

IOWA AND THE CALIFORNIA GOLD RUSH OF 1849

The editor of the Dubuque *Miners' Express*, preparing copy for the November 14, 1848, issue of the paper, felt moved to write an editorial concerning the recent reports of the gold discoveries in California. In the exchanges before him he had found what he considered to be a complete refutation of the extravagant rumors which for several weeks had caused such tremendous excitement in the East. "A specimen of this substance", he wrote, referring to the alleged gold ore of California, "has lately been submitted to an analysis by Doctor Kent, of New York, the result of which gives a very satisfactory explanation and explosion of the whole matter.

"It is found to consist of Arsenite of copper, combined with Nickle and Zinc, and a small portion of Iron pyrites. Not a particle of Gold is found in it."

The skepticism of the Dubuque editor with regard to the gold stories seems to have been shared by Iowa editors generally.¹ All through November and much of December, 1848, most of them remained discreetly silent, reprinting occasional California items, but choosing for the most part, only such as were non-inflammatory in nature. On the basis of tales so incredibly extravagant they did not intend, apparently, to succumb to the popular excitement

¹ Twenty newspapers were published in Iowa in 1848; twenty-three in 1849. (See unpublished survey by D. C. Mott, Historical Department, Des Moines.) Of these, only ten files were available to the writer, complete or in part, the complete files consisting of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, *The Davenport Gazette*, and *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque). There can be little doubt, however, that the attitude of caution and silent skepticism discoverable in most of the existing files was representative of Iowa editorial attitude generally.

in the East, and sow the seeds of discontent at home by reprinting such stories.

The silence of the local editors, however, by no means isolated the Iowans from the exciting news of the gold coast. Metropolitan newspapers from the East and South, carrying extensive and lurid accounts of the gold discoveries, came to many citizens of the State, who undoubtedly passed them on for others to read when they had finished with them. Up the Mississippi and overland, itinerants journeyed about with ready stocks of California stories, while through the mail came letters from relatives and friends, repeating the rumors and reflecting the general unrest. By the fourth week in December, 1848, the California excitement had grown to such proportions in Iowa that many were ready to join the rush the moment they were assured the reports were measurably credible.

That week, with a timeliness almost dramatic, President James K. Polk's message to Congress appeared in many of the Iowa newspapers, confirming not only the reports concerning the discovery of gold in California but also the most extravagant rumors of its abundance. Basing his remarks upon the official report of Colonel R. B. Mason, Military Governor of California, the President said: "The accounts of the abundance of gold in that territory are of such an extraordinary character as would scarce command belief, were they not corroborated by the authentic report of officers in the public service, who have visited the mineral districts and derived the facts which they have detailed from personal observation Labor commands a most exorbitant price, and all other pursuits but that of searching for the precious metals, are abandoned."²

² *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), December 19, 1848. President Polk's message, read before Congress on December 5, 1848, was first reprinted in the Iowa newspapers about two weeks later. *The Miners' Express* published it in two installments, the second installment appearing on December 26th.

In some of the papers a document no less startling accompanied the President's message. This was Governor Mason's proclamation to the citizens of California, issued at Monterey on July 25, 1848, revealing the fact that soldiers and sailors stationed in California had deserted in great numbers to go to the mines, and that great suffering existed in the towns because men had abandoned their families without making proper provision for their support.³

On the heels of these official reports came further corroborating accounts of the astonishing abundance of gold, in the letters of local people who happened to be in California when the rush first began. Particularly interesting is the following extract of a letter from B. P. Koozer, a loyal but distressed soldier probably in Colonel Mason's command at Monterey, which appeared in the *Miners' Express* early in January, 1849.

It is useless for me to attempt a description of the quantity and quality of the gold already obtained, as you would not believe it. See the newspapers of the day, and depend they cannot overrate the mineral resources of California. Our company has been reduced down to 20 from 172 by desertion. These men have made their fortunes, but have violated their oaths and dishonored their flag by deserting in time of war.

We have just heard the news of peace, and I am on the fence whether I will desert or not, as I can easily make \$150 per day at the mines.

Lead has been discovered, and yields 90 per cent. Mr. Bales, of Galena, Illinois, has opened one of the veins, and thinks it of sufficient richness to keep four furnaces in operation. . . .

One of our men on a three months furlough, brought back to Monterey with him *twenty-seven* [pounds] of *Virgin Gold*. This, at . . . Boston prices, (\$20 per ounce) [amounts to] \$6,480. What do you think of that? I hate to desert — I hate to soldier for six dollars a months — I am almost crazy. Excuse this letter as I have the Gold Fever shocking bad, and "the root of all evil"

³ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), December 26, 1848.

is in my mind night and day Do as you please, but I advise you to bundle up your traps and come to California.⁴

The wildest rumors having been thus confirmed, a number of Iowans made preparations for an immediate departure to the gold fields. By January 1, 1849, and perhaps earlier, some had already made the start, and without a thought of the consequences of their precipitate haste hurried down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and thence to the Isthmus. At New Orleans, unfortunately, and in fact along the whole lower river, the cholera had broken out. Fear of the epidemic apparently induced many of these early emigrants to go by way of New York, but the trip thither, in the dead of winter, was long and hard, and added considerably to the expense of the entire journey.⁵ The wise thing seemed to be to wait for an overland trip in the spring.

There was, however, little patience for waiting. Spurred on by the departure of the earliest Iowans and by the hurried preparations of others planning to take the water route just as soon as their affairs could be adjusted, prospective overland emigrants were moved to immediate action. "Ho for California!" rose the shout in Iowa hamlets and towns, and California meetings were held everywhere in order to determine who intended to go.⁶ "Gold is henceforth to flow, not only up the Mississippi", the optimists felt, "but to 'shine through the interstices of the poor man's purse'; it is not 'gold in the clouds or in the

⁴ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 2, 1849. While Koozer was probably not an Iowan, the proximity of Galena, his reference to lead-mining, and the fact that *The Miners' Express* reprinted his letter in full warrant its inclusion here.

