

THE DU BUQUE VISITOR AND ITS PRESS

By Frederic Chapman Battell*

In 1836 the little mining town of Dubuque, Michigan Territory, was a typical frontier town of history and legend. The population was a motley one. There were soldiers just released from service in the Black Hawk War, emigrants from other countries, miners, outlaws, gamblers, merchants, and others not only imbued with the spirit of adventure but with the earnest intention of increasing their fortunes.

Because Dubuque was a mining town where armed men gathered in the dram shops to drink and fight, it soon gained a lurid reputation up and down the river. The more exciting tales told were probably attempts to make the village appear intensely wild and wicked; in reality the lawless were held in check by a group of the more civic-minded of the population, aided by the few ministers and the first religious congregations. "But moral suasion was supplemented by a set of orders or resolutions drawn up by John King and adopted by the citizens as a guide of law and order to serve until the usual courts could be set in operation."¹

John King, editor of Iowa's first newspaper, had arrived in the little river settlement in 1833. Born in Shepardstown, [West] Virginia, on January 10, 1803, King, while still a boy had moved with his family to Chillicothe, Ohio, where he grew up and had most of his schooling. By the beginning of the 1830's King had arrived at the age when so many young men were heading westward; being of an ambitious and restless nature he decided to go west and see for himself what was being offered. After examining various localities in new parts of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, he finally arrived at the Mississippi River and visited the area of its upper reaches in 1833.² What he found in that as yet unsettled region proved to be a challenge which he could not ignore. He had nothing ". . . except his intelli-

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¹ Franklin T. Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . (Chicago, n. d.), 49.

² *The History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . (Chicago, 1880), 821.

gence, his strong body, and a determination to succeed in business by giving the public sound value for every dollar he took in."³ He stopped in Dubuque, decided that the town was destined to become an important city, and considered that it might even turn out to be his permanent home.

During his first two years in the rapidly-growing community he worked at whatever odd jobs he could find and even tried his hand at lead mining with rather indifferent success. From the beginning he was a positive force in the development and improvement of the town, and in the early days of 1835 Stevens T. Mason, then Acting Governor of Michigan Territory, appointed him "Chief Justice of the County Court of Du Buque County," and from that event onward he was popularly known as "Judge" King. It was in this capacity that he drew up the previously mentioned resolutions for maintaining law and order. "The town of Dubuque was infested with infamous gamblers and lewd women. A public meeting was held, and Judge King drew up the stringent resolutions that drove that class of nuisances across the river."⁴

After two years of hard work and careful observation of the trend of developments in the new town, King finally concluded that he need look no farther for a permanent residence, and that the best way for him to benefit himself and promote the welfare of the town was to establish a newspaper. There were other factors, however, which influenced him in his decision to become a newspaperman. On September 6, 1834, a little more than two months after the region became attached to Michigan Territory, the Legislative Assembly of Michigan divided the area into two counties by extending a line "due west from the lower end of Rock Island."⁵ The territory north of this line was named Dubuque County, and a court was organized to be held at Dubuque, with John King as judge. At this time there were approximately 1,000 people living in the area. King had the best interests of the town at heart, and he felt that if it were to thrive and prosper as it should, the population would have to increase and new businesses would have to be established. He felt that the best way to attract newcomers was through the medium of the press.

For some time there had been agitation to divide Michigan Territory

³ Iowa Writer's Program, *Dubuque County History, Iowa* (1942), 38.

⁴ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 821

⁵ *Dubuque Herald*, June 19, 1861.

into two separate governments and to call the new portion Wisconsin Territory; King felt that he could be instrumental in effecting this change through the editorial columns of a newspaper. Although the decision to create the new Territory was made before he had a chance to start his paper, the site of the Territory's capital had not been decided upon. Judge King thus had a new incentive for becoming a newspaper publisher: to promote Dubuque, the largest town in the Territory, for the site of the new capital.⁶

In the fall of 1835 King journeyed back to his old home in Chillicothe, Ohio, where he spent the winter.⁷ While there he met William Carey Jones, an enterprising young man who was eager to seek his fortune in the West. Judge King felt that here was a man with both mechanical and literary talent and employed him to take charge of the mechanical department of the printing office.⁸

Continuing to Cincinnati in the spring of 1836, King purchased a small hand printing press and sufficient type and other materials to establish a weekly paper. According to the contract, it is probable that Jones accompanied his employer on the buying trip to Cincinnati and on the return trip to Dubuque by steamboat, where they arrived about the first of May.⁹

On one of his frequent trips eighteen miles downstream to Galena, on the opposite side of the river, Judge King had occasion to stop in at the office of the *Galenian*, a newspaper published in that city by a Dr. A. Philleo. Dr. Philleo was busy much of the time ministering to the ills of the community and was necessarily away from his printing office a great deal. He had a very unusual but capable assistant, however, named Andrew Keesecker, in whose hands he left much of the work of turning out the paper. Keesecker, among his other duties, wrote many of the editorials and set the type for the *Galenian*. It was his unusual talent of setting up the type as he composed the editorials, without first putting them to paper, that delighted Dr. Philleo and he showed him off to everyone who visited the shop of the *Galenian*. It was thus that King met Andrew Keesecker; he was

⁶ David C. Mott, "Early Iowa Newspapers," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 16:222 (January, 1928); Joseph Schafer, *The Wisconsin Lead Region* (Madison, 1932), 61-2.

⁷ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 821.

⁸ John Springer, *Memoranda Relating to the Early Press of Iowa* (Iowa City, 1880), 14.

⁹ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 821.

so impressed with the latter's ability that he immediately hired him to work on the forthcoming Dubuque paper.¹⁰

King set up his press and equipment at the corner of Main and Church streets in a 20 x 25 foot two-story log building which had been constructed as a residence two years previously by Pascal Mallet.¹¹ There he prepared to publish the first newspaper west of the Mississippi River and north of St. Louis.

The small-town newspaper plant of the middle 1830's was a simple affair compared with the plants of today. Frequently the entire process of manufacturing the newspaper was confined to a single room. On one side of the room was a wooden trough containing water for wetting the paper. Usually a full day before press time the required amount of paper was counted out and placed at one end of the wetting trough. The wetting process was performed by picking off the first quire of twenty-four sheets from the heap of paper and dipping it in the trough of water. It was then placed on a wooden board, or boards, and a quire of dry paper was placed on top of it. The entire heap was treated in this manner, stacking alternate wet and dry quires, and then heavy weights were placed on top of the pile to keep the paper from curling and to force the moisture to penetrate the entire heap uniformly.

