

THE OPENING OF THE DES MOINES VALLEY TO SETTLEMENT

[For an article by Mr. Van der Zee, dealing with the earlier history of the Des Moines Valley, see *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS* for July, 1916.—EDITOR]

THE FIRST PERMANENT SETTLEMENT IN THE IOWA COUNTRY

The wilderness tract just above the mouth of the Des Moines River was a region which was early frequented by fur traders. Near the Sac Indian village Louis Tesson (nicknamed Honoré) had received a land grant from the Spanish government, and there he had set up a little frontier establishment. How long he stayed and who lived upon his land afterwards can not be ascertained, but about the year 1806 Tesson transferred his land to Joseph Robidoux of St. Louis in satisfaction of a debt. In 1810 Robidoux's estate was sold and Thomas F. Riddick became the new owner. The United States government in 1816 confirmed Riddick's title to six hundred and forty acres, instead of to a league square which he claimed. Whether the land was actually occupied during this time and for some years later must be left to conjecture. There is no certain evidence in the fragmentary records now available, but inasmuch as an Indian village stood near by there is good reason to believe that some sort of a settlement was maintained on the site of the present town of Montrose.¹ During the years of the War of 1812 Americans were driven from the neighborhood by the Indian allies of the British and not until after peace was restored in 1815 could American subjects feel safe in this region.

¹ *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XIII, pp. 239, 240.

John C. Sullivan was engaged in 1816 to locate the northern boundary of the Osage Indian land cession in the Territory of Missouri. He was the first surveyor in this part of the public domain, and he ran a line which thirty-four years later definitely became the Iowa-Missouri boundary. Running east and west the line stopped at the middle of the channel of the Des Moines River and if extended to what have long been called the Des Moines Rapids of the Mississippi would have deprived the State of Iowa of its tongue-shaped southeastern corner. This area, however, was then in possession of the Sac Indians and therefore was not within the power of the Osage Indians to cede.² It was a tract, too, that was destined to attain unusual historical significance within the next two or three decades.

Besides the events which took place there in connection with the operations of the fur traders (of which comparatively little is known), practically nothing can be said concerning the human habitation of that part of the Des Moines Valley until tradition tells of the building of a log cabin upon the site of the present city of Keokuk in 1820. Dr. Samuel C. Muir, an Edinburgh University graduate then performing the duties of surgeon at Fort Edwards just across the Mississippi, is reported to have constructed the cabin for the accommodation of his Sac Indian wife and five children. Tradition also tells how, when United States army officers and attachés were ordered to terminate relations with Indian women, Muir resigned his position, leased his property to Otis Reynolds and John Culver, and for several years practised medicine in northern Missouri and at Galena, Illinois.³

Isaac R. Campbell visited the locality in the month of June, 1821, and noted Muir's cabin. Six miles north, on

² THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XIII, pp. 28, 29.

³ *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. V, pp. 889, 890.

the present site of Sandusky Station, stood the trading post of Monsieur Lemoliese. According to Campbell's reminiscences, recorded forty-six years later, "Lemoliese had a very amiable lady for a wife, who was fond of dress. She frequently, to please him, arrayed her person in gown, bonnet and shoes, but could not be prevailed upon to continue the costume, as her native garb, the blanket and petticoat, were more congenial to her feelings and taste." One mile above Lemoliese lived another trader, Maurice Blondeau, who was half Frenchman and half Fox Indian. On the spot where the town of Montrose now stands Campbell found the remains of a deserted trading house in the midst of an orchard of apple trees. This no doubt describes Tesson's old Spanish grant as it appeared in the year 1821. Just above was the Sac village of Chief Cut Nose. Such is the picture of life in that part of the Iowa country, the nearest white settlements upon the frontier being situated to the east in Illinois and to the south in the State of Missouri, then but recently admitted into the Union. During the next four years Campbell visited these wilderness scenes more than once. He recalls a journey by ox team and wagon from his farm in Missouri to the Sac village: he and his Indian guide were compelled to swim their oxen across the swollen Des Moines River and to transport the wagon upon a raft which they constructed.⁴

In the summer of 1824 ten Sac and Fox chiefs, accompanied by their trader, B. Vasquez, as interpreter, Maurice Blondeau, Louis Tesson, and John W. Johnson, formerly government factor at old Fort Madison, journeyed eastward to consult the President of the United States at Washington. On the fourth day of August they signed a treaty relinquishing all the claims of their tribes to lands within the limits of the new State of Missouri on condition "that

⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. V, pp. 883, 884, 885.

the small tract of land lying between the rivers Desmoin and the Mississippi, and the section of the above line [the Sullivan or Old Indian Boundary projected eastward] between the Mississippi and the Desmoin, is intended for the use of the half-breeds belonging to the Sock and Fox nations." One may be sure that the Indians themselves were not so desirous of this grant as were the fathers of children by Indian mothers. In fact the men who witnessed the treaty were inhabitants or sometime residents of the country established for the Sac and Fox half-breeds.⁵

Records of life upon the Half-breed Tract are very meager and not altogether satisfactory, but since they constitute the history of the first permanent settlement in Iowa, a brief narrative of events in this region may properly be presented here. According to the reminiscences of a pioneer, Dr. Samuel C. Muir left "The Point" or "Puck-e-she-tuck" (Foot of the Rapids) sometime after 1820. What the lessees of his log cabin, Reynolds and Culver, did at this place is not reported, but they were probably engaged in the Indian trade. In 1828 they stationed here their agent and representative, Moses Stillwell, who came with his wife and four children and a brother-in-law by the name of Valencourt Vanorsdoll. They cut and sold fire-wood to passing steamboats and carried on trade with the Indians. Stillwell died six years later; while Vanorsdoll came to be called "the oldest continuous white citizen in the State of Iowa", being still alive in 1879.⁶

On the morning of July 4, 1829, amid the booming of cannon, men and women bound for points north in Illinois and Wisconsin disembarked at what certain gentlemen on the steamboat at the suggestion of George Davenport had

⁵ See THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XIII, pp. 151, 152.

⁶ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XIII, pp. 153-155; *The History of Lee County, Iowa* (1879), pp. 333, 334.

agreed to call "Keeokuk", the capital of the Half-breed Tract and a village containing about twenty Indian families, an American Fur Company store, and a tavern. A passenger upon the steamboat at this time reported the reservation as the common property of about forty-two half-breeds, only a few of whom had actually made clearings or settlements. Steamboats were at that time unloaded upon the Iowa shore and thus lightened were enabled to make their way up the shallow rapids of the Mississippi. Then after several days delay passengers and goods resumed the journey. Some miles north of "Keeokuk" lived Maurice Blondeau with his Indian wife and daughters, "well educated, well read, and accomplished young ladies", and just above his establishment stood a little Sac village of forty or fifty persons. Blondeau died in the month of August of this year, leaving his brother-in-law, Andrew St. Amant, in charge of his plantation.⁷

The American Fur Company had erected as business headquarters at Keokuk a row of hewed log buildings which afterwards went by the undignified name of "Rat Row". In the year 1830 Russell Farnham was the Company's manager here; Joshua Palen, Mark Aldridge, and Edward Brishnell were clerks; Francis Labashure and a Menominee Indian named Baptiste or Battise served as interpreters; while John Connolly, John Forsyth, James Thorn, and John Tolman acted as itinerant peddlers and collectors of furs: "all having Indian women for wives, were very popular as drummers with the various bands of Indians." Andrew St. Amant, Baptiste Neddeau, Bruseau, and Paul Bessette, all indirectly connected with John Jacob Astor's enterprise in various capacities, were also among the first settlers. Dr. Samuel C. Muir returned to his log building at Keokuk

⁷ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XIII, pp. 155, 156; *The History of Lee County, Iowa* (1879), pp. 333, 334.

pants of the Sac village removed, leaving the few whites upon the half-breed lands tenants by sufferance.

FORT DES MOINES No. 1

Alive to the future danger from Indians west of the Mississippi and mindful of the expense of life and money incurred by the Black Hawk War of 1832, Congress in 1833 made provision for the better defense of the frontier by authorizing the establishment of a regiment of dragoons, with headquarters at Jefferson Barracks near St. Louis. Congress thus appears to have given ear to the words of Secretary of War Lewis Cass when he said: "We owe protection to the emigrants, and it has been solemnly promised to them; and this duty can only be fulfilled by repressing and punishing every attempt to disturb the general tranquillity. Policy and humanity equally dictate this course; and there is reason to hope that the display of this force will itself render unnecessary its hostile employment."¹²

On the nineteenth day of May, 1834, scarcely a year after emigrants began to pour into the eastern Iowa wilderness, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Kearny was ordered to take up winter quarters near the mouth of the Des Moines River with the dragoon companies of Captains Sumner, Boone, and Browne. Quartermaster George H. Crosman was sent ahead with a number of men to build barracks and stables.¹³ Just north of the apple orchard on Louis Tesson's old Spanish land grant Crosman selected a site for the buildings. Materials for the stables were prepared at St. Louis, brought up by boat, and put together on the ground. William Skinner, a Keokuk settler, received a contract to make twenty thousand clapboards at twenty dollars per thousand, delivered. Having completed this work by saw-

¹² *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 351

¹³ *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VI, p. 524.

ing up the best timber on the river bluffs between Keokuk and the site of the fort, he was engaged at sixty dollars per month to superintend the erection of log barracks to be used as sleeping-quarters and mess-rooms. Kearny's quarters were constructed of willow logs lightly "scutched" or "scarified". Skinner also made hay and otherwise prepared for the coming of the dragoon companies, while Alexander Cruikshank by means of a crude kiln produced lime for the government and built stone chimneys for the barracks.¹⁴

Setting out from the vicinity of Fort Gibson on the Arkansas River on the third day of September, Lieutenant Colonel Kearny, three captains, and one hundred and seven non-commissioned officers, musicians, and privates completed the long overland journey to the Des Moines River in three weeks, with horses none the worse for wear. Having undergone severe privations on an expedition to the plains of the far West during the winter and summer just past, and expecting to find their new quarters in a state of readiness, comfortable and convenient, the dragoons were not a little disappointed when called upon to help complete the buildings before winter weather set in. Such was the beginning of "Camp Des Moines, Michigan Territory", later called Fort Des Moines.¹⁵

Intended not as a permanent post but rather as a base for operations in the wilderness country farther west, Fort Des Moines did not play an important part in American military history. In the spring of 1835 the arrival of recruits increased the garrison to one hundred and fifty-seven men,

¹⁴ *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 380, 381, 382.

¹⁵ *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VII, p. 114; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 353; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XII, pp. 180-182. This fort is usually referred to as Fort Des Moines No. 1 for the purpose of distinguishing it from the later post by the same name where the city of Des Moines now stands.

and about the same time came orders for work to be done. Lieutenant Colonel Kearny obeyed, and setting out from Fort Des Moines on June 7th the three companies proceeded up the Des Moines Valley through an uninhabited country. On their way to find the mouth of the Raccoon River they passed two Sac and Fox villages, and then directing their course northwestward, they came to the mouth of the Boone River, many miles north of the point which they expected to visit. The dragoons then marched northeastward to Wabasha's Sioux village on the Mississippi, encountering buffaloes on their way through a picturesque wilderness of hills, valleys, and stretches of prairie.

After a week's encampment in the Minnesota country the expedition proceeded in a westward direction and then southward to the East Fork of the Des Moines. Forging this stream they descended to the Raccoon River, where Kearny examined the country for a suitable site for a fort and reported no spot especially desirable, although the point of land at the junction of the rivers answered the purpose best of all. Kearny expressed the opinion that if a new military post were needed to protect the Missouri frontiers, a fort at the Raccoon Fork would be too far away; and if it were needed to preserve peace between the Sac and Fox tribes and the Sioux, a better site could be found in the Neutral Ground on the upper Des Moines. Moreover, Kearny reported that, whatever the War Department saw fit to do, another military establishment in the Sac and Fox country was decidedly opposed by the Indians because "the Whites would drive off the little game that is left in their country."¹⁶

Kearny despatched Lieutenant Albert M. Lea, one private, and one Indian to descend the Des Moines in a cottonwood "dug-out" for the purpose of ascertaining the

¹⁶ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, pp. 356, 357.

practicability of navigation with keel-boats. Lea sounded all shoals, took courses with a pocket compass, estimated distances from bend to bend by the time and rate of motion, sketched every notable thing, and landed occasionally to examine the geology of the rocks. The little party reached Keokuk without accident and arrived at Fort Des Moines many days before the main body of dragoons, who returned on August 19th after a march of 1100 miles.¹⁷ Two members of the expeditionary force left records of the long journey: one kept a brief daily journal of events and another, Lieutenant Lea, availed himself of his experience on the expedition and of information gathered from surveyors, traders, explorers, and residents to compile and publish a booklet on the "Iowa District" of what in 1836 became by act of Congress the Territory of Wisconsin. Lea's *Notes* on the new country were intended to appeal to emigrants, speculators, and legislators.¹⁸ A quotation from his general description of the Des Moines Valley may well be included here:

The Des Moines River and its Tributaries afford fine lands, well diversified with wood and prairie, as far up as I am acquainted with them, some fifty miles above the "Upper Forks." There is much that is inviting in the general character of the country bordering on the Des Moines; level meadows, rolling woodlands, and deep forests, present themselves by turns. The soil is usually rich and productive: and when there are no natural springs, there is no difficulty in obtaining water, by digging, at almost any point in the highland-prairies.

Lea declared the Des Moines River navigable without difficulty for one hundred and seventy miles in a tolerable stage of water after the removal of some snags and loose rocks. For ninety-six miles more, as far as to the Raccoon

¹⁷ *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VI, pp. 546-553; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. VII, pp. 333, 364-378.

¹⁸ Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, pp. iii, iv.

River, the channel was shallow, crooked, and filled with rocks, sand-bars, and snags, although keel-boats and perhaps even steamboats might navigate that portion of the stream during the spring and fall. Bituminous coal of excellent quality was found abundantly along this portion of the river, and there were other mineral productions. Thus did Lieutenant Lea attempt "to place within reach of the public, correct information in regard to a very interesting portion of the Western country, especially that part of it known as the *Iowa District*".¹⁹

Nothing further of importance can be added to the history of Fort Des Moines No. 1. Besides the evils of an unhealthy situation the fort experienced more desertions, it is said, than any other military post in the United States.²⁰ In the autumn of 1836 a town had been laid out on the mile square on which the fort then stood; lots had been sold; and buildings had begun to appear. All this was the work of the heirs of Thomas F. Riddick to whom the land belonged. Outside the new town-site other persons were setting up establishments with the object of selling liquor to the Indians and soldiers. Soon after the appearance of settlers, however, orders were issued that the post be broken up without delay, and accordingly the dragoons began to make preparations to march away. Although the town boom had ceased in March, 1837, the government did not abandon its plan. Waiting until "the grass might be sufficiently high to afford grazing for the horses, as corn cannot be had on some parts of the route", the dragoons evacuated Fort Des Moines on the first day of June, 1837, and proceeded to Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri River.