⁵ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 23, 1849.

⁶ In fact, the earliest recorded California meeting in Iowa took place on December 30, 1848, two days prior to the earliest recorded departures by water. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 9, 1849.

sea, or in the centre of a rock-ribbed mountain, but in the soil of California".⁷ While these preliminary meetings often ended without any definite decision having been reached, and frequently after much vituperation and debate, they nevertheless gave additional momentum to the California movement by revealing how deep and widespread the interest in the emigration had become.

Disturbed by the severity with which the California virus had infected the Iowans, and by the prospect of a disturbingly large emigration when the season opened, many of the local editors sought to moderate the excitement by calling attention not only to the physical dangers attendant upon an adventure of the nature contemplated, but also to the moral dangers. "What will it profit a man", wrote the editor of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* in answering the question whether or not it were best to go to the gold regions of California, "if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"⁸ It was also pointed out that the chance for success in the mines was highly uncertain, since the gold deposits might give out at any time. "We hope and presume, that a little reflection will deter many of those from going who are now talking about it", declared the editor of the *Miners' Express*. "The chances for gaining a fortune in the California mines, are as precarious as in almost any lottery, and the cost of the Ticket, much greater than in any."

"To those who are out of business, and can go without making a sacrifice of property, we would say go, but if you are well fixed in Iowa, and can make a comfortable living where you now are, we would say pause and reflect ere you start."⁹

⁷ *The Davenport Gazette*, January 11, 1849.

⁸ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, February 8, 1849.

⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 6, 1849.

Particularly urgent in his effort to stem the California migration was the editor of the Bloomington (now Muscatine) *Herald* who sought to interest Iowans in the possibilities of achieving wealth in their own State. "There is one kind of surface gold mining", the editor pointed out, "which is deservedly growing in great popularity in Iowa and which we cannot too seriously commend to those who may desire to grow rich by working the earth. The gross product, to be sure, has the gloss and jingle said to belong to the productions of the California mines; but our miners never fail in finding the metal, just in proportion to the labor expended, and there is nothing precarious about its value or sale in the markets. Neither is there any difficulty about procuring all the necessaries, and most of the luxuries of civilized life, at fair and reasonable rates. This way, then, amateur miners, and do not suffer the poetry of your honorable calling to be destroyed, by town popinjays, in hairy faces and high heeled boots, without the ability to pay for land enough to plant themselves in, though they curl their pretty lips and call you F-A-R-M-E-R."¹⁰

But the ceaseless flow of gold stories, the published reports of huge shipments of gold-ore from western to eastern ports, and the spectacle of thousands of people throughout the country feverishly preparing for a rush across the plains proved much more effective than the warnings and the pleadings of the editors. "Our exchange papers", reports the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* on February 1st, "contain calls for California meetings all around us. The gold hunters in Iowa City have formed a company for mutual aid and protection, which is well conceived, and they wish others to join them."¹¹ The compact of this

¹⁰ *The Bloomington Herald*, December 30, 1848.

¹¹ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, February 1, 1849.

company, reprinted in a number of Iowa newspapers under the title "The Iowa-California Compact", evoked on the whole, favorable comment, especially from the editors in the vicinity of Iowa City, who suggested that local units attach themselves to the capital city company. It is apparent, however, from the large number of California meetings held throughout the State, even in communities where organization with the Iowa City company had been suggested, that the urge for local organization proved much too powerful to resist.

ORGANIZATION OF COMPANIES

It has occasionally been asserted that Iowa emigrants in the early days of the gold rush committed themselves to the hazards of the trail totally unprepared. Thus Hoyt Sherman, addressing the old settlers of Polk County years ago and speaking of the emigration from Des Moines declared: "In spite of the uncertainty, peril, and privation of the long journey men would bundle their wives and children into a rickety two-horse wagon, with a small supply of the coarsest food, hitch to it a couple of worn-out horses, or two yoke of oxen, and relying on the road-side growth of grass for support of animals, swing away from civilization for a two or four month's journey toward the Pacific. Relying blindly on nature to cure disease in their party if it came, on the weather for a supply of forage, and on favorable conditions to reach the end of their long journey before winter came they exhibited a blind faith in their good luck".¹²

¹² See Fulton's *Scrapbook of Des Moines* (in the Library of the Historical Department of Iowa at Des Moines), p. 36. The Iowa emigrants of 1849 used ox teams almost exclusively. While some horses and mules were used, they were generally considered too light as draft animals. But the forty-niners, learning by bitter experience that their loading was much too heavy, wrote back urging the emigrants of 1850 to travel light. "Our great mistake", ad-

While it is conceivable that in the later years of the gold rush some Iowa emigrants may have trusted thus blindly to their good fortune, no instances of such heedlessness are reported in the newspapers in the spring of 1849. On the contrary, the evidence clearly indicates that many weeks of careful preparation preceded the departure of the Iowa companies, that the emigrants were deeply conscious of the dangers that confronted them, and that emergencies, so far as they could be anticipated, were carefully provided for.

