

[AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF LUCIUS H. LANGWORTHY]<sup>1</sup>

The author of this sketch was born in St. Lawrence County [New York], February 6th, 1807. Early in life his father removed to Jefferson County, New York, and subsequently to Erie County, Pennsylvania. At the age of ten years he emigrated to Ohio and remained at a point just below Marietta, opposite Blennerhassett's Island, called Belpre, where his instruction was continued in the rudiments of common school education. In 1819 his father removed the family to Illinois, landing at Shawnee Town in that spring, where they took wagons and were conveyed to Edwardsville in that State. The summer season proved most unhealthy and the mother and one brother died of the malarious diseases of that new and prolific clime. The next year, after enduring all the horrors of fever and ague, they removed to Diamond Grove near where Jacksonville now stands, and there remained until 1827. At that time the County of Morgan contained only twelve families. It was a wild but delightful land.

After some years when schools were first established the subject of our sketch attended the schools in the log cabins of that age during the winter, and in summer assisted in the farming operations of the times. In 1825 he attended the first term of the academy founded by Doctor Beecher at Jacksonville, Illinois, where he attracted the notice of the trustees of a neighboring district (Bluffdale, Green County, Illinois) and was employed to teach their district school. Here he remained until the spring of 1827, when, hearing

<sup>1</sup> This sketch was written by Lucius H. Langworthy some time between 1856 and 1865. The manuscript is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Ada L. Collier of Dubuque, Iowa.

of the great discovery of lead in the upper Mississippi lead mines, he proceeded to try his fortune in the distant fields of enterprise which were then laid open to the adventurous.

He arrived at Galena, May 24th, 1827, after a voyage of thirty days from Quincy, Illinois, in a pirogue. Embarking in mining with Edward, a younger brother, he soon had the good fortune to strike a large lead, since called the Drummond lode on Coon Branch. In the winter of 1827-8 he traveled through on horse back on the imperfect roads then existing to St. Louis, returning in the spring.

He carried on the mining business extensively at Mineral Point, New Diggings, and Platteville. In 1830, hearing of the vacation of Dubuque's mines by the Indians, he was the first to explore the then mysterious region upon which Dubuque in olden days had operated so successfully. One day when rambling along the Indian trail that led westward from where Dubuque now stands, he found a portion of a silver armlet which had once been worn by an Indian chief. He exclaimed at the time "this is my fortune in accordance with an old superstitious thought." That day he struck the old Langworthy lead which led to the first settlement at the mines of Dubuque. It has produced altogether about ten million pounds of lead ore. He was twice driven away from these Indian lands, before their purchase by the United States Government, by Zachary Taylor who sent Lieutenant Jefferson Davis and others to protect these lands.

These lands still belonged to the Indians and it was thought to be the duty of the government to protect them. Accordingly Jefferson Davis, a loyal soldier, a young man who had been educated by the common beneficence of the country was sent here with a detachment of United States troops, drove off the white settlers and left a garrison here

until the commencement of the Black Hawk War. In this operation Mr. Langworthy lost the proceeds of his great discovery.

In the Indian war that ensued Mr. Langworthy gave himself and all that he had to the service of his country. When he first heard of the murder of citizens of Blue Mounds by Black Hawk's band he took his three horses to Platteville and enlisted them as well as himself in the public service, went through all of the campaigns of the Black Hawk War, and endured in common with others the perils and hardships of an Indian war.

He led a company of spies (scouts) as Lieutenant in the Black Hawk War under the command of Captain James Gentry, and from Fort Winnebago took through to Mineral Point a company of invalids with broken down horses, mules, etc. Black Hawk's band had scattered while pursued by our army in August [July], 1832, and their trail was lost. But this party headed by Mr. Langworthy on their way to Mineral Point from Fort Winnebago encamped near where Madison city now stands. They made no fire but laid down on their arms with their horses closely tethered because the Indians were supposed to be somewhere in that vicinity. Early in the morning they began to hear horses nicker, dogs bark, etc., not far off. At daylight they crept silently up to the top of a ridge of land, whence they discovered about two miles away Black Hawk's entire band just mounting their horses on their retreat towards the Wisconsin. A courier was at once dispatched back to General Dodge with this intelligence. Our army overtook them at the crossing of the Wisconsin.<sup>2</sup> Had they known of this

<sup>2</sup> During the night of July 12th the horses of the troops commanded by Henry, Alexander, and Dodge at Fort Winnebago were stampeded across the camp, probably by Indians. It was perhaps some of the "invalids with broken

small party of invalids so near them on that night not one man would have escaped for they were over 2000 warriors, the flower of Black Hawk's army.

Upon the organization of Dubuque County (then a portion of Michigan) Mr. Langworthy was elected Sheriff when the county extended below Davenport, being one half of the territory.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently he was elected to the legislature which was holding its session at Burlington when the act took effect which gave to Iowa a separate Territorial existence.

He had his residence in the northern part of the city, building the first frame dwelling house in the State, which now stands within the Tivoli gardens. He traveled to Cincinnati through the grand prairies of Illinois, being beset by robbers on one occasion. In the winter of 1835-6 he married; and in conjunction with Captain Orrin Smith and Captain R. S. Harris bought a steamboat called the Heroine, and settled down in the spring of that year upon all that portion of land in the Couler Valley which lies north of Eleventh Street in this city.

He contributed largely to different periodicals, especially on the subject of the great Pacific Railroad. One of his articles was read by Hon. A. C. Dodge in the Senate of the United States when urging the attention of Congress on the subject; and he attended as one of the two delegates from Iowa whom the people had selected to endeavor to obtain grants of land for this purpose (the other being General Van Antwerp) and labored in conjunction with Asa Whitney, John Plumbe, Jr., and others to induce Congress to make the necessary appropriations.

down horses'' from this stampede whom Mr. Langworthy was accompanying to Mineral Point. Henry and Dodge overtook the army of Black Hawk and severely routed it at the Battle of Wisconsin Heights on July 21st.

<sup>3</sup> The writer probably here means half of the territory west of the Mississippi.

He very early abjured the party politics of the time and ran as an independent candidate for the State Senate against the terrible array of partizan prejudice that prevailed at that day. Himself and J. L. Langworthy, under a contract from the United States, constructed the military road leading from Dubuque to Iowa City.

He contributed largely to the literary and religious institutions of the city. In 1854 and 1855 he delivered before the Literary Institute of Dubuque sketches of the history of the place, together with some Indian traditions and scenes of border life connected with the early settlement of Julien Dubuque and his adventures from 1876 [1788] to 1810, the time of his death.<sup>4</sup>

He was one of the directors in the Miners' Bank. In 1840 he struck the famous Langworthy Cave which is a continuation of the Tom Kelly range, a lode which is unsurpassed by any other. It extended through the grounds now occupied by the Messrs. Langworthy and was a wonder of all the wonders of the mines. In 1855 he was a director in the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad, and in 1856 a director and subsequently President of the Dubuque Western Railroad.

In all of the relations of life Mr. Langworthy has been genial, kind and affectionate. In him the community has always found a prompt and generous nature well fitted in most respects to adorn either the public or domestic circle. He is now in the enjoyment of all the comforts of life with a numerous offspring. He lives on the high bluffs of the city near the very spot which has witnessed so many<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> These lectures were published and are reprinted in the present number of THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, pp. 366-422.

<sup>5</sup> The manuscript abruptly ends here. It is probable that a final page existed but was lost.