¹⁹ Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, pp. 24, 25.

²⁰ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, pp. 358, 359; THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, pp. 180, 181.

Having notified the Secretary of War that the United States had intruded upon private lands and asking that the fort buildings and property be turned over in consideration of such illegal occupation, Riddick's heirs, after many years of litigation to prove their title to the premises at last came into possession of their own.²¹

IMMIGRATION TO THE DES MOINES VALLEY

The Indian title to the Black Hawk Purchase became extinct on the first of June, 1833, and the fee simple then became vested in the government of the United States. Many persons at once crossed the Mississippi and others moved northward from the State of Missouri to squat upon the new public domain. The pioneer whites of the Half-breed Tract near the mouth of the Des Moines River thus received a slight accession to their population, and though all alike were trespassers in the eye of the law the government virtually made no attempt to remove them from the lands which they had selected. Immigration increased²² somewhat in the year 1834 and claims became more and more numerous. In this year also Congress relinquished the government's reversionary rights to the Half-breed Tract and the half-breed owners then began to sell their undivided shares to all who were speculative enough to invest. Consequently, owing to the unsettled condition of titles, few persons cared to settle and improve these lands, despite their excellent situation and fertility. The same was true of town lots at Keokuk.²³

In the spring of 1835 home-seekers began to come in larger numbers — some by wagon, others by boat — from

²¹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, pp. 359, 360-362; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XIII, p. 243.

²² *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 379, 380.

²³ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. X, pp. 451, 452, 460; *Lea's Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, pp. 18, 19, 26, 27, 35.

New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky. Steamboats upon the Ohio and the Mississippi brought passengers and household and farm utensils, while ferry boats plied ceaselessly between the Iowa and the Illinois shores transporting the horses and wagons and livestock of incoming settlers.²⁴

An English tourist described Keokuk in the autumn of 1835 as "the lowest and most blackguard place" he had yet visited: "its population is composed chiefly of the watermen who assist in loading and unloading the keel-boats, and in towing them up when the rapids are too strong for the steam-engines." These men were described as "a coarse and ferocious caricature of the London bargemen," whose chief occupation consisted in drinking, fighting, and gambling.²⁵ Unfortunately the traveler left no picture of the pioneers who had come to found homes and to clear and till farms in the wilderness. He might have found them dwelling in tents, wagons, log cabins, and other kinds of makeshifts.²⁶ By that time, naturally enough, the best locations for farms and towns had been picked out upon or near the Mississippi, the Des Moines, and other rivers, because these avenues of nature afforded the only ready means of travel and transportation, matters of prime importance in the life of wilderness inhabitants. The progress of the western movement in the space of two brief years was noted by a dragoon who wrote that the land was rapidly being occupied "by emigrants from all the states & Europe."²⁷ Lieutenant Lea in the following words made much the same observation when he descended the Des Moines River in August, 1835:

²⁴ *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 385.

²⁵ Murray's *Travels in North America*, Vol. II, p. 96.

²⁶ *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 387.

²⁷ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. VII, p. 378.

It is about seventy-five miles from the mouth, by water, to the Indian boundary. The lands, on both sides of the river, throughout the greater part of this distance, are exceedingly fertile, and many of them are covered with forests of the finest walnut, oak, ash, elm, and cherry; and back of these wooded bottoms are extensive prairies, both flat and rolling. The settlements have long since . . . extended along the river entirely up to the line [now about the western boundary of Van Buren County], and are beginning to spread out on either side, especially towards the head waters of Sugar creek [in Lee County]. There are already some extensive farms along this river, and others are in rapid progress.²⁸

Thus did the pioneers occupy unsurveyed government lands, individually respecting each other's rights to lands staked out as claims and collectively uniting to maintain their rights "against any unjust action of the Government, or against any attempt at improper speculation by capitalists at a distance."²⁹ Immigration in 1836 increased very materially. Indeed, the rush is said to have been so great during the summer season "that the small ferry-boat at Fort Madison was kept busy almost day and night, crossing those who came by land", while others disembarked from steamboats at the landings at Keokuk and Fort Madison.³⁰ So many persons had flocked to the Black Hawk Purchase or, as it now came to be called, the Iowa District of Wisconsin Territory, that two more notable additions to the public domain of the United States were soon made by outright purchases of Indian territory: the Sacs and Foxes

²⁸ Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, p. 25.

²⁹ Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, p. 20.

³⁰ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, p. 5; *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 388.

In his *Sketches of Iowa* (1841), p. 109, J. B. Newhall declared:

"At the commencement of the settlements upon the Des Moines, so strikingly beautiful did the verdant banks appear, that every delighted settler fancied his farm possessed the peculiar attributes of a town site; hence, literally, the farms were, at the commencement, staked off into towns. Accordingly in Van Buren County too many towns were laid out and trade was diverted from any particular place."

gave up their claims to Keokuk's Reserve in the autumn of 1836 and to a million and a quarter acres of land situated west of the Black Hawk Purchase in 1837.

THE REMOVAL OF INDIAN VILLAGES FROM KEOKUK'S RESERVE
TO THE DES MOINES VALLEY

Sometime before surrendering all their rights in the territory which bordered on the Mississippi the Sacs and Foxes set up two villages in the Des Moines Valley, beyond the pale of the white settlements. On the present site of South Ottumwa, Chief Appanoose established himself and his band in the spring of 1834 and called the village Ah-taum-way-e-nauk (Perseverance Town). Ten or fifteen miles below, just west of the Indian boundary line, in the region that is now northeastern Davis County, Keokuk chose a spot for his tribesmen.³¹ Here the bands were dwelling in the summer of 1835, when the dragoons under Lieutenant Colonel Kearny visited them. Appanoose's town, according to an eye-witness, stood upon "a handsome Prairie & for an Indian town is very handsome & appears to be increasing in wealth and population." Keokuk's village made a good impression upon a dragoon by reason of its neatness and the apparent comfort of its population, who were "the most decent in their manner of living of any Indians I have seen."³²

Thither in the autumn of 1835 went their government Indian agent, General Joseph M. Street, accompanied by the famous painter of Indian portraits, George Catlin, and a corporal's command of eight dragoons furnished by

³¹ Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 239, 257. See also a map of the Black Hawk Purchase surveyed by Charles De Ward acting for William Gordon in October, 1835. For Rev. Cutting Marsh's visit to the Sac and Fox towns upon the Red Cedar, Iowa, and Des Moines rivers in 1834, see his report in *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, pp. 201-203.

³² THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. VII, pp. 366, 367, 377.

Lieutenant Colonel Kearny. Catlin wrote as follows of this unique experience:³³

The whole country that we passed over was like a garden, wanting only cultivation, being mostly prairie, and we found their village beautifully situated on a large prairie, on the bank of the Des Moines River. They seemed to be well supplied with the necessaries of life, and with some of its luxuries. I found Ke-o-kuk to be a chief of fine and portly figure, with a good countenance, and great dignity and grace in his manners.

General Street had some documents from Washington, to read to him, which he and his chiefs listened to with great patience; after which he placed before us good brandy and good wine, and invited us to drink, and to lodge with him; he then called up five of his *runners* or *criers*, communicated to them in a low, but emphatic tone, the substance of the talk from the agent, and of the letters read to him, and they started at full gallop — one of them proclaiming it through his village, and the others sent express to the other villages, comprising the whole nation. Ke-o-kuck came in with us, with about twenty of his principal men — he brought in all his costly wardrobe, that I might select for his portrait such as suited me best; but at once named (of his own accord) the one that was purely Indian. In that he paraded for several days, and in it I painted him at full length. He is a man of a great deal of pride, and makes truly a splendid appearance on his black horse. He owns the finest horse in the country, and is excessively vain of his appearance when mounted, and arrayed, himself and horse, in all their gear and trappings. He expressed a wish to see himself represented on horseback, and I painted him in that plight. He rode and nettled his prancing steed in front of my door, until its sides were in a gore of blood. I succeeded to *his* satisfaction, and his vanity is increased, no doubt, by seeing himself immortalized in that way. After finishing him, I painted his favourite wife (the favoured one of seven), his favourite boy, and eight or ten of his principal men and women; after which, he and all his men shook hands with me, wishing me well, and leaving, as tokens of regard, the most valued article of his dress, and a beautiful string of wampum, which he took from his wife's neck.

³³ *Smithsonian Report*, 1885, Part II, pp. 500, 501, 525; *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VIII, p. 311; Catlin's *North American Indians* (Chatto and Windus), Vol. II, pp. 149, 150.

They then departed for their village in good spirits, to prepare for their *fall hunt*.

Chief Keokuk's Reserve upon the Iowa River practically divided the Iowa District into two parts. Owing to the rush of emigration to the West negotiations were soon opened for the purchase of this tract. By virtue of a treaty concluded on September 28, 1836, and ratified by the United States Senate in February, 1837, the Sacs and Foxes gave up their title to the land and agreed not to return for fishing, hunting, or planting after the first of November, 1836. It is reported that when Henry Dodge, Governor of Wisconsin Territory, requested the chiefs and braves to remove their families and property from the cession to make room for the whites, the Indians became excited and then burst into hearty laughter. This behavior one of them explained as follows:³⁴

My father, we have to laugh — we require no time to move — we have all left the lands already, and sold our wigwams to Chemokemons (white men) — some for one hundred, and some for two hundred dollars, before we came to this Treaty. There are already four hundred Chemokemons on the land, and several hundred more on their way moving in; and three days before we came away, one Chemokemon sold his wigwam to another Chemokemon for two thousand dollars, to build a great town.

Thus, ahead of "people from the East, enlightened and intelligent — with industry and perseverance that will soon rear from the soil all the luxuries, and add to the surface, all the taste and comforts of Eastern refinement",³⁵ the Sacs and Foxes had taken up their line of march to lands farther west. From their sale of the Iowa River lands they realized a cash payment of \$30,000, the sum of \$10,000 annually in specie for ten years, and \$48,458. 87½ with which

³⁴ Catlin's *North American Indians* (Chatto and Windus), Vol. II, p. 216.

³⁵ Catlin's *North American Indians* (Chatto and Windus), Vol. II, pp. 216, 217.

to satisfy the claims of traders against them for goods sold and delivered. Sac and Fox debts had accumulated since 1832 and numerous "just creditors" presented their bills for settlement, among them Pratte, Chouteau & Co. of St. Louis, John Campbell, S. S. Phelps & Co., George Davenport, Antoine Le Claire, and Francis Labachiere. It was agreed that one half of the amount ascertained to be due should be paid at once, while the other half should be paid later out of the Sac and Fox annuities, for which purpose \$5000 was to be set aside each year beginning in 1838. The United States, furthermore, undertook to supply the Indians with two hundred horses in June, 1837.³⁶ In all of this there is manifested the government's desire to confer benefit upon the tribesmen and to present new opportunities to home-seekers, but most of all there is evidence of the successful dictation of treaties by Indian traders who had their own selfish interests at heart. They exploited the natives by a system of bartering goods for cash and furs and also by giving unlimited credit in the hope of a government payment later on. They also found it to their best interests to have the Indians removed from the temptations of civilized life to the open western country where the skins of game animals could still be secured for a most lucrative trade in the fur markets of the world. And so, the traders

³⁶ The treaty also provided \$1000 to the widow of Felix St. Vrain, the Sac and Fox Indian agent who had been murdered at the outbreak of the Black Hawk War. One thousand dollars each was given to seven half-breeds, the children of Wharton R. McPherson, James Thorn, Joseph Smart, Nathan Smith, Wayman, Mitchell, and Amos Farrar, \$2000 being paid to Joseph M. Street for the use and benefit of the children of the last two. At the special request of the tribes two hundred dollars was paid to Street for the children of the late John Connolly, James and Thompson Connolly.

Other persons to whom the United States paid various sums of money were Jeremiah Smith, Stephen Dubois, Nathaniel Knapp, Wharton R. McPherson, Jesse W. Shull, James Jordan, the owners of the Steamboat "Warrior", Nathaniel Patterson, Mesdames St. Ament, Gunville, Le Claire, and Miss Blondeau.—Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 353-355.

had nothing to lose and everything to gain when they urged and supported Indian treaties such as the one of 1836.

THE TREATY OF 1837

In the autumn of the year 1837 about thirty Sac and Fox chiefs and delegates left their villages upon the Des Moines River and journeyed by water to the East, conducted by their Indian agent, Joseph M. Street, and the portly half-breed interpreter, Antoine Le Claire. Besides visiting New York and Boston, where they are said to have given a war dance on the Common,³⁷ they met the government's commissioner at Washington and concluded a treaty on October 21st. This time they sold 1,250,000 acres of land lying west of the previous cessions upon the Mississippi River — a narrow strip of territory along the whole western border of the Black Hawk cession of 1832. The reasons for the sale are not clear, unless it be that the Indians and their traders again wanted relief: certain it is that the whites had not filled all the best vacant lands of the "Iowa District".

In return for fertile lands the United States agreed to survey the new tract and pay all Sac and Fox debts up to \$100,000: if these debts amounted to a larger sum, the creditors were to be paid pro rata, and if the debts aggregated less, the Indians were to receive the surplus. The government gave further evidence of its generosity by promising to give the Indians \$28,500 worth of goods suited to their wants; to build two grist mills and furnish two millers for five years at a cost of \$10,000; to break and fence certain Sac and Fox lands and provide "for other beneficial objects" at a cost of \$24,000; to pay \$2000 a year for five years for the services of laborers and other objects to aid

³⁷ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, pp. 100, 101; *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 360, 361.

the Indians in agriculture; and also deliver \$4500 worth of horses and presents to the chiefs and delegates on their arrival at St. Louis. The government further agreed to invest \$200,000 in safe State stocks and pay the Indians a five percent income each year in money or goods as the tribes might direct, although the President of the United States might order some of the income to be spent on education or other improvements, if the Indians so desired. The treaty also stipulated that two blacksmith establishments and one gunsmith shop should be removed from the lands sold to the new location of the tribe; while the Indians themselves should depart westward within eight months after the Senate's ratification of the treaty — the only important exception being that Chief Keokuk might retain possession of his village for two years.³⁸

After the Indian deputation returned to the West, James Jordan,³⁹ William Phelps, and John Tolman are said to have paid \$3000 for the rights of Keokuk and his tribesmen to remain upon the lands which they had sold. The Indians accordingly vacated their village in 1838 and crossed the new Indian boundary to establish themselves on lands a few miles farther up the Des Moines River near the present site of Ottumwa. In the spring of 1838 Keokuk's old village site was laid off by its speculating owners and called Iowaville.⁴⁰ Just across the Des Moines the aged Black

³⁸ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 367, 368.

³⁹ The date of Jordan's coming to the Iowa country is very uncertain. In *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VIII, p. 58, it is 1819, and in an article in the *Des Moines Leader*, July 26, 1886, the date is given as 1822. This and other evidence conflicts.