Despite the meagre news reporting of the forties, it is nevertheless possible to get an accurate notion of how the organization of the Iowa companies proceeded. At a preliminary meeting called by prospective emigrants, the feasibility of the hazardous trip to the gold coast was discussed and, as previously indicated, the number and names of those intending to go were ascertained. At this meeting, or at a subsequent one, two committees were ordinarily appointed, one on rules and regulations, and another on outfit. When these committees were ready to report, another meeting was called. If the reports were accepted, an organization was immediately effected and a roster of subscribers made up. Thereafter, perhaps weekly, the

vised a Jackson County emigrant, "was in taking too much loading and large wagons, and I would advise all who come after us to profit by our experience."—*The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), October 12, 1849. When the rush of 1850 was getting under way, the editors began to voice their fears that the emigrants would suffer from too light loading. "Last spring, persons fitting up for the trip procured the strongest wagons and loaded them down; this year they seek the lightest wagons, provide no clothing and take as little provision as possible."—*Western Democrat* (Andrew, Iowa), February 8, 1850. The editor of the *Dubuque Miners' Express*, March 27, 1850, on the other hand, was inclined to believe that the experience of 1849 would "benefit those who are now on the way. Instead of slow dragging ox teams, most have gone with horses or mules, and all have lighter outfits than last year." But even in 1850 the emigrants were anything but heedless, despite their determination to travel light. Like the forty-niners they formed themselves into companies, made careful provision for the hazards of the journey, and did, in fact, profit from the experiences of their predecessors.

company met to perfect its plans and to listen to progress reports in the matter of equipment and supplies.¹³

To demonstrate the painstaking attention which the Iowa emigrants gave to matters involving mutual protection, sustenance, and equipment, and to show in detail the nature of the organization of an Iowa company of gold-seekers, the report of the Muscatine-California Emigrants' Association on regulations and outfit is here presented.

Report on General Regulations

The undersigned, and others who may be hereafter associated with them, agree to observe and abide by the following Rules and Regulations, for the mutual protection and safety of their persons and property, to continue from their departure from the Missouri River to their destination in California:

1. That each Emigrant shall be furnished and equipped with such teams, provisions, arms, amunition and camp equipage as shall be required by the committee on outfit.
2. That said committee shall consist of three, viz: — — — Who may be removed by a majority vote of the emigrants hereby associated, whose duty it shall be to see that each emigrant is duly supplied with all such things as are necessary for their comfort, health, safety and progress; and whose duties shall continue until the termination of this expedition.
3. There shall be a Committee on Regulations, Consisting of — — — (subject to removal by a majority) whose duty it shall be to see that these rules are carefully observed, and to make all rules to regulate the affairs of the emigrants, as they may deem advisable, and to adjudicate all questions of dispute and to see that the rights of each emigrant are protected and enforced.
4. It shall be the duty of each emigrant to obey all decisions of the said Committee on Regulations, and in default thereof such recusant emigrant shall be expelled from the protection of this association.
5. Any emigrant who shall be afflicted with sickness on the road, shall be taken care of by some one, to be designated by

¹³ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 3, 1849.

the committee on regulations, from day to day; and in case of death of any emigrant, his effects shall be disposed of in such manner as shall be determined by the committee on regulations, and the proceeds thereof returned to his friends and relatives as speedily as possible.

6. That in case any team shall fail, or any wagon shall be broken, or any other casualty happen, not through the gross negligence of the owner, it shall be the duty of each emigrant to contribute his share of labor, money or property to repair such injury.
7. If any part owner of any team or other property pertaining to this emigration, shall after the day of departure, hereafter to be fixed and published, wilfully fail to go, aid and participate in this expedition, the remaining part owners or owner shall become the proprietors of the whole of such team or other property, to be paid for in California, or on the return of such remaining part owners or owner to Iowa; the value to be fixed by three appraisers appointed by the Committee on Regulations.
8. There shall be a Superintendent of this Association who shall see that these rules are strictly enforced, and cause all orders of the Committee on Regulations to be executed; and shall have command of the daily processions, time of departure each day, and time and place of encampment at the close of each day, subject to the orders of the Committee on Outfit.
9. Said Superintendent shall be elected by a majority; and in executing the duties of his office shall be clothed with military power, and it shall be the duty of each emigrant to obey him as such: Provided, that the orders and commands of such Superintendent may be over-ruled by the Committee on Regulations, except in cases of actual conflict with opposing adversaries not members of this Association.
10. Said Superintendent may be removed by a majority of this Association.
11. No spirituous liquors to be carried by any emigrant, except for medical purposes.
12. The Association shall observe the Sabbath day, if practicable, and shall not travel on that day, unless absolutely necessary.
13. The Committee on Regulations shall have power to impose fines and penalties for a violation of these rules.

14. The Superintendent may appeal from the decision of either of the Committees over-ruling his orders, to the decision of the Association, when duly assembled.

Report on Outfit

Each two or three persons joining said company shall be provided with a good well built wagon, capable of bearing such load as its owners may see fit to put in; but not to exceed, in any case over 3,000 pounds; with such covers as will turn rain. To have an extra king-bolt, and two extra lynch pins, and two gallons of tar. For the team they shall have at least one yoke of oxen to every 700 lbs., but not less than three yokes to any wagon; ages from 5 to 6 years.

For tent, Osnaburg of sufficient size to accommodate three persons.

Each wagon should be supplied with tools for repairs, such as an axe, auger, saw, drawing-knife, two gimblets and a hatchet.

Arms and Amunition. — Each man shall be provided with a good substantial rifle or shot-gun, to carry not more than fifty balls to the pound of lead, a good bowie or butcher-knife, 2 lbs. of powder, 18 lbs. of lead and 1,000 percussion caps.

Provisions. — Each man shall have 150 lbs. flour, 70 lbs. hard bread, 30 lbs. beans, 150 lbs. bacon, 20 lbs. dried beef, 10 lbs. lard, 5 lbs. sugar, 1 lb. tea, 30 lbs. salt, and 10 lbs. soap.

Cooking Utensils. — For each mess a camp kettle, a frying-pan and bread pan.

Cordage. — Each man shall have at least 20 feet of good 3-4 rope, Tackle, chains, yokes, bows, etc., of good quality.

Bedding. — Two Blankets, or their equivalent, per man.

