

PIONEER EXPERIENCES IN KEOKUK COUNTY,
1858-1874

By Edith H. Hurlbutt*

"On the N.Y. Central R. R. going along at a great rate, reached Cleveland, Ohio about sundown but still kept a-travelling." Thus wrote Hanno Newton in his diary in 1858 when he, with his parents, were enroute from Connecticut to Iowa to establish a home in the section of Keokuk County then known as Dutch Creek and now the site of the town of Keota. Hanno had started to keep a diary two years before, and he continued this day-by-day account of events until his death at the age of ninety. Having consulted the diary many times for information for articles published in his paper, the *Keota Eagle*, Mr. W. C. Richardson regards this diary as "a veritable mine of information."¹

Hosea N. Newton and Mary Anne Bolles Fiske, natives of Cheshire County, New Hampshire, were married in Hinsdale, where their son Hanno was born in 1838. Hosea, who was engaged in the business of making oyster kegs in Hinsdale, moved his family to Fair Haven, Connecticut, in 1840, where he continued to engage in his business as cooper and where he taught his son the trade.

The pioneer spirit which had brought Richard Newton to Massachusetts from England in 1638 imbued his descendant, Hosea. After hearing reports from friends about the opportunities in Iowa, he made an exploratory trip in 1856 and bought 160 acres of prairie land at \$1.25 per acre. Two years later he moved his family to Iowa.

Even though the family did not travel by covered wagon, as so many of the immigrants of that time did, the account of their trip makes interesting reading. From Fair Haven they took a stagecoach called the "King's Omnibus" to the dock at New Haven, where they boarded a steamboat at ten

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¹ *Newton Diary*, April 7, 1858; W. C. Richardson to author, Oct. 12, 1951.

o'clock at night; nine hours later they arrived at New York, "two hours behind time on account of the heavy fog on the sound." They took a hack to the Gerard House, where they remained until six o'clock at night when they took "the cars" for Albany, New York, arriving there about midnight. At two o'clock in the afternoon of April 8, three days after they had left their home at Fair Haven, the Newtons arrived at Chicago. After visiting a few days in and around Chicago, they boarded "the cars" at Aurora at ten o'clock in the morning and that night at 6:30 they were met by friends at Davenport. Finally, on April 16 they arrived at Columbus City in Louisa County, the end of the railroad. They hired a man with team to take them to Washington that afternoon, and the next morning hired the same man to take them on to Lafayette Township in Keokuk County, about twenty-two miles. They lost their way and did not reach their destination until five o'clock in the evening. They "stoped [sic] at Hinman's (a hard place). Evening called upon a Mr. Farrand."²

The Newtons had come to what must have seemed the end of the world. They had a farm, but there were no buildings on it, not even a tree or a stick of wood, as they were to discover when they started to mark out the places where the buildings were to be placed. They had left the civilized and populated East, had brought all their personal belongings and perhaps some furniture with them, but they had no place to live and no place to bring their "goods," making it necessary to leave them at Columbus City.

After looking the situation over on Sunday, the day after their arrival, they decided that the Farrand's looked like a good place for them to stay, so early on Monday morning, "before breakfast," Hanno wrote, "Father went over to Mr. Farrand's and arranged boarding for us." It was here that they stayed for three months, and it would appear that Mr. Farrand was very cooperative and helpful in getting the new family adjusted and started on their new venture. He is mentioned in many subsequent entries as accompanying them on trips for supplies and as working with them on various farm operations.³

Their next step was to buy a team of horses for \$250 and a cow for \$20. They then borrowed a wagon and went to a sawmill, nine miles south on Skunk River, for lumber, getting their loads stuck in the mud twice on their way back to Mr. Farrand's. The day after this strenuous trip they built

² *Diary*, April 6, 17, 1858.

³ *Ibid.*, April 19, 1858.

a stable for the horses and cow. None of their land being broken that first year, they rented a small piece of plowed ground for corn, but it was a very wet season and they did not get their corn planted until June 10.