⁴⁰ The site of this town in the northeastern part of Davis County was the scene, it is said, of a battle between the Ioways and the allied Sacs and Foxes in the early twenties — the date is variously given as 1821, 1823, and 1824. The story of the battle as told by A. W. Harlan who claims that he heard it from the lips of an Indian chief sounds somewhat improbable when it is known that these Indian tribes had for a long time been friendly tenants-in-common of the Iowa wilderness. The fact seems to be that the Ioways left their vil-

Hawk maintained his residence until the time of his death a few months later. Here, too, William and Peter Avery are reported to have served the American Fur Company until 1842, building a blockhouse for their protection. The first steamboat reaching the new frontier town was the American Fur Company's boat "Pavilion".⁴¹

LIFE AT THE SAC AND FOX AGENCY

After their return from Washington in November, 1837, the Sacs and Foxes did little but live upon the government's presents of horses and merchandise, drink whiskey, and associate with the whites, many of whom had settled on Indian lands. Had the squaws not raised considerable quantities of corn, beans, and pumpkins in the summer of 1838 the Indians must have died from hunger, for the Foxes had killed very little game and the Sacs had not attempted to hunt because their vicinity was practically destitute of game. The poverty of the tribes resulted from withholding provisions and also from the sale of liquor by small dealers and border settlers, many of whom presented large claims when the government undertook to liquidate the indebtedness of the tribes. The Sac and Fox Indian agent reported that the whites had dispensed more whiskey among the natives in 1838 than at any other time since 1834.

It was to get away from the border whiskey-sellers that Joseph M. Street selected a site for his Sac and Fox Agency some miles west of the new Indian boundary and only an hour's ride from the principal Indian village. The contract

lage on the Des Moines about this time and later dwelt in what is now northwestern Missouri, but that the removal followed "a big battle and massacre" by the Sacs and Foxes cannot be authenticated. The story of "this decisive and bloody conflict" is detailed in the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VII, pp. 190, 191. Other accounts based upon it are to be found in *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, pp. 483-487, Vol. X, p. 296; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, p. 182.

⁴¹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VIII, pp. 57-59.

for constructing the necessary buildings was let to the lowest bidder, a citizen of Missouri, who started from his home with teams, some of his slaves, and an ample force of mechanics and laborers, and soon had a large number of men at work on the agency grounds. In August, 1838, the council-house of hewn logs was ready. A visitor to the place also found timbers prepared for the agent's house, two heavy teams of horses breaking up the prairie sod, wagons hauling fence rails, and a blacksmith hard at work: "the hospitable-looking camp of tents and board sheds, . . . the blazing fire, over which two or three female Africans were busy at the steaming coffee, bacon, biscuits and divers vegetables of the season, excited in his mind an impression of the new agency, the satisfactory contentment of which has never to this day worn off."⁴² Although the agency buildings were to have been ready in the autumn, they were not finished until after General Street took possession early in 1839. He had had his office on Rock Island as Indian agent for nearly five years, while his wife and children lived at Prairie du Chien. All now took up their residence in the Sac and Fox country.⁴³

Mr. and Mrs. Richard Kerr, having been appointed farmer and matron to the Indians, soon arrived. A suitable location was selected for the pattern or model farm and operations were begun at once. Agent Street wished to make a practical demonstration of his motto: "Teach him agriculture and his family domestic economy, give him by experience right notions of individual property, and the plan of civilizing the Indian commences with the A, B, C, of civilization."⁴⁴ Two saw and grist mills were also con-

⁴² *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 363, 364.

⁴³ *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, p. 530; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, p. 373. Joseph M. Street was appointed Sac and Fox agent on Rock Island on March 4, 1835.

⁴⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, p. 103.

structed: one upon Sugar Creek, the other upon Soap Creek, and Jeremiah and Samuel Smith were placed in charge as millers. The mills were soon destroyed by freshets and even when rebuilt made no appeal to the Indians. The pattern farm and agricultural experiments near the villages succeeded no better. Josiah A. Smart, Charles H. Withington, Joshua W. Baker, Harvey Sturdivant, Job Smith, William and David Fullerton, Henry Plumber, Preston Roberts, and a man named Counon, all came to the agency as government employees in various capacities.⁴⁵

Street's experience during the summer of 1838 indicated that little good could be done for the Indians unless white people and whiskey could be more effectively excluded from the Indian country. When Street came to pay the Sacs and Foxes their annuities, not less than one hundred white men crowded into the new log council-house, and upon being requested to retire to permit the tribesmen to enter and receive their money, they went out and removed "all the chinking between the logs to look in and see what was going on." To quote further from the agent's report:

After the payment, the Indians paid to these small dealers, whiskey sellers, etc., something over \$12,000 in specie, and the Foxes took \$3,000 to pay the claimants, they said, not there. I mention these facts to show the Department the absolute necessity of the exclusion of the whites, except licensed traders, for the Sac and Fox country; and in relation to these I would add, that the only hope I can entertain of a benefit to the Indians is in the exclusion of all white men, but one trader, from the Indian country, whose goods and prices should be controlled by the United States agent, or that the United States take the trade into their own hands and exclude all traders, etc.⁴⁶

In his annual report for 1839 Agent Street gave 4396 as

⁴⁵ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, p. 368; *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 160, 362; *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, No. 126, p. 4.

⁴⁶ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. VI, pp. 367, 368.

the number of Sacs and Foxes dwelling in three villages a few miles from the agency and in Poweshiek's village on the Iowa River one hundred miles away. Although they now possessed mills and millers and broken fields for agriculture no benefits had yet accrued to the tribesmen because there was too much whiskey. In the summer liquor arrived at the Indian towns in barrels in open violation and defiance of the Territorial law passed in January prohibiting such commerce with the Indians. Some whites had actually crossed the boundary line, planted crops, fenced fields, built houses, and absolutely refused to leave: "in some of these houses the vilest practices take place to defraud the Indians. A man named Reason Jordan has built, two or three miles above the line, on the Indian lands, and refuses to remove until he shall please." Physical force was needed to drive out the intruders.⁴⁷

The Indians, strongly attached to Agent Street because he had their best interests at heart, were plunged into deep grief when they received word of his death at the agency in May, 1840. In the hope of succeeding to Street's position and also of preventing Mrs. Street and her children from being turned out of their new home, a son-in-law, John Beach, made a rapid twelve-day journey from Dubuque to Washington and obtained the appointment as Indian agent. Arriving at the agency in June, he found the following persons in residence: Mrs. Street and nine children, interpreter Josiah A. Smart and his Sac wife, blacksmith Charles H. Withington, gunsmith Harvey Sturdivant, and some half-dozen people on the pattern farm. Not far away lived William Phelps, the trader, and on Sugar Creek lived the millwright and miller, Jeremiah Smith, with his family. Then south of the river dwelt a West Virginian named Van Caldwell. It seems that he and others had unknowingly

⁴⁷ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, No. 1, pp. 498-500.

gone across the boundary and settled in the Indian country. He alone was allowed to remain upon condition that he maintain a ferry across the Des Moines River so as to make the mill on Soap Creek seven miles away to the southward accessible to government employees and all other persons during times of high water. Also, from five to seven miles west of the agency across the Des Moines stood the villages of Keokuk, Wapello, and Appanoose with their improved fields. Farther up the river was the village of Hardfish and ten miles north of it another village on the Skunk River (in 1841).⁴⁸

In his first report in the autumn of 1840 Beach notified the government that a Sac and Fox war party had attacked and killed several Sioux and Winnebago Indians, that the mills had been destroyed by freshets, and that the farms did not yield much. Indeed, at one time the Indians took down a fence and drove their ponies into a field of young wheat.⁴⁹ Such was their inclination to farm. A year later one mill had been rebuilt, a bolt had been set up for the manufacture of flour, and the farm contained one hundred and seventy-seven acres of cultivated land, most of which with its crops of corn and oats had been fenced in with rails. Potatoes and turnips were expected for distribution. Agent Beach also made the following interesting statement:

But the cultivation which appears to render the greatest satisfaction of the Indians is that of two acres in watermelons. About one half of those residing on the Des Moines are alternately invited once in each week, and several hundred melons issued to them. As this is, perhaps, the only article which they prefer to whiskey, they readily come several miles to procure them. Two beeves have been killed, and three others are fattening, for the Indians.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, p. 354; *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 365; *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, p. 531; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. II, pp. 101, 387; *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 351.

⁴⁹ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 26th Congress, No. 1, pp. 327-330.

⁵⁰ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 350, 351.

As early as the year 1834 a difference of opinion had arisen among the Sacs and Foxes about the government method of paying annuities. At that time the chiefs of two Fox villages, Poweshiek and Appanoose, sent to the President a petition signed by over four hundred Fox hunters and warriors. They complained that the annuities paid to Keokuk had been given by him to the American Fur Company and they had received nothing.⁵¹ In time Hardfish, head of the upper village, became the leader of those who objected to having money paid to irresponsible chiefs: they favored the direct payment of government annuities to the heads of families, and were supported in their contention by the Iowa legislators. At the council which was held in the agency house on September 28, 1840, in the presence of Governor Robert Lucas, the Indians could not conciliate their differences and so the payment was deferred. In the month of July, 1841, Governor John Chambers visited the Indians and probably discussed their dissensions with them, for not long afterward John Beach, the Indian agent, notified him that the two bands had at last solved their difficulty. Hardfish's band was to receive a part of the money due for distribution to the heads of families, while Keokuk's band was to receive the remainder for payment to the chiefs.⁵²

On October 12, 1841, Governor Chambers and T. Hartley Crawford, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, arranged to pay the Sac and Fox annuities to the heads of families in proportion to numbers. A census was accordingly taken, twenty-three hundred souls were counted, and the money for two years was then distributed. Enriched by the sum of \$82,000, they paid some of their debts and spent the rest for whiskey, horses, and merchandise: they bought from the traders everything they wanted for cash and more on

⁵¹ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 23d Congress, Nos. 63, 64.

⁵² *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 349.

credit.⁵³ It was under such unfavorable conditions that a few days later the United States commissioners, John Chambers, James D. Doty, and T. Hartley Crawford, with their secretary, James W. Grimes, met the Sacs and Foxes at the agency according to instructions to obtain a cession of all the land they possessed in Iowa. The Indians were requested to deliberate and answer "without allowing themselves to be influenced by the counsel of white men, who were excluded from all participation in their deliberations."⁵⁴ Mr. Crawford, just arrived from Washington, offered them one million dollars and money enough to pay all their debts, and added:

The country we wish you to remove to . . . will be on the head waters of the Des Moines, and west of the Blue Earth river. To remove apprehension of hostilities from your red brothers in that section [the Sioux Indians], we propose to establish and man three forts there for your protection, to be established before your removal from your present villages. Out of the million of dollars we propose that you have farms and farmers, mills and millers, blacksmiths, gunsmiths, school-houses, and a fine council-house. But, what will be of more value to you than all, we would propose to build a house for each family, each house to be worth not exceeding one hundred and fifty dollars, and to fence and plough six acres of ground for each family. We propose to build for each of the chiefs a house worth not exceeding three hundred dollars, and fence and plough twelve acres of ground for each. We then intend you all to live in one village like brothers. This is the proposition we are authorized to make. If you will once try this mode of life you will never quit it. The white people have found it good. You will be happy with your wives and children, in fine, warm, and close houses. Your children will grow strong and be healthy, if kept from the weather and well fed, and you will all live long. But to make your children respected, they should be taught to read and write. To enable them to do so, we propose to place fifty thousand

⁵³ Parish's *John Chambers*, pp. 170-176; *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 275-277.

⁵⁴ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 253, 269.

dollars at interest for the purposes of education. If you will live in houses, cultivate the land, and educate your children, you will be contented and happy. I have now told you the terms upon which we propose to treat. You will probably want time to reflect upon this subject. In making this proposition I have been honest and plain with you, and I expect the same from you. Any other course of conduct would be unworthy of you and unjust to the Government.

Governor Chambers asked the chiefs and braves why the white people increased like leaves on the trees and why the Indians had decreased to only 2300 persons, and answered the question by telling them that white people lived in comfortable houses and had enough food to eat and sufficient clothing to wear. Besides, the red men used too much "liquor, impregnated with pepper and tobacco and other poisonous ingredients." The Sac chief Keokuk asked to have the proposal explained more fully the next day, and on Sunday, October 17th, the commissioners met the Indians in council to hear their answer. The Sac chief Hardfish declared that all were of one mind: they could not subsist in the poor prairie country offered them in exchange for their homes in the timber. Poweshiek, Pashepaho, Kishkekosh, Wishewahka, Keokuk, Wapello, and Appanoose all made short speeches and reiterated what Hardfish had said. Governor Chambers replied that they were mistaken about the region farther north, that there was timber, and that the government had only their best interests at heart and wished to remove them out of their present degraded condition. The Indians, however, were not to be won over, ended the negotiations, and went upon a spree such as they had never before known.⁵⁵

Not long after the failure of these negotiations the Ter-

⁵⁵ For James W. Grimes' minutes of the treaty negotiations see *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 270-275. See also Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 176.

ritorial legislature of Iowa passed a resolution in favor of further negotiations early in 1842. A purchase of Indian territory had become absolutely necessary in view of "the great and unprecedented influx of people" who wanted fertile lands and expected the government to buy and open to settlement more of the western country. Besides, it was understood that the Sacs and Foxes were willing to dispose of at least a part of their lands.⁵⁶ On the other hand Governor Chambers' description of drunkenness among the red men struck no sympathetic chord in the legislature and hence no provision was made to suppress the illegitimate sale of liquor.⁵⁷ Then, in the month of February, 1842, the heads of the four Des Moines River villages called upon Agent Beach and expressed a desire to sell some of their country. In the spring and summer the destitute Pottawatamies and the Ioways visited them and as unwelcome guests helped to eat up their scanty supplies and game; some Sacs moved their homes fifty miles higher up the Des Moines; the buffalo hunt proved to be quite unsuccessful; revengeful whites burned down the mills; and the Sac and Fox census revealed a rapid decrease in numbers due to drunkenness. To such a condition had debt and poverty reduced them that they met the United States commissioners in council and disposed of the remainder of their territory in Iowa.⁵⁸ (See the terms of the treaty of 1842 below.)

The treaty of October, 1842, required the removal of the Indians to lands farther west and the abandonment of all the trading houses and the agency buildings. Only the pattern farm was to be operated for another year.⁵⁹ George Wilson, the farmer, took charge in November, finished a

⁵⁶ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 86.

⁵⁷ Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 177.

⁵⁸ *Senate Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 424-427; Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 178.

