

## SOURCE MATERIAL OF IOWA HISTORY

[The following "Early Recollections of Fort Dodge" appeared in the *Fort Dodge North West* in the issues of February 16, 23, March 2, June 8, and 22, 1871. The author, W. Oakley Ruggles, was an early resident of Fort Dodge, who had gone to New York and entered the brokerage business in that city, after the depression of 1857 had brought "a long period of business stagnation for the Western Country." At the time he wrote these reminiscient letters for the *North West* he had retired from active business because of ill health, and was spending his time in travel, study, and reading. This information on the author of this lively account of Fort Dodge was gleaned from a letter from Ruggles to Governor Cyrus C. Carpenter in 1872, a letter which is now in the Carpenter Papers at the State Historical Society of Iowa. — Editor.]

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### EARLY RECOLLECTIONS OF FORT DODGE

BY W. OAKLEY RUGGLES

#### *Physical*

Those fortunate few who saw the town site of Fort Dodge before any structures were built on the lawn, (but the old barracks), can remember one of the loveliest landscapes that ever delighted the eye. Whether seen from Maj. Williams' door, looking south "upon the grassy carpet of this plain" on which fed two noble elk and a pair of high shouldered buffalos, with the gleaming river stretching south and losing itself in the dense forests below; or, viewing it from the old flag-staff on the east brow of the prairie, sloping from the feet to the heavy wooded island in the river, the eye resting against the abrupt bluffs beyond, and softened by the undulating acres of Mr. Boott's farm, or, seen from Mr. Colburn's bluff-side looking down on the river and over the parade ground and barracks beyond, and farther on to the unbroken prairie and its unquiet ever waving green, it made a picture of unrivaled loveliness. The beholder was struck with its quiet unobtrusive beauty, the lines of the landscape were curved,

the river valley deep and crooked enough to delight the eye, the ravines here and there deepened the shadows as though touched in by the artists pencil, the woods dense, large stemmed and of such variety as gave many hues to the foliage. On the river bottom the grass grew rank and tall, while the bluffsides were fringed with trees and vines, and ragged with jutting rocks. Frequent springs trickled out from the rock seams to cool thirsty lips, and in the deep shade of Soldier creek valley was one bountiful enough to supply the largest demand. On this wondrous spot and all around it, up and down the river, nature penciled its loveliest lines with most delicate touches. . . . We had no power with the pencil, but I believe there have been sketches made of the town site of Fort Dodge in an early day. If I mistake not Maj. Williams' sketch-book contains some. [See the cover picture of this issue of the JOURNAL for one of these sketches.]

### *Historical*

Fort Clark was designated a military post in August, 1850. Soon after it was named Fort Dodge in honor of Senator [Henry] Dodge of Wisconsin. The officers ordered to establish the post, after many days reconnoissance up and down the river, selected the site now occupied; for its natural beauty, scenery, springs, and healthfulness.

Upon ratification of the Treaty purchasing the Minnesota Lands from the Indians, the garrison of Fort Dodge in 1853 was ordered to the Minnesota river and built Fort Ridgely.

The Fort Dodge buildings (18 log barracks) and the ground from the river up and east to the brow of the prairie, became the property by pre-emption and purchase of Maj. Wm. Williams. It was laid out into streets and lots.

The U. S. Government located a district Land Office there and appointed officers in the session of 1854 and 1855: Wm. H. Merritt, Register, Gen. Van Antwerp, Receiver.

The county of Webster at that time included Hamilton, Humboldt and the present Webster county, with Wright, Kossuth, Palo Alto and all north attached to it for judicial purposes. — But to go back a little. There were a few settlers within the limits of Webster county when the troops established Fort Dodge. The earliest settlers came to occupy farms in 1848-49 and 50 and were I. Bell, Francis McGuire, L. Merricle, J.

Mericle [sic], D. B. Spaulding and Wm. Miller. Maj. Wm. Williams and his son James B. Williams came with the troops and remained after their departure. Among those who came in immediately after the departure of the troops were Fred. Booth [Boott], E. H. Albee, Geo. H. Rogers, Geo. B. Sherman, Cha's Bergk and Ed. McKnight. Early in the spring of 1855 came Albert Morrison, E. Elliott Colburn, John F. Duncombe, W. O. Ruggles, Tom Sargent, W. P. Pollock, John Garaghty, Dr. S. B. Olney, Dr. E. H. Arnold, D. H. Prindle, Cyrus C. Carpenter, Q. A. Gilmore, W. H. Plumb, A. M. Dawley, Hez. Beecher, Sewall Gower, Dr. L. L. Pease, C. H. Vincent, A. McBane and Sam'l Rees. Following these there came a stream too numerous to mention but who made up the list of pioneers that came in the year 1855.

