

Francis J. Herron • Iowa Battle Flags Project • Mormon Handcart Migration • A 1905 Wedding

Summer 2006 • \$9

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers: We received several letters about our last issue, on the history of baseball in Iowa. Many readers included stories about local teams and players. Here are a few of them.

Shagging balls in Solon

Another outstanding publication about baseball. The issue brought back good memories. Solon, my hometown, had a good team. I used to shag balls and get into the games that way. Solon played the Davenport Indians, Cedar Rapids teams, the Moose of Iowa City, and a number of smaller towns in the area. A batter from Parnell was hit by a pitch which hit him on the hip pocket. He had a box of matches and they caught on fire.

E. E. Jebousek, Bella Vista, Arkansas

Babe Ruth in Rockwell City

No story about baseball in Iowa could be complete without recounting the time that Babe Ruth came to Rockwell City, Iowa. It was on Sunday, June 30, 1940. The Sultan of Swat performed a batting exhibition between a doubleheader of the Storm Lake White Caps playing Audubon, and the Rockwell City Cubs playing Pomeroy. My dad got Babe Ruth to autograph a baseball that to this day remains our family's most famous heirloom.

Merle Wilberding, by e-mail

Corrections on Feller

I very much enjoyed the baseball issue. Pictures and stories were very interesting. If you ever do another baseball article, I hope you will include some of the success we have had here in Bancroft. As a high school junior, Bob Feller pitched for Cleveland [not St. Louis]. He won five and lost three games at age 17.

Bill Dudding, Bancroft, Iowa

On July 4, 1935, Feller was 16 years of age [not 18] and had just completed his sophomore year at Van Meter High School. The summer after Feller completed his junior year he signed a contract with the pros and had a record of five wins and three losses for the Cleveland Indians at 17. At the end of that first season he returned to Van Meter High School for his senior year and was promptly elected president of the senior class. He was now a professional so he was unable to participate in high school sports at that time. The following spring Feller left school early but returned to graduate with his class. Bob Feller was a great pitcher and his record would have been even greater but for almost four seasons lost while serving in the navy during World War II.

Earl R. Shostrom, Urbandale, Iowa

Major Leaguers and their hometowns

According to www.baseball-reference.com, Max (Milo) Marshall was found to be born in Randolph, not Shenandoah. The two names under "Unknown" have been found to be born outside Iowa.

Rod Nelson, Society for American Baseball Research

I read with interest your issue on baseball and was interested in John Liepa's article "Hometowns of

Iowa's Major Leaguers." I feel we have a baseball player that quite qualified for mention. Herman Bell, whose hometown is Sibley, Iowa, played in the major leagues on two teams, the 1926 St. Louis Cardinals (they won their first-ever World Series in 1926) and in 1933 he pitched in the World Series as a member of the New York Giants. Bell also has the distinction of being the last National Leaguer to pitch back-to-back games. In 1924 he pitched and won both ends of a doubleheader. I do hope he gets a mention.

*Jan Stofferan, Curator, McCallum Museum
Osceola County Historical Society, Sibley, Iowa*

Author John Liepa's reply: Jan, our list only included native-born Iowans. Although Herman Bell had ten good years as a major leaguer from 1924 to 1934, he was born in Mt. Sherman, Kentucky, on August 16, 1897, so he doesn't qualify for our roster. Over 100 major leaguers either went to college in Iowa, spent baseball time in Iowa, or decided to settle and die here. They're not eligible for our list.

As a native of Lee County and a baseball fan, I was very interested in the article "Hometowns of Iowa's Major Leaguers." Under Keokuk, Rollin Lutz is listed. Joe Lutz of Keokuk High School, class of 1942, played briefly for the St. Louis Browns directly out of high school. His big sister was a high school classmate, so I had a bit more than casual interest in him. Under Donnellson, Iowa, you list a Lawson, but not Roxie Lawson, who did a fair amount of big-league pitching. To the best of my memory that would have been in the 1950s (with the Tigers?). Thanks for an interesting article.

John Vermazen, by e-mail

Author John Liepa's reply: Rollin and Joe Lutz are one and the same. Many players used more than one name and had numerous nicknames. Roxie Lawson's real name was Alfred Voyle Lawson, but Roxie was so much more "catchy." Thank you for your interest in Iowa's early baseball history.

Kittenball in Battle Creek

I surely enjoyed your baseball issue. I was hoping to see mention of the "kittenball" (softball) craze of the 1930s. My small town, Battle Creek, as most other towns, had a lighted field and a town team. We even imported from Sioux City a pitcher with a great windmill delivery; he was given an easy job with the auto dealer for the summer. My father played with the fat men's team against their great rivals, the local firemen. Surprising what a keg of beer can do as an incentive, and the stands were packed. At our country school we played "work up" at noon. One of my schoolmates was not a good ballplayer. Her batting stroke was vertical, not horizontal, a woodchopper's swing we called it. Were we surprised when her downward swing drove the ball against the wood home plate and arced the ball over the fence!

Gordon Marshall, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

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On the Cover

The Civil War battle flag of the Hawkeye Rangers, Company B, 1st Iowa Volunteer Cavalry, bears an unusual painted eye. Made by women in Lyons (Clinton today), the 29x42-inch silk flag is part of the State Historical Society's Iowa Battle Flags Project. A hawk, 34 stars, and the words "We will meet you on the Border" are on the back.

PHOTO BY AND COURTESY OF ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

"General Herron has a neat, well-formed person, and dresses with much taste. In appearance he is intelligent, and in manners agreeable," wrote Iowa captain A. A. Stuart in 1865. Stuart praised Herron for his calm composure, taciturnity (though not "sullen or morose"), and self-reliant spirit.

Courage and Conduct

Francis J. Herron

by Dennis Black

A man of less nerve would have been intimidated, perhaps sought safety in retreat and been destroyed. Gen. Herron decided otherwise, and, undismayed, threw his little army upon the rebel lines with an energy and fierceness."

So states an 1867 description of Francis J. Herron at the Battle of Prairie Grove. That Herron was the consummate militarist would be proven throughout the Civil War. He served fearlessly in several chapters of the great epic. He earned promotions at astonishingly early ages, becoming brigadier-general and major-general in his mid-20s. He was awarded the nation's Medal of Honor. And yet he is Iowa's most unknown and overlooked military hero.

Francis J. Herron was born on February 17, 1837, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, the son of wealthy farmer and landowner John Herron and Clarissa Anderson Herron. Francis received his first formal education at a military academy in Frankfort, Kentucky, following which he entered Western University of Pennsylvania in Pittsburgh. He left the university at the age of 16 to clerk in a bank and in 1854 partnered in the family banking firm of Herron and Brothers. The next year he and his brother Richard moved to Dubuque, attracted by the vast commerce of the Mississippi River. First engaged in the lumber business, the brothers were soon joined by two more, and they opened the Herron and Brothers Bank of Dubuque.

Herron was involved in more than business. He considered a militia integral to the well-being of the citizenry, and in February 1858, he organized a local unit, "Governor's Greys," named in honor of former Iowa governor Stephen Hempstead from Dubuque. Herron

was its captain. The town took pride in the unit; in April 1860 the *Dubuque Herald* boasted that "the Governor's Greys were out on parade yesterday in their new white accoutrements. We will defy any city in the West to turn out a better looking military company or a 'whiter' [more honorable] lot of boys than our own G. G's. 'Tis true they are composed of the very pink of our finest young men."

By the spring of 1861, Herron and the Greys were anxious, willing, and ready for duty when President Lincoln's call to arms followed the fall of Fort Sumter. They left Dubuque in April to rendezvous in Keokuk. The Greys mustered in as Company I, one of ten companies in the 1st Iowa Volunteer Infantry.

Following two weeks of training, the 1st Iowa departed Keokuk on June 13 to join other Union forces in Missouri. Dramatically divided over the war, Missouri had rejected secession though it had a pro-Southern governor who maintained state troops near St. Louis and the federal arsenal. What happened in Missouri was critical. Determined to push rebel forces out of southwestern Missouri, General Nathaniel Lyon led 3,000 infantry and a battery of artillery towards Springfield. En route they were joined by two Kansas volunteer regiments, a detachment of regular (non-volunteer) army, and an additional artillery battery. The blazing summer sun took a toll on the new recruits, with many falling by the wayside. Such was not the case for Herron and the 1st Iowa, who "stood the test of endurance so well that they out-distanced part of the column," a historian later wrote. "General Lyon called them his Iowa greyhounds" for their swiftness and stamina.

At 5 a.m. on August 10, Lyon's army entered its first battle. Wilson's Creek was the second battle of the Civil

War, the first west of the Mississippi River, and a fierce and bloody confrontation with great deeds of valor on both sides. Lyon's 4,200 troops and Colonel Franz Sigel's 1,200 launched a surprise attack against Confederate General Ben McCulloch.

Unknown at the time, McCulloch commanded a force of 11,600 men. Lyon moved his troops down the west side of Wilson's Creek, where they encountered an enemy cavalry force in retreat. In pursuit, Lyon's troops were met with enfilading artillery. Meanwhile, Sigel had positioned his Union troops on the ridge east of Wilson's Creek and opened artillery fire on the main camp along the creek. The Union had the upper hand until the Confederates regrouped and responded with vengeance. Five of Sigel's six cannon were captured and his command was decimated by point-blank musket fire from 40 yards. The 1st Iowa wore butternut-colored uniforms, as did many Southern troops, and in the confusion of the battle, Sigel had mistaken the Confederates for the 1st Iowa and ordered his men to hold fire.

Lyon was twice wounded and then fell when a musket ball pierced his chest. One historian described his death: "'Iowa Regiment, you are noble boys!' [Lyon] murmured as he saw his 'greyhounds' prepare to charge. A moment later he died."

Major S. D. Sturgis now assumed command. Preparing for the final attack, every available Union soldier was moved to the front, effectively concentrating their muskets and artillery. The Confederates established a line of 6,000 men but did not break the Union lines. Nevertheless, Sturgis and his troops, exhausted and low on ammunition, retreated to Springfield and then to the railroad at Rolla. Although Wilson's Creek was considered the South's victory, the Confederates erred in failing to pursue and finalize that victory.

Of the 1st Iowa's 800 troops, 154 were casualties at Wilson's Creek. Francis Herron was slightly wounded by an exploding artillery shell. He was later praised by Sturgis for his "zeal and courage." Sturgis also praised the 1st Iowa Volunteers for fighting "like devils, and if any man after this ever says to me that volunteers won't fight, I'll make it a personal matter with him!"

Ten days after the Battle of Wilson's Creek, Herron and the 1st Iowa were mustered out, having served beyond the 90-day enlistment. He and the Governor's Greys returned to Dubuque for an exuberant welcome home. Herron immediately went in search of an officer's commission in another regiment.

He found it in the 9th Iowa Infantry, raised by Con-

gressman William Vandever from his northeast Iowa district. The 9th was mustered into service at Dubuque on September 24, 1861, with Vandever as colonel and Herron as lieutenant-colonel. The regiment immediately departed Dubuque by steamer for training at Benton Barracks, St. Louis.

From fall to midwinter, the 9th Iowa guarded railroads in Missouri. In late January 1862, the regiment joined Brigadier-General Samuel R. Curtis and the Army of the Southwest, and proceeded to Springfield in search of Major-General Sterling Price, commander of the pro-Confederate Missouri State Guard. At Sugar Creek, along the Missouri-Arkansas border, the 9th Iowa experienced its first skirmish, advancing on an enemy three times as large. The Confederates put up little resistance and fled south into Arkansas to rendezvous with Major-General Earl Van Dorn.

Van Dorn commanded Confederate troops west of the Mississippi. On the evening of March 6, he and his 16,500 troops (including 800 Cherokees) attempted to outflank Curtis's army of 10,250, consolidated three miles south of Elkhorn Tavern at Pea Ridge—the site of what would be the Civil War's most decisive battle west of the Mississippi.

Van Dorn had divided his army into two columns. Herron was in temporary command of the 9th Iowa when advised of Van Dorn's move. In response, he ordered the regiment in a sustained, forced march of 16 hours to join the main body. Upon their arrival, he told his men, "We have come a long ways, boys, to fight them, and by the Eternal, we will fight them right here!"

Van Dorn's division of his army into two columns was a major tactical error. Curtis seized the opportunity by turning his troops to the north, meeting the en-





COURTESY ANDY THOMAS

emy head on. Two Confederate generals, Benjamin McCulloch and James McIntosh, were killed.

The Battle of Pea Ridge raged for two days. Vandever later praised Herron's "coolness and bravery" in rallying his men to "repeated acts of daring." Although the men in the 9th Iowa performed like the veterans they were, casualties totaled nearly a third of the regiment.

Herron had led several charges against the determined Confederates before he and his horse were si-

Above: *On the Battery: The Battle of Pea Ridge at Elkhorn Tavern, March 7, 1862.* Painting by Andy Thomas.

multaneously hit by a shell fragment. His right ankle was shattered, and his fallen horse pinned him to the ground.

Captured by the enemy, Herron was taken to a Confederate jail in Van Buren, Arkansas. For two weeks in his cell, he looked through the bars of his window at a large Confederate flag waving in the wind atop the

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Captured by the enemy, Herron was taken to a Confederate jail in Van Buren, Arkansas. For two weeks in his cell, he looked through the bars of his window at a large Confederate flag waving in the wind atop the

courthouse. Nine months later, he and his troops would march through Van Buren, where Herron would take possession of the flag with "considerable pleasure" and send it to Iowa's governor.

Herron was soon exchanged for Colonel Lewis Herber who, coincidentally, had fought at Wilson's Creek. After a brief recuperation in Baltimore, Herron returned to Iowa and promptly sought a promotion through his friend, Iowa governor Samuel J. Kirkwood. Without hesitation, Kirkwood recommended promotion, and on July 30 Lieutenant-Colonel Herron was promoted to brigadier-general, becoming the only officer in Iowa history to bypass a colonelcy. Thus, at the age of 25, Francis J. Herron became Iowa's youngest general. He thanked the governor with several boxes of cigars delivered to his office.

Herron was soon assigned command of the 3rd Division of the Army of the Frontier, under General John Schofield. Schofield's three divisions had been skirmishing between Missouri and Arkansas. General James G. Blunt, 1st Division, was in the vicinity of Bentonville when he moved against a detachment of Major-General Thomas C. Hindman's army, perhaps 20,000 strong in Arkansas's Boston Mountains. Hindman now gathered his troops for an assault.

Blunt needed reinforcements and immediately dispatched a messenger, who arrived early on December 3 at Schofield's command. Schofield was absent, leaving Herron in command. Herron immediately broke camp, and, with the 2nd and 3rd divisions, entered a forced march of men, guns, and wagon trains. After four grueling days and nights and 110 miles, Herron and his troops arrived at Fayetteville a few hours before dawn on December 7.

Hindman did not yet know

Herron's troop strength. When Major James M. Hubbard of Herron's advance guard was captured, he was taken before Hindman and was asked, "How much of a force has General Herron?"

The soldier replied, "Enough to annihilate you!"

Hubbard's firm resolve caught Hindman's attention and tempered his eagerness to attack Herron.

Hindman's massive army now lined Prairie Grove, partially sandwiched between Blunt and Herron's three divisions. Skilled artilleries dueled relentlessly. Herron led numerous infantry advances up the slopes: "For four miles we fought their cavalry, driving them back to Illinois creek, where I found their whole force strongly posted on a long ridge, with magnificent positions for batteries. For one mile in front it was clear ground, and my road lay right in the center of their line. From a pris-



COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS

Early in February 1863, Francis Herron wrote Governor Kirkwood the following words: "With this, I send you a rebel flag captured by my troops, at Van Buren, Arkansas, in December last. This identical flag was floating on the court-house in that place, one year ago, while I was there, held as a prisoner of war; and, of course, it gave me considerable pleasure to take possession of it. Will you please pass it over to the State Historical Society, with my compliments."