⁵⁹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 406 (Article VII of the treaty).

house for visiting Indians, and two corn cribs, and distributed the produce of the farm to the tribesmen, thus preventing much suffering during a winter of unusual length and severity. Owing to the malicious burning of the Indian mill on Soap Creek, Wilson was obliged to journey from forty to sixty miles to have wheat ground into flour. This with corn, potatoes, pork, beef, and oats and fodder for horses comprised the supplies furnished to the Indians. In the spring of 1843 the chiefs asked that the whole farm be planted in corn, but interminable rains made it impossible to comply with their wishes. Then, owing to a summer drouth not more than one-third of the usual crop was gathered, besides a small quantity of oats and hay. Such was the end of the history of the Sac and Fox Agency.⁶⁰

A FORT NEAR THE SAC AND FOX AGENCY: FORT SANFORD

John Beach, the Indian agent, had work to do when over-anxious, land-grabbing whites sought to gain a foothold in the Sac and Fox country. In his first annual report dated September 1, 1841, he made the following statement:⁶¹

Extensive infractions of the intercourse act, in that section prohibiting the surveying, marking of trees, and otherwise designating boundaries within the Indian territory, have been for several months past, and still are, constantly occurring. Information of the intended treaty [negotiations in fall of 1841] having become extensively circulated, has caused this portion of the country to be visited by large numbers of persons, some of whom occasion much annoyance to the Indians, beside committing acts in direct violation of the laws of the United States. Of the intruders who have settled upon Indian land, and have been frequently warned to remove therefrom, with most ample assurances of what would be the final result of pertinacity on their part, none have removed since my late special report upon the subject. I earnestly hope, as I then recommended, that no delay will be suffered in taking the necessary measures to convince these people of the potency of the law.

⁶⁰ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, pp. 384-386.

⁶¹ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 349, 350.

During the first two years of his incumbency Beach found it necessary three times to call in dragoon detachments from Fort Atkinson to drive out the intruders. Early in the year 1842 Governor Chambers asked the federal government to aid in expelling the squatters and preserving order. During the month of June a squad of dragoons under Lieutenant Leonidas Jenkins removed many persons from the Indian lands south of the Des Moines and returned to Fort Atkinson.⁶² His opinion that a sufficient military force should be stationed near the agency received the endorsement of the Governor when he urged the United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs to prevent the lawless element from returning to the Indians. Beach in the autumn of 1842 reported that incendiaries had burned the agency mills out of revenge for being removed from the Indian country and that they had terrorized the agency families by their acts of violence. Whiskey-sellers produced the most disgusting scenes of drunkenness; Beach and the Governor were shot in effigy; and Jeremiah Smith secretly removed a band of Indians to tour the country for exhibition purposes.⁶³ Concerning all these disorders and difficulties Beach wrote:

I know of no point upon our Indian frontier where the permanent presence of a military force is more essentially requisite than at this. . . . No obstruction, no means of prevention here exist to the continual passage to and fro in the Indian country of the most lawless and desperate characters, who can at any time commit outrages against order, morality, and the laws, with perfect impunity; and many of whom, feeling themselves aggrieved by their recent expulsions from the Indian country, are the more ready to revenge themselves by acts of violence.⁶⁴

In view of the disturbances narrated above and in prep-

⁶² *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 289, 290.

⁶³ Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 179.

⁶⁴ *Senate Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 425, 426.

aration for the time when the next annuities were to be paid to the Sacs and Foxes the War Department gave orders that a dragoon post be established wherever the Governor of Iowa Territory might direct.⁶⁵ On a journey to visit the agency early in September, 1842, Chambers found hundreds of landseekers infesting the border line, "ready to swoop across and take up the new land" as soon as they heard that a treaty of purchase had been made. Although some behaved themselves well, others drunkenly "threatened the Agent, the dragoons, and the Governor, and created so many kinds of disturbance that they must needs be placed under guard." Accordingly Chambers obtained a full company of dragoons from Fort Atkinson. These troops under Captain James Allen arrived at the agency early in October in time to preserve order during the important treaty negotiations between Governor Chambers and the Indians.⁶⁶ They were needed to guard against disturbances by the thousand or more whites in attendance, but an eye-witness took offence at their presence, as is shown by the following statement:

The treaty was conducted with great dignity and propriety, if we may except the introduction of dragoons to keep out citizens beyond hearing distance. Capt. Allen and Lt. Ruff, of the Dragoons are talented and gentlemanly officers, and were present in obedience to orders — but Gov. Chambers certainly believes too much in show, or greatly mistakes the character of our citizens, if he deems all this flummery and metal-button authority necessary to the order, dignity or success of a treaty.⁶⁷

On the twelfth of November the dragoons left their camp near the agency and found quarters in abandoned log cabins four miles to the westward, thanks to the kindness of John

⁶⁵ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 290, 291.

⁶⁶ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, p. 400; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. X, p. 261.

⁶⁷ *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. X, pp. 263, 264.

F. A. Sanford, a son-in-law of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and a member of the American Fur Company. Captain Allen named the post Fort Sanford, built log huts for two officers and stables for the horses in preparation for the winter, and during the month of November made an expedition with a portion of his company to the mouth of the Raccoon River. Once a week mail was carried by express from Fairfield, the nearest postoffice, twenty-one miles away. In official military circles the station went by the name of "Sac and Fox Agency".⁶⁸

THE SAC AND FOX TREATY OF 1842

Upon receipt of instructions from the United States government Governor John Chambers at once began to make preparations for treaty negotiations with the Sacs and Foxes. Knowing beforehand that the Indian traders were a factor first of all to be taken into account, he appointed Arthur Bridgman and Alfred Hebard to investigate and adjust the claims of all persons against the confederated tribes. When this work had been completed in three weeks time by weighing the testimony of both the Indians and the traders, Chambers with the interpreters, Antoine Le Claire and Josiah Smart, and a few others met the chiefs in a large circular tent set up for the occasion — the Governor in the uniform of a Brigadier General and the Indians in their best blankets, fresh paint, and fine feathers. When, after many days of oratory and counselling and dancing almost every night, the terms of the treaty had been agreed upon and signatures affixed on October 11, 1842, the Sacs and Foxes had parted with their title to all lands within the Territory of Iowa.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 164, 291, 292; THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, pp. 190-192.

⁶⁹ Parish's *John Chambers*, pp. 179, 181, 183; THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, p. 262.

Besides retaining the right to occupy their villages until May 1, 1843, and to occupy all their country to the west of a line drawn north and south through "painted or red rocks on the White Breast fork of the Des Moines river [in Marion County]," from then until October 11, 1845, the Indians were to receive each year an income of five percent on a fund of \$800,000; their debts were to be paid; and a tract of land on the Missouri River was to be assigned to them. Each of the principal chiefs became entitled to spend five hundred dollars annually as he saw fit. Moreover, a sum of \$30,000 was to be kept out of the annual payment for tribal and charitable purposes such as the support of the poor, the burial of the dead, the employment of physicians, and for provisions in case of necessity. The Indians were also to be free to ask for the payment of annuities in goods or provisions or for agricultural purposes. Among the minor stipulations were two of a sentimental nature: the Indians left one hundred dollars in the hands of John Beach for a tombstone in memory of their chief, Wapello, who lay buried beside their former agent, Joseph M. Street; and feeling under obligations to Mr. Street for many acts of kindness and wishing to give "his widow Mrs. Eliza M. Street one section of land to include the said graves, and the agency-house and enclosures around and near it", the United States agreed to give Mrs. Street "six hundred and forty acres of land in such legal subdivisions, as will include the said burial ground, the agency house, and improvements around, and near it, in good and convenient form, to be selected by the said E. M. Street or her duly authorized agent."⁷⁰

It will be noticed that, although many Indian tribes of the time had schools, the Sacs and Foxes obstinately refused to let the government establish schools among them, and dur-

⁷⁰ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 404-407.

ing the treaty negotiations "they resisted every effort to induce them to make provision for the establishment of the *pattern farm*, which, under a former treaty, had been very successfully conducted for them, near their principal villages; and equally unsuccessful was the exertion of the commissioner to induce them to permit a portion of the proceeds of their land to be expended in the erection of comfortable houses for them, and the enclosure of small lots of land for cultivation."⁷¹

THE RACCOON RIVER AGENCY FROM 1843 TO 1845

Owing to the endless rains of April and May, 1843, the Sacs and Foxes found it impossible to move westward in compliance with the treaty provisions, but they abandoned their villages soon after the first of May. Ninety miles away, twenty-eight miles across the line which became the Indian boundary on that day, a location was selected for the Raccoon River Agency, so named because its buildings stood about half a mile east of the Des Moines and one mile and a quarter below the mouth of the Raccoon River. Not far from the agency house arose the residences of the interpreter and the smiths, as well as two blacksmith shops and two gunsmith shops, one set for each of the tribes. The new agency site, "in regard to beauty of appearance, quality of soil, and general position of ground," was far superior to any other in the vicinity — "a consideration of some importance in the final sale of the property." Practically everything was in readiness for a two years occupancy by the first of October, 1843.

Agent Beach succeeded only partially in his attempt to induce the Indians to take up their residence as near the agency as possible. About half of the Sacs and one band of Foxes built their villages near by, while the other Sacs set-

⁷¹ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 374.

tled down about eight miles away and "the great majority of the Foxes, comprising the bands who had resided upon the Iowa and Skunk rivers, entertaining some jealousy of the other portion of the nation, as well as an aversion to the *Des Moines* country," fixed themselves about fifteen miles distant upon the Skunk River, not far from the new boundary line with its numerous whiskey shops.⁷² Inasmuch as the Indians had delayed their removal to this region on account of heavy rains and bad roads, they arrived too late to prepare the soil for the little corn and vegetables which their women usually raised. This fact, together with the losses and inconveniences incident to moving, reduced them to a condition of want and obliged the agent to purchase provisions for them. The next year, however, they cultivated considerable ground and raised a good quantity of corn. As an indication of their gradual decline in numbers the agent reported sixty-eight deaths for the year 1843-1844.⁷³

Rev. Benjamin A. Spaulding, a pioneer minister among the settlers, who occupied the old Sac and Fox Agency in Wapello County, visited the white population of nearly two hundred persons at the Raccoon River Agency and Fort Des Moines in 1844. He preached "to as many of these as could be crowded into a single room, officers, soldiers, merchants, mechanics, farmers, gentlemen, ladies, children and servants, both black and white." There had been much sickness and some deaths in the settlement. Mr. Spaulding, like the "circuit riders" of his day — among them a Methodist clergyman who had already called at this frontier place — expressed a willingness to make frequent visits to

⁷² *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, pp. 374, 379-381. Poweshiek and Kishkekosh had their villages in Jasper County.— Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 266, 268.

⁷³ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, pp. 417, 421, 422.

the agency, should other engagements permit. His description of an Indian village near by is worthy of repetition:⁷⁴

Their huge bark buildings present a fine appearance in the distance at twilight, but on a nearer approach by day they seem rather the haunts of beasts than the abodes of men. Not a tree or shrub, a garden or well, nor the slightest mark of beauty or comfort, was any where to be seen; even the wild grass had been beaten by continual trampling, till not a blade or root was left, and as the savages were away on a hunting expedition the stillness of death reigned over their desolate homes. There are several other villages on this and the neighboring rivers, containing in all about 2,200 persons all that is left of the Sacs and Foxes, those warlike tribes who filled the whole frontier with terror during the Black Hawk War.

Nothing of particular interest occurred at the agency during the ensuing year: periods of employment and of idleness recurred as did the seasons, "idleness and its attendant dissipation greatly preponderating over that devoted to any serviceable occupation." After receiving their annuities in September, 1844, the Indians dispersed "over the country for the purpose of hunting and remain so scattered until spring, inhabiting their temporary lodges made of mats, which they erect under the protection of some densely wooded bottom land, and moving from place to place as circumstances may require." Scarcity of game compelled the Foxes and Hardfish's Sacs to visit and remain about the border settlements during the winter, "the former visiting their old haunts upon the Iowa, to which they are much attached, while the latter went upon the borders of Missouri." Agent Beach continued his report on the habits and customs of his charges as follows:

As soon as the sap commences to run, the Indians move to their 'sugar camps,' and employ themselves in the manufacture of sugar and molasses as long as they can. After which, they repair to their permanent villages; and, having once more placed their bark lodges

⁷⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. V, pp. 57, 58.

in habitable order, the time has arrived for the commencement of their agricultural operations. These are somewhat limited, and mostly performed by the females, being confined to the planting of a little corn, beans, and melons, in the small patches broken up with hoes in the soft timbered ground, though of late the men have shown an increasing disposition to assist, and have applied to me for the purchase of horses, harness, and ploughs, from their agricultural fund.

From the time of planting until their payment, except the month of June, (usually consumed in a buffalo hunt,) the Indians hang about their villages, addicted to the most constant and revolting intoxication, the facilities for which are so deplorably numerous, and will continue to increase until greater certainty of detection and the *penitentiary* shall be made to await all those who are guilty of the *crime* of producing it.

The site of the Raccoon River Agency proved to be an unfortunate choice. Nearly all the residents, civil and military, suffered severely from malarial disorders. Mrs. Beach died in the summer of 1845 and was buried near her father at the old Sac and Fox Agency. Beach himself also became very ill, and during the year seventy-nine Indians died, including Chief Pashepaho.⁷⁵

The month of September, 1845, was a busy one for the red men who were preparing for their final departure from the Iowa country. Keokuk aided Beach in every way, displaying more than his usual capacity and firmness.⁷⁶ Governor Chambers considered the chief a remarkable man but exclaimed: "What a noble Indian that would be, but for his intemperate habits!" Before the Indians set out on their journey to the reservation in the Kansas country, arrangements were made for the distribution of the government annuities. The last money was doled out to the Indians in Iowa, followed by the same scenes of drunkenness as had characterized the payments of previous years.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 1, pp. 485, 486.

⁷⁶ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, p. 195.

⁷⁷ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, p. 195.

Before their rights of occupation by the treaty of 1842 expired on October 11, 1845, Keokuk and the Sacs were on their way southwestward. The Foxes, however, made a show of refusing to accompany their confederates: the illness of Agent Beach "enabled evil-disposed and interested persons to act upon the credulity of a portion of the tribe, and by keeping them drunk, and misrepresenting the character and situation of the land designated for their future residence, to prejudice them against it, and render them unwilling to remove."⁷⁸ Nevertheless, with the exception of about one hundred, including many of the sick and infirm, the Sacs and Foxes passed out of "a country endeared by tenderest recollections: their cradle, the home of their youth, the sepulchre of their ancestors, and of many dearest friends". They emigrated within the time prescribed by the treaty, the Sacs before the last day of September and the Foxes a few days before the eleventh of October and, owing to their abundant supply of horses and a plentiful crop, they needed no assistance from the government in removing to the region which they selected about the headwaters of the Osage River. Agent John Beach once more set up headquarters, this time on the Kansas reservation.⁷⁹

DRAGOON ACTIVITIES AND FORT DES MOINES

The duty of preventing eager whites from settling the New Purchase before the stipulated time devolved upon the dragoon force under Captain Allen. The government, however, did not forbid persons to travel through and inspect the country, and as a result many homeseekers picked out sites for claims weeks before the first of May. The Des Moines Valley region seemed most magnetic during those anxious times, so much so that the dragoons in several in-

⁷⁸ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 1, pp. 480, 481.