Among the earliest co-operative acts was the formation of a "claim club" in the early spring of 1855 — Mr. E. H. Albee president of the club. Each person coming in and taking a claim became a member of the club. Homer was then the county seat. Immigration came rapidly to Fort Dodge and to the country up and down the Des Moines and up the Lizard river. A stream of people poured in, and among others "claim jumpers," or those who were disposed to make trouble and take claims occupied by others.

At this time Fort Dodge had only a weekly mail. Every Saturday — mail day — was a holiday. The "boys" came in from their claims, interchanged courtesies, made acquaintances, pitched quoits, and twenty dollar gold coins were frequently used for pitching pieces. On arrival of the mail, Wm. Williams, P. M., would call out the letters and toss them over the counter to the lucky fellows who drew prizes. — The mail was opened in James B. Williams' store in the old storehouse. — Sunday was spent in writing letters and exploring the vicinity of the town. As yet there were no religious services held.

Up to the fall of 1855 the families of Maj. Williams, E. H. Albee, W. H. Plumb and Wm. Miller furnished the only female society of the town. Five hundred men and less than a dozen women. Miss Mollie Williams had the honor of being the only young lady in town in the summer of 1855. . . .

I will now give a little unwritten history. In July 1855 a meeting was held in Fort Dodge to name delegates to a county convention to be held at Homer. Maj. Williams was chairman. After the delegates were chosen, and after some interchange of sentiment, Mr. Charles Bergk was called on

for a speech. Charley's knowledge of English sixteen years ago was somewhat crude, and he often got his sentences inverted; but his culture, native good sense, and *bon hommie* made him a great favorite with all. He said:

GENTLEMANS: You have done de bleasure to call ond me of a speech and I dank you. As a representidtif vond Humboldt do dis konvendsun I vas broud to say dat I vas a Demokrat from de fUSD. I hab my kundry lefd mit dat brinciples dat I kan aldways vas a Demokrat, as dat is de bardy of vreedom mit speech, vreedom mit drade and vreedom mit everdink. I vas aldogeder a subborder of de Presidend Frankdline Pierse, and vas dankful do de bardy dat I vas do be de Bost Master von mine place. Gendlemans, dere is someding yat understand me I kand in dis kundry; and dat dem knownodings [Know-Nothings, an anti-foreigner political party] is. How shall a man kum von all de vorld ober, und here mit his babers oud, he kand bin more as a zitisend, not no more sure of his hold, vy he shall den kumb? Vat for would dis Ford Dodge in dat beaudiful Iowa Stade du day bin mitout dem imigashun, und mitout dem foren zitisends? So? Aldogeder a mistage, mit insjustis I dink, by dem knownodings is very much made, vatever.

Charley sat down amid uproars of applause. He had an intelligent honest face, and the manners of a gentleman and I doubt not has run an honorable career.

The county convention assembled at Homer, July 28th, 1855. The object of the convention was to select county officers to be supported by the people of Webster county. The delegates met at the school house at 1 p.m.

"On motion of Maj. Williams, Judge W. M. Pierce of Homer was called to the chair, and W. O. Ruggles of Fort Dodge made secretary.

Maj. Williams made an appeal for prompt, energetic and united action in securing the rights belonging to citizens of the whole country, and severely denounced the Know Nothing organization. . . .

Dr. Arnold in a brief speech wished to see harmony among the people of the county, a cordial support of the ticket about to be nominated, and deprecated the expenditure of money in building a court house until the people of the whole county could be heard by vote on that question; and with the great influx of people it better be deferred, as by so doing the tax would be less. He thought Dr. Pease would decline the nomination of Judge. The nomination was withdrawn.

Mr. Johns called upon Mr. Maxwell for an expression of his views as to the propriety of building public buildings without a vote of the people.

Mr. Maxwell said he wished to carry out the will of the people in regard to the matter, and was opposed to any uncalled for expense without the proper action of the people.

Maj. Williams asked Mr. Maxwell if he was a Know Nothing. Mr. Maxwell replied 'that he belonged to no society but the Presbyterian church.[']

Mr. Johns remarked it was unnecessary to be too hard on the Know Nothings, as they were tumbling down without assistance.

