

THE HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA.¹

[The history of the separate Territorial governments, and of the Territorial system in general, remains to be written. We shall not understand the history of political parties in this country until the history of political parties in the Western States has received more attention. Nor have such topics as the admission of the Western States into the Union, the formation of their constitutions, and the sources of their political institutions been sufficiently considered. The West is a rich museum of political forms and experimentations that will reward study.—Turner's *The West as a Field for Historical Study in the Annual Report of the American Historical Association*, 1896, Vol. I, p. 285.]

In the political history of Iowa the decennium from 1836 to 1846 presents the successive stages of the growth, the organization, and the triumphs of a political party which during this period was in the ascendancy in national affairs. Likewise it illustrates the evolution of the political ideas and methods of a frontier community into those of a body politic with all the departments and machinery of a State government. Various States through their emigrants contributed to the stock of political ideas, principles, and methods of the people of Iowa Territory; while throughout this period the National government, through the power of its patronage and its appropriations, was nurturing its political ward in the principles and creed of the party in power. Territorial politics, therefore, becomes a detail as well as a background in the National picture of these ten years of American political history.

¹The facts in this article are to a considerable extent based upon material collected by Professor Benj. F. Shambaugh for a documentary history of political parties in Iowa. For a parallel article on the Whigs, see the writer's *The History and Principles of the Whigs of the Territory of Iowa* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. V, No. 1, p. 46.

When the Iowa District became a part of the original Wisconsin Territory its area included the present State of Iowa, Minnesota and parts of North and South Dakota, and moreover its population was then increasing faster than that east of the Mississippi River. Governor Henry Dodge, of Wisconsin Territory, after assuming his duties ordered without delay a census to be taken of Du Buque and Demoine counties, which at that time comprised the Iowa District. The census returns gave to Du Buque County a population of 4274 and to Demoine County a population of 6257.² On September 9, 1836, Governor Dodge issued a proclamation apportioning to Du Buque County five Representatives and three members of the Council and to Demoine County seven Representatives and three members of the Council and designating October 10, 1836, as the time for an election of Representatives, members of the Council, and a Delegate to Congress.³

The proclamation of Governor Dodge for the first election in the Iowa District called forth a large number of announcements of candidates for the various offices, from Delegate to Congress to constables. The *Galena* (Ill.) *Gazette* in September, 1836, contained the announcements of Col. George W. Jones and Moses Meeker who were aspiring to represent the Territory of Wisconsin at Washington.⁴ The Whigs, realizing their minority, began to nominate candidates for the various offices under such deceptive titles as "no party men", "fence men", etc. But the Democrats at once penetrated these masquerading tactics and issued the following call, which gives an excellent account of the political feeling then existing:—

² Shambaugh's *The First Census of the Original Counties of Dubuque and Demoine*, pp. 45, 82

³ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 50.

⁴ *Du Buque Visitor*, Vol. I, No. 19, September 14, 1836.

To the Democrats of Du Buque County:

An important election is about to be held for the choice of Councilmen and Representatives in the Legislative Assembly of this new Territory. At such an important epoch as the first election for legislative officers for this vast scope of country, it is not proper that the Democracy of this county should stand idle, with their arms folded.—The price of liberty is eternal vigilance. The character of the first Legislative Assembly will have an important bearing upon the future political prospects of the States that will be formed from this Territory. The enemies of the people are always on the alert. They are always ready and anxious to plant their noxious principles wherever they will take root. Let not the Democracy of the county be stigmatized as too dull to apprehend their rights, or too indolent to maintain them. But, fellow citizens, be not deceived by hollow-hearted professions of friendship. We have been told that all who cry Father! Father! shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven; neither shall those who cry "*Democracy*" and "*the People*" be considered as genuine disciples of Jackson and Jefferson. There are those who to effect a temporary object, may seem to adopt our principles, although they are at variance with their past conduct. Trust them not, they have clothed themselves with the lion's skin, but elect them to office, and they will show by their braying what they are. You hear a great deal said, fellow-citizens, about "no party men"—that the citizens of this Territory have nothing to say in politics—and that the question should not be raised at the coming election. These are but the acts and snares and stratagems of a wily enemy. Examine the list of candidates offered. How many of them do you recognize as your political friends,—who stood by Jackson in "days of panic," and good wishes now are for the success of the Democratic candidates, Van Buren and Johnson? Depend upon it those who are not for us are against us. "No party men" and "fence men" are always against the Democratic party—and we had better have an open enemy than a pretended friend.

It is well known that a large majority of the citizens of this Territory are Democrats, friends of Jackson and Van Buren, and it is highly important that the majority should have something to say in the choice of public officers. They can only effect their object by union and concert of action among themselves. In union

there is strength and victory. But if we permit our enemies to retain the vantage ground which they have assumed,—if we suffer our strength to be frittered away by casting our votes in the dark for candidates with whose principles we are unacquainted, and without any understanding amongst ourselves, we shall ensure the election of a majority of our political opponents.

For the purpose therefore of ensuring concert and union among themselves the DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICANS of Du Buque County are invited to meet at the cabin of Mr. Miller, at the mouth of Bee Branch on Cooley, near Samuel Hulitt's, on the 26th day of Sept. (inst.) at 10 o'clock A. M., for the purpose of taking the necessary steps preparatory to the next general election in this Territory.⁵

It had been hoped that the past services of George W. Jones would entitle him to a unanimous election. But a few Whigs were willing to administer a measure of partisan politics to the infant Territory. In the campaign lasting hardly a month the past records and capabilities of Jones and Meeker were paraded for comparison. Personal and local considerations, however, such as the location of county seats, internal improvements, and a discussion of the various claims of Burlington, Belmont, Du Buque, and Madison for the capital of the Territory constitute the principal record of the first political activity in Iowa.

The popularity of Col. G. W. Jones was general throughout the Territory. It was he whose efforts had secured the passage of the Act of April 20, 1836, establishing the original Territory of Wisconsin, and the voters generally believed that his election was necessary to secure the best interests of the young Territory in matters of National legislation.

In the election of October 10, 1836, the returns showed that out of a total vote of 4218, Col. Jones had been elected by a majority of 2826. In the Iowa District, Meeker had

⁵ *Du Buque Visitor*, Vol. I, No. 20, September 21, 1836.

received but 57 votes. In Iowa County⁶ Meeker had a majority of five votes which was explained by the *Belmont Gazette* as follows: "A temporary excitement with regard to the seat of government was made to operate against him (Jones); gratuitous and unfounded reports of his being interested in a particular place were circulated and to this, and this alone, is to be ascribed his loss of votes".⁷

The next political contest in the Iowa District took place on July 10 of the next year. On the death of Hosea T. Camp, a Representative from Du Buque County, Governor Dodge, on May 31, 1837, issued a proclamation calling for a special election to fill the vacancy.⁸ At a meeting on June 17, 1837, in response to a call for a meeting of the Democratic citizens of Du Buque County, John Parker was nominated to succeed Camp, and two weeks later in a Democratic journal he set forth his views on various public questions.⁹ On June 24 Alexander W. McGregor¹⁰ also launched his candidacy for the office in a long letter in the *Iowa News*. The election returns showed that McGregor was the successful candidate by 138 votes.¹¹

One year's experience under the laws of Wisconsin Territory had demonstrated that it was impossible to secure their proper and adequate administration in the Iowa District. The extent of the Territory, its geographical posi-

⁶ Iowa County comprised an area in Wisconsin Territory east of the Mississippi River. It had been established in 1829 by an act of the Territory of Michigan.

⁷ Strong's *History of Wisconsin Territory*, pp. 221, 222.

⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 59.

⁹ *Iowa News*, Vol. I, Nos. 4, 5, June 24, July 1, 1837.

¹⁰ For the career of Alexander W. McGregor in the Territory of Iowa see Parish's *The Bribery of Alexander W. McGregor* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. III, No. 3, p. 384.

¹¹ *Iowa News*, Vol. I, No. 8, July 22, 1837.

tion, the number and increase of the population, the difficulty of securing adequate administration in the courts of justice, and the prospect of losing political prestige and distinction by the possible removal of the seat of government from Burlington to Madison¹² had combined in creating a desire on the part of the people of the Iowa District for a separate Territory.

Du Buque County took the lead in the movement by appointing, on October 13, 1837, twenty-one delegates to attend a Territorial Convention in Burlington.¹³ Assembling on November 6, this Convention held a three days session at which all the seven counties of the Iowa District were represented. Three committees were appointed to memorialize Congress: a committee on Preëmptions, a committee on the division of the Territory, and one on the Missouri Boundary. The first and second committees reported on November 25 and commended highly the services of Governor Dodge and Delegate George W. Jones. Throughout these reports there is shown a patriotism, a foresight, and an intelligence that are highly commendatory of the settlers of early Iowa.¹⁴

From Burlington there issued in the first half of the year 1838 numerous announcements of candidates for the office of Delegate to Congress and for Representative, the terms of the incumbents of which were, by the Organic Act of April 20, 1836, to expire this year. The announcement of Col. George W. Jones as a candidate for Delegate was preceded by that of William W. Chapman for the same honor; while Thomas P. Burnett's announcement arrived

¹² By an act of the Legislative Assembly of Wisconsin Territory of December 3, 1836, the seat of government was to be located temporarily at Burlington until March 4, 1839, or until the public buildings at Madison should be completed.—*Laws of Wisconsin*, 1836, p. 49.

¹³ *Iowa News*, Vol. I, No. 20, October 14, 1837.

¹⁴ *Iowa News*, Vol. I, No. 23, November 25, 1837.

on June 13.¹⁵ Congress, however, had considered the memorials from the Burlington Convention of November 6-8; and on June 12, 1838, President Van Buren signed the act which on July 4 was to establish the Territory of Iowa and provide for a new set of officers for the newly created Territory.