Although the flag appears reversed, some 19th-century flags had the canton in the upper right rather than the upper left. The flag measures about 14x8 feet. A circle of eight stars surrounds a slightly larger ninth star. According to researcher Dave Holmgren, "This is a rather unusual number of stars on a Confederate flag. Some early Confederate flags showed seven stars for the seven original states of the Confederacy. Later flags showed eleven stars for the total number of states that eventually joined. Others showed thirteen stars, to include Missouri and Kentucky although neither seceded from the Union. Perhaps this flag shows nine stars because Arkansas was the ninth state to secede. It joined the Confederacy within weeks of the surrender of Fort Sumter and secession of Virginia. Tennessee and North Carolina followed later in May."

oner taken, I learned that Hindman was on the ridge, with his whole force, and intended to whip me out before Blunt could get up—in other words, to take us one at a time. The case looked tough, with Blunt ten miles away, and 25,000 men between us; but I saw at a glance there were just two things that could be done; namely, fight them without delay, and depend on the chance of Blunt's hearing me and coming up, or retreat and lose my whole train. It required no time to make a decision."

Blunt, having heard the commotion of heavy battle, moved to position, shifting the momentum to the Union. Still, neither army gained advantage. As darkness fell on the blood-soaked slopes, casualties were immense. The Union loss at the Battle of Prairie Grove was 1,100; the Confederate loss, 3,000. During the night and following morning, Hindman and his rebel army quietly retreated.

Although the Confederate forces had been more than double those of the North, the Yankees had persevered through sheer determination and superior leadership. Blunt praised Herron for his gallantry and highest conduct. A Civil War chronicler noted, "At Prairie Grove [Herron] led the advance over the ford of Illinois Creek, and, under the rapid and accurate fire of the enemy, was in imminent peril; but he was perfectly calm, and apparently insensible of danger." Another chronicler minced no words: "The battle of Prairie Grove is Herron's praise. He can rest on the laurels he won there, and in getting there, certain that he will go down to history among the bravest of the brave generals of the war, and among the most energetic and efficient."

For his leadership at Prairie Grove, Brigadier-General Herron was promoted to major-general. The promotion on March 10, 1863, was retroactive to 1862. Though others would follow, Herron—having just turned 26 in February—was at that time the Civil War's youngest major-general.

Now commanding a division of eight regiments and three batteries, Herron joined Grant in his siege on Vicksburg. He arrived on June 11 and immediately took position left of Grant's line along the Mississippi River. Heretofore, the Confederates had relayed orders under the cover of darkness. In Grant's words, Herron's action "cut off the last possible chance of communications between [Confederate generals] Pemberton and Johnston." With Pemberton's surrender on July 4, 1863, Grant selected Herron to occupy the city. Fruits of the Confederates' surrender were some 2,200 officers and 27,000 enlisted men, as well as 172 cannon and 60,000 small arms.

Grant also ordered Herron to drive the Confederates out of Yazoo City, a few miles northwest of

Vicksburg and the site of a Confederate naval yard. Herron's division steamed up the Yazoo River with a convoy of three gunboats, including the ironclad USS *Baron DeKalb*. Arriving just below Yazoo, Herron and his troops went ashore. The gunboats proceeded upriver, but the Confederate batteries were strong and well positioned, and the gunboats retreated out of range.

Herron stated that on July 13, he and "Major Clark, of my staff, went on board the gunboat *De Kalb*, in advance of [Union troops moving into Yazoo City]. The *De Kalb* had moved up to a point nearly opposite the city, when she was blown up by a torpedo (a number of which had been placed in the river by Captain Brown, of the Confederate Navy), which tore away some 2 feet of her port bow, and sinking her in less than a quarter of an hour in 15 feet of water. Fortunately, no one was hurt."

The Union destroyed five Confederate steamers at Yazoo City. Herron reported taking "six guns, with about 200 rounds of ammunition for guns, and captured about 300 prisoners, with 8 commissioned officers." His troops also captured 250 stand of small arms; 2,000 bales of cotton; 800 horses and mules; and hospital bedding for 450 patients. He reported a countryside teeming with corn, beef, hogs, and sheep. Thousands of bales of cotton were "stored in the woods and valleys," and at least 50,000 bales could be transported from Yazoo City. Showing his concern for his men, Herron added, "Owing to the constant labor to which my men have been subjected during the last month, the change of climate, and the impure water used on this trip, many of them are sick."

Just five days after Vicksburg's surrender, another 5,000 Confederates had surrendered at Port Hudson, Louisiana. The Mississippi River was now open to the sea, and the Confederacy was split.

Following Vicksburg, Grant assigned Herron to the 13th Army Corps, commanded by General O. E. C. Ord, Department of the Gulf. Near the end of two weeks of skirmishing in Louisiana, Herron relinquished his command. He was extremely ill, unable to perform command duties. Ord placed him on leave and he departed by steamer for a hospital.

Upon his return a month later, Herron received the command of Union forces at Brownsville, Texas, across the Rio Grande River from Matamoros, Mexico. Mexico was also in the throes of a civil war. Although his hands were officially tied, Herron was thrust into a hotbed of international politics. American interests were at risk,

for France had troops on Mexican soil in what President Lincoln considered a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. France was a known sympathizer of the Confederacy, to the point of providing harbor and haven to its raiders plundering the high seas. Lincoln's administration was not about to allow the French to succeed in their dream of reestablishing an empire.

Although liberal Mexicans were in power at the time of Herron's arrival at Brownsville, by mid-year the power had shifted and Napoleon III had installed his puppet Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph von Habsburg of Austria as emperor of Mexico. The liberals, under President Benito Juarez, departed Mexico City and entered exile as the French embarked on the path of occupying the country.

Although ordered to exhibit no visible involvement in Mexican affairs, Herron was besieged with requests, both open and confidential, to intervene. He rendered aid where possible, some of which is known, and undoubtedly much that has never been revealed. An example of his open intervention occurred in early January when violence erupted in Matamoros. The U.S. consul dispatched the following message to Herron on the evening of January 12: "A battle is now raging in the streets of this city between the forces of Governor Manuel Ruiz and Col. Juan N. Cortina. My person and family are in great danger, as the road between here and the ferry is said to be infested with robbers. I have also about \$1,000,000 in specie and a large amount of other valuable property under my charge in the consulate, and from the well-known character of Cortina and his followers, I fear the city will be plundered. I therefore earnestly request that you will send a sufficient force to protect myself and property and to transport the money within the limits of the United States at the earliest possible moment."

Herron ordered the 20th Wisconsin Infantry to cross the Rio Grande. The contingent arrived by 11:30 that night, but waited until morning to rescue the consulate personnel and the million dollars in gold or silver. Governor Ruiz was decisively beaten in the battle that followed, and he and other prominent officers crossed the Rio Grande as refugees.

Matamoros was one of many sensitive and delicate missions that Herron oversaw in his unenviable position of responsibility along the Mexican border. Official records laud the man and his many accomplishments, and it is most apparent that the federal administration had total confidence in the abilities of the 27-year-old major-general from Iowa.

Herron was soon ordered to Louisiana and then to Arkansas. This marked a major change in his life. Herron

was given a free hand to investigate kickbacks, diversions of public property to private use, bribes, and overbillings in the Department of Arkansas. Herron traveled to Fort Smith, Arkansas, and there rekindled friendships with trusted acquaintances. His officer friends, knowing he would treat them well in the face of anticipated discoveries, assisted greatly in getting to the bottom of the sordid and blatant corruption. The results of Herron's investigations, according to a fellow Iowa soldier, were "published in nearly all the leading papers of the country, and convinced all honest men that the Department of Arkansas had been the theatre of most outrageous abuses." Herron's successful resolution of the problem did not go unnoticed by his superiors.

The Civil War was now in its final stage. Confederate troops were demoralized, and desertion was rampant. In late March 1865, Herron joined forces along the eastern shore of Mobile Bay, Alabama, where retreating Confederates had taken final refuge in two nearby forts. Both fell rather easily to the Union, especially with immense contributions by African American troops. Because Herron was a calm and decisive man, it was no surprise when he was selected to negotiate and receive the formal surrender of the Trans-Mississippi Army—60,000 troops—at Shreveport, Louisiana.

Herron was offered many opportunities to remain in service to the Union. In fact, after tendering his resignation in early May and awaiting word from Washington, he proceeded with his duties, including the initial negotiations with Indian nations that had supported the Confederacy. He was also intimately involved in the decisions regarding civil control and law enforcement in Louisiana during the massive reconstruction of the devastated South. Herron went so far as to urge freed slaves to stay with their former masters, in the capacity of paid laborers to plant crops, and thus help restore the South's economy.

Herron's resignation was officially accepted on July 10, 1865. Because of his extensive family in Iowa, most expected that he would return. He was captivated by Louisiana, however, and remained in New Orleans to practice law and pursue other business interests. Word of Herron's decision reached Iowa, where an 1867 profile reported that Herron "is now a resident of New Orleans. While fighting Confederate armies, he seems to have become enamored of the soft breezes and sunny skies of Confederate latitudes, and soon after the establishment of peace within their borders, took up his abode

among his former enemies. Bountifully may he be prospered. If his successes in civil life are proportioned to the merits of his military career, they will be productive."

The price of cotton had soared during the Civil War as demand far exceeded supply. Knowing the price would remain high for a few years, Herron saw the opportunity for huge and quick profits. In the spring of 1866, Herron and Whitelaw Reid (renowned author, newspaper editor, and Radical Republican) entered into partnership and leased three plantations near Natchez. According to *Scribner's Monthly Magazine*, "The bold novices planted the large number of 2,200 acres with cotton, hiring and working no less than 300 Negroes." All looked well, with a huge crop ripening in the fields, when army worms invaded. The loss was immense; only a fourth of the crop was harvested. Luckily, Herron and Reid's meager harvest covered labor and fixed expenses.

Herron was an astute businessman, and his decision to live in New Orleans was surely for business purposes. However, the major-general was soon smitten by the natural beauty and social class of a locally prominent widow. Adelaide Sophia Wibray Flash had inherited considerable stock, funds in Europe, and slaves. Herron was an active Radical Republican and adamantly opposed to slavery in any form; one wonders how he made peace with the issue of his wife having inherited slaves (whom she had freed after the war), or if political and ideological differences even existed between the two.

Although Francis and Adelaide's date of marriage is uncertain, 1870 records indicate that the couple, in their early 30s, was financially secure. Their household comprised three daughters from Adelaide's previous marriage, a white governess, and two white servants.

Herron had entered the upper crust of southern Louisiana's economic and political social structure. The attorney was at ease in this environment and soon befriended Henry



In New Orleans after the war, Herron married Adelaide Flash.

BOTH PHOTOS, COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

enough to protect him from his adversaries, and he implicated Herron for bogus charges of corruption as a tax collector, claiming he diverted settled accounts to personal use. Herron's friends recognized the ridiculous nature of Warmouth's charges as an obvious vindictive reaction for his own political problems and inadequacies.

Strong and resourceful, with head held high, Herron returned to his law practice. Then, in 1877, when Radical Reconstruction ended and federal troops withdrew from Louisiana, the Herrons departed for New York City. There he was a successful attorney and pursued a variety of business endeavors, including manufacturing and banking. He was active in both the Grand Army of the Republic and the Loyal Legion.

In 1893, a letter arrived informing Herron of his selection as a recipient of the nation's highest recognition for military valor—the Medal of Honor—awarded for his actions on March 7, 1862, at the Battle of Pea Ridge. Then a lieutenant-colonel, he had assisted in the command of the 9th Iowa Infantry and "was foremost in leading his men, rallying them to repeated acts of daring, until himself disabled and taken prisoner." Congress had established the Medal of



Herron was a New York attorney and businessman later in life.

Honor in the 1860s, but many Civil War heroes were not designated for the award until two or three decades later. The War Department issued Herron's medal on September 26, 1893.

Herron died on January 8, 1902, a month short of his 65th birthday and just two months after Adelaide's death. For several weeks he had suffered severely with inflammatory rheumatism and heart trouble. At the news of his death, the Dubuque armory announced plans to drape his portrait in mourning and fly the flag at half-staff for 30 days.

In Queens, New York, Francis and Adelaide's graves are marked by a massive, rose granite stone, adorned by a huge, sculpted sitting eagle. In Des Moines, Iowa, however, any symbol of his heroic actions in the Civil War is oddly absent from a far larger monument.

About the time when Herron received the Medal of Honor, a massive memorial to Iowans in the Civil War was taking shape, at least on paper. In 1887, Iowa veterans in the Grand Army of the Republic had pushed for a monument to be located near the state capitol. The next year, the legislature appropriated initial funds and appointed a commission to select the design.

The Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument was controversial from the very beginning, and the wrangling lasted a decade. As the *Iowa State Register* commented in one of many articles on the subject, "The commission's pathway has not been lined with roses along the entire route." Arguments persisted over the artist, the design, and the specific location. Selecting which of nearly 77,000 Civil War soldiers should be honored on the monument was a monumental question in itself. Should they only be officers? Only ordinary soldiers? Only those who had died in the war? Should the portraits be based on actual likenesses or simply represent "the ideal soldier"? Perhaps the names of all Iowa regiments should appear, rather than images of soldiers.

At a time when public statuary dictated popular memory and held great cultural significance, these were weighty debates. Selection of individuals to be depicted apparently began in December 1893. As monument commission secretary D. N. Richardson explained in early 1896, "We have spent several years doing this work and examining into the records of the various soldiers."

In the design that evolved, the 135-foot shaft was crowned by a classical figure of Victory. Two-thirds down the shaft, equestrian statues paid tribute to four of Iowa's greatest Civil War heroes, each astride a spirited horse. These four equestrian statues were consid-

ered the greatest honor. Below the statues, on each side of the monument, large bronze medallions featured another four heroes. Thirty-two smaller medallions belted the square pedestal; bas-reliefs depicted the Battle of Donelson and Iowans' triumphal return home; and allegorical figures represented Iowa and History. Statues of an infantryman, cavalryman, artilleryman, and sailor looking out from the corners completed the monument. In all, 86 Iowans appear on the monument. General Francis Jay Herron does not. Herron's Civil War comrades and Iowa friends were furious.

Certainly some Iowans held Herron in disfavor, primarily because he had been a friend to Louisiana governor Henry Warmouth and had served in his postbellum administration during the time Warmouth had used his position for personal gain—even though Herron was innocent of any wrongdoing and was released from his duties as secretary of state when he would not support the governor during impeachment proceedings.

Throughout Herron's life, however, numerous and notable individuals also attested to his honor, decency, and heroism—as had the Medal of Honor he received in 1893. Many individuals now argued fervently on his behalf as the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Commission identified Iowans to be honored on the memorial.

Regarding the highest honor—the equestrian statues—an April 1894 newspaper article on the commission's progress announced that "it was decided that the four equestrian statues . . . should represent Generals [Grenville] Dodge, [John M.] Corse, [Marcellus M.] Crocker, and [Samuel Ryan] Curtis." Whether these were the final choices is not clear. At a November 1895 commission meeting, former Iowa senator J. K. Graves of Dubuque argued that Herron deserved an equestrian statue. He was supported by testimonies, letters, and petitions from Governor-elect F. M. Drake; U.S. Senator William B. Allison; recent Speaker of the House David Henderson; Dubuque's Governor's Greys; and others of importance. In response, the commission explained that no space remained for a fifth equestrian statue and instead voted unanimously that Herron's likeness would replace the Iowa coat of arms on one of the four large medallions.