The following ticket was finally adopted: John D. Maxwell, County Judge; Sewall Gower, Prosecuting Attorney; L. D. C. McGort, District Clerk; E. H. West, Sheriff; Benj. McPheters, Recorder and Treasurer; Cyrus C. Carpenter, County Surveyor; Norman L. Osborne, Coroner.

Resolutions was passed to heartily support the ticket. Committees were appointed to write up the ballots to be voted, and the president and secretary of the convention with Walter C. Wilson were chosen a committee to call future meetings. Adjourned."

Considerable anxiety was felt at Ft. Dodge lest the move on foot at Homer to build county buildings at the latter place by action of the county officers should be persisted in, and thus create an unnecessary tax and fix the county seat at Homer. The rapid growth of Fort Dodge threatened a removal of the county seat unless some such steps forestalled the action which a preponderance of population would soon encourage Fort Dodge to take. This county convention was the first in which Fort Dodge took an active part.

August 28th 1855 a four horse coach came through from Dubuque with the mails, and was greeted with loud huzzas. From that date we had tri-weekly mail service. We were having a weekly mail from Fort Des Moines.

The first church organization in Ft. Dodge was the Episcopal; a somewhat remarkable fact, for that church communion cannot be called a pioneer or missionary body. In August 1855 the Rev. Dr. E. W. Peet of Fort Des Moines was invited to come and hold services at Fort Dodge. The services were held in the upper story of the Wahkonsa House, it having been recently built on the original barrack, and was not yet "staked off" into rooms. It furnished a good hall for the meeting. Morning and afternoon

services were held, with a general attendance of the citizens. After services a church organization was formed. The parish was called St. Marks after old St. Marks in N. Y., and a vestry and wardens elected. The Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches were soon after organized. I believe before this there had been there an itinerant Methodist clergyman in 1854 but no church organized. I think Father Preston was the first priest of the Catholic church. He was a gentleman universally esteemed for his suavity, learning, and energy in his work. The first church services were held in John Haire's house. The Rev. Mr. Dodder was the first pastor of the Presbyterian society, a young and earnest preacher, whose efforts in building a church were ably seconded by Sam'l Rees and others of that denomination. The first rector of the Episcopal church was the Rev. T. B. Fairchild, whose culture and eloquence endeared him to citizens of all denominations, and whose sermons and publications attracted the attention of the community. The Catholics were the first to build a church, the Presbyterians next.

The first railroad meeting held in Fort Dodge was in the Wahkonsa barroom the evening of October 23d 1855. Col. Mix of Dubuque in the interest of the "Dubuque & Pacific R. R. Co." addressed the meeting. Speeches were made by Messrs. Carpenter, Garaghty, Duncombe and Lucas. Meeting enthusiastic and room crowded.

The first death, Mr. Orr, occurred on Sept. 21st, 1855. He was a quiet, industrious young man; died of fever. We had no clergyman nearer than Ft. Des Moines, and Gen. Van Antwerp read the Episcopal burial service at the grave.

The Government Land Office opened for land entries for the first time at Ft. Dodge on November 5th 1855. There were a thousand people there impatiently waiting to get land. The two months previous to the opening, private offices had been hastily built, and the old barracks on Williams street were fronted by a military row on the opposite side of the street. Every house and office was full of people, and many encampments on the prairie south of Williams street. Such a wild, crazy, devil-may-care lot of bipeds never gathered on similar business.

It is not the intention of the writer of these "Recollections" to embellish with ornate style the facts he has to relate, but to give a simple story of events as they occurred from the spring of 1855 to the fall of 1856, when the *Sentinel* newspaper began life, and from which the history of Fort

Dodge can be continued. It is probable other gentlemen kept a journal from which a more minute relation of events can be gathered. The early history of any community or locality is interesting so far as it tells of the vicissitudes and sufferings of the pioneers, the growth and changes of the town or country, and the character of the seasons.

The spring and summer seasons of 1855 at Fort Dodge were delightful. The fall was wet. Early frosts withered the grass, and the last of the season was remarkable for the general burning of the prairies, east and west from the Boone river to the Big Sioux. The heavens were brilliant at night, the atmosphere warm and filled with smoke for weeks. It was a grand sight, and one that a few years hence will be impossible on the same territory.