During the two years of its inclusion within the original Territory of Wisconsin there had been no definitely organized political parties within the original Territory of Wisconsin. Nevertheless the pioneers—from the Tennessean whose politics was "Old Hickory" to the man from the granite hills of Vermont who had worshipped at the shrines of Webster and Clay—had brought from their various homes political methods and a fairly well defined political philosophy. The two years from 1836 to 1838 furnish, therefore, the starting point for the expression of the political instincts of our pioneer fathers and for the creation and development of party machinery during the eight years of the Territorial period which followed.

Political activity in the Iowa District in 1838 was quickened by its contiguity to the Territory east of the Mississippi River. A meeting of Democratic citizens in Navarino, Brown County, in May, 1838, had issued an address stating the principles of Democracy and urging the organization of the Democratic party in the Territory. "Let the party be organized throughout this wide Territory", ran the report, "to meet the emergency as becomes the descendants of those patriotic spirits which achieved and bequeathed to us the blessings of liberty, and like them to stand ready to sacrifice their all upon the altar of freedom."¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Fort Madison Patriot*, Vol. I, Nos. 3, 8, 9, April 18, May 30, June 13, 1838. This was a Whig journal published from March 24, 1838, to September 2, 1838, by James G. Edwards, at Fort Madison.

¹⁶ *Iowa News*, Vol. I, No. 49, May 26, 1838.

Following in the echoes of this address came a large number of announcements for the various offices of the new Territory. Henry Eno, from Lee County, aspired to a seat in the Council; James Davis declared his candidacy for Delegate to Congress;¹⁷ and on the same day Peter H. Engle launched his candidacy for the same high office. *The Fort Madison Patriot*, in an extra issue on September 2, contained the announcements of seven candidates for Congress, two candidates for the Council, and nine aspirants for the House of Representatives.¹⁸

No systematic campaign developed and the issues again centered largely about the questions of locating county seats, temperance, and internal improvements. The Whigs, who had everything to gain and little to lose in partisan activity, were largely responsible for the partisan politics which appeared in the campaign.

The election of September 10, 1838, in which sixteen counties participated, gave the following number of votes to the several candidates for Delegate to Congress: William W. Chapman (Democrat), 1490; Peter H. Engle (Democrat), 1454; Benjamin F. Wallace, the candidate with the strongest Whig leaning, 913; David Rorer (Democrat), 605; L. Taliafarro, 3; Isaac Lefler, 2; William Wallace, 3; H. Craighton, 1; and John Foley, 1.¹⁹ The history of the First Legislative Assembly shows that the complexion of that body was Democratic.

The Whigs derived in the next few months a new stimulus for partisan activity from the various political appointments by Governor Robert Lucas and from the bestowal of

¹⁷ *The Fort Madison Patriot*, Vol. I, Nos. 10, 13, June 27, July 25, 1838.

¹⁸ *The Fort Madison Patriot, Extra*, September 2, 1838.

¹⁹ Election returns as found among the Archives in the Historical Department at Des Moines.

political patronage by the Legislative Assembly. Nevertheless, *The Iowa Patriot*, the leading journal of Whig sentiments, said timidly: "We know that the Governor is opposed to carrying national politics into the Legislature, and so are we, and shall be until this ceases to be a Territory. Should opposition to the Administration develop it will cut off our supplies from Washington." It also ventured the warning that a partisan election would destroy the harmony and concord which would be necessary to secure the admission of Iowa to Statehood. It pointed out the evils of strenuous partisanship in Illinois and the Territory of Wisconsin to show that an absence of partisan contests would ensure the election of the best men.²⁰

In this year (1839) an election for Delegate to Congress took place which was as unnecessary as it was illegal. It appears that on January 25, 1839, Governor Robert Lucas had approved "An Act providing for and regulating General Elections in this Territory."²¹ A careless and bungling drafting or printing of the statute resulted in a great discrepancy in the first section between the printed law and the bill as it was signed by Governor Lucas. The following extract from the Governor's annual message of November 5, 1839, shows this feature.

The original enrolled bill signed by the presiding Officers of both branches of the Legislative Assembly, approved by the Executive, and deposited in the Secretary's office, in the clause relating to Delegate to Congress, reads as follows: "An election for Delegate to Congress, for members of the Council, and County recorder, shall take place on the first Monday in August next—and forty, and on the same day in every second year thereafter." The printed copy is made to read "An election for Delegate to Congress, for members of the Council, and County Recorder, shall take place on the first Monday of August, *Eighteen hundred* and forty, and on

²⁰ *The Iowa Patriot*, Vol. I, No. 4, June 27, 1839.

²¹ *Laws of Iowa*, 1839, p. 185.

the same day in every second year thereafter." Thus we find the word "*next*" when it occurs after the word "*August*" in the original enrolled bill omitted, and the words ["*Eighteen hundred*"] that are not in the original roll interpolated in the printed copy.²²

By the provisions of the Organic Act the term of the Delegate to Congress was two years and the term of William W. Chapman, who had been elected on September 10, 1838, would, therefore, not expire until 1840. Nevertheless, there is evidence that Francis Gehon, from Dubuque County, relying upon the Governor's version of the first section of the Act of January 25, 1839, had made an aggressive campaign for the office of Delegate to Congress. Governor Lucas as an additional step to these unnecessary and extra-legal proceedings issued, on October 1, 1839, a proclamation stating that in the August election Francis Gehon had received 843 votes, William W. Chapman 24, and Joseph M. Robinson 13, and declaring that Gehon was duly elected Delegate to Congress.²³ The *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* was content to express its mirth over this proclamation in exclamations.²⁴ Of course this election was null and void and Gehon never had any more claims to the office of Delegate to Congress than had the Governor's house servant.²⁵

²² Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa, 1838-1841*, p. 184.

²³ Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa, 1838-1841*, p. 159.

Some thought that the Governor's proclamation was in accordance with the Act of Congress of March 3, 1839, amendatory of the Organic Act, the second section of which declared "That the term of service of the present delegate for said territory of Iowa shall expire on the 27th day of October, 1840; and the qualified electors of said territory may elect a delegate to serve from the said 27th of October to the fourth day of March thereafter." From this it is seen, however, that the Act of Congress neither created a vacancy nor called for an election for the year 1839.

²⁴ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. I, No. 19, October 10, 1839.

²⁵ For a detailed account of this case see the writer's article on *The Election of Francis Gehon in 1839* in THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. V, No. 4, p. 534.

The year 1840 was a time of delirium for the political parties which was general throughout the United States. For three long years the ill-fated Van Buren had been tossed like a political derelict upon the waves of financial distress and disaster which had followed in the wake of the stormy financial legislation under the autocratic reign of "Old Hickory". The Whig party was quick to take advantage of the financial and industrial depression by instituting a campaign the like of which is not recorded in the annals of American politics. Clay, Webster, and Winfield Scott were cast aside as unavailable candidates for the presidency, and the choice finally fell to William Henry Harrison, the hero of many battles, whom the Whigs without any platform and without any declaration of policy²⁶ called from his Ohio home to lead the conglomerate Whig hosts to victory.

The campaign was marked by parades and processions, songs and speeches. Webster, Clay, Corwin, Preston, Prentiss, and many others formed the galaxy of brilliant speakers who addressed the cheering throngs of Whigs. The Democrats in vain argued and protested and demanded a sane discussion of public issues. But nothing could stem the tide; and the election returns showed that Harrison and Tyler had been harangued, paraded, and sung into office and that the Jackson dynasty was at an end.

Although the Territory of Iowa had no voice in the national election, symptoms and effects of the noisy excitement were evident in the young Territory. William W. Chapman, the Delegate in Congress, wrote from Washington advising the people of the Territory to desist from a political warfare until after the adjournment of Congress. Political measures would tend to defeat measures of the

²⁶ "In presenting General Harrison for President the Whig party had torn a page from the Jackson text-book."—Schouler's *History of the United States*, Vol. IV, p. 336.

greatest interest to the Territory. "I cannot", he added, as reported in a Whig journal, "permit my name to be submitted to any Convention of a partisan character."²⁷ Yet two months later the friends of Van Buren held a meeting to appoint delegates to a Van Buren Convention to be held at Burlington on July 9, 1840.²⁸

Abuse and denunciation of the Democrats for their partisan activity issued from the Whigs who at the same time were holding Conventions and meetings, nominating candidates, issuing addresses, forming the Tippecanoe clubs of Burlington and Muscatine, and assuming their role in the theatrical demonstrations of this year. A Territorial Convention of Whigs met at Bloomington, called itself a "Congress of the People", and adopted resolutions on the issues of the campaign. A thorough organization was effected, and Mr. Alfred Rich was nominated for Delegate to Congress.²⁹ James Churchman of Dubuque County, announced his candidacy³⁰ on April 30, and the Democrats in their Convention of August 19, 1840, nominated Augustus C. Dodge. On July 16, Philip Viele, of Lee County, had announced his candidacy³¹ which he withdrew when Rich became the regular nominee of the Whigs. On August 20 appeared the announcement of the Democratic incumbent of the office, William W. Chapman.³²

A strict party alignment of the voters took place this year and both parties became thoroughly organized by the appointment of vigilance, correspondence, and central committees, and by the formation of clubs. The *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* declared that Dodge was holding a lucra-

²⁷ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. I, No. 47, April 23, 1840.

²⁸ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 4, June 25, 1840.

²⁹ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 10, August 6, 1840.

³⁰ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. I, No. 48, April 30, 1840.

³¹ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 7, July 16, 1840.

³² *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 12, August 20, 1840.

tive office under the Federal government, and but for that he never would have come to Iowa. Rich, it urged, would oppose the suicidal policies of the Van Buren administration and combat a "union of the sword and the purse."³³ The effect of the great campaign upon the voters of Iowa Territory is noticeable in the election of October 5, 1840, at which Dodge received a majority of only 615 votes over Alfred Rich, which caused the *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* to complain that hundreds and hundreds of Whigs had voted for Dodge out of personal and local considerations.³⁴ The elections to the House of Representatives resulted in some advantages for the Whigs, while in the elections to the Council they gained one additional member which gave them control of that branch of the Legislative Assembly.