The composition, or setting of the type, was all done by hand and frequently all by the same compositor. Although Joseph T. Fales did a little typesetting for the *Visitor*, most of it was done by Andrew Keesecker. It is said that the first piece of type he picked from the case was the letter "I," the initial letter in the name of the future State.¹² Keesecker was an extremely rapid compositor, but his time was fully occupied; as soon as one issue of the paper was run off he had to distribute all the type back into the cases and then begin the composition of the next issue. As a matter of fact it is quite possible that he may have had to distribute the type before the entire paper was printed; many small papers on the frontier had short supplies of type and no more than two pages could be set at a time. All day long he would stand before his type case, deftly picking the pieces of type from the case and transferring them to his composing stick. As the

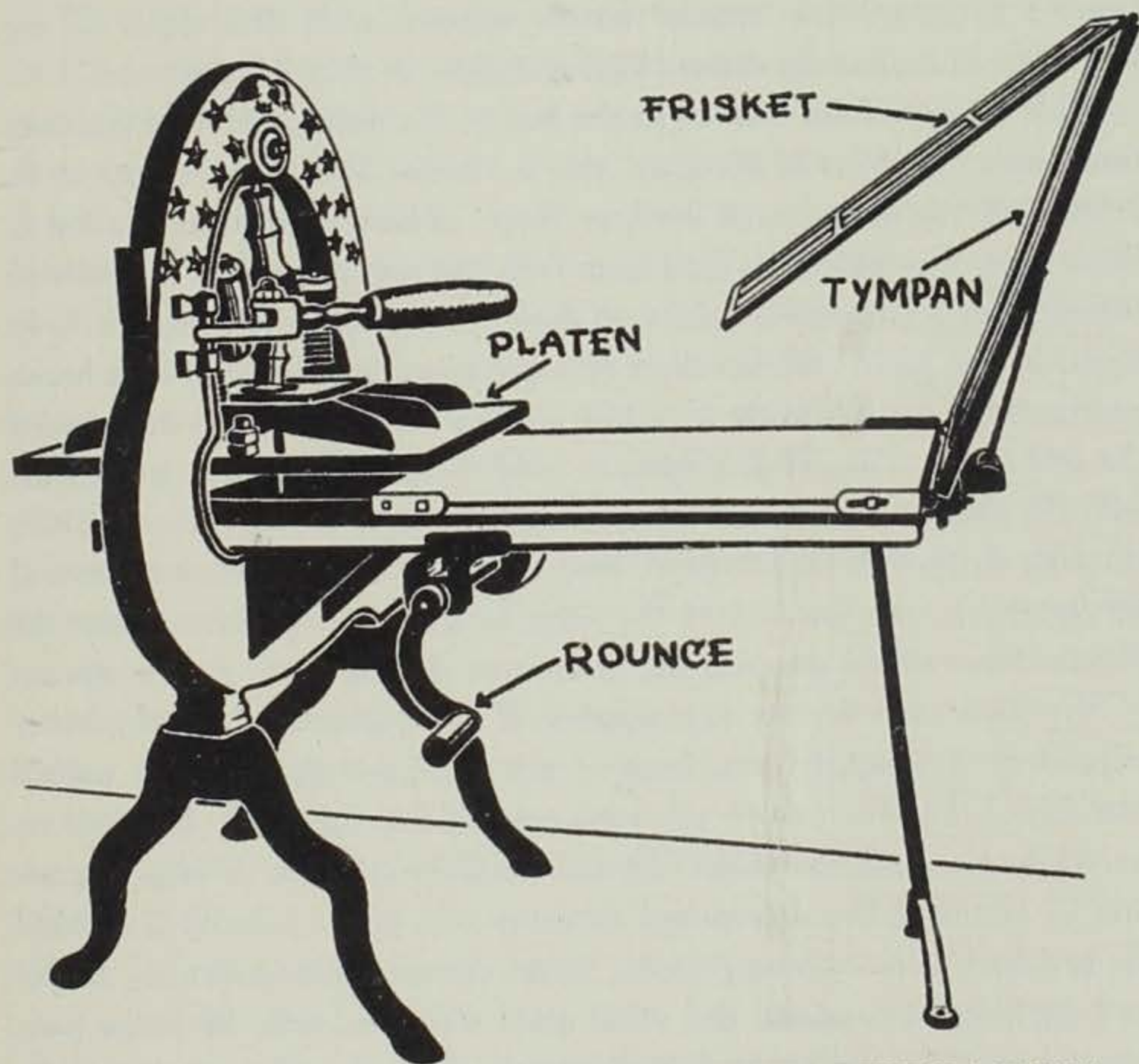
¹⁰ Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 12-14.

¹¹ Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 52

¹² Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 15.

stick became full he would transfer the completed lines to the galley and begin again.

As printer and foreman of the shop, William Carey Jones was responsible for arranging and setting up the forms ready for printing. It was also his duty to see that the paper was sufficiently damp and that the press was in readiness for printing. The tympan had to be properly covered with parchment, muslin, or silk. The blanket, usually of flannel or fine broadcloth, was used in the tympan to intervene between the type and the platen



SKETCH BY ERNEST A. HAEMIG

SMITH PRESS

to secure the proper impression upon the paper when the power was applied, and had to be carefully adjusted. It was then necessary to see to the proper working order and adjustment of the frisket, the thin frame holding a sheet of paper cut to the size of the form. One end of the tympan was attached to the end of the bed of the press, and the frisket was fastened to

the other end of the tympan. When the bed of the press was run out, the tympan was raised to an obtuse angle, and the frisket, in turn, to a position slightly beyond that of the perpendicular. When the frisket was folded down over the tympan it held the paper in place ready for printing, protected it from ink marks other than those from the type itself, and forced it to raise cleanly from the type after the impression had been made. The paper for the *Visitor* was neatly placed within arm's reach on the near end of the bank, an oblong wooden table containing an inclined stage with a wooden back, called a "horse," on the opposite end. The object of the horse was to receive the sheets of printed paper as they left the press.

