

[AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF EDWARD LANGWORTHY]¹⁹

The early history and incidents of new countries attract the attention of older societies and partly for this reason, but chiefly for the facts themselves and their perpetuation, has this association called upon some of its members to put in writing for preservation in its archives some of the leading features of our early history so far as the same came under their own eyes.

In doing this much that is entirely personal must form a prominent feature of each communication; and in order to forestall any charge of egotism on this ground I will recall to your minds the fact that anything written in the first person is liable to such a charge and there seems to be no other or better way of complying with your request.

Of myself I may be permitted to say that I was born on August 3d, 1808, in St. Lawrence County, New York. My parents and ancestors were natives of New England and were of English origin. True to the migratory spirit of the Yankee nation my father was one of the early settlers of St. Lawrence County, New York, of ——— County, Ohio,²⁰ Madison County, Illinois, and of Morgan County, Illinois, where in the spring of 1827 the news of the valuable lead mines of Galena reached our prairie home near the present flourishing town of Jacksonville. In order to secure our full share of the wealth of those mines my brother Lucius and myself left a home and a farm, on which we had sup-

¹⁹ This sketch was written by Edward Langworthy, at a date somewhere between 1871 and 1893. The manuscript is in the possession of his daughter, Mrs. Frances L. Gibbs of Dubuque, Iowa.

²⁰ It may be that the writer is thinking of the few months spent at Belpre, Ohio, in the course of the migration to Illinois.

ported a large family for four years and could then leave in comfortable circumstances, determined to seek our fortunes in the far off lead mines of Galena. Accordingly, on the 24th day of May, 1827, we left in a lumber wagon for Quincy on the river and there took a steamer bound for the land of lead. A forty mile voyage to the rapids ended steam travel for that trip, as the lower rapids could not be crossed by steamers. After a few days stay at old Fort Edwards (Warsaw), nearly opposite Keokuk, we, in company with Moses Meeker, John Hough, John Potts, Barney Gray, Major Downey of the U. S. army, and a French boatman whose name I forget, procured a pirogue or large skiff and for the next ten days literally worked our passage up as far as Rock Island, rowing, poling, cordelling, and bushwhacking along in the broiling sun of June.

Here let me mention some incidents which occurred on that trip. First, in the hurry and bustle of landing from the steamer we left on board a part of our baggage consisting of our bed and most of our clothing, among which and the most regretted by us was a full suit of buckskin for each of us for mining suits.

At Warsaw, when about to start, Mr. Hough who was always on the lookout for the good things of life came along looking proud and happy, having procured a large uncovered demijohn filled with the best old brandy. This he slyly put under the caboose at the stern of the boat. But alas, a treacherous skillet safely stowed away there thrust its iron handle through the bottle and all the fourth-proof was lost in the bottom of the boat and the pride and glory of our Mr. Hough departed or oozed out with the brandy.

Our gentlemen passengers provided themselves with a comfortable shade by the use of our sail cloth spread over poles, and in this way managed to keep cool while we who

performed the labour at pole and cordelle were scorched by the burning sun. One day there sprang up a lively breeze right astern and our laboring party desired to try to sail; but no, our captain could not think of losing his shade and we had to submit. But the spirit of comfort was soon compelled to seek shelter from the mutiny of the crew in a graceful backing down after the boat was landed and a part of the crew brought a mast from the island and set it up and converted the tent into a first class sail. We landed at Rock Island, having sailed in a few hours as far as we had run in the two previous days. At Rock Island we remained three days waiting for a keel boat which was fitting out for the remainder of the voyage; and while there we visited numerous camps of Winnebago Indians, the first we had seen. They were a squalid dirty looking set and in no way came up to my ideal of *Poor Lo*.

One exception I should make — a beautiful young squaw of sixteen summers with whom I fell in love at first sight and for whose sake I could have turned Indian or Heathen or anything else. But the boat was ready and we must leave and *all aboard* was the word. What a delightful trip! This was a fine keel boat, well manned by an experienced crew, while a splendid breeze filled the sail. We walked the water like a thing of life and the merry song of the boatmen enlivened the scene. We landed in Galena, then the largest town north of St. Louis and west of the lakes. It consisted of six stores, a smelting furnace, a United States lead agency, and perhaps forty or fifty dwelling houses on both sides of the river — not the Mississippi but simply Fever River, since better known as Houghton's Bay.