The history of the political parties in Iowa Territory becomes linked in this year (1840) with the question of securing the admission of Iowa as a State. A brief review of the movement is necessary to give a perspective of the political agitation of this year. A Territory has always been considered as a temporary form of government—as a stage in the evolution of a frontier community to Statehood. For some time the desire for Statehood had existed among the citizens of the Territory of Iowa. Governor Robert Lucas had given expression to it on November 5, 1839, in his second annual message to the Legislative Assembly;³⁵ editorials had been written upon the question and the subject had occupied the attention of the Council;³⁶ in the extra session of 1840 Governor Lucas referred to the committee on Territories in the National House of Representatives which had made a report favorable to the admis-

³³ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 10, August 6, 1840.

³⁴ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 22, October 29, 1840.

³⁵ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 95.

³⁶ Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, pp. 146-150.

sion of Iowa, and again urged action by the Legislative Assembly.³⁷ In accordance with his recommendations that body, in July, had passed "An Act to provide for the expression of the opinion of the people of the Territory of Iowa as to taking preparatory steps for their admission into the Union."³⁸

Official returns of the vote on the Constitution question indicated an overwhelming defeat of the proposition for which its supporters had mustered 937 votes and its opponents 2907. Linn County alone gave a vote in favor of the Constitution—the vote stood 81 to 39. In the same county the vote for Delegate stood: Dodge, 164; Rich, 91.³⁹ A comparison of the total vote on the Constitution question with the total votes cast for Delegate—4838 for Dodge and 4315 for Rich—shows clearly that the proposition was not fully understood by the voters and that interest in it was diluted by the excitement of the campaign for the various candidates.

The old Jacksonian maxim, that to the victors belong the spoils, served in 1841 to vitalize the politics of the young Territory. The Legislative Assembly controlled by the Democrats was careful to give the legislative printing and binding to its partisan friends. The Whig journals resenting this, charged that the Locofoco members had banded themselves into a partisan organization and had resorted to every malice, slander, and oppression of the Whig members.⁴⁰ It was charged in this year by the *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* that the *Bloomington Herald*, the *Burlington Gazette*, and the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* (the leading Demo-

³⁷ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 145.

³⁸ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 135.

³⁹ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 27, December 3, 1840.

⁴⁰ *Iowa Standard*, Vol. I, No. 15, January 29, 1841.

cratic journals in the Territory) had entered into an "unholy alliance" to secure a monopoly of all the public printing. The *Bloomington Herald* resented this charge and declared that it was aimed at Ver Plank Van Antwerp, the editor of the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* which at this time was enjoying the largest share of the legislative printing.⁴¹ On the other hand President Harrison, on March 25, 1841, had removed Governor Lucas whose steady and firm purpose had guided the Territory for nearly three years⁴² and had appointed his former political ally and military comrade John Chambers, of Kentucky, and a new list of Whig Territorial officers was sent to the capital at Iowa City.

A lack of issues and a spirit of organization pervaded the politics of the year 1841. "We were overthrown but not defeated in 1840", declared a meeting of Democrats in the Council chamber early in January. Serious alarm was expressed over Harrison's election and over Webster's elevation to the portfolio of Secretary of State. The public career of Henry Clay was severely condemned while they reviewed with honest pride the public services of the Delegate to Congress, Augustus C. Dodge. After appointing a Central Committee of five and providing for a Committee of Correspondence in every county, the meeting recommended the holding of a Territorial convention of the party early in June to nominate a candidate for Delegate to Congress.⁴³

County after county was thoroughly organized and delegates were chosen to attend the June convention at Iowa City.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the untimely death of President Harri-

⁴¹ Printed in the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 3, December 18, 1841.

⁴² Parish's *Robert Lucas*, pp. 264, 265.

⁴³ *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. I, No. 13, January 22, 1841. The *Herald* was a Democratic paper under the editorship of John B. Russell and Thomas Hughes.

⁴⁴ *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. I, Nos. 18, 26, 30, 39, February 26, April 23, May 21, July 23, 1841.

son had elevated to the presidency John Tyler, whose title to membership in the Whig party had never been clear. The disappointment and sorrow of the Whigs over this event had pressed the various factions into some degree of coherency, but the final breach between Tyler and Congress rejuvenated all the hopes of the Democrats and gave fresh zeal to their preparations for the Iowa City Convention.

Democrats from every county seem to have been present at this Convention, which was marked by hope and warm enthusiasm. The 103 delegates formed themselves into a long procession and marched through the streets of the young capital, carrying a huge banner on one side of which was inscribed in large letters: "Thomas H. Benton, The friend of the poor man, the western squatter and champion of equal rights. Against Henry Clay the denouncer of the pioneer of the West, the speculator's friend and supporter of foreign dictation." On the reverse side ran an equally impressive text: "Democracy — our Country, against Daniel Webster and the Hartford Convention."

In the Convention strong resolutions were adopted charging that the Whig administration was corrupt and attacking the banking system of the Whigs in the usual terms. Governor Chambers, too, was denounced as an enemy of the West and of the western settler. Augustus C. Dodge, whom they commended for his untiring and patriotic services in behalf of Iowa Territory, was given a unanimous renomination for Delegate to Congress. The *Iowa Standard*, a Whig organ, which gave an account of these proceedings, denied the charges in these resolutions and declared warmly that the voters would rebuke the authors of them at the polls.⁴⁵

Meanwhile the Whigs had again selected Alfred Rich to

⁴⁵ *Iowa Standard*, Vol. I, No. 29, June 10, 1841.

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make the race against Augustus C. Dodge for Delegate to Congress.⁴⁶ No issues developed in the campaign and the contest was waged over the records and qualifications of the candidates who conducted a speech-making canvass. The election returns of August 6, 1841, indicated that the Whigs had lost one Representative to the Democrats, who now controlled the House by a majority of six votes. For Dodge 4838 votes were cast, which was a majority of 523 votes over the Whig candidate.

Again the question of the formation of a State government was asserting itself. The *Iowa Standard*, inspired by the Whig triumph of 1840, had expressed in February, 1841, the hope that Iowa Territory would be a State in 1844 and that the Whigs of Iowa could therefore have a voice in the presidential election.⁴⁷ After the election of 1841, however, the same journal declared that there was no inducement for the Territory to become a State and that the high interest on farm loans would make additional taxation under a State government impossible.⁴⁸ Governor John Chambers, however, was sincere in his desire to see the admission of Iowa Territory to Statehood, and in his first annual message of December 5, 1841, he referred to the unwillingness of the people to assume the duties and responsibilities of a State government. "But", urged the Governor, "the rapid increase of our population, and the recent legislation of Congress in relation to the future disposition of the proceeds of the sales of the public lands, will present the subject in a new aspect, and may produce a change of public sentiment upon it." He therefore recommended that the question be again submitted to the voters.⁴⁹ Acting on the Governor's recommendation the

⁴⁶ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 50, May 13, 1841.

⁴⁷ *Iowa Standard*, Vol. I, No. 18, February 19, 1841.

⁴⁸ *Iowa Standard*, Vol. I, No. 18, February 19, 1841.

⁴⁹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 252.

Legislative Assembly passed on February 16, 1842, "An act to provide for the expression of opinion of the people of the Territory of Iowa, upon the subject of the formation of a State Constitution and Government, and to enable them to form a Constitution for the State of Iowa."⁵⁰

In anticipation of the passage of this law agitation for Statehood had already begun—an agitation that was to ebb and flow for four years from the polls to the President's chair. National issues now become subordinated to the one of Statehood upon which the political parties formulate their principles, nominate their candidates, and wage their campaigns. It is in these four eventful years that the environment of the pioneers, their political instincts, and their history and traditions were giving expression to a political product the blessings and enjoyment as well as the evils of which their posterity was to inherit and to judge. The march of the Territory to Statehood was free from many of the thorns that have marked the path of other Territories seeking the same goal. Unlike Indiana, the transformation was not darkened by the discussion of the issues of slavery; more fortunate than Missouri, the admission of Iowa was not for years a bone of contention in Congress; and there have been no bloody wars or "Lecompton Constitutions" in the constitutional history of Iowa.

Political as well as partisan activity this year received an impetus from the Statehood question, which in turn was treated to its quota of partisan eloquence and sophistry; the political soundness of the plan was given intelligent discussion; the commercial and industrial benefits of Statehood were debated; considerations of liberty, local pride, and self-government occupied the disputants; and

⁵⁰ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 137.

the financial aspects of the question were always an object of contention.

From the Whigs there issued the objection that the frontier life and the immaturity of the Territory tended to make the people incapable of managing successfully the affairs of a State government at this time. Ralph P. Lowe, a prominent Whig, even urged that the change would be undesirable because there really were no eminent men in the Territory fitted for the tasks of State government.⁵¹ The Democrats resented this argument with a show of wounded pride and resentment. "Are the people of Iowa all aliens, minors and women?" asked the *Lee County Democrat*. "Are they laboring under any mental or moral incapacity? Are they chargeable with a want of inexperience in the duties and obligations of freemen? . . . Are they not also equally qualified to discharge the duties of representatives and legislators now as while they were citizens of the States? Whence then the great danger of unwise, extravagant, or disastrous legislation?"⁵²

Statehood, argued the Democrats, would give Iowa the right and the privilege of selecting its own officers who would then be responsible to the people. The Territorial appointments of the President were bringing hither a crowd of office seekers who knew little about the people and their legislative needs and cared less. Patriotism, pride, and love for independence should make the people willing to submit to the additional tax of about "three bits per head", urged the *Burlington Gazette*. "The right to choose our public servants", continued this journal, "should be held sacred—not to be frittered away or surrendered up or bartered off for any consideration whatever. Such an idea must not be countenanced, or even thought of for a

⁵¹ Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, p. 167.