Supplies were difficult to obtain because of the long distances which they had to be hauled. About two weeks after their arrival, Hanno, in company with Mr. Farrand and Mr. J. D. Batterson, went to Iowa City, about forty miles away, to buy some necessary equipment. Leading Hanno's team and driving Mr. Farrand's, they made the trip to Iowa City in eleven hours. On the return trip the roads were muddy and their loads were heavy. They spent the better part of two days driving home. Getting through mudholes really took patience. For example, one line in the diary states quite simply what must have spelled patience as well as brute strength: "got stuck in a mud hole so that I did not get out for over 2 hours."⁴

Once home, however, Hanno and Hosea lost no time in getting started on their building program. The next morning they "took the loads down to our place unloaded them. afterward commenced digging the cellar."⁵

While the Newtons had arrived on their farm on April 17, it was not until June 21 that they went to Columbus City for the rest of the "goods." Since their barn was not ready for "living in" for another month, we can only conjecture as to what they did with their "goods" during that time. The trip to Columbus City and back is an interesting little story in itself. Mr. Hinman and Mr. Miller went along, driving their own teams, making three wagon loads that they hauled the thirty-five miles. They made the trip to Columbus City in one day, then were delayed in getting started back the next day because, in the words of the diary, "The Freight Agent being away . . . could not get our goods untill [sic] about 11 o'clock." Once the goods were loaded on the wagons and the return trip started, troubles multiplied. First, the roads were very bad, and their loads were heavy, Hanno's being 1,800 pounds; then Hanno lost his "pail and halters"; the next day "Mr. Hinman broke a whiffle tree"; and finally, on their second day out from Columbus City, darkness overtook them when they were only five miles from home. The "roads being so bad we concluded not to go any farther tonight. borrowed a sythe [sic] and cut some grass for the horses. then went into an empty house and camped on the floor." Alto-

⁴ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1858.

⁵ *Ibid.*, July 3, 1858.

gether, it took them three and a half days to make the round trip of seventy miles.⁶

Many loads of lumber from the sawmill were needed before they had enough to complete the farm buildings. Finishing lumber and other supplies had to be hauled from Iowa City, each trip usually consuming two or three days. But at last, three months from the date of their arrival, the barn was finished, and, in the words of the diary: "We quit boarding out . . . moved into our barn. it is quite comfortable."⁷

For four months, then, the barn was their home. On September 21 they "got ready to raise our house," and on October 9, "moved into the chambers of our new house. seems some better." The finishing work on the house continued until November 24, Thanksgiving Day, when the diary reads: "Run off lime for plastering. Never worked before [on] Thanksgiving day." They were working against time now, for the winter was soon to set in. On November 29 they "laid chimney," and on December 2 they plastered the lower part of the house. Snow began to fall about four o'clock that afternoon, and they did not get the plastering finished until eight o'clock. They then brought the stove down from upstairs, and by eleven o'clock had it set up and "a fire going hot."⁸

The fact that the Newtons first built their barn — a barn substantial enough for them to live in for several months — and then erected a plastered house indicates that they differed from the typical pioneer of the fifties. Most of the early settlers first built a rude cabin, heated by a fireplace, for their family shelter; later, they might build a rough lean-to shed to house their animals. That the Newtons were building on such a grand scale must have been a cause of wonder and envy to their neighbors.

Hosea turned his skill as cooper to that of carpenter and thence to cabinet maker. He became known, ultimately, as an excellent cabinet maker, and we know that he had plenty of practice in the trade. He made their own furniture, such as bedsteads, bureaus, washtubs, and a bookcase with pigeonholes; he also made machinery such as wagons, sleds, a seeder and wheelbarrow, and plows. Not only did he use his skill at carpentry for his own work, but he was called upon to do a good bit of that kind of work in the neighborhood. When the Newtons became firmly established, there

⁶ *Ibid.*, June 21, 22, 23, 1858.