With the type form secured in the bed of the press and all adjustments made with the nicest of accuracy, the *Du Buque Visitor* was ready to be printed. While the printer's devil, or "imp" as he was frequently called in those days, was inking the type form with the newly-invented composition roller, Jones was preparing the first sheet for printing. Twisting his body to the left he picked the top sheet of paper from the bank with both hands and carefully fitted it to the adjusting pins on the tympan. He then folded the frisket down over the tympan to hold the paper in place, and almost with the same motion folded the tympan down over the type form. Then, reaching down with his left hand, he grasped the crank of the rounce, and by turning it, ran the bed of the press to its proper position under the platen. Normally it was also the pressman's duty to make the impression on the paper, but for the first number of the *Visitor* Andrew Keesecker stepped up, grasped the bent lever of the press, and by pulling it toward him forced the platen down upon the tympan and the form. He then released the lever and the platen was automatically raised to its original position by means of two coil springs on either side of it. Jones then cranked the bed back to its starting position, raised the tympan and then the frisket to their inclined positions, and stood aside while the sister of Judge King stepped up and removed the first sheet from the press. The printing of the first copy was an historic event and a group of interested spectators had gathered in the rustic printing shop to witness the ceremony.¹³

In the normal course of printing, the pressman would not only make the impression, along with his other duties, but would also remove the sheet from the tympan, swing around to the left and place it upon the rest of the

¹³ *Dubuque Herald*, June 19, 1861.

heap on the horse at the far end of the bank, and as he turned back toward the press he would grasp a new sheet of paper from the bank and place it in position on the tympan. While the pressman was engaged in replacing the printed sheet with a blank one, the imp, or another assistant, would quickly ink the form; and as the impression was being made he would be occupied with applying more ink to his roller. The entire process of printing one sheet of paper took only a few seconds; with an experienced crew, about 250 impressions could be made in an hour.¹⁴

The *Visitor* was printed on the nearest thing to an imperial sheet, which in 1836 measured 22 x 31 inches. Actually, the dimensions of the newspaper were closer to 20 x 30 inches. The masthead was set up in an eight-line pica (approximately 1-1/3 inches high) German text, but the main body of type throughout the paper was set in a bourgeois (nine-point) Scotch face, liberally sprinkled with italics. The poetry and some of the special features were printed in brevier (eight-point) type of the same or very similar face, while the advertisements included a rather wide selection of sizes and faces, the most ornate of which were "Pica Tuscan Shade" and "Brevier Outline Shade." "Two Lines Pearl, No. 2," a title face, was the type most used at the heads of the advertisements, while "English (fourteen-point) Condensed" was used as the title heading on the last three pages of the paper.¹⁵ Although there were a few typographical errors, a few cases of "wrong font," and several amusing divisions of words, such as U-nited States, Uni-ted States, and Se-nate, Andrew Kee-secker did an excellent job of composition on the first issue of the *Visitor*.

Volume I, Number 1 of the six-column *Du Buque Visitor* bore the heading "TRUTH OUR GUIDE, THE PUBLIC GOOD OUR AIM." J. KING, EDITOR. DU BUQUE, (LEAD MINES,) WISCONSIN TERRITORY, Wednesday, May 11, 1836." Actually, Wisconsin Territory did not exist until the fourth of July, 1836, but the enabling act had been passed on the previous April 20, and King felt justified in anticipating the

¹⁴ Thomas F. Adams, *Typographia: A Brief Sketch of the Origin, Rise, and Progress of the Typographic Art* . . . (Philadelphia, 1837), 279-306, 338-48; John Johnson, *An Abridgement of Johnson's Typographia, or the Printers' Instructor* (Boston, 1828), 255-80; Charles H. Cochrane, "Printing Presses," *Encyclopedia Americana* (1939 ed.), 22:591.

¹⁵ Adams, *Typographia* . . ., 371. Identification of the type faces was made in *Specimen of Modern and Light Face Printing Types and Ornaments, Cast at the Cincinnati Type Foundry* (Cincinnati, 1834).

event by eight weeks.¹⁶ Following King's name as editor appeared that of Wm. C. Jones, Printer; but Andrew Keesecker's name was not to be found. Subscription rates of the paper were given as "Three dollars per annum, in advance; Four dollars at the end of the year." The advertising space was to be sold at \$1.00 per square (a portion of the column as deep as the column was wide) or less for the first insertion, and 50 cents for each subsequent insertion, with a liberal discount to yearly advertisers.

It is readily understandable that the maintenance of a weekly newspaper in a frontier town in the middle 1830's was a difficult task. Paper and other materials were hard to get, and the costs often exceeded the income. The *Du Buque Visitor* experienced all of these hazards and consequently underwent many changes during its short lifetime. Examination of the history of other early newspapers will show that the changes in ownership and editorship were many and frequent. Political disagreement with the publisher was a common factor in the withdrawal of an editor. The restless urge to keep pace with the frontier — to move on into new and more promising territory — was another reason for many changes. Probably the most practical reason, however, was the fact that publishing a newspaper in the early pioneer days was not a very lucrative business. This disadvantage, along with the frustration accompanying shortages of paper and printing materials, lack of adequate help, and the difficulty of obtaining sufficient news to fill the columns regularly, caused many newspaper owners to desert the profession for more gainful and less worrisome occupations.

By the end of the first six months of the *Visitor's* existence, Judge King claimed nearly 1,000 subscribers, and the office was removed to the east side of Main Street just above the northeast corner of Fifth and Main.¹⁷ In December, King sold the *Visitor* to United States Attorney W. W. Chapman, who was accused by some of not keeping the pledge he made in the issue of December 21 to "maintain a non-partisan paper and to keep it free from all that 'savors of defamation and scurrillity,' but instead made it an open and avowed Jacksonian democratic organ."¹⁸ Three months after his proprietorship, Chapman sold out to William H. Turner, who in turn disposed of the paper to William W. Coriell, John King, and John B. Russell

¹⁶ Mott, "Early Iowa Newspapers," 223.

¹⁷ Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 52.

