, agreeable day.

Sept. 1st 1856 Monday. Go to Kossuth County Meet Judge Call above Lots Creek. Shoot a prairie Henn with my revolver. Go down to Millers at the forks of the river. Stay there all night I have driven about 55 or 60 miles to day.

McKnight has about four buildings in his town called Dakota City.

Richards has lain out a town just this side of Lots Creek.

2 Stay in my office, & fool away the day

3 ditto.

Sept 4, 1856 In my office. Very strange weather, cool days and cool nights. The nights have been extraordinary cold the last three weeks. Corn and potatoes & all crop are very fine

5th In my office until about noon. It rains hard. Every thing looks Gloomy. Start [?] the rails for Border Plains

Go to Dawes & Bushes to electioneer on the subject of a rail Road subscription of 200,000\$ to the Capital stock of the Dubuque and Pacific Rail Road Company. Make RR speech at schoolhouse.

6th Stay all night at John Tolmans. I never experienced a more soaking rain, Harder thunder and more severe lightning. Go to Hooks Point.

Sept 7th 56 Sunday. Go with W.C. Willson to Boonsboro, to the canvass for Representative. Get some splendid melons to eat at the house of Ross.

Have a real spat about the Rail Road subscription. He — Ross gets good natured and I do to. So we part, after showing our teeth.

Monday, 8th Attend the canvass at Boonsboro. Judge Ripa from Greene Co there. Also Judge Montgomery

Hurrah for the Rail Road! Was never so busy in my life

from Boone Co. and Squirt [?] Richards Hon Prosecuting Attorney alias, Persecutor, of Webster Co.

An awful time at this canvass and no mistake Willson & I dug into them for a canvass, as he had the majority but they adjourned and would not canvass the votes. A funny, funny time. Hurrah for our side!

Tuesday Sept. 9th 1856 Went to Webster City. Stayed with Devote all night at Willsons. One of the most laughable times I ever heard debating the question

whether vegetable diet was not far better for the Human system than when meat was used. [Sumler?] Willson & D Benedict on the affirmative and Salsbury and myself on the negative.

Finally we meat eaters after citing the instance in which vegetables injured the intellect in the case of Nebechudnezor in which it made him like an ox. We got to trying our strength and we meat eaters gained the argument

10th Went to Homer. then to Border Plains then to Fort Dodge Electioneering on [?] Rail Road subscription.

Thursday the 11th Sept 1856 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office writing letters and fixing up my business

12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, & even 22. Spend all the time night & day Electioneering for Webster County to take \$200,000 of the Stock of the Dubuque and Pacific Rail Road Company I have an awfully exciting time but my friends stand right up to me and we whip our enemies, by 125, Majority with a vote less than 800 in the county. I bet 20\$ win it & give it back to my opponent Mr Bagg.

Great personalities. Sharp & bitter retorts. I stump the County and finally succeed.

Hurrah for the Rail Road! Was never so busy in my life

Tuesday Sept. 23 1856 Mr Wood & I go over to Webster City and have a good old time rejoicing

The weather has been extremely cold for some time past. Hard frost for at least 3 nights in succession The corn foder is killed and all the late corn, a very extraordinary season all through. Not a real hot day all summer & the coldest spring and winter on record

24 Go from Webster City to Fort Dodge. Spend the balance of the day in my office.

Thursday Sept 25, 1856 Cool but very pleasant day. Quite smoky. I spend my time in my office bringing up my much neglected business.

I am going to give my time in the future more emphatically in business

26th Spent my time in my office in the forenoon — in the afternoon I went down the river to see & sue old John Speer. I sued him for 500\$ Agreed to give him all the time I could

I shot with a gun that I bought of Frank Reno,

4 prairie chickens. gave them to Dr. Olney.

27th Spend my time in my office. Garaghty & I buy a qr sec school land together It rains a little in the afternoon Quite cool today

Sunday Sept 28th 1856 Spend my time in my office reading the News Papers nearly all day

Sept 29th Go with Mr. M.S. Wood to Webster City. No, I go with C.C. Carpenter for Mr. MS Wood. I am figuring with the Willsons to buy A.J. Brewers place. I think it will be a very fine Speculation.

Sept 30th We manage all day until late in the afternoon and finally succeed in getting Mr Brewers place. I think in the final result, out of my one fourth interest I will clear at least 3000 or 4000 Dollars, if I am not very greatly mistaken

Oct 1st 1856 Wednesday I stayed last night with Willsons and today I go over to Fort Dodge on the stage. This morning a few flakes of snow fell. The first of the season. The snow is a little earlier than we had last year at this time.

Oct 2d I spend my time in my office, looking up my causes in court. I have about 8 or nine.

Rather a poor show if the land was my entire business.

Oct 3 Warm pleasant weather in my office.

4 Warm pleasant day. Shot 11 prairie chickens coming up from Nettletons

Sunday Oct. 5th 1856 Took a ride out with Mr N B Morrison out to his place over the river. This is one of the most lovely days I have ever seen.

Took dinner at Mr Morrisons

6th Maj Williams left for the river, to take Mary to school.

Court commences this week. Judge McFarland with a beard at least ten inches long. Powerful build — a voice like a bull dog.

"Old Timber" Croker Berkley Ellwood, Garghty myself, J.B. Hall et al the lawyers

E H West Sheriff C B Richards Pros Atty

Tuesday Oct 7th 1856 Court convenes in Hodges Stable on Williams Street. The weather is warm and

pleasant. We dont need any fire yet and I hope we shall not for some time to come. There are 45 cases on the Docket this year and the judge gets them all off of the Docket in two days. He is one of the fastest judges to wind up business that I ever saw He can't be beat for this. A good deal of fun takes place this evening in the courtroom

8 Warm pleasant day. Court continues. One of the worst sprees I ever saw I was in my office locked in and three or four men came down and forced me away. And took me to the hotel where there was an awful spree going on. Chairs were broken and I got a black eye before I got out of the Scrape

9th '56 An indictment found against me by the Grand Jury, with W O Ruggles, E E Colburn & Maj Williams for taring & feathering Myron Smith & John H. Busey & pulling down Buseys house. The venue is changed to Hardin County on application of the State and by my consent

10th Court continues and the county officers, viz. Woolsey Gregory, & Messervey are all indicted for official misconduct.

Court adjourns today. Go to Webster City with Wood & Morrison

11th Warm pleasant day. Start for home. The air becomes dark and damp Spend the evening at Morrisons. Great sport

Sunday 12th 1856 Pleasant day. I spend my time in my office writing letters. Get quite tired. Wrote a great many letters

13th Warm pleasant day

14th Pleasant day. I never saw a more beautiful fall.

15th Pleasant day. In my office.

16 Pleasant day In my office

17 Pleasant day In my office

18th Went up to Lumpkins to trade horses, could not come it.

Sunday 19th 1856 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office reading the news and writing letters

Judge Cave J. McFarland

During the summers of 1856 and 1857, John Duncombe traveled frequently on behalf of Democratic Party candidates. His journal suggests that he had the ability, or at least the willingness, to talk with almost anyone about nearly any subject. Yet nothing could have prepared him for Judge C. J. McFarland, with whom Duncombe campaigned on several occasions. The diary says little about the content of their conversations or about McFarland himself, other than to note his "powerful build" and "voice like a bulldog." But other historical accounts offer additional details about this unusual pioneer jurist.

A large man by the standards of the day — he was six feet tall and weighed about 200 pounds — with a shiny black beard extending ten inches from his chin, Cave J. McFarland would have to be considered one of the oddest characters to appear on the Iowa frontier. A native of Ohio, McFarland came to Iowa as a young adult and opened a law office in Lee County in the 1840s. In 1851 he was elected to the state legislature, served one term, and in 1853 moved to Boonesboro, where he resumed his private practice. During his stint in the legislature, McFarland had strongly opposed creation of a 5th Judicial District in Iowa insisting that it would cover mostly uninhabited territory. He dismissed the idea as nothing more than "a scheme to give some poor lawyer up at Des Moines a salary of a thousand dollars a year as Judge." Ironically, McFarland himself was appointed to this very position by Democratic governor Stephen Hempstead in 1854.

As a judge, McFarland was known for his integrity, his wit, and his fine clothes. He was also known as a hopeless drunk; a political accident foisted upon the people of central Iowa; and an embarrassment to all self-respecting people in the frontier settlements where he held court. Seeing the judge in action at the 1856 Democratic convention, an observer remarked that McFarland was "a man with a flourishing crop of whiskers, whose luxurious growth doubtless exhausted such a large proportion of nutriment as to greatly affect the nerve center of the brain."

Perhaps it was the beard but more likely the booze that often turned McFarland's courtrooms into circuses. McFarland "was a good judge of whiskey," noted Polk County historian L. F. Andrews, and could never pass it by. The judge's fondness for liquor "developed that keen sense of humor which inspired the many incidents related of him." The liquor was probably also responsible for his premature death in 1863.

"What he lacked in legal acquirement, was compensated by intellectual capacity [and] stalwart common sense," Andrews wrote in his 1908 Polk County history. "His decisions were rarely reversed. Exact justice was his dominant desire, regardless of technicalities, lawyers, and often the law itself. The lawyers of the district were loaded with proof of that."

According to Andrews, "probably no one knew the Judge better than 'Dan' Finch, one of the foremost lawyers of the state. They were strong personal friends, traversed the circuit in a buggy, stopped at the same hotel, ate at the same table, and

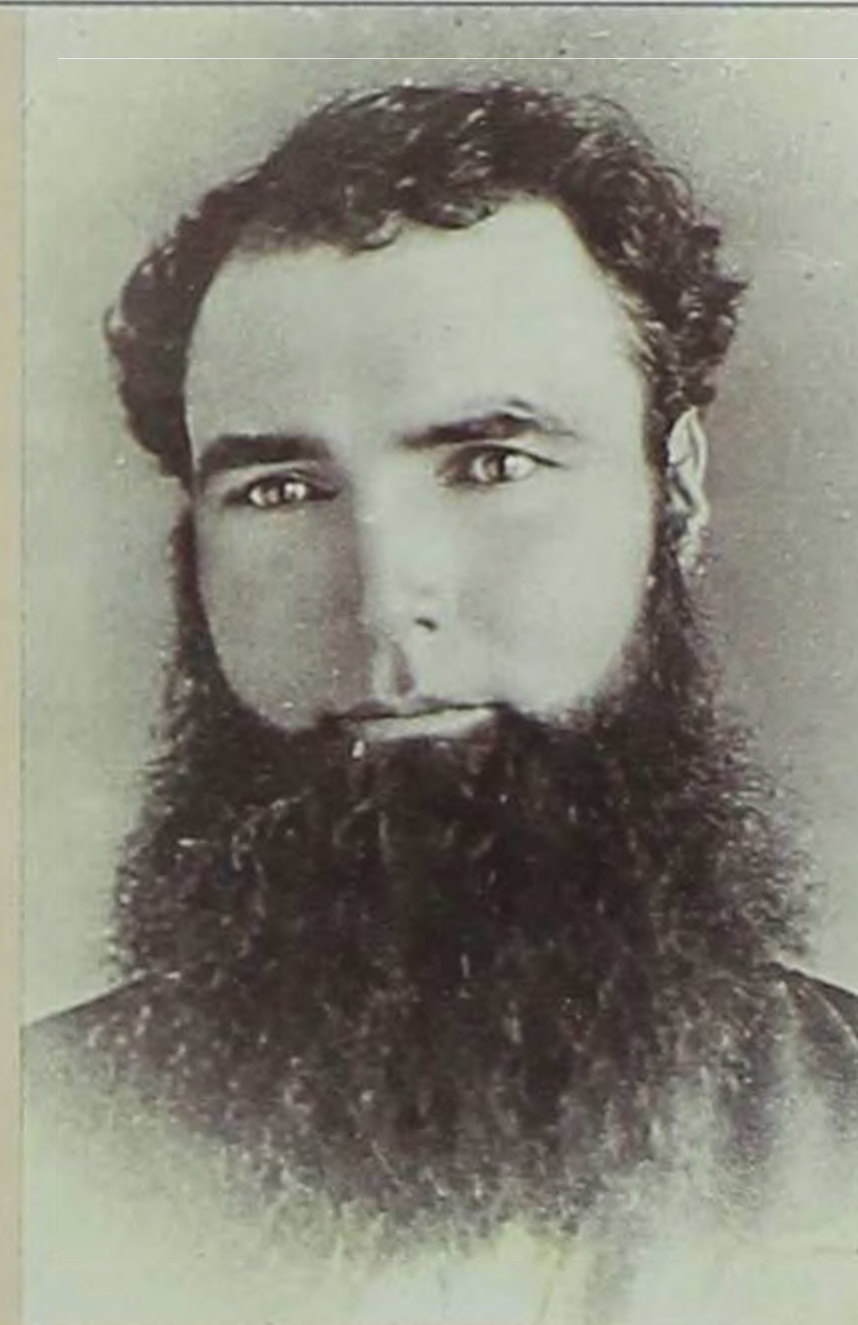
slept in the same bed, which, supposedly, would give 'Dan' an advantage in court, but when on the bench, personal friendships had no weight, and 'Dan' often declared that the Judge took especial delight in ruling against him."

Andrews recounted a Webster County story that shows the judge's heavy hand at work on the law. "A fellow had been captured at Fort Dodge with a horse in his possession he had stolen. The Judge happened to be at Homer, the County

Seat, and was told of the arrest. It was not court time, but he directed that the prisoner be brought to Homer at once, with the witnesses, which was done. He then directed the Sheriff to call in a Grand Jury. An indictment was found, when the Judge called him up and said to him: 'Now, young man, if you plead guilty, I will send you to the penitentiary for only one year, but if you don't, and put the county to the expense of trying you, I will send you to the "pen" until your hair turns white.' The fellow pleaded guilty, received the sentence, and served the time."

McFarland "was rigidly opposed to unnecessary and useless court expenses, and cut them off wherever possible," Andrews related. "In Marion County, a petition was filed by a man for a divorce. When the time came for the hearing, the man, his lawyer and a score of witnesses were present. The Judge, looking over the aggregation, asked the lawyer what he wanted of so many witnesses. 'To prove the allegations in our petition,' was the reply. 'Take your decree; I know the defendant,' said the Judge."

Of course, C. J. McFarland was not a typical frontier judge. Most judges, even in the rustic pioneer communities of the 1850s, were presumably sober and not inclined to share their personal views with the court, which was a McFarland specialty. Still, McFarland got the job done, in a manner of speaking. Working without much administrative support, in makeshift courtrooms — Duncombe's journal mentions one session of court held in a Fort Dodge stable! — frontier circuit judges had to be fairly knowledgeable about many areas of the law, able to think quickly and make firm decisions in sometimes hostile surroundings, and strong enough to travel for weeks on end during sessions of the district court. Soon enough, the court system would catch up with Iowa's rapid westward expansion. Until then, however, eccentrics like McFarland occasionally found themselves in positions of authority in frontier society.



Judge C. J. McFarland

— by Bill Silag

20th Warm day. Threatens rain

21 Rains. I am in my office.

22 Rains. I am in my office I take a little Brandy and Champaign to commemorate my 25th birth day

23 Rains. I am in my office. Spend the evening at Mrs Olcotts Sewing Society. regular kissing bee Nothing else in truth and in fact.

24 I am in my office Rains hard. Severe wind. Grows cold

25 Rains hard. In my office. Spend the evening at Mr Morrisons very pleasantly. Not on account of Miss Pauline particularly but it is a pleasant place to visit

Sunday 26 Pleasant day again The sun shines brightly Went to Church. heard the new minister in Hodges building Went to Webster City with Mr Wood.

27 Came back to Fort Dodge. Very cold wind. One of our horses [tires?] out and the other draws us in.

28 Cool day. A surprise party at Mr Whites. The time passed away quite pleasantly.

29 Cold day but very pleasant. Spend my time in the office Maj Williams returned from the river town last evening. Spend the evening at N B Morrisons

30 Cold morning. Froze quite hard. The sun shines very prettily. The Weather is rather fine after all

31 Rains a very little. I go down to Yell precinct to distribute tickets Leave them at John Beams, Thos Landreths & Frank McGuires. Cross the Des Moines to go to Homer Shoot a duck on the Des Moines McGuires boys go after it. I get to Homer just at dusk. Stay at old Gray Beard [Storming?] Smiths.

November 1st I am at Mr Smiths over night. Go to see Mr. Berkley, at his house Leave some American tickets or Know Nothing tickets for him, to give to such men as will vote for Fremont if they dont vote for Buchanan. (The 31st ought to have been written for today)

Nov. 2 Sunday. I go from Homer to Fort Dodge There is a cold raw wind blowing from the North. I am closely wrapped with a coat and shall and still it is very cold. I spend my time in my office after my

return. I hear from my sister It seems very pleasant.

3 Cool windy weather. Maj Williams preemption case with Karr comes off. Witnesses are heard until after midnight. Richards & Strow are attys for Karr I am for Williams. A very bitter contest, great deal of feeling in the case

November 4, 1856 Election day for President Great time in "Ameriky"! I am for James Buchanan of Pennsylvania. A Union party are the Democratic. Old Buck is the best man by all difference on the race.

Fremont is a young inexperienced man a Speculator, a bastard Democrat — and without any legislative experience of any kind except 21 days in the Senate of the United States He was nominated by a party of men from the North alone, 15 of the state in the South having only 8 delegates out of 500. Filmore is a good man but a Know nothing

I hope we shall be victorious as the only issue in the election between the Democrats and the Black Republicans is whether the people of Kansas shall have the right (and other territories) to make their own laws with reference to slavery and all other laws, or whether Congress shall do it for them.

The weather is quite cold. The wind blows severely. I spend the day trying Maj Williams case with Karr and am kept until about midnight again tonight We get through except a little matter of evidence of A [Eaton?].

5. Cold day. Spend my time in my office The Des Moines river froze over last night the wind blows quite hard.

We get Rooms at Old Timber . . . by noon he & the Judge are both very drunk

6th Cold day. Wind blows terribly. Froze hard last night. The ice over the Des Moines river is from 1¹/₂ to 2 inches in thickness.

7 Cold day. Awful wind blows constantly. Spend my time in my office

8 Cold day. Blows & there are a few flakes of snow on the ground.

9 Sunday. Sixteen of the Fort Dodge boys start out of the Fort to go to Eldora Hardin County for the purpose of seeing that W Williams, John F. Duncombe W.O. Ruggles and E. E. Colburn who are indicted for pulling down a house of John H Busey & tarring & feathering him and one Myron W Smith.

These men were tarred & feathered on the 21st of April 1856

10 Stayed all night at Skunk Grove. Cheyney keeps the house Our company consists of John Garaghty, N. B. Morrison, Thos Sargent, Byer, Solon Mason J S Cheyney, C. H. Vincent Danl Okeson, W M Koons, E A Albee J D Burkholder J. B. Williams, besides we who are indicted. We go to Eldora. Stop at Fullers. Judge McFarland and Old Jim W Woods alias Old Timber or Old Basswood is the rascal who gets 100\$ to prosecute the suit

11 To day H L Huff Pros Atty of Hardin County consents to allow a trial for the purpose of disposing of our cause and he waives any imprisonment. We get Rooms at Old Timber and by noon he & the Judge are both very drunk To drunk for our own special benefit. We try the case. Colburn & I stand at the side of Old Timber for the purpose of knocking him down if he uses any low vulgar language towards us.

He does not. We go home to the hotel & the Judge gets awful drunk, beastly drunk.

12th The jury stayed out all night on our case but finally as imprisonment had been waived and the Judge had told them of it our friends give in and we are found guilty. We are sentenced to pay a fine of 20\$ dollars each with nearly 40 Dollars costs, which we do with some little pleasure and start for home by way of Steam Boat rock. Take our dinner at Buck Eye Grove. Go on to Skunk and stay at Old Wheelers or Cheyneys I mean.

13 We had one awful high time last night. But no one of our number got real drunk although a great deal of liquor was wasted. Went home to Fort Dodge.

14 We had beautiful weather all the time we were away and an awful jolly time I never was on quite so big a spree.

Nov 15. Stayed at Fort Dodge, in my office. Nothing of importance The weather is rather cool.

16 Cool weather, quite frosty No news

17 Cool weather — frosty

18 Cool clear & frosty. Col Williams & Lemp here

19 Wind blows & it begins to snow a little, nothing of importance except Col Williams & Lemp have closed their trade

Williams give Lemp \$18500. for all his interest in Fort Dodge property of every kind

Nov. 20, 1856 ☞ start for home & the East generally.

*Take dinner at Delhi.
Very good Town but the
Rail Road misses it and
it must go down.*

Go in a two horse hack owned by the Western Stage Company

A severe snow storm has commenced & is blowing directly in my face: This is the first snow of the season, but it is rather hard for the storms of Iowa are really severe

21. Stayed all night at Iowa Falls at the old shanty kept by Larkins Iowa Falls just begins to develop itself There [are about] 10 or 12 stone buildings going up this season. They are building a stone tavern. I think this will be a fine town. The R R is located here & the stone water power &c must make it of importance & Estes one of the proprietors is a real driving man. He goes on with me to Dubuque. Travel along the Beaver valley to Cedar Falls today. The Beaver valley will be one of the finest farming districts in the State after a while

22 Stayed all night in Cedar Falls at a house kept by S[?]. The town has grown finely for the last year. They are just building a large stone mill here, the finest building so far inland in the State of the kind. I think this will be a fine inland city

I judge the present population must be from 1000 to 1500.

Waterloo is also a very fine growing town. It has improved very much since I was here a little less than a year since. It is the county seat of Blackhawk Co. They have just erected a fine court house, for the new county Waterloo is about the size of Cedar falls.

I go on to Independence The Roads are frozen

and the travelling has been very good until now it begins to be rather poor. The mud begins to thaw.

I don't like the soil as well East of Cedar Falls as I do West of there.

R.P. [Speer?] is about to marry. He is an old college mate of mine

Sunday 23 Stayed all night at a very fine Town (Independence) with about 1800 inhabitants. This Town is growing very rapidly. The mud is deep and troublesome here. We lie over at Independence today. I spend the day rather pleasantly with Knickerbocker the R.R. engineer. It rains nearly all day and it is very muddy.

24 Start at 1/2 past 3 o'clock for Dubuque. Go by way of Quasqueton. Take dinner at Delhi. Very good Town but the Rail Road misses it and it must go down. Stayed a time in Rockville. Had a great time with old Jefferson & the stage driver. They are determined to make us stay over night. But we are equally determined that we will go on. We have a loud old time but finally carry the day & go on. Ride in the night to old Drakes 15 miles from Dubuque & there are compelled to stay until day light much to our annoyance

25. We go to Dubuque over & awful muddy road. Arrive about noon. I stop at the Julien house. This is the best house in the city.

Dubuque is a fine growing city, now containing about 15000 inhabitants. It is a little the largest city in the State. Keokuk will keep close to it in growth, but I think Dubuque will go ahead of any city in the State. A block of buildings is now being erected on ground [leased] for 20 years that will cost about \$100,000. The builders pay ground rent and leave the building at the end of the time. I go around and make the acquaintance of all the Directors of the R.R. that I can find

26 Visit around Dubuque. Meet J.M. Lafferty. Have a pleasant time in Dubuque. Start for Erie at Six o'clock P.M. with Mrs Shaw & her two children in my charge

A cold severe wind blows. I bought a ticket to Boston which cost me \$29.90 from Dunleith. Rode all night in the cars until about 5 o'clock arrived at Chicago

27 Started from Chicago 1/2 past seven o'clock. Rode all day very pleasant day. Sun shines finely. No snow. Along the R.R. the forest is torn down through Indiana for a long distance. Rode all night until 2 o'clock P.M. arrived at Erie. West of Erie a poor son of Dr Vosbergs a drunken rascal that I took pity on and gave him

5.00\$ to help him home to Erie. Of course, I'll never get the money again. Stayed at Browns hotel

28 Got up at ten o'clock. Called on my friends — took dinner at Marshalls. Had a very very pleasant time. In the evening called on Mr Otis. Had an oyster supper. Miss Tinker [s?] a song most beautifully. She is a sweet singer though her voice is rather too high for private singing. Stayed all night at Otises. ~~Fine sleighing.~~ Mud

29 Start to Wattsburg where I arrive about 2 o'clock. C. David & father in Town. Ride home & see all my folks & for the first time saw Cousin [Selina Gleason?] Happy me, me, me!!

30 Sunday. Go to Church at Wattsburg. Hear Anderson preach. Would rather have heard Stevens

Dec 1, 1856 Stay at home. Enjoy myself very well. Pleasant time. Very pleasant. I am quite happy. It does me good to see my blood relations & friends. It is the greatest pleasure of my life to visit my friends.

I go to singing school. Have a real jolly time. I believe I get the load to imagine I am a steam engine.

2 At home. Pleasant day. There is about 2 inches of snow on the ground. Mr Moors & numerous folks visit. Fathers folks. It rains hard all night. They stay all night.

3. Cold. Wind blows & it snows quite fast. Go to Lester Perkins horse back. He has become very pious

*he is a prodigious
Abolitionist. He thinks
more of Sumners speech
than he does of his Bible*

since I last saw him. He prays twice a day in his family. I don't know whether he will hold out. He tries to preach. Stay with him all night

4. Cold morning. Hard wind. Go to Beaver Dam. Stop with Dr Perkins. Don't enjoy my visit. I never have since Carrie died. Seems strange and cold & unpleasant. Dreary. My mind looks back with painful grief on the past.

I go to Mr Crooks Uncle Johns & Cousin & Burrets. Get home at 10 P.M.

5. Am at home until noon Go to Waterford with Wm on horse back in the afternoon Stay all night with Merri-man my old class mate — he is a prodigious Abolitionist. He thinks more of Sumners speech than he does of his Bible I guess. He has it bound in gilt edged paper. A speech that I look on as little short of treason.

6 Start for Erie on the Hack in the morning in company with Dr Spencer. Arrive at 11 A.M.

Go to Mrs Richards. Have a very pleasant visit with Ella. I really love her better than any other girl I know of. I think she would be a very good girl for a wife and if she was not quite so young I should be in favor of looking into the State of the case a little I think quite likely. Stay with Mr. Janes.

Sunday 7 Go to church with Mr Janes family. Stay with pleasure to see the faces of nearly all of my friends. Go to the Pres. Church in the evening. Stay all night here. Have a deal of fun with Miss Cornelia. [L?] is the principal subject.

8 Call around with my friends Call on Miss Sarah Moore. She is a pretty girl and an excellent player on the piano She has a piano that cost \$600. Call on Ella & Mrs Richards. Stay until 11. P.M Stay all night at Mr Otises

9 Visit the West Ward School See all the teachers Call on all the bankers & leave my card. Go to Mr Janes & get my dinner Start for the East about 1 oclock P.M. Reach Rochester at 8. P.M. Go to Uncle Charles house 92. Monroe Street. See my cousins again after an absence of nine years. Good sleighing

10 Beautiful but frosty morning. I ride all over the city with cousin Wilbur, visit the [G?] falls & mills.

The falls are about 70 feet high. Dont know the hight of the lower falls They are very fine

Rochester is a fine city with about 35000 inhabitants. The Courthouse here is a very fine building The Plymouth Church is also a very fine building of stone, with a steeple 250 feet high. There is an observatory here on Mount Hope

11 Stayed with Uncle Charles last night Started for Albany at 8.35." AM

The country along the road is rough and rugged Take it as it is and I rather love the wildness of the scenery Scrub pines or spruce groves on the rocky peaks

Arrive at Albany just at dark. It has been a real dark dreary day. One of the real old dreary fellows

that makes one feel as if his friends were a great ways off from him. Stayed all night at [Stanwix?] Hall where I pay \$2 for Supper & lodgings

12th A very fine Statehouse. I dont like Albany very

*Have a very pleasant
visit with Ella. I really
love her better than
any other girl I know of.*

well from what I can see The scenery around the city is beautiful. The Hudson river is rather fine. I start for Boston at 8 A.M. on the Western R.R. It is an awful rough country around Kinderhook near which Expresident Van Buren resides It would look riding from Boston to Albany as if it would be utterly impossible to build a R Road

They are compelled to follow the little ravines & streams. Pittsfield Mass is about as old a looking town as I saw. Springfield on the Connecticut river is a pleasantly situated & pretty place. The largest Armory in the United States is here. Worcester is a very old looking town. I arrive at Boston at dark. Stop at the City Hotel.