⁷ *Ibid.*, July 19, 1858.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Sept. 21, Oct. 9, Nov. 24, 29, Dec. 2, 1858.

were many entries in the diary, such as the following: "Father went to work for Mr. Jones — frameing [sic] his house." Even during that first summer, when they were so busy with their own house, they were called upon to help their neighbors with building projects, one such call being to help "raise" a neighbor's house. But there was fun as well as hard work at those house-raising. After the Newtons had raised their own house, Hanno wrote in his diary: "haveing [sic] plenty of watermelons when we got through we eat some."⁹

From time to time other buildings were added to the Newton farm homestead: on August 11, 1869, they "raised the Granary," and a month later they finished a cowshed. By 1867 the family had outgrown the original house, and an addition was built.¹⁰

The growing family is accounted for by the fact that in 1862 Hanno married Maria DeBerard, who, with her parents, had moved onto a corner of the section opposite the Newtons some two years before. By 1867 three children had been born to the couple, all girls. Since they needed more male help on the farm, they took a boy, Charlie Ames, "to raise." Add to this the fact that there were many guests coming to the Newton home from time to time, often staying over night — one wonders where they all slept. The original house had a living room, bedroom, kitchen, and pantry downstairs and four bedrooms upstairs. In 1867 a large room was added to the back of the house and used as kitchen and dining room.

Crowded conditions again existed in 1871. That was the year that a branch of the Rock Island Railroad was extended from Washington through Sigourney. It cut through the Newton farm, and the Newtons took some of the laborers to board, which in those days meant rooms as well. There were by this time five children, making eleven people altogether in the family — add to this the railroad men — where would guests be put? But guests they did have, as indicated by Hanno's entry: "today the first time in two weeks but what there has been someone here besides our own folks."¹¹

During the first years in this new land, the Newtons spent much time during the winter months in the woods over near the river, cutting and hauling wood to burn and to make fence posts. At times they camped over night, bringing home two loads instead of the usual one. It is doubtful if

⁹ *Ibid.*, April 1, 1864; Sept. 21, 1858.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Aug. 11, 1869.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Dec. 27, 1863.

this kind of camping was enjoyable; to take the sting out of their problem, the Newtons, with neighbors J. Sherman and Doty, built a "cabin to camp in" in the winter of 1862-1863. Even at that, one can be reasonably certain that the cabin was merely a protection from the wintry blasts.¹²

In addition to carpentering and wood cutting, there was farm work to do, even that first year, and while they probably did not do very much on their own farm that first summer, they did do some farm work for their neighbors. On June 16, "Helped Father finish planting corn over to Mr. Case's today," which, by the way, was quite a late date to plant corn. However, it made good corn, as Hanno testified in an article in the *Keota Eagle* in May, 1877.¹³

Other farming operations mentioned that first summer were mowing and putting up hay, mowing buckwheat, and husking corn. It would appear that these operations were all performed by hand, since it took two men all day to mow an acre and a half of hay. The next year special mention is made that they cut hay with a machine. Corn, of course, was all husked by hand. Since there were no fences, they had some difficulty in keeping the cattle out of the corn; in July of that first summer there are several entries in the diary indicating that someone usually stayed at home to herd the cattle.

The pattern of the rapid development of farm machinery from hand operated to horse operated is clearly shown in the diary. Hay was cut by machine as early as 1859 and 1860, while corn was still being planted by hand after the field had been "marked" out, but in 1864 some corn was planted with a two-horse planter. In 1859 the plowing was done with a homemade shovel plow, but in 1863 and 1864 the Newtons made a sulky plow. They took the "hind wheels of H. Case's wagon set the tin, and fited [sic] them onto the plow." Sowing wheat was done with shovel plows in 1861, but in 1863 they "bought pattern right of a seed sower," and set out to make one. The pattern was evidently a good one, since the entry on March 30 stated that the "machine worked very well."¹⁴

Threshing in 1864 was accomplished by the cradling method, but was soon changed to the reaper except, as in 1869, when the ground was so wet that they had to revert to cradling. Until 1871 corn was hoed by hand, all

¹² *Ibid.*, Dec. 7, 1863.

¹³ *Ibid.*, June 16, 1858; H. P. Newton, "Notes from a Farmer's Diary," *Keota Eagle*, May, 1877.

¹⁴ *Diary*, April 22, 1864; Jan. 28, March 30, 1863.

hands helping, even the womenfolk, but that year they bought a corn cultivator which must have revolutionized the operation.