As soon as a local company had organized, the members bent their energies to provide the required outfit. Of this period of activity and of the difficulties encountered by the emigrants the newspapers are comparatively silent. It is obvious, however, in view of the serious nature of the expedition, that great care was taken in the selection of draft animals, and that the building of wagons was a matter of constant supervision. But even after these things had been attended to and the equipment and provisions had been

gathered and stored, other serious problems confronted the emigrants. Particularly important was the determination of the best trail to the Pacific. To aid the emigrants in making a wise selection a number of California "Guides" were available, small pamphlets, for the most part, containing maps of questionable accuracy, and descriptive sketches of the mountains and plains. The author of one of these, publication of which was announced, was John B. Newhall of Burlington, Iowa, whose guide was to consist of thirty or forty pages of descriptive matter and maps. It was advertised to appear on March 1st, but no trace of this guide in printed form has been found.¹⁴

A further point to be considered, especially by those companies comprising units living in different communities, was the selection of some frontier point along the Missouri River which was to serve as a rendezvous, before they launched out upon the plains. The two stations most commonly selected by the Iowans were St. Joseph (then St. Joseph's), Missouri, and Council Bluffs, Iowa. The former was better known, but the latter offered a more direct route to the South Pass of the Rockies. Favoring St. Joseph, however, was the fact that companies originating along the Mississippi could ship their loadings by regular boat service to that point and thus save their teams by traveling light through Iowa.¹⁵

A final matter to be determined was the date of local de-

¹⁴ J. B. Newhall, one time secretary to Governor James Clarke, had visited the West as early as 1836. He had written a series of articles for an eastern journal under the title *Sketches of Iowa* and in 1846 had published a book called *Glimpses of Iowa*. For Newhall's connection with the Burlington emigration see footnote 46. No copy of Newhall's "Guide" has been discovered. Other guides widely advertised in the Iowa press were Seymore's *Guide to California — Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 31, 1849 — and Ware's *California Guide — The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 20, 1849.

¹⁵ See *Des Moines County* and "Iowa Trails to the Missouri", pp. 331, 354. St. Joseph was usually written "St. Joseph's" in the early guides and maps.

parture. The chief consideration in fixing this date was the condition of the forage upon the plains. Obviously, no crossing could be attempted before the grass was high enough to feed the stock. The Iowa companies may also have considered the fact that thousands of gold seekers from eastern States were likely to converge at a few frontier points and that unless the Iowa units arrived early, they would be delayed by a jam at the ferry crossings along the Missouri. How far the latter consideration entered into the calculations of the Iowans can only be conjectured, but the time fixed upon by most companies to make the start appears to have been the first week in April, sufficiently early, as events later proved, to avoid costly delay at the crossings.¹⁶

FRAUDS, HUMOR, AND POETRY

The organization of the Iowa forty-niners for a march across the plains was, on the whole, a serious business. The breaking of home ties, the investment both in cash and equipment required to make the journey, and the dangers of the trip were not matters to be taken lightly. An examination of the news files, nevertheless, indicates that from the beginning considerable jocularities accompanied the progress of the preparations and that incidents sometimes occurred which offered a comic relief to the seriousness of the undertaking. Particularly amusing was a fraud by which a number of Iowa editors were duped.

A man who called himself Don Jose D'Alvear and was said to have been the original discoverer of gold in California claimed he had made the discovery by means of a

¹⁶ The departures actually occurred, however, all through the first half of April. A portion of the Dubuque company appears to have got away as late as April 24th. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 24, 1849. On the other hand, a company from Burlington departed as early as March 26th. — *Iowa State Gazette* (Burlington), March 21, 1849.

newly invented magnetic instrument called the "goldometer". This machine, D'Alvear announced, he now wished to place upon the market "at the remarkably low price of *Three Dollars* each, accompanied by full instructions for use, and a variety of philosophical hints drawn from the ancient and modern sciences, on the art of Finding Mines of Gold . . . and other Mineral Riches, the whole being given in a publication called the Gold Seeker's Guide.

"The goldometer is so simple an instrument", the Don claimed, "that a child may learn to operate it in five minutes. It is not affected by climate, moisture, or any other known causes, (except the natural magnet) and will retain its power of pointing out mineral riches in the earth for any number of years."¹⁷

A long, finely printed advertisement setting forth the virtues of this machine was mailed to newspaper editors everywhere, with the request that it be printed. For inserting the advertisement the editor was to receive ten dollars, to be remitted later. The novelty of the machine, the alluring claims concerning its efficiency, and the wide publicity the machine was receiving in the eastern press gave the matter a *bona fide* appearance. As a result some Iowa editors not only inserted the advertisement, trusting that the promised ten dollars would soon reach them, but also ordered the machine. "The thing bears upon its front the features of a remarkably steep humbug", writes one editor, who suspected his gullibility would be ridiculed should the goldometer prove a fraud, "and we ask of our friends who are going to California a suspension of opinion until the arrival of a specimen of the machine, which we herewith order."¹⁸

¹⁷ *The Davenport Gazette*, February 1, 1849.

¹⁸ *The Bloomington Herald*, February 3, 1849.

Needless to say, the ten dollars for running the advertisement was never paid, and when the machine arrived, it was found that it would indeed attract metals, but that any intervening earth destroyed its efficacy.¹⁹

The credulity of the people regarding matters pertaining to California during the early spring months of 1849 is further illustrated by a hoax which a local jokester perpetrated upon the people of Davenport. For a number of days a report had been circulating that recruits were being sought by the government for service in California. Thereupon a notice was posted that on the following day a recruiting officer would visit Davenport, hoping to enlist five hundred men. Those who entered the service were to receive three dollars a day on their journey to California and five dollars if they furnished their own horses. It is reported that the city was suddenly thrown into a paroxysm of California fever, and that young and old were eager to enlist. The recruiting officer, however, failed to make an appearance.²⁰

Reflecting the lighter side of the gold rush, also, are the California anecdotes and poems which one encounters so abundantly in the Iowa newspapers of the spring of 1849. While it is probably true that few of these are local in origin, the fact that they were read and enjoyed by thousands of Iowans, while the local companies were busy with their preparations, and the fact that they helped to reflect the spirit and temper of the period may justify the inclusion of some of them here.