13 Get up early in the morning and start out to look at Boston. I travel out across or nearly across the Bridge leading to Cambridge Get a beautiful view of the city. Go back to the Boston commons. This I call the prettiest place for a public walk of any place in any of the American cities unless it may be the Mall at Washington is superior. I go up through the Statehouse Look all over the city Have a fine view from here of all parts of the city and Charleston & Cambridge Also of the harbor and Bay. The Bunker hill Monument is really the greatest monument to the city. It lies directly north of the public common & Statehouse. The Capitol is a very fine building. The Library is also very fine. I go from here to the Museum. The Boston Museum is a very fine building & it is indeed a fine museum. Not superior to Barnums however and as a curiosity the Patent office at Washington is superior to either

The Bunker Hill Monument is about 220 feet high and cost about \$20,000

Started at [?] 2 P.M. for Portland Maine passed

through old witch killing Salem & Portsmouth N Hampshire, crossed the Saco & Piscataqua Rivers.

The lowlands along the coast are covered with thousands of Hay Stacks built on stakes to prevent the water troubling it at high tide. The lands are covered with rock and scrub timber

In thirty years the West will have the power to control the East if it chooses so to do. I arrive at Portland $1\frac{1}{2}$ past 6 P.M Stop at the United States Hotel

*The girls of New England
I rather fancy. They
are bright and sprightly
but a little to formal*

The weather has been warm and pleasant thus far No snow on the ground of any account since I left Albany

The girls of New England I rather fancy. They are bright and sprightly but a little to formal Still they are generally smart, quick spoken rather wanting grace on account of their quick motions.

The Western girls are generally more fun and I think more pleasant in their manners.

I am however rather a poor judge of the girls I like them all to well to speak of their faults!

The East seems to old and the West to new. Cant find [Paradise?] any where on earth

Dec. 14, 56, Sunday I am at Portland, Maine Hear Dr Lord Pres Dart. Coll. preach at the Cong. Church

Also hear Dr Dwight. Excellent sermons

It snows and rains together quite hard making it very disagreeable travelling indeed

15 Go all over the city with exmember of Congress Rufus McIntire. The Custom house is a very fine building, built of gray granite. A new hotel now being erected is a very fine building indeed

There are other buildings that look very well.

I visit the English Steam Ship Anglo Saxon — take a glass of brandy with the burser & captain. Go all over the ship.

The wind blows severely & the pavements are covered with ice. I go up to the Observatory where I get a fine view of the city and harbor.

Portland is destined sometime to be a rival to

Boston, or I mistake It has a far better harbor. It and Norfolk have the best harbors in the United States.

They are the only harbor in which the Great [?] ship can enter. Now building in Great Britain.

The R Road from Detroit has not a break of gauge throughout its entire length to Portland and when the rivers are bridged it will be the great road of the East. I leave this beautiful city, pass through Lawrence & arrive at Boston about eight P.M

16 Stopped all night at the City Hotel. Had good sleep. Started for New York passed through Providence Hartford & New Haven These are fine looking cities very fine indeed The Connecticut is a beautiful stream. The only nice looking land that I saw in New England was along the Connecticut Arrived at New York about 8 P.M. Stopped at the Clarendon house.

17. I rambled all over the city of New York visited the Palace the Aqueducts and all the main parts of the town Visited the Museum & Burtons Theater Saw the Serious family performance.

18 Remain New York until the afternoon Go to Philadelphia where I arrive about dark At the Girard house Visit the National Theater See the Forty thieves performed.

19 Visit all parts of the city, Fairmount & all Visit Girard College

This is the most complete building in the United States. The House of Refuge & States prison are places that for the immense strength and solidity of the walls around them do great honor to the city

The United States Mint is a splendid building & a magnificent Cathedral is just being built. Start for Washington in the afternoon

20 Passed through Baltimore just before dark last night and arrived at Washington City about 10. P.M.

Stopped at Willards Hotel where I stayed last night. Today I visit Congress. Dont think the Congress of the US at present is a very extraordinary body

21 Sunday I visit around the city. Go to the Washington Monument the Smithsonian Institute. It is the coldest day I have felt this season. ~~I freeze my~~ Catch a severe cold

22 Look around the city Mr Henn & Senator Jones of Iowa call on me at my room, we conclude Mr. Henn & I that we will start for Cleveland on Tuesday —

tomorrow I with Judge Knapp look all over the City. Visit all the curiosities — look at all the large buildings and big men

23 Very cold.

☞ visited president Pierce today in company with Mr Henn & Gen Jones.

I was highly pleased with him. He thought as he expressed it that there was no way to [prevent?] treason if preachers continued to preach as they had done unless it was to withhold the supplies from them.

Judge Knapp of Iowa Mr. Henn & myself start for Cleveland at four P.M. Get to Harrisburg at daylight

24. Get to Pittsburg before dark. Stop at the St Clair house. This is an awful dirty city. The sidewalks are covered with filth frozen down.

We go to the glass works. This is a great curiosity, very great indeed. The imitation of silver is a very remarkable thing indeed. It is just commencing. It makes a great show and is a fine thing for the codfish

*Today I visit Congress.
Dont think the Congress
of the US at present is a
very extraordinary body*

aristocracy like [?] when they want to look like silver.

Saw a poor fellow slip down on the walk turn round & say "kiss my ____ but before he got the last word fully out he pitched length wise into a cellar close by.

25 *Christmas* Start at 1/2 past 3 for Cleveland. Get to Alliance Are compelled to wait Finally go on. Get to Cleveland about noon. Snow about 8 inches deep. Go through the city Mr Henn looks at at least a half doz pr of gloves at as many different stores before he is suited Start for Erie at 20 m. past 3. Arrive at Erie at dark. Stay all night at Browns Hotel. Visit at Mrs Richards Stay all night with Otis. Call on many of my friends.

26 Stay all day nearly and all night with Mrs Richards family I am very fond of Ella Richards

27 David comes out after Mrs Richards Ella Willie &

myself we have a very pleasant ride in the sleigh home.

How pleasantly the time past. To get at the facts in the case I am really in love with Ella though I would not begin to own it! No sir. She is to young ever to think of such an old hard case as I am no doubt of that. Find all the folks well at home

28 Sunday. I stay at home Mrs Richards and our folks go to church

They have a pleasant time & so do I.

29, 30, 31. The time passes off very pleasantly indeed I never was any hapier since the death of my wife

I have really had a pleasant time.

January 1, 1857 I am resolved to make this year one of profit and pleasure. I hope to do a great deal of good to keep from any more bad habits and buck up all that I have.

Let what will come I intend to keep out of all bad scrapes and bad company.

This is a real fine winter day. I commenced it in company with my cousin Selina & my friend Miss Ella R.

I feel happy and I dont know of any reason that I have to feel otherwise.

2 Fine winter weather I am at my fathers. I am happy. happy! happy!!

Saturday Jany 3 I start with father Mrs Richards, Ella, & Willie to go to Erie. It snows & blows quite hard. Storm increases We get very cold before we get to Erie. Really this is an uncomfortable day. I get to Mrs Richards we have a great time in building a fire Finally we get all things in order. I stay in the house the balance of the day.

Bid father "good by" He goes home through a very severe storm.

Sunday 4 I stay all day at Mrs Richards I have a fine oyster dinner Never spent a day any more pleasantly. In the evening Mrs Richards goes to church and Ella & Willie remain with me. Ella is certainly a worthy girl. She is frank and high minded. I spend the evening very pleasantly indeed — very.

Monday 5 I stay at Mrs Richards until 10 AM. Then go to Mr Janes get dinner return and bid my friends "good by" I "salute" them and say farewell.

Take the cars for the West at half past 2 P.M.

Tuesday, 6. Arive at Chicago It is quite cold. No incidents except that on our way the train ahead of us



Duncombe lodged at the DeMoine House on a January trip to see the legislature.

SHSI (DES MOINES)

ran off the track. We were compelled to pass it on a very slippery place on a high embankment.

Wednesday, 7. Start at 10 last evening for Rock Island & Iowa City. Cross the Mississippi on the bridge. Get to the city about 10 A.M. Stopped at the Tremont house. Went over to see the Legislature.

Saw Wooden. bot a Vol of Greens reports

Started at $1\frac{1}{2}$ past 2 o'clock P.M. for Fort Des Moines. Very cold & frosty. Wind in our face. Rode in an open sleigh. rode all night. About 2 A.M. sleigh tipped over and turned us all out on the prairie. Real cold. Stopped the horses after they had dragged the driver about 30 rods. Fixed up the sleigh. Got to [Grinnell?] about day light.

Thursday 8th Go on to Fort Des Moines. Arrive there about 3 P.M.

Look all over for cousin Frank Gleason.

Stayed at the Des Moines house.

Left my fur collar

Friday, 9 Cold stormy day. Start in stage for Fort Dodge. No news on the way & no incidents. Stay all night at Boonsboro.

Saturday 10 Very cold stormy day. Storm right in my face. Take dinner at old Smiths. Good dinner

have my wolf skin coat on — His dog wants to eat me up & I object to it at present. Arrive at Fort Dodge at about dark or a little after having being absent from the Fort since the 20th day of November last & having visited the large cities & great men & my friends dear to me by love and the ties of nature and blood. Having had a very very pleasant & interesting time.

Sunday 11. At Fort Dodge. Stay in my office & read my letters.

Cold & quite stormy. They tell me here that they have had the awfulest cold stormy bitter time that they have ever known anywhere as in any country.

On the night the 2d of December men absolutely got lost in the town and could not find their way home, but came very near perishing with the cold and awful snow storm which was never surpassed. The snow blew through the tightest roofs of the houses and in houses that had been called secure in the morning the snow was [laid?] in huge heaps

Several persons have frozen to death. One coming from Webster City here froze just out of town

Solomon Hand froze so that he has had both his

hands & both his feet taken off — an operation that I would die twice before I would have done, I think. Cant tell though. Three men froze to death on the Iowa river just beyond Alden or Iowa Falls.

The month of December has from all accounts been an unprecedented month in the West & particularly in the State of Iowa.

12 In my office all day writing letters as hard as I could.
Cold day

Tues 13. Start for Webster City with my horses & Shaffners sleigh. Go to Tolmans pay up my interest to School fund coms. Go to Homer then to Webster City, where I arrive just after dark.

It is a very cold day. The horses are as white as snow & frost can make them.

Wednesday 14th Last night was the coldest of the season. The thermometer indicated over 30° below zero.

I had a fine visit with Willson last night his bro is quite sick with the lung fever.

Start for Fort Dodge about 10 A.M.

Roads bad — very bad. finally get home to Fort Dodge

Thursday 15th At home in my office. Cold & quite dreary I am reading papers and writing letters

Friday 16th Very cold. Stay all night in my office

Am quite happy I am boarding at John Garaghty Esq. a Catholic family and very fine family indeed.

Saturday 17th Very cold — 22 degrees below zero, at 9 AM

Stay in the office all day enjoy myself very well.

Sunday 18th 34. degrees below zero, 8. A.M. Coldest day of the season so far. I looked at the thermometer

Monday Jan 19. 10 degrees below zero and a wind has blown from the south since early yesterday morning I have been very busy reading the newspapers today to catch up with the times past. I have made up my mind to enjoy life and not quite so carelessly pass along. I mean to read some in the Bible after I get up. It cant harm me and I know from experience that it will have a tendency to make me virtuous and honorable

I resolve that I will not endorse for any body.

White is the only one that I feel under any obligations to assist in this respect and I dont think I will help him any longer by doing that.

Tuesday January 20th 57 The mercury indicates about two degrees below zero. The day is rather stormy.

Spend my time in my office. Read a good deal in the news papers. Write a good deal and read some law.

To day when Mr White presents his note to me to sign I hand it back to him I am resolved never to indorse in my own name for any body. unless I have the security in return for so doing. If I have I may. But I will not take doubtful security or endorse without security. I have a long talk with White and I really feel sorry for him. But I declare I dont see how I can help him and I dont mean to embarrass myself to help any one.

I advise him to write to Henn & Col Jesse Williams.

Indeed I feel sorry for him. I hope he will stop playing cards if he wants to succeed.

Alby shot

Wednesday Jan 21st Mercury indicates 21° below zero This is really a very cold climate But few climates that beats it for cold. I hope it may become warmer after a while.

I have spent my time in my office. Read the Evening Post through. Had a long talk with White. Read a good deal of law and wrote three pieces for the Sentinel

My health is very good I am trying to live honestly and honorably. I hope to succeed well. I sometimes feel a little downspirited. But never get the blues. I will be content. I will not murmur. I am prospered as well as I could expect to be.

I gave five dollars to Dodder the Presbyterian preacher.

He is a good little fellow and I wish I could give him more.

I am resolved that Dr Pease shall not be judge of this county. See how it will turn out!

Thursday January 23d Cold sharp day about 20 below zero The cold weather keeps up pretty well. I spend my time in my office. Read law attend to answering my correspondents, and other matters of interest.

I have since my return made a practice of reading a few chapters in the Scriptures immediately after getting up in the morning. This I find is really a great pleasure

I am not merely cursorily reading but studying severely. I have read the book of Ecclesiastics through several times until I now begin to find it very interesting.

I read some law. I am determined to post myself thoroughly in the law.

I close the day by calling on the family of Thos Sargent, inviting him to become County Judge &c

Close the day reading the "Tempest" in Shakespeare

Friday January 23d, 1857 Got up about half past seven oclock this morning. Put away my bed, built my fire, swept and dusted my office. Washed my face and combed my hair and then read 10 chapters in the Bible. At 9 AM went to Breakfast at John Garaghty's Esq. Had hash, potatoes, wheat bread frozen Plumb Sauce, buckwheat cakes, fried cakes, Cuckey's, and a glass of Good Cold Water with an excellent appetite. Went to my office stirred the fire went to the taylors and get my coat that I had torn in a scuffle, paid the taylor /50 cts, went to my office, Read law two hours, got tired, went to the office of Robbins Safford & Co, played two games of chess with Saml Robbins. He beat me both times, because I was so careless. Went and eat a piece of pie for dinner. Met Saml K Wright who wished to see me, had a note of Six Hundred Dollars against the estate of Johnson. I suspect that he is playing the rascal. He thinks that he is doing a heavy business. I finally draw out an affidavit and swear him to it. From his appearance I conclude that he has either forged the name to the note or that it is a

Went to Breakfast at John Garaghty's Esq. Had hash, potatoes, wheat bread frozen Plumb Sauce, buckwheat cakes, fried cakes, Cuckey's, and a glass of Good Cold Water

secret rascality in some way. I go over to the County Judge and get all the amounts but that approved. That the Judge agrees not to approve without citing him to appear on some future day.

I go down the river on the ice to where the widow Johnson lives and enquire of her about the matter. She

tells me Wright said to her that he signed Johnsons name to the note! I give her directions to get him to say it before somebody else. Go back to the Fort, 2 miles. In going down I slip & fall on an icy side hill. Dont get hurt any though. Get my supper. Go to my office. Bring in my coal for a fire. Wrote to three [?] & am — this minute writing [him?] & I expect finishing reading the "Tempest" by Shakespeare will finish the day. [Minutely?] cold. About 10 degrees below zero

Saturday Jany 24th 1857 Spent the day in my office. Very pleasant winter day. the mercury indicates about zero. I spend my day very pleasantly in my office reading law. But a part of the day I spent playing chess

Sunday 25th I spent the day in my office. Very pleasant winter day. I read considerable and talk more.

Monday 26th Warm South wind blows in the morning. Read law nearly all the forenoon. In the afternoon played four games of chess, with [Sam?] Robins & Thomas Sargent. Beat twice and got beat twice.

27 Warm pleasant day I spend my time in my office nearly all day

Wednesday Jany 28th 1857 Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office. Have a great time snowballing & sliding down hill.

Buy a sled or sleigh.

29th I start today with Judge J D Maxwell for Webster City by way of Homer. I have about \$900 in Gold to pay at Webster City for property there. I endorse a note at Reeses as second endorser for Morrison to help him raise the money which he was to raise for me in consideration that I should give him a half interest in the property at Webster City. I am perfectly safe as the property is all in my name even if I had to pay the note or I would not indorse for him.

I arrive at the City at about 3 oclock. Stay all night at Willsons. This has been a beautiful day

Friday Jany 30th 1857 Start from Webster City after paying over my money and getting every thing straight for Fort Dodge where I arrive at noon. It snows a little and the wind begins to blow. I spend the balance of the day in my office. It grows quite cold towards night

Saturday Jany 31st 1857 Cold. Mercury 15°s below (0). Quite an unpleasant day to be out. I begin a suit for Michael Caligan vs John C. I have determined to take

a retaining fee in all cases that may arise. I take \$10. of Caligan fill my papers and attend to the matter leaving the notice with Garaghty. I have tried to spend this week as virtuously as I well can reading 6 chapters in my Bible every morning before breakfast.

Good by pleasant week!

Sunday Feb. 1st 1857. Cool morning but not very cold. I get up before day light, and after Breakfast read several chapters, at least a dozen in the Bible. I then write a letter to P [June?] Then go to Church in the School house and hear Elder Dodder preach a very good, but not smart sermon Then go to dinner. Go to my office and have long talk with Maj Williams. Go to supper talk with Maj long time after supper, then write a funny letter to Ella Richards — political in answer to one she wrote me before Election Build up a good fire and get warm and prepare to go to bed. I dont think I am much wiser for having lived this day. I have gained no new idea but some of my resolutions for good are strengthened

Monday Feb 2. 1857 Pleasant day. Thaws I spend my time in my office, getting up the papers in the Caligan Replevin suit & writing a host of letters also trying a suit against Wright on his claim against the Johnson Estate

Tuesday Feb. 3. A severe South wind. A chilly morning but not cold I go over to Webster City to try a case for Binkly deft vs. Williams plff. I have a jury. Jury find that both parties shall pay the costs. Finally they cant agree. Parties settle it.

This is really a victory for my client. I stay all with W C Willson who returns from Iowa City to night where he has been a representative for this section during the past winter.

Wednesday Feb 4, 1857 I leave Webster City in the morning. Get home about 1. oclock P.M. Willson gives me a hint of an attempt to remove the Land office. When I get home I find a great excitement up in relation to the removal of the Land office Mr Henn having written a letter to the effect that Merritt in the office has signed & circulated a petition for the removal to Algona & has with Van Antwerp the register written a letter to Washington urging the removal. We get up petitions & have them printed & prepared to [?] on to have them over thrown in their calculations. Some of the Town is a little excited and some as usual cool.

This world is made up of more fool than wise men or I am mistaken.

Thurs, Feb 5, 1857 I go over to Webster City and get 110 signers to my remonstrance against the removal of the Land office and get back about dark. We get up several letters and with the names already on hand we send off 310 signers to Jones our U S Senator.

Friday Feb 6th The weather has been fine for a long time past until today. It storms & blows very bad indeed.

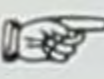
I go to Tolmans to get signers to my petitions but

*This day I must own,
I feel quite cross.*

it could not be done the weather is so bad

Saturday F. 7. One of the stormiest days of the season. In my office attend Caligans case before the County officers Write 12 letters

Sunday Feb 8, 1857 Spent my time in my office Wrote home & a long letter recommending Thos Sargent for Register. Spent my time very pleasantly.

Monday Feb. 9, 1857  ~~Spent my time trying suits for Caligan. [?] one and one not decided. A very queer case. Stormy day.~~

Go to Homer to see Mr. Snell & Butterworth at the answer to Mr Snells letter to Maj Williams The thermometer falls to 14 below zero. This is the stormiest day I ever saw.

Feb 10 Stayed all night at Old Smiths in Homer. Had a long talk with Snell. He feels all right I think or appears so at any rate. Very cold. I ride to Fort Dodge Have 102 names to my remonstrance

Wednesday Feb. 11th 1857 Cold weather. I spend my time in my office. I begin to feel a little dul & bilious. This day I must own, I feel quite cross. Not that I have anything to scold about but it is in my bones and I cant get it out. I think if I had a wife I should be quite likely to scold her if she was not to good natured for me to do it. To day my business I guess will not pay my board. I commence boarding to Schaffners tavern This is one reason for my cross feelings.

Feb 12th It thaws the snow is getting quite soft. I am doing but little to day. I have been troubled with a

sort of [?] disquietude for two or three days. I dont exactly understand it. I had a bad dream last night about my sister. Strange that I should notice it

Friday Feb. 13th 1857 I spent the day in my office. I read a little talked a little, felt rather foolish and dul as if there was about to be a thaw. In the evening I went over to the home of my friend Tom Sargent, and played chess with him. Talked a long time with him about having him run for County Judge. We concluded it would be best to play shy.

Saturday. Feb. 14th Last night ☔! it rained hard and thawed the snow away. In the night it thundered & lightened a good deal.

To day it has thawed all day. The snow is very soft and slopy. Every appearance would indicate a change in the weather for spring. But I dont expect any such good luck.

I hope we may have an early Spring. I spend my time in my office to day. I have accomplished a fair days work to day in my office. This week has been rather lonesome to me

Sunday Feb. 15th 1857 Beautiful day. I attend church. Hear Rev. Dodder preach. Very excellent young man. Preached a very excellent sermon

I spend the balance of the day in my office reading the Bible and Butlers Analogy of Religion The day passes away very pleasantly indeed

Monday Feb. 16th Beautiful day. The thaw has continued until it is getting quite sloppy in the streets. Foggy weather I am very busy. I get Thos Caligans account approved by the County Judge. Have a long trial in Wright vs Johnsons Estate in the County Court.

Spend the evening at Maj Ws very pleasantly, drinking [?] playing chess & having [?]

Tuesday Feb. 17th 1857 Beautiful morning. Spent my time in my office

18 Beautiful day. Spend my time in my office

19 Beautiful day. Spend my time in my office.

20 Beautiful day. Yesterday I issued the No. of the Sentinel. This is my first act as Editor de facto of the Sentinel.

The boys laugh at me a great deal. Call me Mr Editor.

21st Pleasant weather. In my office. Begin to feel a little of the Spring fever

22 Sunday. I go to McKnights and back on the ice of the river, to let him know that Humbolt [isnt quite restored?]

Monday 23, Feb. 1857 Warm pleasant day. It continues thawing Spend my time in the office.

24 ditto

25 ditto

26 ditto

Spent the evening at Maj Williams with Colburns family Sargent and Boott.

27 Warm pleasant day To day we get off the Second number of our paper for which I had to work considerably myself in correcting the proof sheet &c

Saturday 28 Feb 1857 Beautiful morning, but quite cool. Rise at daylight

March 1 1857 Attended church at 1/2 past ten. heard Dodder preach Did not think he preached a very good sermon. Was not much interested in it

This is a real cold day Wind blows hard from the North. Willson and Funck come over from Webster City

March 2 Monday. ☔ Thermometer 7 degrees below zero at daylight. Bright sun shine. Weather looks beautiful, but feels cold

Tuesday March 3 In my office, close. Cold about 5

Mercury 18 degrees below zero. Rather cold for Spring.

degrees below zero

Wednesday March 4 Cold day In my office James Buchanan President.

5 Cold day. In my office.

Friday March 6th 57 Cold day. I go down to Nettletons to get Bush papers in his law suit. Had a great deal of trouble in this suit.

7 ☞ Mercury 18 degrees below zero. Rather cold for Spring. Spent my time in my office

Sunday 8, 1857 In my office. Snows a little About zero cold Wrote letters nearly all day. Eat dinner at Thos Sargents

Monday 9th Cold morning Mercury 10 degrees below zero.

Spent my time in my office writing & preparing for Court.

Nothing of importance. Read several letters from Pa. Has been warm there. No frost in the ground

Tuesday March 10th 1857 Cold morning. I spend my time in my office. Little excitement about county officers.

Wednesday March 11th 1857. For several mornings past the mercury has sunk below zero but the days have been beautiful

Thursday March 13th 1857 Cold morning. N B Morrison & I go up the Lizard River to get a set of delegates nominated for county officers. The wind blows quite hard and it is unpleasantly cold.

Large meeting at John H Williams.

Friday March 13th 1857. Cold morning. Pleasant day I go around and rally the boys out for our Convention which will be held here tomorrow.

Saturday March 14th 1857 Cool morning and chilly day Great excitement over our town Election. Wm H. Merritt unites with a set of Know Nothings, and in order to carry his ticket places my name at the head, with a few other reliable men as delegates for the convention. The grand move is by my enemies to get me as one of the convention to nominate county Judge, and have enough delegates on the ticket to get W N Messervey nominated County Judge.

We had a bitter fight, and I never felt more interest in so small a matter. But as usual I make every exertion to conquer The Irish are deceived by John Garaghty. And from this day I set him down in my Journal as a treacherous man. He is, or else he is a fool in this matter, for he votes for and assists in nominating a set of Know Nothings on his ticket the worst enemies he has. He could not be mistaken I think. He has deceived the Catholic priest & he has electioneered for this bastard ticket with all his might. I mark John Garaghty Esq Attorney and counselor at law, as

a man that I will not trust in the future politically. He has done a base act, or else he has been very easily duped, either of which disqualifies him for my trust. But I only mark him in my own mind. He shall not know anything about it.

Our fight goes on. But thank my friends and my

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own Bull-dogitiveness, I beat and get every delegate of the 13 my own ticket elected. One of them by only 1, majority and the balance by 9 majority thanks also to a few shrewd Irishmen.

I get every vote of the convention as a delegate 113, run by my friends for success & by my enemies placed first on the ticket to make it carry & kill my electioneering.

This little fight, and the very narrow escape, gives me reason to increase my energy every time I go to battle.

Sunday March 15th 1857 Warm pleasant day. The snow is melting very rapidly. I attend church and hear Dodder preach.

March 16th 1857. Warm pleasant day. I go and attend the Democratic County Convention for the nomination of County officers We nominate Samuel Rees for County Judge. Tom White for Treas J Garaghty for Recorder L Davis for county assessor, J H Williams Sh[eriff] A. Mesmore Drainage Coms.

A very good list of officers.

March 17th 1857 Warm days I receive all the British Reviews for the year 1856 and a part for the present year

I mean to attend to my own comfort a little more in the future, and not work so hard for others.

18 Republicans hold their Convention and nominate L. L. Pease for County Judge, John Brady for Sheriff, W E Brooks for Clerk A Carpenter treasurer, Wm Burkholder Recorder F B Drake Surveyor Dont know how

it will turn out but I think that Pease will be defeated.

Thurs 19. I go in my sleigh down to old Judge Johns to get him to serve a writ that I have against Benj [McPhiters?] for a span of horses of Saml Hayden which the Sheriff refuses to serve I feel rather poorly. The snow is nearly all gone in the roads. So that the sleighing is rather poor. The stage comes up tonight on wheels and the wagoning is excellent.

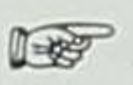
Friday 20 It Rains a little this morning. The weather indicates a break up in our winter. No one would be more anxious to see it than I am.

Saturday 21st Mar. 57 Three men, Messrs Howe, Wheelock and one name forgotten came here from Spirit Lakes, on the North line of the State in Dickinson County, who brought the news that the entire settlement on the Spirit Lakes had been destroyed by the Indians which settlement consisted of 43/ persons in all We call a meeting at the School house for the purpose of seeing who will go to their relief. We appoint another meeting for tomorrow.

Cool chilly weather.

Sunday 22, Mar 57 Cold chilly day Another meeting for the purpose of devising ways and means to relieve the Settlers attacked by the indians on Spirit lakes is held to day and the five men appointed as a committee brought in the report that about 30. had volunteered to go to the lakes and that there would probably be about 75. volunteers with those expected from other points in the County. Also that the probability was that we should be able to raise provisions &c for the trip. The committee consisted of Messrs N B. Morrison, E.E. Colburn, C B Richards, H. Beecher and myself.

Monday March 23, 57. Cold chilly morning Very cold weather for the season of the year. We meet again to devise measures to relieve the Settlers on the lakes. New volunteers are constantly coming in. We fix on tomorrow for a start. A company of 17 men came in this evening from Webster City. Some from Border Plains some from Homer

Tuesday, March 24, 57  A body consisting of about 75. men were organized into three companies, viz Company "A" under command of E.E. Colburn, (who declined going, and afterwards C.B. Richards, Captain) Company "B", who chose me to command them Company "C", who chose Mr Johnson of Webster City to take charge of them as their captain. All under

the command of Maj Wm. Williams of Fort Dodge.