The crops raised by the Newtons included corn, wheat, oats, buckwheat, rye, and sorghum. No mention is made of the varieties they grew except in the case of wheat, when Fife, Tea, and Club were cleaned with a fanning mill in 1863.¹⁵

Since there were no native trees on the Newton land, they planted trees from time to time. By 1863 they had a hedgerow "between Smock and us," and that year they set out some willows. The next year they bought more "willow cuttings at \$2.00 per thousand," and also set out cottonwood sprouts. In 1867 they started a seedling bed of maples, using seeds which they had had sent from the East; in 1871 they set out the maple seedlings.¹⁶

Fences very soon became a necessity, and the work of building them was commenced in 1859. Rail fencing was the cheapest kind to build, but it was a time-consuming job. There were countless entries made in the diary of which the following is typical: "Father & I went to timber and split rails." Merrill E. Jarchow cites an example of the time which it took to make a rail fence: "it required 6,720 rails, fourteen to the rod, to fence eighty acres, while the job of splitting the rails took one man about sixty-seven days. Further, it required 1,920 stakes and 960 blocks for the support of such a fence."¹⁷ When we read about the times that the sheep strayed, and how they sometimes had to hunt for several days before they found their cows, we can appreciate the fact that they must have been very eager, indeed, to get fences built as soon as they could. It is not clear from the diary whether they fenced their fields or their stock in first.¹⁸

What they did for water the first year is a mystery, but in August, 1859, they went on a hunt for stone to "wall a well," which they were digging and in which they installed a chain pump.¹⁹

Doing a little conjecturing from the fact that willows seemed to be a good kind of tree for them to plant, and the fact that in 1860 they hired a Mr. Gordon with a ditcher to make "113 rods of ditch," we can conclude that part of the farm, at least, was quite wet. Another pretty good proof

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 1863.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, April 27, 1863; April 26, 1864.

¹⁷ Merrill E. Jarchow, *The Earth Brought Forth* (St. Paul, Minn., 1949), 7.

¹⁸ *Diary*, March 7, 1863.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, Aug. 1, 1859.

that they had some low, wet land, as well as that there was a bit of humor in Hanno's makeup, is an entry in the diary on March 1, 1861: "At noon heard Frogs sharpening their teeth for the first time this year." At the present time there is a so-called "slough" which cuts through the farm and across which, at one place, is a bridge. Probably this is where the ditching was done. Aside from this slough, the entire farm is tillable, and probably the slough was a very valuable factor in the worth of the farm, since it provided water for the stock during the summer.²⁰

As was the case with most of the farmers in southern Iowa, the corn-hog program proved to be the most profitable for the Newtons, since that is the most consistently reported on. Early in their farming, they sold much of their livestock already butchered, their chief market being Washington. One day in January of 1862 they butchered twelve hogs, the next day they "killed 2 cows," and two days later "killed 8 turkeys." They established connections in the East where they could sell turkeys, chickens, and geese: dressing as high as sixty turkeys or "51 turkeys and 28 geese" in one day. This was not easy work, and the remuneration was very little as evidenced by one entry in 1869, after they had dressed thirty-five geese. Hanno wrote: "Tough work. Took geese to Washington and got 50 cents a piece for them." While frequent reference is made concerning the dressing, packing, and shipping of fowl, no mention is made of the price received from the East. The only mention made of the price of dressed turkey was that which was sold in Washington in 1872 when they received eight and a half cents per pound.²¹

On a farm there are many projects which one may follow to turn one's time and resources into cash. The Newtons tried various ones, such as the dressing of fowl and the butchering of hogs and beef. At one time Hanno tried raising bees, but that did not turn out as well as some other projects, for he wrote: "went to work to take care of bees got stung so bad had to have the doctor." Only once during this period is any mention made of the sale of eggs when, in 1860, they received seven cents per dozen. They may have sold butter occasionally, but only once was any mention made of it, when they "sent 100 lb. . . . to Washington." One project which was successful year after year was that of making sorghum molasses; in 1861 they made 900 gallons, which they sold at twenty cents a gallon. There

²⁰ *Ibid.*, April 27, 1860; March 1, 1861.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Jan. 17, 18, 20, 1862; Nov. 23, 1870; Dec. 20, 1869.