The following anecdote, with something of regional humor about it, seems to have been inspired by the goldometer fraud of D'Alvear: "A Yankee down East has invented a specific for the use of gold hunters. The operation

¹⁹ *The Davenport Gazette*, April 5, 1849.

²⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, February 8, 1849.

is to grease himself well, lay down on the top of a hill, and then roll to the bottom. The gold and 'nothing else' will stick to him. Price \$94 per box."²¹

Another invention, intended for the convenience of the emigrants en route to California, was a newly patented stove. "It is placed under the feet, and a mustard plaster upon the head", the directions stated, "draws the heat through the entire body."²²

Many of the stories circulating through the Iowa press reflect the exaggerated reports concerning the marvelous production of the California mines and the size and the value of the nuggets. There is, for example, the story of the soldier who had discovered a rock weighing 839 pounds. Of course he could not move it; so at latest accounts he had been sitting there 67 days and had offered \$27,000 for a plate of pork and beans.²³

There is also the story of the man who returned home from California with gold to the amount of \$64,000 which he deposited in one of the mints. "He took off his old tattered unmentionables, and was about to throw them away, when his wife, good prudent woman, took them, and with a trifling effort, shook \$23,000 worth of gold out of them."²⁴

The novelty of playing poker at the mines with gold dust as a medium of exchange suggested the following story. Four persons had seated themselves to play a game of poker — the ante, as a substitute for money, being a handful of gold dust. They continued playing for some time, no one winning much. At length one of the group who had a good hand went a handful better. "I see that and go you a pint better", cried another who also had a strong hand.

²¹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 3, 1849.

²² *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

²³ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 8, 1849.

²⁴ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 27, 1849.

"I see that", responded the first, "and go you a quart better." "Well, I see that and go you a gallon better", responded the other. This rather disconcerted his adversary for a while, as it oversized his pile, but confiding in the superior strength of his hand he collected together all the gold dust he had left, put it aside, and coolly remarked to one of his companions, "Here, Jim, watch my pile till I go out and *dig enough to call him.*"²⁵

Of poetry relating to the California gold rush, whether humorous or otherwise, relatively little seems to have found its way into the Iowa newspapers, and what did appear is for the most part poor. In February, 1849, the *Keokuk Register* reprinted the highly popular "California Emigrant", sung to the tune of "Oh Susanna!" but if the song became as popular in Iowa during the early stages of the gold rush as it did elsewhere, the fact is not evident from an examination of the news files. The jingle which follows is offered chiefly for the theme of the second line, a topic especially popular among newspaper editors and merchants who suffered severely from the departure of emigrants who had not paid their debts.

I'm away, I'm away to the golden shore;
I've cut my creditors — they'll know me no more.
I've said goodbye to Sall, Moll and Sue,
They may wail and weep and affect to look blue —
But I'll brave the worst, I'll encounter all shocks —
They will see me no more, unless I come home
With my breeches pockets well filled with rocks.²⁶

A poem, written apparently by some one in Davenport, reflects, in its lament of the heartaches caused by the lure of gold, the sadder aspects of the gold rush.

²⁵ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 10, 1849.

²⁶ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 3, 1849.

O, cursed love of gold!
 How worthless is the prize
 That human life doth hold
 To our young uncheated eyes;
 For this from home and house we part,
 And tear sweet nature from the heart.

In vain fond parents weep;
 In vain a sister sighs;
 To gather gold we sweep
 To sickly climes and skies;
 And when the stream begins to roll,
 We gain the world and lose the soul.²⁷

THE EVE OF DEPARTURES

With the approach of spring, the California fever, which had abated somewhat during the winter months, rose to a new peak. Merchants who planned to make the trip — and there were many of them in the spring of forty-nine — adjusted their affairs as hastily as possible. “O. P. H!!” (Oh Please Hurry!!), they advertised in the local newspapers, we “are now up for California. All persons indebted to . . . [us] will please pay up immediately.”²⁸ Emigrating professional men, particularly doctors and lawyers, announced the dissolution of partnerships and prepared to close their offices. Everywhere, on the farms, as in the towns, members of the California companies made whatever arrangements were necessary to facilitate their departure or to meet the exigencies which would result from their absence.

As the date of departure drew near, preachers exhorted the emigrants upon the moral dangers involved in the great venture, and not a few of them decided to accompany the Californians as spiritual advisers. Prominent among

²⁷ *The Davenport Gazette*, April 26, 1849.

²⁸ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 20, 1849.

the latter was the Reverend S. V. Blakeslee of Ottumwa, whose zeal for the moral welfare of the Iowa emigrants led him to visit a number of companies and lay before them the advantages of refraining from travel on the Sabbath. The editor of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, who envisioned Blakeslee among the Californians as something of a John the Baptist lifting up his voice in the wilderness and preparing the path of the Lord, regarded the preacher's decision to accompany the emigrants as highly commendable.²⁹ Some editors, however, noting a practice, especially in the West, of preachers attaching themselves to companies, were apparently suspicious of the motives which prompted many of them to join, and expressed the hope that in California they would not grub for gold.³⁰

Another source of criticism by some of the Iowa editors was the fact that in many communities women and children were included in the emigrant lists. For these, the editors argued, the journey would be too long, arduous, and dangerous. "Hardly can we hold that man guiltless", wrote the editor of the *Davenport Gazette*, "who imposes so much privation upon his family as to drag them across the interminable prairies that separate us from California."³¹ To this as to other warnings, however, the emigrants seemed to pay little heed, with the result that some Iowa companies, as for example those from Jackson County, included an unusually large number of women and children.

By the second week in March the first overlanders from the north and east began to arrive at various points in Iowa. Down the Mississippi they came, hundreds of them, presently, crowding boats piled high with baggage. Across

²⁹ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, March 15, 1849.

³⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 29, 1849.