¹⁸ Kenneth E. Colton, "W. W. Chapman, Delegate to Congress from Iowa Territory," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 21:290 (April, 1938).

in April, 1837. Russell, incidentally, was another one of those rare editor-printers, like Andrew Keesecker, who never wrote his editorials but composed them as he stood at the type case.¹⁹

By the end of May, 1837, the *Du Buque Visitor* had completed its first volume, and Mr. Coriell, senior partner of the firm of Coriell, King, & Russell, changed its name to the *Iowa News*. The word "Iowa" had been used in connection with statehood in a little sketch in the *Visitor*, and it is said that Coriell's use of the word in the title of his newspaper made it so familiar in the halls of Congress that it was finally adopted for the name of the Territory west of the Mississippi.²⁰

Three men had given character to the *Du Buque Visitor*—William Carey Jones, Andrew Keesecker, and John King. Jones' connection with the paper was short-lived, however. He broke his contract with King in the fall of 1836 and returned to Ohio where for a time he edited the *Scioto Gazette*. He also did some book printing, for on the title-page of *Galland's Iowa Emigrant* appears the imprint: "Chillicothe: Printed by Wm. C. Jones, 1840." His subsequent career took him to California where he practiced law.²¹

Andrew Keesecker, the man who set the type for the *Du Buque Visitor*, had a much longer and more important influence on the paper. He was born in Shepardstown, [West] Virginia, also the birthplace of John King, on January 29, 1810. Keesecker spent all but a few years of his life engaged in the printing business. Indeed, most of his printing life was with the *Visitor* and its legitimate successors. When he was only eight years old he was apprenticed to the printing business, and six years later, at the age of 14, he became a journeyman printer in Baltimore, Maryland. He worked at his trade in Baltimore for a short time, but finally grew restless and went to

¹⁹ A. R. Fulton, "Early Journalism in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (second series), 2:98 (October, 1883); Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 6.

²⁰ Lucius H. Langworthy, *Dubuque: Its History, Mines, Indian Legends, Etc.* . . . (Dubuque, [1855]), 41-2. The *Iowa News* was suspended from October 14 to November 15, 1837, for lack of paper. On June 18, 1838, John King sold his interests in the paper to his two partners, Coriell and Russell, and late that same year Coriell also sold and left the *News* under the sole ownership of Russell, who was joined almost immediately by Edwin Reeves. Another short suspension occurred from March 7 to May 5, 1840; from June 14, 1840, to May 29, 1841, the paper was again suspended. Finally, in 1842 it ceased publication and the press and type were removed to Lancaster, Wisconsin. Mott, "Early Iowa Newspapers," 177.

²¹ Item appearing in the San Francisco *Alta California*, November 8, 1867.

sea. While abroad he enlisted in the cause of Greece and took some part in the Greek revolution of the 1820's. Returning to the United States after an absence of five years, he once again resumed his trade of printer, working in several of the foremost cities of the country. For awhile again he deserted his profession and worked on the Mississippi River, eventually finding his way to the region of the lead mines, and arriving in Dubuque in 1833, the same year as did John King.²² Unlike King, however, he did not linger in Dubuque but instead continued on to Galena, Illinois, where he immediately went to work for Dr. Philleo on the *Galenian*. As mentioned previously, it was in the office of the *Galenian* that he was "discovered" by John King.

Because he took some unchronicled part in the Black Hawk War, probably while working on the Mississippi, and because he was constantly sought out for advice and information on matters historical as well as typographical, Andrew Keesecker was known around Dubuque as the Nestor of the Iowa Press. Always sure of himself, he sometimes appeared dogmatic and obstinate. He never intruded his opinion on others, however, but was usually reticent and had to be drawn out. "As a writer he was sharp, often bitter, but never coarse. No man could more smoothly, and at the same time so effectually dispose of an adversary in an editorial article."²³

Throughout his lifetime, Andrew Keesecker worked regularly and seemingly tirelessly.²⁴ His habits were as fixed as were his mental moods, and he was always the first one at work in the morning and the last to leave at night. He continued to work on Dubuque newspapers until April 25, 1870, when he was suddenly stricken, while busily at work before his type case, and died a few minutes later.²⁵

²² Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 12; *History of Dubuque County, Iowa . . .*, 350.

²³ Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 15.

²⁴ He was connected with several of Iowa's early newspapers, following his years with the *Visitor* and *Iowa News*. In 1842 he and David Stokeley Wilson purchased the *Miner's Express*; the paper was a decided success and was sold in 1845 to George Green. In 1847 Keesecker took a brief sojourn from Dubuque and established the *Western Democrat* at Andrew, Iowa. Twice during the following years he returned to the *Express*, finally, in 1860, when the *Express* was absorbed by the *Dubuque Herald*, Keesecker became a partner of the new owner and editor, D. A. Mahony. M. M. Hoffman, "The Wilsons of Dubuque," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 21: 328-9 (July, 1938); Mott, "Early Iowa Newspapers," 178-9, 186.

²⁵ Springer, *Early Press of Iowa*, 16.

Although the name of John King is one of the most significant in Iowa newspaper history, actually his direct connection with the press was very brief, extending from May to December, 1836, and from April, 1837, to June, 1838, a total of less than two years. As a contributor, however, he never lost his connections with the press, and his articles and communications appeared in the papers of Dubuque and its vicinity with more or less regularity throughout the remainder of his life. During the twenty years before his death, scarcely a week passed without a newspaper item of some sort by Judge King. His interests were both local and statewide, and ranged from "forest culture and railroads in the country, to gardening, fruit growing, and street improvements at home." His interest in agriculture and horticulture led him to become one of the first members of the Dubuque County Farmers' Club in 1860, and he probably did more than any other man to encourage the residents of Dubuque to grow trees and shrubbery in their city.²⁶

A proponent of progress in all forms, King took an active part in promoting the idea of a Pacific railway as early as 1836 by encouraging and backing John Plumbe, of Dubuque, who was said to be the organizer of a scheme for a transcontinental railroad.²⁷ He was also one of the nine subscribers of the Miners' Bank of Dubuque.²⁸

King took his civic responsibilities seriously and many years of his life were spent as a public servant. Mention has already been made of his appointment as the first Justice of the Peace in Dubuque County in 1835. About 1839 he was appointed Postmaster of Dubuque, a position which he held for several years. A public service of a somewhat different caliber began on January 7, 1839, when Governor Lucas issued General Order No. 2, appointing his staff for the Iowa Militia. King was named as one of the aides to the commander-in-chief. From 1854 until 1866 he served his city as a member of the Dubuque City Council. In March, 1865, he proposed the organization of an old settlers society, and a few months later, when the Early Settlers Association of Dubuque County was organized, he was named one of the five vice-presidents.²⁹

²⁶ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 822.