The Iowa Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, south of the capitol, honors Iowans in the Civil War. Although the likenesses on it clearly represent specific individuals, none are identified by name. Controversy dogged the planning and design of the monument, particularly regarding who would appear on it.

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Graves saw this as somewhat of a victory. The large medallion, he said, "is second place on the monument, and considering the insidious, cowardly New York attack upon General Herron's character, had relegated our hero to obscurity so far as Iowa's monument is concerned, is a triumphant vindication of his unsullied civic character, in harmony with his excellent military record." Graves referred to a "cowardly letter" from an unnamed "assassin of character" who had "stabbed in character and hurled [Herron] from Iowa's monument but two months after the outrage [became] known."

The "outrage" may have referred to a *New York Times* article two months earlier, on September 20, announcing possible litigation against "Francis J. Herron, a broker at 45 Broadway" regarding alleged stock speculation in a Mexico mining operation. Nothing more is known about the charges against Herron, but they apparently affected the commission's choices. Months later, commission member C. H. Gatch stated that the commission had considered Herron for an equestrian statue until they heard of the slanders and initially believed them.

Herron's supporters would not rest. On January 21, 1896, Senator Robert Bonson of Dubuque entered Joint Resolution No. 7. The monument commission had indeed received "a secret communication impugning the General's personal character," Bonson stated, but the Governor's Greys had "conclusively demonstrated the utter groundlessness of the secret attack." Why then, Bonson asked, "of Iowa's two living Major-Generals, one [Samuel Curtis] was accorded equestrian honors and the other given a Medallion"? The senator's resolution was meant to force the monument commission to grant Herron equestrian honors on the monument. Due to apparent behind-the-scenes lobbying, Joint Resolution No. 7 was not adopted. Herron would not be honored by an equestrian statue.

A year and a half later, contractors were installing the medallions on the monument, and on August 27 the *Iowa State Register* listed those depicted. According

to the news story, Herron was assigned a large medallion, as were General W. W. Belknap, General Edward Hatch, and Colonel E. F. Winslow. But in the end, the Iowa coat of arms, not Herron's likeness, appeared within the large medallion. No further explanation for this final substitution has been found.

A great injustice was rendered by the Iowa Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument Commission. Unquestionably, Herron's contribution to the legacy of Iowans in the Civil War was monumental. Yet, vicious innuendo with no validity resulted in his absence on the monument and his obscurity in Iowa history. Several of Iowa's historically prominent figures, along with the media they influenced, had

commented negatively on Herron's decision to stay in Louisiana following the war; were quick to point out that his wife had inherited slaves; widely reported the scandal in the Louisiana administration; and savored any rumors of business failures.

Even his final years have been portrayed negatively by scholars and biographers. *Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union Commanders* (1964) states that Herron's "stature and fortunes steadily diminished" during his years in the Louisiana governor's administration and that "his death certificate records that he died in a 'tenement' on West 99th Street [New York City], 'Occupation: None.'" A recent history of the Battle of Wilson's Creek (published in 2000) cites this same source and asserts that he was "unsuccessful in business and died in poverty."

These interpretations are easily refuted. First of all, although Herron's 1902 death certificate lists his occupation as "none," the 1900 census lists him as a banker. Perhaps he had exited his career because of severe health problems in the last months of his life. Second, the notation of "tenement" on his death certificate did not necessarily mean a slum. Technically, a tenement (from the word "tenant") meant simply a multiple-dwelling build-

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; FROM A. A. STUART'S IOWA'S COLONELS AND REGIMENTS . . . (1865).



A steel engraving of Herron from an 1865 book about "Iowa's distinguished officers—those through whom the military prowess of the State is known abroad." Years later, rumor and innuendo overshadowed Herron's prowess and conduct during the war.

ing. In fact, censuses of 1880, 1890, and 1900 list the Herron residence as an "apartment." His address on West 99th was just west of Broadway and the north end of Central Park, in fashionable suburbs. It is unlikely that slums lined the street. Two years after his death, an ad in the *New York Times* describes Herron's former apartment: "6 large rooms and bath . . . Elevator, etc." The rent was \$60—over \$1,200 in today's dollars.

Civil War historian Patricia Faust considered Herron "one of the most admired officers of the war, at least by his commanders." Ulysses S. Grant spoke highly of the young major-general from Iowa. When William Tecumseh Sherman visited his brother Hoyt Sherman in Des Moines, the general often spoke of Herron's selfless contribution to the North's successful perseverance in the war, and he portrayed Herron as one of Iowa's greatest generals.

By age 26, Francis J. Herron had risen from the rank of captain to major-general. He led his troops through key battles at Wilson's Creek, Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove,

Vicksburg, and Yazoo City. He had the trust of his superiors to negotiate with Confederate officers and Indian nations. He was given the responsibility to subtly intervene in Mexican affairs and to objectively investigate the Union's own Department of Arkansas. He transcended political backstabbing by a corrupt Louisiana governor and received the esteemed Medal of Honor from the U.S. Congress. To quote a Civil War colonel, Herron's "courage and conduct won the admiration of all." His legacy of leadership deserves far more visibility in Iowa than it has received in the past. ♦

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NOTE ON SOURCES

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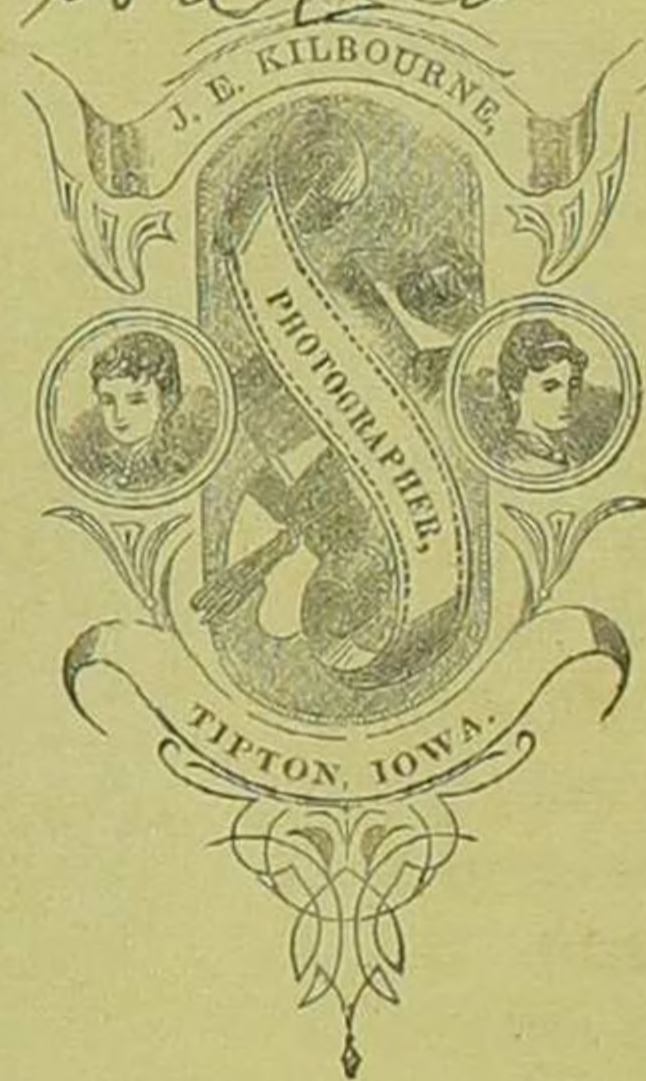
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Complete annotations are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (SHSI-Iowa City).



11th Reg Iowa Vol.

This flag
~~had~~ belonged to the
 11th Reg Iowa Vol Inf
 carried through the
 civil war and I



followed
 by
 J. White

done by M. Virginia White

Today many of us look upon our nation's flag as a powerful symbol. It is carried in parades, adorns our clothing, and serves as an avenue of political expression. But to Civil War veterans, flags meant much more.

During the war, battle flags had served the regiments as treasured comrades. The soldiers had looked to the flags when the smoke and rattle of thousands of muskets deafened their ears to their officers' calls. The flags guided them forward and rallied them when pressed near destruction. In turn, the men cherished the flags for the lives they had saved and the horrors they had shared. The tattered flags were the memories of thousands, dead or maimed, who served, honored, and carried them for what they represented—our nation.

The story behind one such flag follows.

—Bill Johnson, battle flag curator
State Historical Society of Iowa



Baptized by the Blood of Many a Brave Fellow

The Battle Flag of the 9th Iowa Infantry

by Bill Johnson

Private George Gordon Adam lay in a hospital in Helena, Arkansas, wounded in the thigh. Less than a year earlier, the attorney from Decorah had enlisted in the 9th Iowa Infantry. Now he was among that regiment's 118 casualties from the Battle of Pea Ridge. From his cot he wrote to his sister Phebe in Boston. He was dismayed that his regiment had fought six

months with no flag to rally to. Trained at Benton Barracks in St. Louis, the soldiers had received uniforms, Dresden muzzle loaders, and equipment, but no flags were issued.

He wrote, "Will not some of my Massachusetts friends send us one?"

The response from Boston friends was so abundant

that in August Phebe and a committee of Boston women sent two flags to the 9th Iowa. One was a national flag, with red and white silk strips sewn together [see left]. Within its blue silk canton in the upper right, painted stars circled "PEA RIDGE, March 7th & 8th 1862."

The second flag was a regimental banner of double-ly blue silk and trimmed in gold braid. In Phebe's words, its design of "two greyhounds in springing position on each side of the coat of arms [is] intended to be emblematic of the activity and rapid marching of the regiment . . . dubbed 'the Iowa Greyhounds.'" On the front appeared the words "The Ninth Iowa Greyhound Regiment." On the reverse: "Presented by their Countrywomen of Massachusetts in memory of Pea Ridge, Ark., March 6th, 7th, & 8th, 1862."

Phebe's enclosed letter conveyed the donors' wish that Private Adam would be the one to present the flags to his regiment. But the soldier was too ill with fever and could not even rise from his cot. The package was taken to the hospital on August 3, and the flags were unfurled before him. Regiment commander Colonel William Vandever offered to postpone the presentation until the wounded soldier was better, but Adam did not wish to deprive his comrades of battle flags any longer.

That afternoon Vandever unfurled the flags before the regiment. He read Phebe's eloquent letter: "We desire to present you with our national colors, . . . as a token of our grateful admiration for the valor and heroism displayed by you on the memorable field of Pea Ridge.

"We greet you today, not as strangers, but as true and loyal friends, for, though but [only] one of your number is personally known to us in far off Massachusetts, our hearts have followed you with prayer, and with a hopeful expectation of being gladdened by your success."

The letter ended: "God bless the Union. God bless you and all soldiers of the union armies is the fervent prayer of your countrywomen in Massachusetts."

Then Vandever shared the reply he would send to Phebe and her friends. The words were not easy to read

aloud. "That . . . [you] have thought us not unworthy of this token of approval will ever be cherished in grateful remembrance. Many in this regiment remember with tenderest emotion their kindred of the Old Bay State. . . . Be resolved that by the blessings of God, no traitor's hand raised to dim the luster of that flag shall prosper. This purpose transmitted from sire to son, our country, her laws and institutions will live while the granite foundation of old Plymouth endure or the floods of the West flow to the ocean."

A diary entry by Second Lieutenant Alonzo Abernethy hints at the flags' importance to the men: "The Regiment was paraded at two oclock to receive the beau-

tiful stand of colors presented by the Ladies of Boston to the Iowa 9th. Col. Vandever delivered a short speech at the presentation. Seemed much affected as were many others present at the respect & honor thus manifested by noble women of a distant state and at the associations connected with the scene."

Private Adam also described the scene: "I have talked with a great many officers and men of the regt. who came to see me while I was ill, and I will tell you [Phebe] what I have heard through them of the presentation. . . . When [Colonel Vandever] got to the last paragraph of his reply he choked for several moments, and three fourths of the regiment were in tears. Not a single cheer was given for the flag at this time! What with the address, and the reply, and the surprise at so splendid a testimonial from far-off Massachusetts, the men and officers were so affected that an attempt to cheer would have been a total failure. But when the colors were planted

near the Colonel's tent, they collected around them and cheered like mad-men."

Adam continued, "Nothing could have had a better effect on the regiment than this gift. The men were much dispirited by their continual privations, and, as many of them, like myself, have never seen a paper in which their conduct at Pea Ridge received anything but the ordinary newspaper praise bestowed on the whole army, the poor fellows are surprised and delighted to



The finial from the 9th Iowa's battle flag.

BOTH PAGES: PHOTOS COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS

find that they are understood and appreciated away off in old Massachusetts. Your gift has infused a fresh spirit into them, they look brighter and happier and would die to the last before the colors should fall into the hands of the rebels."

The flags served the 9th Iowa well, leading them into battles at Chickasaw Bayou, Arkansas Post, Jackson, and Vicksburg. Private Adam, however, did not follow the flags into battle. His recovery was slow, and with the encouragement of General Samuel R. Curtis he was assigned as chief clerk in the quartermaster section, where he remained until discharged.

The regiment, reduced to 300 fighting men, joined Grant's siege of Vicksburg on May 18, 1863. The following day they were part of an unsuccessful charge against the city's fortification. Through tenacity the regiment obtained a position within 75 yards of the outer defenses, but still the Union forces were forced back. The attack cost the regiment 16 casualties.

Three days later a major assault was launched. The 9th Iowa was in the first wave. It was a hot day, Private Levi A. Green, from Allamakee County, wrote in his diary. "When all were in order, the order was given. . . . We moved steadily forward to the brow of the hill. Here we stopped a moment for rest and each one nerved his courage up to the highest point for a desperate struggle. We had orders not to fire a shot until we raised the breastworks and then to do our work quick. Then came the final order. Forward! And we sprang to our feet and each one made the best time he could to get to the breastwork. But few reached it."

Sergeant James Elson was one of the few. The 24-year-old from Benton County was the color bearer, with the duty of carrying the flag into battle. He and the others in the color guard dashed across the field, littered with fallen trees. The men scrambled through a trench, then struggled up the steep embankment of the breastworks. Cannon fire and bullets rained down from above.

Elson was the first to scale the embankment; perhaps he used the flag staff to help him climb. He reached the top and stood up with the flag. Immediately he was shot in the thigh and fell on the flag.

Corporal Otis Crawford, a 20-year-old from Maquoketa, now struggled forward towards the fallen Elson. "As I raised myself a ball tore through my shoulders and cartridge belt," he recollected years later. "I remembered: Pea Ridge is written on that flag. The rebels shall not have it. Hugging the ground I crawled back up to it, perhaps six to eight feet. A bullet struck the staff the moment I touched it. . . . I dragged it and myself down

the slope to the West. Dragging it affectionately, I kept the spear toward the foe. . . . Seeing the Adjutant behind a fallen tree, some 15 or 25 feet below, I called to him softly, asking him to care for the flag in the event I should succeed in passing it to him."

Weak with pain, Crawford rose a bit on his right side. Using his hand and foot, he slid the flag to another soldier, who passed it to yet another. As part of this human chain, James H. Gipe, from Spring Creek, was wounded in the head and hand. Finally it reached the adjutant, Captain George Granger. The young soldier from Marion untied the flag from the staff, hid it in his blouse, and crawled to safety.

As dusk fell, the remnants of the regiment awaited support. None came. For two hours, the 9th Iowa lay in the shadow of the Confederate fortifications, awaiting darkness and an opportunity to retreat.