was much work to it: cutting wood from the timber, hauling it home, piling it in readiness for the fire which would be kept burning continually for days; in addition, they had to strip the cane and then boil and watch the molasses.²²

The food which the pioneers had to eat, although of interest to us today, apparently did not seem important enough to Hanno to write about, except in the case of the special treats like oysters which were shipped them from the East. One entry is typical: "rec'd a 2 gall. keg Oysters from H. C." When such a shipment would arrive the Newtons would give a series of oyster suppers, one time inviting the older folk of the neighborhood, and a few days later the younger set. To these people who had been brought up on seafoods such as oysters, lobsters, and codfish, a shipment of such delicacies must have been deeply appreciated. May Ramsey, Hanno's daughter, in a letter dated October 24, 1952, reported that her father, when he was five years old, "would steal his mother's scheres [sic] and go down to the shore and open them [oysters] and eat them right there."²³

One of their favorite foods was hominy or hulled corn which they served with milk and sugar. The following description of how the hominy was made is May Ramsey's: "They had a hopper made out of wood up on a stand where they put the wood ashes & made lye. Grandmother would take corn & boil it in lye water untill [sic] the shell would come off. (That was in a big kettle out doors). Then take the corn to the well and wash it until she had all the lye off. I remember how I watched her & wondered about it. It sure made good hominy when it was washed enough."²⁴

Another favorite food was cheese, which they also made themselves. Hosea made a cheese press with a round box for the cheese, and Maria made the cheese. To quote May Ramsey again: "We little ones watched close when they took the chees [sic] out of the press and trimmed [sic] the edges. We got it to eat. My! It was good."²⁵

Having been easterners, they, of course, had their Boston baked beans and brown bread. As was the custom in those days, they also took wheat and corn to the gristmill and had their own flour and corn meal made. In

²² *Ibid.*, Aug. 5, 1864; Jan. 27, 1871; Nov. 2, 1861.

²³ *Ibid.*, Feb. 4, 1860; May Ramsey to author, Oct. 28, 1952.

²⁴ May Ramsey to author, Dec. 13, 1951.

²⁵ *Idem.*

their garden they raised their own potatoes, carrots, turnips (in 1864 they "pulled" 17 bushels), pumpkins, and dry beans.²⁶

While there are not many accounts of trapping, hunting, or fishing, these undoubtedly were favorite sports which often proved profitable. Traps were set for prairie chickens, mink, and muskrat, and occasionally Hosea and Hanno attended wolf hunts. On one such occasion, Hanno reported they "got badly fooled . . . nary Wolfe was seen." Fishing in the Skunk River was good, and "lots of fish" were caught, but the kinds were not mentioned.²⁷

Neighborliness was one of the greatest assets which pioneers had. Although their houses were not close together, the occupants lived in close association with each other, being dependent upon one another for their social life, for help in getting various farm and household jobs done, and for assistance in times of need.

Entertainment in those early days was pretty much of the homemade variety, and much of it was educational in character. The singing school was probably the most popular and the longest lived. There were also geography schools, arithmetic schools, the spelling bees, and the literary societies, each of which seemed to survive for only a year at a time. There were other entertainments, such as dancing, school "exhibitions," and "donations." Hanno tells of one such donation party which was held in January of 1859: "Afternoon Father, Mother, Clara went to Mr. Hill's to a donation. Hobart & Howard Case, Ben Vastine and I rigged up a 4 horse team and got a load of young folks and attended the donation in the eve. a very cold time . . . not very good sleding [sic] Jan. 7. I got home this morning about 5 o'clock, but they did not get around with the sled till about 8. they had broke the tongue and wore off some 5 inches of the hind of the runner. Ther. 8° below zero."²⁸

Fairs and circuses and neighborhood parties came in for their share of participation, but the diary does not go into detail concerning them, only an occasional remark such as "had a tip top time" or "had a first rate time," indicating that the event had been pleasant.²⁹

There were two holidays which usually called for a special celebration:

²⁶ *Diary*, Nov. 2, 1864.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, April 1, 1865; July 25, 1863.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, Jan. 6, 1859.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, March 13, 15, 1861.