²⁷ Johnson Brigham, *Iowa, Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* (3 vols., Chicago, 1918), 1:119; Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 52.

²⁸ Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 55.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 52; *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 822; Cyril B. Upham, "His-

His character may be summed up in the following words quoted from an early Iowa historian: "Judge King was . . . an admirer of honesty and integrity. To the rich he was always just; to the poor he was generous, and he would have left a much larger estate had he not always leaned to the side of kindness and charity. . . ." ³⁰ He died in Dubuque on February 13, 1871. ³¹

While the story of any newspaper would be incomplete without an account of the men who made it, the story of the *Du Buque Visitor* would be equally incomplete without an account of the press upon which it was printed. If the *Visitor's* press had had an ordinary career, it could be disposed of in a few words; but since it played an important role in various frontier towns, and since it was the subject of a controversy which has been kept alive for many years, its story assumes an enchantment which makes its telling imperative. The press was taken first to Wisconsin and then to Minnesota and — possibly — from there to South Dakota. The question now is, which of two existing presses is that of the *Du Buque Visitor*. Two states claim possession of the original press — South Dakota and Minnesota. Had there been but two hand presses in St. Paul in the early 1850's, the dispute might be solved. However, there were at least three and possibly four such presses; therefore, the solution is one of probabilities rather than certainties.

The story of the old *Visitor* press is one of contradictions, charges, and counter-charges. All accounts agree that it was manufactured in Cincinnati, Ohio, where John King purchased it. Several reports mention the manufacturer as being a Charles Mallett. Also, most historians have agreed that after serving its first six years with the *Du Buque Visitor* and the *Iowa News*, the press was purchased by a stock company in 1842 and taken to Lancaster, Wisconsin. ³² One report has it in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, after leaving Dubuque, however, and still another is that the

torical Survey of the Militia in Iowa, 1838-1865," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 17:334-5 (July, 1919); "Meeting of the Old Settlers of Dubuque," *Annals of Iowa* (first series), 3:474 (April, 1865); "Organization of the Early Settlers," *ibid.*, 525 (July, 1865).

³⁰ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 821.

³¹ *Annals of Iowa* (first series), 9:632 (July, 1871). There is nothing in the records of the Linwood Cemetery to indicate that further steps were ever taken to provide a proposed monument there to King, Jones and Keesecker.

³² *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 584.

press went to Platteville, Wisconsin, in 1840, in which place the *Northern Badger* and later the *Wisconsin Whig* were printed on it.³³ This latter account delays its arrival in Lancaster until 1843.

There seems to be no disagreement on the claim that the press was used for printing the *Grant County Herald* in Lancaster. The *Herald* was first edited by General H. A. Wiltse, for many years a prominent citizen of Dubuque, and afterwards Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin.³⁴ In January, 1846, James Madison Goodhue assumed the editorship of the *Herald* and retained that position until he purchased the press and its equipment in March, 1849.³⁵ Goodhue was born in Hebron, New Hampshire, and graduated from Amherst College in 1833. After his admission to the New York bar in 1840,³⁶ he tried his hand at farming at Plainfield, Illinois, for three years and then practiced law in Galesburg, Illinois, Platteville, Wisconsin, and finally in Lancaster, where he decided to change his profession from the law to journalism, and thereby became owner of the *Du Buque Visitor* press.

When plans for the organization of Minnesota Territory were completed at the convention held at Stillwater in 1848, Goodhue determined to be the first editor in the new Territory as well as the Territory's official printer.³⁷ Early in April he loaded his press and equipment, his wife, his household possessions, and his printers in a wagon and drove from Lancaster to Cassville, Wisconsin, where the party boarded the steamboat *Senator* bound for St. Paul.³⁸ The Goodhue party arrived in St. Paul on the 18th day of April, and just ten days later there was issued from the old press the first newspaper printed in Minnesota Territory, the *Minnesota Pioneer*.

Goodhue was well fitted to be the new Territory's pioneer editor. He

³³ Oldt (ed.), *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 52; John Clyde Oswald, *Printing in the Americas* (New York, [c1937]), 439.

³⁴ *History of Dubuque County, Iowa* . . . , 584.

³⁵ Oswald, *Printing in the Americas*, 438. For Goodhue, see Mary Wheelhouse Berthel, *Horns of Thunder: The Life and Times of James M. Goodhue* . . . (St. Paul, 1948).

³⁶ Warren Upham (comp.), "Minnesota Biographies, 1655-1912," *Minnesota Historical Society, Collections*, 14:263 (1912).

³⁷ Return I. Holcomb, *Minnesota in Three Centuries* (4 vols. [Mankato], 1908), 2:432.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:432.

was bold and active as well as talented,³⁹ and was equipped with a very forcible character and high moral principles. Through his newspaper he accomplished much in the upbuilding of St. Paul and Minnesota, but in so doing he inevitably made strong personal enemies as well as friends. Because of a scathing editorial in 1851, flaying United States Marshal Alexander Mitchell and Judge David Cooper, the latter's brother made a personal attack on Goodhue in the street in front of the building in which the legislature was sitting, stabbed him twice in the abdomen with a dirk, and was shot in return by Goodhue. Goodhue never fully recovered and it was believed that his death, about a year and a half later, was the ultimate result of the knife wounds.⁴⁰

Before Goodhue's death, however, other newspapers had been established in St. Paul. As early as the fall of 1848, Dr. A. Randall, a member of David Dale Owen's Geological Corps, had journeyed to Cincinnati and purchased a press and materials with which to publish a paper. Delayed by bad weather, he found it impossible to return to St. Paul during the winter months. Therefore, he decided to print his first issue in Cincinnati, dating it at St. Paul, April 27, 1849. Thus, the *Minnesota Register*, as the paper was called, was dated one day earlier than Goodhue's *Pioneer*, but was not actually printed in Minnesota until some time in May. Associated with Randall in this venture was John P. Owens, who, in May, took the press to St. Paul.