Private Green summed up the valiant effort in his diary: "When Col. Wood saw the butchery of the men he ordered his men to halt [and later] each with one accord began to back down the hill. . . . Many of the dead we could not get."

On the next day he wrote: "Up all night and were busy burying the dead. Our reg't had to bury the dead of: 3rd reg't, 9th IA, 12th and 3rd Mo. At night we buried a few more of the dead and all the arms and accouterments were brought off and about 1 o'clock AM we left our position and moved back behind another hill about 80 rods from the lines and then retired to get some rest which we so much needed."

Vicksburg finally capitulated on July 4. The siege had cost the 9th Iowa 78 men, victim to disease, wounds, or death. Originally 1,200 strong, the regiment now barely numbered 200 fighting men.

The national flag so heroically guarded on the battlefield was now described in a letter from Private Adam to Phebe: "The flag is riddled with balls and stained with blood, & unfit for further use. The boys are discussing whether to send it back to you or to the Governor of Iowa." Although the custom was to send retired flags to the governor or adjutant general, the soldiers decided it should go back to the Boston women. Colonel David Carskaddon justified the decision. "The State had allowed the regt. to be in the service six months and fight a hard battle without any colors to fight under, that the 9th didn't owe the State anything, but did owe much gratitude to the donors of the flag."

Carskaddon wrote to Phebe: "We return this flag to you because it has fulfilled its mission. Beneath it many a martyr to constitutional liberty has gone to his last



Battles in which the 9th Iowa fought appear on the once white stripes of the second national flag from the Boston women.

rest. It is to us, and we trust it will be to you, the emblem of the eternal union, cemented by the best blood of patriots."

Before the national flag was returned to Boston, it was taken to Dubuque, where "its appearance created a perfect furor," Adam wrote to his sister. "People hurraed and cried over it. It was very difficult to preserve it from destruction, as everybody was trying to obtain a little piece of it as a relic of the fight, in which some father, son or brother served, perhaps was wounded or killed. The Col. says that only one old lady got a piece—he could not refuse her. She begged him, with tears in her eyes, to give her a small piece as her two sons had fallen under it."

The 9th Iowa continued in service until January 1864. The regiment was now considered a veteran unit, and as in many such prestigious units, the majority reenlisted. For this they were rewarded with a 30-day furlough. But before they left

Nashville for Dubuque, another package arrived from Phebe Adam. Enclosed was a new flag to replace the blood-stained silk national. It held within its canton the regiment's identification and the statement that it was presented by their country-women of Massachusetts.

"Once more, Countrymen and Friends, it becomes our privilege to extend to you, from our far-off New England home, 'the right hand of fellowship,'" Phebe wrote. "How faithfully you have discharged your trust, the blood-stained, war-worn relic you have returned to us gloriously attests—its tattered folds speaking to our hearts in language more eloquent than words. . . . And, now, we ask your acceptance of another battleflag [above], to replace the one you have returned to us. May the sight of the list of your victories, emblazoned on its folds serve as an incentive to new deeds of heroism, so that, in the close of another year, you may bear it home with you in triumph, an emblem of Peace—a peace valiantly won and honorably achieved."

When the soldiers of the 9th Iowa returned to active duty they carried their new flag with pride, but not

into battle. A stand of regulation flags from the federal government would serve that purpose. With care and respect, the new flag would be flown only in camp or carried in marches and parades.

After the war, George Gordon Adam practiced law, and his sister Phebe continued to teach school in Boston. Colonel William Vandever, who had first unfurled the flag to Adam in the hospital, again practiced law, served as U.S. Indian Inspector under President Grant, and moved to California, where he was elected to Congress. He kept the regimental "greyhound" flag, eventually giving it to the regimental association. Color bearer James Elson was wounded again in Atlanta. Later he operated a dry goods store, and served as postmaster in Shellsburg and sheriff in Benton County. He received the Medal of Honor in 1891 for his gallant stand on the edge of Vicksburg.



Color bearer James Elson, years after the Civil War.

Phebe G. Adam was my sister, both now dead, and as one other sister and I are the only members left of our family we wished the State of Iowa to have the Flag."

The governor's office gave the flag to the Department of History and Archives in Des Moines (now the State Historical Society). It was displayed in a glass case in the capitol alongside dozens of other flags.

Tradition—but not definitive proof—holds that the blood on the flag is that of Sergeant Elson, the color bearer who fell upon the flag. Recently a direct male descendant of Elson's brother, Daniel, was located in Iowa City. Samples of the descendant's DNA and of the blood-stained flag were compared by the Iowa Department of Public Safety's Crime Laboratory to determine whether the 9th Iowa flag is indeed stained with the blood of Sergeant Elson. Regrettably, the DNA material is too degraded from years of exposure and natural decomposition to provide a viable sample. Although it is disappointing that no results were determined, the DNA test is just another tool in the research involved in the history of such flags. The story of this battle flag and its blood stains are forever tied to the actions of Sergeant James Elson and of Private George Gordon Adam and his sisters Phebe and Helen. ❖

In January 1902, a letter arrived in the Iowa governor's office. It was signed by Helen J. Adam. "The one member of the 9th Iowa known in Massachusetts was my brother George Gordon Adam, and

Bill Johnson is a museum curator at the State Historical Society of Iowa. He has curated exhibits on the Civil War and Iowa's battle flags and has researched Medal of Honor recipients in Iowa.

COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS



A State Historical Society of Iowa flag conservator tests for the presence of blood on the battle flag of the 9th Iowa Regiment.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Research for this article relied upon the manuscript collections and records of the adjutant general at the State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines).



The Iowa Battle Flags Project

by Bill Johnson

Perhaps you were once among the thousands and thousands of visitors to the state capitol who peered into the glass cases at nearly 200 faded and fragile battle flags crammed inside. Some were bundled together with once-lustrous silk cord and tassels. Other bundles were pierced by wire, staples, or screws. Corroded pins held paper labels on brittle silk. The flags leaned against each other like weary old soldiers.

Most of the flags were carried to the capitol on August 10, 1894, in a mile-long procession of Civil War veterans "with unsteady steps and tear dimmed eyes." A governor's proclamation and legislative action had directed that flags "borne by Iowa regiments and batteries during the war of the rebellion" be preserved and displayed in the capitol. Many of

the flags had been in the possession of the adjutant general for years, and on Battle Flag Day they were retrieved from the arsenal in Des Moines. Others came from the collections of the State Historical Society and from the hands of regimental members, who had lovingly preserved them over the years.

The flags "looked weird and somber in the bright sunlight as though they had come from another world," a reporter noted, "and brought back to the minds of the veterans as nothing else could the solemnity of the occasion. It was a scene which never occurred before and never will again."

General J. W. Noble acknowledged in his speech that the violence of battles and the passage of time had taken a considerable toll on the flags:

"At one time they gleamed in the sunlight fresh and beautiful, their colors as bright as the flowers of the prairies." He continued, "On their silken folds are inscribed the names of the many battles in which they have been borne. . . . Those names are crumbling with decay."

The flags were being placed in "shrines of safety," Noble said, and it is clear that the legislature believed that with this action, the flags were permanently taken care of, because no government agency was given the authority or appropriations to further manage and preserve the collection.

For decades, the battle flags were a key element of public tours of the statehouse. And for decades, the flags continued to deteriorate. By today's standards, the glass display cases in the rotunda were not adequately

sealed from dust and other contaminants, including cigarette smoke and grease and smoke from the capitol kitchen below. The lights installed along the cases in 1905 to illuminate the flags did additional damage (we now know that light is one of the most destructive forces on fabric). Sometimes a particular flag was temporarily removed by a Grand Army of the Republic post for ceremonial use. When it was returned to the case, pollen, dust, and other contaminants might have accompanied it.

Flags from the Spanish-American War were added to the rotunda displays in 1908, and after World War I, a case was added for flags of that conflict. In the 1970s the Iowa adjutant general decided to try to preserve the flags, but the process was too costly, and only four were treated. The flags remained in the cases for another two decades.

In the late 1990s, in response to concerns expressed by several organizations and private citizens, the Iowa Battle Flag Preservation Committee was formed to investigate preservation efforts. In 1999, the General Assembly provided \$50,000 to conduct a study. The next year Fonda Thompsen, a nationally known flag conservator, presented her findings and recommendations to the State Historical Society of Iowa, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, which submitted the report to

the legislature. Supported by the legislature and governor, funding was established for the Iowa Battle Flags Project and continues as part of the annual infrastructure legislation. (In addition, the conservation of five flags in 2005 was funded by a grant from Save America's Treasures and international and state Questers study clubs.)

In January 2001, the staff of the State Historical Society museum began the transfer of the first group of flags from the capitol to the State Historical Building one block west. Through the generous help of the Heartland Regional Council of Carpenters and the apprentice program of Carpenters Local 106, an enclosure was built in the rotunda. This provided a place to prepare the flags for transfer and gave the public a glimpse of the process.

The flags were removed with the same dignity in which they had been delivered a century ago. Dressed in period uniforms, Civil War reenactors of the 24th and 15th Iowa regiments, and Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, served as an honor guard. With some anxiety and great effort, the century-old glass door of the display case was swung upward, releasing the smell of stale air. Slowly, the staff unbound the bundles of flags. Each movement of air or touch of hand sent particles of cotton gauze or

silken flag drifting down. As each flag was brought out from the case, it was enveloped in acid-free materials and transported to the Society's conservation laboratory for treatment. (Follow the intricate stabilization steps on the following pages.)

The Iowa Battle Flags Project is an ambitious, long-term undertaking. The process is tedious and challenging, and it requires skilled hands. Meticulous records are kept at each step. Meanwhile, historical research is conducted regarding the flags and the military units associated with them. Each flag takes weeks to stabilize. Only then will it be considered for public exhibition, which is limited to six months to minimize exposure to light. Cases in the capitol rotunda are being retrofitted with climate and light controls, as part of the capitol restoration.

More than 230 flags (from the capitol and State Historical Society collections) are being conserved, one flag at a time. For the Civil War flags alone, current estimates indicate that stabilization will require ten years. ❖

Bill Johnson is the museum curator of battle flags at the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Rally 'Round the Flags

• *Tour the Iowa Battle Flags Conservation Laboratory at the State Historical Building, 600 E. Locust, Des Moines. Reservations are required. Tours are on the third Saturday of each month and begin at 1:30 p.m. The project conservator and project historian lead the hour-and-a-half tour. Groups are limited to ten. Must be age ten or older. \$20 per person (10 percent discount for members). For tour reservations, call 515-*

283-1757, or e-mail museum.store@iowa.gov.

• *Adopt A Flag. Individuals, groups, and businesses are invited to select and help fund a flag's conservation. Donor levels begin at \$500 with increasing benefits. For information on Adopt A Flag, call 515-281-5111; e-mail sheila.hanke@iowa.gov.*

• *For a complete understanding of the Iowa Battle*

Flags Project and more photos, explore this Website: www.iowaFlags.org.

• *Purchase the colorful battle flags poster at the Museum Store in the State Historical Building. Proceeds benefit the Battle Flags Project.*

• *Watch for more stories about the flags in upcoming issues of this magazine.*



Stitch by Stitch, Step by Step

by Sheila Hanke

Imagine snipping and delicately removing 4,000 stitches, one at a time, from layers of soiled, brittle gauze. In 1881, 1894, and sometime after 1904, white cotton gauze was sewn onto the front and back of the silk battle flags in the capitol in the belief that this would stabilize and protect them. Today, a first step in conserving the flags here at the State Historical Society's Battle Flags Conservation Laboratory is to remove the deteriorating gauze, stitch by stitch.

The layers of gauze were machine-sewn in horizontal rows across the flag. The number of rows varied, from 7 to 104. The length of the stitch

varied too, from 3 stitches per inch to 22. Removing the stitches can take up to a week for each layer of gauze. About every 45 minutes, my lab assistant and I have to take a break to relieve eye stress and muscle tension.

Once the stitches are removed, the rows of holes left by the sewing machine are like perforations. Too much tension or pressure can shatter the silk right along that perforated line.

When the gauze is removed, you see what the layers of fabric have hidden from your eyes. So this is what it really looks like! Now you begin to understand the flag.

COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS



A low-velocity vacuum is attached to a sterile end chamber, which is moved over the flag's surface to pick up particulate matter. We have found trace amounts of food, soil, pollen, gunpowder, and soot from campfires. Further study of these collected particles will help answer more questions about the flag.

When we clean the fringe we often find interesting items because the fringe was flapping in the wind and snagging things. We've identified seeds, feathers, bits of branches, even pieces of money. On one flag we found a tiny piece of wallpaper. I still have no idea where that came from.

COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS



The surface of each flag is gently vacuumed to remove dust, soot, and other surface debris accumulated over the past 140 years. A fine screen is placed over the vacuum nozzle to prevent any damage to fragments of the flag.

Every flag is different. How and where the flags were used during the war and how they were stored after the war mean that each requires an individual conservation plan.

Although the original colors have aged considerably, the battle flags must have been beautiful in their glory—deep blues, rich reds, silver eagles, yellow-gold fringe. Just stunning.

COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS



An ultrasonic humidifying tool called a Preservation Pencil cleans the painted areas on the silk, and the darkened paint gradually becomes bright again. Of course, the flags had to be brightly colored so they could be seen in battle.

Flag makers chose silk because of its beauty and because it gave the flag loft. The paint on flags might have been applied by a local individual if it was a flag from a community, or by a professional artist in places like Philadelphia where flags were mass produced. Artists used a variety of chemical additives, or diffusers, in the paints. This speeded up the drying time but made the paint unstable.

Over the years, the rigid paint and the silk contracted at different rates. The humidifying tool introduces controlled moisture allowing fabric distorted by years of hanging to be gently repositioned.

To relax and flatten the surface, glass plates and a 100 percent cotton-rag barrier are placed over the flag for a period of time ranging from a few hours to as long as two days.



Using micro dissecting tweezers, we carefully move minuscule fragments back to their proper locations. Some are as short as a quarter of an inch. Mylar polyester film and PH-neutral tissue protect the flag and help hold the fragments in place.

As we work on the flags, we try to get into the heads of the people who sewed and painted them. We need to understand how they were constructed and what materials were used, and where they were flown in the war—as a regimental banner in camp, for instance, or as a national flag in the heat of battle.

If a community made a flag, there might have been several people who sewed it, perhaps using different kinds and shades of thread. Even the stitches might vary in their style, length, or tension. The methods of construction also hint at

how rapidly a flag was produced in order to fill orders from the army.

Note the narrow rectangle in the right foreground. Pieces of battle flags were sometimes cut and removed by soldiers as mementos or souvenirs of their military service.

COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS

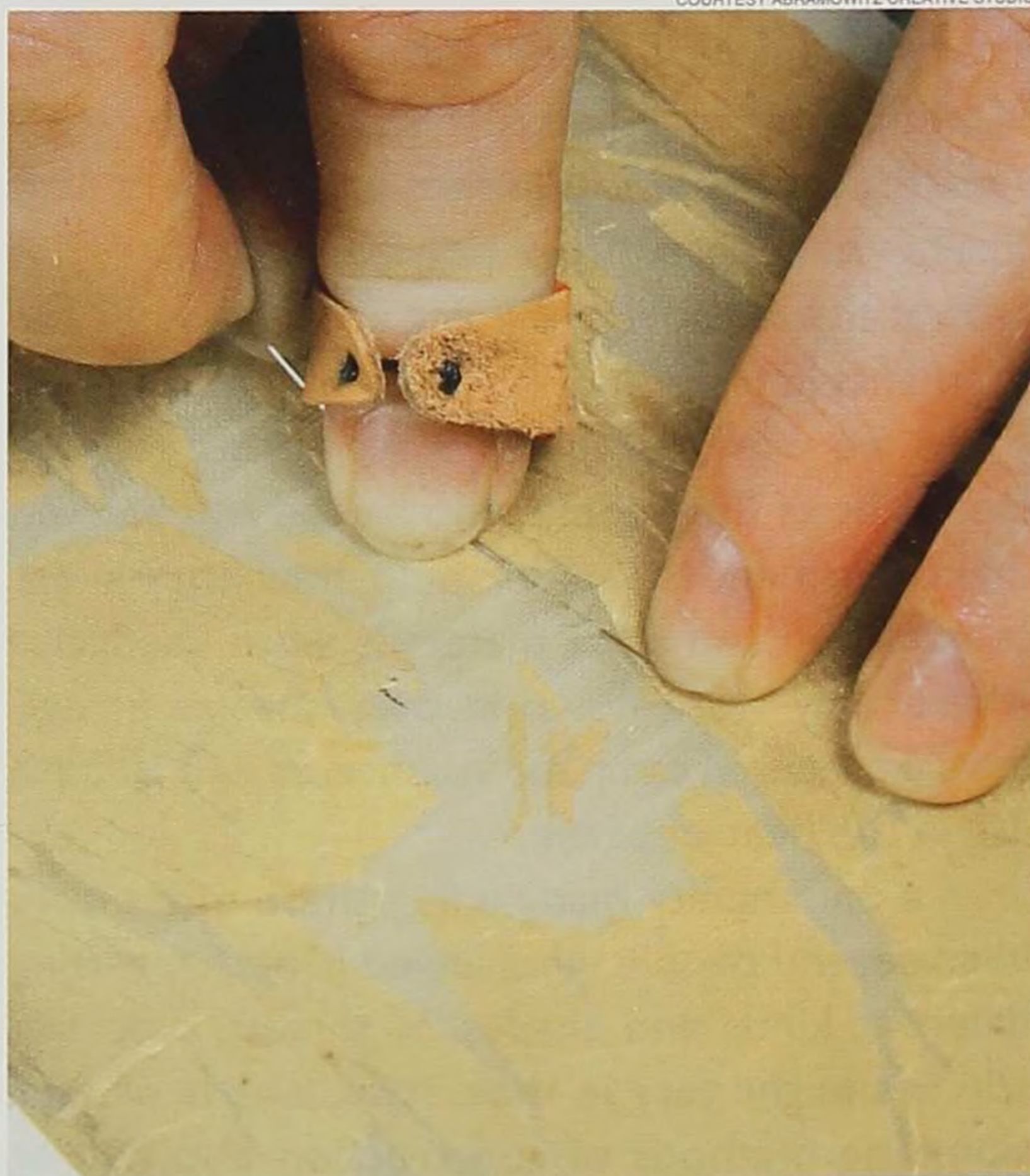


Finally the flag is placed between two layers of a microfiber fabric called Stabiltex for stability and protection. Without piercing the flag, we sew around each fragment to hold it in position (see right).

To minimize handling, the flags are stored flat in large pullout drawers here in the State Historical Society of Iowa museum collections, with temperature and humidity controls, minimal light exposure, and protection from fire and theft.

During the Civil War, the battle flags received the care, attention, and respect of those who made them and those who fought under them. Today, we are again giving them care, attention, and respect, with the advantage of state-of-the-art conservation techniques. ❖

Sheila Hanke is the collection manager/flag conservator for the Battle Flags Project and has worked on the project for six years.



COURTESY ABRAMOWITZ CREATIVE STUDIOS

Above and Beyond the Call of Duty

Iowa's Medal of Honor Recipients

The Medal of Honor is given for distinguished gallantry during hostile action and is presented by the president of the United States in the name of Congress. Authorized in 1861 by President Lincoln, the Medal of Honor has recognized the valor and sacrifice of more than 100 Iowans (including Civil War officer Francis J. Herron; see article in this issue). Below are the stories of eight Iowans' acts of valor. To learn about all the recipients with Iowa connections, explore the State Historical Society's exciting new multimedia Medal of Honor Web site (www.CulturalAffairs.org) on your own computer or at the new kiosk in the state capitol.

—The Editor



James Jackson

*Captain, 1st U.S. Cavalry, Indian Wars
Born 1833 in New Jersey. Resident
of Dubuque by 1861. Died 1916.*

James Jackson's actions reflect the ferocious nature of the Indian Wars. He risked his life to retrieve the dead body of a compatriot. Although both sides sometimes mutilated bodies, Indians did so because they believed that the soldiers' spirits would then be crippled when they reached the afterlife.

Jackson's cavalry unit was part of the pursuit of Chief Joseph, who led the Nez Percé towards Canada in quest of their freedom. For several years Chief Joseph had resisted a treaty that would forcefully move the Nez Percé from their traditional homeland in Oregon to a reservation in Idaho. In 1877 he decided that fighting the white man was futile and that he would lead 700 of his people to Canada.

On August 20, Chief Joseph's warriors encountered Jackson's unit at Camas Meadow in Idaho. Badly

outnumbered, the soldiers retreated to a defensive position in a grove of aspen. Trumpeter Bernard Brooks, who was near Jackson, was killed instantly. In the face of heavy fire, Jackson dismounted and he and another soldier carried away Brooks's body. They hid it in a clump of bushes so it would not be found by the Nez Percé. Before they returned to base camp, they buried the body.

Seven weeks later, Chief Joseph surrendered, within 40 miles of the Canadian border.

Osborn W. Deignan

*Coxswain, U.S. Navy, Spanish-American War
Born 1877 in Stuart. Died 1916.*

Growing U.S. concern over Spain's harsh suppression of Cuba, coupled with the U.S. desire to annex Cuba and expand military and commercial power, reached a turning point in February 1898 when the USS *Maine* exploded in its visit to Ha-

vana. War followed. A quick U.S. victory in the Spanish possession of the Philippines paved the way for occupation of the islands. Meanwhile, U.S. forces prepared for an expedition into Cuba, particularly Santiago, where most of the Spanish forces were concentrated.

The U.S. Navy's daring plan was to sink a U.S. coal ship in the narrowest point of the channel, thus blocking Santiago Bay, trapping Spain's fleet, and isolating its army in the city. The ship chosen was one with chronic engine problems, the *Merrimac*. The crew would drop anchor on one end of the 5,000-ton *Merrimac*, let the tide swing the ship lengthwise, and then sink it with underwater charges.

Iowan Osborn W. Deignan was among the six who volunteered for the job. He later wrote that he did so because of his mother, who led a hard life. He believed that if he died, the navy would take care of her.

The plan went awry. As the *Merrimac* approached the channel in the night, the Spanish shot out its steering mechanism, making it impossible for Deignan to maneuver the ship into the precise location.

COURTESY WALLY HINGTGEN



Osborn W. Deignan

But the crew persevered through murderous fire and managed to detonate the charges.

Deignan later described the long night of June 2-3: "We all lay on the deck, packed like sardines in a box, with shots flying about our heads, expecting every minute to be killed." About 4 a.m., "our vessel gave a list to starboard. . . . Lieutenant Hobson, when he saw she was sinking, said, 'Very Good! They are helping us out; they are doing it for us.' . . . The water was pouring in over the starboard rail, coming down on us, when we scrambled to our feet and seized the rail to prevent being washed into the hold. The ship then gave a list to port, the water coming over our port rail. . . . We all leaped overboard and swam for the catamaran, which was floating near the ship's side. Just as we started for it the *Merrimac* sank, and the suction drew us down with her under the water."

For hours, the sailors held onto the side of the catamaran, not daring to climb on board and risk being shot. Captured that morning and imprisoned for one month, they were the only U.S. military personnel held prisoner during the war.

In July the Spanish fleet attempted to break through the blockade but was routed and most ships were lost. The actions at Santiago decided the war. By late 1898, Spain agreed to grant independence to Cuba and to cede Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States.

Calvin Pearl Titus

*Bugler, Co. E., 14th Infantry, U.S. Army,
Boxer Rebellion
Born 1879 in Vinton. Died 1966.*

As 1900 dawned, the United States joined other colonial powers (Great

UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY



Calvin Pearl Titus

Britain, Germany, France, Russia, and Japan) in trying to dominate the economy of China and Westernize its culture. The Chinese resented these outside influences, including that of Christian missionaries. Extremist militia groups swore to rid China of foreigners. Loosely translated, the name of the Chinese militias was "Righteous Harmony Fists," from which the term "Boxer" evolved.

In the spring of 1900, the Boxers murdered 200 foreigners and many Chinese Christians. Tens of thousands of Boxers poured into Peking (now Beijing) and Tientsin, looking for more foreigners. Foreign business and diplomatic communities joined with Chinese Christians in barricading themselves and pleading for outside help.

The U.S. minister to China, Edwin Conger of Iowa, and his family were trapped in Peking. Two other Iowans, newlyweds Herbert and Lou Henry Hoover, were trapped in Tientsin. An international force of 14,000 (2,500 were Americans) liberated Tientsin and headed to the walled city of Peking.

As troops approached the city,

the 30-foot wall loomed before them. The international contingents of troops made ready to assault different parts of the wall. In one section, heavy Chinese rifle fire pinned down U.S. and Russian soldiers. Bugler Calvin Titus was among those who reached a corner of the wall shielded from the fire. Colonel A. S. Daggett gazed up and wondered aloud if it was possible to climb the wall. Titus uttered his now-famous reply: "I'll try, sir."

Daggett looked at his five-foot-seven, 120-pound bugler. "Well, if you think you can make it, go ahead and try."

"I took off all my equipment: haversack, canteen, pistol and belt, and hat, and started up," Titus recounted. "I recall that the wall was made of brick of some kind . . . some 18 inches long and 4 inches thick. . . . The mortar had fallen out in places making it possible for me to get finger- and toe-holds in the cracks. About halfway up, a convenient bush grew out of the bricks and that also helped some."

"At last I got to a point where I could look through one of the notches or firing ports at the top of the wall. It was empty. I slid over the top and onto the floor behind. To my surprise I saw no one."

About 250 yards away, Chinese troops were firing at the Americans below, but they had not noticed Titus. He began shooting at the Chinese as more men scaled the wall. After clearing that section of the wall, the U.S. soldiers climbed down the inside toward the gates, where other allied troops were entering.

After the legation was rescued, the siege of Peking lifted, and the Boxer Rebellion quelled, the 14th Infantry was ordered home. "I'll try, sir" became its motto.

Back home in Vinton, Titus enjoyed a hero's welcome. He led the Fourth of July parade in 1901, and

his cousin, Des Moines civic leader Lafayette Young, delivered the keynote. A local merchant printed and sold dime souvenirs: miniature silk American flags with pins of Titus's image. Myrtle Sisler composed "Marching to Peking" in Titus's honor, with sheet music available.

Titus was granted a presidential appointment to West Point, and in 1902, as a first-year plebe, he attended the academy's centennial ceremony. He was shocked to be called front and center of the entire assembly. The commandant and President Theodore Roosevelt walked over to him. Pinning the Medal of Honor on his coat, Roosevelt said, "Now don't let this give you the big head!"

Afterwards, a cadet named Douglas MacArthur approached Titus, looked at his medal, and said, "Mister, that's something!"

Frank Jack Fletcher

*Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, Veracruz, Mexico
Born 1885 in Marshalltown. Died 1973.*

Without firing a shot, Lieutenant Frank Jack Fletcher earned his Medal of Honor during a little-known military action in Veracruz, Mexico. President Woodrow Wilson's diplomatic policies with Mexico in 1913-1914 had deteriorated and he refused to recognize Mexican leader Victoriano Huerta, who had seized power. To undermine Huerta's military, Wilson imposed an arms embargo on Mexico and bolstered U.S. naval presence in the area. When the president learned that a German ship loaded with arms was en route to the gulf port of Veracruz, he ordered Fletcher's uncle, Admiral Frank Friday Fletcher, to occupy the city.

The operation began on April 21, 1914. The U.S. Marines and Navy

took key areas while most of Mexico's military withdrew. But street fighting erupted as the American occupiers battled angry civilians and Mexican troops who remained behind. Armed conflict continued the next day, as more naval battalions and marines came ashore. U.S.

UNITED STATES NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER



Frank Jack Fletcher

forces began evacuating endangered American and British civilians. Fletcher was put in charge of a troop ship docked in the harbor. Although the ship was struck some 30 times by enemy fire, he rescued over 350 refugees.

The 29-year-old lieutenant was next in charge of a train evacuating refugees from the interior of Mexico. Although the train traveled under a flag of truce, it was believed that the tracks were mined, and that Mexican guards at the checkpoints were potentially hostile. Nevertheless, Fletcher evacuated hundreds of American and British citizens. In all, he helped over 2,000 civilians escape from the tense war zone. Fletcher received his Medal of Honor for his cool and decisive evacuations of civilians despite great danger.

The U.S. military action concluded in a matter of days, with 126 Mexicans and 19 Americans killed. The occupation lasted until November. It has not been judged a strategic success even though Huerta was eventually ousted by a rival. Relations with Mexico soured and the Veracruz intervention was viewed negatively by the Mexicans for a long time.

Frank Jack Fletcher became an admiral in World War II.

Eduoard Victor Izac

*Lieutenant, U.S. Navy, World War I
Born 1889 in Cresco. Died 1990.*

On a May morning in 1918, Lieutenant Eduoard Victor Izac was eating breakfast aboard the transport ship *USS President Lincoln* when German torpedoes slammed its hull. Before long, survivors sat shivering in lifeboats.

When the German U-90 surfaced, the captain grabbed Izac, the only officer he could find, and took him prisoner. While aboard the sub-

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Eduoard Victor Izac

marine, Izak discovered information about the operations and tactics of the hated U-boat "wolf packs." Believing this intelligence was vital, he vowed to escape.

In one attempt, he jumped out of the window of a speeding train while soldiers fired at him. Recaptured and brutally beaten, he tried again to escape from a prison camp. He broke through barbed wire, drawing enemy fire so that others might also escape in the confusion.

In the next week he fled 120 miles in the mountains of southwestern Germany, surviving on raw vegetables, and then swam down the freezing Rhine toward freedom. Within 30 yards of the Swiss border, an exhausted Izak lost all strength. "So turning over on my back I commended my soul to my God and closed my eyes. Instantly my feet touched the rocks."

In London he was anxious to report what he knew about U-90s, but the war was about over and the U.S. commander showed little interest.

Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt awarded Izak the Medal of Honor on November 11, 1920, the second anniversary of Armistice Day. His friendship with Roosevelt helped Izak launch a career in politics. As a California congressman, he advocated for veterans' rights and benefits.

Ralph G. Neppel

*Sergeant, Co. M, 329th Infantry, 83rd Infantry Division, World War II
Born 1923 in Willey. Died 1987.*

Two days before the start of the Battle of the Bulge, Ralph Neppel, a 21-year-old machine-gun sergeant, swept his squad into the German village of Birgel, on the edge of Hurtgen Forest. They braced for a German counterattack. At dusk an

enemy tank supported by 20 Nazis appeared. From the corner of a building, Neppel held his fire until they were within 100 yards, then raked the soldiers, killing several. The tank pressed forward, and at 30 yards it blasted a high-velocity shell into the Americans, wounding the entire squad.

"There was a tremendous roar. ... A blinding flash," Neppel recalled. "The next thing I know I was laying ten yards behind my gun. My crew was sprawled all over the road."