We get one waggon from Webster City drawn by three yoke of oxen. One waggon drawn by Geo McClures mules, one drawn by Dawsons horses, one drawn by Hardmans horses. We start about noon. The snow banks in the ravines are from 4 to 10 feet deep The water is rising. The snow is melting. and the roads are becoming extremely bad. We labor hard and finally succeed in getting out about six Miles to Badger Creek where we encamp for the night. The men get a little hay off from a hay stack and we lie down on the ground for the night. I have been quite unwell for some time past. I have had a severe ear ache for several days past. To night I lie on the ground, and as it is very cold and frosty my ear aches very severely.

Wednesday March 25th, 1857 We get up in the morning and after cooking and eating our breakfast we start on our march. We have a big tin horn to call us to arms! Badger Creek is so high in the channel that we cannot cross it except on a cattle path. We cut willows and bush and lead our horses and cattle over and drive our waggons over by hand. We find a very deep bad slough between Badger and Beaver Creek where the cattle and horses are nearly compelled to swim. We drag the waggons through by means of ropes & chains. Of course we get very wet.

About noon we reach Beaver Creek, where we find it almost an impossibility to drag our waggons over as the snow is drifted about twenty rods. We unyoke our oxen and drag them over the deep places. We are compelled to haul our waggons, heavily loaded up a hill, over ten rods through a snow bank nearly hard enough to hold the waggon, but the wheels cut through to the axeltrees. We have a very willing set of men.

About 4 oclock we reach the East Fork of the Des Moines River, about 1½ miles South East of Dacotah. Here the snow is drifted in about 10 ft deep on the East Bank. We shovel a path through for a single horse and ox and thus get our horses and cattle over. The ice is about half out of the River and we cut it so as to get our waggons through and drag them over by hand, wading the river wet as ducks. We encamp about forty rods from Dacotah in a grove. I get the use of the house of O W Clark for my men to sleep in My ear aches awfully, but I have it tied up with a handkerchief and I have worked the stiffness out of my neck almost entirely I do not sleep any until about morning. One of my men Michael McCarty, an old sailor gets fighting drunk and disturbs us all for a

time until he falls into the fire and burns his hand badly and this rather seems to quiet him. Towards morning my ear broke on the inside and ran quite freely, which greatly relieved the pain, and I got a very little sleep which greatly refreshed me.

Thursday March 26th 1857 We leave Dacotah early in the morning. It blows and rains, a very dreary looking morning. We have an almost awful hard days work to day. The snow is very deep.

Yesterday Byer and one or two more deserted us. On account of hardships To day we are compelled to drag our cattle horses and heavy waggons through snow banks, almost without number. I go ahead and look out the roads until I find one of these bad places and then wait until the men come up, and assist them

over. I am not with the Co B when they get their dinner and consequently get nothing but a cracker or two. The high points of lands are free from any snow, while the low places are covered with old snow from a foot to 5 and six feet in debth. The snow is hard. So that in some places it will hold a horse In other places, it will hold a man, and in others it would not hold a child. This makes the hardest kind of traveling. Like going up a high flight of stairs where the stairs are very high separated.

About 2. oclock P.M. when we were within about 10 miles from McKnights point and surrounded with deep snows John N Maxwell, Lieutenant of Co. "C." and myself started ahead to put up lights at the point, to direct the Company, as it became quite evident that they would not reach the timber before dark. We

The Spirit Lake Relief Expedition

In March 1857, as unseasonably cold temperatures gripped northern Iowa, a band of Wahpakute Dakota Indians led by Inkpaduta entered the white settlement at Spirit Lake in search of food and shelter from the pounding blasts of Arctic air. Not all of Spirit Lake's settlers were willing to open their larders for the visitors, and by the time the Indians departed a few days later 33 settlers were dead and 4 white women were in captivity.

In the immediate aftermath of the killings, community leaders in central Iowa raised companies of armed citizens to track down the kidnappers and to secure the Spirit Lake settlement from further attack. In Des Moines, for example, young lawyer Jefferson Scott Polk called his neighbors to arms in order to protect life and property in northern Iowa from further depredations. In Boone County, Judge C. J. McFarland joined a group of his neighbors and headed north toward Spirit Lake. Greeted by the "entire populace" on their arrival in Webster City, where the Boone County men stopped to rendezvous with other companies, the always voluble Judge McFarland spoke for his comrades. "The Boone Tigers are here," the judge declared. "Bring on your Indians, and we will lick hell out of them."

In Fort Dodge, William Williams, John Duncombe, and others pulled together about 100 men, including some from Webster City and presumably Boone County as well, and on March 25 set out on a relief expedition to Spirit Lake in deep snow and frigid temperatures. Travel was slow and taxed the strength of most of the men. Many of them collapsed into a deep sleep at the end of each day, often without eating. In her biography of Cyrus Clay Carpenter, who rode with the Fort Dodge men, Mildred Throne wrote, "the hardships that this group of men underwent called for the last ounce of stamina, and had it not been for a good core of tough frontiersmen,

who kept the men together, many of them would never have survived the experience."

An advance party sent out by William Williams to survey the situation in Spirit Lake returned with word that U.S. troops from Fort Ridgely in Minnesota had secured the settlement and were now pursuing Inkpaduta's band. In response to this news, Williams sent a small detachment north again to Spirit Lake with orders to bury the dead before returning to Fort Dodge. With supplies running low and the weather showing no sign of letting up, Williams himself and the other men turned south toward home.

Hardships continued all the way home for Duncombe and the other men who traveled with Williams, according to Mildred Throne. "At one time the men were marooned for thirty-six hours in the midst of a blizzard, with no shelter except a wagon cover and two tents stretched across the wagon bodies to provide some protection from the storm," she wrote. "Many became crazed with the cold and the lack of food; feet and hands were frozen; clothes became tattered rags."

At least the men who traveled with Williams could rely on each other for help, and eventually the group made it home. The burial party did not fare as well. Separated in the stormy weather, many wandered aimlessly for days before finding a route home. Two became lost altogether and presumably died somewhere in the unsettled territory between Fort Dodge and Spirit Lake.

Many years later, in 1894, John Duncombe and Cyrus Clay Carpenter joined Abbie Gardner Sharp — who had been taken captive in March 1857 by Inkpaduta's band and released unharmed a few months later — in dedicating a memorial to the Gardner family, their Spirit Lake neighbors, and the frontiersmen who in 1857 had hurried to their aid. — by Bill Silag

travelled about six miles through a low flat piece of ground which was filed with snow, that would break through about every other step and let us in to the hips. Some of the time I would lie down flat and roll over and over like a log to get along.

We were then within about four miles of the Grove and we overtook a Mr Wheelock who had started ahead about three hours before us. After I had travelled with him a short time he took out a little bottle of medicine, took some and told me to take a little. I did so. After a little I began to grow dizzy, and I laid it to my extreme fatigue. I took a little more a few spoonfuls, thinking that the brandy in it would resuscitate me. In five or ten minutes I could not walk a step, and the instant I would sink down in spite of biting my lips, to keep up my grit until they were sore and raw, and in spite of my friend Wheelock telling me that I must have a "little pluck", I gave out in body completely. So that I could not make a loud noise, or halloo, in the least, although I have an indistinct Recollection of trying it. Wheelock called until he was heard by Wm Church and a Mr Evans, who lived at the point and had now put out lights, it being now night. They had come out a mile to meet us. I put my arms over their necks, and with much difficulty managed to hold on until they got me to Evan's house. Here they gave me a cup of strong tea and I vomited freely. They then put me to bed, and that is the last I recollect until late in the morning of the next day when I jumped out of bed, got a cup of cold water, vomited it up, went to bed again, and lay abed all day. I felt weak and dizzy headed.

Maxwell got within about a mile of the Grove and had to be dragged in. Wheelock could not walk in, but managed to crawl and roll in.

The company was the next day in getting in and to night they lay out on the cold snow and frozen damp ground.

I came a little nearer the Locker of Davy Jones this time than ever before. On examination I found that the medicine that I had taken was one sixth part Laudinum. The surgeon, Dr Bissell, told me that it was almost a miracle that I had not been killed as it would have killed 99. out of a 100. That I owed my escape to being stirred and vomiting so freely.

I felt perfectly sure that the Indians would not kill me on this trip after this.

Friday March 27th 1857 To day I lay at the house of Jeremiah Evans on my back. The company get in about 2 or 3 oclock. Several of the men tried to get in last night, but lay out on the prairie, without any

cover. It rained a little today. Sent men ahead to Carters to kill a beef

Saturday March 28th 1857 I go out in the morning I am well but rather weak. I find several of the boys quite discouraged and ready for desertion.

Oscar E. White, John Heffley Stephen York — Richardson, Wm. Tihlman and one or two more deserted. An old crazy woman went off with the battalion of deserters, and we gave them three groans for a farewell Although I had "fainted" my pluck was as good as ever if not better, and I told my men that I would go on if I knew I would be killed, and Captain Johnson of Company "C" agreed with the sentiment (poor fellow I have fear for him) and the brave boys responded with cheers.

We start, and go on, as before, collecting a few hardy volunteers to fill the places of the effeminate crazy battalion of deserters, over snows & difficulties to many to mention until we reach a place near Cillinder Creek, where old Shippy lives, where we encamped for the night. Here we had to drag our wood a long distance I slept in a waggon box, on a sled. My blankets were covered with frost. My feet and legs are wet &c.

I am careful of my strength to day and am gaining

Saturday March 29th To day we march to the Irish Colony about 10 miles. We are now about 60 miles from Fort Dodge at, a little huddle of temporary shanties where about 8. or 10. families have wintered.

We are now about 60 miles from Fort Dodge at, a little huddle of temporary shanties where about 8. or 10. families have wintered.

Their cattle and horses look very nice indeed. Some of our teams are tired out, and we leave them here. They furnish us with nearly all the teams we want, and we are compelled to take only one by four which we do, with a little swearing by the owner.

Generally they did for us all that was possible.

Today one of the teams horses tires out and I put my horse in, as it is impossible for me to ride but very little on account of the bad places.

This settlement is on the West fork of the Des Moines river about, 2 or 2¹/₂ miles above the center of Palo Alto Co where Baggs Pollock McBane & C C Carpenter have laid out a town already. It is a little South West of the [Medium?] Lakes.

Monday March 30th 1857 We start from the settlement north, up the Des Moines River and pass over a beautiful ridge of land, with broad flats along the Des Moines river valley. We send a scout of 17 men ahead to day, to scour the country and look for Indian signs. Shortly after noon the Scouts meet a body of eighteen persons who have been on the road from Springfield Minnesota (about 8 miles north of the state line) Since Thursday night last, past on which day Springfield was attacked by the Indians and six persons killed found, viz. Stewart, wife and two daughters, a little boy escaping aged 8 years, by hiding behind a log until the Indians left. Wm Wood (his brother is missing, supposed to killed and burned in his own house which was burned) and a son of Mr Thomas with whom I was well acquainted while he lived in Webster County.

In this company was Mr Thomas who had his house at Springfield attacked, with himself, Mackhan Culver & Bradshaw in it

Here they had a very severe fight and finally whipped the indians killing about a dozen of them Mrs Wm Church one of the company loading the guns, (of which they had about 12) and shooting an Indian. Here Mr Thomas Son himself, Mrs. Church's sister and Culver, hearing a whooping at the door, of an old Indian running through the road past the house rushed out, and, the instant they came to the door were fired on by a large party of indians in the woods close by them. And Mr Thos son was instantly killed or rather he lingered at the door about two hours before he was entirely dead. Mr Thomas had his left arm shot all to pieces below the elbow. Mr Culver was shot in one arm and in the side. The ball passed through the case of his lungs and he will not probably live. Mrs Church's sister was shot through the shoulder and is doing very well.

There are several small children in the company, one or two babes, I think two, several weakly women & children. The little Stewart boy, before named and a Miss Gardner aged about 16 or 17 years, is in the company. She is an orphan Her fathers entire family having been killed by the Indians at the Spirit Lakes.

These people have travelled, without a mouthful of food, except about a bushel of boiled corn, all the time since Thursday night, a distance of about 30 miles, through snows with two ox teams, and how they did it, to me is inexplicable God only knows. There there never was a harder case in Indian warefare They were wet all the time and in the snow and slush some of the time to their hips. The mind will carry the body through a great many difficulties. This is illustrated in the remark of a brave soldier who noticed that his

They were wet all the time and in the snow and slush some of the time to their hips. The mind will carry the body through a great many difficulties.

legs shook just before going into an action, when he said, "You would shake worse than that, if you knew where I was about to carry you," and marched on.

After our scouts had come up with this company they brought us word, and after our usual days toil we reached a small grove on the ~~lakes near~~ river a few miles from Big Island Grove, South West from that grove. It rained hard and we built a good fire and divided our food with the poor sufferers and set out 12 Guards who wached, 4 at a time, all night as we expected very likely the Indians would follow these refugees, and come on them when they would be most likely to catch them off their guard.

I lay to night on the frozen ground, which had thawed a little by the rain, and with my head in the mud and water, and slept soundly. I think a number of this band of Refugees must have perished if Providence had not directed our path to their assistance.

Tuesday, March 31st, 1857 This is a dreary, foggy, chilly wet morning, and the boys look a little sober, but no one grunts, or complains, except now and then one who thinks that his supply of Slap Jacks is rather short. (A Slap Jack with us is a composition of Indian

meal & flour wet up in water sometimes eatable and sometimes as hard as a brick bat)

We send a few men back with this company and the balance of us get on our way. We have a hard day to day and only travel six miles. We have an awful

Quite fresh Mocacin tracks. An unfinished canoe left but a short time since, a tree on a high peak trimmed and topped so that a man could see for miles around

time crossing Prairie Creek, and have very severe toil as the distance is about 80 rods across the flats when we have to draw our waggons. This is the last day I will leave my horse in the team. He is not large enough for the heavy work

We send a scout of 25 men ahead to day who scour all the Groves around big Island Grove and find many signs of Indians. An ox killed by them within two or three days. Quite fresh Mocacin tracks. An unfinished canoe left but a short time since, a tree on a high peak trimmed and topped so that a man could see for miles around and other signs.

We encamp to night at the Big Island Grove, and again we set a guard of 12. out

I sleep on the ground again. Quite cold tonight. I have recovered my strength and feel well. Our boys have some pretty sore feet, and many of them are compelled to rip their boots in pieces so as to enlarge them. As for me I spoiled as good a pair of boots as I ever owned the two days after I started and bought a new pair at Dacotah, which now resemble a piece of raw hide. I have lost all the socks I had when I started, have now two pair of womens stockings which I bought at Dacotah. No, I did not steal them although the boys thought it would be evidence if I ever got back that I had caught a Squaw.

Wednesday April 1st 1857 Today it is pretty cold. We have some very bad places to cross. We have travelled so

far that we dont think anything of wet feet and wet legs.

We send a scout of 25 men ahead to day.

I ride to day a good part of the way on my horse. About noon we hear a firing of guns at a little grove near a lake about 2 miles ahead of us and about three ahead of the company. Shortly after I see several men, (so far it is impossible to tell an indian, and these indians are dress in broad cloths from the plundered houses on the Little Sioux River) running out of the grove and others after them. The first I conclude are Indians and, the latter our scouts. I thought from the position of the ground that very likely three of the men running were out of the sight of the scouts, and were skulking to escape. I had left my rifle, but my Revolver is in capital order and I had an excellent double barreled Shotgun and plenty of double sized Buck shot. I put in a good load of powder and 14 buck shot in each barrel in a moment and concluded, as much as ever a man believed any thing that he did not know that I would have the gratification of getting a shot at "big game"

I thought if these rascals were armed with Rifles I could get near them by dismounting and placing my horse between me and them.

With these reflections I put my horse under the fastest gate possible and hurried on to what I supposed would be "honorable warefare" such as would not in the least disturb my conscience, after seeing the sight and hearing the story that I had seen and heard.

But I was doomed to disappointment, and found that the cause of what I had seen was simply this. We had several old trappers in our scout, and when they

We had several old trappers in our scout, and when they reached the lake they saw seven or eight beautiful otter on the ice

reached the lake they saw seven or eight beautiful otter on the ice and could not restrain their old custom and habits, and although under strict orders not to shoot at anything but Indians and to kill every thing of that kind that they could find, they let loose,

and then some of the otter ran and the men running were men after them.

I found when I reached my company they were not less anxious than myself and were all prepared for

I always doubted whether I had the real grit. I always thought my caution led me close to the verge of cowardice

action having loaded their guns, and some of them being so sure that they saw indians that they declared that they could plainly see their blankets, which every one knows would be quite difficult for a long sighted Western pioneer accustom to look miles, instead of rods, like an Eastern man

This is the first time in my life that I honestly had a chance to have my courage tried, by a prospect of a deadly fight, in which I really thought I was about to be engaged.

I always doubted whether I had the real grit. I always thought my caution led me close to the verge of cowardice but this time I would have given all I was worth to have had the three men I saw been Indians. If they had not killed me I should have killed them — I know

There is a strange fact about this whole matter. It is the first day of April!

We travel about 12 miles to the place of one Gardner who had deserted his house. Here we met messengers who came from Springfield, about 10 miles above who said that 50 mounted infantry from Fort Ridgely had arrived at that place on Friday immediately after the attack of the Indians, and had rested over Saturday and had started in pursuit of the Indians, who left the day ~~after~~ the soldiers ~~left~~ arrived in the morning. They followed the indians within a half day of them on Sunday, as shown by their camp fires, and then returned.

I have no doubt that if they had not sent for the Soldiers, which the Indians knew, we should have got hold of the red rascals.

But chagrin marked every countenance when we heard the news. We could not possibly follow the Indians as they had to much the start of us to give us

any fair chance, as we should soon run out of provisions.

We camped here over night rather crabed and cross. I lay on the ground.

Thursday April 2d 1857. We sent a company of 23. men under Captain Johnson to bury the dead at Spirit lakes. A few ~~of us~~ went on to Springfield and the balance a large majority of our 110 men turned for home. Our company who started back with the waggons reached the Big Island Grove about night. Here we encamped for the night. I slept on the ground It snowed a little and blowed hard. Very disagreeable. Gave my Bowie knife to [?]

Friday Apr 3d 1857. We reached Prairie Creek today I took the saddle off my horse and he wallowed through with water to his back & sluse the same debth We had an awful time crossing this stream I believe the worst I had seen anywhere. The snow & water nearly ran over the top of our waggon Boxes as we dragged them through. We arrived to night at the Irish settlement.

Saturday Apr. 4 1857. Started in a severe rain with our company towards Fort Dodge We got to Cillender Creek about noon, wet and cold. Here the rain had raise the Creek so that it extended or overflowed the entire flat about two or three feet up to four & five, and in the channel 10 feet deep. This Creek brought us to a dead stand still. Some went back to the Colony Some tried to head it, but failed. Two waded and swam acrost it. Several got some of the waggon boxes together and nailed them and tried to raft. Solon Mason only reached the other side and was dragged out by three men who were there getting a beautiful ducking. Wm M Koons rode my horse back to the Settlement. Mr C B Richards, Gurnsey Smith Malcolm and myself, corked another waggon box and crossed over, thinking to get back and bring others over but a strong wind — an awful wind blew from the other side and after laboring for a long time to get over we found at last that it was utterly impossible and gave it up. We went three miles to old Shippys, and staid all night. In the night it turned very cold & snowed

Sunday April 5, 57 This morning, when I first went out, I was very much afraid that many of our men must be frozen to death, as it was an intensely cold frosty windy snowy morning.

Richards, Smith Mason & myself went down to the creek to see what could be seen of our boys.

We found our boys had tented as we supposed. The distance was too great to see or tell a horse from a

man. The ice had frozen so as to hold nearly — the half mile except where the wind had blown so that it could scarcely freeze if it had been at the North pole. We took our waggon box, hitched a long rope to it, (That is Smith and I did, Richards being a feminine man, and Mason, from the severe ducking of last night was so chilled that he could hardly get back to the house) and then attempted to cut our way through. The cold was so severe, that my beard was covered with ice, as bad as when the thermometer is 20 degrees below zero. We found finally after working about two hours that it was utterly impossible to reach the other side, as the ice would freeze to our boat as fast as we could cut it away in front making it a perfect drag and we feared after we would get about half across that it would freeze the channel back of us and put us in a "fix". So we went back. In the evening we came back and I crawled over and found

Our boys were all right. . . . They had blankets, but nothing to eat, but a little cold raw rice and raw pork.

that our boys were all right, and succeeded with boards, in getting two of them across, with the help of Smith & Malcolm. They had blankets, but nothing to eat, but a little cold raw rice and raw pork.

I felt very bad to day for fear our Spirit lake boys would all be frozen to death

Such a day as this I never saw in April

Monday April 6th 1857. This morning it is very cold But the wind has gone down and the sun shines brightly. ☞ Let it be remembered that last night and yesterday the ice froze over the body of water in Cillender Creek notwithstanding the wind blowed nearly a hurricane and the waves roled a foot or two high, so thick that today Richards brought his horse over and we drew a loaded waggon over; the balance having gone back. One or two of the boys were slightly touched with frost, but slightly. To day I, with part of the company, went on the McKnights point where I stoped about noon to wait for the balance. Smith & Malcolm & Johnson went on a head.

I stayed at Evanses all night

Tuesday April 7th 1857 To day I wait at Evanses for my [company?] to come on. I go down and wade to my hips in Bridge Creek & carry little John Stewart, the orphan boy, on my back, we having left the balance of our company of invalids at the Irish Colony. The women came with us to Cillender Creek but when they could not cross they returned back again. We begin to hear from our Spirit lake boys. Some of them came up with us to day. Some of them got in to the Colony on ☞ Sunday laying out on Sunday night wet to the skin and some of them are badly frozen. Hardly expected to get along without loosing some of their toes and fingers. Some did not get in until the Monday following. They were out of their heads on the day they arived, many of them

These men give the following account of their expedition, which I took from Lieutenant John N Maxwell.

The party burried A. Noble wife and child E Ryan, Mrs Joel Howe and five sons, child of J.M. Thatcher, man unknown found at Granger's and supposed by some to been a Granger, WW Mattock, wife & four children, eldest 14 years old Robt Clark of Waterloo, J H Harriott, Joseph Harshman, a man supposed to be Granger or Cropper, Man unknown Rowland Gardner, wife & child 12 years old, Mrs Mary Luce (wife of Harvey Luce) Albert and Amanda Luce, The bones of two persons found in the ashes of Mattock's house.

At the house of Mattock there had evidently been a severe battle, as the bodies of the men were found around, mostly by the trees to the number of seven

Fourteen large tepees were found about 16 feet in Diameter which would indicate that there were at least 140 warriors present according to their customs on a war party.

The cattle were all killed, and the only living thing found at Spirit lake was a chicken and a dog.

The murdered were terribly mangled, some of their heads were cut open, some were hacked up, but none Scalped

Thus, the Settlement at the Lakes which consisted of 43 persons was entirely destroyed

The party buried 29. The bones of the two burned made 31. The soldiers found and burried 1 making thirty two with six at Springfield made the No. known to be killed 38. With the missing 12, makes 50 in all, killed & missing and 3 wounded before described

The whole history of the settlement of the country has not given a more bloody record of the hellish nature of the Indian, who has been praised in a Thousand Hiawathas. One of the men, Howe I think,

had a book in his pocket in which he had poetry about the songs of the Red Man — devil, it ought to have been, to rhyme with his true character.

Wood, who was killed, was frequently heard to say, that the Indian had more honor than the white man and when he was killed they owed him quite an amount. The villains came into the houses of the whites

My horse is at the Irish Colony. My buffalo robes and the blankets of my bed have been distributed in every part of the land to the brave boys

and spied out everything professing the kindest feelings until they go ready, then they took women out and brutally abused them by forcing them to satiate their brutal passions until finally they got ready to kill, and then they did kill, taking advantage of the time in which they supposed no person could reach them.

Two of the persons sent to the lakes have not been heard from, Capt Johnson and Wm Burkholder. Fears are entertained that they are lost, frozen or starved & frozen.

I stay tonight at the Evanses

Wednesday Apr. 8, 1857 I start from the Evanses. Most of the boys have come up. I walk 20 miles to Dacotah, in about 4½ hours. I am the first through except McCarty & Baker of my company, who are with me. Our company scatter in. I stay here all night. It is quite cold weather yet. The River is not fordable. The water is pretty high. The ice is gorged in some places.

Thursday Apr. 9th 1857. We start today for Fort Dodge it being 17. days since I left there today. We are ferried over the West Fork by John Miller. Mr Miller gives us our dinner and will take nothing. He treats us very kindly.

He sent his teams down to deer Creek and brings on our way to that point. Here I met W O Ruggles my old friend whom I am happy to see. He treats me very pleasantly. He has just brought back his new wife from Vermont.

I go back with him to his house and then he brings me on down to the Ford where a New Ferry boat has just been constructed for the benefit of the travelling public.

To night I sleep at my office. My friends congratulate us

Friday April 10th 1857 I spend my time in my office trying to look up my matters. I find I have spent in cash about 39. dollars, which is out of course. My horse is at the Irish Colony. My buffalo robes and the blankets of my bed have been distributed in every part of the land to the brave boys that are with me.

Last night we had a Military Meeting in which we were applauded by the citizens and commendatory resolutions passed for our special benefit. All for our Indian Excursion. Our men are all dismissed tonight.

I go home feeling that I have done one [good?] act in my life at last, whatever I may have done wrong. Am vain I fear in this. I deserve no praise. I did my duty only

Saturday April 11 I spend my time in my office writing letters. I have a great no. to write. I think I write about 25 today. It will take a little time to catch up my business. I call this cold weather

Sunday Apr 12th 1857 I spend this day in my office, writing letters and am glad to hear a sermon. I spend the afternoon at N.B. Morrisons very pleasantly.

Monday Apr 13th 1857. Cold weather for the season. The ice has just left the Des Moines and the frost is

I spend my time in my office writing letters. . . . about 25 today.

just leaving the ground. The nights are cold and a cold North wind is blowing from the North.

Tuesday, Apr. 14th 1857 The weather is very cold. Today the votes for County Judge are canvassed, and Notwithstanding the Southern portion of the County [Runs?] Cole, Rees was elected. Rees, Dem. 155, Pease Repub. 123, & Cole Independent 149. We have carried the election and I have accomplished two objects with which I set out and had a hard fight to get it fixed right viz.

To defeat Pease and Messervey I did it and no mistake.

Wednesday Apr 15th 1857 The weather is very cold for the season. I think as cold as I ever saw. A cold North wind.

Thursday April 16 1857 The weather is very cold. I spend my time in my office

Friday April 17th 1857 I go with Mr M S Wood over to Webster City. Oh what a joyful thing once in a while

*I find Mr & Mrs
Willson at home. They
have lost their child.
They seem quite lonely.*

to get rid of eating at the Wahkonsa Hotel, in Fort Dodge! Long to be remembered, place of dirt & dry meat farewell for a day or two!

I find Mr & Mrs Willson at home. They have lost their child. They seem quite lonely. I have a pleasant evening here.

The weather still continues quite cold.

Saturday Apr 18th Mr. Wood and I go up to Wm Frakeses to get him to accept of service of a notice to appear at the next term of the Court to answer a petition by him as exc of the Estate of A J Brewer in favor of W C & [?] Willson. Frakes accepts of the service of the notice. We return home and cross Boone River in a skiff. The river is very high.

It froze quite hard last night So the ponds will nearly bear up a person

Willsons are in the hotel at Webster City.

Berkley says it is the practice and that deeds can be properly executed by an admr for land sold by a decedent without an order of Court. I deny it, and I know I am right

Sunday Apr 19 I spend my time at Willsons, and in the afternoon attend the funeral of two small children. Cool but pleasant day

Apr 20 Still at Webster City. Try to find coal on [Brewer farm?].

Tues April 21st 1857 Beautiful day, but a cold wind blows from the North. I go over to Fort Dodge in Beaches lumber waggon. I really suffer with the effect of the cold winds

Wed Apr. 22, 1857 I spend my time in my office writing. The weather still continues cold.

Thurs Apr 23 57 Cold wind. No appearance of grass as yet.

In my office.

Friday, Apr 24 57 Very cold chilly wind. Need an overcoat.

The roads are good and have been all the spring except the sloughs which are passable.