³¹ *The Davenport Gazette*, April 12, 1849.

the ferries at all the principal crossings between Dubuque and Keokuk, long lines of emigrant wagons made their way into Iowa, some heading for St. Joseph, others for Council Bluffs. Over night, business at these points became suddenly brisk. The ferries, especially, reaped a fine harvest of dollars.³² The elated editor of the *Miners' Express*, hoping to divert trade to that point, declared:

Persons fitting out for California will find it to their interest to lay in their entire outfits at this place.

Emigrants from Wisconsin, Illinois, and other states east of the River, who are going the overland route by way of Council Bluffs, will find this the best place to purchase their outfit.

Those who put off purchasing until they get further west, will be taken in.³³

Other towns advertised in much the same fashion, each pointing out to the emigrants the special advantages which would result from making a crossing at that particular place.

The date on which the first company of Iowa forty-niners departed for the gold coast would be difficult to establish. It is highly probable, however, that some units got away as early as the second week in March, expecting, apparently, to wait at the rendezvous until the condition of the grass on the plains made the "jump-off" possible. The date for departure scheduled by most of the Iowa companies was around April first. As a matter of fact, emigration took place all through the first half of April, and some units did not get away till the fourth week in April.

Equally difficult to establish is the total number of

³² *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 20, 1849; *The Davenport Gazette*, April 5, 1849.

³³ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 3, 1849. Really active competition between the various crossing points did not develop until the forty-niners had gone over. Almost immediately thereafter, however, preparations were made to capture the crossing trade of the following season.

Iowans who joined the rush to California. Estimates reported for communities where no papers existed were probably based on hear-say or conjecture, while those from communities which had papers were too frequently premature and consequently not subject to a final corrective check as the date of departure approached. An editorial in the *Dubuque Miners' Express* on April 17, 1849, written, therefore, after the major portion of the emigration had gotten under way, seems to offer the most dependable estimate. It is quoted below, for the additional reason that it probably reflects better than any other contemporary utterance, the attitude and emotions of those who stayed at home as they contemplated the departures of their friends for far-off California.

The attraction of gold will take a large number of the citizens of our state to the distant regions of California the present spring.

The County of Dubuque will afford her full share of the immense caravan that is about to launch out upon the broad prairie, and bend its course o'er the boundless plains and towering hills to the golden valley of the Sacramento.

One hundred, at least of her sons, breaking away from the attraction of home, and the ties of kindred affection, will soon have turned their backs upon the fairest and pleasantest portions of our happy country, to seek new homes and new friends upon the western verge of our continent. . . .

The numbers, leaving the borders of our beautiful Iowa will not come short of one thousand, and may reach as high as twelve hundred. . . .³⁴

The home of the hardy pioneer which had just begun to yield the thousand sweets that cluster around that sacred name, must be forsaken and forgot, and its restless tenants thrown again upon the

³⁴ The population in Iowa in 1849, as shown by the returns of the assessors, was 154,368. — *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), January 18, 1850. In this State as in others, however, the loss of numbers gave less concern than the fact that so large a number of the emigrants were professional and business men, or otherwise prominent citizens. Few others could afford to go. It is interesting to consider that it must have required no less than 550 wagons and 3700 draft animals to transport the Iowa emigrants and their loadings to the gold coast.

world of adventure in gathering the dust that glitters in the rays of the setting sun.

Many, many we fear will be doomed to disappointment, and will rue the day they forsook the flowery plains of our beautiful State. But to those who have determined to hazard the enterprise, we can but say, God speed you; and when we learn of fortunes made, or fame secured, our heart will thrill with joy, if connected with that fortune or that fame shall be the name of some son of our own Iowa.

ORGANIZATION AND PERSONNEL OF THE IOWA COMPANIES

Those acquainted with the sketchy manner of news reporting in the period under discussion will realize the difficulties of presenting even a brief account of the organization and personnel of the Iowa companies which, in the spring of 1849, joined the rush to California. A further complication, however, is the fact that scarcely a third of the Iowa news files for the year 1849 are still preserved. A more or less detailed exposition will be possible, therefore, with regard to only a few localities.³⁵

No doubt several companies left Iowa about whose existence nothing has been discovered. Concerning many others only meagre details are available, these having been obtained, for the most part, from exchange items in the various newspapers, or from comments found in the printed letters of the emigrants. But even for the companies concerning whose organization the major facts are known, it is impossible, on account of the inadequacy of the reporting, to get a satisfactorily complete picture. Not

³⁵ In addition to the newspapers, such other sources were used as were readily available. No attempt was made, however, to examine all diaries and books relating to the forty-niners, in the hope of finding information with regard to the emigration out of Iowa. While a comprehensive investigation of all such sources would doubtless throw additional light upon the emigration from various localities of the State, and in some instances, perhaps, serve to correct erroneous conclusions in this paper, the likelihood is small that it would contribute anything important to the entire presentation.

a single instance was discovered, for example, where an editor narrated the events of the stirring day when the local company departed, or depicted the dramatic moment when the long whips cracked and the ox teams and the covered wagons began the long march to the Pacific.

Despite these many, and in some respects serious limitations, however, it is hoped that the sections which follow will present a fairly accurate survey of the organization and personnel of the Iowa companies, and wherever possible show the extent of the emigration from the various counties.

Cedar County.—A number of emigrants from Cedar County organized with groups from Jackson, Jones, and Clinton counties in a meeting held at Thorn's Mill, on February 22, 1849. M. G. Heart presided and J. D. Denson acted as secretary. After many resolutions concerning the safety of the company had been passed, it was agreed that the emigrants should be ready by the first day of April to start at a day's notice and to rendezvous at Iowa City, the first marching point.³⁶ It is probable that this company later joined the company at Iowa City. (See *Clinton County.*) Concerning the number and identity of the Cedar County emigrants in the group organized at Thorn's Mill, nothing was discovered.