⁵² Printed in the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 8, January 22, 1842.

moment, if we would preserve a just tone of feeling upon the subject, and transmit it unimpaired to posterity."⁵³

"Our present condition as a Territory", wrote Ver Plank Van Antwerp, the Democratic editor of the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, "is that of colonial vassalage, which is at all times humiliating (to say the least). We approach the General Government in the attitude of a suppliant, beg like a slave for the crumbs that may perchance, be left after a division of the loaf amongst the States, and at the same time, Iowa is pouring her thousands into the public Treasury, from the sale of the lands within her limits, and what does she get in return? The unparalleled influx of population in our Territory, for the last few months would seem to call on us, in a voice of thunder, to depend upon the paternal care of the Government for support and patronage no longer. The little States of Rhode Island and Delaware are each represented in Congress by two Senators and a Representative, whilst Iowa, possessing at this moment a greater population than either has no vote in either house."⁵⁴

The commercial gain to result from Statehood was widely discussed by the Democratic press. "Year after year do the earnest representations of our legislature and the efforts of our Delegate pass unheeded while at the same time millions upon millions are engulfed in the almost fathomless depths of some arm of the Atlantic. Breakwaters are constructed, harbors are improved; or perhaps scooped out of the solid earth, for the benefit of Eastern commerce, while the interests of the West, and particularly those of this Territory, seem entirely overlooked. . . . Appropriations to facilitate the navigation of our rivers are not only few and far between, but trifling in importance compared

⁵³ Printed in the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 28, June 11, 1842.

⁵⁴ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 26, May 28, 1842.

with those that are annually lavished upon the Atlantic frontier or even upon the lake coast." Because the Territory of Iowa had no political weight in Congress the pleadings of Augustus C. Dodge remained unheeded. "The Rapids [of the Mississippi River] will never be improved until Iowa becomes a State."⁵⁵

Immigration, too, was connected with the benefits of Statehood. "The adoption of a State government", reasoned the *Burlington Gazette*, "would at once cause an unparalleled influx of immigration. Thousands otherwise desirous of making their homes with us are deterred by what they deem the unsettled state of things incident to a Territorial government. . . . Whatever may be the cause, it is certain that the new States have generally, if not always, for a time at least, increased in population ten times as fast as while they were Territories. Such has been the case with neighboring States; and such too, will be the case with ours."⁵⁶

To compel the people to submit to another vote on the question of Statehood the Whigs declared both premature and unfair. They pointed to the election of October 5, 1840, at which the Convention proposition had been defeated by 1970 votes and maintained that the vote meant a decisive settlement of the question. To this the Democrats replied that the brief interval between the passage of the Act of July 31, 1840, and the election on October 5, 1840, had not allowed the public mind to become versed in the subject sufficient to express itself fairly. Little effort for or against the question was then shown; it was so lukewarm that a large and populous district made no returns on the election.⁵⁷ In July at a barn-raising in Des Moines

⁵⁵ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 29, June 18, 1842.

⁵⁶ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 31, July 2, 1842.

⁵⁷ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 34, July 23, 1842.

County at which forty-seven men were present a vote was taken which showed that forty-three were in favor of Statehood and only four against it.⁵⁸ The *Pennsylvania Argus* said: "If the citizens of that young and beautiful Territory are as intelligent and regardful of their *true interests* as they are represented to be, we will not hesitate in saying that the Convention party will prevail by a large majority." These facts, the Democrats argued, called for a resubmission of the question.⁵⁹

The Whigs knew very well that in the event of Statehood all the State offices would be occupied by Democrats. Actuated by this knowledge they recurred again and again to the argument which appealed to every tax-payer and which from time immemorial has served to defeat measures of legislation—the argument of increased taxation, which the State government would entail when the salaries of the officers of the Territory, the legislative printing, and all the expenses incident to Territorial legislation would cease to be paid from the coffers at Washington.

Rigid economy was promised by the Democrats in reply to this objection. The Governor's salary could be reduced to \$1000, that of the Attorney General to \$400, and \$600 would be sufficient for the State Treasurer. Then, too, some of the Territorial offices could, in the interest of economy, be abolished. The following from the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* is an excellent representation of the arguments of the Democratic press as they were marshalled against the Whig shibboleth of increased taxes:—

The State government will cost \$30000.00 per annum. One half of this amount, at least, we shall receive back in ready cash—the proceeds of the five per cent on the land sales—so that the actual cost of supporting the government should be estimated at not more than

⁵⁸ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 33, July 16, 1842.

⁵⁹ Quoted in the *Lee County Democrat* and printed in the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 33, July 16, 1842.

\$15000.00 per annum. The improvement of the Rapids, which will result from our admission, will benefit us \$200,000.00 annually; and the increase in value of the 500,000 acres of land will be at least \$250,000.00 more, making \$450,000 per annum which will result from our becoming a State. This will be fifteen times the amount of the cost, to say nothing of the possible receipt of the ten per cent under the distribution act. Well may we say, then, that the price paid for the support of a State government will be only seed sown of which a bountiful harvest will result.⁶⁰

A final appeal to the voters, in a long and detailed statement of the Democratic arguments, appeared just before the election and a résumé of the advantages of Statehood was presented. "It would aid us to effect a new purchase of Indian lands. It would aid us to procure an appropriation to improve the navigation of the Mississippi over or around the Rapids, by canal or otherwise. It would aid us in effecting a permanent settlement of our southern boundary question. It would aid us in placing under the immediate control of the State government all conflicting clauses of boundary and title."⁶¹

Meanwhile the Democrats were engaged also in perfecting their election and campaign machinery, nominating candidates for the Legislative Assembly, and waging war upon Henry Clay. On January 8, 1842, the twenty-seventh anniversary of the Battle of New Orleans, a large and determined meeting of Democrats was held in the Council chamber of the Capitol at Iowa City. A committee of eleven was appointed by President Francis Gehon. With patriotic pride they referred to the triumph of "Old Hickory" at New Orleans, President Tyler was thanked for his vetoes of the bank bills passed by Congress, and in a note of warning they referred to the broken promises of the Whigs and to the removal of Democratic officers in Iowa.

⁶⁰ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 30, June 25, 1842.

⁶¹ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 34, July 23, 1842.

Praise was extended for Senator Thomas H. Benton, of Missouri, in the following resolution:—"The Democrats of Iowa are especially grateful to him for his able and uniform support of Pre-Emption laws, and for his efforts to obtain, for their benefit, a graduation of the price of the public lands." The third resolution reads: "That the Democrats of this Territory still entertain towards Mr. Van Buren, the late patriotic president of the United States, sentiments of the highest respect and friendship for his virtues, his brilliant talents, and his unalterable attachment to Democratic principles—and that while they regret sincerely the martyrdom which he has suffered for the sake of principle, yet they believe that at this time his exile is honorable: for recent elections prove that the people can no longer be blinded by means of such clap traps as '*coon skins*' and '*hard cider*' and the generally absurd paraphernalia which characterized the pipe-laying operations of the unprincipled whig leaders of 1840."

A central committee for the Territory, appointed by the President of the Convention, was made up of the following persons: Pleasant Harris, James P. Carlton, Henry Murray, Henry Felkner, V. P. Van Antwerp, and Curtis Bates. All the counties were requested to appoint each a committee of five to insure the efficient organization of the Democratic party in the Territory.⁶²

All through the forepart of the year 1842 a campaign of real education was carried on. The discussions of the Whigs, however, bear no comparison to those of the Democrats in argument, thoroughness, and sincerity of purpose. Theirs was a campaign of refutation and denial, and it was only their slogan of increased taxes under Statehood that proved to be the impregnable stronghold of the Whig defense. At the election of August 1, 1842, 6825 votes were

⁶² *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 7, January 15, 1842.

cast against the proposition for Statehood, while only 4129 votes were mustered in favor of it. In Johnson, Lee, and Clinton counties the vote was closest, but in every one of the seventeen counties of the Territory the question went down to defeat.⁶³ The people clearly were not yet ready for Statehood and voted for a continuance of the paternal donations from the United States treasury. In the House of Representatives the Whigs gained two new members which left the Democrats a majority of but two in that body. A Democratic organ declared that to the Council seven Whigs, one neutral, and only five Democrats were elected.⁶⁴

It was bad enough for the Democrats to lose the election over the question of Statehood; but greater chagrin and disappointment was felt over the elections to the Legislative Assembly. Local interests in Lee County, disunion, and a mixed ticket in Van Buren, traitors in Muscatine, and bad management and personal animosities in other counties were responsible for the Whig gains. "It is, for the sake of the party", mused the *Bloomington Herald*, "a pity that we were not completely routed—then we would have learned from sad experience, the evil of allowing ourselves to be distracted by light and trivial matters, but as the Whigs have been so long out of power, they will, like the present powers at the Capitol, cut such fantastic shins, as to convince one and all, before their term of office expires, that we have had enough of Whiggery."⁶⁵

The year 1843 was an "off year" in Territorial politics and there is very little that was notable in conventions, candidates, or campaigns. In the Capitol another meeting of Democrats was held on the anniversary of the Battle of

⁶³ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 142.

⁶⁴ *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. II, No. 41, August 12, 1842.

⁶⁵ *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. II, No. 41, August 12, 1842.

New Orleans. Thomas Cox, of Jackson County, was president and the meeting was an occasion for Democratic speeches. The meeting requested the various counties to elect delegates to attend a Democratic Territorial Convention at Iowa City in June for the purpose of nominating a candidate for Delegate to Congress.⁶⁶ Scott County, on April 4, 1843, selected four delegates and commended the services of Augustus C. Dodge.⁶⁷ In the same month the Democratic members of the Legislative Assembly met at the Capitol, appointed a Central Committee for the Territory, and designated committees of organization for each county.⁶⁸ The Democrats of Jackson County extended their thanks to Augustus C. Dodge, "the pioneer of the West, the defender of her interests and her fast and never failing friend."⁶⁹ And so, in the various counties, in conventions and mass meetings faith and undiminished confidence were expressed in the fidelity and ability of Dodge,⁷⁰ who was renominated in the Territorial Convention at Iowa City on June 26, 1843.