Almost at once Randall, either because he "caught the California fever" or because of ill health, sold his interest in the *Register* to Major Nathaniel McLean of Ohio who planned to emigrate to Minnesota. A third paper, the *Chronicle*, began publication on May 31, 1849, under the guidance of Colonel James Hughes, also from Ohio. By June of 1849 there were, therefore, three newspapers in St. Paul, and three presses: the *Pioneer*, the *Register*, and the *Chronicle*. In August of 1849 the *Chronicle* and the *Register* merged. Shortly after this consolidation, another paper, the *Minnesota Democrat*, was established, thus giving St. Paul three papers again. The explanation behind all this publishing activity was the struggle for political preferment in the awarding of contracts for territorial printing. That the *Democrat* used one of the presses left idle by the merging of

³⁹ J. Fletcher Williams, *History of the Newspaper Press of St. Paul, Minnesota* ([St. Paul, 1871]), 3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7; Upham (comp.), "Minnesota Biographies, 1655-1912," 263.

the *Register and Chronicle* is established by a letter from Goodhue to Henry H. Sibley in December of 1850, in which he wrote ". . . both presses are in Rice's 3 story brick . . .," the office of the *Register and Chronicle*, and from the further fact that the *Democrat* was also issued from the Rice building. In February of 1851 the *Democrat* merged with the *Register and Chronicle*, again leaving the *Pioneer* with but one rival. Thus, at least three hand presses were in use in St. Paul during the years 1849 to 1854 — those of the *Pioneer*, and of the *Register and Chronicle*, and one of the latter two was also used for a while by the *Democrat*. There may possibly have been a fourth press at the time. Mary W. Berthel, in her recent study of Goodhue, states that in August of 1849 Goodhue had two presses in his shop.⁴¹

In March of 1854 the *Pioneer* and its press came into the ownership of Earle S. Goodrich. He installed a power press to replace the old hand press, and began publication of the *Daily Pioneer*. Late in the following year, on November 1, 1855, the *Pioneer* consolidated with the *Democrat* and was published under the name, *Pioneer and Democrat*. The *Democrat*, as has been shown, was also printed on a hand press similar to that of the *Pioneer*, a press which they now discarded.⁴²

It is significant that at about this time, after the establishment of the *Daily Pioneer* and before the consolidation of the *Pioneer* and the *Democrat*, a hand press was purchased by Jeremiah Russell, who transported it to Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, and printed on it the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*. The first number of the *Frontiersman* appeared in April, 1855, with Russell being assisted by William H. Wood. In December of 1859, Wood purchased the press and equipment of the newspaper and issued the *New Era*, the first number of which appeared on January 12, 1860. About a year and a half later the press again changed hands, this time passing into the ownership of C. C. Andrews of St. Cloud, who used it to print the first number of the *Minnesota Union* on June 13, 1861. When Andrews joined the Union Army in October of that year, the old press found itself in the

⁴¹ Berthel, *Horns of Thunder* . . ., 27n. See also *ibid.*, 36-8, 43, 58, for references to the various St. Paul newspapers. Dates of first issues of the newspapers are from Winifred Gregory (ed.), *American Newspapers, 1821-1936* . . . (New York, 1937), 337-8. For an older account, see J. Fletcher Williams, *A History of the City of Saint Paul* . . . (St. Paul, 1876), 208-11, 215, 229-30, 282-3, 351-2, 360.

⁴² Willoughby M. Babcock, Jr., "The Goodhue Press," *Minnesota History Bulletin*, 3:292 (Feb., 1920); Williams, *History of the Newspaper Press of St. Paul* . . ., 5.

hands of Spafford and Simonton who utilized it for the publication of the *St. Cloud Union*. Moore & Company used the press for the *St. Cloud Times* for a while, after which it lay idle until the winter of 1866-1867. Then George W. McLaughlin obtained it for the *Sauk Valley News*, which was superseded by the *Sauk Centre Herald* in 1867. It remained with this paper for more than thirty years, until finally, in 1897, the old hand press was taken to Lindstrom, Minnesota, where it was used on the Swedish *Medborgaren* until August 1, 1899.⁴³

As far back as 1869 the Minnesota Historical Society had the promise of this old hand press as soon as its Sauk Centre owners could spare it. It was not until 1905, however, that it actually came into the possession of the Society through the generosity of the Pioneer Press Company of St. Paul.⁴⁴

In the meantime, to return to the year 1853, there had arrived in St. Paul a young printer by the name of Samuel J. Albright. Albright was born in Delaware, Ohio, in 1829 and had served in the Mexican War.⁴⁵ In St. Paul he joined the staff of the *Pioneer*, where he remained as compositor and associate editor until 1856, witnessing the paper's consolidation with the *Daily Democrat*. He then resigned from the staff of the *Pioneer and Democrat* to establish the *St. Paul Press*, which later consolidated with the *Pioneer and Democrat* to become the *Pioneer Press*.

In 1858, two years later, during which time he also became active in politics to the extent of being for a while Chief Clerk of the Minnesota legislature, Albright acquired a hand press, placed it on wheels, and by ox power transported it "over the prairies, through the forests, around the lakes, and through the streams" to Sioux Falls City, on the banks of the Big Sioux River, in the interests of the Dakota Land Company.⁴⁶ Action was then under way to obtain government legislation for the creation of Dakota Territory, and the value of a printing establishment and an official

⁴³ Babcock, "The Goodhue Press," 292-3; Williams, *History of the Newspaper Press of St. Paul* . . . , 4.

⁴⁴ J. Fletcher Williams, "The First Printing Press in Minnesota," *Annals of Iowa* (first series), 7:186 (April, 1869); Babcock, "The Goodhue Press," 293.

⁴⁵ "The Settlement at Sioux Falls," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 6:133 (1912).