⁷⁹ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 29th Congress, No. 4, pp. 298, 299.

stances had to expel the trespassing white settlers. It is said "that every imaginable scheme was resorted to for gaining admission": some wished to become attached to the Sac and Fox Agency, and others sought connections with the different trading-houses in order to stake out the choicest spots. Because the agent, John Beach, refused to recognize such applicants for permits, he was thoroughly hated as an officer. Moreover, those who secured permission from the Indian chiefs to mark off claims and build cabins left the forbidden land only after clashes with the dragoons. Indeed, detachments of Captain Allen's troops were kept on patrol duty up and down the Indian boundary, constantly on the look-out for intruders.

So many hundreds of landseekers had moved their families and stock to the boundary line and pitched camp in their anxiety to lose no time in getting to the spots already selected that serious apprehensions were entertained by Agent Beach and Captain Allen lest the people should organize opposition strong enough to overcome the reign of martial law; "but those anxious to settle the new country, on proper reflection, thought it best to submit to these regulations, and abide their time; for it was generally understood that any claim which was marked off before the whites were permitted to settle the country would not be held valid under the claim laws."⁸⁰

About one month after Captain Allen visited the point at the junction of the Raccoon and the Des Moines, he wrote to the War Department, stating his reasons for selecting that place as the best site for a new fort. First, the locality possessed all necessary building materials, water, and grass; secondly, a fort at that point would protect the Sacs and Foxes against their Sioux enemies and against squat-

⁸⁰ *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, pp. 534, 535; Vol. IX, pp. 475, 476.

ters; thirdly, it was equidistant from the Mississippi and Missouri rivers and would lie on the best route between the two rivers; fourthly, it was about the right distance from the settlements and only two miles above the site chosen for the Indian villages and trading houses; and fifthly, the fort would be at the head of keel-boat navigation. The captain also proposed plans for establishing the post and urged that necessary materials and supplies for the garrison be sent up to the Raccoon on an American Fur Company steamboat which was going to take advantage of the spring rise of water in the river.

On February 20, 1843, orders were issued for the erection of a temporary post on a site to be determined by Captain Allen. Late in April a small detachment of dragoons set out for the new station and soon afterward helped to unload army supplies from the steamboat "Agatha" which came from St. Louis.⁸¹ Leaving his men to guard these stores Allen returned to Fort Sanford and after loading corn and other stores in a keel-boat and wagons for shipment, Allen led the remainder of his company to what he called "Fort Raccoon" and arrived there on the twentieth day of May, Captain John R. B. Gardenier coming the next day with Company F of the First United States Infantry.

Fort Des Moines, as the authorities at Washington preferred to call it, came to be a considerable establishment, but without pickets or block-houses it never had the appearance of a military post. Captain Allen's command first built a temporary wharf for steamboats and keel-boats, then a public store-house, a hospital, several one-story log cabins for the soldiers, stables and corrals for the horses, and officers' quarters. Gardens were also laid out. Not far

⁸¹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 331, 332, 334. Authorities disagree about the name of the steamboat which made this journey in May, 1843: the "Ione" is mentioned in Turrill's *Historical Reminiscences of the City of Des Moines*, and in the *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. XI, p. 482.

from the flagstaff the post trader, Robert A. Kinzie, set up his store and dwelling; J. M. Thrift and Charles Weatherford became post tailor and blacksmith, respectively; Benj. B. Bryant, John Sturtevant, and Alexander Turner received permits to cultivate tracts of land in the vicinity in order to raise supplies for the garrison; and J. B. Scott opened a farm east of the Des Moines River opposite the officers' quarters under the terms of a contract to furnish forage and beef. North of Scott's farm the Ewing Brothers⁸² were allowed to erect a log trading house and about two miles southeast stood the residence of the Phelps Brothers also engaged in the Indian trade. About two miles southeast of the fort stood the Indian agency buildings of the government in charge of John Beach.⁸³ When the winter of 1843-1844 set in, all the men above named, besides two other attachés, Dr. T. K. Brooks and James Drake, occupied houses upon this frontier site of the future State capital of Iowa. Including the troops they numbered over one hundred men.⁸⁴

With the spring of 1844 came the annoyance of the first straggling squatters who hoped to be permitted to remain on the land before the Indians were required to depart. Captain Allen and his dragoons constantly watched "these vagabond speculators". In the winter of 1843-1844 they were obliged to bring back a small band of Foxes who had returned to their old village on the Iowa River and caused some trouble to the white settlers in that vicinity.⁸⁵ Then, setting out with a guide from Fort Des Moines on August 11, 1844, Captain Allen led a cavalcade of over fifty dragoons and some wagonloads of provisions for an ex-

⁸² Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, p. 360.

⁸³ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 381.

⁸⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 169-172.

⁸⁵ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 416.

ploration of the northern portion of Iowa Territory. The expedition proceeded up the Des Moines Valley, crossing the trail made by emigrants to far-away Oregon⁸⁶ in the summer of the year before, noting the place where a party of Delaware Indians had been wiped out in 1841, and finally reaching the numberless lakes of southern Minnesota. Finding a way out they went on to the headwaters of the Des Moines, to tributaries of the Minnesota River, and westward to the Big Sioux River, killing many buffaloes and losing several horses to the thieving Sioux Indians. The troops descended the Big Sioux to its mouth, passing its falls and exploring the present counties of northwestern Iowa, and after an absence of fifty-four days arrived at Fort Des Moines on the third of October, the horses badly worn out by a journey of over seven hundred miles.⁸⁷ Another expedition made by Captain Allen and his company of dragoons was despatched the following summer in conjunction with Captain Sumner's company from Fort Atkinson, and the purpose seems to have been to impress the Indians with their "vigour, alertness, and fine appearance", as well as with "the wise and humane admonitions" of their commanders. The two-months' saddle journey of 1845 extended from Fort Des Moines via the St. Peter's or Minnesota River to Devil's Lake, North Dakota, and return.⁸⁸ The reports of both expeditions make very interesting reading.

About the middle of September, 1845, the last annuity was distributed among the Sacs and Foxes and, if one may

⁸⁶ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, pp. 425, 427, 429. The "Oregon trail" noted by the dragoons lay just above the mouth of the Raccoon River. Iowa City, Muscatine, and Burlington were then advertised as good starting-points for the journey across the Iowa wilderness to Council Bluffs on the Missouri.

⁸⁷ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XI, pp. 74-108.

⁸⁸ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XI, pp. 259-267.

believe the report of a newspaper correspondent present on that occasion, the officers of the garrison were guilty of the most reprehensible conduct: a large jug of liquor was placed before Indians who were invited to drink. Captain Allen had even sent bottles of liquor with his compliments to Poweshiek and other chiefs and rumor had it that he "had a particular object in view in making the Indians drunk about the time of the payment." It was further alleged that the captain had refused to clear the country of liquor or of whiskey peddlers, though the Indian agent, John Beach, made a requisition upon him. It is impossible, however, to vouch for the truth of the reporter's statement "that the location of Fort Des Moines among the Sac and Fox Indians (under its present commander,) for the last two years, has corrupted them more and lowered them deeper in the scale of vice and degradation, than all their intercourse with the whites for the ten years previous".⁸⁹

The duties of the garrison increased as the end of the Indian occupation of the country drew near. Squatters lined the Indian boundary and frequently crossed, only to be driven back. It also became evident that the tribes, especially the Foxes, were strongly disinclined to leave their Iowa hunting-grounds. Captain Allen successfully urged the War Department not to abandon the fort until all the Indians had left the country, to accomplish which the dragoons might yet be necessary. The company of infantrymen, however, marched away to Jefferson Barracks. Although most of the Sacs and Foxes complied with the terms of their treaty of 1842, and departed peacefully for their new reservation west of the Missouri River, about two hundred tribesmen were found at a place thirty miles north of the fort as late as December 10, 1845, and Lieutenant

⁸⁹ *The Davenport Gazette*, November 13, 1845; THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XII, p. 195.

Robert S. Granger "rounded them up" for removal. The military reservation of Fort Des Moines having been ceded to Polk County on January 17, 1846, and orders having been issued in February for the evacuation of the post, the Indians still dwelling in the neighborhood were brought in and under the escort of Lieutenant Patrick Noble and twenty-five dragoons were conducted southward. On March 10, 1846, the remaining half of Company I marched out on the route to Fort Leavenworth. Lieutenant Grier returned to the post later and sold some property at public auction on May 1st, and with that event the government's immediate interest in the region ceased.⁹⁰

THE IMMIGRATION OF 1843 AND 1845

May the first, 1843, and October the eleventh, 1845, are memorable days in the history of the conquest of the West: they marked the expiration of Sac and Fox domination in what soon came to be thirty-five prosperous counties in the south-central portion of the Commonwealth of Iowa.

The Indian boundary established in 1837 barred the way of Anglo-Saxons moving westward. The surveyed lands of the Territory of Iowa extending to this line filled up so rapidly that the announcement in 1841 of a proposal to buy more of the Indian wilderness lured a considerable number of expectant home-seekers to the border. The failure of negotiations in the autumn of this year resulted in disappointment for a multitude of people, but the success of United States commissioners in October, 1842, everywhere revived the interest of Americans who were ready and willing to brave the hard knocks of frontier life. Emigrants rushed to the "New Purchase" by the way of the Ohio and the Mississippi or they rolled overland in great, rumbling

⁹⁰ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 173-177; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. VIII, pp. 542, 543.

wagons. For weeks and months before this wonderful country was opened to settlement alluring prospects brought hundreds of persons to the frontier border and only military force could restrain them from building homes upon the red man's soil.

The loud discharge of fire-arms by those encamped along the extended Indian boundary announced the midnight hour and the coming of the first of May, 1843. Before this horde of men in quest of homes lay stretched the El Dorado of their dreams, prepared to welcome and reward the wielders of axes and holders of ploughs. The flood-gates of immigration being opened wide, hundreds of pioneers burst over the line and pushed the American frontier many miles westward. Their scramble for the choicest spots upon the new public domain presented a scene of the wildest confusion. Within a few brief hours by torch light they staked off all sorts of irregular areas of land for occupation. In haste they blazed trees in the timber, ran lines in all directions, and crossed and recrossed each others' tracks in marking out their claims. When daylight dawned upon the weary fortune hunters and revealed to them conflicting and overlapping interests as well as strips or "gores" of unclaimed territory between their lines, altercations arose in plenty,⁹¹ but be it said to their honor, "compromises were generally effected without serious difficulty or personal violence." Before night fell on that momentous first of May, the hunting-grounds roamed by savages for centuries had passed into the hands of representatives of a new régime: the civilization of ambitious white men was crowding hard upon the heels of the receding red men.⁹²

Of the millions of acres which squatters now seized, to

⁹¹ *Niles' Register*, Vol. LXIV, p. 272; *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. III, p. 536.

⁹² *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. IX, pp. 476, 477; Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 185.

await the government survey and sale, no portion filled up more rapidly than did the valley of the Des Moines. Accessions to the neighborhood of the Sac and Fox Agency were especially noteworthy: five thousand persons were reported to be living within the confines of Wapello County at the end of the first month.⁹³ Men brought their families, live stock, and farm implements, and lost no time preparing the virgin soil for the first season's crops. Against the coming winter they also raised log cabins for their homes. Ottumwa and other towns were at once laid out by interested speculators. The press of people who flocked from the East and South by team and wagon continued up the valley into Monroe, Mahaska, and Marion counties. Everywhere little groups of families united by blood ties or by previous acquaintance and friendship wisely formed settlements in the wilderness to combat and overcome the privations of frontier life by mutual dependence and coöperation.⁹⁴

But if the white population of the Indian country opened to settlement was in the main characterized by the well-known frontier virtues, it is also true that the waves of immigration of 1837 and 1843 deposited upon the very border the scum of the earth. The abandonment of portions of their territory in these years was but the prelude to an immediate pursuit of the Sacs and Foxes by depraved and debased persons whose sole employment consisted of ministering to the Indian's vicious appetite. Upon the Indian frontier congregated a class of people "who willingly suffer every inconvenience, and complain of no discomfort, so long as they have the means of successfully continuing their infamous traffic in whiskey." When the line of 1843 had been surveyed liquor shops became more numerous upon it

⁹³ Barrows' *Notes on Iowa*, p. 19; *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 381; *Niles' Register*, Vol. LXIV, p. 311.

⁹⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. II, p. 294, Vol. III, pp. 534, 536, Vol. VII, pp. 37, 254.

than upon the old line of 1837.⁹⁵ No wonder, then, that the Sacs and Foxes took little stock in the education, civilization, and religion of the white men with whom they came into contact — “men whose licentious dispositions, love of gain, and propensities for the most sensual indulgences, unchecked by any respect either for their own characters or the opinions of the more virtuous,” would always draw the red men to the frontier so long as they had hopes of success in their shameless and abandoned course. Nor were the people dwelling upon the northern Missouri boundary any different. And finally, American citizens of the same type were in 1846 found again upon the outskirts of civilization, high up the River Des Moines, furnishing the young braves of the Yankton Sioux with liquor and cheating them out of their guns, horses, and buffalo robes.⁹⁶

For two years immigrants pushed up the Des Moines into the empty lands of the Territory of Iowa — only dragoon patrols along the White Breast boundary impeded their seizure of Sac and Fox lands farther west. As the red man's sway over this country approached its end, the history of two years before repeated itself. Prospective settlers first crossed the line and inspected the region “so long as they were unaccompanied by wagon and carried no ax.” As the dragoons became less vigilant, occasionally “a wagon slipped in through the brush.” Then, as the eleventh of October, 1845, drew near, scores of settlers provided with sharpened stakes and lanterns or blazing torches awaited the signal which should welcome them to better opportunities: the loud cracking of muskets for miles along the border was followed at midnight by the sudden advance of the army of invaders. Completing the occupation of Mahaska

⁹⁵ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, p. 380.

⁹⁶ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 1, pp. 483, 484, 485; *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 29th Congress, No. 4, p. 295.

County, the pioneers took possession of the lands around Fort Des Moines and the Indian agency and penetrated the solitude far beyond. A pioneer's reminiscences convey a striking, though flowery, picture of that memorable night:

The moon was slowly sinking in the west, and its beams afforded a feeble and uncertain light, for the measuring of claims, in which so many were engaged. Ere long the landscape was shrouded in darkness, save the wild and fitful glaring of torches, carried by the claim-makers. Before the night had entirely worn away, the rough surveys were finished, and the Indian lands had found new tenants. Throughout the country thousands of acres were laid off in claims before dawn. Settlers rushed in by hundreds, and the region lately so tranquil and silent, felt the impulse of the change, and became vocal with the sounds of industry and enterprise.⁹⁷

TRADERS AND WHISKEY SELLERS AMONG THE SACS AND FOXES
FROM 1834 TO 1845

Instead of merely a large portion of eastern Iowa lying along the Mississippi, twice or three times as much, or even all, of the Sac and Fox territory in the Iowa country might have been added to the public domain by the treaty of 1832 had not Indian traders effectually blocked the government's commissioners. John Jacob Astor, represented by his agents, Russell Farnham and George Davenport, was astute enough to procure \$40,000 in full payment of Sac and Fox debts, and in order to prevent the removal of the Indians too far away from their business headquarters on Rock Island the traders also advised and obtained the insertion of a provision for Keokuk's Reserve upon both banks of the Iowa River. Were the Sacs and Foxes to congregate on this tract, how much more convenient and profitable for the American Fur Company than a location south or west of the Missouri River four or five hundred miles away!⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Turrill's *Historical Reminiscences of the City of Des Moines*, pp. 16, 17; *The History of Mahaska County*, p. 304.