With one leg severed below the



Ralph G. Neppel

knee and the other in shreds, Neppel dragged himself by his elbows back to his position, remounted his machine gun, and killed the remaining enemy riflemen. Before retreating, the enraged tank commander approached Neppel and took aim at his head, but the helmet deflected the bullet.

When medics arrived, Neppel insisted they help his mates first. Doctors later amputated his other leg.

Neppel attended the Medal of Honor ceremony on August 23,

1945, only a week after V-J Day. Twenty-seven recipients, including Iowan Herschel Briles, gathered in the East Room of the White House. President Harry Truman told them that the Medal of Honor would be a better possession than the U.S. presidency.

After an agonizing rehabilitation, Neppel returned to Iowa and began farming with equipment specially made for him. Later he worked for the Veterans Administration and advocated for disability access and rights. A wing of the veterans hospital in Iowa City was named in his honor in 1989.

Neppel didn't consider himself a hero, stating, "The heroes don't live."

Junior D. Edwards

*Sergeant 1st Class, Co. E, 23rd Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division, U.S. Army, Korean War
Born 1926 in Indianola. Died 1951.*

As the Chinese Communist armies intervened in North Korea in November 1950, United Nations forces withdrew and made a defensive stand at the 38th Parallel. A new enemy offensive began on December 31. Junior Edwards's regiment was assigned to occupy the high ground around Changbong-ni, key terrain dominating the surrounding landscape. If Communist troops captured the hill, an entire South Korean corps would be surrounded, probably captured, and possibly annihilated.

The Medal of Honor citation describes Edwards's action on January 2, 1951: "When his platoon, while assisting in the defense of a strategic hill, was forced out of its position and came under vicious raking fire from an enemy machine gun set up on adjacent high ground, Sfc. Edwards individually charged the hostile emplacement, throwing

COURTESY SALLY AND TOM WOOD



Junior D. Edwards

grenades as he advanced. The enemy withdrew but returned to deliver devastating fire when he had expended his ammunition. Securing a fresh supply of grenades, he again charged the emplacement, neutralized the weapon and killed the crew, but was forced back by hostile small-arms fire. When the enemy emplaced another machinegun and resumed fire, Sfc. Edwards again renewed his supply of grenades, rushed a third time through a vicious hail of fire, silenced this second gun and annihilated its crew. In this third daring assault he was mortally wounded but his indomitable courage and successful action enabled his platoon to regain and hold the vital strongpoint."

Jimmie E. Howard

*Gunnery Sergeant, Co. C.,
1st Reconnaissance Battalion,
1st Marine Division, Vietnam War
Born 1929 in Burlington. Died 1993.*

The U.S. Marines were pushing south of Da Nang. In "search and clear" missions to eliminate Viet

Cong and North Vietnamese troops, helicopters landed reconnaissance teams to evaluate the enemy's positions and call in artillery and air strikes.

Jimmie Howard commanded a reconnaissance team on Hill 488, an observation post. On June 16, 1966, a Viet Cong force of several hundred surrounded Howard's platoon and attacked with arms, automatic weapons, and mortar fire. According to his Medal of Honor citation, Howard "skillfully organized his small but determined force into a tight perimeter defense and calmly moved from position to position to direct his men's fire. Throughout the night, during assault after assault, his courageous example and firm leadership inspired and motivated his men to withstand the unrelenting fury of the hostile fire in the seemingly hopeless situation. . . . When fragments of an exploding enemy grenade wounded him severely and prevented him from moving his legs, he distributed his ammunition to the remaining members of his platoon and proceeded to maintain radio communications

and direct air strikes on the enemy with uncanny accuracy. [The next morning] when evacuation helicopters approached his position, G/Sgt. Howard warned them away and . . . directed devastating small arms fire and air strikes against enemy automatic weapons positions in order to make the land zone as secure as possible. After a harrowing 12 hours, a third of his 18 soldiers were dead."

A marine medic recounted, "When Jimmie and the platoon arrived we were shocked. At least five men were dead and most, if not all the others, were badly wounded. . . . I'll never forget wheeling Jimmie into the shock and resuscitation tent. He was lying on his stomach with his head raised, calling out encouragement to all his men. (Every one of Jimmie's wounds were in his butt.) . . . We razed him to no end, asking, 'Which way were you headed when the shooting started?' Jimmie took it all in good humor. And as time progressed, we learned how he had managed the defense of that hill all night long without losing more men than he did."

Howard's team received more decorations than any other unit in the Vietnam War. ♦

UNITED STATES ARMY



Jimmie E. Howard

This article is adapted from a Web site about Medal of Honor recipients with Iowa connections. Filled with compelling stories and images, the Web site was compiled by museum curators Bill Johnson and Jack Lufkin (with major research by Dennis Black) and created by State Historical Society of Iowa Webmasters Jill Hermann and Rick Dressler. The Web site is www.CulturalAffairs.org. A multimedia kiosk at the state capitol is another way to access the information.

K.C. HUMMELL, SHSI (WESTERN HISTORIC TRAILS CENTER)



Sculptor Torlief S. Knaphus's *The Handcart Pioneer*, at Western Historic Trails Center in Council Bluffs, depicts Mormons' arduous migration on foot from Iowa to Salt Lake City. Western Historic Trails Center explores the story of westward migration trails, including the Mormon Trail.

The Mormon Handcart Migration

by William G. Hartley

One hundred and fifty years ago, the Mormon handcart migration began. Between 1856 and 1860, Mormons organized ten handcart brigades, involving 3,000 Latter-day Saints (LDS) travelers, mostly from Europe. Although three of the brigades left the last two years from Florence, Nebraska Territory, just west of the Missouri River, seven of the ten crossed Iowa.

Although handcarts have become the primary visual symbol of the entire Mormon migration westward to Utah, less than 5 percent traveled in handcart brigades. The far larger westward migration began in 1846, when members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) were compelled to leave their main settlements in and around Nauvoo, Illinois, and find homes in the West. Crossing the Mississippi and southern Iowa beginning in 1847, they headed to Utah. From then until the transcontinental railroad opened in 1869, Mormons from the United States and Europe flowed to outfitting places yearly to join LDS wagon trains heading west. But outfitting was costly—the 1856 costs translate to \$10,000–\$12,000 in today's dollars. Such expense, especially after paying for travel from Europe to Iowa, meant that hundreds each year could not afford the trek west. To help those lacking money, the LDS Church created a revolving loan fund, the Perpetual Emigrating Fund, and agents arranged group rates on sailing ships and riverboats for the emigrants. By 1855 the fund was drained, so some other form of assistance was needed. In 1856 church leaders devised the system of handcart companies, whereby emigrants who could not afford the expense of covered wagons and four oxen could pull small, inexpensive handcarts the 1,300-mile distance.

Because most migrants (Mormon and non-Mormon) who traveled west in oxen-pulled wagon trains actually walked instead of rode, the vehicles they chose related more to hauling baggage than to moving people. Although nine LDS-sponsored wagon trains outfitted at Iowa City in 1856, 1857, and 1858 and headed to Utah, the advantages of handcarts were obvious in this era of wagons. Low cost was one advantage. The trip from England to Utah (including passage by ship, riverboats, and train to Iowa) cost less than 10 percent of what it cost for a wagon, oxen, equipage, and supplies. Faster daily travel was another advantage—handcart companies could move more rapidly than oxen, leave earlier in the day, and travel longer. The handcart pullers did not need to find campsites offering grass and water for oxen. They were spared the intense labor involved with oxen—

hitching, unhitching, double yoking to go uphill, getting them across rivers, taking them to pasture at midday and evening, watering them, guarding them at night, and rounding them up each morning. They did not have to worry about oxen injuries or illness, or about finding campsites with ample grass and water for the oxen. Disadvantages of the handcarts were that people had to power the carts themselves; the small carts could carry only bare essentials; and the travelers had no protection during the day from sun, wind, and rain like that provided by covered wagons (they did have big group tents to sleep in at night).

The outfitting campground site for the 1856 and 1857 handcart companies was on Clear Creek in present-day Coralville, on Iowa City's northwestern shoulder. Mormons from the East Coast who joined the handcart companies traveled by train to Iowa City, the western terminus of the railroad. They camped on the outfitting grounds and waited for the carts to be ready, filling time by sewing together tents and covers for the carts. Designs for fabricating the carts came from church headquarters in Utah. The first companies employed four different handcart designs, experimenting to see what worked best. Agents purchased prefabricated carts in St. Louis and Chicago, which were shipped to Iowa City. They hired Iowa City craftsmen to build others. Workers at the outfitting camp as well as wheelwrights in Iowa City and St. Louis constructed the two-wheeled handcarts, usually of hickory or oak. In the first year, 100 carts were built at St. Louis, 100 in Iowa City, and about 70 at the campground. In response to Brigham Young's direct orders, green wood was used in some hubs, which contributed to later breakdowns.

The covered family carts each had a small wagon box three or four feet long with the side and end boards about eight inches high, while the larger, open carts had no covers or sideboards. Carts were designed with an extended rectangular handle in front by which two people could pull the cart. One journal entry described the carts this way: "The carts which are delivered to us are well constructed and light. They have very strong wooden wheels, four feet high. The rim is made of two . . . fellies around which is fastened an iron tire. They have wooden axles upon which are attached two shafts eight feet long and five matching cross pieces. The carts are four feet wide and weigh 60 pounds."

According to a common myth, the handcart loads weighed 600 pounds. The truth is that each cart was built to carry about 100 pounds of food, clothing, and equipment, and the actual load was usually 100 to 150

pounds. Each traveler was limited to 17 pounds of baggage. Four or five persons were assigned to each cart, with 20 assigned to each large, round tent that the LDS agents provided. One wagon and team accompanied each 20 carts, hauling the heavy tents, food, and equipment, and carrying incapacitated travelers when necessary. Mule-team wagons kept up with the handcarts; wagons pulled by oxen had to travel longer days to keep up.

On August 2, 1856, the *New York Evening Post* published a non-Mormon's description of the Iowa City camp when it was near its fullest, busiest time. "The camp, as viewed from the brow of a neighboring hill . . . presents a fine spectacle. Over one hundred tents, and perhaps as many covered wagons, with their spires and arches of dazzling white—contrast well with the green sward of prairie and the sparkling ripples of the river running close beside. . . . In all about three thousand have rendezvoused in this spot, of whom some eighteen hundred still remain. . . . The tents are arranged in rows, with wide streets between them—the wagons generally in rings, with the entrance at one side, and sleeping tents on the outside. . . . There are in all four hundred and forty-five oxen, twenty mules, and a few horses. . . . There is seen, as you enter camp, a smithery, a workshop and a store, all full of business and industry. . . . I have made acquaintance of their leaders, and have found them courteous, cultivated, and in business transactions, uncommonly 'sharp.' "

The first two handcart companies, captained by Edmund Ellsworth and Daniel McArthur (both returning from missionary service in Great Britain), left the Iowa City outfitting grounds on June 9 and 11, 1856, and traveled close together all the way to Utah. Together, they contained 497 people, 100 handcarts, 5 wagons, 24 oxen, 4 mules, and 25 tents. Their wagons hauled provisions to last them until they reached Florence, Nebraska Territory, 275 miles to the west, where they were reprovisioned. Both companies arrived in Florence on July 8, the Ellsworth Company 27 days after starting, the McArthur Company, 25 days.

On some days the handcart travelers in Iowa walked and pulled 20 miles or more. On July 1, Mormon diarist Archer Walters noted that the Ellsworth Company had "traveled about 15 miles. Walked very fast,—nearly 4 miles an hour." Twenty-four-year-old Twiss Bermingham, a Dublin University graduate traveling with his wife and three

children, wrote on July 3 that the McArthur Company started at 5 a.m. and traveled "a long and tedious journey of 25 miles" before camping at 7:15 p.m.

Iowa's summer humidity and heat took a toll. Bermingham recorded that "some of the Brethren fainted on the road and were carried into camp in the ox-team. I nearly fainted myself from exhaustion." They reached Florence City "generally very fatigued," in dust-stained clothes and with sunburned faces.

Returning missionary Edward Bunker led the third company, which contained mostly Welsh Saints—320 persons, 64 handcarts, and 5 wagons pulled by mule teams. They left Iowa City on June 28 and reached Florence July 19—a record-setting 22-day journey despite "heavy rain and wind storms which blew down our tents and washed away our handcarts." "People made fun of us as we walked, pulling our carts," Priscilla Evans noted, but she admitted that although "we were very tired at night, still we thought it was a glorious way to go to Zion."

John D. T. McAllister, one of the officials who disbursed equipment and supplies at the outfitting camp, wrote a "Handcart Song" that was sung by many handcart pioneers—and by Latter-day Saints ever since.

Ye Saints who dwell on Europe's shore
Prepare yourselves with many more
To leave behind your native land
For sure God's judgments are at hand.
Prepare to cross the stormy main
Before you do the Valley gain,
And with the faithful make a start
To cross the plains with your handcart.

Chorus:

Some must push and some must pull
As we go marching up the hill,
And merrily on the way we go
Until we reach the Valley, oh!

Of the five handcart companies that crossed Iowa in 1856 (six if counting Jesse Haven's division of the Martin Company), the Ellsworth, McArthur, and Bunker companies made the long, strenuous trek to Utah successfully. But the last two, the ill-fated James G. Willie and Edward Martin companies, left late because ships bearing the emigrants sailed late from England, and their large

numbers required extra time to prepare additional handcarts and supplies. After problems and slow-downs in Nebraska, they were trapped by severe blizzards in Wyoming, and some 200 out of 1,076 lost their lives.

The last to use Iowa City for outfitting were the Israel Evans and Christian Christiansen companies in 1857. J. F. F. Dorius in the Christiansen Company described the camp, where tents pitched in a circle-like fashion accommodated 18 people each. "Each family obtained a handcart from the railroad station," he said. Three days later they broke camp. "I felt glad in enjoying this free life outdoors," he wrote that day. But so many became sick by mid-June that the four mule-pulled wagons were filled to capacity. An elderly woman died in the outfitting camp on June 21 and was buried "in the Woods." (Such non-cemetery burials by Mormon wagon and handcart companies became the source of many Iowans' local traditions about Mormon graves being on lands they now own.)

The 111-mile stretch of U.S. Highway 6 from Iowa City to Des Moines closely parallels the old river-to-river road along which the 1856 and 1857 handcart brigades traveled. They passed where South Amana now is and rolled along one mile south of Marengo. (A young traveler in the first handcart company, Job Welling, Jr., not quite two years old, died on June 17, 1856, near present-day Grinnell and

was buried the next day.) The handcart route continued westward through Newton. Turning southward, the handcart brigades passed through Mitchellville and into Des Moines, where they crossed the Des Moines River. At Adel, the travelers forded the North Raccoon River and moved on to present-day Wiscotta and then west to the now vanished town of Dalmanutha (41 miles west of Des Moines). They walked for many miles beside Turkey Creek, closely following present-day State Route 83. At Lewis, the handcart route joined the 1846 Mormon Trail route and followed it into Council Bluffs. They moved north and crossed the Missouri River at Florence, Nebraska Territory. This ended their journey through Iowa. ♦

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NOTE ON SOURCES

This article appeared in a slightly different form as part of a larger article, "Mormons and Early Iowa History (1838 to 1858): Eight Distinct Connections," in *Annals of Iowa*, 59:3 (Summer 2000). Research sources appear in the footnotes of the longer article.

"They had to watch the cattle, herding them day and night. . . . My father and uncle Robert Reeder had gone three and four nights out of seven in the pouring rain, wet through from head to foot and part time in water up to their knees, but willing to do anything to help get started on their journey westward."