the Fourth of July and Christmas. Thanksgiving was mentioned occasionally as being a day when they went to a neighbor's for dinner, or they had neighbors to their place. The first account of a Fourth of July event was in 1859, when Hanno wrote: "Afternoon 10 couple of us took a ride rode until 5 P. M. stoped at the school house about 3 hours. then came here and took supper afterwards drove up to Scotland." And the next day the diary continues: "Got home about 4 o'clock this morning . . . had a house full of company to supper. *Old folks.*"³⁰

Each year, it seems, they attended the Fourth of July celebration at a different place: Washington, Cramer's grove, Cochran's grove, Talleyrand, Keota. One year they had the celebration in the Newton grove. May Ramsey in telling about it said: "They were supposed to be in the Maple grove N. of the house, but They were all over the place. Grandfather said never again would he have public celebrate there . . . but I had a big time." There were usually about 1,500 people at these celebrations, so it is no wonder that one year was enough for the Newtons.³¹

During the first years in Iowa, Christmas seems to have been just another day; sometimes there would be a school meeting in the afternoon, sometimes the family went right on with their farm work, one time gathering corn, another time going to the river for wood, and one year they "ground out 40 gall. sorghum juice for Vinegar." But from 1870 on there were more festivities arranged for each year. One time unexpected company arrived; Hanno had gone to Talleyrand, and when he returned found "Mrs. Fobes, Jay F. and G. W. Brockway here. Had chicken pie & oysters for dinner." The year 1873 was the first time that a church program was attended by the Newton family, but from then on they took a very active part in the planning and the work of carrying out the Christmas "Festival."³²

One major contribution which the Newton family made to these festivals was a ship which had been constructed by John Lynch, one of the railroad men who had come to the Newton farm when the railroad was built. He had been a shipbuilder and a sailor. After the railroad was completed he stayed on at the farm with the Newtons. He had built a model ship which could be taken apart and stored from year to year. Each year as long as

³⁰ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1859.

³¹ May Ramsey to author, Feb. 13, 1952.

³² *Diary*, Dec. 25, 1862; Dec. 25, 1872; Dec. 25, 1874.

John was there he assembled the ship; after he left Hosea or Hanno did the assembling. For many years they used the ship instead of the traditional Christmas tree. In 1950 May Ramsey wrote about the ship: "It was pretty and the first time it was used, I received a big wax doll on it. Everyone took their gifts and put them on for the family. My! But I was happy."³³

Hosea and Hanno were lodgemen, both belonging to the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges for many years. In 1928 Hanno laid claim to being the oldest Mason in length of membership in southeastern Iowa. At the time of his death in 1929 he had been a Mason for 65 years and an Odd Fellow for 71. Although Hanno had been a Mason since 1864, he did not take the "chapter" degrees in Keota until about 1921. Mr. W. C. Richardson tells about their taking the degrees together: "I was perhaps 25 and I recall being present when his petition was read after I had part of my work. The secretary read it as 'age 28. His petition says 82 but it is evidently a transposition.' I rose up and told them Mr. Newton was really 82 and quite enthused about taking the degrees."³⁴

More important to the life of the community than the social events, however, was the cooperation among the members of the neighborhood. The men folk pooled their manpower when certain farm jobs, such as haying, threshing, and even plowing and planting, were to be done. Persons with special skills were called upon to perform their jobs for all the neighbors. At first Mr. Doty made their boots; they would go to him and be measured, and about a month later they would return to get their finished boots. Later, when the DeBerards moved into the community, Mr. DeBerard did shoe repair work. As was mentioned above, Hosea was called upon for carpentering and cabinet work. Hanno, who possibly had a little more education than his neighbors, contributed to the life of the neighborhood in the drawing up of papers such as the "draft of LaFayette Township." He also acted as clerk at public auctions.³⁵

Very often, when there was illness in a family, Mary Anne was called upon to "tend the sick." And if the ailing persons did not respond to treatment, and death would claim another victim, Mary Anne was usually on hand to help "lay out" the dead. Once when a mother did not recover from an illness, the father sent for Mary Anne to come over and get their

³³ May Ramsey to author, Jan. 16, 1952.

³⁴ W. C. Richardson to author, Oct. 12, 1951.