Meanwhile the Whigs through various vicissitudes of committee appointments, convention notices, unattended and postponed nominating conventions, unwilling candidates, and forced efforts to create an issue had centered upon William H. Wallace as their candidate against Augustus C. Dodge. With feigned disappointment over the inaction of the Whigs the *Lee County Democrat* said: "It was hoped that in all good feeling, a full, calm and manly discussion of the important questions now dividing the two great parties of the country, would take place during the canvass, and that the people would be well prepared to cast

⁶⁶ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 6, January 14, 1843.

⁶⁷ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 19, April 15, 1843.

⁶⁸ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 21, April 29, 1843.

⁶⁹ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 22, May 6, 1843.

⁷⁰ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 24, May 20, 1843.

their suffrages for the candidates of their choice. The Democrats, however were doomed to disappointment in their wishes."⁷¹

During the months of August and September, 1843, joint debates between Dodge and Wallace were held at Dubuque, Iowa City, and other points. The banking system of the Whigs, the protective tariff question, and Henry Clay's policies in regard to the public lands formed the subjects for the discussions. Dodge was criticised also for securing inadequate financial appropriations for the Territory of Iowa.⁷² Dodge, however, could point to the Congressional appropriation of \$13,421 which his efforts had secured in the previous year for the liquidation of all the legislative expenses of the Territory.⁷³

The campaign, however, lacked life and vigor. The people had had enough of political agitation in 1842; and besides they were too busy at tilling the soil and reaping their harvests to attend conventions, march in political parades, sing campaign doggerel, or to listen to the appeals of candidates for office. In the October election Dodge was re-elected by a majority of 1419 votes over Wallace who received 3372 votes.

A comparison of the votes for Delegate for the years 1842 and 1843 shows that the Democratic vote in this year fell off by only 47 votes while the Whig vote in 1843 was 933 less than in 1842. "It shows that we were *not* beaten by increase of Locofocos, above the increase of Whigs", declared the *Iowa Standard*, "but by Whigs staying at home. . . . The Whigs of the Territory have followed the example of their brethren in many of the States—staid at home to dig potatoes and shuck corn, and left the Locofocos

⁷¹ Quoted in the *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 37, August 19, 1843.

⁷² *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. II, No. 38, August 26, 1843.

⁷³ *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 24, May 14, 1842.

to do the voting."⁷⁴ Whig inaction and mismanagement, furthermore, resulted in a loss of five Representatives to the Democrats.

Early in 1844 both parties were girding themselves for the approaching contest and, although the voters had no voice in the presidential election, the Territory of Iowa this year became an arena which witnessed the contests of the two parties in caucus and convention and the precincts and polls. Buoyed up by the hope of repeating the triumph of 1840, the Whigs began their agitation with energy. Again the Whig forces were rallying around Henry Clay, who was already inspiring the campaign poets, the editorial writers, and the pamphleteers, and capturing delegates and conventions. The Democrats became alarmed, urging that the party organize and rebuke the charges and epithets that Clay had heaped upon the settlers of the West. "The enemies of the great cause of Democracy are in the field, with the coonskin banner of the western slanderer and calumniator of the pioneers of Iowa unfurled, with the mottoes of a *Mammoth National Bank—a ruinous Protective Tariff, to build up Eastern capitalists at the expense of the Western producer,—to distribute the proceeds of the sales of the Public Lands among the States, and thereby in all probability, raise the price of public lands to an enormous price.*"⁷⁵

The formation of Clay clubs in Iowa Territory and the acceleration given the Clay movement provoked from the Democratic press additional censure and criticism upon the "Idol of the West." "Our opponents", warned the *Iowa Capital Reporter*, "have unfurled the banner of *Henry Clay, a National Bank, Protective Tariff, etc., and in*

⁷⁴ *Iowa Standard*, Vol. III, No. 42, October 19, 1843.

⁷⁵ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. III, No. 21, June 1, 1844.

doing so, they have assumed to defend their champion against the just and merited indignation of an insulted and abused class of American citizens, who have been by him denounced as a 'lawless band', or as no better than 'highway robbers.'⁷⁶

A prelude to the political contests of this year had been sounded in the opposition of the Democrats to the National Bank policy of the Whigs. Since the days of Jackson's warfare upon the United States Bank it had been one of the cleavage forces dividing the two great parties. The large crop of "wild cat" banks growing out of Jackson's propagation of financial measures had created a suspicious distrust and quixotic notions in regard to the value of banks in general. The Democrats were still sounding the argument of the unconstitutionality of the Bank, while the Whigs promptly met this argument by quoting from the famous decision in *McCullough vs. Maryland*.⁷⁷

In the Territory of Iowa the Miners' Bank of Du Buque, which had been chartered as early as November 30, 1836, became an issue of partisan discussion, and, on account of local bickerings and bad reports concerning its solvency it had become the target for repeated legislative investigations and numerous attempts to annul its charter.⁷⁸ The financial ruin and wild speculation of these years had caused the bank on March 29, 1841, to formally suspend specie payments. Partisan feeling over the bank was augmented, and in the fifth and sixth Legislative Assemblies, in response to petitions signed by many citizens in various counties, numerous attempts were made to compel the bank to resume specie payments and to revoke its charter. The Whigs, as a rule, in both the House and in the Council protested against the repeal of the charter by the legislative

⁷⁶ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. III, No. 16, March 23, 1844.

⁷⁷ McClain's *Cases on Constitutional Law*, p. 1.

⁷⁸ Merritt's *Early History of Banking in Iowa*, pp. 1-30.

branch of the government, declaring that such an act was a function of the judiciary. The Democrats, in harmony with the notions of the party generally, favored the repeal of the charter and looked upon all banks as institutions fostering fraud and corruption.⁷⁹ On the failure of the Legislative Assembly to revoke the charter of the Miners' Bank, a Democratic journal expressed its censure in the following terms:—

From the commencement of the present session, it is well known the Whig party in the House, without a single exception, have labored with a zeal, and we may say with an ability, in debate and otherwise, to save the shadow of a swindling Bank, that certainly was worthy of a better and holier cause. They could not have fought more manfully and desperately if the whole social fabric of our institutions had been at stake. And for what! To save from a just and merited oblivion, the charter of the swindling and rotten Bank of Dubuque.⁸⁰

Meanwhile the border line between savagery and settlement had retreated to the westward. By the treaty of Governor John Chambers with the Sauk and Fox Indians on October 11, 1842, an immense area had been opened to settlement in May, 1843.⁸¹ At once from the seed-plots of emigration in the East and South there followed in the footsteps of the retreating Red Men the American settler and pioneer, transplanting upon the virgin soil of the Territory the latent germs of political, social, and industrial forces, which under the compelling environment of frontier activity have grown to fruition in our industrial life, in our political institutions, and in our social well-being.

Governor Chambers no doubt was anxious that these incoming settlers should have the benefits and the prestige of Statehood which he had experienced in his own State of

⁷⁹ Merritt's *Early History of Banking in Iowa*, pp. 49, 53, 60, 61.

⁸⁰ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. III, No. 7, January 20, 1844.

⁸¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties*, Vol. II, p. 546.

Kentucky. Perhaps he was actuated by the desire to see Iowa have a vote in the presidential election of 1844 in which the Whigs were hoping that Henry Clay would be the man chosen to lead them from the bondage of Tylerism. On December 4, 1843, in his third annual message the Governor had referred to the phenomenal growth of the population and recommended that the Legislative Assembly pass a law for an election to ascertain the wishes of the people in regard to Statehood, that applications be made to Congress to fix and establish boundaries for the proposed State, and that provision be made for calling a constitutional convention.⁸² The Legislative Assembly responded to these recommendations by passing, on February 12, 1844, an act similar to the one of February 16, 1842. The vote on the question of holding a constitutional convention was to be taken at the township elections in April.⁸³

Again the arguments, the oratory, and the declamations of 1842 were paraded on the political forum.⁸⁴ However, there was now a much greater population and an increased area for settlement, and the presidential campaign gave warmth to the discussion. All the benefits to flow from a condition of Statehood—political prestige and distinction, greater internal improvements, increased immigration, release from “colonial vassalage”, and the financial gains—were once more proclaimed on the stump, in editorial columns, and at political gatherings.

The Whigs again resorted to the argument of increased taxes and protested that the Convention question was forced and premature. “We declare without fear of contradiction, that the people are not prepared, and *cannot* be prepared, at so early a period as the first day of April to

⁸² Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 271.

⁸³ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 143.

⁸⁴ Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, pp. 173, 174.

decide the momentous question of State government or no State government. And we say further, that until Congress now in session shall have completed its business, and the decisions that it may make upon some questions concerning the interests of this Territory that it has before it, shall be generally known, the people cannot make a proper and satisfactory determination of the question of State government."⁸⁵

The elections showed that the Constitutional Convention question had carried by a large majority.⁸⁶ Returns from twenty-one counties showed that only eight counties⁸⁷ gave majorities against the question. The attitude of the public mind had, therefore, changed in favor of taking steps to secure Statehood. The advent of better times, the enormous increase of the Territory in population, the new lands for settlement, and various events transpiring in the Nation had combined in converting a majority of the voters to the proposition of calling a constitutional convention.

By the provisions of the Act of February 12, 1844, delegates to the Constitutional Convention at Iowa City were to be chosen in August of this year. There is evidence of some sincere effort to secure the non-partisan election of these delegates who were to assemble in October.⁸⁸ The *Iowa Capital Reporter* declared that the Whigs who were trying to unite with the Democrats in this election were not sincere. By the month of July each party was nominating its delegates and perfecting its campaign machinery.