⁹⁸ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 24th Congress, No. 82, p. 2. For a scholarly account of the Sacs and Foxes in the year 1834 see the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XV, pp. 104-155.

By the first of June, 1833, the Indians were supposed to be dwelling in their bark lodges upon Keokuk's Reserve or in their territory west of the Black Hawk Purchase. That their hunts were becoming very poor is clear from the report that they made about one hundred and fifty packs of fur in the winter of 1833, as compared with four hundred four years before. To what extent the tribesmen refused to hunt, now that the government paid their chiefs large annual sums of money for distribution, it is difficult to ascertain, but one thing seems clear: a difference of opinion arose among the braves and warriors in regard to the manner of paying the annuities. In August, 1834, Poweshiek and over two hundred hunters of the Fox village on the Cedar River, besides Chief Appanoose and nearly two hundred more Foxes on the Des Moines, petitioned against the payment of annuities to Keokuk, the head chief, because he had turned all the money over to the American Fur Company, so that most of the tribesmen received nothing.⁹⁹ This matter remained a bone of contention for sixteen years.

Rev. Cutting Marsh in charge of a delegation of Stockbridge Indians visited the different Sac and Fox villages in the summer of 1834, but their attempt to establish a mission among these Indians failed entirely because of certain formidable and insurmountable obstacles. George Davenport, the trader, "expressed a belief in the doctrine of universal salvation and labored . . . to show 'how happy the Indians were in their present state'." He afterwards declared that missionaries would only make them worse. Antoine Le Claire, the interpreter, besides being connected with the American Fur Company, was a Roman Catholic and hence was unwilling to assist the Protestant American

⁹⁹ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 23d Congress, Nos. 63, 64. Keokuk seems to have been altogether under the influence of the traders of the American Fur Company. See the *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XV, pp. 126, 149.

Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Mr. Marsh found a welcome at the house of a professed infidel when he visited Appanoose's village: there William Phelps and his brother were trading in opposition to the American Fur Company.¹⁰⁰

Sometime before the date of the sale of Keokuk's Reserve in September, 1836, all the Sacs and Foxes, Poweshiek and his Fox band upon the Red Cedar excepted, had removed to the Des Moines River, and so their traders found it necessary to carry goods some forty or fifty miles inland. The treaty of 1836 reveals again the influence of persons financially interested in the tribes: all "just creditors" whose claims the government satisfied are mentioned in the concluding section of the treaty, among them S. S. Phelps and Company, George Davenport, Antoine Le Claire, Francis Labachiere, and Pratte, Chouteau and Company, the latter alone receiving \$20,362.42½. An observer of the time pointed out the policy of the Sac and Fox traders to prevent the extinguishment of title except to small portions of their country and urge the Indians to accept payment in nothing but specie.¹⁰¹ Inasmuch as game was becoming scarcer in the Iowa country, money became a welcome substitute for furs as the medium of exchange for the traders' goods and whiskey.

The narrow strip of country which the Sac and Fox deputation sold to the United States in 1837 proved to be another "nail in the coffin" of the tribes. Despite the fact that the government had the previous year appropriated \$48,458.87½ for the payment of debts due Sac and Fox traders, these gentlemen were not overlooked in the treaty negotiations which took place at Washington, D. C. On the

¹⁰⁰ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XV, pp. 104, 111, 112, 113, 154.

¹⁰¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 355; *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 25th Congress, No. 1, p. 536.

contrary they were generously remembered in the stipulation that bills against Indian customers aggregating not more than \$100,000 would be paid by the government.¹⁰² Thus, the sale of comparatively small portions of the Indian country, instigated from time to time by the men who traded with the childlike natives, served to secure the payment of goodly sums from the nation's treasury and to bring American money into circulation upon the western frontier. And the persons who suffered the most severely from this ruinous policy were the Indians for whose benefit the treaties of sale were ostensibly concluded. Indeed, the oftener their debts were paid and the greater the quantity of cash distributed among them by the government, the more worthless, dissipated, and dependent they became in their villages on the Des Moines River. Hunting gradually ceased to be a pastime and until their departure from Iowa in 1845 the furs and skins of wild game animals were not important articles of commerce.

Finding it difficult to care for his charges so many miles away, Joseph M. Street, Sac and Fox agent since March 4, 1835, removed his office from Rock Island to a place several miles west of the Indian boundary established in 1837. He reported that the border whites had dispensed more whiskey among the Sacs and Foxes in 1838 than at any other time since 1834. Despite his uncompromising hostility toward all whites who were exploiting the Indian's weakness for liquor and articles of every description, Street could make no headway against their traffic with the red men. Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company of St. Louis (the American Fur Company) were still doing a large business with the confederated tribes in their Des Moines villages, George

¹⁰² Antoine Le Claire and George Davenport had accompanied the Sac and Fox deputation to the East. White men intimately acquainted with the Indians could be depended upon to be present whenever treaty negotiations were begun. See Wilkie's *Davenport Past and Present*, p. 162.

Davenport and his son George L. continuing to serve there until the summer of 1838. At the same time the tribesmen seem to have journeyed to Rock Island to obtain supplies at Davenport's store.¹⁰³ After twenty-two years Davenport withdrew from active participation in the Indian trade and turned the fur trust's local affairs over to S. S. Phelps. On the Des Moines River bluffs, three miles west of the new Sac and Fox Agency, Phelps set up a trading post in charge of his brother William.¹⁰⁴ That the Chouteau people were not dealing honorably with the natives may be gathered from Keokuk's complaint to Governor Robert Lucas of Iowa Territory: Chouteau gave the Indians no account of goods sold and no statement of the amount of money due; therefore, said Keokuk, the Sacs and Foxes ought to have a book-keeper.¹⁰⁵

Governor Lucas, acting also as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the Territory, aired his animosity towards the Chouteaus at every opportunity. In the autumn of 1839, he wrote to Washington about the payment of the annuity to the head chiefs who in turn handed it to the agent of the American Fur Company. Great dissatisfaction reigned among the tribesmen; some of the chiefs had lost popularity among the braves and warriors and they were suspected of being controlled by the agents of the American Fur Company and other traders. Lucas felt certain that the government could do the Indians very little good so long as the power and influence of traders remained supreme in Indian councils. Since the interests of traffickers in merchandise and liquor were opposed to the government's policy, frequently embarrassing government officials by open violation

¹⁰³ *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 97; Wilkie's *Davenport Past and Present*, p. 162.

¹⁰⁴ *The History of Lee County* (1879), pp. 365, 366, 367.

¹⁰⁵ *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. II, p. 209.

of the law, Lucas strongly urged that goods instead of money be distributed to the red men to protect them against the impositions of traders.¹⁰⁶

The year 1840 saw the arrival of more traders among the Sacs and Foxes to compete for a portion of the Indian furs and annuities. The Chouteau post had been monopolizing business in the villages of Keokuk, Wapello, and Appanoose, then situated where the city of Ottumwa now stands. Higher up the Des Moines River Hardfish and a band of malcontents, openly hostile to Chief Keokuk and his administration of tribal affairs, had pitched their lodges.¹⁰⁷ There, in the heart of the present town of Eddyville, J. P. Eddy was licensed to trade in the summer of 1840, and not long afterward the Chouteaus had a post near the same place. The brothers George Washington and Washington George Ewing, experienced in Indian trade since at least the year 1826, were also licensed to deal with the Sacs and Foxes and accordingly set up a large establishment opposite the Indian villages under the supervision of "a Mr. Hunt, a gentleman of far more education, refinement and culture than is often found among the resident Indian traders."¹⁰⁸

How were goods for the Indian trade conveyed to this wilderness just beyond the pale of civilization? The answer can be found in the reports of two United States army officers who surveyed the Des Moines River in the spring of 1841. A captain of the topographical engineers ascended the river to the American Fur Company's trading post near the Sac and Fox Agency and learned of the practicability

¹⁰⁶ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 26th Congress, No. 1, pp. 491, 492.

¹⁰⁷ *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. III, pp. 531, 532; Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁸ *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 369. W. G. and G. W. Ewing were trading on English Lake, on the Kankakee River in 1826-1827.—*Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 19th Congress, No. 58, p. 1.

of navigation from the fact that trade supplies had been repeatedly transported one hundred miles to this, "their principal depot in a steamboat of the size ordinarily used on the upper Mississippi in low water, and that a heavily laden keel boat has been taken up nearly to the mouth of Rackoon Fork."¹⁰⁹ Late in June of this same year Lieutenant John C. Frémont also stopped at Phelps's post and wrote to the government as follows: "Having been furnished with a guide and other necessaries by the uniform kindness of the American Fur Company, we resumed our journey on the morning of the 1st of July, and late in the evening reached the house of Mr. Jameson — another of the company's posts, about twenty miles higher up." In pushing his survey of the river valley, Frémont gained much information from "Mr. Phelps, who has resided about twenty years on this river, and who has kept boats upon it constantly during that period." From his own observations and from the fact that Phelps "ran a Mississippi steamer to his post, a distance of 87 miles from the mouth and a company are now engaged in building one to navigate the river", Frémont declared the Des Moines to be "highly susceptible of improvement".¹¹⁰

The council for the payment of annuities in 1840 was held at the Sac and Fox Agency on September 28th. Besides the Indian agent, John Beach, there were in attendance Robert Lucas, Governor of Iowa Territory, and the traders. The American Fur Company was abundantly represented by Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Messrs. Sanford and Mitchell from St. Louis, George Davenport and his son, George L.,

¹⁰⁹ *House Executive Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 38, pp. 13, 15. A writer in the *Annals of Iowa* (First Series), Vol. XI, p. 482, is authority for the statement that the steamboat "Science" ascended the Des Moines to the Sac and Fox Agency in 1837.

¹¹⁰ *House Executive Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 38, pp. 16, 18. Frémont also mentioned "Vessor's trading house".

and Antoine Le Claire, the half-breed interpreter, had come from Rock Island. S. S. Phelps of Oquawka, Illinois, and his brother, William Phelps, were also present. All these men were there to look after their trade interests, and the spectacle may be taken as typical of such occasions in the West. Great must have been their disappointment when the payment of the annuity was deferred because the two factions of the Sacs and Foxes failed to agree on the mode of distribution. Governor Lucas, whose sympathies lay with the Hardfish band, accused Beach of "acting in conjunction with the American Fur Company" and later even urged Beach's removal from the agency.¹¹¹

Beach declared in his annual report for 1840-1841 that the domestic discord in the tribes was "principally attributable to a rivalry among the trading interest, and the different opinions entertained by those licensed in the trade, in regard to that mode promising the greatest certainty of payment to themselves for the credits they had always extended to the Indians to a large amount." The difficulty, however, was cleared up in the fall of 1841 and the annuities for two years were doled out to the satisfaction of all concerned, traders with big accounts included.¹¹²

Immediately after the payment of annuities the chiefs and braves of the confederated tribes met a United States commission to negotiate for the disposal of more Sac and Fox country. John Chambers, the Governor of the Territory of Iowa, first addressed them to ask for their own honest and candid opinions upon the subject and not the opinion of their traders and those who had claims against them. Then T. Hartley Crawford, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs from Washington, begged them as "a hand-

¹¹¹ Parish's *John Chambers*, pp. 169, 170, 171.

¹¹² *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 349; Parish's *John Chambers*, pp. 172-175.

some and powerful people'' to cease to follow the advice and practice of those who designed their destruction, and told them if they would remain honest they should not obey the counsel of those who endeavored only to corrupt them. Their best welfare called for removal beyond the reach of white men who wanted only their funds, and so, to get the Indians' free assent to the sale of more lands and not the opinion of persons coming from a distance who wanted their money and cared nothing about the condition or happiness of the Indians, all white men had been sent away and excluded from the council-house during the treaty negotiations.

Governor Chambers also explained why they were being kept clear of these "vultures" and declared:

You have now been two years without money. You are surrounded by blood-suckers, who are constantly endeavoring to obtain all the money paid to you. All the money you yesterday received has already gone into their hands. You have paid them enough to supply all your wants for a year. Those of them who sell you whiskey are men who desire only your money, and would kill all your women and children to obtain it. They have no souls — they are men of bad hearts, and you should not permit them to exercise any influence over you whatever. I believe it your interest to get out of their reach. Your great father proposes to give you such an opportunity — he proposes to you to go north [to the head waters of the Des Moines].

Now, I will tell you why your great father proposes to you to sell at this time. He knows, and I know, that white people have got near you; are selling you whiskey, and that we cannot prevent them from selling, or you from buying. Bad white people are thus encouraged to sell, and you are degraded by buying; and you will become more and more degraded until you become wholly extinct. Troops have been sent here, but on account of your proximity to the white settlements, improper intercourse with them cannot be prevented. I had learned, and reported to your great father, that you bought goods which you did not need, and immediately traded them away for whiskey. Your great father thought you wished to pay

your debts. I have ascertained that \$300,000 will not pay them. This is another reason why he thought you should sell. A few months ago you went to Montrose and bought fifteen thousand dollars of goods, none of which you wanted (save, perhaps, a few horses), and they are now all given to the winds. How will you pay the man of whom you procured them? The whole amount of your annuities for five years will not pay your debts to your traders. They will not trust you any more. They have sold to you, heretofore, expecting you would sell your lands, and that they then would be paid. You will get no more goods and credit. It was kindness, then, on the part of your great father which induced him to offer to buy your lands to furnish you with money, with which you could render yourselves, your wives and children, comfortable and happy. It is my business to superintend your affairs, and watch over your interests as well as the interests of the Government; and I want you to reflect upon the fact that in a few days all your money will be gone; and you will be without credit; you may be unsuccessful in your hunts, and what will become of you? Even your whiskey-sellers will not sell to you that, without money or an exchange of your horses, guns, and blankets for it; many of you do not reflect upon this now, but you will before a year with sorrow.¹¹³

Such traders as George Davenport and Antoine Le Claire having been segregated in a trading house and placed under a guard of dragoons to prevent direct communication with the Indians,¹¹⁴ three days were spent in fruitless negotiations. Flush with money the tribesmen paid some of the vast debt which had been accumulating, but they exchanged most of their cash for liquor. Governor Chambers filed a strong complaint against the whole system which made

¹¹³ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, pp. 270, 271, 272, 274, 275.

In anticipation of this treaty Beach had reported the increased sale of whiskey among the Indians. Though advised and urged to pay no bills incurred in this way, the Sacs and Foxes were unwilling to offend their white whiskey-selling neighbors, and fearing also that their liquor supply might otherwise be cut off, they liquidated all debts "with a most scrupulous integrity."— *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 349.