³⁵ *Diary*, May 21, 1861.

child who was sick also. Although a blizzard was raging in its second day, they went after the child, arriving home before the storm became so bad that traveling was impossible.

The weather, of course, played a very important part in the life of the pioneer farmers, and Hanno faithfully recorded each day's weather conditions. For the most part these notations are short and of little interest, except in the case of unusual storms such as the one recorded on May 22, 1873:

About 2 P. M. there came up a very heavy rain with a good deal of large hail and a tornado started near Lancaster tore a number of houses to pieces there and came on towards Keota destroyed a number of buildings came on to the east side of Clear Creek. Destroyed Nick Engladniger's house and killed his wife and child. Destroyed Mr. Carter's house and Barn destroyed about 50 head hogs 20 head horses 1 bull 1 cow etc. making his loss some 3 or \$4000. it traveled on destroying fences etc. Destroyed F. Campbell's house & hurt Mr. C. his wife and 2 children & his barn it then raised passed over Keota and traveled on about 10 mi. east here where it struck the ground again and the destruction was terrible killing some 10 persons injuring a great number. the loss cannot be estimated.³⁶

The Newtons, having a well developed community spirit, took an active interest in schools, mail services, civic affairs, and farmers' clubs. Soon after their arrival in the west, Hosea was elected sub-director of the school board, and in May, 1859, Hosea and Hanno helped to build a schoolhouse on the Newton land.

Church played an important part in the life of the family. While at Fair Haven in 1848 they had all been baptized in the Episcopal church, and Sundays were spent at church — "all day and evening." During their first years in the west there were no churches, but Sunday School was held in the schoolhouse as early as July, 1859, and soon after this they arranged to have itinerant preachers conduct church in the schoolhouse. The year after the railroad was built and the new station at Keota established, interested folk got together, chose two lots for a Methodist church, formed a board of trustees, and on May 12, 1872, "Mr. Smock preached the first sermon in Keota," and the Newtons were present in full force to hear him. While there seems to have been some interest in spiritualism about 1860 in

³⁶ *Ibid.*, May 22, 1873.

the neighborhood, only one mention was made in Hanno's diary of their attending a meeting.³⁷

For years Talleyrand was their mail center. About once a week someone would go after the mail for the neighborhood, that task usually being assumed by Hanno. Later on they had post office meetings, some at the Newton home, but wherever they were held, the Newtons always attended. However, up to 1874 no change had been made in their mail arrangements.

In civic and political matters, the Newtons always showed keen interest. In 1862 Hosea was justice of the peace, using the authority of his office to perform marriage ceremonies and to make out deeds. In 1862 Hanno was constable, and in 1872 he was elected town clerk. Politically, they were Republicans. Once, however, Hosea strayed from the fold and joined a new party known as the Anti-Monopolists. He threw his hat in the ring and was elected state senator, serving in the 1874 and 1876 sessions of the General Assembly at Des Moines. Hanno's sketchy description of the election follows:

Oct. 14, 1873. Election Day. the election was held at Keota for this Twp. Everything passed off very well. 190 votes cast. A pleasant and nice day. Oct. 15th. got through counting out last night about 3 P. M. I took the train at noon for Sigourney to take the returns up. Anti-Monopolists quite jubilant over their success. Father's majority for senator, 415.

Further mention is made in the diary of the times that Hosea went to Des Moines during the 1874 and 1876 sessions, but nothing is recorded of what part he took in the proceedings. The *Senate Journal* indicates that his defection from the Republican party lasted only one term, that of 1874; in the 1876 *Journal*, Hosea voted with the Republicans. He was one of the few Republicans who had defected to the Anti-Monopolists; when it seemed that the Democrats were taking over this third party movement, most of the Republicans returned to their former allegiance.