*—reminiscence by Sarah Hurren Seamons
of the 1856 Mormon experience in Iowa*

In Excellent Spirits

Mormon Diary Accounts of Crossing Iowa

by Loren N. Horton

The Mormon handcart migration to the valley of the Great Salt Lake was an experience almost unique in the history of migration on the U.S. frontier. Compared to the 1846 migration of Latter-day Saints (LDS)—which began in Nauvoo, Illinois, and then crossed the Mississippi and southern Iowa to the Missouri River—the 1856 and 1857 handcart migration had several advantages. Because the

state was more settled, the Mormons were able to travel on known roads and passed many more settled towns and areas. Therefore, supplies could be more readily obtained, and the travelers could stop and work for cash wages more often, even though many of the LDS European immigrants spoke little or no English. The populations through which they passed could be either an asset or liability. Although assistance was

sometimes offered, so was occasional harassment by people who objected to the religious views of the Saints. The handcart companies constantly faced the problem of people along the way trying to lure converts away from the LDS Church.

Mormons' journals in 1856 and later reminiscences describe the journey from Iowa City to the Missouri River, a little-known chapter in the handcart migration.

One of the crucial factors of the journey was the weather, as Archer Walters made clear in his journal. On May 12 he noted briefly: "It rained and it was cold." The next day was "very cold, still raining and very uncomfortable." On May 26 he described a powerful thunderstorm: "Lightened very bad; began about 8 o'clock until 11 o'clock. Never saw it so in my life and it rained hard and our beds began to swim. I was wet on my side as I laid until I found it out."

Daniel D. McArthur also described the weather that day: "The morning being so rainy nothing of importance could be attended to. In the evening a smart breeze set in attended with a good deal of rain, thunder, and lightning, so much so that a continual illumination was kept up for the space of two hours."

Dry weather caused problems, too. On June 12, the second day after leaving Iowa City, Twiss Birmingham recorded in his diary: "Very hot day and windy. The dust flew so thick that we could not see each other 1 yard distant." But on July 1 he complained: "Storm, thunder and lightning raged fearfully all night. Blew up part of our tent and wet all our clothes through. Lay all night in our wet clothes until morning with water running under us in streams."

"We were cold all the time," Sarah James recalled. "It was either rain or snow or wind. Even when you wrapped up in a blanket your teeth chattered."

In spite of such problems, morale apparently was high for the most part. Often this is stated directly. John D. T. McAllister noted that "the company was generally healthy and in excellent spirits." In another camp, Archer Walters wrote on June 1 that "the

band played several tunes after the meeting." Andrew Galloway was the official clerk of the Ellsworth Company. On June 9 he also commented that "the Saints were in excellent spirits" and a few weeks later that "a good spirit prevailed in camp."

Finding good drinking water and firewood along the route was sometimes a challenge, as Galloway noted in his diary. June 17: "At 2:20 P.M. tents were pitched for the night at a place where there was not wood, but plenty of water." June 30: "No water for twelve miles." July 3: "Very little water as we came along." July 4: "The first ten miles they had plenty of water, but the last ten there was none." July 7: "For about eight miles there was little or no water."

Contact with people who were not members of the LDS Church sometimes was pleasant, and sometimes unpleasant. During the same weeks when Galloway complained about lack of water, he mentioned visits by a "good many strangers." "Some were attentive, others could not bear the doctrine and walked off grumbling." While still in Iowa City, Priscilla Merriman Evans reported, "We were offered many inducements to stay and my husband was offered \$10.00 a day to work at his trade as an iron roller; but money was no inducement to us, for we were anxious to get to Zion." John Chislett recollected, "The people in Iowa were very good in giving to those who asked [for] food, expressing sympathy for us whenever they visited our camp—which they did in large numbers if we stopped near a settlement." On one occasion, as described by Twiss Birmingham, an eight-year-old boy got lost from his company.

The boy made his way to a farmer's house, where he was taken care of until his father found him four days later.

Descriptions of the 1857 handcart migrations across Iowa echo many of the 1856 accounts. Carl Christian Anton Christensen, a Danish convert, reminisced about the 1857 trip: "The hot season of the year, frequent rain-showers, almost bottomless roads, exertion and diet to which we were unaccustomed . . . brought about much sickness and many deaths among us."

Nevertheless, the religious conviction of the Latter-day Saints helped them overcome obstacles on the 1,300 miles between Iowa City and Utah, and more than 90 percent of those who began the effort actually reached their goal. In comparison with other travel during this period in history, we need to remember that a proportion of people undertaking any journey at the time faced difficulties. Of those who started to California during the Gold Rush years, for example, a similar percentage probably perished along the way. Monotonous diet, hard work, bad weather, poor roads, and dangers from people encountered along the way, all were factors faced by any traveler in the mid-19th century. Written accounts by the Mormon handcart travelers are useful in understanding that particular migration, and its similarities and differences to other accounts of travel on the frontier. ❖

Loren N. Horton lives in Iowa City. His teaching career spanned 17 years, followed by his 24 years at the State Historical Society of Iowa, ending as senior historian.

Charles Good's Act of Kindness and the Handcart Children

by William G. Hartley and Fred E. Woods

On a hot July afternoon in 1856, businessman Charles Good paid an unannounced visit to a crowded campground west of Fort Des Moines. There he found nearly 500 tired travelers—Mormon emigrants who had pulled their handcarts earlier that day through the small business district of Fort Des Moines where Good lived. This was the fourth handcart company to pull through the city in two months. Good's visit would be noted in the company's official journal, but subsequent histories have overlooked his charitable gesture—a simple act of kindness—while at the camp.

The handcart brigade that Good visited was led by James G. Willie, age 41. The Willie Company consisted of about 500 men, women, and children, 5 mules, 12 yoke of cattle, 100 handcarts, and 5 wagons with teams. The company had departed the outfitting campground in Iowa City on July 15, following existing roads, often dusty or muddy and filled with holes and bumps. Thirteen days later the Mormons passed through

Newton. According to the Willie Company journal, "It appeared as if the residents of the entire city and the country round about were lining the streets as they walked along" and gazed upon the Mormons with a look of surprise. No one troubled the travelers, the journal notes, "but snide remarks such as gee and haw were directed toward the company. These words, commonly used to direct oxen to the right or to the left, were uttered to make them appear as beasts of burden."

On June 30, the company camped overnight somewhere between Rising Sun and Fort Des Moines, the town of 2,500 that still bore the name of the earlier military fort. The travelers broke camp at 6:30 a.m. The long train of handcarts "crossed [the Des Moines River] on the Flat Boat Bridge and passed about a mile through the town [Fort Des Moines], where we stopped til 2 o'clock to give the cattle water and grass." Then they resumed travel. "We pursued our journey again about 4 miles, where we encamped for the night," apparently by Walnut Creek. Peter Madsen, a Danish diarist in the company, described



T. B. H. STENHOUSE, ROCKY MOUNTAIN SAINTS (NEW YORK, 1873)

As the handcart companies crossed Iowa, they were watched by residents; some were curious, some helpful, some hostile.

Des Moines as "a large city which had many nice houses and the inhabitants were also a nice people."

Not all descriptions of Des Moines citizens were so positive. "Some of the people here raged with the spirit of Cain against us," according to John Oakley in a handcart brigade a month earlier. At the end of the day when the Willie Company reached Des Moines, Levi Savage described how "a large number of ruffians came determined to disturb our camp." The camp posted a strong guard to keep out the trouble-makers, who finally left about midnight. "Some strangers tried to disturb us," Madsen observed, but "did nothing more than make a little noise."

Only hours before the "ruffians" arrived on July 31, Charles Good had left a different impression. He visited the crowded Willie camp at either their early afternoon stop or the later one. The company journal noted his visit: "Mr. Charles Good, a respectable gentleman from the City, who seemed very favorable to the Gospel, from no impure motive, brought a present of 15 pairs of childrens boots."

No one in the camp knew who this "respectable gentleman" was. Beyond this simple story, what is known about the man? Research in Des Moines newspapers, histories, city directories, and genealogy records reveals details that answer this question and might explain his concern for the handcart children.

Charles Henry Good was born November 18, 1808, on a farm in Roseville, Coshocton County, Ohio, to parents stricken by poverty. According to one biographical sketch in an Iowa county history, as a boy Good was determined to work hard so that he would never be poor again. When he was 16 he learned the trade of a blacksmith, working the anvil and forge. For the next 15 years he pounded red-hot iron into horseshoes and nails and other useful objects. He also learned carpentry and brick laying. In Logan, Ohio, he built the town's first brick building.

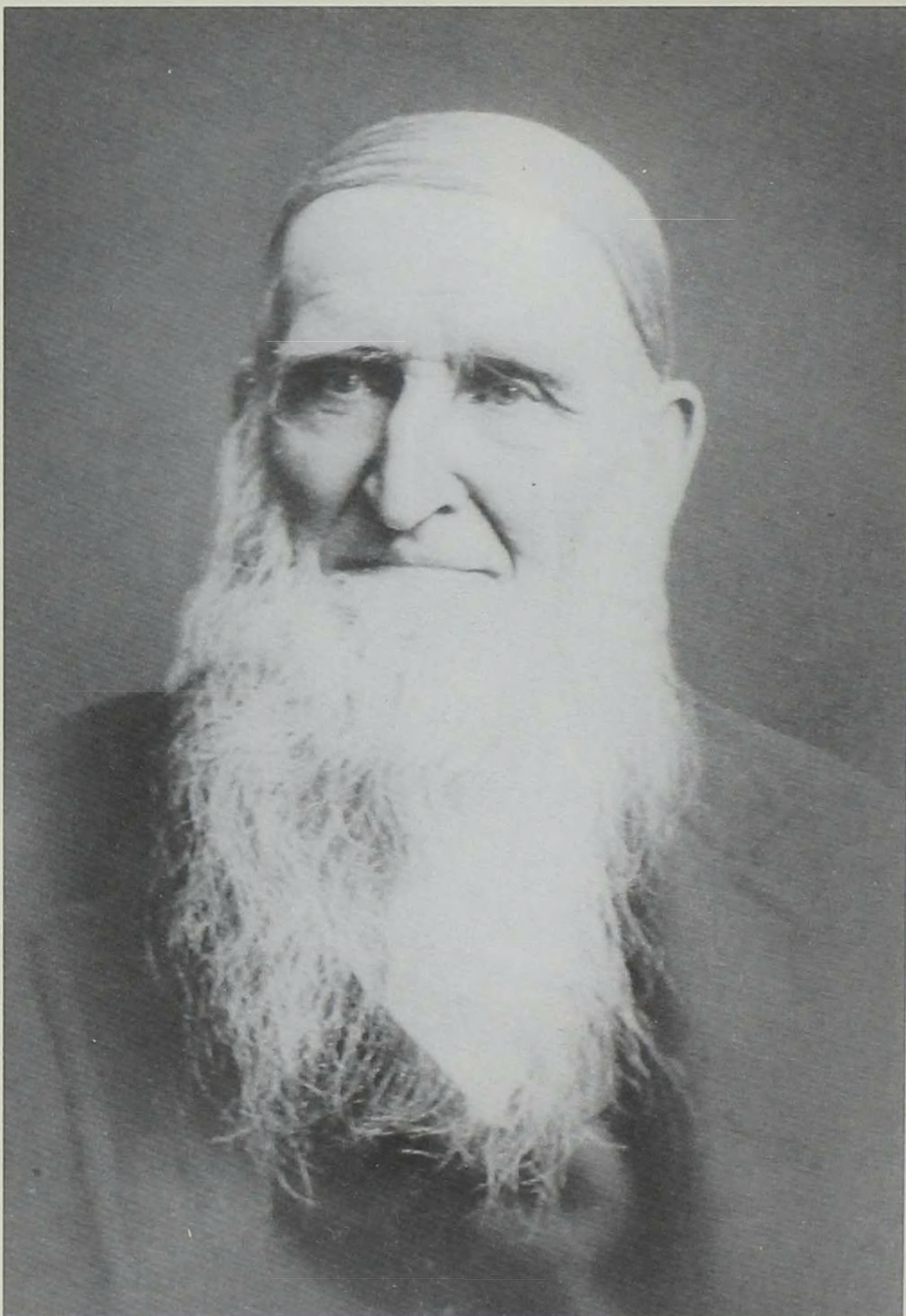
On the lower floor he opened a general store and used the top floor for a school. In 1833, at age 30, he married Sarah (Sallie) Geil. Three of their four children would reach adulthood.

Seeking better opportunities, Good visited Iowa in 1847. While he was gone, Sallie died and was buried before he returned. In 1849 he married Barbara Beery and they moved to Des Moines the next year. Their first two children, born in 1851 and 1854, both died in infancy.

In Des Moines, Good's business career began in their log home on Second Street and Elm, where he opened a grocery and drug business. Later he started a bakery, "where he established quite a large trade with the Indians," according to his obituary. An 1857 city map lists him as a druggist on Walnut Street. For his day he seemed to have a good knowledge of drugs and medicines, and he sold his own formulae, including a liniment and a cholera medicine. At some point, he built a two-story building on Second Street between Vine and Market. On the ground floor he "dispensed drugs of all kinds including whisky which was generally sold on the prescription plan," a town historian later wrote. "The upper story was used for religious meetings and if a preacher was not handy, Good attended to it himself, as he could take a text and follow it to a logical conclusion quite as well as many backwood orators of the old style."

Good was said to be "a man of very devout character" who was "zealous" in his Brethren in Christ faith. "While he read many other books," one sketch says, "he read the Bible whenever opportunity offered, and committed much of it to memory." He gave his children "several well marked and worn Bibles" in which he had written his own thoughts and references. At times he preached, sometimes in Des Moines and beyond, and he held religious services in his Second Street home. Later, he bought an old German Methodist church and turned it into a mission, which became known as the Good Mission, where a Sunday School and other activities were held.

SHSI (DES MOINES)



Des Moines businessman and benefactor Charles Good, late in life.

Never able to forget his own boyhood days in poverty, he provided food, clothes, and gifts to needy children at the mission. "A large portion of his life was given up to religious work," an obituary notes. He was "passionately fond" of children and "could not see them in want."

Perhaps Good had watched the Willie Company pass near his business on that day in July 1856. Certainly he had seen or heard about the previous three handcart companies that had traveled through the city since May. Twice as large as the others, the Willie Company included at least 84 children between the ages of 3 and 12. Those small feet would need protec-

tion sooner or later, as the handcart brigade walked 1,300 miles across the plains, through the mountains, and into the Salt Lake Valley. Good gathered up 15 pairs of children's boots and took them to the camp.

In October and November, a fierce Wyoming blizzard caught the Willie Company, along with the Martin Handcart Company and two Mormon wagon trains. Deep snow and freezing temperatures took a heavy toll on the exposed handcart people. About 70 died in the Willie Company, and others suffered frostbite and sickness. If Good heard news about the tragedy, no doubt he hoped that his boots had lessened the suffering of at least a few children.

Eight years after the Willie Company passed through Des Moines, 60-year-old Charles Good was again a widower, with five-year-old daughter Sarah to raise. He retired two years later, and sold his businesses. Five years later he erected the Good Block of business buildings at the corner of Fifth and Walnut. He purchased the properties for \$250; by the time of his death they were worth more than \$200,000.

Various sources from the 1870s and later list him as a gardener, a "vine grower," and a farmer of 31 acres. The 1880 census describes him as a "real estate operator," sharing his home with Sarah and her husband, Dr. Christian Nysewander, a 16-year-old granddaughter, and a 21-year-old male servant.