The winter of 1855-6 will be ever memorable (to me a mild term) as the *cold winter*. Snow fell November 22d and continued all winter, until the ice ran out at the spring flood of the river. The snow averaged two feet on the prairies, with a crust on it so thick and strong at times that horses and loaded teams traveled on the crust as on ice. Through the most of December the mercury was ten degrees below zero. . . . Those were pinching cold days, and with one in a bed in those old barracks on a shuck mattress were awful crisp. About the 12th of January the cold "let up" a little; just enough to thaw the wrinkles out. January 26th the mercury was 14 degrees below zero; March 10th, 18 below. April 1st had a thunder shower. The ice ran out of the river April 4th.

Mr. Day, a young man, perished on the prairie just east of and in sight of town, in the great storm on Saturday night December 8th, 1855. Four persons were found frozen to death within that week on the roads out of Fort Dodge. Cyrus C. Carpenter went to Sioux City in this storm and great anxiety was felt for his safety.

The air all that winter was full of frost and the phenomenon of a mock sun, and sometimes two "sun dogs" were common in the mornings of that very cold winter. Such glorious natural exhibitions are never seen on the sea coast. The winter of 1856-7 was not far behind that of 1855-6 in intensity of cold. That of 1857-8 was moderate and comfortable.

In November 1855 Mr. E. Elliott Colburn began to mine coal on his pre-emption over the river. A. M. Dawley and Sherman & Morrison opened stores, dry goods and groceries, in the fall of 1855. Maj. Williams and

James had been trading with the Indians and early settlers since the abandonment of the fort by the troops. The first new building was built by Chandler & Gilmore, a balloon frame, opposite James Williams' store. Mr. Orr was building at the same time the stone office opposite E. H. Albee's, but after his death it was finished and occupied by Beecher & Gower. A grout house adjoining Chandler & Gilmore's was built for Dan. C. Corbin; Albert Morrison was the chief architect. The first dwelling houses were Tho's Sargent's, C. H. Vincent's, N. B. Morrison's and John Garaghty's. Mr. Garaghty's was a log house opposite the old Land Office, and was the scene of more social merriment than any other in town during the winter of 1855-6. The mails during that winter were very irregular; sometimes we were weeks without a mail.

November 13th 1855 a load of apples came from Missouri. Mr. Duncombe and the writer paid two dollars for a half bushel. The first lawyers in town were John F. Duncombe, John Garaghty, Sewell [sic] Gower, Hez. Beecher and C. B. Richards. The first physicians were S. B. Olney, Prof. E. A. Arnold, W. L. Nicholson, J. A. Blanchard and C. R. Bissell.

The first stove merchants and tin workers were A. J. Humphreys and Prusia & Klinedob. The first livery-stable was kept by M. S. Wood. The first saw-mill, owned by Mr. Schoepp, was a ten horse power engine and circular saw, located at the ferry landing east side, above the mouth of the Lizard. Mr. Hinton, in the fall of '55 put a pole dam across the river and built a saw-mill, one-half mile above the town. During the fall and winter of '55-6 Mr. Tod built his steam saw-mill south of the town.

In June 1855, Messrs Sargent, Pollock, Ruggles and Allen, reopened the Soldiers stone quarry, on Soldier creek, from which Mr. Sargent built the cellar walls of his house. Mr. Pollock and himself laying up the walls. There were no masons yet in town. Mr. E. H. Allen "handed" the stone to Sargents house and to Ruggles & Allens office lot.

July 5th, 1855, Albert Morrison and W. O. Ruggles leased the soldier quarry to burn lime. Supplied the demand for lime, outside of our own wants in building, at fifty cents per bushel — slacked at that. September 21st, D. W. Prindle, purchased of them the quarry lease and lime kilns.

About that date 25 or 30 offices and other buildings were in the course of construction, to be in readiness for the opening of the Land Office.

James R. Strow, John D. Strow, and Egbert Bagg came to Fort Dodge about Sept. 1st, 1855, Gen. V. P. Van Antwerp, Receiver of the Land

Office, came Sept. 16th, his first visit to the town. Mr. W. H. Merritt the Register had preceded him. Robbins Safford & Co., issued the first lithograph map of Fort Dodge land district, Ruggles and Bagg the next one. The first bridal party that came to town was Tom Steele and bride, they came Oct. 15th, '55, to Mr. Millers for quarters being full, Mr. Whicher gave up his bed in the hall to them, and shared mine. . . .