Saturday Apr. 25th 1857 ~~Spend my time in my office~~ A number of Strangers come to town, to attend the land sales. Yesterday evening I went to Webster City and I never saw such an excitement among rational men. Towards night the whole town was roused up by the cry of Indians. A man by the name of Gray and one by the name of Gleason rode their horses on the full run for 8 miles or more and brought the news that they had been chased into town by three Indians on horse back. The great mass of the people believed the report, but I offered them and every other man \$25. a piece for every man that had seen an Indian and for every Indian they had seen

After a short time Messrs W Church J N Maxwell & Bradshaw came riding into town but there was no signs of Indians and it turned out that they had rode up so near to the said Gray & Gleason that they had recognized them and had called to them but they Swore that they all wore blankets and were armed

*I never saw such
an excitement among
rational men.*

with rifles and had chased them and were mounted on Indian ponies.

This is an illustration of the way a scared man will see. The truth was not a man of them had a blanket, not a man had an Indian pony But large horses but one man had a rifle.

The people were so anxious to be scarred that in spite of what I could say, and all the other cool headed men they had no doubt of the truth of the story until

Some fled so rapidly that they left their meals half eaten and their doors wide open. Some rushed across the prairie, Some started for Ft Des Moines and some for Iowa City.

these three men rode into town and I believe some of the women and I don't know but some of the scary breed of men actually believed they were Indians after they were near enough so that I knew them.

The Report had gone over to Webster City that Fort Dodge had been attacked by the Indians numbering 70,000 and it is a fact that a great many people had no doubt of it. I believe the panic was so great that the people from the head of Boone River to the mouth with two or three exceptions, fled from their homes. Some fled so rapidly that they left their meals half eaten and their doors wide open. Some rushed across the prairie, Some started for Ft Des Moines and some for Iowa City. The last night Webster City was guarded by 24 armed men.

Not a man has been seen as yet who has seen the sign of an Indian. There is not the slightest danger from them. But there is some excuse on account of the late Spirit Lake Massacre.

The people at the Irish Colony have all come down to Ft Dodge and the people at Lots Creek. The people of Algona & Irvington up the East fork of the Des Moines river have built forts, for their protection, but I don't think they will need them.

This is another illustration of the power of Humbug.

I have never been more disgusted in my life! To see men whom we would call sensible get so terribly excited that they really don't know which side up they are. It does seem to me that it is the most perfect farce I ever saw. Some of the people in the suburbs of the

Town of Fort Dodge & Webster City actually moved into the central part of the town for protection.

We have sent guides & scouts out to the very head of the River to see what the real danger is, but have not as yet been able to hear anything like danger.

We hear reports about the depredations of Indians in Minnesota but if the rumors are as false about that just as here, probably it is all false.

I go to Fort Dodge

Sunday Apr 26th 1857 Cold chilly day. I am in my office nearly all day reading and writing.

Apr 27 57 Court sits here this week. I have twenty two cases on the Docket.

Judge McLong Whiskers alias McFarland presides Court in the School house.

Rather an interesting court! No whiskey drank by the Court! (?)

Apr 28. Rather a pleasant day. This is really the first Spring day ☞ that we have had. This is a real pleasant Spring day.

Apr 29 To day I make a speech in defense of Wm Gibbons tried for shooting Barney Caligan or Calihan with intent to kill him.

The case was tried and decided in favor of the State. The verdict was that "We the Jury find the Deft guilty of the offense of ~~doing~~ a shooting at Barney Caligan with intent to do a great bodily injury. The sentence was 50\$ fine. The second offense or rather penalty was one weeks imprisonment in the county jail. He gets off rather easily although I did defend him.

In the case of Buterworth Et Al Defts. & the State of Iowa Plaintiffs, the Judge refused to allow "Old Timber" or myself appear in this case. Court adjourned today.

Thurs Apr. 30, 1857 Beautiful day. This is the second beautiful day this year.

In the afternoon the rain comes which we really need.

This has been a very remarkable spring. The papers state that on the 14th [?] the snow was 3 feet deep in the western part of New York, and Oneida County.

May 1st 1857 Beautiful day. The rain has given a slight appearance of grass. The first of the season.

Saturday May 2d Beautiful weather. At home.

Sunday 3d Beautiful day. At home.

Monday May 4th 1857 This is a fine day. The land sales commence at the Fort Dodge Land Office. This is the first "Land Sale" of public lands I ever attended. The lands are "offered" as it is called for two weeks, before there can be such a thing as private entry. Then you can enter with Land warrants or otherwise

The lands are sold in 80 commencing with the N.E. $\frac{1}{4}$ East half. So through the Section going west. Then beginning at the E $\frac{1}{2}$ S.E. $\frac{1}{4}$.

These lands are all North of the South line of Town-

I shall be wonderfully disappointed if the purchasers do not get soaked a little. . . . If I live 20 years I shall not see these lands settled.

ship No. 94. and sell from 1.25. to 2.50 per acre. I shall be wonderfully disappointed if the purchasers do not get soaked a little in their purchases. I may be mistaken. If I live 20 years I shall not see these lands settled.


Tues May 5th 57 At home Beautiful day. The grass begins to sprout nicely. Very.

Wed. May 6 57 A home. Very fine day I tip my stove out of my office.

Thurs. May 7th 57 Pretty day. I go over to Webster City in the Stage.

Friday May 8th 57. I sell a lot in Webster City for \$200. Gold to P.H. Smith & Edward Clements of St Augustine Fulton Illinois. The lot is oposite to Judge Maxwells house

I trade another with a man by the name of Kinsman of Oskaloosa for a very nice gold watch and chain worth \$125 cash, & get \$50 to boot. I trade with Willson the same rig & boots and get another lot worth \$50 more than the one I sold.

 A remarkable day for a South wind — terrible.

Saturday May 9th 1857 I go to Fort Dodge facing a very cold chilly West wind. Yesterday morning at

sunrise I saw a beautiful rain bow across the entire Heavens that indicated a storm. We get it in wind and no mistake the old saying of "Rainbow in the morning Sailors take warning" is true in this case

Sunday May 10th 1857 Last evening I put up my stove again in my office It is quite cold. The wind blows hard.

Monday May 11th 57 Col Jesse Williams arives The weather is rather cold and windy. I begin to let my horses run out without feed or grass.

Land still sells at a high price. Very high for the kind of land. I mean at the land sales.

Jesse Williams brother is here from Cincinatti.

Tuesday 12 I spend the day in my office. I am quite busy, writing articles, leases &c for Col Williams.

No particular news

Wednesday May 13th 1857 This is a cold windy day It rains quite hard in the morning. I feel a little discouraged. I fear we are to have another cold season. If we do it will give us a hard hard time and no mistake. But it is soon enough to take trouble when it comes.

John Shaffner sells out his lease to O.K. Johnson today & the Wahkonsa house has a new set of proprietors

Thurs May 14th 1857. In my office, doing business. Very good weather. The Spring is quite backward.

Friday 15th Pleasant day. Quite a crowd, at the Land office.

Col Williams here. We talk of discontinuing the firm of Williams Henn Co

Saturday May 16th 1857. Fine Day. At home. The Land Sales are closed and adjourned for a week.

Sun 17th In my office reading until the afternoon I am ashamed to say I went out to see a party fish although I did not fish any myself

A very fine day.

Monday May 18th In my office. Quite busy writing &c

Tues. 19th In my office. Pretty day I read the Westminster Review

Wed. 20th In my office. Beautiful day Subdivided Dipperts Block

Thursday, May 21st 1857. I rose early this morning.

Did my mending, and went to my breakfast Board is \$4.50 per week without lodging.

Provisions are very high. Fodder is dear all through the Country. The Spring is very late. The grass is just up enough to make it passibly good. Politics are quiet. This State has gone Democratic by about 500. Majority, all except one officer, the Register of the Des Moines [Impt?]. He, the Republican was elected by about 300 majority. This is a democratic gain of about 7 or 8000.

To day has been the warmest day of the season

Friday May 22d 1857. Beautiful weather. The grass is high enough for good feed Wm M Koons says there is quite a heap of old snow on the other side of the Des Moines. On the night of the 15th inst. it froze $\frac{1}{2}$ inch in thickness at fathers. We have about 500 land agents in town. We meet to make some arrangement about entering land.

Saturday May 23d 1857 Beautiful day. We meet again to arrange matters for entering lands. It is agreed that every body who desires 1000 acres of land shall be permitted on Monday next at 7 oclock A.M. to draw lots for the first chance Col Williams is still here.

Sunday May 24th 1857. A Beautiful day. The weather has been very fine for a week or ten days.

I spend my time in my office reading Blackwoods Magazine

Monday May 25 1857. It rains a little this morning A

*Beautiful weather.
The grass is high
enough for good feed*

great crowd collects around the land office door. 376 ballots are drawn for chances. We have 9 chances but are exceedingly unlucky

Tuesday May 26th 1857 It rains. The weather is rather cold.

Wednesday May 27th 1857 A very little rain. Rather cold I go out to look at the land up deer creek to see the best way to survey it

This evening there is a beautiful rain bow, and if

the Sailors signs prove true we shall have some beautiful weather.

Thursday May 28th 1857 This morning is rather cool but the sun shines brightly.

I rise early at 5 oclock and read a long article

*A great crowd collects
around the land office
door. 376 ballots are
drawn for chances.*

entitled "Sidney Smith" in Blackwoods Magazine before breakfast. I am engaged in laying out some out lots on the N $\frac{1}{2}$ N.W. $\frac{1}{4}$ 29,89,28.

Friday May 29th 1857. Beautiful, warm day. I spend my time surveying out lots as yesterday. Col Jesse Williams leaves to day for Fairfield to return in two weeks.

Towards evening the wind blows severely.

Saturday May 30th 1857. Today I spend my time in my office plating the land I surveyed for the Fort Dodge Company.

It rains nearly all day slightly. The trees are in pretty full leaf & the grass is up pretty finely.

No news in particular. Money is a little tight.

Sunday May 31st 1857. It rained nearly all night. The morning looks a little gloomy but it brightens as the day advances

I lock my office to keep old "humbugs" and "disipations" [out?] so that I may have a little quiet on Sunday

I spend the day in reading and reflection. I am now ~~wright~~ writing about half past ten o'clock. I have read an article in the April No. 1856 of Blackwood on De Bazancourt's Narative of the Campaign. One on "Allisons History of Europe" and one on "The Laws Concerning Women", all of which are excellent. The one on the Laws Concerning Women is beautifly written and contains my sentiments on the Subject with an accuracy of Expression far beyond my power of communication. I really enjoy life more in reading the learned articles on various subjects contained in the Brittish Reviews and this Magazine than all my

intellectual reading put together. It is a feast to me although bodily I cant boast of the feasts that I have these hard times when it is impossible to furnish physical food for the body. I love to live for no other great reason as my honest sentiment would express it than because I desire to fill my mind with useful

*I really wonder if I was
born to live and die
without leaving a name?*

knowledge. Today ends the Spring of 1857, which counts for my life twenty six springs I have past. I look over my life now with really pleasant feelings I have seen a great many events for so short a life, but really I have no great reason to complain, and if I will only put my shoulder hard to the wheel I am not so old yet, but that I may make my mark. I really wonder if I was born to live and die without leaving a name? Is it possible that more than one third of my probable life has passed without my doing one single act that will mark my memory, after the present race is dead? Yes, it is even so? I say it in sorrow. But I am determined that it shall not be so in the future

I will at least make the attempt by aiming high.

Monday June 1st 1857 Rather cool in the morning but grows pleasant through the day

I spend the forenoon in the land office in trying to keep a little [?] in order. He promised to enter 480 acres of land for me but only entered 160. I went over the Lizard River and took dinner with W M Koons on his preemption.

I wrote a good many letters and made out a large No. of papers for Mrs Bridget [Fahy?] in the County Court. In the morning I read a piece in Blackwood Magazine entitled "Fish ponds & fishing boats, which gave me a number of interesting ideas as to the best kind of fishing boats and the best method of arranging ponds Also the particular power of taming fish as you can any other animal an instance of which is given by the writer

Tuesday June 2d 1857 Cool cloudy morning. I have read an articles from the June No. of Blackwoods Magazine entitled the Scott abroad which gives me an excellent moral sentiment given by Col Monro that

when demanded to capitulate he answered that he did not find any such language in his commission

I spend my time in my office and do a little business.

Wednesday June 3d 1857 Rise early and read a little in Blackwood. Cool day.

Frank Reno & Winters have a real sharp fight in front of my office. Frank whips. I would not have seen him whipt for \$50 as he was from my native county, and has not at pride of his native land? I go to Tolmans with [?] Williams. The country looks beautiful indeed! He admires it. The farmers are planting [?] this spring.

Thursday June 4th 1857 Cool morning. Almost need a fire. I rise early and bathe myself all over and read an article in the Edinburgh Review.

Friday June 5 1857 Rise early, read an article in the Edinburgh, and take a walk before breakfast. Warm pleasant day. I survey out lots in the forenoon In the afternoon spend my time in the office and got down to see the beds of iron ore which is dug out amounting to [150000?] tons I think

Saturday June 6th 1857 Warm morning. looks a little cloudy and the wind is blowing

Sunday June 7th 1857 Beautiful warm pleasant day. Spend my time in my office reading.

*I go and hear Elder Dodder
preach. He said that Religion
was not popular here. . . .
I must confess that I lost
the string of his discourse
on account of a short nap*

Monday June 8th 1857 Beautiful warm pleasant day. I enter 1000 acres of land warrants on land that I cannot recommend as first rate.

Tuesday June 9th 1857 Spent my forenoon in my office.

In the afternoon I went to Sargents with J P Williams & Frank Reno Had a delightful ride, and a pleasant visit

This has been the warmest day of the season thus far

Wednesday June 10th 1857. Cloudy morning. Rained a little last night. Warm, good weather for corn. Rise early. Sweep my office, take a walk, write a little, read an article in Blackwood before breakfast Spent most of my time in my office it is a delightful day. I read a long story in Blackwood "[?]." In the evening I call on W.O. Ruggles. Have very pleasant visit.

Thursday June 11th 1857 Beautiful morning. I rise early take a walk, black my boots, read considerable before breakfast in Blackwood, find a Dutchman stealing sand, for [Ferrel?]. Straighten up my accounts and then go to breakfast

Friday June 12th 1857 I spend the day in going with A S White his wife & sister in going to Webster City. Underdown keeps the big hotel in Webster City. Willson and his lady are just ready to start for the East to remain a short time. Mrs Willson thinks of spending the summer at Saratoga Springs.

Saturday 13th Start for Fort Dodge via Homer. It rains. Have a pleasant ride Eat dinner at Homer. The weather is quite pleasant ride. Rather cool day

Sunday June 14th 1857. Beautiful hot day. The warmest of the season. It would be almost insufferably hot if the wind did not blow. I go and hear Elder Dodder preach. He said that Religion was not popular here. He did very well. But I must confess that I lost the string of his discourse on account of a short nap that I took out of sight of anybody while he preached.

I spend the balance of this day in my office very pleasantly. I take one good nap and write a letter or two & read a little

Monday June 15th 1857 Beautiful day. Today a notice is placed on the Land office door stating that all persons who desire shall have the privilege of pre-empting the even sections of land alternating with the odd sections.

This raises quite an excitement

Tuesday June 16th 1857. Rather a cool damp day. It rained quite severely last night I go over to Boots to see that he has some person on his place as soon as

possible He attends to it and gets Michael Cavanaugh to do it for him. He is to get the title of the land and if Boot wishes to buy after he has got it he is to have the land at \$5. per acre & is to furnish the purchase money making \$7.50 per acre

*So that by the time I am
45, if a kind Providence
spares me so long,
I shall have a little income
to work on in old age.*

Wednesday June 17th 1857. It is really a cold gloomy day. One of the coldest I ever experienced this season of the year. I consummate my trade with Elizabeth H. Colburn for $\frac{1}{8}$ interest in her farm lots 3, 4, & 5 in 30, 89, 28 for \$3460. At the rate of \$200 per acre. I tremble over this trade but I rather hope it may be the means of making my fortune. It will or else it will come very near breaking me. One note for \$700 is due 19th Nov. 1. \$600 / 2. yers from date 1. 600, 3 years. 1. 600, 4 years. 1. 660, 5 years from this date all with ten per cent interest per annum. This is the most speculative trade I ever made in my life. And I candidly think my chances are about equal whether I win or loose. I really hope to win. If I make anything out of this trade, if I dont absolutely loose on it I shall make not less than \$20,000 in 20 years. So that by the time I am 45, if a kind Providence spares me so long, I shall have a little income to work on in old age.

My heart feels a little faint, but time will develop the whole thing and will show me whether I have done wisely or foolishly.

I cant see into the future, but I am in for luck good or bad, accordingly as I have coal or no coal which it is impossible for me to determine as yet, or rather how it may turn out

Thurs June 18th 1857 Cool day. It rains a very little. I spend my time in my office. I do a little business. The corn is rather stunted by cold weather

Friday June 19th 1857. Cool day. A few sprinkles of rain.

I spend [my day?] in office in writing. I go over

the River in the afternoon to visit N.B. Morrison or rather his wife, or more particularly his Sister. I am sadly disappointed. I meet all three coming into town and they take me across the river in their light buggy. Morrison rides one of the horses, while I take his place in the buggy. Pleasant! riding by the side of the lady.

Saturday June 20th 57 Beautiful morning! I spent last night with Morrisons family on the West side of the Des Moines River. I slept on the floor with my friend

Senator Jones is a most admirable travelling companion.

while his wife and sister slept in the same room in a bed. I spend the day quite pleasantly visiting, riding on foot over the prairie, splitting fence posts, catching horses and finally wind up the day by all going over to Fort Dodge to take me home.

I find that Genl Jones Gen Booth, Col Mason Mr Morris Mr Denton and several R R men have been all day at the Fort. I spend the evening with them, at Maj Williams.

Sunday June 21st 1857 By agreement I rise at four in the morning and take Genl Jones with Merritts horse and buggy over to the Lizzard to try to catch Dr Wright who was to wait for the Genl about six miles out of town. We drove about 14 miles and found that he had gone on. So we turned back. On our way back Genl Jones was determined to get into a crowded waggon with strangers to go to Sioux City. I would not let him go but restrained him by telling him I would take him with great pleasure with my own horses and carriage.

I bought a carriage of Morrison for that purpose and gave him \$200. for it.

Genl Booth Mason Et. al. R.R. men all leave us about two o'clock delighted with our place.

Monday June 22d 1857 I start today in my carriage with Genl Jones to go to Sioux City in company with B Grayson J P Williams & Wm M Koons who are to go with us to the twin Lakes, twenty five miles from Fort Dodge. The day is most delightful and we enjoy ourselves very well.

Senator Jones is a most admirable travelling companion.

We stay all night at Graysons at the Lakes. I tie my horses to my waggon or rather to Graysons waggon Sweetly sleep. It rains during the night.

Tues. June 23d 57 Rains this morning. One of my horses gets cast by his rope and is thrown down. He gets the rope under his hind shoe and we try to get it out in vain. Finally he gets up and gets away from us. Genl Jones advises me to catch him immediately as he suggests he might run off. I have no fears and do not attend to the matter. After breakfast I go out to the door and see my horse about 2 miles away on the keen run.

I look rather blank for a short time. Finally [?] W M Koons goes to Fort Dodge after him. We wait all through this long day before we find him. Finally we don't find him but we are all right, as Koons will bring him tomorrow.

It rains quite rapidly all day. The Genl. & Self give a fellow who was leaving the country [perfect "Jesse"?] for his course. Don't know whether he stayed or not, I think not, however.

Wed. June 24, 57 Beautiful day. Koons returns with my horse from Fort Dodge and we leave the beautiful twin Lakes almost with regret. The Genl wrote a strong letter to J.S. Willson relating to W.M. Koons Preemption. We ride all day until night and find ourselves at

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.

Sac City. We stay here all night with one Mr Chris.

We have rather a pleasant time. Here I see a curiosity worth attention. A deep ravine near a steam saw mill was filled with snow last winter. This snow was covered with the saw dust of the mill and is now

George Wallace Jones



George Wallace Jones

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

But fearing further disturbances, we . . . dropped down to the mouth of the Running Water among the Ponca Indians

dropped down to the mouth of the Running Water among the Ponca Indians

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 oposite 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.

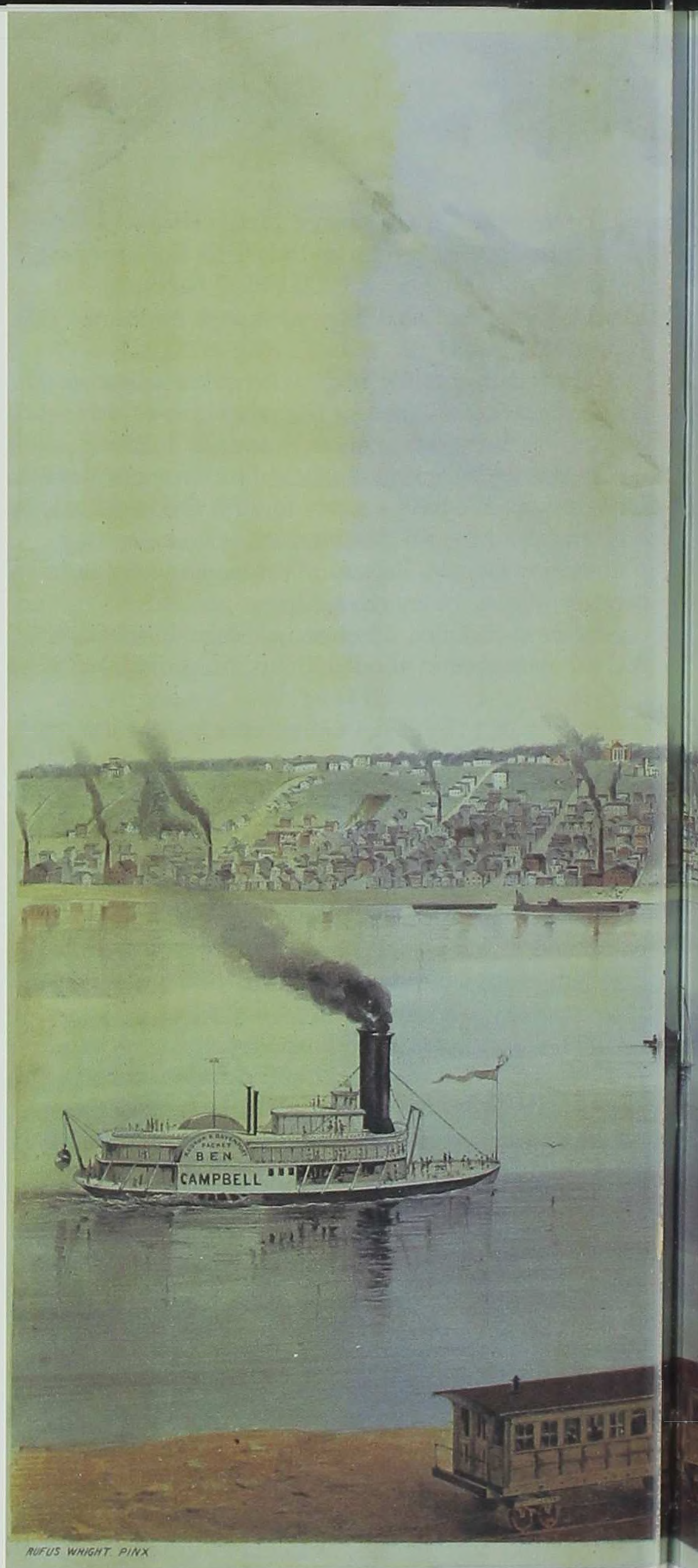
Fifty seven excellent steamers run on this river, and cannot do all the business.

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.

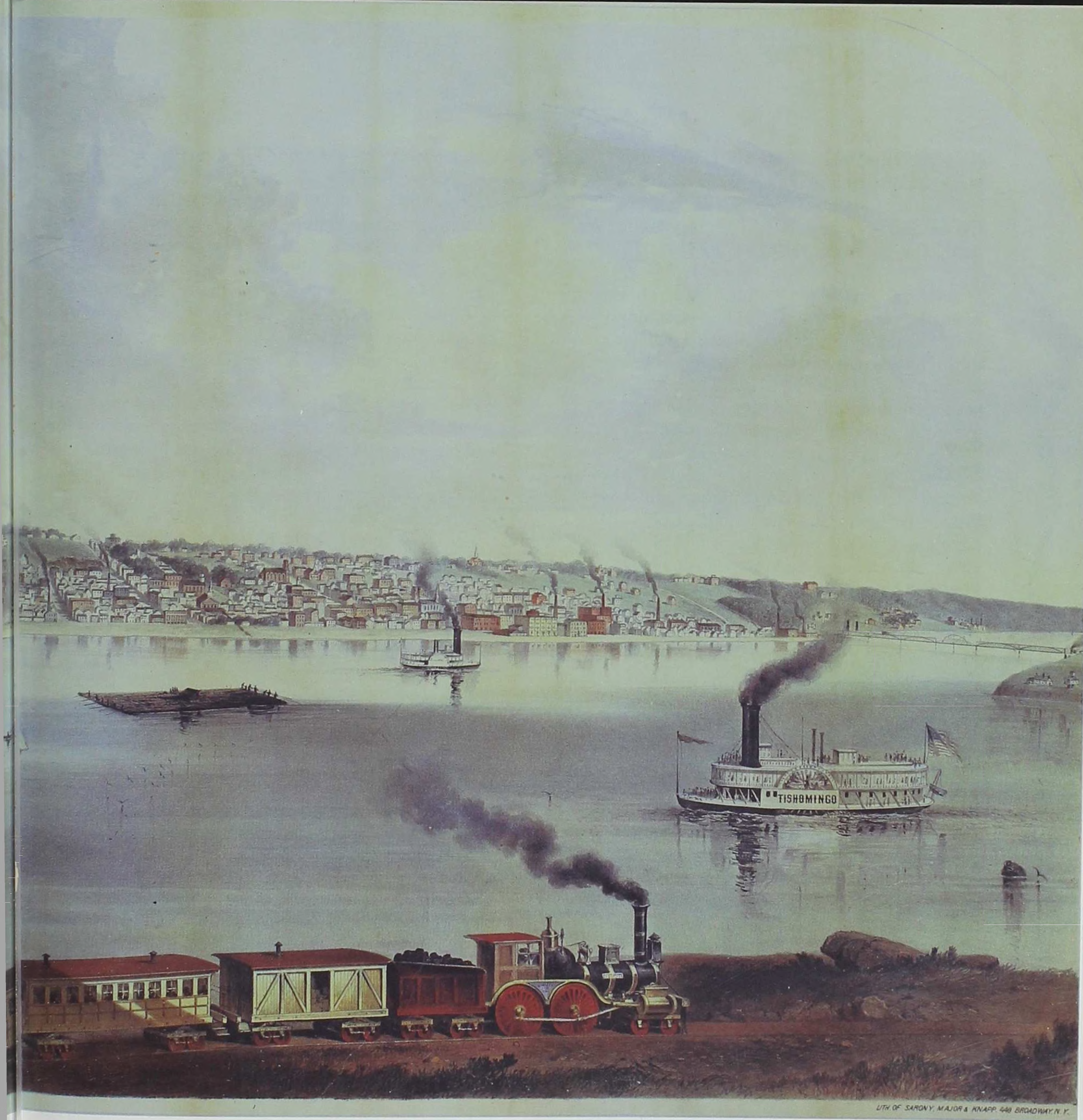
We get on board the Ben Campbell and start for Davenport. Get to Burlington. Go out to Mr Henns house. Get there about 3 oclock tomorrow. Rode on cars to Mt. Pleasant.

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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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.

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 arrived at Davenport about 11 o'clock A.M. and had a very pleasant time there. Col Williams and I went in the

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.