We commenced mining on Fever River where we lived with our brother James who had been in the country two years and lived and kept a store in Buncombe. In the sum-

mer we bought a small sheet lead near Council Hill on a lot joining Capt. H. H. Gear's big lead. This sheet we worked for several months raising about \$100 worth of mineral per month and living in a cabin of our own construction.

I will try to describe this cabin. It was built of mixed material and put up in the composite order of architecture. It was on a hill side. The upper side was a wall of loose stone four feet high. The opposite side was of posts three feet apart and the spaces filled with brush. One end was about the same style, the other end open for a door, and the whole was covered with brush and a few slabs made with a whip saw. We lived in this house till fall doing our own cooking and working our hard rocky sheet during the day and sleeping under our brush roof at night, three fourths of which were rainy and cold. In the morning we used to get out of our wet bed, build a fire out of wet wood and cook breakfast and go to work. This year we had forty-five rainy days in July and August.

This was the year of the Winnebago War and we spent a part of our time in our military duties standing guard at the fort or patrolling the country in search of Indians, but as none ever came within twenty miles of us it proved not to be a very dangerous or destructive war, but still it interfered very much with business. The whole of the lead mines at that time probably contained five thousand inhabitants, about two hundred of whom were females. Very many miners left the country on the first rumour of hostilities and their places were not filled during the year.

My mining career has been too much diversified to enter into full particulars, having worked with more or less success at Hardscrabble, Coon Branch, East Fork, Menominee, Mineral Point, and Platteville. In one diggings near Min-

eral Point we raised about sixty thousand pounds of ore out of one chunk which lay in a crevice about fifteen feet below the surface and was thirty-six feet long and two feet in diameter at the largest place and about the shape of a large log whittled off at both ends. It was considered quite a curiosity there. Mineral at that time was sold for five dollars per thousand and as a consequence most of the miners were very poor and many destitute. Add to this the great scarcity of provisions, amounting to almost a famine, and we have sufficient cause for the scattering of the miners. Most of them went to Illinois and Missouri, where food at least was abundant, and of all kinds. Business was at a stand still. I have but few pleasing memories of these years and shall therefore pass them over as briefly as possible. Having divided our own stock of flour, meat, potatoes and groceries so many times among the needy that a six months stock was in two months reduced to one days supply, I left for Galena and forwarded back supplies as far as my money would go and then left for the Sucker State. In the spring of 1831 I returned with a drove of hogs which I took to the Platt River woods where they flourished and increased rapidly. Many of them ran wild and were abundant only a few years ago.

From that time we were mining and farming near Platteville and doing pretty well until the summer of 1832, when the Black Hawk War interrupted our work, as every man had to turn out, join some company, and go hunting after Indians. Lucius and I joined different companies, he that of Captain Gentry under Colonel Dodge and I enlisted in the company of Captain Craig under Colonel Stephenson. We put into the service five horses; and some of them did better fighting than I did, for only two of them came out of the war alive, the best one having been killed at the

Battle of Bad Axe at the mouth of Black River on the Mississippi River. I had been mining and hunting Indians alternately all summer, but fortunately never found any Indians and unfortunately found no mineral.

When this country was first inhabited it was exclusively by miners and for mining purposes and no other. No one thought of farming or manufacturing or even building towns or permanent dwellings. All alike came to make their fortunes, and leave for their old homes in the civilised world. None supposed that corn, wheat, or other valuable grains would or could be raised in this cold country. At first small gardens were made — a few hills of potatoes or cabbage planted with but little hope of any valuable results — but the fall came and brought very fine crops. Then a bold miner — recollecting the luxury of green corn — determined to try the experiment and actually planted some corn in his garden. It proved a success and some of it fully matured in the fall. Thus slowly and gradually grew the knowledge that the country was adapted to agricultural purposes and might some day produce enough to supply the miners — but who then would have predicted that in a few years corn, wheat and oats, and beef and pork would become the chief articles of export from the mines. Such is the history of the thoughts and opinions of the early miners; such the slow growth of knowledge and intelligence; and such the slow process of its development, showing that a whole people wholly absorbed in one channel of business and thought are slow to comprehend or decide upon all their surroundings. Time only can fully develop all the resources of a country or educate a people to a complete and comprehensive knowledge of its capacities.