April 10th, 1856, news came to the town that Major Williams' claim across the river was "jumped," a reconnoissance made by Wm. Koone verified the story. April 11th, Mr. E. H. Albee, President of the claim club called a meeting of the club, which was answered by a full attendance of the members. A committee, Messrs. Garaghty, Colburn and Robbins was appointed to wait on the intruders to remonstrate with and warn them off. Saturday April 12th, committee reported to the club that the "jumpers" were determined to hold the claim, but would meet Major Williams at Fort Dodge on Monday morning. — April 14th, the club decided Major Williams claim to be outside of the jurisdiction of the club, but that of James B. Williams was good and valid. Saturday, April 19th, the claim club was again called together, and by a vote resolved to go in a body on Monday to set off J. H. B — from James B. Williams claim, and ordered to rendezvous at Mr. Colburns on west side of the river. April 21st, was a bright morning, the club assembled as ordered near Mr. Colburns house. Sixty persons answered to roll call, and after arranging the preliminaries, the party under the command of E. E. Colburn marched across the prairie to Maj. W's claim and found Mr. M. S — one of the men who had jumped the claim of James Williams. After the committee appointed to confer with him reported his decision to hold the claim at all hazards, he was conducted to Mr. B — ys shanty which he had built on James' claim. Mr. B. insisted upon retaining possession of the quarter section. The club demolished the shanty and removed his effects and furniture on to section 19. — Then after urging upon both to desist from their purposes, and with no success, a party was sent to town for tar and feathers, which coming, they were stripped and it was applied to S — without changing his will; finally, a few lashes brought him to terms, and a promise to leave the country. Tar and feathers were applied to B — and he promised to leave. I will not attempt to defend the action of the club, but simply give the facts as an episode in the history of the town.

The western Indians are fond of hanging about the military forts and

posts, particularly during the winter, when they carry on a small traffic in ammunition, beads, blankets, calico, tobacco, coffee, and whisky, for which they trade their furs.

When the troops vacated Ft. Dodge in the year 1853 the Indians continued their visits to Major Williams' store through the year 1854, and during the winter of 1854-5. With the rapid increase of population at the fort in the spring of 1855 they became very shy, and their encampments were not seen below the forks of the river.

After the Spirit Lake massacre in the spring of 1857 they left the Des Moines valley and went on to the reservations in western Minnesota. Ti-Tonka-ti-Macha was the chief of the band, and I have seen at the forks as many as thirty, including warriors, squaws, and children, in encampment. His band seemed to live apart from the great body of the Sioux tribe to which they belonged. Ti Tonka was a splendid specimen of manhood. Tall, finely proportioned, straight, with dignified, even haughty bearing. I recollect on a visit at the forks of the river in the summer of 1856 he bade me good-bye, and drawing his blanket around him strode away like a kingly warrior. His whole demeanor impressed me strongly.

Wahkonsa, the young warrior who used to visit the fort before the spring of 1855, I did not see. But those who knew him spoke of him as a noble, intelligent and handsome boy, and to whom they became much attached. — Wahkonsa township and the old hotel were named after him.

The first Indian scare at the Fort was on July 19th 1856. Some settlers at the head of the Lizard became alarmed and came pell-mell to the town, when there was soon a party of 30 organized to go to the scene of trouble. The fright proved to be senseless, the war party returned on the 21st, and the Indians continued peaceable until the spring of 1857. . . .

On Monday October 6th 1856 Judge McFarland held the first term of the District Court at Fort Dodge. It was held in the lower room of the brick school house, the building having been fully enclosed, but no interior work done. Judge C. J. McFarland was a perfect type of the western border judge. He was tall, strongly built, with black hair and long heavy beard, and a voice full, deep and not unpleasant; had altogether a commanding appearance, was eminently social, a Kentuckian by birth, but a long residence on the border had given him a careless, rough, off hand manner of address, and the forms and usages which prevail in our eastern courts were wanting in his court. He was esteemed a good lawyer,

and his decisions were mainly just. His physical endurance was great, as it needed to be to undergo the fatigue of holding court in a district covering many counties of the north and west part of the State. He was a great sportsman, an excellent shot, and could bag more grouse in a day than any man on the river. If he had some vices they were those incident to early and long border life, and to which all in like circumstances were more or less addicted. His heart was large and in the right place.