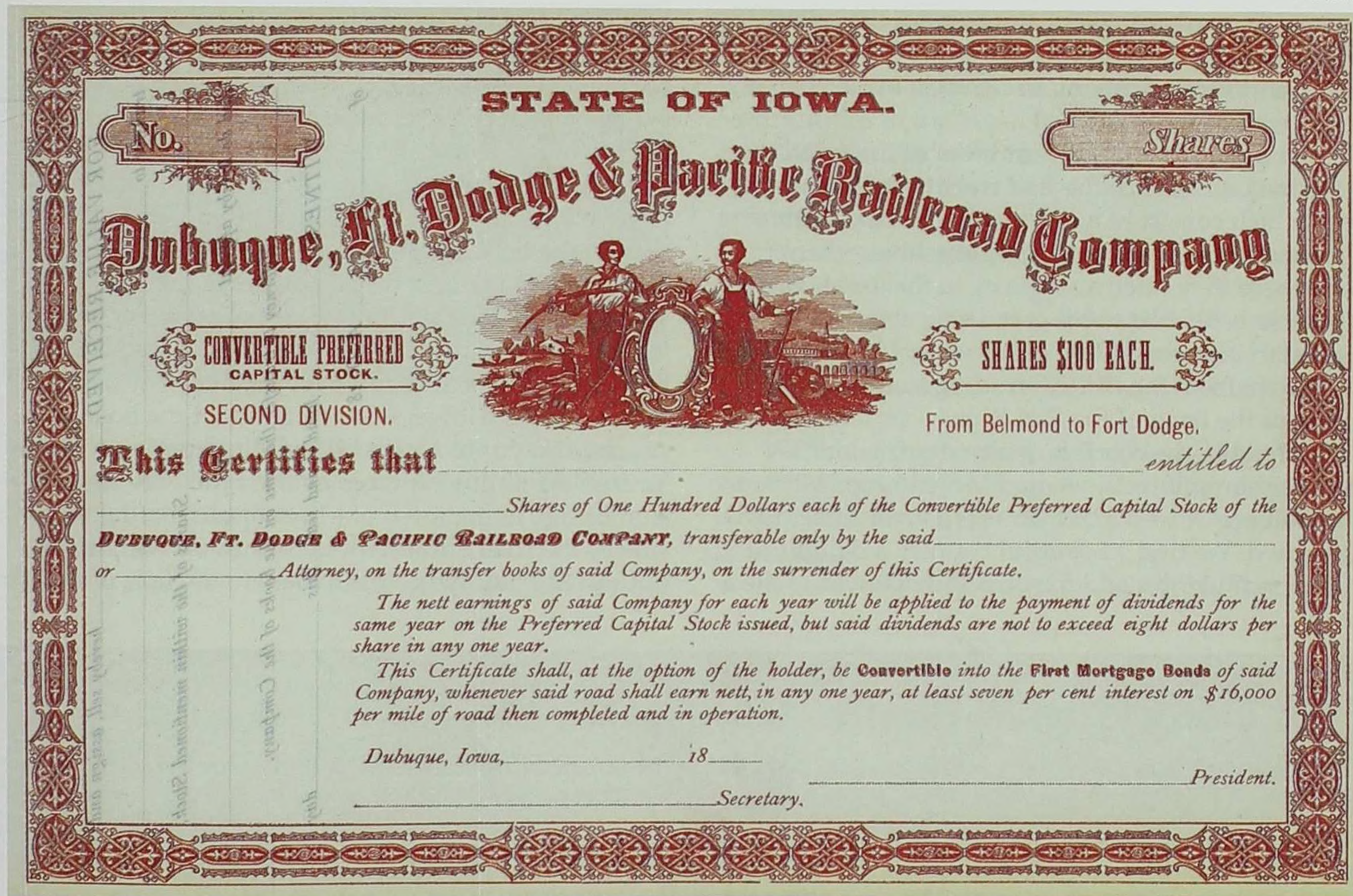
Thurs July 16th 1857 Beautiful weather. I still remain at the house of Senator Jones. I find Thos Sargent, Colburn, Booth, and some more of the Fort Dodge boys at Dubuque. We have a fine time.

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 peak.

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

on stone They dig excellent stone out of the cellars to build the walls.

We start for St Anthony in coaches I take charge of my friend Miss Jannis

After getting a short distance out of the town we stop to look at some of the Red river travelling carriages which consist of a cart just like a dray, with shafts and without a single jot of iron about them. Before these they hitch a single ox in the same way a dray horse is hitched to his cart. I saw about 150 of these establishments. They come several hundred miles down from the British trading station in the vicinity of the head of the Red River.

The load in the coach in which my friend Miss Jannis and myself rode, we had Mr Jennings, Mr Ben Campbell and Miss M[?] & Mrs S[?], in all a decidedly jolly crowd. We find a beautiful country a delightful day, Splendid crops, and for myself, what was to me a

thousand times better, a sweet girl of 18 summers, whom I find I am in spite of my hardheartedness beginning to love. Its a fact! No mistake in this problem.

We go to the tower at St Anthony and mount to the top of it. Here we have a most magnificent view. The country for a long distance around appears in all its lovely beauty. The falls of St Anthony appear to me only in the light of utility, not of beauty. They must afford one of the best water powers in the world. There are several falls, falling from five to ten or more feet. On these mills are erected, and a board shoot is fixed to let the boards run over the dams, or rather falls, and at the lower end of this shoot the boards are caught and put into rafts A very fine specimen of Yankee ingenuity. We cross over on the wire suspension bridge to the town of Minneapolis, on the west side of the river. I think these two towns will finally out run St Paul. We go from there to the falls of the

The Dubuque & Pacific Railroad

The Dubuque & Pacific Railroad was chartered on April 28, 1853, by several Dubuque businessmen who wanted to extend their trade territory inland from the Mississippi River. Assisting in the railroad company's organization were officers of the Illinois Central Railroad — whose tracks, then under construction, would reach the Mississippi River at a point just opposite Dubuque. Roswell B. Mason, the Illinois Central's chief engineer, served also as the Dubuque & Pacific's engineer-in-chief. In 1855 Mason would quit that job to head the construction company hired to build the Dubuque & Pacific's tracks across Iowa.

President of the Dubuque & Pacific was Jesse P. Farley, a Dubuque merchant with a major role in the regional steamboat trade. Local lawyer Platt Smith and banker Frederick Jesup also took positions with the Dubuque & Pacific, as solicitor and treasurer respectively. And heading the Dubuque contingent was the Dubuque & Pacific's board chairman, U.S. Sen. George Wallace Jones. No one had done more than Iowa's Senator Jones to convince the Illinois Central to direct construction of its tracks toward Dubuque, and no one would do more in the years ahead to see that the Dubuque & Pacific got its own tracks built across northern Iowa.

The Dubuque & Pacific was one of several Iowa carriers to benefit from federal land-grant legislation passed in 1856, one of a series of such grants that Congress had been making to various states since 1850. The land-grant legislation of 1856 — "a princely gift to the state of Iowa," in the words of historian Leland Sage — made available to Iowa railroad builders grants of land totaling about 4 millions acres, more than 10 percent of the state's land. The land was given to each railroad

in the form of alternate square-mile sections across a territory six miles deep on either side of the railroad's right-of-way. Once the government gave them the land, the railroad companies could pretty much do what they wanted with it. For example, they could turn around and immediately sell it off in smaller parcels, or they could hold on to it until incoming settlers drove up the price. The choice was theirs. But the government's "bait to railroad builders" (Sage's words again) had one condition: Land designated by the grant could not be claimed by the railroad until the company's tracks actually reached the particular sections to be claimed. Thus land in the Fort Dodge area along the Dubuque & Pacific's proposed route would not become Dubuque & Pacific property until the company's tracks were built in Webster County. For this reason, the land grant was no help in financing construction. Construction funds had to be raised in conventional ways — through sales of corporate stock and local bonds.

Within a month of the land-grant legislation's passage, Fort Dodge lawyer John Duncombe was becoming the Dubuque & Pacific's man on the scene, though he does not appear to have had an official position with the railroad company. On June 19, 1856, he conferred with B. B. Provost, Mason's successor as chief engineer, about the Dubuque & Pacific's crossing of the Des Moines River at Fort Dodge. A short time later, he spent two days out in the hot summer sun with a Dubuque & Pacific employee named Knickerbocker, who was conducting the railroad's survey through Webster County. Then on August 18 he reported in his journal, "I get up a petition for a loan of \$200,000 of the credit of the County of Webster to the Dubuque & Pacific Railroad Company." Duncombe's diary indicates that he spent late August and most of September 1856 "electioneering"

*We find a beautiful
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Splendid crops, and for
myself . . . a sweet girl
of 18 summers*

Minnehaha, a beautiful sight! this fall is about sixty feet. My friend Miss Jannis is delighted! This I think is one thing that pleases me

After we leave these falls each of us take a small piece of a Bull rush from the falls of the Minnehaha

and go across the river after looking through Fort Snelling. This Fort is beautifly located and would when properly manned be one of the strongest fortifications in the West. It is built of stone. Here I find the most beautiful specimen of glass sand, as white as the pure snow, that I ever saw, and in very great abundance.

We crossed the Mississippi just below the mouth of the St Peters.

We visit the great sand cave and have a glorious time whooping and yelling and howling in there.

Compared with the caves of Old Kentuck it is a perfect humbug

We find it pretty warm riding home. The dust get very disagreeable. But I must own that under all these disagreeable circumstances I feel very happy, with Miss Jannis.

We get back in time, get on board the Northern

for the railroad bond, which paid off in a sizable victory in the countywide vote on September 22. His success in the fund-raising campaign brought Duncombe to the attention of Senator Jones, who was no doubt impressed by the younger man's dedication to making the railroad a reality. Within a few months Jones had become Duncombe's friend and political mentor.

Construction of Dubuque & Pacific tracks had been underway throughout the spring of 1856 — even before enactment of the railroad land-grant legislation — but it was not until May 1857 that the Dubuque & Pacific actually began service. On May 11, the first train out of Dubuque completed the 29-mile route to Dyersville. Within a few months, Dubuque & Pacific construction crews had laid tracks another eight miles, as far as Earlville in Delaware County.

At that point, in late summer 1857, one of the nation's largest banks failed and panic hit Wall Street. Suddenly, creditors across the country rushed to collect their debts, depositors closed their accounts, and investment capital all but disappeared. As with many western railroads, the westward progress of the Dubuque & Pacific came to a halt. The company's sizable federal land grant was little help as a source of needed construction funds, since none of the land beyond the existing 37-mile route belonged to the railroad yet. And maybe even more troubling for Dubuque & Pacific investors, the staunchly Democratic George Wallace Jones was losing his legislative effectiveness in the midst of the Republican ascendancy in Congress.

Losing its momentum in the slump of the late 1850s, the Dubuque & Pacific was reorganized in 1859 as the Dubuque & Sioux City Railroad by stockholder Morris Jesup, brother of the company's original treasurer, Frederick Jesup. The Dubuque &

Sioux City pushed on through northeast Iowa, to Manchester, Independence, and finally to Cedar Falls. There construction stopped until the Civil War ended. When work resumed, the Illinois Central would play a more formal role in building the rail route across northern Iowa. In 1867 the Illinois Central took a 20-year lease on the Dubuque & Sioux City, paying the owners about a third of the line's gross earnings each year. Once the Illinois Central reached Iowa Falls, Platt Smith on behalf of the Dubuque & Sioux City helped the Illinois company form a subsidiary — the Iowa Falls & Sioux City Railroad — which obtained the right-of-way and land grants of the Dubuque & Sioux City all the way to the Missouri River. The completion in December 1868 of a steel railroad bridge across the Mississippi at Dubuque expedited shipment of construction materials to work sites all along the line, and the Illinois Central arrived in Fort Dodge in August 1869 and in Sioux City about a year later.

By then, Duncombe's range of activities had extended well beyond Fort Dodge. He had become prominent in Iowa Democratic Party politics at the state level, having served as his district's representative in the state legislature, and soon he was to be named to the Iowa Board of Regents. His involvement in Iowa railroads had deepened as well. He had been one of the incorporators of the Iowa Falls & Sioux City Railway in the late 1860s, and he had helped organize several other lines planning service to Fort Dodge. Perhaps most significantly in light of his dedication to the Dubuque & Pacific in the 1850s, in 1871 Duncombe became attorney for the Iowa Division of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, a position he held with distinction for many years thereafter.

— by Bill Silag

light and start for Dubuque perfectly delighted thus far. Have a very fine dance tonight. But I had one friend who engaged my time

Tues. July 21st 1857. On our way down to Dubuque I shall recollect the very pleasant time I had last evening as long as I live. I think it was one of the pleasanter or most pleasant evenings that I ever spent. I owe it all to the pleasant company of my stranger friend Miss Jannis. She is really an excellent girl and I don't believe I could help but like her to save my head, and what is more I rather like her than not. The sweetheart of Jules F Jannis sings for our amusement last night! I don't feel like laughing at her like some others. The beautiful scenery along the Mississippi I do not notice on my return as I did going up the river. I have some scenery in the cabin that suits me better and pleases me much more.

Last night the young ladies, or some of them had a great time hopping, and jumping, and singing after they had nearly undressed themselves, and Uncle Ben Campbell and some of the mischievous boys have their own fun over it.

I bid "good by" to most of our pleasure party, perhaps never again to meet them. It hurts my heart. I feel it how short are all our fleeting pleasures. We meet, and oh how the ephemeral pleasure steals

*I have some scenery
in the cabin that suits
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me much more.*

away! I know that nearly all of our party felt as I did, perhaps much worse. I had met with nearly all of the party the few days before an entire stranger and now, how happy I am, to think how long deep and lasting will be the friendships I have formed. None had a right to have any interest in me — not one. Why should they? I lived a stranger to all in a distant part of the state, never met them before, yet they treated me as a brother, as if I had been one of the same family. They have sought to make me happy, and I have been very happy. This pleasure trip will be one of the little oases in life's barren desert. I shall keep it in my mind for old age to dream of. If I live a half

century more, this will live with me, unfaded.

I left Miss Jannis with greater regret than all others. This little episode in my life with her, will be like an Ambrosial flower that never fades. I promise to go and see her in Missouri! I wonder if I shall do it! I know I shall if she lives and I live. There are no "ifs" in my way. I will do it. She tells me when I ask the privilege of becoming better acquainted with her, that she loves me but has another friend and will not deceive me. I hope she may never have a single unhappy moment! She has made me happy but I must own that I was a little, and not a very little disappointed when she told me she had another very dear friend. I felt sad. But I really hope, if she ever has a friend, that is to be her friend, for life, she may have one that is really worthy of such a sweet lovely lady. But I am determined to know more of this matter. I am not to be thrown off by another friend until I know more of the real state of this case. History bear me record of this!

I go to Mr Gregories in the evening and there I meet my lady friend, and she sings for me, and plays for me! I am happy again. She [?] her [?] present in a beautiful bunch of flowers.

I wish flowers never faded!

Wednesday July 22d 1857. I spend my time at the house of my friend Genl Jones and in the city with Thos Sargent, A. Morrison, B. Grayson, Robt [?] &c. I get my business relating to RRoad matters fixed all that I can. The prospects for the Rail Road on account of the failure of the loan look rather dull, but I hope for the best.

A small party collect at the house of Genl Jones this evening and have a beautiful little dance. I meet my lady here again. I am happy with her and I am not ashamed to own it. I wish I knew her feelings towards me. I know she respects me, but whether more than others I am really at a loss to know.

Another delightful evening. The weather has been very hot for several days.

Thursday July 23d 1857 I go over to Mr. Gregories, to bid my sweet lady, stranger friend "good by". I stay but a moment I wonder if she will forget me. I guess she will. Of course. Why should she not? I am nothing to her. We have not been acquainted but a week — not a week. But it has been a full year of pleasure to me. I hope my friend has been happy too. I really hope she has.

But she had another friend and I have no other friend so dear to me as this lady whom I shall probably never meet again — probably: what am I saying?

I will see her again, unless Providence interferes. I forgot what I said.

I wonder if she will have as happy a time riding down the glorious Mississippi to her dear home in Missouri? Of course. Why do I ask such a question? I ought to know better than talk with myself so foolishly to say nothing of my talk with others.

I leave in Mr Sargents carriage for Fort Dodge. I never left any unless it was my own dear mother with

The prospects for the Rail Road on account of the failure of the loan look rather dul, but I hope for the best.

such regret as I parted with my very hospitable kind friends at Dubuque. Genl Jones will rest in my mind a noble honorable, high minded man. He is a kind husband, a dear father and a true friend. And I hope I may die before I ever become false to his friendship to me. I rather die any time than to be a traitor to my friends I hope I may, when I intentionally commit such a sin.

Miss Jannis leaves this evening too. "Good by" my friends.

Friday July 24th 1857 I rode out to Dyersville last night 30 miles. I staid at the house of Judge Dyers. He has a splendid hotel here for the west.

I have been offered a place in the Land Office at Fort Dodge and Sioux City as Register or [Receiver] but will not [receive] it.

I am under the same obligation to Genl Jones as if I had, however.

I ride today to Manchester and take dinner and inquire about P.M. I recommend Young.

Stay all night at Independence.

Saturday July 25th 1857 Ride to Cedar falls. Sargent is pretty good company, but I am tired and sleepy, and sleep on the way.

Sunday July 26th 1857 Ride to Iowa Falls. Stay all night at the Stone tavern. This a little town of about 600 inhabitants.

I write Genl Jones recommending Larkin for Post Master here, as I had done before.

Monday July 27th 1857 We ride home to Fort Dodge after an absence of just five weeks, having spent \$300 in travelling, and seen a great amount of good country, pretty ladies, great men, and traveled about 3,700 miles.

I am in fine health and spirits. I hope to remain so. I find about a bushel of letters to answer and plenty of work to do in my office Now off with my coat and at it. Hurrah for work.

Tuesday July 28th 1857 Maj Williams & myself start for Algona, at 11 A.M. and arrive there in the evening although it is very hot. No incidents today. The country looks beautiful and crops in every part looks encouraging. I have made a mistake in my Register. I wrote letters today and this is tomorrow

Wednesday July 29th 1857 See above for report of this day.

Thursday July 30th 1857 At Algona. Get a present of two lots for services. One of Judge Call and one of Maj W Williams.

Friday July 31st 1857 Look all over for my horses. Ride about 30 miles hunting them. [Weist?] finds my horses. We go to Dacotah. Stay at Mr Lanes.

Saturday August 1st 1857. Come home to Fort Dodge. Go to M Bride to settle a claim of Powell Bush. Go to Homer Go to Webster City. The people of Webster City are in a great fuss about Election. Maxwell runs for county Judge as the people's candidate. Moore runs against him on the Homer side.

Sunday August 2d 1857. Stayed all night at Willsons or rather at [Underdowns?]. I think Maxwell will be Judge by a very small majority.

Monday August 3d 1857 Today, Election day. I take no part in the Election except to vote.

The Democrats nominate no. candidate and Messervy runs as an independent candidate. The Republicans have a full ticket. I shall long recollect this day. The Black Republicans have submitted a bogus constitution. They have submitted a clause in that Constitution which is to be voted on separately, as to whether the word White shall be stricken out. This shows their hands. They have all along talked about not being abolitionists Have repudiated the

idea and have in every instance denied it. But it is of no use now. About $\frac{1}{3}$ to half are voting to have the word white stricken out of the Constitution. In Fort Dodge 19. out of [37?] Black Republicans have voted for this!

Wm H Merritt, John Hare, and a few Democrats with Strow a Black Republican go up (yesterday) on the Lizard and Electioneer for the Election of Judge Messervy, a Know Nothing, and represent to the Irish that the ticket they hold is the straight out ticket Democratic to the Back Bone. I do not vote any other ticket than that nominated by the Democratic party. I vote an open ticket and write my name on it.

The people of Fort Dodge give two to one and over, against the new constitution.

Fort Dodge gives 21 majority in favor of Wm Messervy.

Tuesday Aug. 4th 1857 I go down with Miss Mary Williams to see if I cannot settle Burkes claim.

Wednesday Aug 5th 1857 I am in my office in the forenoon and in the afternoon I go over to McLaughlins and do some business for him and Stephen Powers. I go to N.B. Morrisons on the North Lizzard

Thursday August 6th 1857. Last night there was a long loud thunder storm. I stayed at the house of N.B. Morrison, all night. Lersa Vincent is here. I have some fun.

Friday Aug 7th 1857 I stayed at Morrisons until about 3 P.M. I go home. In the evening I take a long ride with Frank Reno.

Saturday Aug. 8th 1857 Beautiful day Yesterday Maj Williams bought an office of A Morrison the best in the town or as good.

Sunday Aug 9th 1857. Beautiful day. I spend most of my time in my office. Hear Elder Dodder preach. I write a great no. of letters among them, one to my lady friend in the State of Missouri.

In the evening I take Mrs Williams & Miss Mary Williams out riding, and I then give my horses and carriage to John M Stockdale to take his lady out riding. I receive an introduction to Mrs Logan & Mrs Stockdale.

I rather like the appearance of Mrs Logan, and Mrs Stockdale I call a very fine looking lady. In the evening she goes out and milks the cow, which is a very common thing for the most aristocratic ladies in

the State of Pennsylvania. They think it is a disgrace for a gentleman to milk a cow.

Monday Aug 10th 1857 Beautiful morning. I feel in pretty good spirits. I rise quite early and read law. Attend a suit for White and brother in the forenoon. Cause adjourned. In the afternoon I go in company with Miss Brown to the gentlemens Picknick at Morri-

*I dance for the second
or third time in my life.
I do not believe that I am
doing wrong by any means
or I would not do it.*

sons place. The repast of the gentlemen before the ladies is nothing but boiled corn and bread and butter.

We have a good amount of genuine sport. In the evening we return to town and have a very fine dance in the upper room of our School house.

I dance for the second or third time in my life. I do not believe that I am doing wrong by any means or I would not do it. I wish I had learned younger.

Give 5\$ to Pres Church

Tuesday Aug 11th 1857 Beautiful morning, but rather to hot for comfort. I spend my time in my office principally. Attend a suit for Jerry Coleman who is accused with assault and battery with intent to kill. The marks are shown and proofs in abundance, and he is fined \$15. and the costs of suit.

This is a little to much. I Think Bagg will make a very good Justice of the Peace. Booth is quite drunk and Merritt & Safford are both a little high. The[y] are determined that I shall go and drink. I run away and finally lock myself in my office to escape them. I took Booth up to Supper. He performs an amusing part with several ladies who come to get a church subscription out of him, but do not know that he is drunk

Wednesday Aug 12th 1857. It is a beautiful morning. Only the wind blows. We have had but very little wind during this Summer. I go to Homer to see Mrs Hardy Williams She writes me a pitiful letter and

tells me that her husband is not a[t] home, and of course a gallant young lawyer would not refuse his assistance in such a case gratis. I council with her. She cries and scolds and swears, but it is all of no use. My expenses out for this days labor! Such is the fate of man when a woman is in the case.

I return to Fort Dodge in the evening after traveling about 37 miles

It is to warm to sleep well or to do any business.

The R.R. Engineers are between Webster City and Fort Dodge making the final location.

Thursday Aug 13th 1857 This is a very hot morning indeed. I can hardly stand the heat I go in company with Mr Hanly, the Engineer who is making the final location of the D.&P.R.R. to look out the route at the crossing of the Des Moines River.

I then go to my office where I remain about four hours, then catch my horses and take Mr Hanly over the R.R. line in my carriage out to his party over between Brushy Creek and Holidays run. The Heavens become black and the thunder begins to roar and the lightnings play about the clouds in one grand scene. It is a majestic sight. Everything betokens a very hard rain The winds become restless and the air is much cooler. I have barely time to get home, get my horses turned out and get in doors before one of the severest rain storms commences that I ever witnessed.

Friday Aug 14th 1857. This morning I sleep rather later than usual. It is still raining. The clouds look black and heavy. Here and there a light cloud rushes along as if anxious to find a resting place.

The R.R. Engineers are between Webster City and Fort Dodge making the final location.

I feel in good health and good spirits, only I feel a little sober of the two extremes. My feelings are too apt to partake of the same character as the weather. I know this ought not to be and I will try to correct the mistake.

Our county is now pretty nearly divided as far as

it lies between Democrats and Black Republicans. We elected our county Surveyor by 12 maj., our Drainage Coms by 43. maj., our coroner by 43 maj. Our sheriff was defeated as he lived out of Fort Dodge & theirs lived here, by the Democrats of Fort Dodge. Treasurer Garghty was defeated by being a Catholic I am sorry to say. We ought to have about 20 Democratic maj in the County, if we had our just dues. There are now about 500 voters in Webster County. We have about 200 in Wahkonsa precinct when all out.

It is rather cool all day today. I spend my time in my office. Dont have any paying clients today.

In the evening Mr S Mason takes my buggy out, and I take a ride with him. Then he lets me take his horses and I take Miss L. Vincent out riding. She is a very good girl and will make some man an excellent wife. I like her company very much. I dont like her father but I do like her as a friend.

Saturday Aug 15th 1857. This morning the air seems rather cool. The clouds obscure the sun and it looks a little dark and gloomy. It rains nearly all day long. The R. Road engineers get into the Town.

W.C. Willson calls to see me. He is quite anxious to have me run for the Legislature. I do not think I will at present. The district is too strongly Black Republican to give me the slightest chance of success. It would interfere with my business too. I have all that I can well do to take care of that.

Sun. Aug. 16th 1857. This is a cool dreary morning for the time of year. It rains a little. I am a little afraid that we will have to much rain for the good of the crops Still I will hope for the best.

I go over to meeting but find only two or three there and in company with my friend Albert Morrison I leave and go by the house of my friend W.O. Ruggles. Here we call a few moments and see him and his nice little wife. He is living quite cosiley. I then return to my office where I remain all day reading the newspapers and the law. I have several calls and the day passes very pleasantly — but not as Sabbath used to pass.

Oh, if I only had a pleasant home and a true hearted sweet wife, how much happier I should be! I know it. But some how I cannot for an instant think of such a thing, except with one lady, and of her I think every day, with deep feelings But I cannot reasonably expect her to leave her home "Sweet home" and the pleasures of her old paternal residence for another in Iowa. And I only think of her because I cannot help myself — not with hope. My heart would be sad if I

would give it time. But courage my heart! Better days are coming.

Monday Aug. 17th 1857. Cool wet, gloomy morning. My soul is filled with high noble ambition. May God help me to be a man — virtuous honorable, and discreett. May I be friendly, courteous and kind. I mean to spend this week improving and not retrograding. When it is over I want to look over my

The principal scene in the tragady or perhaps I might call it the crisis, was my dancing with Solon Mason.

journal and see how the case stands. I dont mean to speak a vulgar mean word, or think a vile thought. May God help me to keep my resolve.

I spend this day in my office most of the time. I read a good deal of law, learn some very important things, write two papers for Court, make one deed, look up a large no. of preemption case, write a half dozen protest against preemption in favor of the D.&P.R.R. Co. In the evening I attend a party at the house of John Garaghty Esq Here we have dancing and a good deal of fun in general. The principal scene in the tragady or perhaps I might call it the crisis, was my dancing with Solon Mason. This might perhaps be styled with some propriety a second edition of the "beau dance". A good deal of kissing got mixed in here after a time, but I did not kiss any I frightened one young lady very much for fear I would kiss her! I nearly broke the head of one young lady in the celebrated rope performance of "in and out.

I have acted as well as I knew how through this day. The fun of the evening I have enjoyed, and I do think I had a right to do so.

Tuesday, Aug 18th 1857 The gloomy rain seems over the air is clear, the sun bright and all things portend a lovely day. I am in fine health and spirits, full of noble aspirations, and I mean to make this day count a little. I work hard all day, writing a long political article for the Sentinel and writing protest against Preemptions

cases for the Dubuque & Pacific Rail Road Company. I file ten of these and make charges accordingly.

In the evening I am invited to attend at Miss Lizzy Whites for supper where I go with great pleasure and find Miss Lizzy, A Morrison & his excellent sister. We have a very pleasant time indeed. The evening passes gaily away. I feel quite happy for this time being.

Wednesday Aug. 19th 1857. I wake up this morning and find it rains severely. We are having a very extraordinary season for rain. More real severe rains, than I have seen since I came into the State. I must be industrious and faithful today. And I must not waste any of my precious time.

Thurs. Aug 20th 1857 Spent my time in the office. Pleasant day.

Friday Aug 21st 1857. Elected a delegate to the Dem. State Convention at Iowa City, yesterday. Today start for that place

Satury, Aug 22, 1857 Go from Boonsboro to Ft Des Moines Crops look beautifly. All is right but hard times.

Sun Aug 23, 57 Start from Fort Des Moines to Iowa City with Finch Solomons and others. Had a very strange time for the Sabbath. Rode all night.

Mon Aug 24, 57 At daylight had a pitched battle be-

We have a great quarrel outside about the New Constitution Polk & Lee Counties carried the new Constitution

tween two of our stage passengers. D.O. Finch and myself parted them after a long time. McCo[?] was victor. Both were well scratched. Arived at Iowa City today.

Tues Aug 25, 57. Took room with Solomon and had a very good time. We have a great quarrel outside about the New Constitution Polk & Lee Counties carried the new Constitution

Wed. Aug. 26, 57. To day we hold a full Democratic State Convention, to nominate Gov & Lieu. Gov. under the new Constitution just adopted by the people.