But the business of mining has annually decreased, while farming has as steadily increased until it has become the

chief wealth of the mining region and at this time takes all the natural and artificial means that wealth and enterprise have brought into being to transport it to the marts of the world where most wanted. Steamers and cars are all filled to their utmost capacity to carry off the surplus of this farming country where our far seeing miners supposed nothing but lead would ever be produced.

Of my political career little can be said but I will merely schedule the different places filled for longer or shorter periods:— County Commissioner in 1836. Member of the Town Council, 1836 and 1837, a Representative in the Territorial Legislature in 1839-40 and 1840-41. Member of the Constitutional Convention in 1847 or '48 [1844]. In 1838 and 1839 as one of three School Trustees was engaged in organizing our district schools and built two school houses on or near the sites of the present First and Third ward school houses. These were of brick, one story high, sixteen by thirty-two feet, and were about sufficient for the town's children at that time. Schools were kept in these houses for several years but could not be called free, for the school money was not enough for that. Therefore a tax of fifty cents per quarter was imposed on all children attending to help along. From this small beginning has grown up our present flourishing public schools, and I look back on our trials and difficulties in working up that little beginning of schools for Dubuque with more pride than any other act of my life as it took more time and study and advance of personal means than any other. H. A. Wiltse, Judge Borts, and myself spent two or three years in getting these little schools under way.

The only battle in which I took a part was one fought in the Platt timber in Grant County, Wisconsin. Word came to headquarters that the Indians were prowling in those

woods and a part of two companies was detached to look after them, one Company of Illinois Volunteers and one of miners, both under Captain Craig of Illinois. Our march was in regular cavalry style with a spy company in advance and on the flanks, and while entering the woods full of all kinds of undergrowths of plums, crab-apples, and briers, the report of a volley of rifles was heard immediately in our front. The word charge was given and sounded loud and long from our one-armed bugler. The Illinois part of our Company cut loose their baggage and charged at the thicket. But it would be saying too much to infer that they charged into it, for they were caught by brambles and briers and thorns and further progress completely stopped, while at the same time our miners charged to the thicket, deliberately dismounted, leaving five horses in charge of one man, and worked their way to the front where we found our spies crowded around the foot of a tree from which at the first volley had fallen a young black bear. The curses of the captain and arrest of the whole spy company ended this bloody battle.

I have barely mentioned our Indian wars of which we have had two. The Winnebago War of 1827 was a small affair but sufficient to prevent most of the miners from work, and cause them to build forts, block-houses, and stockades — in one of which I passed a part of that summer.

But the Black Hawk War of 1832 was of a different order. The Indians became aggressive and murdered many men and families in different localities causing much fear and caution. The call to arms was responded to by all the miners, who were formed into companies and regiments and placed under the command of experienced officers while all the west responded to the call for volunteers and an army was raised which after many ineffectual campaigns

finally conquered a peace at the Battle of Bad Axe on the Mississippi River near the mouth of Black River.

Of the early incidents of the first settlements much has been said and written and many stories are told having very little foundation in fact if any; but some scenes were witnessed and some feats performed that may be worth a place in our annals. It is surprising how some little things sometimes have a bearing on larger ones. When in 1836 the United States Surveyor came to survey and lay off Dubuque there was standing a row of log houses on the east side of Main street between Second and Third Streets which measured sixty-four feet in front and directly opposite was a small house just sixty-four feet distant and it is believed that these distances decided the width of streets and lots for the whole of the old part of the town. There was also a slough running from Eagle Point to the Lorimier Hollow brooking along, which bounded the east line of the town from South Avenue to 12th Street and was made and declared the public landing for Dubuque. The islands in front of the city were very heavily timbered with elm, maple and ash and skirted on the banks of all the sloughs with an immense growth of willow. These islands for a long time furnished nearly all the fire wood for the city; and as late as 1839 and 1840 I hauled from them about one hundred cords of elm wood for home use. In the winter of 1829 and 1830 when on an exploring expedition to these mines I found several hundred Indians encamped on these islands.