⁸⁵ *The Iowa Standard*, Vol. IV, No. 9, February 29, 1844.

⁸⁶ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 148.

⁸⁷ Clayton, Clinton, Dubuque, Delaware, Jones, Linn, Scott, and Muscatine.

⁸⁸ In Johnson County a joint meeting of Whigs and Democrats issued a report, signed by eleven men from each party, which said: "It is our sincere desire that at least the Delegates to the Convention be nominated and elected without party lines, for in what appertains to the Convention from first to last, all men should lay aside every party or personal consideration."—*Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. III, No. 22, June 8, 1844.

After the candidates had been nominated they were subjected to a political catechism or they expressed their views on the proposed Constitution. The term and election of the Governor, the sessions and the powers of the legislature, salaries, the judiciary, and banks were a few of the subjects that called forth discussion from the candidates. The intended prohibition of banks was severely condemned by the Whig journals. "If elected they will unanimously advocate the insertion of a clause in the Constitution forever prohibiting the citizens of the State of Iowa from engaging in banking privileges. This is a subject that should be left just where the Whig candidates for delegacy propose leaving it, that is, *to the good sense of the people of the State*, and this we fervently maintain to be true republican principle."⁸⁹

Again the election resulted in a Democratic triumph. Of the seventy-two delegates chosen the Whigs had elected only twenty-one.⁹⁰ The Democrats were elated over the election and declared that it expressed a full endorsement of their policies and an emphatic repudiation of Henry Clay and the tenets of his party.⁹¹

When the Convention assembled on October 7, 1844, it included many men of experience and ability. Among the Whigs were Samuel H. McCrory, from Johnson County, and Ralph P. Lowe, from Muscatine County, who later sat in the Governor's chair. Foremost of all, on the Democratic side, was ex-Governor Lucas, ripe in political experience and next to the oldest man in the Convention. Other leading Democrats were: Shepherd Leffler, the President

⁸⁹ *The Davenport Gazette*, Vol. III, No. 50, August 1, 1844.

⁹⁰ Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, p. 183. -122

⁹¹ No Representatives or members of the Council were elected this year. Pending the outcome of the efforts to secure the admission of Iowa to Statehood the Legislative Assembly had postponed the election to April 7, 1845.—See *Laws of 1844*, p. 2.

of the Convention; Stephen Hempstead, a subsequent Governor of the State; and ex-Delegate William W. Chapman.⁹²

The first party division in the Convention appeared in the discussions over the question of chartering banks. From the report of the Committee on Incorporations a minority report "That no bank or banking corporation of discount, or circulation, shall ever be established in this state" was signed and presented by Michael O'Brien and Stephen Hempstead—both Democrats.⁹³ On October 19 Mr. Hempstead moved to strike out of the report of the Committee on Corporations the section establishing a bank with branches and to insert the minority report.⁹⁴

Mr. Hempstead was opposed to all banks upon principle and thought they ought to have no existence in the State. Mr. Quinton denounced them as a set of swindling machines, and Mr. Ripley believed that banks had always been a curse to the country and that they were unconstitutional. Mr. Hall said that Banking was a spoiled child and had been nursed and petted until it had been corrupted. He considered the banking system to be useless in this country.⁹⁵ These views give an outline of the crude conceptions of financial institutions as expressed by the more radical delegates of the Democracy.

The Whigs argued that a Constitutional prohibition would tie up the hands of posterity and maintained that the chartering, restriction, or prohibition of banks should rather be left to the votes of the people. The more conservative Democrats, led by ex-Governor Lucas, held to

⁹² Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, Appendix, pp. 403-409.

⁹³ *Journal of the Convention of 1844*, p. 30.

⁹⁴ *Journal of the Convention of 1844*, pp. 89, 90.

⁹⁵ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 68, 70, 72.

these views; and so Mr. Hempstead's amendment went down to defeat.⁹⁶

For several days the discussions continued. Mr. Grant expressed the opinion that the Whigs desired to make the Constitution as odious as possible, so as to defeat it before the people. The Miners' Bank at Dubuque was held up as an example of financial fraud and mismanagement by the more extreme Democrats. Mr. Hall, of Henry County, insisted that the people would find that "a Bank of earth is the best Bank, and the best share, a Plough share." Mr. Hempstead's political economy convinced him that banks of discount were vested with the privilege of living and fattening upon the distresses and misfortunes of their fellowmen; they created no real capital in the country but lived upon the products of the farmer, the miner, and the laborer and they would drive the real money—the specie—from the country.⁹⁷ The conservative Democrats, however, maintained that the question was one of expediency; and, with the help of the Whigs, the article on Incorporations as finally adopted provided that no banking charter could be granted by the Legislature unless the charter had been submitted to the voters and received a majority at a general election.⁹⁸

In the national election, meanwhile, Polk and Dallas had defeated Clay and Frelinghuysen. Elated over their success, the Democrats of Iowa Territory had appointed a committee to arrange for a grand celebration at Iowa City. On December 2, 1844, the Democrats assembled; and in the evening the Capitol and all the offices and residences of the Democrats of the city were illuminated. A grand torch

⁹⁶ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 81.

⁹⁷ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 191, 198, 202.

⁹⁸ *Constitution of 1844*, Article IX, Section 3.

light procession was formed in front of the Capitol, and preceded by flags and a band they marched through the streets of the city. Speeches were delivered and songs sung over the election of Polk and Dallas, and where there had been gloom and disappointment in 1840 there was now encouragement and hope.⁹⁹

Strenuous and numerous political activities were to mark the year 1845. In April the vote on the Constitution of 1844 was to be taken and thirteen members of the Council and twenty-six Representatives were to be chosen. In August a delegate to Congress had to be chosen, and as it proved another vote on the Constitution of 1844 was to be taken.

Political comment and criticism now arose upon the Constitution as it emanated from the Convention on November 1, 1844. Again the Whigs attacked the instrument with objections which were voiced by *The Iowa Standard*. The Constitution mingled unwisely the legislative, popular, and executive powers; it would cause a partisan selection of the officers; the salaries were objectionable; there were too many officers; and the article on the Judiciary was defective.¹⁰⁰ Their knowledge that they would not have a share in the State offices or in the representation at Washington was the parent of most of their objections and gave color to their arguments against its adoption. Their cries of a partisan Constitution and increased taxation also mingled in their chorus of objections.

The Democratic press was conscious of several minor defects in the instrument but generally argued for its adoption. Said the *Iowa Capital Reporter*: "To the im-

⁹⁹ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. I, No. 45, December 14, 1844.

¹⁰⁰ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 208-210.

mense mass of merit which our proposed constitution possesses, we have deemed little comment necessary.—It is recommended by its comprehensiveness and brevity; and those provisions which we have considered as defective, may deceive our expectations, and answer in full, the wishes of the public.—If these are errors, they are easily amended, and the constitution as it is, is far better than a necessity to exist in colonial vassalage. With these views we are determined to give it our decided support, and wish to see its unanimous adoption by the people.”¹⁰¹

Activity in the nomination and election of members of the Legislative Assembly was rather overshadowed by the issue of the Constitution. A favorable vote on the Constitution would mean that a new election for members of the legislature would be held in August. This fact no doubt detracted from the interest in the campaign and election. On March 4, 1845, the Democrats of Mahaska County met and in conformity with other counties perfected an organization. The resolutions opposed a Bank and a Protective Tariff, and favored the annexation of Texas and the occupation of Oregon by the United States. Confidence was expressed in the fidelity and capability of Polk and Dodge and the importance of a favorable vote on the Constitution was again emphasized.¹⁰²

An unexpected event now happened which swelled the ranks of the Whig opponents and gave them a new line of attack. Congress on March 3, 1845, had passed “An Act for the Admission of the States of Iowa and Florida into the Union.” In this act Congress had rejected the boundaries prescribed by the Convention of 1844 and had substituted therefor the “Nicollett Boundaries” which greatly

¹⁰¹ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 225.

¹⁰² *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. IV, No. 9, April 5, 1845.

curtailed the northern and western boundaries of the proposed State.¹⁰³

The news of this restriction by Congress reached Iowa Territory quickly; and with it came a letter from Delegate Augustus C. Dodge, addressed to his constituents. In this communication he reviewed the history of the measure of March 3 and explained its provisions. He strongly urged the acceptance of the new boundaries, closing the letter with the emphatic declaration that "whatever your decision on the first Monday in April next may be, we will not be able hereafter under any circumstances, to obtain *one square mile more* for our new State than is contained within the boundaries adopted by the act of Congress admitting Iowa into the Union."¹⁰⁴

Democrats now became alarmed and many joined with the Whigs in opposing the Constitution. Enoch W. Eastman, Theodore S. Parvin, Shepherd Leffler, who had been President of the Convention which had formed the Constitution, Frederick D. Mills, James W. Woods, and other prominent Democrats canvassed the Territory in March urging the people to reject the Constitution on account of the objectionable boundaries imposed by Congress.¹⁰⁵

The people followed the advice of these speakers and at the election of April 7, the Constitution was rejected by 996 votes.¹⁰⁶ In Des Moines, Louisa, and Dubuque counties the vote against it was especially strong. In the House of Representatives there were now nine Whigs and seventeen Democrats while in the elections to the Council only two Whigs had escaped defeat.

¹⁰³ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 125-128.

¹⁰⁴ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 231-235.

¹⁰⁵ Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 217.

¹⁰⁶ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 179.