¹¹⁴ Wilkie's *Davenport Past and Present*, p. 163.

such exploitation possible: he urged the effective suppression of the whiskey traffic and the abolition of the licensed Indian trade in favor of direct government management. The Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa passed resolutions calling upon the Delegate to Congress to exert his influence toward a reformation.¹¹⁵ It was not long before the Indian chiefs, realizing their vain struggle against poverty and debt, announced a willingness to journey to Washington for a treaty council. Chambers believed such a plan emanated from the traders who preferred to have their debts paid at the national capital rather than at the agency. Indeed, he knew they were stirring up feeling against him. In May, 1842, the debts due to the three licensed trading companies amounted to over \$200,000. In the autumn of 1842 Governor Chambers and Agent Beach

¹¹⁵ Parish's *John Chambers*, pp. 176, 177. In *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 27th Congress, No. 107, there is a resolution of the Territorial legislature, approved on January 18, 1842, which may well be set forth here because it seems never to have found its way into the officially published *Laws of Iowa*.

“Preamble and joint resolution, requesting our Delegate to use his influence in procuring a change in the existing system of licensing traders to deal with the Indians, &c.

“Whereas the Sac and Fox tribe of Indians, living within the prescribed limits of the Territory of Iowa, are subject to many frauds and peculations under the existing system of licensing traders:

“And whereas, from the improvident habits of the Indians, they derive, it is believed, no benefit from their annuities, under the present rules and regulations of the Indian bureau, from the fact that their liabilities to the traders are always found to exceed, by large sums, the amount of their annuities from the General Government:

“And whereas the policy of the Government is often thwarted, in attempting to negotiate with the Indians for the extinguishment of their title to any portion of their country, by the extraordinary and transcendent influence which the traders are known to exercise over them:

“And whereas such a state of things is deeply to be deplored, and should be regarded as a great evil, especially when it is considered that the traders are enabled to dictate, in matters of such vital importance, to the American Government:

“And whereas we believe the most effectual remedy for this evil would be to abolish the present system entirely, and to establish in lieu thereof a sort of

reported again the awful devastation being caused by the nefarious traffic in liquor and the inordinate fondness of the Indians for intoxication.¹¹⁶ Beach, especially, pictured conditions in a black light:

A set of the most abandoned and unprincipled wretches collected near the line upon the Des Moines river, and at one or two other points along the boundary, from whose dens the intoxicating liquid flows in uninterrupted streams upon the Indians. . . . On my first acquaintance with them in 1832, intoxication was rare among them, and I doubt if a confirmed or habitual drunkard belonged to their nation; while at this time, except when far distant upon their hunting grounds, the whole nation, without distinction of rank or age or sex, exhibits a continual scene of the most revolting intoxication. Laws, of a truth, exist, but of what avail without the means of enforcing them.¹¹⁷

Thus the lack of food and clothing produced a change of

factor system — the factors to be Government officers, whose duties should be defined by law, and whose salaries should be sufficient to insure fidelity and competency in the discharge of their duties. By the adoption of this or a similar plan, the Indians would be liable to fewer impositions, and would be better and more readily supplied with subsistence stores, and the various articles of Indian goods which their necessities require. By a provision of this kind, nearly the whole of their annuities, before they are due, will have been paid in articles proper for their use and consumption, the factors' commercial intercourse with the Indians to be similar to that of a sutler at a military post, never, under any circumstances, allowing the Indians to incur a greater indebtedness than the amount of their annuities:

“And whereas, by the adoption of this plan, the overwhelming influence of the traders over the Indians would be destroyed, and the General Government left free to pursue its enlightened policy towards them: Therefore,

“*Be it resolved by the Council and House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa*, That the Hon. A. C. Dodge, our Delegate in Congress, be requested to use his influence to procure a change in the laws and regulations respecting the system of licensing traders with the Indians, in conformity to the views contained in the foregoing preamble.

“*Resolved*, That his excellency Governor Chambers be requested to forward one copy of the foregoing preamble and resolution to the President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, to our Delegate in Congress, and to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.”

¹¹⁶ Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 178; *Senate Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 422.

¹¹⁷ *Senate Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 1, p. 426.

heart in the Sacs and Foxes: in October, 1842, they were ready to meet the United States more than half way. On the other hand the government wished to promote the march of empire westward, and the land hunger of the whites also had to be appeased, so rapidly were people from the East and the South migrating to the empty trans-Mississippi region. Accordingly, Governor John Chambers journeyed to the Sac and Fox Agency before the close of September, accompanied by Alfred Hebard and Arthur Bridgman, the agents appointed to investigate the claims of the traders and other creditors of the Indians. In regard to the process of sifting Hebard afterwards declared:¹¹⁸ "Aside from the accounts of the licensed traders, scores of other smaller claims had been carefully nursed with the expectation that they would be allowed, *en masse*, whenever a sale of their lands was made to the Government. The rigid examination required by the Commissioner was unexpected, but the rule was inflexible — evidence and reasonable explanation were required in all cases."

After the receipt and examination of fifty-eight claims against the Indians, the expert accountants presented each to the tribesmen in council for further information. Altogether, the indebtedness on the books aggregated \$312,366.24, but after many days of laborious overhauling this amount was reduced to \$258,566.34.¹¹⁹ J. P. Eddy and Company obtained their claim in full — \$52,332.78 — while the demands of Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and Company were very little reduced, amounting to \$112,109.47. The account of W. G. and G. W. Ewing was materially modified, a reduction of twenty-five percent placing their allowance at \$66,371.83. One writer has well explained the reason for the action of the commission:

¹¹⁸ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, pp. 399, 400.

¹¹⁹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, pp. 402, 403; Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 182.

They had sold the untutored native such useful objects as "Italian cravats", "satinette coats", and "looking glasses" charged at twenty-two and thirty dollars. A clerk informed the investigating commission that these last articles should have been styled "telescopes". They had found purchasers among the red men for "fine satin vests" at eight dollars and fine spotted ones for six and seven. They had charged forty-five dollars for "dress coats" and "super-fine cloth coats" and sixty dollars for "surtout coats" and "super over coats". Verily the white pioneer settler must have felt sadly tailored beside his Indian neighbor. The profits upon some articles were estimated at from one to nine hundred per cent.¹²⁰

Besides the three largest claims above mentioned, some fifty-five others were considered, only thirty-nine of them being finally adjusted. Edward Kilbourne was allowed \$10,411.80; Francis Withington, \$4,212.58; Jeremiah Smith, Jr., \$4000; James Jordan, \$1775; and Antoine Le Claire, \$1375. All other creditors obtained less than a thousand dollars.¹²¹ It appears that Peter and William Avery were most severely censured; so that their bill for \$6284.73, repudiated by the Indians, was entirely rejected. Hebard afterwards declared that claims "that had a prima facie appearance of fairness, and were sustained by explanation, seldom met with opposition or a word of complaint—showing an element of honesty in the Indian character not always found among many of those with whom they had been dealing."¹²²

Claims having been adjusted to the satisfaction of at least the most influential traders, negotiations for the purchase of the Sac and Fox country were begun soon after the first day of October and successfully concluded on the eleventh of the same month. The United States government

¹²⁰ Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 182; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. V, p. 463.

¹²¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, p. 407.

¹²² Parish's *John Chambers*, p. 259; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, p. 403.

agreed to pay the debts of the Indians as part of the purchase price for the remainder of their lands within the borders of the Territory of Iowa. That the stipulation for the removal of these natives to a place southwest of the Missouri is directly traceable to the active influence of the licensed traders there is no dearth of evidence to prove. Indeed, the testimony on this point seems to be unanimous. An eye-witness of events at the agency during the early days of October testified that "but for the activity and influence of Messrs. Sanford, Davenport and Le Clair and the Messrs. Phelps, who exerted every means in their power to harmonize the clashing among the bands, we doubt much whether the purchase of the whole country could have been effected."¹²³

Alfred Hebard is authority for the statement that the United States commissioners invited "persons known to, and knowing the Indians, and having their confidence, especially those who could speak their language," to aid in securing the object of the government. He continued as follows in his account of the treaty:¹²⁴

Those having claims had a double motive, and citizens generally were interested in the same direction, thus creating a pressure of public opinion, that greatly assisted the Commissioner in his patient, persuasive reasonings with the Indians, in trying to convince them that their true interest would be promoted, by accepting a smaller home farther west, with increased means of support and free from border entanglements. . . . The Indian heart appreciates friendship, and had it not been for this strong undertone of faith in known friends, I doubt if the mission had been fully successful. The aid of Major Sanford and others is entitled to just appreciation to this day.

¹²³ THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. X, p. 265; Wilkie's *Davenport Past and Present*, pp. 163, 164. George Davenport is said to have quit the Indian trade at this time to devote his time to improving property in Davenport and Rock Island. He lived comfortably in his island home until he was murdered by bandits on July 4, 1845.

¹²⁴ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, pp. 403, 404.

Governor Chambers also asserted that the Indian mind could not be reached except through the mediation of the licensed traders, whose influence could under no circumstances be brought into operation in support of the government except for a "consideration" obtained through a treaty stipulation for the payment of the claims against the tribe to be treated with. "The tremendous profits of Indian trade, resulting from the privileges granted the traders by the Government under the existing system of trade and intercourse with the Indians," he said, "does not seem to produce on the part of these people the least sense of obligation to forward or promote the views of the Government, or even to abstain from obstructing them when the promotion of their own interest is not presented as an inducement.

. . . . The traders have in their employment the best interpreters, frequently half breeds, and numerous clerks and adroit individuals, familiar with the vices and follies of the Indians, and always administering to them, not unfrequently raising children by their women, and thus making the impression upon the Indians that they are identified with them and their interests in all respects". Therefore, the traders had more influence among the red men than did the government from which they derived their power.¹²⁵

Not long after the treaty of 1842 was concluded, G. W. Ewing wrote to T. Hartley Crawford, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, describing some of the many infamous practices resorted to by unprincipled, unlicensed men in order to cheat and abuse the Indians. Crawford sent Ewing's complaint to Chambers and the latter replied in a letter full of indignation at the government's system of regulating

¹²⁵ *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 28th Congress, No. 1, pp. 287, 288. Substantially the same picture of conditions can be found in the report of two Friends or Quakers who visited the Sac and Fox Agency at the time of the treaty.—*THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XIII, pp. 258-260.

the Indian trade.¹²⁶ He flayed unmercifully the regular or licensed traders, accusing them of dealings characterized by the vilest extortion: their claims might be reduced at treaty times, but how could inspection of their accounts then reveal the nature of their cash dealings or exchanges for furs and skins? The Governor's words were unsparing. "If the vengeance of Heaven is ever inflicted upon man in this life," he declared, "it seems to me we must yet see some signal evidence of it among these 'regular traders'. . . . When a treaty is to be made and their claims against the Indians are to be liquidated, some of them come prepared to show your commissioners the hazard they incur in disobliging them, by a curtailment of their iniquitous demands. Letters from distinguished senators and members of Congress are presented, introducing them as strangers, (though well known) and recommending them as gentlemen of integrity, high standing and great influence, and I suppose they might, in great truth add, what would be equivalent to all the rest, distinguished for their *great wealth*, acquired in the Indian trade."

Some time during the year 1842 the American Fur Company seems to have abandoned its log cabin headquarters a few miles west of the Sac and Fox Agency, permitted a company of dragoons under Captain James Allen to occupy them, and established a new post higher up the Des Moines

¹²⁶ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. V, pp. 461-464.

Governor Chambers recommended the following change in the system of licensed traders: "I have thought that if the system could even be so modified as to compel the licensed trader to furnish sworn copies of their invoices, and submit their goods to a comparison with them and to inspection, and their books and accounts to thorough examination, and compel them to render quarterly or semi-annual abstracts of their sales on the oaths of themselves and their clerks, and a statement of all money, skins, furs, etc., received from the Indians, it might by a rigid scrutiny be made to some extent a means of restraining their extortions and frauds; but to make such a scrutiny effectual, it would be necessary to employ agents who neither resided in the Indian country or were in habits of intercourse with the traders or the Indians."

River in the Red Rock region of Marion County.¹²⁷ The Sac and Fox villagers removed their lodges to the neighborhood of the Raccoon River in accordance with the terms of the treaty of 1842, which allowed them to retain that part of their territory in Iowa for another two years. When the winter of 1843-1844 set in, the licensed traders were comfortably ensconced in log cabins on the present site of East Des Moines. The Ewings occupied a half section of land; not far away was the residence and farm of the Phelps brothers; and just across the river stood Fort Des Moines.¹²⁸

Little need be added about the activity of licensed traders in this region before the departure of the Sacs and Foxes in the autumn of 1845. The change of residence to the neighborhood of Fort Des Moines did not in the least abate the Indians' excessive fondness for liquor nor limit their means of procuring it: unprincipled whites supplied them with whiskey wherever they went. The Indians still wasted their money. Instead of buying necessities, they quickly spent their income on the trash of traders and the whiskey and horses of others. Furthermore, a large part of the provisions and goods furnished by the government they "exchanged for whiskey as soon as they get possession of them, and always at such rates as the cupidity of the whiskey sellers choose to dictate." Most of them had abandoned the chase, were seldom sober, and were "averse, from habit and savage pride, to labor." Subject to the overruling and controlling influence of their traders, they made "no provision in advance for their wants, and the prospect of starvation seems to have no terrors for them until the last mouthful of food is exhausted." Even the waste of provisions subserved the interest of the traders because they were always prepared to supply the deficiencies of their native customers. And because the traders at the treaty of

¹²⁷ *The History of Lee County* (1879), p. 369.

¹²⁸ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, pp. 171, 172.

LATER HISTORY OF INDIAN RIGHTS TO THE UPPER DES
MOINES VALLEY

The departure of the Sacs and Foxes from the well-watered prairies of central Iowa to the dry lands and feverish climate of southeastern Kansas did not rid the valley of the upper Des Moines of Indian visitations. Indeed, two other tribes of red men retained for a few years longer the right to hunt in this portion of the Iowa wilderness.

As early as 1825 the United States government had taken steps to end the long, deadly feud between the Sioux and the allied Sacs and Foxes: a line was drawn from the mouth of the Upper Iowa River in northeastern Iowa to the second or upper fork of the Des Moines River and thence to the lower fork of the Calumet or Big Sioux River. Neither of the Indian nations was to cross this boundary to encroach upon the other's territory, but time demonstrated that the treaty line of 1825 availed nothing.

The next step to establish peace came in 1830. The same nations were prevailed upon by the United States to part with their titles to twenty-mile strips of land north and south of the boundary fixed five years before. This Neutral Ground, however, was to extend only from the Mississippi to the Des Moines. Events soon showed that long years of rivalry and enmity could not thus be forgotten all at once by an agreement to respect the neutrality of this uninhabited forty-mile strip: a scrap of paper proved to be no effective barrier against the war and hunting expeditions of savages thirsting for each other's blood. The Neutral Ground continued to be the scene of occasional frays between these enemies. Two years later the President of the United States exercised his power to allot the eastern portion of the barrier country to the Winnebago Indians in exchange for their cession of certain lands east of the Mississippi, and in 1837 the government agreed to let them

hunt upon the western portion also.¹³³ It was with considerable misgiving that the Winnebagoes took up their abode in this Iowa region as the buffer between two irreconcilable foes.