This fact recalls to my mind that trip. On the last day of January, 1830, four of us left our cabin near Buncombe for the purpose of examining the supposed lead mines west of the Mississippi River. It was a warm dry day, for the season had been so far of that character. No snow, no rain, but dry and sunshiny. We came to the top of the bluff above

Dunleith, but behold the river was open and our further advance stopped. After consultation we resumed our walk up the river and among the islands of Maquoketa, and opposite we found ice over which we crossed, one place only impeding our way. Between the islands there was an open piece of water about twelve feet wide and this we bridged with willow poles. About this time, too, it commenced snowing and to insure our road back we cut holes in the ice and planted a line of poles at short intervals across the river, for our return land marks. Night overtook us at the head of the Zollicoffer Lake where we camped making a huge fire from the dry logs found there. But to start a fire we scraped the wood of a green hickory limb in a fuzz, rubbed it full of powder and flashed the powder from our rifle pan (flint locks) into it. Unfortunately in this case my rifle went off and echoed over the hills and river. But we ate our supper and lay down with a blanket under and one over each two of us. One couple lay with feet to the fire. But we lay down fifteen feet from it. About twelve o'clock we were aroused by our other couple who had been standing around the fire, the snow melting on their blankets as it fell till they looked like drowned rats. We roused up to find ourselves sweating copiously under our blanket and fully a foot of snow. They had roused us because they heard some strange noises near us, and there was at intervals a little snapping like the breaking of a dry twig. We listened and scouted around but nothing was to be seen, although it was now light with stars and snow. In the morning, however, we found moccasin tracks not one hundred feet off where Mr. Redskin had mounted a log and quietly taken a survey of us and our camp. Afterwards we found several hundred of them camped on the Dubuque Island near Eagle Point. They were not friendly and told us to *puchachee* (clear out), and as the object for which we

came was defeated by the fall of snow, we took their advice and left for home. Of all the cold days I ever have experienced those first two days of February, 1830, were the coldest. As an example one of our men broke into a spring branch on Menominee and before he could walk one hundred rods his pants and boots were frozen so stiff as to stop him there. But by cutting open pants and boot and putting on a dry sock he managed to get half a mile further to a house without freezing.

In the fall of 1832 about three hundred miners crossed the river and commenced prospecting among the old diggings formerly worked by the Spanish miners under Julien Dubuque. Some had prospects found by them in 1830. Among these were myself and brothers.

A lead struck by Lucius at that time and worked by the Indians led on by white men, all the time until the Indian outbreak in 1832, was again opened by us and worked continuously till 1836. This was one of the finest lodes found in the country and yielded in all its length many million pounds of mineral divided by four or five companies. During the fall of 1832 we took from it all the mineral we could smelt in two log furnaces, and during the years 1833 and 1834 not less than twenty-five men worked on it continually raising large quantities of ore. In one place we had a sheet two feet thick at the depth of forty feet in clay, which was so solid as to require splitting in the middle before it could be broken enough to handle or hoist up on the rope, and many places on the range were equally rich. This lode was just east of the level that supplies the city with such abundance of pure water, and was worked in some places to the depth of over one hundred feet and one shaft one hundred and thirty feet to caves of white sand rock. In 1834 and 1835 we took up the land in the Couler Valey (now from 18th Street to the end of the horse railroad) for a farm

and ploughed and fenced a part of it. Our cabin was where Heeb's Brewery now is and was built in June, 1833, and occupied by our miners. In 1835 and 1836 we added to the farm on the north to the point at the late John King's house and by purchase on the south from 18th to 12th Streets and fenced it all in with a rail fence and built a good frame house which still occupies the back ground in the Tivoli Garden. It was built by contract and when fully enclosed was totally demolished by a tornado and then rebuilt in a more substantial manner. These were stirring years for us. We made a large farm, bought and ran a steam boat, raised fruit, made lead, bought and shipped lead all summer. Lucius and myself both married during the year 1835, therefore we date our permanent settlement from that year and from that time we became a part of Dubuque in its prosperity and its reverses, ever taking our share in its interests.

Much has been said and written of the morals of highly educated and enlightened communities. My experience proves that nowhere has ever such a state of society existed for honesty, integrity, and high toned generosity as was found among the miners in the early days of mining in this country. No need here for locks to keep out burglars. We had none. No fear of being injured by others. It was never done. No one was left to suffer from cold or hunger. All the cabins stood open to receive the weary, the wardrobe open to those needing clothing, and the table ever full for all that were hungry. While tools, provisions, and clothing, were always free to all the needy, and piles of valuable mineral were at all the diggings unguarded and exposed, cases of theft or misappropriation were unknown. And if a crime was committed, retribution and punishment followed, dealt by the hands of justice without law, but systematically and in accordance with the usages of older societies.