We have a warm time. I get a resolution passed for my friend Genl Jones, sanctioning his course &c. as Senator. Also a resolution against certain features in the new Constitution Ben. M. Samuels as Gov. & Geo. Gillaspay as Lieu. Gov. I think we have an excellent platform, and rather think we may be a match for the Black Republicans

Thurs Aug 27th 57. Start in the morning by the cars for Dubuque, to defend old Maj Williams against the charge of being a voter for Black Republicans.

In company with the Dubuque delegation. Take a steam boat — the Kate Cassel. I am quite unwell. Took a very severe cold last night.

Arrive at Dubuque in the morning.

Friday Aug. 27th 1857. Go to the Peosta house. Then go and see my dear friend Genl Jones.

I am treated very kindly by him and his most excellent family. I am quite unwell however.

Stay at his hospitable home to night

Sat. Aug 28, 57. Genl Jones gets an early breakfast and starts with me for the Cars, with his carriage.

On my way to Fort Dodge, the crops and farms never looked better. Providence smiles in abundance.

Sun Aug 29, 57 Ride from Independence to Cedar Falls. Ride alone most of the way.

Stay all night at Sen. Cords house in Cedar Falls.

Mon Aug 30, 57 Go to Iowa Falls.

Tues Aug 31, 57 Go to Eldora. See friend Huff. I am quite unwell Sick half the day.

Wed. Sept 1st 57 See Mrs W.C. Willson. Go with her by stage to Iowa Falls. Stay at Sanfords Stone hotel.

Thurs. Sept. 2d 57. Go to Fort Dodge. Beautiful weather but a little to cold for the corn crop.

Friday Sept 3, 57. Have a great time about Register & [Receiver] in place of Van Antwerp & Merritt resigned. I recommend John M Stockdale for one of the positions and Thomas Sargent for another. Merritt & Van Antwerp recommend Olcott for Reciver.

Saturday, Sept 4, 57 I have a long talk about this

matter. Van Antwerp offers to recommend me but I tell him to do as he pleases about this matter I am determined that Mr Sargent shall be appointed hit or miss, and I tell him so.

Sun. Sept 5th 57 Stay in my office. Beautiful day. I write a long letter to Genl Jones about Mr Sargent &c

Mon Sept 6 57 I go to Dubuque at the request of Mr Sargent. I start in the morning without saying a word of excuse, without washing my face, eating my breakfast or anything else. At W. City I get W.C. Willson to go with me. We stay all night at Iowa falls. I get letter from Elsworth Hon. J.D. Thompson John A Hull, & J.S. [F?].

Tues. Sept. 7th 57 Go from Iowa falls to Cedar falls. Here we get a livery team, drive all night — get lost on the prairie, but finally we get out all right. Start at 4. A.M. in morning for Dyersville in the stage.

Wed. Sept 8, 57 Arrive at Dyersville at 12 m. go in the cars to Dubuque. Arrive at Dubuque at 6 P.M. Take a bath. Go to the house of my excellent friend Genl Jones. I am delighted to see him and his excellent family. See Mr. Jannis of Missouri.

Genl Jones will recommend my friend Thomas Sargent for [Receiver].

Have a delightful time for so short a visit

In the county every delegate elected is my friend. I feel as well as if I had been elected to Congress.

Thurs Sept 9, 57. Genl Jones takes Mr W & myself in his carriage and goes to the Depot.

Bid him good by. Off for Fort Dodge.

Go to Coffins Grove to night and by daylight are at Cedar falls allright.

Fridy Sept 10th 57 Take stage to Iowa Falls.

Sat Sept 11, 57. Take stage to Fort Dodge.

Sun. Sept 12, 57 Go my way rejoicing. Merritt has come out as a candidate for the Legislature in order to kill my influence. My friends rise up spontaneously

and beat him all out. He gets a good drubbing. His highest vote for delegates is 25, mine 85, in Fort Dodge In Douglas precinct I am triumphant. In the county every delegate elected is my friend. I feel as well as if I had been elected to Congress.

Mon Sept. 13, 57. Last evening I went to Webster City after dark Saw Willson & lady in the morning Stayed nearly all day at his house Went to Homer.

Tues. Sept. 14, 57. Stayed at Churches last night. I got in the worst kind of a slough. I got my horse down in the mud, broke my buggy. Got very muddy had a very hard time My nice clothes looked beautifly! Came to Fort Dodge

*McFarland . . . dismissed
the Court accept for . . .
naturalizing foreigners.*

Wednes Sept 15th 57 Stayed all night at home Rained hard. In my office all day.

Thurs Sept 17, 57 [Here Duncombe catches his errors in dating since Friday, August 28] Warm pleasant day. I spend my time in my office. Politicks runs rather high. I dont know but I shall be elected representative for seventeen Northern Counties. I feel rather surer of the nomination however than of the Election.

Friday Sept 18th 1857 I spend my time in my office.

Saturday Sept 19th 1857 I go over to the Democratic Representative Convention at Webster City and am nominated for Representative on motion by acclimation, No one objecting. I feel happy that Democracy of 17 new and pioneer counties should thus give expression of their good will toward me. I shall probably be defeated on account of the simple fact that there are more Republicans than Democrats.

Sun. Sept 20, 57 Go from Webster City to Fort Dodge with Saml Rees. Spend the day in my office. ☞ Last night we had the first frost of the season.

Mon Sept 21, 57. Cool morning. Court opened today. Judge McFarland not having the seats provided in the

afternoon, dismissed the Court accept for the purpose of naturalizing foreigners.

Tuesday Sept 22d 1857 I remain in Fort Dodge and Electioneer all I can. In the evening I go up to see Lane & Ray. They give me plainly to understand that they will vote for me. I stay tonight with N.B. Morrison

Wednesday Sept 23, 57 I go to Webster City. Electioneer here all day. Stay at the Willson house. Trade horses

Thursday Sept. 24th 57 Go down to Woodards and get up a meeting & make a speach at the school house. I ride all around the neighborhood to get up my meeting Stay at Osborns

Friday Sept 25th 1857 Got up a meeting at Hooks point Spoke to the people in the evening with Judge McFarland. The people here broke up their meeting with a wild hurrah for me. I shall be sure of the vote here

Saturday Sept 26 57 Went to Yell Tp. Here I got up a meeting. I called on Jasper Richie and had a long talk with him. He finally promised to vote for me. So I am all right here. I made a speach at Landreths School house. Stayed at the house of David McLaughlins last night.

Sunday Sept. 27, 57 I rode all day to day from Jasper Richies to Jefferson City and then ten miles north to Beaver Creek. A very hard ride on a cloudy day over the prairies

Monday Sept 28, 57 Went to Lake City in Calhoun Co. Here I had a team furnished me by Mr Oxenford and I saw nearly ever man in the county. In the evening I

*Clear Lake is a beautiful
sheet of water, with as
fine a beach as I ever saw.*

made a speach in a log School house near Lake City the only one in the county.

Lake City has two houses in it only. Stayed at the house of Mr [Aury?].

I shall get 10 majority in this county.

Tuesday Sept 29th, 1857 Passed Big Grove to the place

of F M Cory Esq. Here I held a meeting. I found a terrible feud in the county, about County Judge and County Seat &c. I spoke to night at the house of Cory.

Wednesday Sept 30th 1857 Spoke to night at the house of [Early?] in Sac City. This town has about 10 houses in it all told. I shall carry Sac County by 40 to 45 majority.

Stayed at the house of Chris.

Thursday Oct 1, 57 Went from Sac City to Fort Dodge about 60 miles. The weather is beautiful and has been since I started out.

Friday Oct 2d 1857. Went to Webster City, thence to Boone River. Stayed all night at Hewits house.

Saturday, Oct. 3, 57 Got up a meeting on Boone river and spoke at Liberty Liberty has about 10 houses in it.

Sunday Oct 4th 57 Went to Belmond a town of about 10 or 12 houses all of which are in good order. Rode in the night to Hampden, Franklin Co.

Monday Oct. 5th 1857 Got up a meeting at Hampden and spoke at 2 P.M. and also at Maysville at 7 P.M. Stayed all night at Maysville. Got into a dispute with one Lyman.

Tuesday Oct 6th 1857 Spoke at 10 A.M. at Saratoga then traveled all day to Clear Lake in Cerro Gordo County. Stayed at the house of Owen.

Clear Lake is a beautiful sheet of water, with as fine a beach as I ever saw.

Wednesday Oct 7th 1857. Got a meeting at Clear Lake, went to Owens Grove. Spoke at Clear Lake at 7. A.M.

Thurs Oct. 8, 1857 Spoke at 7. P.M. at Mason City Went to Shell Rock Falls.

Went to Clear Lake in the night Arrived there at 3. P.M.

Frid. Oct. 9, 1857 Went to Belmond. Spoke at 10. A.M. Electioneered here until night. At night started for Cruplers grove on the Boone River. Got lost on the prairie. Lay out until about midnight the moon rose and I took my backtrack to the road. Arrived at the Grove at 3. A.M.

Sat Oct 10, 57 Went to Irvington and spoke at 7. P.M. Bot 20 lots in Irvington

Sun Oct 11, 57 Rode all over Kossuth Co. At 4 P.M. started to Fort Dodge. Stayed at Dacotah all night In the morning at 8 A.M. arrived at Fort Dodge.

Monday Oct. 12 57 Had a great time in Fort Dodge discussing the issues of the day

Carpenter abused me and greatly injured himself.

Tues Oct 13, 57 Election day I believe I shall be beat 100 votes. If I had had 3 days more I should certainly have been Elected. I shall about tie Webster and Hamilton Cos

A very exciting election.

*Got lost on the prairie.
Lay out until about
midnight the moon
rose and I took my
backtrack to the road.*

Wed. Oct 14, 1857 I beat Carpenter in Fort Dodge 48 votes. In Webster Co 28. He told that he would not take his certificate if he was not sure of getting 100 majority in this county.

We have had beautiful weather this fall. There is a big meeting. The first county fare in Hamilton Co.

Thurs. Oct. 15th 1857. A little rainy today. I am at Lots Creek trying to beat Robbins out of some saw logs I go home in the forenoon.

The roads are bad


Frid. Oct 16th 1857 Go to Webster City to get Sargents bond signed as [Receiver] of the Fort Dodge Land Office.

Have a good visit here The Republicans here had a flag got up by themselves upon which was inscribed "J F Duncombe forever." And they drove their teams through town with that kind of a flag and with flags tied to their horses, with the same inscription. I run about $\frac{1}{5}$ the entire vote of this county ahead of my ticket

Saturday Oct 17, 57 I go back to Fort Dodge in the stage. All is right. I think I am defeated by about 30 to 50 votes. I had some hopes of getting over the District

but riding nights as well as days would not bring it. In every county I visited I gained largely over the Democratic vote, and the Democratic vote gained largely over the former vote.

Sun. Oct 18, 1857 I stayed in my office all day today and wrote letters. My health is excellent and so my spirits. I commence boarding with A S White

Mon. Oct. 19th 57 We had a  very few flakes of snow yesterday and a very severe frost last night. It is getting quite cold but the prospects are fair that I shall have good success in business

I am applied to to act as atty for the Iowa Central Air line R.R. Co

Tues Oct 20th 1857 Spent my time in my office Reading law &c

Wed Oct 21st 1857 Spent my time in my office.

 *Thur Oct 22nd 1857.* Spent my time in my office Of Age!! 26 years old

Friday October 23d 1857 Spent my time in my office

Sat Oct 24th 1857 I arose at 4. A.M. got breakfast, fed my horses and started for Irvington 38 miles from Fort Dodge in Kossuth County before daylight. Arrived at Irvington at 2 1/2 P.M. Attended a claim suit between Joseph Crouch and Clark W. Carr. Gained the suit and dispossessed Crouch an actual settler whom Carr was attempting to dispossess and cheat out of the house he had built on his preemption an outrageous evasion of right at any rate

Sunday Oct. 25th 1857 I went to Algona. Had a long talk with the Algonaites, who are no particular friends of mine. Also with Judge. Asa C. Call. Stayed all night at Irvington with Geo D Wheeler

Mon Oct 26th 1857 I took a deed of the 20 lots I had purchased in Algona. Went home to Fort Dodge.

Tues Oct 27th 1857 Spent my time in my office We have had a beautiful fall. Iowa or the Garden of the World could not produce a better supply of food than has been produced this fall

Weds Oct 28th 1857 To day the county Canvasses canvass the vote of the 13th Representative District. All told the 17 counties of the District give Mr Car-

penter only 41. majority while the abstracts of Dickinson County was without a certificate, date, or a seal. Also Humbolt Co had no seal. Consequently there was no legal evidence that there were any abstracts of either of these counties. Without them I had 27 majority. The Democrats would not sign Carpenters certificate and as the Republicans had a majority of the board of canvasses he got a certificate from them.

I am legally elected the Representative of the 13th Representative District. But a Black Republican Board have cheated me out of my legal rights

I will get my seat if there is a Democratic house without any doubt Otherwise Carpenter will get his seat.

Thurs Oct 29, 57 Spent my time in my office attending to my business.

Friday Oct 30, 1857 Spent my time in my office. Visited Colburn & my coal bank over the Des Moines River

Glory Enough for One Day!

So read the headline announcing Republican Cyrus Clay Carpenter's election victory over Democrat John Duncombe in the 13th District Iowa General Assembly race in October 1857. Twenty-seven years old and new to politics, Carpenter had won his party's nomination as a reward for his efforts on behalf of Republican candidates in the previous year's campaigns, not because of any special vision or charisma he brought to the podium himself. But Carpenter's work ethic and easy-going manner apparently suited the district's several hundred voters, who were spread thinly across 17 counties in north-western Iowa.

Carpenter and his Democratic opponent, John Duncombe, were well acquainted at the time of the election, since both had extensive interests in the land business centered in Fort Dodge. They had also ridden together on the fateful Spirit Lake rescue mission just a few months earlier. They were similar in several ways. Both were young and ambitious. They were Yankees, both having come to Fort Dodge from Pennsylvania, and both were lawyers. Each had become involved in party politics quickly on their arrival in Iowa. However, in other respects they contrasted sharply. Carpenter's biographer, Mildred Throne, wrote that where Carpenter was described by contemporaries as warm and friendly, Duncombe was seen as cool and somewhat aloof. Even as a young man, Duncombe was clearly on his way to a fortune. Carpenter's investments often turned out badly. For example, he kept his money in the western land market too long and lost a bundle in the financial collapse of 1857. Though he got along comfortably enough in

We are getting an excellent quality of coal out of this Bank and no mistake.

Saturday Oct. 31 In my office in the forenoon In the after noon drew 8 bushels corn from Mrs Johnsons

Sunday Nov. 1, 1857 Went and heard Elder Dodder preach.

Beautiful fall weather.

Monday Nov. 2 Spent my time in my office hard at work

Tues Nov 3 Mr Wm D Perkins of Chicago of the firm of Barrett King Co. They have a claim of about \$3000 against Woodbury and Dawley. Dawley comes into my office in the forenoon and asks me if Dr Pease would be a good indorser. I told him yes. he goes and sees Dr Pease. Dr Pease refuses He then offers to do any thing. To assign his property or any thing else He proposed to give two notes to secure the note for

1800+ dollars, at thirty and sixty days time, Mr Perkins and to turn out notes and accounts in favor of his firm for security.

Mr. Perkins told him he would take his two notes as he proposed with that security. Mr Dawley went after his books notes and accounts. He found and brought his ledger and a quantity of notes and accounts I looked them over and selected to the amount of \$2400 and over, and I asked what amount Mr Perkins would require for collateral security. He said he would require about 4000\$. Mr Dawley said he would not give it. Mr Perkins asked him what he would give. He told him the amount that had been selected.

He said then that he would take it and I made out two agreements duplicates for them.

Mr Dawley said he would make out the bills in full in the afternoon and I might write the assignment on them. He went away. I looked at my watch a few moments after and it was after half past 12. M. oclock. The dinner bell at the Wahkonsa house had rung.

SHSI (DES MOINES)

subsequent years, he never became wealthy — unusual at a time when political connections like his provided access to numerous legitimate money-making schemes. But really the essential distinction between the two candidates in the campaign of 1857 was the fundamental fact that Carpenter was a member of a party on the rise, while Duncombe remained committed to a party in rapid decline by the late 1850s.

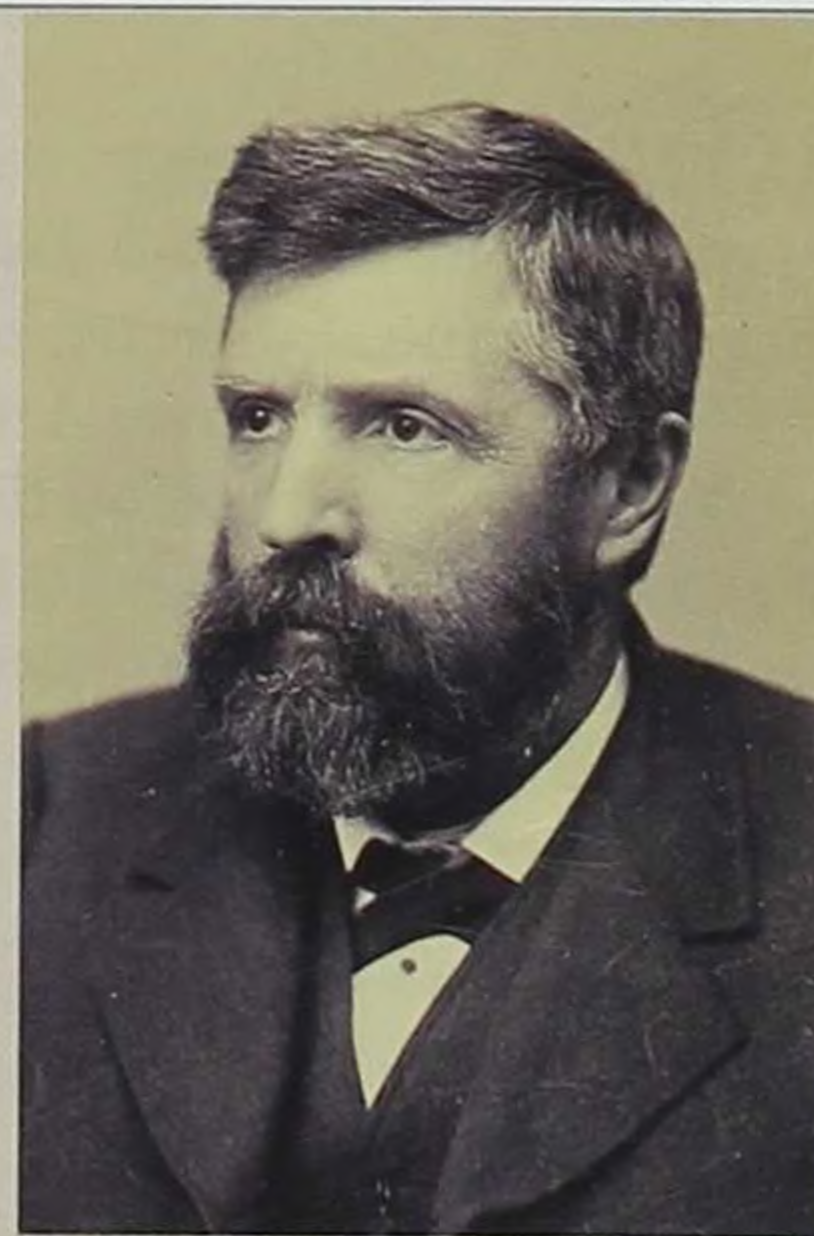
In describing Carpenter's experience in the 1858 General Assembly, biographer Throne admits he "played an unspectacular role. He voted with his party on party issues, and with the majority on non-controversial issues." Though he was liked and respected by his constituents, he may have lacked other attributes essential to political success. Simply put, wrote Throne, "as a lawmaker he did not have the necessary fire and force to play an outstanding role." Carpenter's district won no big prizes during his legislative term, though he tried to have an institution for the hearing impaired located in the Fort Dodge area. Similar efforts to establish a state-supported mental hospital in Webster County failed as well.

Resolving to leave politics, a world-weary Carpenter returned to Fort Dodge from Des Moines at the close of the legislative session in March 1858. He would not stand for office again for another dozen years. But after lengthy absences from Fort Dodge — he panned for gold in Colorado and then served in the Union army as a commissary under Gen. Grenville Dodge — Carpenter was back home and fully engaged in Republican politics. He accepted administrative appointments and committee assignments, and he could be counted on to help the party

on the stump in every campaign. Politics were in Carpenter's blood, and eventually, in the 1870s, he would be back in Des Moines as governor of Iowa. Two terms in the U.S. House of Representatives followed.

Webster County remained a Democratic Party stronghold throughout the 1870s and 1880s, and Cyrus Carpenter's old rival John Duncombe — who had prospered over the years — continued to challenge the Republican status quo. As the Iowa General Assembly election approached in 1883, Duncombe's local organization appeared formidable enough to prompt Fort Dodge Republicans to ask for Carpenter's help again. By then his term as governor had expired, and Carpenter was enjoying life as the Fort Dodge postmaster. Still, he was a sure bet against any Democratic opponent, and before long the 54-year-old "elder statesman" was back on the hustings, winning another election, and ensuring Republican representation for his district in the Iowa legislature. No doubt the thrill of victory had diminished over the years, but for Carpenter there was no resting with someone like John Duncombe around.

— by Bill Silag



Cyrus Clay Carpenter

I went to my dinner a few moments after, was not gone over fifteen or twenty minutes, and returned to my office. In a moment after, it might have been as late as 25 minutes past one P.M. oclock Mr Dawley came in. He said he had concluded that he would do nothing about the notes with Mr Perkins. That he had taken [counsel?] and had been advised not to unless he would take his notes and accounts in payment, that he might go ahead take his own course, (or words to this effect) and attach. I know that he used the term attach for it struck me forcibly at that time that he intended to make an assignment.

Mr Dawley took his notes & accounts and left. Mr Perkins returned from dinner in a few moments. I told him our case had taken a new faze and that he had better see Dawley immediately. He went and returned in a few moments and desired me to get out the papers for the attachment. I did so as soon as possible, and by the time I got the bond approved and all, and the writ into the hands of the Sheriff it was by my time 15 minutes of four oclock, P.M.

The Sheriff took the attachment, and served it

Wednesday Nov. 4th 1857 I see the Sheriff and tell him he must be sure and see that a list or schedule of the property in the store must be attached to his return. See him about this several times.

Wisner & Co. replevy the goods from the Sheriff. I saw the Clerk and charged him to be sure and not accept of bonds of any except responsible parties.

To my astonishment he did take the "crowd".

Thurs Nov 5th 1857 To day Dawley talked hard about me and I hear of it and went to see him in the evening to thrash him if he said what I hear he has. White tells me among other things that he said to him that he would not have been shut up if Perkins had had any other Lawyer but me.

When I went to see him he said that if I had said certain things I lied. As I had not said those things of course I did nothing more.

He said in that conversation that Perkins had stole his accounts. He said that he did not think of making sale of his property until he started away from my office, and he said he started away from my office after the dinner bell had rung at the Wahkonsa house. He denied saying to me when he returned after dinner that Perkins might go ahead and attach, but I know he did say attach for I noticed the expression under the impression that he might have made an assignment.

He said also in the conversation to day all of which was in presence of Thomas Dawley and H.

Beecher in Be[e]chers office, that he did not go to his dinner on the day of the sale.

Frid. Nov 6th Spend my time in my office attending law business

Saturday Nov. 7 Spend my time in my office. In the evening it commenced snowing. ☄ The first snow of any account of the season. It snowed a good deal this evening for so early a storm.

Sun. Nov 8. Snow about 3 inches deep this morning. This is quite a stormy morning. Spend my time in my office today.

Mon. Nov. 9th Snow on the ground

Tues Nov 10th Cold weather. Hard at work in my office.

Wed Nov 11th Cold weather. Hard at work in my office

Thurs Nov 12th Cold. Hard at work in my office. Went to Coffins to attend Koons Law Suit.

Frid Nov 13th Hard at work

Nov 14 Sat. Hard at work. Weather fair.

Sun Nov 15 In my office. Hard at writing letters. Attended church in the evening

Mon. Nov 16 Cool weather. Hard at work. My business has been pretty good for a month past.

Tues Nov. 17 Cool weather.

[?] H. Busy et al remove the house built by Stevens from his place

Nov 18th Take up a no. of persons for riot. Have a great fight before Esq White but I get them all bound over

Nov 19th Last evening we have a very sudden change. The weather became intensely cold and blows the wind awfully

Nov 20/57 In my office hard at work.

Nov 21/57 In my office hard at work. Paid 50 per ct for \$650 six months

Sun. Nov. 22/57 Go to Irvington to attend law suit between L[?] [D?] and A S Collins.

Travel until quite late in the evening It snows and in the evening is very cold

Mon Nov 23d 57 The mercury is 12° below zero. Go to Algona. Am successful Return to Washington Hands. Stay all night.

Tues Nov 24, 57 In my office hard at work. Pretty cold today but pleasant. I sold my horses and carriage to apply on a note of \$600 due Colburn. The first note due in 1859, being now fully taken up in case I should loose it or die.

Wed. Nov 25/57 In my office, hard at work. We cross the river for coal on the ice.

Thurs Nov 26/57 In my office Pleasant thanksgiving day

Frid Nov 27/57 In my office hard at work. It rains. The snow is off the ground

Saturday, Nov 28/57 In my office hard at work It commences to rain to day rains quite hard. The snow all gone. The ice will go out of the river if the rain continues much longer. Had a law suit with my particular friend Geo. H. Rogers.

Sunday . . . I am ashamed to say that I worked nearly all day to day to catch up with my business.

Sunday, Nov 29 I am ashamed to say that I worked nearly all day to day to catch up with my business.

Monday Nov. 30th 1857 I spent the day in my office hard at work. Beautiful day No snow, no wind, all looks bright. To day I went into the house of A.S. White the Editor and I found him and his wife on their knees, he with his arm around her neck. He was praying. I think I was never more surprised.

I quietly withdrew from the room. White is without a doubt in my mind, in some respects dishonest. He will tell things that are not true, and seems to pay no regard to the payment of his debts, as dozens

can testify. His paper has been stoped, this is now the 3d week. He is a Poor tool, for his own good

Tues. Dec 1st 1857 Last night was a beautiful moonlight night. The air is warm and the weather most beautiful this morning.

I have eaten only two meals for the last 60 hours simply because I have been busy at meal times

I aim for the largest equity for Poor actual settlers. They ought to be protected by all means.

Attended suit for Thos [?] in his preemption contest in the Land office with G. N. Patterson.

Wed Dec 2/57 Last night it was quite muddy. This morning it is frozen hard but it is a beautiful morning

Thurs Dec 3rd 1857 Beautiful day. No snow on the ground. Feels almost like indian summer.

I attend the suit of Hammond vs. James Linn. I am for Linn. Hammond is trying to rob Linn of his preemption.

I want no better causes than Linn has. I aim for the largest equity for Poor actual settlers.

They ought to be protected by all means.

Frid Dec 4th/57 Beautiful morning. Spent the day in my office. Worked hard. In the evening I went to Literary Society, was chosen a member, appointed on the [debate?] on the old tariff question.

Saty, Dec. 5th 1857 This is a foggy morning. There is a wind from the S.E. Looks like a storm

Spend my time in my office.

Sun. Dec. 6th 1857 I attended church in the forenoon. Call on E G Morgan and lady in the afternoon. Write a few letters. Take supper with Mr Sargents people.

Beautiful day. No snow.

Mon Dec 7th 1857 Pleasant day. Spent my forenoon in my office. In the afternoon I went with John M

Stockdale to defend D W Sterrett for the crime of cheating under false pretenses. The state of the case was this — Albert Wisner bought on the night of the 27th of Nov. ultimo a stock of goods belonging to D.W. Sterrett in Fort Dodge. Wisner alleged in the information that he had bought a bed and bedding, also a barrel of salt, which Sterrett had sold to him particularly, and that the property belonged to another party and not to Sterrett. This case excited a good deal of interest for the reason that Sterrett was always thought to be a good honest hearted young fellow.

We succeeded in getting him clear, and the whole crowd gave one [?] hurrah and shout. Mr Stockdale made a very good speech. He made one remark that was really beautiful. That was, a remark made by atty. Genl J.S. Black formerly of the S.C. of Pa. viz. "A mans good character is a mantle which he can throw around him in the hour of trial and peril"

The figure is really beautiful I felt a good deal of interest in the case for the reason that I really believe that Wisners were swearing falsely and that Sterrett was innocent.