The holding of this session of court was one of the epochs in the history of the town. The first was the location of the Land Office; then we attained a tri-weekly mail, through persistent importuning of the post office department; the removal of the county seat followed a good fight, and now we were to hear the sheriff cry "Oyez, oyez" for the first time right in the heart of our game and plucky little town. But that first call of court will be remembered by the "boys of the bar" as a ludicrous joke. Maj. Williams (the central figure of our society,) the Government Land Officers and other gentlemen, were entertaining the judge in a social manner at the Wahkonsa; the occasion was a joyous one, and all parties hilarious; wine flowed, stories were told, and boisterous laughter from the Wahkonsa reached the court room. The "learned counsel" and their clients had long assembled and waited impatiently the appearance of the judge. Finally the bar comprehending the judicial status, and bent upon having their share of fun upon the occasion, and the time for call of court having long passed, solemnly gathered themselves around the attorneys' table, called the sheriff to them, and ordered him to call the court. The sheriff graced his position for the first time, and acknowledged his ignorance of the "how to do it," but after being told by the learned gentlemen, he went to the door, and with stentorian voice that sent his words clear down to Soldier creek bottom, he cried, "C. J. McFarland, C. J. McFarland, C. J. McFarland! hear ye, hear ye, hear ye! you are commanded to open court immediately and govern yourself accordingly." The sheriff out of wind, returned to the bar to find them in paroxysms of laughter. The worthy farmer was not clear he had not been imposed upon. He had little time to cogitate over it however, for his voice brought the judge and his party to the street, when comprehending the situation the judge thereupon took his deer skin, which he invariably carried for a seat cushion, and with his friends walked into the court room. The judge putting his deer skin on a splint bottomed

chair, seated himself, stroked his long black beard, looked grave, and ordered the sheriff to call court.— The sheriff stood stock still in amazement; he looked at the learned gentlemen, and then at the court, and the court looked at the sheriff; the counselors swelled with suppressed laughter, while the judge directed the clerk of the court to instruct the sheriff. The clerk reddened, stammered and tottered on his legs — he was as verdant as the sheriff. The judge seeing the joke, rising said, "Mr. Sheriff, follow me;" and going to the door taught the sheriff the proper call; and the "Oyez, oyez, oyez," was given in due form; whereupon the judge and sheriff indulged in a private smile and congratulation under the staircase, and thereupon returned, the judge to his seat, and the sheriff to his position, to threaten the bar with his menacing fist. The court was organized, jurors sworn in, and some progress made that afternoon. — The next day business proceeded smoothly. In the evening (7th) there was a political meeting held at the court-room — Democratic. The Judge, Col. Wood, and the aspiring members of the bar "spoke their pieces" and uncorked a good deal of pent up buncombe. From the meeting all went to the hotel, where political feeling was laid aside and social union promoted in real western style. The judge and officers of the court, grand jurors, learned counsel, physicians (our clergy were out of town,) clients, strangers, and citizens generally, held a merry festival on the occasion; daybreak came and no thought of sleep; the supply of spirits held out, and human endurance was on trial. All day of the 8th the carnival prevailed; shouts, laughter, speeches, jokes practical and coarse, with an occasional scintillation of wit consumed the day, but nightfall closed the scene, and "hushed in grim repose" the revellers went early to sleep. No session of court was called on the 8th and the records are silent as to the cause.

On the next day, October 9th, the grand jury found indictments against Maj. Wm. Williams, John F. Duncombe, E. Elliott Colburn and W. O. Ruggles for leading a riot April 21st 1856, said riot being the forcible ejection of Messrs. S. and B. from James B. Williams' claim. Bail was given and the trial was set down for the 11th of November 1856, at Eldora, Hardin county. We will skip the intervening time and go to Eldora. We found it difficult to get witnesses and friends to accompany us; as is often the case the leaders were left by the followers to take care of themselves. But some men are born true to friends. On Nov. 9th