West of the Neutral Ground, upon the west bank of the Des Moines, the Sioux bands and the allied Sacs and Foxes still prosecuted their hunts, their hunting-grounds being separated by a wedge-shaped portion of Pottawattamie Indian country, the point of which reached the mouth of the East Fork of the Des Moines River. Setting out from here in the summer of 1835 Surveyor James Craig and his party ran the first line called for by the treaty of 1830: from the east or upper fork they proceeded over one hundred miles northwestward in the region bordering upon the West Fork of the Des Moines, passed "Lac D'Esprits (Spirit or Ghost Lake)" and the sources of the Little Sioux and the Floyd rivers, thence going southwestward along the Little Rock River, the Rock River, and down the Big Sioux or Calumet to the Missouri.

Thus did the lands of four tribes meet at one spot. That other tribes occasionally resorted to this region is evidenced by the report that sixteen Delaware Indians from the reservation near Fort Leavenworth in the autumn of 1841 made their way northward across the Pottawattamie reservation in western Iowa and somewhere in the northern part of Webster County encountered a large party of Sioux who surrounded and fired upon them. The Delawares put up a valiant fight but were killed to a man: only a Pottawattamie friend escaped and reached home badly wounded. The chiefs of the offended nation filed a heavy claim with the United States government for the loss of sixteen men, all the horses they had with them, riding saddles and pack saddles, guns, traps, blankets, clothing, and camp equipage.

¹³³ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 251, 370.

The spot where the murderous outrage was committed came to be known as "the Delaware battle-ground".¹³⁴

The removal of the Sacs and Foxes from the Des Moines Valley in the autumn of 1845 and the early months of 1846 was followed by the government purchase of all the Pottawattamie lands in the summer of the same year. The Sioux bands, besides the Winnebagoes, were, therefore, the only tribes that could follow the chase in the region of the upper waters of the Des Moines. That they came into contact with lawless border whites as early as the summer months of 1846 may be gathered from a statement of grievances by the Yankton Sioux, whose village life was confined to the eastern Dakota country but whose hunts took them to the headwaters of the Des Moines River. They complained against American citizens residing upon the river because they furnished youthful Yankton braves with fire-water and then cheated them out of guns, horses, and buffalo robes.¹³⁵ The Winnebagoes sold their rights in the Neutral Ground in October, 1846, but retained possession until the first months of the year 1848.¹³⁶

While government surveyors were engaged in staking off the territory thus acquired from the Indian tribes in northern Iowa, certain bands of Sioux interfered with their operations and also subjected the pioneers in that region to repeated robberies and depredations. Orders were accordingly issued to a company of United States infantry in 1850 to erect Fort Clarke on the east bank of the Des Moines a

¹³⁴ *House Executive Documents*, 3d Session, 27th Congress, No. 2, p. 429; THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS, Vol. XI, pp. 86, 87. For Craig's map see the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. XI, p. 358.

¹³⁵ *House Executive Documents*, 2nd Session, 29th Congress, No. 4, p. 295. Henry Lott made a settlement just above the mouth of the Boone River in the spring of 1846 and was robbed by the Sioux before the end of the same year.— See *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IX, p. 96.

¹³⁶ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II, pp. 419, 420.

short distance below the mouth of Lizard River. Stores, munitions, and supplies for the fort were unloaded from steamers at Keokuk and then hauled overland for a distance of nearly three hundred miles. The garrison stationed at Fort Dodge, as it came to be called in 1851, busied itself with the usual duties of a frontier post, but as the country settled up and the Sioux Indians became less troublesome, after selling their interests in the lands of the valley in 1851, the need of the establishment of Fort Ridgley on the Minnesota River farther north caused the evacuation and sale of the Fort Dodge buildings in June, 1853.¹³⁷ Soon a flourishing city sprang up. The land of Iowa was at last clear, so far as the Indian title was concerned, and men could once more blaze the way for settlement and civilization into the northern and western portion of the State.

THE EARLIEST PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DES MOINES
VALLEY

The first settlers in southeastern Iowa obtained what things they needed from St. Louis. Such imports as primitive pioneer conditions called for were landed at Keokuk and then transported by wagon overland or perhaps by simple water craft. Roads became fixed wherever the seasons and "the lay of the land" dictated. During the early years wants were few and long journeys infrequent, and the settlers were under no necessity of exporting their surplus agricultural products because they found ready consumers in the increasing population of their neighborhood, but when this cause no longer afforded a market at their doors, they began to urge the need of better transportation facilities. The Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa authorized commissioners in various parts of the new coun-

¹³⁷ *Senate Documents*, 2nd Session, 31st Congress, No. 15, and 1st Session, 32d Congress, No. 14; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XII, pp. 197-199.

try to locate and establish roads. For instance, in 1838, James Sutton, Joseph Robb, and James McMurry were appointed to mark a Territorial road from Keokuk to "the horse tail reach" on the Des Moines and thence up the river to Iowaville, passing through the towns of Farmington, Bentonsport, Columbus, and Philadelphia in Van Buren County.¹³⁸

One year later the Iowa legislature perceived the great importance of this road both to the Territory and to the federal government: Keokuk was "the natural and most convenient depot for all the extensive Des Moines country". When finished the highway would afford excellent facilities for the transportation of mails through a number of towns and a densely populated country to the Indian border. Inasmuch as the road passed over many tributary streams of the Des Moines and needed to be rendered passable in all seasons of the year, the expense of which was deemed too great to be borne by the Territory, the Legislative Assembly called upon the Iowa Delegate at Washington to use his influence in obtaining an appropriation of \$10,000 for the opening of the road. Congress refused to improve this highway and defeated a bill with that end in view, and so the pioneers were obliged to submit as well as they could to the inconveniences of western methods of transportation.¹³⁹

In the year 1839, however, Congress appropriated \$5000 to be spent by the Secretary of War for the construction of a road from Burlington to the new Sac and Fox Agency, and later authorized the expenditure of money for the construction and repair of seven bridges on this "Agency Road", although much more was asked to complete the work in a satisfactory manner. Such highways or military

¹³⁸ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1838-1839*, p. 427.

¹³⁹ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1839-1840*, pp. 150, 151; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. III, p. 223.

roads seem to have been laid out by the federal government in the Territories so that troops, cannon, and munitions might, in case of war with the Indians or when needed for other purposes, be quickly moved from one portion of the Territory to another.¹⁴⁰

The transportation of goods upon the waters of the Des Moines River appears to have been confined entirely to canoes and keel-boats until the steamboat "Science" landed goods at the town of Keosauqua and ascended as far as Iowaville in September, 1837. Two months later Aaron W. Harlan shipped from St. Louis a consignment of merchandise on the "Pavilion", captained by William Phelps. On board this steamboat were Keokuk and the Sac and Fox chiefs and braves returning to Iowaville from a pleasure and business trip to Washington and other eastern cities.¹⁴¹ Although freighting by keel-boat continued to be the more dependable method of transportation to the pioneer towns upon the Des Moines, the American Fur Company frequently shipped supplies to its trading posts higher up the river in small steamboats. But many difficulties soon became apparent.

The Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa recognized the value of Territorial waterways when it empowered William Meek and Sons, Henry Eno, and others to construct mill dams across the Des Moines River in Van Buren County. These two dams were to be not more than three feet above the common low water mark and were to contain convenient locks, not less than one hundred and thirty feet in length and thirty-five feet in width, for the free and undelayed passage of steam, keel, and flat boats,

¹⁴⁰ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. V, pp. 352, 670; *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. III, p. 222; *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. VIII, p. 253; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 48.

¹⁴¹ *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. IV, p. 331.

rafts, and other water craft of at least two tons burden. Similar legislative action in 1841 and 1843 authorized John Godden, John R. Sparks, Isaac R. Campbell, Robert McKee, Ovid Grennell, and Arthur Thomes to erect dams in Lee and Van Buren counties.¹⁴²

There were two reasons why the pioneer legislators in 1839 brought the Des Moines River to the attention of Congress: first, its position between the Mississippi and the Missouri pointed it out as "the natural channel for imports and exports for the extensive and fertile country in the interior of Iowa and a portion of the State of Missouri"; and secondly, the Des Moines despite its importance afforded "but few facilities for navigation, without that improvement of which it is peculiarly susceptible, being admirably adapted to the building of dams for the purpose of slack water navigation." It was asserted that the channel and banks everywhere afforded suitable stone for the foundation and structure of necessary dams, and hydraulic power of incalculable value could be obtained for the country. Accordingly, the Iowa Delegate to Congress was requested to exert himself to obtain an appropriation for the survey of the Des Moines by a corps of engineers and also \$100,000 in money or land for the purpose of improving navigation.¹⁴³

Congress gave ear to this petition of the Territorial legislature by granting \$1000 for a survey of the Des Moines and Iowa rivers. With the arrival of favorable weather in the spring of 1841, Captain W. Bowling Guion of the United States Topographical Engineers proceeded from St. Louis to make a general examination of the Des Moines River and thus get a knowledge of its general character and the nature

¹⁴² *Laws of the Territory of Iowa*, 1838-1839, pp. 338-340; 1840-1841, pp. 103, 107; 1842-1843, pp. 47, 59, 68.

¹⁴³ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa*, 1839-1840, pp. 148, 149.

and extent of the obstructions to navigation. Guion and his party obtained a small, light draught keel-boat at the Chouteau trading post near the Sac and Fox Agency, ascended the stream about seventeen miles above the mouth of Raccoon Fork, and then descended to the Mississippi. The chief characteristics of the Des Moines River were found to be "a great declination in the plane of its bed, causing in time of flood a very swift current, unusual uniformity in the depth of water in its channel, great sinuosity of course, and a lesser amount of obstructions in the upper than in the lower parts."

Besides a small number of snags and trees, there were twelve rapids or "riffles", as the boatmen called them, and two mill dams — one at Keosauqua and another ten miles below. These obstructions effectually prevented the passage of loaded keel-boats as well as steamboats. Guion declared that from the mouth of the river to the American Fur Company's trading house there was nowhere less than two feet of water, or perhaps ten inches in very dry seasons; while higher up the depth would be no less than three feet or one foot and a half in a dry season. Besides, during the three or four month period of high water there would always be from five to fifteen feet of water in the channel. The removal of rocks, snags, logs, and overhanging trees would admit the free passage of boats. Guion did not hesitate to assert the propriety of making such improvements at an estimated expense of \$29,000, "for the Des Moines is a beautiful river, . . . whilst its banks present one of the most fertile and lovely countries nature ever presented to the view of man, abounding in immense fields of bituminous coal from Raccoon Fork nearly to its mouth. . . . In fine, such are the temptations which this country offers, that the portion now in the possession of the Indians will no sooner pass into the hands of the United States than it

will be crowded with whites, as that which lies below the Indian country is becoming already."¹⁴⁴

On a horseback journey up the Des Moines Valley in June, 1841, Lieutenant John Charles Frémont¹⁴⁵ took particular note of the botany and geology of the region through which he rode. Proceeding from Missouri over luxuriant prairie bottoms "covered with a profusion of flowers," he and a small surveying party forded the river at Portland and later reached "the little village of Iowaville, lying on the line which separates the Indian lands from those to which their title has already been extinguished." "After leaving this place," he continued, "we began to fall in with parties of Indians on horseback, and here and there, scattered along the river bank, under tents of blankets stretched along the boughs, were Indian families; the men lying about smoking, and the women engaged in making baskets and cooking — apparently as much at home as if they had spent their lives on the spot."

From the American Fur Company's upper post Frémont proceeded with instruments and provisions in a canoe propelled by five men, though Frémont himself walked most of the time, examining the topography of the southern bank of the river with its heavy and dense bodies of timber, luxuriant soil, and almost impenetrable undergrowth. The party returned from the Raccoon to the mouth of the river and Frémont made a survey noting the rapids, bends, and sand bars: he felt sure that "steamboats drawing four feet water may run to the mouth of Cedar river [in Marion

¹⁴⁴ *House Executive Documents*, 3rd Session, 27th Congress, No. 38, pp. 13-15.

¹⁴⁵ It is said that Thomas H. Benton of Missouri did not favor Frémont's suit for his daughter's hand and accordingly "obtained through his political influence with the government, what was substantially a decree of banishment, in the form of an order assigning the lieutenant" to the duty of surveying the lower Des Moines River.— *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VII, p. 398; *Memoirs of John C. Frémont*, p. 68.

County?] from the 1st of April to the middle of June; and keelboats drawing two feet, from the 20th of March to the 1st of July; and those drawing 20 inches, again, from the middle of October to the 20th of November. . . . The removal of loose stones at some points, and the construction of artificial banks at some few others, to destroy the abrupt bends, would be all that is required. The variable nature of the bed and the velocity of the current would keep the channel constantly clear."¹⁴⁶

To the pioneer settlers of the Des Moines Valley these investigations must have seemed worthless, because the government did not immediately follow them up with actual improvements. "Pork barrel" appropriations had not attained so much prominence then as now, especially in the Territories of the West. In the absence of railways the hope of westerners naturally lay in the direction of water routes improved at the expense of the federal government. Accordingly, the people of Iowa voiced their wishes in Congress through their Delegate, Augustus Caesar Dodge. This frontier representative declared on June 8, 1846, that the country through which the Des Moines River ran was one of unsurpassed fertility and was then being densely settled. "From the central position of this river, and its other advantages," he told Congress, "there are a very large proportion of the people of Iowa who believe, and desire, their ultimate seat of Government should be upon it."¹⁴⁷

Thus championed by their spokesman in his efforts to bring them under the fostering protection of the general government, the infant settlements of the Territory of Iowa were not indifferently nursed when Congress and President Polk in August, 1846, gave them alternate sections of all

¹⁴⁶ *House Executive Documents*, 3rd Session, 27th Congress, No. 38, pp. 16-20.

¹⁴⁷ *Congressional Globe*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, p. 940; *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. III, p. 600.

unsold and unencumbered public lands for a distance of five miles on each side of the Des Moines to aid in the improvement of the navigation of the river from its mouth to the Raccoon Fork. This grant of thousands of the most fertile and valuable acres in Iowa was accepted by the First General Assembly: nearly one-half of the people of the new State were directly interested in the matter because a system of locks and dams enabling fair-sized steamboats to navigate the river at all seasons of the year would furnish an easy, safe, and cheap mode of transportation for the vast and increasing productions of the valley, and also because such an improvement would greatly add to the population and wealth of the State. It is not possible or necessary to give in detail here the history of the nonfulfillment of a project of such large proportions.¹⁴⁸

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¹⁴⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 342-344; Gatch's *History of the Des Moines Land Grant in the Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I.