Tues Dec. 8th 1857 This morning it snows and from present appearances I am inclined to think we are about to get a little fall of snow.

Wed Dec 9/57 Pleasant day. Attend suit before L.S. Coffin Esq. for J.H. Williams.

In the evening I read two or three speaches on the Homestead Bill, and the play in Shakspeare called "Much Ado about Nothing"

Caught a cold, the second cold of any account since I came to the State.

Thurs Dec 10/57 In my office. This winter is really an anomaly or else all the winters that I have seen are anomalies. The weather is more like October than Dec.

Frid Dec 11/57. Attend suit before O E White for [Jesse?] Williams.

Attend Wahkonsa Lit.[erary] S[ociet]y.

Sat Dec 12./57 In my office. Warm weather. In my office all day.

Sun. Dec 13/57 Spent the day in my office resting. In the evening, I went to Wm. O. Ruggles office.

Mon Dec 14/57 Warm weather. The streets are filled with mud.

Spent my time in my office and examining pre-emption cases.

Tues Dec 15/57 Warm pleasant morning.
Looks like April.

Wed. Dec 16th 1857 As warm as an October day.

This is really like Southern weather. The mud is very bad indeed. I spend my time in my office.

Thurs. Dec. 17th 1857 ☞ This morning it rains quite hard. The mud, O the mud I never saw it worse in Ft Dodge.

It is really abominable.

Friday Dec. 18th 1857 Last evening it snowed a little, about two inches on the mud. This morning I rise determined to do all in my power to be a man, equal at least to any of my competitors, and to waste no time.

Sun Dec. 20 1857 The ground is frozen and rough.

I attend the Catholic Church in the forenoon in the afternoon I hear Rev Firchild of the Episcopalian Church. I like his sermon very much indeed. I think he will do very well.

In the evening I read two or three speaches on the Homestead Bill, and the play in Shakspeare called "Much Ado about Nothing"

I am determined to be a man

Mon Dec 21/1857 Pleasant morning I rise at daylight. Spend my time in my office

☞ Aply to become a Mason.

Tues Dec. 22d 1857 Beautiful morning. I spend my time in my office in forenoon and beat Rogers in a law suit in the afternoon. Go to Literary Society in the ~~afternoon~~ evening.

Have a pleasant time. Debate the Homestead law I have the negative and in my own opinion I beat them out. C C Carpenter on the affirmative.

☞ A most brilliant meteor passes through the

skies while I am speaking so visible that every person is surprised

Wed Dec. 23 1857 Beautiful day! I spend my time in my office.

Thurs Dec 24th 1857 Spend my time in my office.

I go to Webster City with Miss Hellen Ruggles. . . . We dance until about six oclock in the morning

This winter beats all the winters that I have seen in the North for warm pleasant weather. I ask Hellen Ruggles to go to Webster City with me.

Frid Dec 25th 1857 I go to Webster City with Miss Hellen Ruggles. It is a pleasant day. We go in a carriage and have a pleasant ride. We have a splendid party at my old friends, D.A. Underdown. I enjoy the party very much indeed. We dance until about six oclock in the morning

I have never seen a finer supper west of the Mississippi River.

Sat. Dec 26th 1857 I go around the town of Webster City, call upon my friends, and a little past 2 o'clock, I start with Miss Ruggles to Fort Dodge. It is a beautiful day and I enjoy it very much. I find Miss Ruggles very pleasant company. I could ask for no better.

Sun Dec 27th 1857 Beautiful day. I hear Elder Dodder in the morning and in the afternoon I hear Mr Fairchilds preach the finest sermon yet in Fort D

Mon Dec 28, 57 Spent the day in my office. I have nearly made up my mind to take charge of the Fort Dodge Sentinel. I dont know about the policy but I am willing to run the risk for the good of my friends and the town. Spent the evening at Mr Ruggles house.

Tues Dec. 29th 1857. Beautiful morning. I rise before light, and am hard at work. I spend my time in my office hard at work. Attend suit before O.E. White D. Westerfield vs. G.H. Rogers. Heard lecture of Rev. Mr

Kent in the evening. Beautiful Beautiful weather. I think I will take charge of the Fort Dodge Sentinel as Senior Editor

Wed Dec 30th 1857 Rather a cool day. I rise at 5 A.M. read law until nine A.M., take breakfast. Settle pre-emption suit of Crouch & Carr, attend to the foreclosure of a mortgage vs. M Morrissy. Sheriff Sale of his land. I work hard all day. Write a long [Shff?] deed, take tea with Thos Sargent. Write long letter in the Evening write some Agree with Dr Pease to try my best to [gain?] a suit for him, where patient has [?] fraud. I am to have \$100, if I succeed, if not, nothing.

Thurs Dec 31, 1857 Beautiful weather. No snow. Spent my time in my office

Frid Jany 1st 1858 I had a splendid time today. I called in company with A. Morrison on most all of my friends. Had a real jolly time.

In the evening I went to the dance at the St. Charles hotel, and had a good time here.

A first rate time. the party here tonight was excellent.

If New Years is any indication of this coming year, I shall have a happy one indeed

Sat. Jany 2d, 1858. Beautiful day. Spent my time in my office. Had a fine time.

I think I will take charge of the Fort Dodge Sentinel as Senior Editor

Sun. Jany 3d 1858. Attended church twice to day. Heard two excellent sermons from Mr Fairchilds

Monday Jany 4, 1858 Spent my time in my office hard at work. Shaffer from Chicago gave me a claim vs Woodbury & Dawley of \$5000+.

We go to Webster City tonight

Tues Jany 5, 1858 Spent the day at Webster City. Skinner, Shaffer & I go to Fort Dodge in the night.

Wed. Jany 6th, 1858. Arived at Fort Dodge early in the morning. To day we get Woodbury & Dawley to confer judgment in favor of [Story & Thomas Barrett King & Co.]


Thurs Jany 7th 1858. Have the sheriff levy on the store of Woodbury & Dawley. Sold to Wisner & Co, or so claimed at least.

Frid Jany 8, 1858. There is some little stir in town over my levy

Saty Jany 9, 1858 Started to Fort Des Moines to get a law repealed if possible giving G.F. McClure the right to dam the Des Moines River at Fort Dodge.

Suny Jany 10th 1858 It rained severely to day. So that the little streams are raised.

The first Legislature that ever convened at Ft Des Moines convenes today.

Mony Jany 11th 1858  The first Legislature that ever convened at Ft Des Moines convenes today. Ft Des Moines is a very scattered town of about 5000 inhabitants. This Legislature has 22 Black Republican majority and I think will elect Grimes.

Tues Jany 12, 1858 I go up to the Capitol and hear the spouting.

Wed Jany 13th 1858 I am busy at my ax grinding business.

Thurs Jany 14th 1858 I am busy at my ax grinding. Saw Gov Lowe inaugurated.

Friday Jany 15 1858 Same as above

Saty, Jany 16 1858 Same as above

Suny Jany 17 1858 Went to Church. Heard Rev Mr Peat

Monday Jany 18, 1858 I have never seen such beautiful weather in the winter. [It] has been splendid. It beats any Southern winter that I ever saw. The Senate & house are getting into motion a little. Attend P[?] festival.

Tues Jany 19 1858 Attend the Legislature Have fine time.

Wednes Jany 20, 1858. A beautiful time between Democrats & Republicans in the Senate.

Thurs Jany 21, 58. At Des Moines. The mud is deep

Frid Jany 22, 1858 In Des Moines Electioning the Legislature or the Election of U S Senator.

I think I never saw worse roads

Sat Jany 23 1858 At Des Moines
As above

Sunday Jany 24 1858 As above

Monday Jany 25 1858 As above

Tues Jany 26 1858 As above. To day they go into a balot for U.S. Senator and James W Grimes of Burlington receives the nomination by nearly a $\frac{2}{3}$ votes as the Republicans have about $\frac{1}{3}$ more in the house than the Democrats. Ben M Samuels gets the Democratic vote in the house. He is 3 ahead of Genl Jones in [?]

Wed Jany 27, 1858 At Des Moines. The muddy roads freeze up and are as rough as the Rocky Mountains

Thurs. Jany 28, 1858 In the afternoon Dr Bissel Tom Dawley and I start for Fort Dodge on foot, the roads are so bad that the stage or a team cannot run

We walk to Nagles the 9 mile house this side of Fort Des Moines.

At Des Moines. The muddy roads freeze up and are as rough as the Rocky Mountains

Friday Jan 29 1858 We hire Nagle to send us on to Boonsboro. We break his waggon all to pieces, cork a horse and pay him off & send him home We hire another team
Arive at Boonsboro about dark or a little after
Stay all night at Hoffmans hotel.

Sat Jany 30 Start with another team for Fort Dodge. Stay all night at Homer. I play "Euchre" tonight. I have learned the use of cards in this game for the first time

All the products of the country are low, this year, and it is important that those who contemplate a removal to the West, should be here soon if they wish to avail themselves of the low price of land and other advantages of an early settlement, as every month is adding to the value and price of land. If it is delayed till the Railroad is finished, the price of land will be quadrupled. Fort Dodge has already got such an upward impulse, that it is vain to deny that it will be an important town. The land within six miles West, and twice that distance North, is already settled by pre-emptors, and, with the adjacent land on the East side of the river, already contains a population sufficient to support a good sized town, while the whole length of the river is lined with thrifty farms. Merchants of various kinds are needed, in addition to those already here, to meet the wants of a constantly increasing community.

Since the above was prepared, orders have been given at Washington to bring in all the unsold lands in this part of the State, which will immensely increase the weight of all these considerations, and render what might be thought mere conjecture, a matter of certainty.

JOHN F. DUNCOMBE,
ATTORNEY AT LAW
AND NOTARY PUBLIC,
FORT DODGE, WEBSTER COUNTY, IOWA.

JOHN GARAGHTY,
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELLOR AT LAW,
FORT DODGE, WEBSTER COUNTY, IOWA.

SAINT CHARLES HOTEL,
FORT DODGE, WEBSTER CO., IOWA.

CHAS. M. WHITE, - - - - - Proprietor.

CHARLES B. RICHARDS,
ATTORNEY AT LAW,
- AND -
General Land Agent,
FORT DODGE, IOWA.

Titles examined, Plats, Maps and Abstracts furnished, Collections made, Taxes paid, Lands Located with Warrants or Cash; Lands sold on Commission.
REFER TO:—Ex Gov. Grimes, Burlington; Gov. Lowe, Des Moines; Gen. Van Antwerp, Keokuk; Hon Geo. Richards, Warren Co., N. Y.; Isaac Munson, Jefferson Co. New York.

EGBERT BAGG,
General Land Agent and Justice of the Peace,
FORT DODGE, IOWA.

Land Warrants bought, sold and located on favorable terms. Collections made.
I am permitted to refer to Hon. Horatio Seymour, Chas. A. Mann, Prest. Oneida Bank, Utica, N. Y.; Jos. Stringham, Cashier, Buffalo City Bank, Buffalo, N. Y.; M. D. Bagg, Esq., New York City; Wm. C. Johnson, Esq., Prest. D. R. & N. Co., Washington, D. C.; Register and Receiver Land Office, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Duncombe's advertisement follows six pages of booster narrative in *A Brief Description of Fort Dodge, Iowa, Its Agricultural, Mineral, and Commercial Facilities and Characters*, published in early 1858 by editor A. S. White at the *Sentinel* newspaper office. Of the 26 local businesses advertised, 23 are attorneys and land agents. Fort Dodge, White explains, "is now reached by the Dubuque & Pacific R.R. as far as Nottingham, 40 miles, and thence by stage in three days travel by daylight only."

this fall or any other game of cards Stay at Old Smiths.

Sun Jany 31 Go to Fort Dodge

Monday Feb. 1st, 1858 Fine weather. I try to get the sheriff to go ahead and sell Wisner & Co goods But he will not do it unless Stockdale and myself will go on the bond.

Tues Feb. 2d 1858 Commence the sale of Wisner & Co or Woodbury & Dawley goods. They [replevy Wisner?] Tom Snell swears he is worth over 50,000\$ clear of all liabilities.

Wednesday Feb. 3, 1858 At Fort Dodge in my office

Thurs Feb. 4, 58 At Fort Dodge Fine weather but it is a little colder than it has been before

Frid Feb. 5, 58 In my office.

Sat Feb. 6 58 In my office.

Sun Feb 7, 1858 Attend Elder Didders Church.

Mon Feb 8, 1858 At Fort Dodge I neglected to

note? the Ball at the St. Charles hotel on the 3 It was a proud affair for this new County. The Webster City people were all on hand.

*I wonder if I am always
to live this cold half liv-
ing life. . . . It is wrong*

Tues Feb. 9 1858 [At] home, if I have a home. I wish I had a good home and a good wife.

Wed Feb 10, 58 At Ft Dodge.

I like this cold winter weather, it is healthy and bracing

I wonder if I am always to live in this prison of monotony, without any home, without any wife or family, without any dear one to love, to live to let my heart dry up with selfishness

I wonder if I am always to live this cold half living life. If I am I care but little how soon I die. It is wrong wrong wrong

Thurs Feb 11, 58 In my office.

Feb. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 23. On 22 Joined the Masons

At home in my office most all of this time and but very little worthy of notice.

Wed 24 Feb 1858 J.D. Burkholder and I start for Fort Des Moines to prevent T. 90. being stolen from our County.

A hoar is sent off at the same time with us by some of the Fort Dodge hoar masters. I know her character and keep aloof from her. I never touched a leud woman or any other woman illicitly and by the help of Providence I never will. I despise them, and I love a virtuous woman above all living things on Earth.

Thurs Feb 25, 1858 We start from Boonsboro early.

The hoar tries to become very interested with me but it is of no use. I am impurturable to such temptations

We arrive at Des Moines after dark and Burkholder and I stop at the American house.

Sun Frid Feb 26, 1858, Feb. 2, 3, 4, 27, 28.

March 1, 2, 3, 4. I worked hard, had two real quarrels with Ed McKnight fought with words and election-eered my best for R.R. bills T. 90 and all other projects that I felt an interest in.

The tide is in our favor, but court is coming on

"How much happier I should be"

When he arrived in Fort Dodge in 1855, John Duncombe was a heartbroken young widower. He had married Carrie Perkins in 1852 in Erie, Pennsylvania, soon after opening his legal practice there. Within two years of their wedding, however, his young wife had died, and Duncombe struck out for the West in hopes of beginning his life anew. In his first years in Fort Dodge, he was prone to miserable bouts of loneliness and depression. "I wish my heart was as happy as it once was," he complained on April 13, 1856.

His mood brightened later in the year, around the Christmas holidays, when he met Ella Richards during a trip east with Bernhart Henn. Never given to understatement, Duncombe declared on December 27, "I am really in love with Ella," noting in his journal that he had not seen such happiness in recent years. But this happiness proved elusive — Ella's name does not appear again in the journal — and on August 16, 1857, Duncombe again found himself in a funk. "Oh, if I only had a pleasant home and a true hearted sweet wife, how much happier I should be!"

Historian Ellen Rothberg, author of *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America*, would probably describe John Duncombe's feelings as typical of 19th-century middle-class

men in the United States. According to Rothberg, the mid-1800s saw the emergence of modern notions regarding romance as an essential part of courtship and as the basis of marital intimacy. Once considered youthful folly, romance had become socially respectable. "Everyone wanted to fall in love, and men especially seemed to feel a sense of obligation, even of desperation, about it."

These were years of a widening gap between the spheres of home and work, Rothberg explains, when "middle-class men were becoming increasingly identified by their involvement in the world away from the home." If marriages were to succeed, couples needed to establish the "mutuality, commonality, and sympathy" required to bridge men's and women's spheres. For this reason, men were well advised to find partners who brought to marriage an understanding of the world of work along with a commitment to establishing a peaceful refuge from its physical and mental demands.

Duncombe's journal reveals that he too was looking for a "virtuous and lovely" woman who could be "the great source of all virtue" in his life, not only to "assist [him] to be happy" but also to protect his "taste for refined Society." References to his high-minded romantic pursuits fill pages of the journal, and they in-

and I cannot tell what the result will be when we leave.

C B Richards shows himself a scoundrel.

Frid March 5, 1858 I start with Burkholder for Fort Dodge.

Sat 6 1858 We arrive at Fort Dodge

Sun 7 Spend my time in my office writing letters in the evening call at Maj W[illiams]

Mon. March 8, 1858 Spend my time in my office. A good deal of excitement about land office.

Pleasant weather It looks like spring. The roads are getting quite dry in Fort Dodge

Tues March 9, 1858 In my office Very busy preparing for court

Wed March 10, 1858 Spend my time in my office. We are to have a vote on erecting public buildings.

Thurs March 11, 1858. Beautiful day. Enter 920 acres in the land office

Very busy bringing suit for court as this is the last day of service Spent the evening very pleasantly at Maj Williams

Frid March 12 1858 Beautiful morning. I take a walk before breakfast.

Saturday March 13, 1858 Spent my time in my office. Attended one suit. Was successful.
Beautiful weather.

Sunday March 14, 58. Beautiful day. I wrote a long Editorial after Breakfast & then went to church Went to Ruggleses Had a pleasant call. Went to Church. Went home with Miss Molly Williams. Had a very pleasant afternoon and evening visit.
Rains in the evening.

Mon March 15, 1858 Beautiful spring morning

Tues 16, 1858 Spent my time in my office hard at work all day It rains in the evening. I go to the dramatic recitation. Learn that A J Humphrey and Miss Libby Jenkins are engaged to be married. Good if true Have pleasant time with Miss Molly Williams.

Wed March 17, 1858 Cool wet morning A S White & wife start East

Thurs. Frid. Sat. Sun Spent my time in my office preparing for Court.

clude portraits of several young women Duncombe knew in Fort Dodge and in other cities. Emily Jannis, for example, who Duncombe met on a visit to Senator George Jones's Dubuque home, was "a very excellent girl in my opinion.... I really like the appearance of this young lady." Traveling with Jones's entourage on a sightseeing trip up the Mississippi, Duncombe wrote on July 20, 1857: "We find a beautiful country a delightful day, Splendid crops, and for myself, what was to me a thousand times better, a sweet girl of 18 summers, whom I find I am in spite of my hardheartedness beginning to love."

Two days later, however, John and Emily parted company, he for Fort Dodge, she to return to her father's house in St. Louis. Duncombe remained smitten, but in his journal he admitted, "I cannot reasonably expect her to leave her home 'Sweet home' and the pleasures of her old paternal residence for another in Iowa." Still, he was determined not to sink into self-pity. "I only think of her because I cannot help myself," he added. "My heart would be sad if I would give it time. But courage my heart! Better days are coming!"

"Better days" is a term not typically used to describe 1857 in frontier Iowa. A brutally cold winter, violence at Spirit Lake, and then a nationwide financial panic — which halted railroad

construction and slowed Iowa's commercial growth in general — combined to make 1857 a year of increasing uncertainty. As a lawyer heavily involved in railroads, townsites, and land sales, Duncombe no doubt felt the impact of these events.

Equally discouraging was his personal situation: "I wonder if I am always to live in this prison of monotony, without any home, without any wife or family, without any dear one to love, to live to let my heart dry up with selfishness," he wrote in February 1858. In despair, he considered a move to Pike's Peak, whose gold mines had already drawn Cyrus C. Carpenter and several other Fort Dodge men to the Rockies.

Duncombe stayed put, however, and within months he was again celebrating love's glories. Although he had given up hope that he would find another love and had grown hardhearted, by late summer he had found a way to "let my heart out of the iron cage in which it had been confined."

Her name was Mary "Mollie" Williams, and she was the daughter of Duncombe's close friend and business associate, Maj. William Williams, former sutler at the garrison and subsequently one of Fort Dodge's leading citizens. Mollie was "gay" and "full of fun," and she had already attracted several suitors.

— by Bill Silag

Beautiful weather. Roads fine and the grass starts

Mon. Tues Wednes Thurs Frid. Sat. 27th March 1858

Spent my time in Court Hon J D Thompson Judge. I was very successful. I had some 45 or 46 cases out of about 110 on the Docket.

A little more care would make me a little better lawyer Spent the evening with Mollie.

Sunday attend church. In the evening with Mollie

Mon. Beautiful day I never saw such fine weather in March.

Sun. Mon. Tues Wed. Thurs Frid. Sat. Sun. 4th Apr 58 I spent all the week electioneering for the vote to erect county buildings with Mr Carpenter. Beautiful weather. Almost like summer. The flowers begin to show their heads. The prairies begin to look green.

Mon 5th Apr 58 Election day. 652 votes polled in the county 200 majority for the Erection of Public buildings

Tues Apr 6. Wed Thurs Frid. Sat. I spent this week at Webster City Hamilton Co attending court. I have very good success in all my cases. I have a very pleasant time here. The people are warmly my friends. They take great pains to make me happy. A very fine dance on Tues evening — a party nearly every night

Webster City is growing quite rapidly. The Public square has just been ornamented with trees.

and all to make us happy Webster City is growing quite rapidly. The Public square has just been ornamented with trees. They are just about erecting a fine town hall. I like the people here. The ladies are very fine.

This week it is rainy and wet. The roads are getting almost impassible.

Judge J D Thomson is our Dis Judge and he is a very good man indeed for Judge for one so young.

I like Mr Skinner very much as a lawyer.

Saturday I get home to Fort Dodge. The sloughs are awful

Mon Tues Wed Thurs Frid. Sat. 17th Apr 58. This has

been a very beautiful week. I have been quite lazy, have been quite busy however in attending land suits in the land office. One for Heckert of Algona One for Hood of Wright County. I was successful in part of the cases and in part was unsuccessful.

The case of Hood I think was one of those cases in which I had a decision against me contrary to law, and equity both I believe fully that I will have that case decided in my favor at the Gen' Land Office

I rise early nearly every morning and before breakfast go out with my rifle to see "whom I may devour". I find game very scarce, but I go more for the exercise than the game

The Kansas question is still before Congress The Lecompton constitution has passed the Senate by 8 maj — but has not yet passed the house

Sun Apr 18 1858 I go with Jas R. Strow and D.F. Elsworth to the Boone river to see about the county seat election between Liberty and Ontario. Stayed all night at D.[?]

The roads, on account of the late rains are almost impassible.

Mon Apr 19. Rise early. Start for Liberty. I[t] rained all night and Boone River is almost out of its banks about ten feet deep.

Strow cant swim and remains with Okeson. But Elsworth and myself swim the river. Elsworth's horse swims beautifully but my horse goes down so that I get wet nearly all over. It is a cold chilly day and I ride 8 miles to Liberty where I remain all day in my wet clothes. I wonder that I did not get down sick

The vote by returns showed for co seat Ontario 72 Liberty 69, but the canvass managed to make it stand Ontario 66 Liberty 68, and that Liberty was co seat

Tues Apr 20 58 Started for Fort Dodge [Brassfield?] ferried us over Boon River. Strow strains his horses shoulder.

Get home just at dark. Go to the first public theatrical performance in Fort Dodge by our citizens in which was played "Raising the Wind, Box & Cox, The Irish Lion. The performance was very well executed. Miss Louisa White Miss Mollie Williams and Mrs M.A. Wilks were the performers who represented the ladies. The Brick School house was crowded.

Wed. Apr 21, 58 Attended a preemption trial. Thurs & Friday in my office hard at work.

Saturday Apr 24, 58 Went out to L.S. Coffins on the

Lizzard and defended John McLaughlin from the prosecution of Abner Bell for an assault I shall remember this case as one of the rich cases tried in my life. The

*Finally the justice gets
Websters Unabridged
dictionary to try
to convince
Mr Obstinate Juryman*

jury agree three times and I have them polled each time and every time one of them answers "not guilty".

Finally the justice gets Websters Unabridged dictionary to try to convince Mr Obstinate Juryman that when a man strikes another he is guilty of an assault and Battery. But it is of no use. Mr Juryman and I make a clear distinction where the man is justifiable in striking? Finally as a sort of a compromise they fine my client ten cents and he & Bell the prosecutor are each to pay one half of the costs of the suit
Ha. Ha. Ha!!

Sun Apr 25, 1858 It snows about two inches this morning. I attend church in the morning Methodist, in the evening Pres with Miss Morrison and hear Dodder preach a sermon

The incident of the evening was a crazy man who whistled just as the preacher had got out some tremendous "Idea", as much as to say that is a whopper

Mon Apr 26, 1858 A little snow on the ground this morning.

Tues April 27, 1858 I went out hunting this morning with Thos Sargent. I waded sloughs nearly middle deep Shot two ducks and a mud hen. Dear for the whistles.

Wed, Thurs Frid. 30/58 Rather unpleasant weather Dul times. No money.

Sat May 1, 1858. A little snow falls in the morning. To me this is a very pleasant evening at Maj. Williams.

Sun 2 May 58 Attended Church. heard Fairchilds &

Dodder Spent the afternoon with Miss L Vincent pleasantly.

Mon. May 3, 1858 Rainy morning. I rise early build fire — wash all over, eat breakfast — read several chapters in the bible — read some time in a Missouri book — make good resolutions for the week — feel fresh and strong of good cheer — sweep out my office and then set about my business.

Tues 4. Pleasant day.

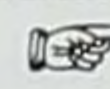
Wed. 5. Went on a fishing excursion to Hintons mill dam with several of our young ladies, including Miss Molly Williams Miss [Lersa?] Vincent, Miss Nelly Olcott, Miss Libby Jenkins, Miss Louisa White Miss Gardner & Miss Burkholder

We had a very lively time — a very pleasant time.

The trees are in bloom the flowers are looking finely and everything bids fair for a joyful season
Spend evening at Mr Jenkins

Thurs 5. It rains, rains rains that is the fault of the season

Frid. 6. We have a pleasant time for dance and in the evening we enjoy ourselves very finely at the St Charles hotel [?] [Miss Lersa].

 The Lecompton bill has passed Congress.

Sat. May. 7 58 Have great time trying Wisner for getting C.M. Whites horse out of his hands

Sun May 8, 58 Beautiful day, but becomes a little cool towards evening.

I attend church three times — twice with Miss Molly Williams. I spend the day with her very pleasantly. I think she is a frank, wild good hearted, very sweet and quite pretty girl but a little to small. But I like her after all, & cant help it.

Mon May 10th 1858. It rains very badly this morning. The air is cold and it is quite disagreeable.

From this day to the 22d I have been about nearly all the time and except that I made a legal tender to H.D. Merritt for O.E. White on the 10th

I have been attending court in Wright Co in which there is a very bitter contest between Liberty & Ontario about the county seat

The sloughs are awful — never worse The mud is deep and almost impassible.

I had a very pleasant time at Webster City.

May 21st I returned to Fort Dodge. The only interesting incident was this. At the big slough at the head of Brushy creek I pulled off my boots, pants & drawers & put them on the saddle of my horse. I then waded in. The horse could not get through. I waded in about $\frac{1}{3}$ across where the water was, about three feet deep & returned.

I found on my return to Fort Dodge that an article that I had written about Merritt had created very great excitement

Sat 22 May, 1858 Very busy in my office.

Sun 23, May 1858 Spent most of the day at Maj. W. house very pleasantly.


Mon, Tues — Wed — 26 We have had a very rainy wet spring — and it is quite backward


Thurs. Frid. 28, 58 Fine weather for the season


May 31, 58 I started in a skiff with B Grayson on the Des Moines river for Fort Des Moines.

The wind was down stream and altho we did not start until between two & 3 oclock we got to Bellville that night, where there was a steam saw mill and two or three little houses. We stayed with Jacob Bell until about 1 oclock when we got out of bed, got into our boat and put out.

June 1. By breakfast we were at Millford opposite Boonsboro, a little town with about a dozen dilapidated log huts, and a place for a mill. We took breakfast here. After rowing all the first part of the night we

I started in the stage for Washington to  prevent the removal of the land office to Algona.

were excessively hungry and the chilly dampness of the river gave us anything but a pleasant sensation. We did not feel first rate but on we went. The most  noted circumstance of the time was the wild gold excitement here. Every body was hunting gold — small particles were found in many places, but not enough worth digging for

About three oclock we arrive at Elk rapids a little town opposite to Swede point. We had each rowed a half hour alternately and were very tired. Here we hired a man to row us into Fort Des Moines. We arrived in Des Moines after dark. We could see nothing and were within hearing of old Halls mill dam below us on the raging Des Moines. I felt a little tired as we all showed by our silence. Not a word was spoken by any one of our company for some time. Finally our rower brought us up against the shore among logs brush &c and terra firma felt good again. I stayed at the Des Moines house, where I found friends enough to keep me up until 3 A.M. and at 4 I started in the stage for Washington to  prevent the removal of the land office to Algona.