our party, consisting of C. Hazard Vincent, Tho's Sargent, N. B. Morrison, John Garaghty, J. D. Burkholder, E. H. Albee, J. B. Williams, Daniel O'Keson, Wm. M. Koons and Messrs. Cheney, Byers and Mason started with the defendants for Eldora. We reached Wheeler's grove or Skunk river that evening. All were disposed to make a frolic of the affair and no one was allowed to sleep much that night. We arrived at Eldora at 1 p.m. of the 10th and made our head-quarters at the Eastern House. About 5 p.m. Judge McFarland arrived. The opposing party took lodgings at the Eldora House. Col. Wood, who acted as private prosecutor, (always an offensive position,) took lodgings at our camp. The judge named two o'clock of the 11th as the hour for trial. In the meantime our party were not idle. "All means are fair in war," and a competent committee was appointed "to labor with Col. Wood," to the justification of our cause and the discomfiture of the enemy. Pecuniary inducements were not thought of, but social convivialities are "a means to an end" in our advanced civilization, and our committee were veterans in the arts and diplomacy of social intercourse. Mr. Huff the accomplished District Attorney of Hardin county came on the morning of the 11th to perform his official duties. The trial came on at three o'clock. There was a mellow feeling all round, the Col. somewhat obfuscated, did not see the law or catch the salient points quite as sharply as usual, but then the courtesies of good society do not permit one to partake of another's wine and afterwards remark severely upon that other's shortcomings, even if his labial organs had free utterance. The Colonel served his clients well as he could, and the case was given to the jury at 8 p.m. — The jury were out all night. In the morning we learned there was a Quaker on the jury which of itself prevented an acquittal. One strong man frequently moulds the opinions of eleven associates as did this Quaker, and after breakfast a verdict of guilty was bro't in, a nominal fine imposed, and our party with the judge started for Fort Dodge, where we arrived on the 13th and were received with acclamations.

### *Social*

Seldom if ever has there gathered the nucleus of a city — a colony like that which began the life and history of Fort Dodge. The individuals composing this pioneer community, though bent on personal prosperity, and coming from every portion of the Union, bore the impress of gentlemen in culture,

habits, and address. Here was a departure from the general rule, that the unlettered precede, break and mellow the soil, hew down the forest and build, for the cultured who may come after to mould society, to polish and adorn that which was before rude, earnest and strong. The distinctive character of this exceptional people became known far and wide, and their numbers grew rapidly by the attraction of like material, of men and women who desired the benefits of advanced society in new regions and new homes. This indelibly stamped the character of the population of Fort Dodge and it will never be changed. The pioneers came in the spring of 1855 — men fresh from college, from law and medical schools and from established practice, from the civil engineer's field, from the counting rooms and marts of the sea coast, from the hillsides of New England and the broad farms and thriving towns of the Ohio valley, to build homes and fortunes on the most beautiful spot in all Iowa.

That memorable first season of masculine loneliness was spent in building offices and houses, in making surveys of the country and drawing maps, in camping parties to the lakes and up the river, and Saturdays — mail day — was given up to athletic sports, hunting, fishing, wrestling, and pitching quoits. Many will remember building claim cabins and the solitary life in them, of interchanging visits, and the advent of the claim jumpers. Hospitality prevailed everywhere, welcome was honestly spoken and freely given.

Then too, the first winter was one of rollicking jollity. Some of the gentlemen had brought on their families, among whom were a good number of young married people, together with about a dozen young ladies, enough to tone down our society, make life more sociable and place a desirable restraint on the wild doings of border existence, but not enough to go around; the young men outnumbering them ten to one. — This disparity in numbers was often the occasion of laughable and friendly strife for the favors and smiles of the fair ladies, and they enjoyed the high carnival they held in the turbulent hearts of their admiring companions and suitors. Debates, reading of essays, singing clubs, dancing and sleighing parties and card circles furnished a variety of amusements and all was done in the few small log and one and two apartment houses then built. The accommodations were cramped but the enjoyments hearty and unceasing. If all did not participate in the debates, all attended. Cyrus C. Carpenter and Sam Robbins were stars in the forensic art. Dr. S. B. Olney's office was the

head-quarters of the "Glee Club" which consisted of S. B. Olney, Fred Boott, A. Miller, Hez Beecher and A. J. Humphrey. The "Instrumental Club," composed of W. P. Pollock, Albert Morrison, C. H. Allen and A. J. Humphrey, performed respectively on violin, bass-viol, flute and guitar and made themselves useful and agreeable whenever we could get that artistic body together. There were several euchre and whist coteries. One crystalized into a permanent club and has a history of its own — it met at the office of Albert Morrison — consisting of himself, Maj. Williams, Dr. Olney and the writer. — Wilson and McBane's office was a favorite resort for any who were inclined to fall in and take a smile or smoke and a hand at euchre.

At the U. S. Receiver's office, Gen. V. P. [Van] Antwerp, Thos. Sargent, John Garaghty and John F. Duncombe, four good haters in the Democratic party, occasionally met to exchange sentiments and uncork champagne.