Good died on March 27, 1898. By then he had earned respect and a fine reputation. His obituary eulogized him as a pioneer resident of Des Moines, a citizen of wealth, a prominent philanthropist, and a religious worker. "He was nearly always a generous contributor to relief shipments to Russia, India and other places where extreme distress existed." One biography called him a capitalist, whose early investments in town lots, timber, and farmland paid off well once Des Moines had developed. He was opposed to war and, because of religious principles, took no part in the Civil War. He was guided by "the strictest moral principles," principles that occasionally made him appear severe to those who did not know him well—although acquaintances considered him companionable and genial, and often referred to him as "Uncle Charley." "Sometimes, if hired hands had little to do, he would have them move a pile of lumber or stone from a spot they had placed it the day before to another place, just to keep them at work and not lose their time and pay." Such generosity made some think he was eccentric.

One of Good's obituaries highlighted his act of kindness towards the Mormon handcart children, although it errs when it says he saw the children suffering in winter cold. In fact it was midsummer. A 1908 county history repeats the mistake: "When the Mormons were going through Des Moines, hauling their household goods in push-carts, accompanied with their hungry children, whose bare feet were bleeding from contact with the frozen ground, he gave them shoes and provisions from his store, remembering vividly his boyhood days when he had but a crust for a day, and the Sheriff carried away household goods and kitchen utensils his mother so much needed." Still, the point of both articles is the same. "He never spoke of his charitable gifts," the obituary reads, "and he gave thousands of dollars which the public never heard of." And as the county history states, "His love for children was remarkable. He could not endure to see them suffer." ♦

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NOTE ON SOURCES

LeRoy R. Hafen and Ann W. Hafen, *Handcarts to Zion: The Story of a Unique Western Migration, 1856–1860* (Lincoln, Nebraska: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1960) is the standard history of the handcart saga. For a brief article about Charles Good, see William G. Hartley, "A Good Charles Good," *Pioneer* (Spring 2001). Pertinent material in the Latter-day Saints Church Archives, Salt Lake City, includes reminiscences, diaries, and family records. Some of these appear on www.lds.org/churchhistory. Iowa sources include Des Moines newspaper obituaries, city directories and maps, 1870 and 1880 censuses, and Des Moines and Polk County histories. Complete annotations are held in the Iowa Heritage Illustrated productions files (SHSI-Iowa City).



"We are just married"

From the diary of Buena Vista Crowell Atkinson

I met Wallace four years ago this very month Nov. But I am a married woman now, we were married Wed. Oct 11-1905, one month ago today. I can hardly realize it but it is true, too true. The latter part of Sept and 1st of Oct was a very busy time for me. Dress makers, sewing and plan, plan all the time. But my boy did his part bravely, he "faced" papa, (which wasn't in the least dangerous) to ask for me and how smart he felt afterward. Then there was the license and the preacher. He didn't mind the license but O you preacher. I had always wanted a big wedding, but mama not being

in good health could not stand the nervous strain of such an undertaking and my hubby-to-be preferred a small wedding so quiet it was. The wedding was a quiet home affair with only our immediate relatives and a few near friends. Mrs Zorn was so kind to help mama and Nellie Brown & Mauvee Wherry so kind in decorating the house with autumn leaves, red & white flowers. The ceremony took place in our parlor which was tastefully decorated with a bower of autumn foliage in the corner under which we stood with a large bell hanging overhead. Wallace met me at the foot of the stairs at 10:A.M. We were unattended, the wedding march being played by Mauvee Wherry. The guests were standing in line around the parlor and sittingroom with our immediate relatives, Father, mother etc. nearest the Autumn Bower where we stood. Then the strains of Mendelsson's wedding march changed into a

low love ballad the music continuing during the whole ceremony congratulations etc. That was certainly a straining time, with everyone sniffing and crying, like a funeral. What on earth do people want to cry at a wedding for? Rev Carr can certainly make a service impressive, and it made W & I feel like a funeral. Wallace was so broken up by the seriousness of it all that he did not kiss me for fear of blubbering.

Mother was the first to congratulate then papa who was almost blubbering and the rest of the relatives, followed by our friends.

After congratulations we were ushered to the sittingroom, (which was larger than the dining room) where we were served daintily, by Nellie & Mauvee to our wedding breakfast.

We took the 1 o'clock train to Independence Oelwein & Waterloo where we stayed for a few weeks just to get away from town

After Buena Vista Crowell, 21, married Wallace Atkinson, 24, she described the wedding in a lengthy diary entry, which appears here. (Inconsistent spelling, punctuation, and capitalization have not been altered from the original.) Left: An undated photo of the couple, who played in Storm Lake's Owl Orchestra. Wallace also played in traveling musical groups.

"The ministers wife said I was the sweetest bride she ever saw. . . . Well, my boy is the handsomest on earth."

for awhile. We were sure a couple of happy kids.

The younger people all went to the train with us, well supplied with rice. Our trunk was bedecked with strips of white muslin & old shoes of all sizes, including baby shoes, of course.

The folks put us up a nice lunch to eat on the train, & which we never opened until we reached our destination and found then that they had packed a baby shoe on top of the lunch—the jokers. We were pretty well swamped in rice at the station and there was a young travelling man standing on the platform of our coach smiling down at us & enjoying our embarrassment. As we entered I remarked, "Isn't this fun and he said 'Yes, I just went thro' it myself last week.'"

Our brother-in-law, Leon, tried to get us to sit in the front of the train so he could pin a placard to the back of the seat, upon which was printed in large letters, "We are just married." But he couldn't work us that way, for we took a back seat & destroyed the card.

After the train was well on its way the young travelling man came back and talked to us until he reached his destination. Seemed to be a very nice young man.

I did not have a white wedding gown as I have always wanted but was married in my blue Taffetta going away suit. Mrs Carr, the ministers wife said I was the

sweetest bride she ever saw. Taffy [such flattery]. Said we were a dandy fine looking little couple. More taffy. Well, my boy is the handsomest on earth thats true.

Our relatives at Independence could not meet us, grandpa & grandma being too old and Aunt Maude tied at home with the baby, so we took the one dinky street car, [that] the town afforded, as far as it went our way then got off and walked the rest of the way which was about 9 blocks. What a beautiful night it was, and how I enjoyed that walk with "my husband." Have always enjoyed walking with him, he is the finest companion imaginable.

Aunt Maud was watching for us when we reached her home & soon after we arrived Uncle Harry came home from the Hospital where he worked. We took dinner with Frank & Eva Crowell on Saturday Oct 14 and Eva gave us a sugar & creamer for wedding gift. . . .

We arrived home on Monday and in the evening attended the reception given us by Owl Orchestra of which we were both members. The reception was at Nellie Brown's and was very dainty & nice. Nellie always entertains so gracefully.

First we had a game as follows: Each had to sew or knit something

with the left hand (if right handed) which caused a great deal of inconvenience and was very funny. Later in the evening Nellie & Viola served a very dainty lunch on small tables. The refreshments were Chocolate coffee, sandwiches, fruit salad, cake & olives.

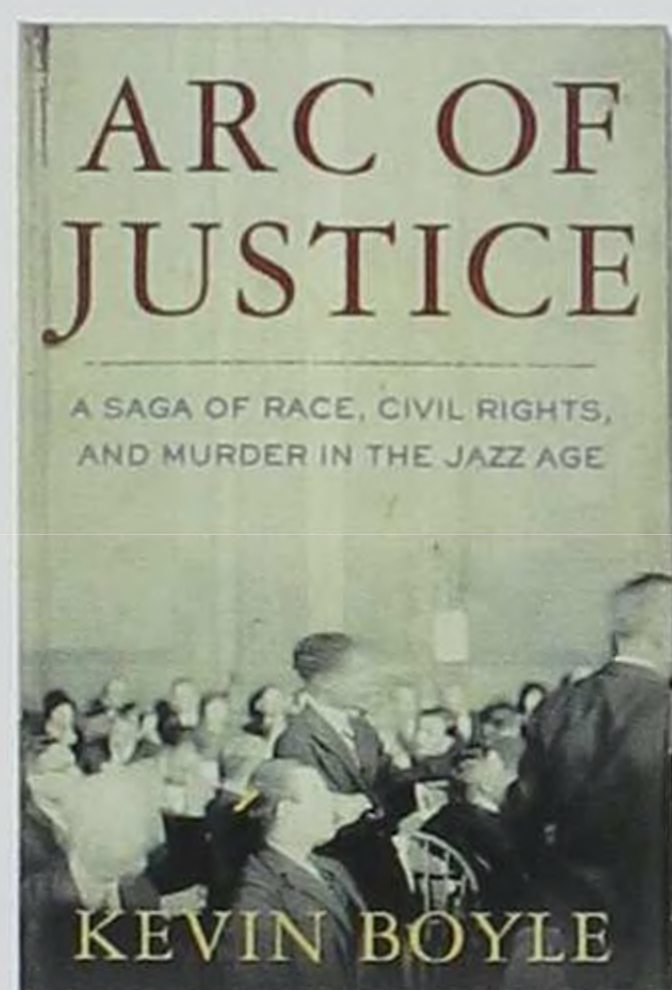
After we were all seated at the tables August Hoch made a little speech & presented us with a set of pearl handled fruit knives as a token of regards from the Owls. I had to get up & in a "bunglesome way" thank the Owls for their thoughtfulness and say we appreciated it so much. It almost got my goat. I think the cat ran away with Wallace's tongue. . . .

The Church gave us a reception about three weeks later. It was a swell reception at the parsonage, guess the whole church attended. We were presented with a large golden Oak Rocker. Once again I had to try to express our appreciation in my "scared way" to that big crowd. Horrors. ❖

The diary is part of the Buena and Wallace Atkinson Papers in Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City center).

Reading the Past

Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age, by Kevin Boyle (New York: H. Holt, 2004), 415 pages.



Historian Kevin Boyle's *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age* relates the dramatic and true story surrounding the trial of 11 African Americans for murder in the mid-1920s. It's not only good history, but just plain a good book—a good reading experience.

At the center of the story are a young, emotionally scarred, and therefore somewhat insecure African American doctor, Ossian Sweet, and his young, self-assured wife, Gladys. The story, as Professor Boyle tells it, begins with the couple, along with nine friends and relatives, defending their newly purchased home from the threat posed by a white mob gathered outside. In the confusion, someone in the house opens fire from an upstairs window, injuring one bystander and killing another. All 11 of the people in the house are rushed to police headquarters, interrogated at length, and charged—all 11 of them—with murder.

Then Boyle takes us back to the rural Florida of Ossian Sweet's childhood and the brutal racism he witnessed there as Florida's white citizens retracted most of the gains African Americans had made under Reconstruction. We follow Sweet to Wilberforce University and then to Howard University, where he trains to become a doctor. He decides, along with thousands of others seeking to escape the Jim Crow

South for opportunities in the North, to participate in what historians know as the Great Migration and to settle in Detroit.

There, as the African American community expands dramatically, white neighborhoods band together to defend their communities from the declining property values they fear will follow the migration of African Americans into their communities. In 1925, the year the Sweets move into their new home, the Second Ku Klux Klan is at its height and has even become a powerful political force in Detroit. The preceding decades have seen race riots in many cities North and South, riots in which whites—at the least provocation—invade African American communities, wreaking havoc and destruction. (Boyle calls them "pogroms" to distinguish them from the very different race riots many readers will recall from the 1960s and 1970s.)

As the trial opens, we are introduced to a fascinating cast of characters, many of them, like Ossian Sweet, unlikely heroes. James Weldon Johnson and Walter White of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) hope to use the case as a wedge to prevent the spread of institutionalized, enforced, residential segregation—and as a tool to build an NAACP legal defense

fund. In one of the many elegant characterizations that mark the book, Boyle comments that Johnson "infused NAACP activism with an extraordinary dramatic flair, beginning with his masterpiece, the 1917 Silent Parade down Fifth Avenue, a peerless example of protest as performance art, and reaching full flower in the literary renaissance of 1920s Harlem, when Johnson helped to make art into a performance of protest."

Johnson and White convince Clarence Darrow, America's most famous attorney, to take the case. It was his first case after his dramatic performance at the Scopes "Monkey" trial in Tennessee, the trial about the teaching of evolution immortalized for future generations in the film *Inherit the Wind*. Johnny Smith, Detroit's mayor, tries to minimize the social divisions that the trial represents, even as he capitalizes on the political divisions it spawns. Frank Murphy, the surprisingly fair-minded judge in the trial, will eventually become mayor himself and later be appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court by Franklin Roosevelt. Reinhold Niebuhr, America's most prominent 20th-

century theologian, is a young pastor in Detroit at the time and heads a commission to study Detroit's race problem.

What makes this book so special is the extraordinary way it blends three tools in the historian's toolkit. First and foremost, Boyle is a masterful storyteller with a dramatic story to tell, which he tells with literary flair. He ends chapters and sections the way good mystery writers do, making you want to keep reading to see what happens next.

Second, Boyle engagingly fills in the back story. As he pushes the history of the U.S. civil rights movement back to the 1920s, he educates readers about the many larger forces that impinge on this narrowly focused story. Even readers who are well informed about many of these large movements in American history—Reconstruction, the Great Migration, urbanization, residential segregation, the rise of the Second Ku Klux Klan, the founding of the NAACP, and the division between the followers of Booker T. Wash-

ington and W. E. B. DuBois—will learn things they don't know, while those who don't recognize the terms will be enlightened but not overwhelmed.

Finally, Boyle never forgets that these large forces in American history affect and are transformed by real individual human beings. He relates both the dramatic story and the accounts of the larger forces through the eyes of people—flawed heroes and villains whose motives he makes understandable.

Alas, this story has little direct connection to Iowa (though we do learn that Dr. Edward Carter, a fellow doctor and fraternity brother to whom Ossian Sweet increasingly turned for advice as he settled into Detroit society, was "the first black doctor to graduate from the University of Iowa's College of Medicine"). But anyone who is interested in history will find this to be an illuminating and engaging story. ❖

Marvin Bergman's occasional column, "Reading the Past," introduces selected books to our readers. Bergman is editor of the Annals of Iowa, published by the State Historical Society.

One in a Million

SHSI (IOWA CITY)

MANDY

F. Ziegfeld Jr., Presents
ZIEGFELD FOLLIES
of 1919
Staged by
NED WAYBURN

by
Irving Berlin

MANDY60
A PRETTY GIRL IS LIKE A MELODY60
HAREM LIFE60
A SYNCOPATED COCKTAIL60
I'D RATHER SEE A MINSTREL SHOW60
I'M THE GUY THAT GUARDS THE HAREM60
YOU CANNOT MAKE YOUR SHIMMY SHAKE ON TEA60
MY TAMBOURINE GIRL60
BEVO60

IRVING BERLIN INC.
Music Publishers
 1587 Broadway—New York

HENRY CLIVE

Here's one of the millions of items in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa: sheet music of "Mandy" by Irving Berlin. Handwriting on the back tells us that Mildred and Helen Stewart owned this sheet music.

We don't know, of course, if the Stewarts ever heard Eddie Cantor sing the Irving Berlin tune, or if they ever saw the 1919 Ziegfeld Follies, in which it was performed. We do know that a century ago, thanks to new printing technology, a tide of sheet music swept popular music into the American middle-class home and sweetened many a leisure hour spent around the parlor piano.

Decades from now, when we look back at the early 21st century, we'll recall the presence of popular music as we "vegged out" at home. (How will historians understand that term?) But today, popular music accompanies us far beyond an hour of leisure at home. Again thanks to new technology, music is with us as we car-pool kids, burn calories, plant crops, order lunch, sell shoes, tackle homework, buy groceries, and fall asleep.

—The Editor

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



"Wallace was so broken up by the seriousness of it all that he did not kiss me for fear of blub-bering." Inside: a 1905 wedding in Storm Lake.

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