A post-election examination of the vote on the Constitution resulted in the following verdict from a Democratic journal:—

The facility for communication throughout the Territory being very inadequate a great portion of our citizens were not in possession of the news [of the Congressional boundaries] until within a few days of the time for taking the vote; and when they did get it, it was, in perhaps a majority of cases, imperfect, tortured and exaggerated. They knew generally, that Congress had altered their boundaries, but we venture to say that a dozen different opinions were entertained with regard to the new boundaries prescribed. . . . Where the news was correctly received, the time was not sufficient for the people to reflect calmly upon the new aspect of affairs and properly digest the subject. . . . The Whig presses, despairing in their efforts to defeat the adoption of our admirable Constitution, by making its intrinsic merits the only issue, seized with avidity upon the means which this state of things offered to them, and dexterously turned them to advantage in the accomplishment of their designs. Inflammatory appeals were made to the people to reject indignantly the conditions of Congress, which were stigmatized as unjust and tyrannical in the extreme. . . . In addition to the above causes, one which has contributed in no small degree to the unexpected result in some sections, and thus jeopardized our Constitution, was a lack of energetic and concerted action on the part of its friends and advocates.¹⁰⁷

Prompted by such considerations the Legislative Assembly on June 10, 1845, passed over the veto of Governor Chambers "An Act to submit to the people the draft of a Constitution, formed by the late Convention."¹⁰⁸ This measure met a determined opposition from the Whigs of the House of Representatives which was expressed in a protest signed by nine Whigs and printed in the journal of that body.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 239-240.

¹⁰⁸ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 180.

¹⁰⁹ *Journal of the House of Representatives, Seventh Legislative Assembly*, pp. 166-170.

Shepherd Leffler, of Des Moines County, had championed the measure in the Council. At the April election of 1844 at which the people had decided in favor of a Convention, the vote could not be regarded in any other light than as a very clear and unequivocal indication of public sentiment in favor of a State government. To refer again to the people the question of a Convention or no Convention, as recommended by Governor Chambers and the Whigs generally, would entail large and at the same time unnecessary expense. "Let the Constitution then go to the people", he said in closing. "If they are in favor of a State government, and satisfied with the provisions of the constitution, give them an opportunity to adopt it. If they are not in favor of a State Government, it will not be much trouble or expense to vote down the constitution. If adopted, let it go to Congress again next winter. Give them another fight for the convention boundaries and if we cannot get them, then let us make the next best bargain that we can."¹¹⁰

On June 11, 1845, the Democratic Territorial Convention met at Iowa City and unanimously renominated Augustus C. Dodge for Delegate to Congress. The resolutions expressed approval of the measures recommended in the first inaugural of President Polk. They were opposed to the United States Bank, and all banks of discount and deposit were regarded as dangerous to the liberties and blighting to the welfare of the people. They commended the action of the Legislative Assembly in the repeal of the Miners' Bank of Dubuque on May 1, 1845. The Protective Tariff was denounced; they approved of the admission of Texas as a State and regarded the title of the United States to the Oregon country as "clear and unquestionable."

The Convention further resolved "That we heartily ap-

¹¹⁰ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 253.

prove of the course of our Delegate in Congress, and recommend him to the people of this Territory, as worthy of their support for re-election." They approved highly of the action of the Legislative Assembly in re-submitting to the people in August the Constitution framed in October, regarding it as "thoroughly Democratic and worthy of their confidence and support."¹¹¹

Two days later, on June 13, 1845, the Whigs assembled at the same place and chose Ralph P. Lowe to oppose Dodge, who was censured for "taking sides with Congress in the mutilation of our Territory", and for sacrificing the best interests of his constituents to the desire to secure his own promotion."¹¹²

During June and July the Constitution again became the vital and engrossing subject in the press, on the political forum, and at political gatherings. The Whigs pointed out and magnified its defects and protested against what they considered the dismemberment of the Territory. During the campaign Mr. Dodge again issued a letter to his fellow-citizens in which he said: "If again sent to Washington as your Delegate, I will go there to carry out your views, opinions, and wishes on this subject, as on all others. The popular feeling has been so clearly and emphatically expressed in relation to the curtailment of our boundaries, as to leave none at a loss to know what it is; and did not my judgment, as it does, tell me that the boundaries called for by the constitution are those best calculated to make Iowa a prosperous State, the duty which a representative owes to those he represents would impel me, were I again called into your service, to devote all my

¹¹¹ *The Davenport Gazette*, Vol. IV, No. 45, July 3, 1845.

¹¹² *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, Vol. VIII, No. 50, June 21, 1845.

time, talents and energies, towards carrying into effect the voice of those for whom I acted."¹¹³

Mr. Lowe's attack on the Congressional record of Dodge on the boundary question drew a return fire from the Democrats in these words: "It is all important that a friend of the constitution should be sent to Congress with it. Mr. Lowe being opposed to the Constitution, and to admission under it, his election would be fatal to our best interest; it would also be viewed as a condemnation of our Delegate, General Dodge, for demanding in the name of one thousand freemen our convention boundaries."¹¹⁴

But the famous Constitution of 1844 was destined to meet defeat once more. In the August election the people rejected it by a majority of 421 votes. The disappointment of the Democrats was keen, and a journal wrote in tones not unmixed with bitter resentment in discussing the causes of the defeat:—

First in the list, stands the pertinacious and wilful misrepresentation of the Whig press relative to the boundaries. . . . The short turn taken by the federal politicians, in charging upon the democratic presses, which have alluded in a spirit of candor, to the pertinacious influence of their fraudulent and dishonest course, a disposition to impeach the intelligence and integrity of the people, is but another proof of their abandoned recklessness. There can be no doubt but that the determined and untiring efforts of our opponents to make the people "believe a lie"—to create the impression that, by adopting the Constitution now, they would accede to the boundaries heretofore prescribed by Congress—has been so far successful in the south and west, where the deepest interest was felt in the boundaries, as to create a division of at least three or four hundred against the constitution.¹¹⁵

For the office of Delegate 14,193 votes were cast, of which

¹¹³ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 258.

¹¹⁴ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. IV, No. 24, July 23, 1845.

¹¹⁵ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. IV, No. 29, August 27, 1845.

Dodge received a majority of 831 over Lowe. When these figures are compared with those for the election of Delegate two years previous—4791 for Dodge and 3372 for Wallace—it shows, after reckoning the increase of voters in two years by immigration, that the Constitution question aroused the full voting strength of the Territory and that it caused great inroads to be made upon the Democratic ranks.

Now, after five or six years of agitation, the Democrats realized that the whole question of Statehood was still before them. But they were neither content nor discouraged. "We were not surprised", a Democratic editor wrote a month after the election, "to find in that most violent and reckless of the Whig prints, the *Standard* of last week, a declaration in favor of remaining a territory, based upon the most short sighted, narrow, penurious, and degrading arguments; and this, notwithstanding that during the canvass, it roundly denied our charge that the Whig press and leaders were secret enemies of admission into the Union. The true position of the Democracy—that of the uniform and consistent friends of State government—which from the first they have occupied, should, and will, be maintained."¹¹⁶

A change in the Governorship of the Territory now took place. President Polk on November 18, 1845, removed Governor John Chambers and appointed in his place James Clarke, a talented Democratic editor of Burlington, who had long been active in urging Statehood and who had been a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1844. In his first annual message Governor Clarke deplored the defeat of the Constitution, referring to the "misrepresentation and mystification" that he believed had much to do in causing its rejection. He further assured the Legisla-

¹¹⁶ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 263.

tive Assembly of his hearty coöperation in any measure looking to the incorporation of Iowa as a State.¹¹⁷

On January 17, 1846, the Legislative Assembly passed "An Act to provide for the election of delegates to a Convention to form a Constitution and a State Government."¹¹⁸ Thirty-two delegates were to be elected in April and were to meet at Iowa City on May 4 to frame a new Constitution.

Realizing their inferiority in numbers, the Whigs at once began to plead for a non-partisan election of the delegates. No caucus, no party, with no bias or constraint but a "People's Convention" was what they desired. The editor of the *Iowa Capital Reporter*, however, wanted no "amalgamation delegates." He would meet the schemes of the Whigs by organizing in every township, county, and district and by nominating the best men.¹¹⁹

County conventions were held in March at which delegates were nominated amid choruses of resolutions commending President Polk and rejoicing at the exit of Tylerism. In Jackson County the Democrats had nominated William Hubbell for delegate;¹²⁰ the Des Moines County Democrats nominated Shepherd Leffler, Enos P. Lowe, and John D. Wright;¹²¹ in Johnson County the nomination was given to Curtis Bates;¹²² and in Jefferson County, William G. Coop and Sulifand S. Ross were chosen by the Democrats.¹²³

A slight eruption of abolition sentiment took place in

¹¹⁷ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 319.

¹¹⁸ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 187.

¹¹⁹ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 1, February 11, 1846.

¹²⁰ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 5, March 11, 1846.

¹²¹ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 7, March 25, 1846.

¹²² *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 5, March 11, 1846.

¹²³ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 7, March 25, 1846.

March in Johnson County. At a meeting nineteen votes were cast, and Asa Calkin was nominated for delegate to the Constitutional Convention which prompted a Democratic editor to remark that "this move looks suspicious and as though there was something rotten in Denmark." At the April election, of the 537 votes cast in Johnson County, Calkin received twenty-one.¹²⁴ In the retrospect of later party history in the State this event is interesting because it contained the germs of a movement which caused disintegration of the Whig party and the defeat of the Democrats in 1854.

The elections in April resulted in the choice of twenty-two Democrats and ten Whigs.¹²⁵ Discussing the result a Democratic organ said: "But for the divisions which arose among our friends in some counties, and the humbugs of which our opponents availed themselves, the Whig strength in the Convention would have been narrowed down to four or five, all told."¹²⁶

In the Convention the question of chartering banks again became the subject of acrimonious debate and extended discussion. But the superior numbers of the Democrats permitted them to incorporate in the fundamental law the following drastic provision: "No corporate body shall hereafter be created, renewed, or extended, with the privilege of making, issuing, or putting in circulation, any bill, check, ticket, certificate, promissory note, or other paper, or the paper of any bank, to circulate as money. The General Assembly of this State shall prohibit, by law, any person or persons, association, company or corporation, from exercising the privileges of banking, or creating

¹²⁴ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, Nos. 8, 10, April 1, 15, 1846.