From a news item in the issue of the *Muscatine Democratic Enquirer* for June 23rd, it appears that a second party of Cedar County emigrants chose St. Joseph as a point of rendezvous and there joined forces with a company from Muscatine, Iowa, and one from Illinois. The organization thus formed numbered twenty wagons and fifty men. It crossed the Missouri on May 12th and

³⁶ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 1, 1849. The location of Thorn's Mill has not been discovered. It was probably centrally situated with reference to the four counties involved.

camped in a small prairie. Here a member of the Cedar County group, John H. Denslow, died of the cholera.

While no direct information was discovered concerning the size of the two Cedar County units, the fragmentary grouping of the emigrants and the relative silence in the newspapers with regard to the emigration from the county seem to indicate that the total number of emigrants was small, perhaps not over thirty.

Clayton County. — The California fever in this county had set in so strongly by the first week in February, 1849, that in the opinion of the *Dubuque Miners' Express*, Clayton County would "probably, if reports from there be true, send more emigrants than any county in the north."³⁷

Since it is likely that the Dubuque editor had the emigration from his own county in mind as a basis for comparison, the number reported going from Clayton County early in February probably ranged from fifty to seventy-five. No information was found, however, which threw further light upon the emigration from this county.

Clinton County. — Two brief items supply all that has been discovered with regard to the emigration from Clinton County. The first, a news item in the *Davenport Gazette* of March 1, 1849, reveals that a group of Clinton County emigrants organized with groups from neighboring counties at Thorn's Mill, on February 22nd.³⁸ Of the personnel of this local group nothing is said. The second item, an extract from a letter by Loring Wheeler of De Witt, Iowa, dated November 5, 1849, at Feather River, California, reports that "All Clinton county folks are in safe. Cotton and Oaks lost all their cattle but three, and

³⁷ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 6, 1849.

³⁸ See account of emigration from Cedar County, pp. 329, 330.

Haun and Bourne lost all but one yoke. Barber, who married Almira Burton, lost everything and I have been informed that Almira had to walk through the mud and snow about fifty miles."³⁹

Loring Wheeler was a member of the Iowa State Senate.⁴⁰ He was prominently connected with the formation of the Iowa City company and at the frontier was elected colonel of his company.⁴¹ In view of the fact that the organization formed at Thorn's Mill agreed to rendezvous at Iowa City by April 1st, the date set for the departure of the Iowa City company, and the fact that Wheeler was well informed concerning the fate of the Clinton County emigrants upon their arrival in California, it seems highly probable that the Clinton County group joined the Iowa City company, and thus at the Missouri, came under Loring Wheeler's command.

Des Moines County.—The first recorded meeting of California emigrants in Des Moines County occurred in the Burlington courthouse on the evening of February 3, 1849. Francis J. C. Peasley occupied the chair, while George W. Kelly acted as secretary. A committee of six, composed of C. Hall, George W. Bowie, John S. David, Jas. McKee, Oliver Cottle, and Jacob Arrick, which had apparently been appointed at a previous meeting to draft recommendations on equipment, offered its report. This committee recommended that emigrants provide themselves with good, light wagons, that the loading should not exceed 2500 pounds, and that four yoke of oxen not over eight years old should be provided for each wagon. With regard to the number of individuals to a wagon the com-

³⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 13, 1850.

⁴⁰ Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. IV, p. 284.

⁴¹ See section on Johnson County below, pp. 342-345.

mittee recommended not less than three and not more than four. No spirituous liquor except for medical purposes was to be taken. In general, the remainder of the equipment specified was similar in type and quantity to that suggested in the Iowa-California compact. The teams were to be ready to start by March 25th.⁴²

While it is reasonable to suppose that members of the Burlington company met at regular intervals to perfect their plans, it is March 22nd before we again hear of them. On that day a petition, signed by six members, appeared in the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*,⁴³ addressed to the Reverend William Salter, which read as follows:

Dear Sir — We, the undersigned members of the California company, would respectfully request you to preach a sermon to us before we start, at whatever time and place you may think proper.

In the same issue of the *Hawk-Eye* appeared Salter's acceptance of the invitation. He specified the Congregational meeting house as the place, and Sunday evening, March 25th, the eve of the departure of the California company, as the time. On that Sunday evening Salter confronted a crowded church. So appealing was his sermon that he was requested to repeat it the following Sabbath to emigrants who were going later.

On Monday morning, March 26th, the first contingent of the Burlington emigration started for the Missouri. To save time and to spare the teams, the wagons started light out of Burlington, the bulk of the loading being sent by boat to St. Joseph.⁴⁴ For two weeks thereafter teams left

⁴² *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, February 8, 1849.

⁴³ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, March 29, 1849.

⁴⁴ *Iowa State Gazette* (Burlington), March 21, and 28, 1849. J. S. David and C. H. Miller went to St. Joseph by boat, probably to take charge of the loading and to make arrangements for the arrival of the Burlington Company. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 30, 1849.

Burlington and vicinity almost daily. By April 5th the editor of the *Burlington Hawk-Eye* listed 76 persons who had gone and 8 who were yet to leave. He estimated that 100 would go from Des Moines County. A few, apparently, backed out before the day of departure, if the local editor may be taken seriously. He tells the story of one young man bound for California who took his blanket and slept one night on an open porch. The next morning he decided not to go. Another young man took a yoke of oxen and traveled six miles through the mud. It was a hard day's work. The next morning he gee-hawed them back again and that evening took his name off the emigrant list.⁴⁵

The emigration from Des Moines County, it appears, centered around three organizations. One company — in part, perhaps, the one whose report on equipment was summarized above — was reported at St. Joseph on April 29th as comprising 47 persons. It was under the leadership of Captain Wile.⁴⁶ A second group, referred to as the Peasley and Brooks company, was smaller, but expensively equipped. It consisted of 11 men, with F. W. Brooks in charge. At St. Joseph this group united with a company from Oquawka, Illinois, under the charge of Captain Findlay. They crossed the Missouri River on May 4th and arrived at the diggings ninety-eight days later, making one of the fastest trips on record.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, April 12, 1849.