⁴⁶ Oswald, *Printing in the Americas*, 457; "The First Newspaper and Printing Press in Iowa. The First and Last Editors and Printers for the Old Press," *Annals of Iowa* (first series), 7:50-53 (January, 1869); *Dubuque Herald*, June 19, 1861.

organ in the campaign were fully realized. Albright set up his press and ran off the first job of printing in what is now South Dakota. It was an election notice printed on small slips of paper, about 2 x 5 inches in dimensions, and dated September 20, 1858. The notices bore the imprint: "Dakota Democrat Print, Sioux Falls City." The election referred to was held during the following month, and Samuel J. Albright was elected Speaker of the House of the Provisional or "Squatter" legislature.⁴⁷

Although the above-mentioned election notices were printed by the *Dakota Democrat*, Albright did not get around to publishing the newspaper of that name until July 2, 1859, nearly ten months later. In the fall of 1860 he sold the paper to a Mr. I. W. Stuart and departed for St. Louis.⁴⁸

When Albright left Sioux Falls City, the *Democrat's* new owner was forced to find another name for the paper. That chosen was the *Northwestern Independent*, a heading which had been used for a paper published at Sergeant Bluffs, Iowa, by F. M. Ziebach. The *Independent* was published for about a year before finally being indefinitely suspended.⁴⁹

Late in August, 1862, two couriers from Yankton arrived in Sioux Falls with news that the Sioux Indians were on the warpath, had perpetrated a series of massacres on the Minnesota frontier, and were heading for Sioux Falls. The couriers also bore orders from the Governor that the soldiers stationed at Sioux Falls were immediately to proceed to Yankton, and to bring with them all the settlers of the Sioux Valley. The pioneers threw together what few personal belongings they could manage and in a few hours were on their way to Yankton. All but two of the inhabitants of the valley escaped safely; Judge J. B. Amidon and his son, who were out working about a mile north of town, fell victims of the assassins. The presence of the troops apparently had impressed the Indians, for they waited until all of the populace of Sioux Falls had departed before descending upon the town and setting fire to it. All but three of the houses in the village were destroyed, and fires were lighted in these. The building which housed the idle press and equipment of the *Northwestern Independent* experienced the same fate as the rest of the town, the Indians destroying everything which did not strike their fancy. When the trouble was over and a peace finally

⁴⁷ *History of Southeastern Dakota, Its Settlement and Growth* . . . (Sioux City, 1881), 48.

⁴⁸ Oswald, *Printing in the Americas*, 457; *Dubuque Herald*, June 19, 1861.

⁴⁹ *History of Southeastern Dakota* . . ., 48, 82.

declared, it was found that the Indians had carried away a portion of the type and utilized it as ornamentation for their red pipestone pipes.⁵⁰ Years later, R. F. Pettigrew, former United States Senator from South Dakota, found some remnants of the old press lying among the rocks on the river bank. The platen and the copy spindles were there, and some of the type was scattered about. All that remains of the old press now is the platen, which Pettigrew salvaged and used as a doorstep for a time, and which is now preserved in the Pettigrew Museum in Sioux Falls.⁵¹

To summarize the situation briefly, between the early part of 1854 and the latter part of 1855, two of the hand presses of the *Pioneer* and the *Democrat* were supplanted by the power press of the new *Daily Pioneer*, when it merged with the *Daily Democrat*. One of these presses ultimately found its way to the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society, and the remains of another are in the Pettigrew Museum in Sioux Falls. The problem as to which of these two presses is that of the *Dubuque Visitor* has never been solved to the satisfaction of everyone, although claims for each have been made for more than half a century.

Mention of the controversy as to the whereabouts of the old *Visitor* press appeared in the *Dubuque Herald* as early as 1868:

A paragraph has recently been making the rounds of the Iowa press, and appeared also in the papers of some other states, assuming that the first printing press in Iowa is still used in printing a paper in one of the northern counties. Similar mistakes have been made at different times in the statement that the first Iowa press was in use in other localities. . . .

The author of this article, whose identity remains unknown, went on to trace the press from Dubuque to Lancaster, Wisconsin; thence by ox power on the ice of the Mississippi River to St. Paul; and from there on to Sioux Falls City. This article was reprinted in the *Annals of Iowa* for January, 1869,⁵² and immediately evoked a contradictory reply from J. Fletcher Williams of St. Paul, which appeared in the *Annals* three months later. Williams, who was at the moment engaged in compiling a history of the Minnesota press, corrected the statement that the hand press was hauled on

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵¹ Frederick J. Lazell, "Iowa's First Newspaper," *The Iowa Journalist*, 1:15 (November, 1925).

⁵² "The First Newspaper and Printing Press in Iowa . . .," 50-53.

the ice to St. Paul, and explained that it was transported to that city on a steamboat in the month of April. He also flatly refuted the claim that the press was sold to a Dakota publisher. He had evidence, he said, that the press was still safe and sound in the office of the *Sauk Centre Herald*.⁵³

The controversy then remained comparatively dormant for a period of fifty years. From time to time the story of the old press would appear in books and newspapers, but usually in a single version, either that of South Dakota or of Minnesota. Finally, on November 8, 1919, and again on November 17 of the same year, articles appeared in the *Sioux Falls Daily Argus-Leader* attacking the authenticity of the hand press in the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society and thus renewing the conflict between the two States. The second article quoted a letter written by Samuel J. Albright and dated December 14, 1899, in which Albright stated flatly that the press he purchased and removed to Sioux Falls in 1858 was the *Visitor* press on which J. M. Goodhue had printed the *Minnesota Pioneer*.

The immediate retort from Minnesota was written by Willoughby M. Babcock, Jr., and appeared in the *Minnesota History Bulletin* for February, 1920. Babcock pointed out that Albright, in his letter, did not tell where he had bought the press but merely insinuated that he had purchased it in St. Paul. He then went on to show why he believed the press was removed from St. Paul shortly after Albright arrived there and that the weakness of the claim of the South Dakotans lay in their failure to account for the whereabouts of the press from 1854 to 1858. The press which was supplanted by a power press in 1854 and taken to Sauk Rapids in 1855, he said, was the Goodhue, or *Visitor*, press. Further to substantiate his contention, Babcock quoted a letter from Frank Moore of Oregon City, Oregon, who was for many years foreman of the press room of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* and who had arrived in St. Paul shortly before the departure of Albright for Sioux Falls. Moore agreed with Babcock's explanations and expressed his belief that the press which Albright took to Dakota was the one which was discarded by the *Democrat* when the *Daily Pioneer* and the *Democrat* consolidated in 1855.⁵⁴

Proponents of the South Dakota claim remained firm, however, and in the *South Dakota Historical Collections* volume for 1922 appeared the following:

⁵³ Williams, "The First Printing Press in Minnesota," 186.

⁵⁴ Babcock, "The Goodhue Press," 291-4.