Hanno's experiences during the Civil War had probably strengthened his Republicanism. He had joined the Iowa State Militia when the war broke out, but the only bit of excitement he recorded was during the first few days of August, 1863, when he played a minor role in the short-lived uprising at South English which came to be known in Iowa history as the "Tally War." The Rev. Cyphert Tally of Keokuk County, a Baptist minis-

³⁷ *Ibid.*, May 12, 1872.

ter with a southern background, led a group of Democrats — “Copperheads” in the minds of all Republicans — into South English during a Republican rally there. Tally was shot down and died shortly thereafter.³⁸ Hanno recounts his part in the ensuing hysteria:

Aug. 1, 1863. 7 P. M. started for Scotland. . . . heard the report that there had been a fight at South English one man killed. Came on home mustered a crowd and I went up there with them.

Aug. 2. arrived at S. E. at daylight. a good deal of excitement. sent a comm. to confer with the Copperheads.

Aug. 3. I stood on guard last night. great excitement on account of the committee not returning sent out spies recruits coming [sic] in from all quarters.

Aug. 4. Stood on guard last night. Col. Chipman of Washington took command today. P. M. built barricades and rifle pits at all of principle entrances. About sun down the Home Guards of Washington came with 40 extra stand of Arms.

Wed. Aug. 5. Had a very heavy rain last night. The Sheriff arrested 10 men today and started for Iowa City with them. About 100 men staid the bal. went home. I came home in the afternoon. The Governor [Samuel J. Kirkwood] went through Talleyrand and on to Sigourney. 4 companies of Militia at Sigourney.

Thus ended the Tally War and Hanno's military service.

Life on the prairie was, at times, pretty drab, uninteresting, and discouraging. Having lived in the mountains of New Hampshire, the Newtons would get homesick for their friendly grandeur. May Ramsey wrote that she could remember how her grandmother, who was small, “would curl up in her rocking chair and cry.” In 1866 they decided to rent the farm. Hanno went into the mercantile business in Talleyrand, while Hosea and Mary Anne went back East for a six-months visit. However, the mercantile business did not prove to be satisfactory for Hanno, so after ten months they bought the renter off their place and all moved back to the farm.³⁹

World events affected the lives of the Newtons in only a remote way, and were reported merely as items of interest. A few such items mentioned were: a total eclipse of the sun at 5 P. M. on July 7, 1869; the celebration of the

³⁸ Robert Rutland, “Copperheads in Iowa,” *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY*, 52:17 (January, 1954).

³⁹ May Ramsey to author, Oct. 13, 1953.

transmission of Queen Victoria's message over the Atlantic telegraph (about which they first heard in a letter from a friend in the East); and the Chicago fire, which news was also received by letter. The question of equal rights for women was debated at their Lyceum as early as December 21, 1858.⁴⁰

The progressive building up of the territory can easily be traced by the changing of trading centers. When the Newtons first started their building program in 1858, finishing lumber and other materials were hauled from Iowa City, forty miles away; by 1867, when the addition was built, Hanno "went to Washington for lumber," twenty-two miles away; and in 1872, "Father went over to Keota and bought a load of lumber," one mile away, and he "got home at 9 A. M." — a far cry from the three-day trips they had made fourteen years before.⁴¹

Pioneers are distinguished by one thing in particular — they can lay claim to many firsts. Hanno recorded some of them: they bought their first sewing machine from Chicago in 1871; their first coal stove for the "front" room in 1863; on January 7, 1864, Hanno went to the "coal bank" for their first load of coal; Hosea Newton and J. Sherman laid the first rail for the railroad in Keokuk County; Hanno rode to Keota on the first train that went across Clear Creek on February 26, 1872; the first lumber which was brought into Keota by train was on March 1, 1872; and the whole Newton family heard the first sermon preached in Keota on May 12, 1872.

The Iowa farm home which the Newton family built provided a way of life such as Hugh Orchard experienced on Old Orchard Farm, so that the Newtons might have said as he did: "That was the luckiest turn anybody ever saw. It led right into peace and plenty, and the chance of a lifetime to build, and set out, and trim, and cultivate, and generally develop a homestead that not only fed us and clothed us and kept us out of mischief, but somehow formed a kind of reservoir of good will and affection inside us that refuses to fade out."⁴²

⁴⁰ *Diary*, July 7, 1869; Aug. 27, 1858; Oct. 10, 1871.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1867; March 2, 1872.

⁴² Hugh Orchard, *Old Orchard Farm* (Ames, Iowa, 1952), 2.