¹²⁵ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, Appendix, pp. 414-415.

¹²⁶ *Iowa Capital Reporter*, Vol. V, No. 29, April 29, 1846.

paper to circulate as money."¹²⁷ They were careful to forestall many of the objectionable features which had brought defeat upon former Constitutions.

For the third time a campaign was to be waged over a State Constitution. The Whigs once more raised the cry of a party Constitution, but directed the main force of their arguments against the radical section which prohibited banking institutions. "The effect of the article on Incorporations", they declared, "will be to make Iowa the plunder *ground* of all the Banks in the Union."¹²⁸ It would deluge Iowa with worthless bank notes, scrip, and shin-plasters from the neighboring Commonwealths.

The Democrats, however, replied to these arguments in emphatic statements of fact. "The members of the Convention were *doubly* instructed to provide this prohibitory clause against banks—first, by the rejection of the instrument which *did not* prohibit them—and secondly, by the most unequivocal expressions of the people at their primary assemblies and through the ballot box.

"Every democratic convention for the nomination of Delegates, adopted resolutions for their instruction, denouncing banks as intolerable nuisances, and the greatest of public evils; and by most of them it was distinctly declared that they ought to be prohibited. Among the conventions that were held in the territory, we have yet to learn of the first one, Whig or Democratic, which has openly declared in favor of banks. If there has been such expression, from any quarter, it has escaped our notice."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ *Constitution of 1846*, Article IX, Section 1.

¹²⁸ The letter of William Penn Clarke to the electors of Johnson County is a masterly presentation of the Whig arguments against the Constitution of 1846 and is an invaluable historical legacy to the political and constitutional history of Iowa.—Printed in Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, pp. 347-365.

¹²⁹ Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*, p. 345.

Until August 3, 1846, the debate on the Constitution continued unabated. The returns from the twenty-eight counties showed that the people had adopted the Constitution by a majority of 456 votes.¹³⁰ A total of 18,528 votes had been cast at the election, and the Constitution had received a majority in seventeen out of the twenty-eight counties.¹³¹ It was with a degree of satisfaction that Governor Clarke issued a proclamation on September 9, 1846, declaring the acceptance of the Constitution and calling for an election on October 26 for State officers, two Representatives in Congress, and members of the General Assembly.¹³²

Again the machinery of the parties—committees, caucuses, and conventions—was put into motion, grinding out their products in the form of delegates, platforms, and nominations. The first Democratic State Convention assembled in Iowa City on September 24, 1846. Flushed with their recent victory they made the following nominations: for Governor, Ansel Briggs, of Jackson County; for Secretary of State, Elisha Cutler, Jr., of Van Buren County; for Auditor, J. T. Fales, of Linn County; and for Treasurer, Morgan Reno, of Johnson County.

A set of nine ringing resolutions was adopted, and in them can be discerned an undertone of pride over the emergence of the Territory to be the peer of the older States. No platform of State policy is present, but banking institutions once more receive Democratic condemnation. The resolutions reflect also a new feeling of interest and active participation in the leading national issues. The text of

¹³⁰ Shambaugh's *Documentary History of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 213.

¹³¹ Complete returns of the election were not received from the counties of Delaware and Buchanan.

¹³² Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 358.

the resolutions as adopted by the Convention¹³³ reads as follows:—

1. *Resolved*, That the conduct of James K. Polk, since he has been President of the United States, and particularly during the last session of Congress, has been that of an unwavering and unflinching Democrat. That young hickory has proved himself to be a true scion of old hickory; and we tender to him and to his coadjutors in the executive department the gratitude of the people of the State of Iowa.

2. *Resolved*, That the recent session of Congress has been one of the greatest importance to the people of these United States, since the time of Mr. Jefferson, and we confidently regard the acts passed by it, particularly the passage of the Independent Treasury Bill, the settlement of the Oregon Question (though the people of Iowa would have preferred 54, 40), and the repeal of the odious tariff act of 1842, as destined to advance the welfare, promote the interest, and add to the peace and harmony, not only of our people, but of the civilized world.

3. *Resolved*, That the repeal of the unjust, unequal, and fraudulent tariff act of 1842, at the recent session of Congress, deserves the highest praise from the people of Iowa, and entitles those members of Congress who voted for it, to the lasting gratitude of all good citizens. That by its minimum and specific duties—by its unequal and unjust protection of the capitalists and moneyed institutions, and by its casting the burden of taxation on the laboring masses, and exempting the upper ten thousand, it was absolutely a federal tariff, based on the doctrines of the great God-like Belshazzar of Massachusetts, viz: "Let the government take care of the rich, and the rich take care of the poor." That the conduct of the Vice-President of the United States, upon that great question of the age, entitles him to the highest place in the confidence of the Democracy of the United States.

4. *Resolved*, That all modes of raising revenue for the support of the government, are taxes upon the capital, labor and industry of the country; and that it is the duty of a good government to impose its taxes in such a manner as to bear equally on all classes

¹³³ The proceedings of this Convention are to be found in Fairall's *Manual of Iowa Politics*, pp. 17, 18.

of society; and that any government, which, in levying duties for raising revenue, impresses burdens on any one class of society, to build up others, though republican in form, is tyrannical in deed, ceases to be a just government, and is unworthy of the confidence or support of a free people.

5. *Resolved*, That the separation of the public moneys from the banking institutions of the country, in the passage of the Independent Treasury Bill, meets the approbation of this convention, and the recent vote of the people of this State, adopting the constitution, is a decisive indication of public sentiment against all banking institutions of whatever name, nature or description.

6. *Resolved*, That the repeated unjust aggression of the Mexican people and Mexican government, have long since called for redress, and the spirit which has discouraged, opposes and denounces the war which our government is now carrying on against Mexico, is the same spirit which opposed the formation of a Republican government, opposed Jefferson, and denounced the last war with Great Britain, and now, as they did then, from a federal fountain.

7. *Resolved*, That General Taylor and our little army have won for themselves the everlasting gratitude of the country, for which they will never, like Scott, be exposed to a shot in their rear from Washington, or any other part of the country.

8. *Resolved*, That we repudiate the idea of party without principles; that Democracy has certain fixed and unalterable principles, among which are equal rights and equal protection to all, unlimited rights of suffrage to every freeman, no property qualifications or religious tests, sovereignty of the people, subjection of the Legislature to the will of the people; obedience to the instructions of constituents or resignation; and restriction of all exclusive privileges to corporations to a level with individual rights.

9. *Resolved*, That, henceforth, as a political party, we are determined to know nothing but Democracy; and that we will support men only for their principles. Our motto will be, less legislation, few laws, strict obedience, short sessions, light taxes, and no State debt.

A brief and spirited campaign followed, resulting on October 26, 1846, in the election of Democratic State officers and the choice of two Democratic Representatives in

Congress. On December 3, 1846, Ansel Briggs was formally inaugurated as Governor; and in his first message he congratulated the General Assembly at the transition of Iowa from a "dependent Territory to an independent and sovereign State."

In this history of the Democratic party we see the introduction and the development of party machinery. The instincts and ideas of politics were in the pioneers, who had been schooled in political thought and methods in the older States of Ohio, New York, Massachusetts, Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. In Iowa Territory, therefore, we find, prior to the organization of the parties, caucuses and conventions, committees and delegates. Later politics produce the central and the county committees, campaign clubs, committees of vigilance and election, announcements of candidates in the press, cartoons, broadsides and proclamations. On the stump are seen the picturesque elements of oratory and debate; while the emotional demonstrations appear in parades and processions. In brief there were present before the close of the Territorial period all the main features of our highly developed present day election machinery and methods.

National issues were ever present in the political history of the Territory. The policies of Jackson and Benton were contrasted with those of Webster and Clay. The National Bank and the policies in regard to public lands were widely discussed and left their impress upon the later history of the State. The Democrats opposed the Protective Tariff and demanded a just equalization of public improvements and an economical policy in public expenditures. The alliterative slogan of "fifty-four forty or fight" became their watchword in the discussion of the Oregon question; they justified President Polk and the

Mexican War; and they applauded the exploits of General Taylor beyond the Rio Grande.

The supremacy of the Democratic party in Iowa Territory during the greater part of ten years from 1836 to 1846 bestows upon it the praises and the blame for its accomplishments. Everywhere can be seen the transplanting of political forces and creeds from other States, which, in the crucible of pioneer conditions, became fused into new political activities. The influence of Andrew Jackson was constant and powerful upon the spirit and organization of the party and in the blighting effects of the spoils system. The incessant condemnation of Henry Clay by the Democrats of Iowa Territory was but the echo of Jackson's enmity and hatred of his old time political foe; and the personal abuse and vilification in campaigns represents a true mirror of the party history of this period.

The Constitution of 1846 with its merits and defects represents a true contemporary product of the Democratic party—defects which demanded its revision a decade later, and merits which remain to-day as a part of the fundamental law of the Commonwealth. "As a citizen of Iowa", said Augustus C. Dodge, in speaking of the Constitution of 1844, "I felt proud of the many encomiums I heard passed upon the constitution during the past winter at Washington, by many of the most distinguished men in the country." It will ever be to the credit of the Democratic party of the Territory that the local pride and patriotism of a large number of its members prompted them to join with the Whigs in April, 1845, in defeating the Constitution of 1844 and thus preventing territorial dismemberment by the Congressional boundaries.

The history of the Democratic party is honored by the names of its leaders during this decade of the Territory. Lucas, Dodge, Clarke, Chapman, Cox, Leffler, and Williams

are the names of men whose talents and energies helped to vitalize Territorial legislation and administration. And finally, the faith of the party and its devotion to the people is reflected in its efforts and perseverance, amid the stormy opposition of the Whigs in the Legislative Assembly, conventions, and campaigns, to minister to the public will and welfare and to pilot the young Territory over the uncharted ways to Statehood.

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