The above statement is disputed by some Minnesota pioneers; but the identity of "The Democrat" press is established by such preponderance of evidence that there can scarcely be a question that it is the identical pioneer printing press of the west. . . . In support of the South Dakota claim this further may be said: Samuel J. Albright was connected with the St. Paul newspapers from the hour of their foundation, knew the old press intimately and brought it with him to Sioux Falls and set it up and operated it there as he had previously done throughout his Minnesota career. To the day of his death he strenuously declared the Dakota press to be the identical one John King brought to Dubuque and ridiculed the suggestion that it had remained in Minnesota. No other person was so well informed about the machine or could testify with such certainty to its identity.⁵⁵

In regard to the above, Albright obviously was not connected with the *Minnesota Pioneer* from the hour of its foundation, as he did not arrive in St. Paul until 1853, four years after the *Pioneer* had been founded. There is no question as to his intimate knowledge and association with that paper's press later, however.

Finally, in the *Iowa Journalist* of 1925, Frederick J. Lazell made the following statement concerning the press in the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society: "Willoughby M. Babcock, curator of the museum of the Minnesota Historical Society, tells the writer that the Society is no longer in a position to claim that this press printed the *Minnesota Pioneer*. It is an Acorn press and not a Smith press."⁵⁶

Mr. Babcock's statement would appear to have settled the argument once and for all and to have left South Dakota the undisputed claimant of possession of the *Visitor* press. The assumption was made without question that if the Minnesota press were an "Acorn" it could not be a "Smith." This assumption, in turn, presupposed the fact that the *Visitor* press was a Smith. Actually, opinion was divided as to whether it was a Smith or a Washington hand press, although most of the accounts, especially the older ones, did call it a Smith. Probably because of the uncertainty as to its proper identification, several narrators neatly side-stepped the issue by merely calling it a "hand press." Albright called it "a Washington, of the Smith pattern. . . ."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ "Newspapers of South Dakota," *South Dakota Historical Collections*, 11:411-15 (1922).

⁵⁶ Lazell, "Iowa's First Newspaper," 14.

⁵⁷ Babcock, "The Goodhue Press," 291.

There is ample excuse for any confusion which might arise, because of the great similarity between the Smith and the Washington presses.⁵⁸ The Washington employed a slightly different application of power in the combination of the levers and was definitely the superior of the two. Although the Smith continued to be used to some extent after the advent of the improved Washington, the latter was manufactured in great numbers on into the twentieth century.⁵⁹

Stephen D. Tucker describes the frame of the Smith press as being "a massive rim of cast-iron of an acorn shape. . . ." ⁶⁰ It would appear fairly conclusive, then, that the expression "Acorn" refers to the shape of the frame rather than to the actual trade name of the press, and that any press so designed might be called an "Acorn" regardless of its application of power. The mere fact that the press in the Minnesota Historical Society's Museum is an "Acorn" certainly does not eliminate it from being the press of the *Visitor* and the *Pioneer*.⁶¹

Just what is the truth concerning the old *Visitor* press? It was decided to approach the problem at its source, Cincinnati, in 1836. Since the Minnesota press bears the inscription "Cincinnati Type Foundry," it was felt that comparison of it and the platen of the South Dakota press with any presses which might have been issued from Cincinnati during or prior to 1836 might serve as evidence one way or the other. This investigation was very nearly fruitless, as the necessary records of R. Hoe and Company, holders of the patents for both the Smith and Washington presses, were lost or destroyed some years ago. In addition, neither the American Typefounders Company, successors to the Cincinnati Type Foundry, nor the authorities on Ohio history were able to cast any light on the existence of Charles Mallett, alleged manufacturer and vendor of the *Visitor* press. The only positive result of the investigation was the fact that the Minnesota press *could* well be the press of the *Visitor*. The close similarity of all of the platens at that date makes it very improbable that even though the

⁵⁸ *Journal of the Franklin Institute of the State of Pennsylvania* (n.s.), 4:57 (1829).

⁵⁹ Adams, *Typographia* . . ., 332-5; Robert Hoe, *A Short History of the Printing Press* . . . (New York, 1902), 8-10.

⁶⁰ Stephen D. Tucker, "History of R. Hoe & Company" (typed copy of a manuscript in the Columbia University Library).

⁶¹ *Specimen of Modern and Light Face Printing Types and Ornaments, Cast at the Cincinnati Type Foundry* . . ., p. [vii].

South Dakota platen was available for comparison, anything, either positive or negative, could be proved. It is necessary, then, to return to the years 1854-1858 and weigh the *probabilities* growing out of the events occurring during those years, as certainly there is no *proof*. Following is the writer's version of what probably happened, based on known facts where possible and partially on speculation where the facts are not available.

In May, 1854, the *Minnesota Pioneer* began issuing a daily paper and the hand press which had been used to print the weekly version was discarded for a power press. Later that year, or possibly early in 1855, Jeremiah Russell purchased a press (possibly that of the *Pioneer*) and took it with him to Sauk Rapids where he published the first number of the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman* on April 26, 1855. Late that same year (the first issue appeared November 1, 1855), the *Pioneer* consolidated with the *Democrat*, which had also been printed on a Smith "Acorn" press, and the *Democrat's* press was also discarded in favor of the *Pioneer's* power press. Albright, who had joined the staff of the *Pioneer* in 1853, remained with the paper until after it had consolidated with the *Democrat*, and when, in 1858, he decided to remove to Dakota, he purchased a press (possibly that of the *Democrat*) which had been gathering dust in the shop of the *Pioneer and Democrat*. He had not operated the *Pioneer's* hand press since 1854, and since neither press had as yet laid any claim to fame, he probably did not even consider the possibility that his new acquisition might not be that of the *Pioneer*. At that time they were just a couple of old Smith presses. Forty-one years later, at the age of seventy, Albright recalled the press upon which he had printed the *Pioneer* and associated it with that which he had taken to Sioux Falls City in 1858. There is the further possibility, of course, that either of the disputed presses might be one of the one or two other hand presses used by the *Register*, or the *Chronicle*, or the *Democrat* before their successive mergers.

Be the truth as it may, the *Du Buque Visitor* press played an extremely important part in the settlement of the Middle West and was the pioneer printing press on at least three and possibly four frontiers.