June 2, 1858. It rained awfully. The stage got sloughed and we had a very interesting time.

The roads were as bad as I ever saw them or ever expect to see them. The botom land East of the Skunk was overflowed for near a half mile.

We left the coach and got a two horse waggon and succeeded in getting over in this. At night we came to Grinnell where we stayed as it was to dark to go on. It rained incessantly in the night and in the morning it still rained.

June 3 We started on in the rain — came to the first stream found the bridge off and a perfect torent.

4 persons in the stage. I striped off to the shirt and waded in to the water to my shoulders, and found that crossing was utterly impossible — went back to Grinnell. Started out in a waggon after dinner to head the stream. Succeeded Stayed all night to night at a little town about 14. miles below Grinnell. Here [Defore?] of Ft Des Moines and I built a skiff of lums to start in the morning. Worked until late at night. We had great fun in this. It was wild adventure and I loved it.

June 4. As soon as the morning opened the stage team took us to little bear creek which was anything but little bear this morning

It was as wide as the Mississippi and about the same debth. It rushed through the timber as if all the sloughs brooks, springs, and mud puddles were frightened and trying to see which could beat in a race to the Mississippi. [Defore?] was a brave man and I had too much pride but to be as brave. We put our boat on the raging waters and left Judge McHenry and another on the shore. We got along better than I feared. A few plank were left in the middle of the stream and we landed one by one on here until we were all in the

middle and then tried the other side which was still more dangerous as the water was deeper and swifter.

Perseverantia omnia vincit [perseverance conquers all]. We were over safe and sound baggage and all.

We hired a new team here on our own account and on we went.

June 5 We passed Marengo today and found it nearly all under water. From our view from the hills it appeared like a lake covered with arks more than a town

June 6. Stayed in Iowa City over tonight and Sunday 7
I never in my life saw such a complete flood.

June 8, 1858. The cars started early for Rock Island, and I for Washington City. I traveled night and day for three days and nights and on Thursday the 11 I was in the little corrupt city — the home of fashion vice, and greatness.

I saw my Dear friends Mr Henn and Senator Jones, and spent 8 days here very pleasantly, calling on President Buchanan and lots of beautiful ladies. Senator Jones was the great beau of Washington City. A universal favorite among the ladies.

Friday June 19, 1858 I left for New York and on Monday I arrived at father's house, where I saw all my dear friends and relatives in fine spirits and glee, glad to see me of course.

I stayed here three days only visiting and on the 23 was off for Iowa.

Stopped over night with the family of my Dear friend Senator Jones and then went on for the R.R. election in Hamilton Co. where I arrived in time to find my R.R. friends beat by 14 votes

Went to Fort Dodge and on Sunday the 4th of July wrote an oration to deliver on the 5th

Mon. July 5, 1858 Had the pleasure of being the principle orator of the day at the first Fourth of July celebration ever held at Fort Dodge.

We held this celebration in the little grove back of Williams Street — north — beyond the little spring brook near the big spring. We had a great crowd. The ladies sang great and patriotic songs, the gents smiled at the ladies. We all eat drank and were happy and are none of us dead yet. "So mote it be"

[*Undated entry*] The latter part of the summer and the fall I neglected to keep my Journal as I was absent and much of the time quite busy. I shall only give a few

items of interest to myself in the future as I am only writing for myself and for nobody else.

I became very much attached to Miss Mollie Williams daughter of Maj Wms. I found in spite of Myself I loved her. I was very doubtful for a long time whether I should not banish all thoughts of her from my mind believing as I certainly did — that she was far from loving me. I knew she loved Mr Grayson and I was too proud to speak to her until I gave her a full

I found in spite of Myself I loved her.

opportunity to show her preference to him. I visited the house of her father for a long time, constantly. I never gave her or her parents a right to demand any cause for my going. She was wild gay, full of fun, and treated me, as I thought rather cool and distant, which I was rather careful to return in the same kind of treatment to her, frequently taking a very sudden leave of her, as she frequently did of me. Mr Grayson was there constantly. I treated him in a manner that I do not believe he ever understood. I am satisfied that he never did. I frequently invited him to go to the Maj's house with me. This made him think sometime that I and Mollie had a perfect understanding

My pride was severely tried by the treatment I received from Mollie. But I had set out on the road, and I was after the end of it. When she was unusually cool to me, I took great pleasure in riding out with other ladies and in walking with them and visiting them, to try the effect. I also talked of other sweethearts in such a cool deliberate manner that she could not understand me. When I had leisure I always rode out with Mrs W, and called for her instead of Mollie. This was to show Mollie that I did not care for her. To pay me back when I did ask to ride out with her she was "Engaged" was "unwell" "Expected company" &c &c. So things went on. Ben Grayson, was engaged but intended to break it if he could get Mollie. He thought he could not, and set Dick at it.

Here was another rival. Mollie call them brothers, and once she gave me a keen cut by calling me father Duncombe, in her cutting manner. I was not fool enough to please her with the idea that I was mad — no, not I. For a time she made all sorts of sport of Dick. He was homely. No doubt of that, but he was a good hearted Virginian. He had time to court her affections

and I had not. My mind was bent on my business, and I had as Editor and Lawyer enough to do, not to spend my time in the Study of the floral language of love. I had been married. Life was different to me from what it was to another. The scenes of my boy-love had long since past. Experience had taught me many things that imagination once made me think was all joy. From the time I was 17, I had been engaged to one I dearly loved. My whole life was changed, after I had enjoyed all the joys of anticipation and of participation, and was in the zenith of pleasure and bright hope,


A reckless life of three years in Iowa had cured the wound and left me entirely changed

and in three short days everything that I held dear, everything for which I lived was taken from me — No one knows, what a terrible change this made in me. A reckless life of three years in Iowa had cured the wound and left me entirely changed, as different as the sun and moon. For this reason I could not let my heart out of the iron cage in which it had been confined, with that freedom of boyhood. In all this I had not the means of making Mollie love me, so I concluded to make her hate me and be kind to her. I did not believe she would marry Dick or Ben. G. In my judgment I did not believe it, but my fear made me think she would — for I honestly loved her — I loved her with a strong ardent affection and it required all my will to keep it concealed. Yet I acted like a stone — careless — and unfeeling. At my early acquaintance with Mollie at Des Moines I loved her, and that little Devil Cupid kept me as uneasy as if I had a flea on my person, all the time. I could not get rid of him. He made me write a letter — and then I tore it up — He made me go to the Maj's house. I loved to see Mollie happy with my rivals. I loved them because she did, and not for any real worth that I had seen in them. They were not proper persons for her and I knew it.

But I praised them to her for the reason that I knew if I said a word to her — she would resent it like a flash of lightning. So things went on. A perfect farce from the beginning — myself being the clown — and Mollie the manager; until, Graysons left. Dick thinking everything was fixed and Ben to get married.

Dick was perfectly burning with love. His face would shine like a coal of fire when I would speak to him of Mollie in my cool unconcerned manner. The little fox — she knew it well but she loved Ben far better than Dick. She loved truly and did not intend to act the coquette — natural as it was for her to do so. She hoped to marry him at one time, and was to proud to give him the least hope — That is so.

Such was the state of the case on the first of November. I do not think that the mass of the community believe that I would ever marry Mollie. I did not think so myself. I had gone to far however not to have an understanding, so I concluded to visit Mollie a short time longer, and then to tell her all my feelings, explain my conduct, and ask her pardon for being so mean, and in case she should refuse my proposition, to discontinue my visits, seal up my heart, explain my conduct to her father who was a Mason and my friend, as I certainly was his and had been from the first. I had gone to that point, and her very coolness had fired me with such ardent love, that by day and night I was getting really miserable and began to talk of going to Pikes Peak where the great excitement for Gold had become the cry of the day.

Through November and December I did as I had intended. I thought Mollie began to love me. She knew better than to try to coquette me. She would kiss Brother Ben & Dick, but I should have resented any of her fondling kindness if it had been extended, and she knew it. I did not intend to be led on and she knew it. About the first of December — I cannot state the day of the week, I think it was Monday, I proposed to go into a law partnership, giving her half the profits and I doing the work. She made me no reply. I then thought she would refuse me, and was preparing for it. I called at the time fixed for a reply, and she never mentioned the subject to me in any manner whatsoever. I went away with a sad heart. She treated me very kindly. I thought she rather pitied me. Of course I spurned pity and her kindness to me. I was in my mind preparing to turn into mockery, when on the fourteenth of December 1858,  I received her polite note stating that she knew I could make her happy and if I thought she could make me happy all she asked was for me to obtain her father's consent. I received this note from my clerk from the P.O. from W W White.


Several persons were in the office at the time I read the note. I had too much discretion to let any of them see my feelings. I put my note in my pocket, and soon as possible called to see my Dear Mollie. I had used no endearing terms to her. I had never given her good cause to think I loved her, until I had boldly

spoken to her in plain English. I then loved her as I had never loved her before. I had not cooed her with flowers and presents. I had acted manly, except by the weakness of love I had been held to her like the needle to the pole, or magnet.

Such was the history of my courtship with My Dear Mollie, whom I expect to be my wife, to share my Joys, and for whom may I always have a thousand good thoughts for her welfare to one for myself. For whom may I redouble my exertion to be great and good, wise and true and by God's blessing, if he will hear the prayer of a wicked man, I pray that I may be to her an ever faithful friend, guarding her as a tender flower from the frosts of life, a loving kind husband, and one worthy of her brave heart, vivid, chaste Soul and true Spirit. God bless her and me for her. I have written the foregoing chapter in my life for the Eye of no one for myself only. I have only two fears in this life. One is that Mollie will be but short lived, as she is a summer blossom, and another is that I shall — not willfully — but heedlessly neglect to do her my duty — and that some silent hour she will weep over my hard heart. God is my judge that I do not fear that I shall do this intentionally. — no never — I only fear my thoughtless nature. I believe that my Dear Mollie will try to please me, and look to our mutual interests. I have no doubt of this — Her temper is quick — and I have only to guard my own, as I am occasionally fool enough to get mad, which is simply a kind of insanity or lunacy, just as fatal as any other. Not that persons should never have feeling — but that they should never have anything like madness, as dangerous in mankind as in the canine species, where it generally proves quite fatal

Dec. 24, 1858 I spent ~~Christmas~~ New Years Eve very pleasantly with my Dear Mollie at a Ball at the St Charles Hotel in Fort Dodge. This is our first ball after our Engagement.


Mollie was dressed the most beautiful I ever saw her. God bless her, may she ever be as happy as she appears to night.

New Years, 1859 Saturday  As bright a day as I ever saw. The fall and winter has been most beautiful. But the roads were not good over two weeks all last summer

Col Wms came here about the [13th?] of the last Nov. and has been here since. The Town Company and laying out the R R addition for the purpose of dividing their property.

From the first of January to the 17th the roads are

beautiful No. snow, and delightful weather.

 Jan'y 17, 1859 I buy out a half interest in the Fort Dodge Sentinel and every thing connected with it and become publisher as well as Editor. I intend this shall pay up for itself. If it does not, I shall be mistaken

I have bot John Scotts farm Sargent is to have half, 160 acres \$1000. 175 down.

Jan'y 8, 1859 I am spending my days hard at work in my office and my Tuesdays Fridays, and Sundays in the evening with my Dear Mollie, whom I love, and by that love am made happy every hour.

Jan'y. 15, 1859 A fair prospect of trouble between the members of the Fort Dodge Town Company.

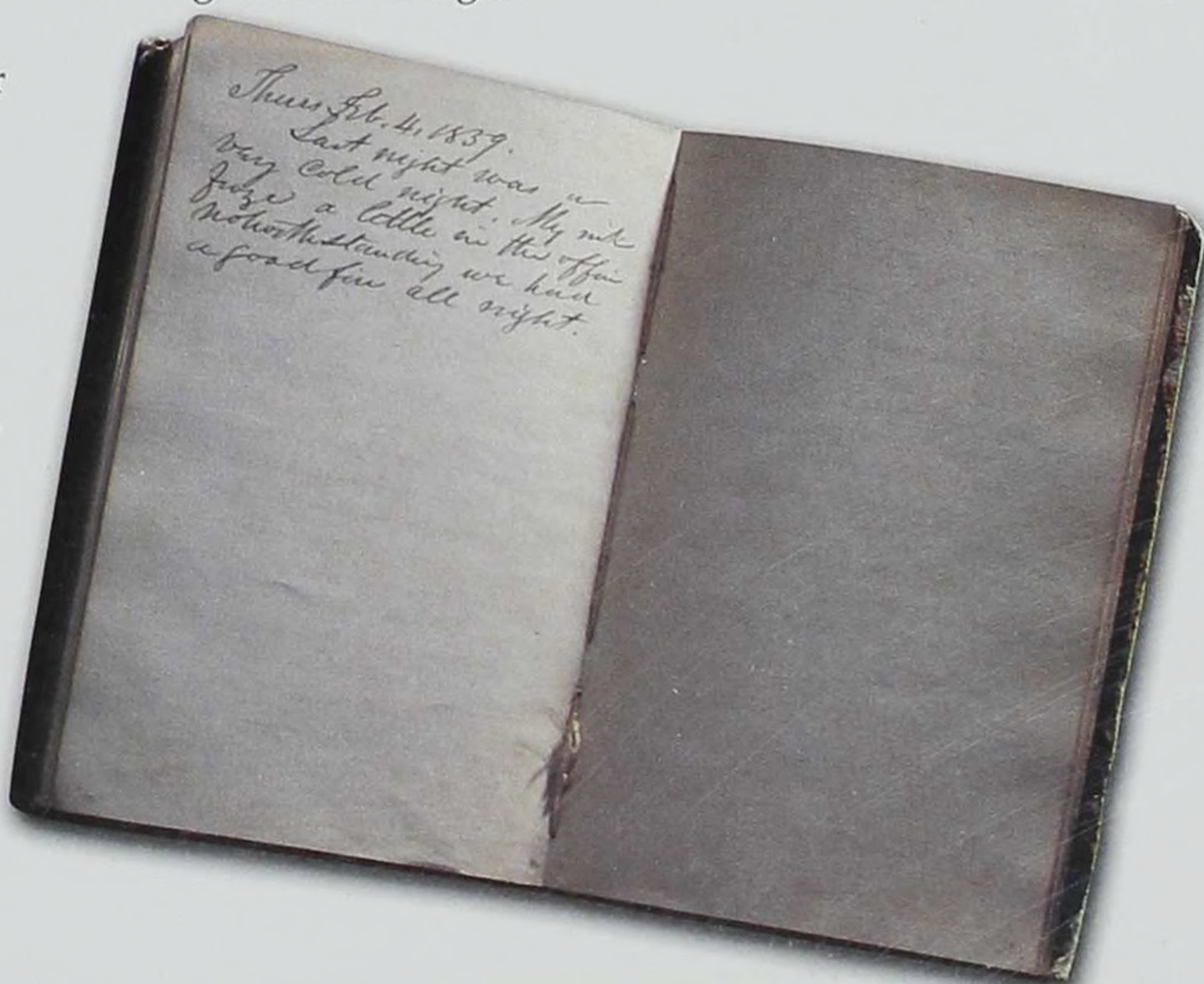
29 Jan'y I defend D McLaughlin for cutting river timber Great excitement. The whole south part of the county is here. Booker gets a terrible trashing by D McLaughlin.

This river timber question is bound to make trouble. My sympathies are entirely with the settlers.

Wednesday Feb 2, 59 I spend the day hard at work in my office and the evening with My Dear Mollie. God bless her.

Thurs Feb. 3, 59 Spend the evening at my excellent friends house, T Sargent with Col & Maj Wms & A S White playing Chess, Euchre, and drinking punch and eating cake

Thurs Feb. 4, 1859. Last night was a very cold night. My ink froze a little in the office notwithstanding we had a good fire all night.



John Duncombe and Mary "Mollie" Williams were married on May 11, 1859, three months after the diary ended. This is their wedding portrait. Below: The Duncombe home — "Fair Oaks" — in 1871. The house was built of gypsum blocks. Seven children were born to the couple. Two sons edited the *Fort Dodge Chronicle*, established by their father. Daughter Mary married U.S. Senator W. S. Kenyon.



HOUSE PHOTO: COURTESY WEBSTER COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY (FORT DODGE). PORTRAIT: FROM A BOOK OF DAYS, BY WILLIAM SAYLES DOAN (FORT DODGE: 1991), WITH AUTHOR'S PERMISSION.

EPILOGUE

John Duncombe, After the Diary

by Roger B. Natte

I really wonder if I was born to live and die without leaving a name," John Duncombe wrote in his diary in the spring of 1857. "Is it possible that more than one third of my probable life has passed without my doing one single act that will mark my memory, after the present race is dead?"

He need not have worried.

Duncombe became arguably Fort Dodge's most prominent citizen, achieving great success in both public and private realms. His legal training and natural ability brought him respect and recognition as one of Iowa's foremost attorneys. During a period in which the railroads played a powerful role in the state's economic and political life, he was the attorney for the Iowa Division of the Illinois Central for 37 years. He also represented the Mason City & Fort Dodge, the Fort Dodge & Fort Ridgely, the Des Moines & Fort Dodge, and the Cherokee & Dakota Railroads for shorter periods. Between 1881 and 1889 he lectured on railroad law for the University of Iowa's law school. He also served as president of the Iowa Bar Association.


As a member of what at times was a powerless political minority, he nevertheless wielded considerable personal influence. In 1860 he attended the Democratic National Convention as a delegate supporting James Breckenridge, and he chaired the Iowa delegation to the Democratic conventions in 1872 and 1892. He served in the Iowa state legislature for eight years — in the Senate, from 1859 to 1862, and in the House, for 1871–1872 and 1879–1880. He chaired the commission to revise the Iowa Code in 1860, served as a member of the Board of Regents


for the University of Iowa for 18 years, and in 1893 was appointed to the Iowa Commission for the Columbian Exposition (the Chicago World's Fair). In later years, he was chosen as the first president of the Iowa Pioneer Law Makers Association, indicating bipartisan recognition of his leadership.

Duncombe's success carried over into the business world. His early fortune was the result of his success as a land agent and land speculator. The wealth he acquired was immediately invested in other enterprises. An incorporator of the Iowa Falls & Sioux City (Illinois Central), the Mason City & Fort Dodge (Chicago Great Western), and the Fort Dodge & Fort Ridgely (Minneapolis & St. Louis) Railroads, he was the first to invest in coal mining in north central Iowa, finding a ready market with the railroads he was tied to financially. His coal investments later extended to the new fields of Wyoming. Duncombe was also one of the original financiers of the Fort Dodge gypsum industry, organizing in 1889 the Duncombe Stucco Mills and building the fourth mill in the area. One of the first local mill owners to recognize the benefits of consolidation in the industry, he sold his company eventually to the newly formed U.S. Gypsum Company.

The final area in which Duncombe left his mark was in journalism, first as co-owner and co-editor of the *Fort Dodge Sentinel*. He later was the editor of the *Fort Dodge Democrat*, and in later years he established the *Fort Dodge Chronicle* (which eventually merged with the *Fort Dodge Messenger*.)

John Francis Duncombe died in Fort Dodge, Iowa, on August 2, 1902, at the age of 70.

 **Roger B. Natte**, who transcribed the John Duncombe diaries, taught history at Iowa Central Community College for many years and also served on the board of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Natte has been involved in numerous local history projects in Fort Dodge and Webster County and has written many articles and monographs on local history.

 **Bill Silag** is guest associate editor of this issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. As author of the contextual sidebars, he drew upon his historical expertise in early town development in Iowa, the subject of his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Iowa in 1979. A former editor of *The Palimpsest*, Silag has taught history, worked in program evaluation and organizational development, served as managing editor and editor-in-chief of Iowa State University Press, and, most recently, edited *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000*. He is now at work on a history of Des Moines.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The main source of information used in preparing the sidebars was Roger Natte's *Frontier Foundations: Creating an Iowa County* (Fort Dodge: Webster County Historical Society, 2000), which includes discussions of the founding of Webster County, its frontier political institutions, and its county courthouse, along with excerpts from the Duncombe journals. Background material about Fort Dodge political traditions can also be found in Thomas Richard Ross, *Jonathan Prentiss Dolliver: A Study in Political Integrity and Independence* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1958), and Leland L. Sage, *William Boyd Allison: A Study in Practical Politics* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1956).

Jack T. Johnson, "Jesse Williams," *Palimpsest* 21 (June 1940), 184–96, which contains as much information about Bernhart Henn as about Jesse Williams, seems to be the only source available on the careers of these two important Iowa land speculators. Roscoe L. Lokken, *Iowa Public Land Disposal* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1942), and Malcolm J. Rohrbough, *The Land Office Business: The Settlement and Administration of American Public Lands, 1789–1837* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), are essential to understanding the context in which entrepreneurs like Henn and Williams operated.

John C. Parish, *George Wallace Jones* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1912), is a standard political biography. A profile of Senator Jones appears also in Franklin T. Oldt et al., eds., *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* (Chicago: Goodspeed Historical Association, [1911?]), 865–66. For information about the Dubuque & Pacific Railroad, and Senator Jones's role in it, see H. Roger Grant, ed., *Iowa Railroads: The Essays of Frank P. Donovan, Jr.* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), especially 102–25. George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution, 1815–1860* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1951; repr. New York: Harper and Row, 1968), 345–51, explains the railroad land grants.

Allan G. Bogue, "Iowa Claim Clubs: Symbol and Substance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 45 (June 1958), 231–53, disputes the democratic motivations attributed to club members by previous historians, highlighting instead the clubs'

dubious legality and the extortionist instincts of the membership. County seat wars are a major theme in Jacob A. Swisher, "The Location of County Seats in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 22 (January, April, July 1924): 89–128, 217–94, 323–62. Webster County's wrestling-match legend is told by Harold Andrews, "Wrestling Match Sealed the Fate of Pioneer Iowa Town," *Des Moines Register*, Nov. 19, 1922. Judge C. J. McFarland's years on the bench are recalled in L. F. Andrews, *Pioneers of Polk County, Iowa, and Reminiscences of the Early Days*, vol. 1 (Des Moines: Baker-Trisler Company, 1908), 449–56.

The material on Governor Carpenter's early career in Fort Dodge is drawn from Mildred Throne, *Cyrus Clay Carpenter and Iowa Politics, 1854–1898* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1974), which also contains an account of the Spirit Lake rescue mission. For a discussion of the events at Spirit Lake in 1857 and their aftermath, see Greg Olson, "Tragedy, Tourism, and the Log Cabin: How Abbie Gardner Sharp and Charlotte Kirchner Butler Preserved and Promoted the Past," *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* 82 (Summer 2001), 56–77.

Leland L. Sage, *A History of Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1974), traces Iowa's political evolution from territorial days through the 1850s with mounting suspense. Morton M. Rosenberg, *Iowa on the Eve of the Civil War: A Decade of Frontier Politics* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972), analyzes key aspects of the Republican ascendancy in Iowa in the 1850s. And James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) is excellent on the national context in the 1850s, especially about Bleeding Kansas (145–69) and the Black Republicans (143–44).

Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 3–13, 87–143, suggests that a man like young John Duncombe was probably not alone among 19th-century American men in his sometimes obsessive quest to find a soul mate. Maj. William Williams, who became John Duncombe's father-in-law in May 1859, looked back on the frontier years in "History of Webster County, Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (1st series) 7 (July 1869), 286–93.

— by Bill Silag

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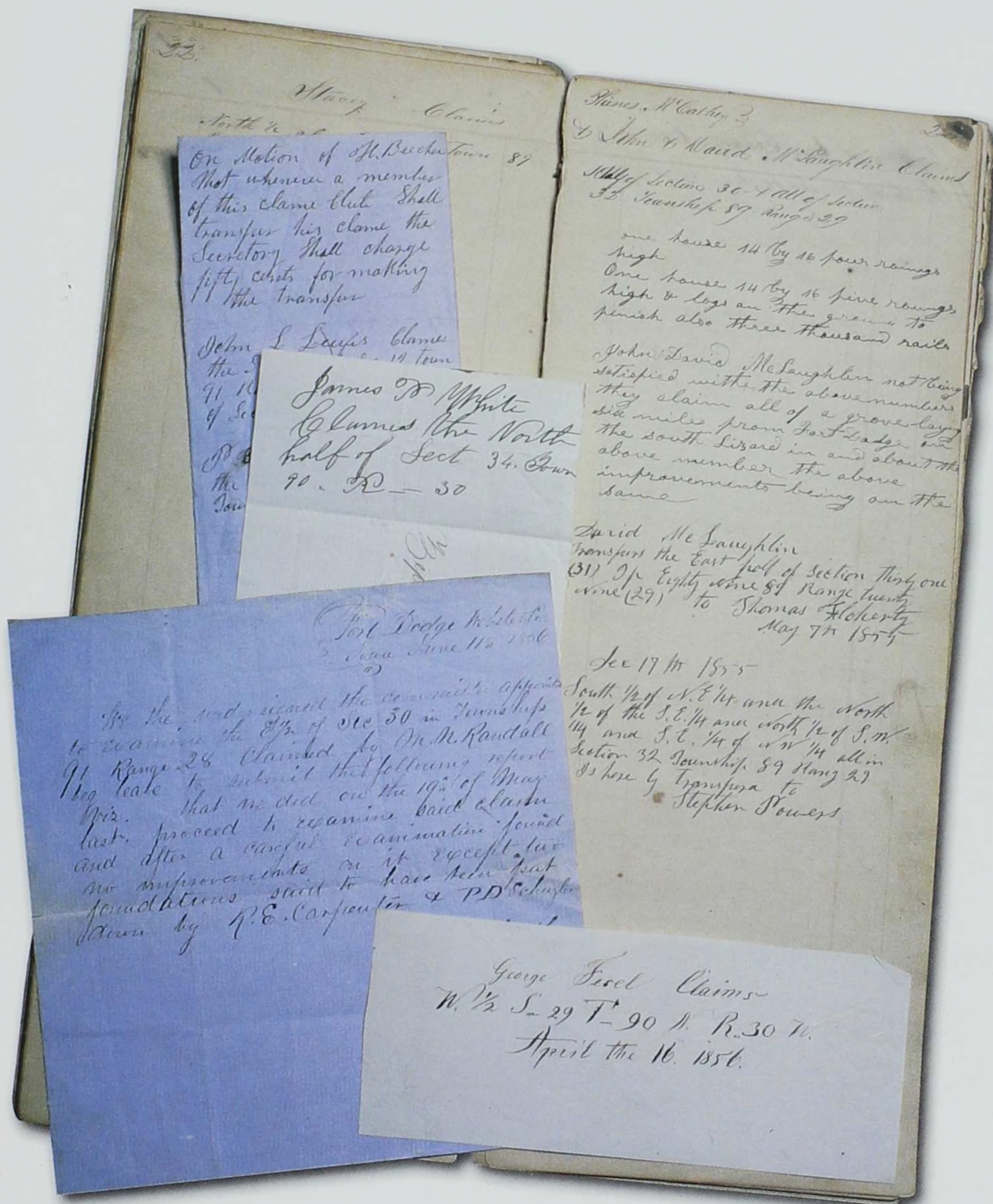
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One in a Million

Many of the individuals named in John Duncombe's diary also appear in these Fort Dodge Claim Club records, preserved in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. The ledger and assorted papers are filled with bylaws, minutes, membership lists, and various land claims described by section, township, and range location. On July 22, 1854, the secretary spelled out the claim club's purpose: "Whereas the land in this vicinity is not in market and may not be soon, We, the undersigned claimants deem it necessary in order to secure our lands to form ourselves into a Club for the purpose of assisting each other in holding claims." Under federal preemption laws, a squatter who had registered a claim and fulfilled other requirements was therefore eligible to make the first bid, at the minimum price, when that land came up for public sale. For more on claim clubs, see pages 66-67.

—The Editor



SHSI (DES MOINES); PHOTO BY CHARLES SCOTT

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There were lawyers and land agents aplenty in Fort Dodge, Iowa, in the late 1850s, and many of them advertised in this booklet, *A Brief Description of Fort Dodge, Iowa*. Attorney John Duncombe advertised in it, too. But he also kept a diary, writing candidly about the people he encountered, the battles he fought, and the land he traversed. This issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* brings you that remarkable diary.

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