Mrs. Maj. Williams received her friends once a week, entertaining them with music and singing, which together with her charming vivacity and grace of manner made her parlor the object of entree with all the gentlemen. Those receptions usually ended with a dance at the close of the evening, and I need not say that Miss Mollie Williams, though quite young, was one of the great attractions at the receptions. Miss Vincent and the Misses Garaghty gave frequent euchre parties, and the gentlemen were not at all diffident about going there any evening for social entertainment, the ladies being favorites with the young men.

The fall season of festivities — 1855 — opened Sunday, Oct. 21st — we had no church services yet — by the "Glee Club" giving an entertainment at W. P. Pollock's rooms, at which were present Messrs. Boott, Olney, Allen, Miller, Beecher, Smith, Sherman, Morrison, Burkholder, Robbins, McBane, Ruggles, Duncombe and Dr. Arnold.

Oct. 25th James B. Williams gave an oyster party; oysters ordered by express, came from the river on the stage — were far from home, but were voted "all right" and eaten with a fierce relish. The persons present were Maj. Williams, Drs. Olney and Arnold, Messrs. Pollock, Rees, Corbin, Beecher, Garaghty, Morrison, Boott, Bagg, McBane, Duncombe, Humphrey, Sherman, Wood and Ruggles.

These and many others I will not enumerate, were aptly called "stag" parties and produced loud remonstrance from the ladies, which brought about the first general assembly of all the ladies and gentlemen of Ft.

Dodge at the Wahkonsa House on the evening of Nov. 29th 1855, for a dance and oyster supper. The music was amateur, kindly furnished by Maj. Williams and Messrs. Pollock and Humphrey.

The entertainment was by Mr. Schaffner, proprietor of the hotel. The young ladies who graced the occasion were the Misses Colburn, the Misses Garaghty, the Misses Schaffner, Miss Em Vincent, Miss Mollie Williams, Miss Nellie Curtis and Miss Brown, together with most of the married ladies; and add all the gentlemen of our young town. There were several couples over from Newcastle (Webster City) and I believe our friends Chas. Bergk of Dakota and James P. White from up the Lizard were present. The ladies did their "level best" in dress, and the occasion was a decided success and frequently repeated.

Dancing, surprise and card parties, with candy pulling and sleigh rides followed in rapid succession through the winter. New Year's day 1856 the ladies received calls in the good old style, and the young ladies announced a leap-year sleigh ride to come off soon, which put the whole masculine gender upon the "anxious seat" in prayerful if not hopeful expectation of an invitation. Bets were freely offered and taken on individual success, and every smile, look or trifling indication thrown out by the fair ones, closely watched and treasured as a promise of joy. In good time the little billets came. Those who drew prizes enjoyed the fun with stormy hurrahs over their crest-fallen friends. Those who did not bask in the sunshine solaced themselves with a dreaming smoke, or an enlivening toast to "The girl I left behind me." It would be invidious to name the happy fellows who handed the young ladies into Mr. Albee's sleigh box well filled with hay and robes that night and drove down the river on the ice six miles to Mr. Mahoney's where we were welcomed in honest old fashioned style. Mr. Mahoney lived in a hewn log house having two rooms and an upstairs. We found a blazing fire in a capacious fireplace, everything had an air of neatness and the family looked happy. We took along oysters, sardines, and confections, while Madam added a nicely boiled ham and coffee and other fixings so invitingly prepared, that with our brisk ride in the crisp air, we ate with a keen relish, and afterwards danced with a zest and enjoyment unknown to the ennuied frequenters of fashionable watering places. About one o'clock we jumped into the sleigh and were driven home at a spanking gait, the horses' shoes crunching the ice to the time of our songs.

In a community where culture was so general, attainments were not conspicuous, but characteristics were apparent. Fred Boott was acknowledged the most polite man, at least Mrs. Williams accorded him that position, and no one of us appealed from it. Sam Robbins was the wit and best impromptu speaker. W. P. Pollock was the musician of finest taste. Cy Carpenter was called "Honest Cy." Energetic John F. Duncombe, "Go-ahead John." Egbert Bagg best understood fencing. E. E. Colburn most skillful in the art of self defense, and in athletic vigor divided the honor with Thos. Sargent. Sam Rees was "a square man" and called "Umpire Sam" until he became judge and the boys adopted the more dignified title. John Garaghty was the poet and counselor. Albert Morrison was the most genial man, and the best shot, at least with no little skill I never could beat him.

"Which is why I remark  
And my language is plain,  
That for ways that are dark  
And for tricks that are vain,  
The rifle practice of Albert is peculiar —  
Which the same I am free to maintain."