⁴⁶ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 17, 1849. Information concerning the Burlington emigrants at St. Joseph was supplied in a letter from J. B. Newhall, prominent Iowan and a resident of Burlington. Newhall had planned to accompany the Burlington group to California, but on May 7, he died of cholera at Independence, Missouri. — *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 24, 1849.

⁴⁷ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, April 5, 1849. See also *The Davenport Gazette*, November 1, 1849. Peasley, apparently, was prevented from accompanying his party in April, but went by water, leaving Burlington about the latter part of November. — *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, January 3, 1850.

The evidence of a third party rests upon two facts: first, the Burlington groups reported at St. Joseph fall far short of the numbers known to have emigrated from the county, indicating that a group may have chosen Council Bluffs as a frontier point of departure; and second, a company referred to as the "Hawk-Eye Company" under the leadership of Colonel Burdge is reported among the companies that had crossed the ferry at Trader's Point (Council Bluffs).⁴⁸ Of this group, however, no further information has been discovered.

Dubuque County. — Nowhere in Iowa, so far as available records show, did the gold fever strike so early as at Dubuque. Impatient to get to the gold fields and hoping by an early arrival to make money by speculation, S. M. Hammonds, William H. Merrit, and E. Mobbey, three of the city's most prominent men, left Dubuque for the gold coast on New Year's Day, 1849, going by way of New Orleans and Panama. By January 23, 1849, between ten and fifteen had departed, most of them going by way of New York.⁴⁹

The excitement aroused by these early departures and by the preparations preceding them must have proved very contagious to those who were considering an overland trip in the spring, for on December 30, 1848, two days before the earliest departures by water, the first California meeting of overland emigrants was held. At this meeting, which took place at the courthouse, signatures were taken of all those who wished to form an emigrating company.

⁴⁸ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

⁴⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 23, 1849. On March 24th five other citizens of Dubuque left for California by way of New Orleans and the Isthmus. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 27, 1849. For comment with regard to the experiences of some of the men who took the water route see pp. 358-361.

The list was then posted in the store of V. Glenat, a prospective emigrant, for additional signatures.⁵⁰

The organization meetings which inevitably followed were unfortunately not recorded in the *Miners' Express*, the only Dubuque news file of the period now extant, nor were the compact and the regulations governing the outfit printed. That a large company was formed very early, however, is evident from an item in the issue of February 6th which informs us that "Some fifteen or twenty wagons are now under contract to be finished in season for the earliest emigrants." Thereafter, with the exception of a few brief references, the preparations of the Dubuque company are not alluded to until April 24th. On that day the editor of the *Miners' Express* published a list of over seventy-five emigrants who had already departed or were to depart within the week. The list included four families and more than ten children.⁵¹

The frontier point selected by the Dubuque company as a place of rendezvous was Council Bluffs. Leaving Dubuque, the train passed through Cedar Rapids and Iowa City and then swung across the prairies to the Missouri. The roads were bad and the weather unpleasant.⁵² First to arrive at the Missouri River was V. Glenat and his party, on May 11th. A few days later, he and a group of others who had come up in the meantime crossed the Missouri, made camp, and waited. But other Dubuque teams, as they arrived at the river, stopped on the east side to wait for the rear wagons to come up. When these got ready to move, a large number of other wagons had collected at the ferry, and the Dubuque teams, having forfeited the right

⁵⁰ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 9, 1849.

⁵¹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 24, 1849.

⁵² *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 27, 1849. E. F. Gillespie, however, who arrived a few days later, reported the roads good and most of the streams bridged. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 20, 1849.

to cross first, were delayed three or four days longer.⁵³ Members of the party on the west bank, impatient at the delay, were tempted to go ahead without the late comers. The difficulty of their situation was increased by the fact that other units with whom the Dubuque company had planned to organize had to wait likewise. To save time the group already assembled decided, on the evening of May 17th, to draw up their constitution and elect officers.⁵⁴ At the organization meeting it was apparently determined, for reasons not stated, to break camp and to move slowly westward in the hope that the others would catch up. But at a point thirty-five miles beyond the Missouri they again went into camp. "Here we have been for the last three days", wrote E. F. Gillespie, "waiting the tardy movements of the Dubuque company. We cannot go alone, and so we are obliged, very unwillingly to remain."⁵⁵

The organization formed at the Missouri River seems to have numbered 53 wagons and apparently comprised, in addition to the Dubuque company, the company from Galena, Illinois.⁵⁶ The officers of the train are not recorded. By June 24th, however, the train split for greater traveling convenience, and it appears that the Dubuque⁵⁷ teams, together with a few others, were travelling in a wing of

⁵³ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 20, 1849.

⁵⁴ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 27, 1849 (Letter from V. Glenat).

⁵⁵ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 27, 1849.

⁵⁶ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 27, 1849. Also see Goodspeed's *History of Dubuque*, p. 84.

⁵⁷ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), August 5, 1849. In September a second attack of the California fever struck Dubuque in consequence of several optimistic letters from Dubuque miners in the gold fields. W. A. Goodspeed, in his *History of Dubuque*, p. 87, reports, perhaps on evidence no longer available, that many more emigrants departed at this time. *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), while it mentions the flurry of excitement and urges caution until a full report from California may be had, is silent with regard to an actual emigration. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), September 5, 1849.

twenty-two wagons. This group arrived in California about the last week in August.⁵⁸

Henry County.—The editor of the *Dubuque Miners' Express*, in the issue of April 17, 1849, estimated the emigration from Henry County to range from fifty to seventy-five persons. If these figures can be trusted, it would seem that at least two, and possibly more, California companies were organized in Henry County. However, the information discovered deals only with a small group from Mount Pleasant, referred to in the printed letters from the emigrants as the "Saunders" group.⁵⁹ On April 29th this company was encamped at St. Joseph, where, according to J. B. Newhall of Burlington, it numbered eleven men.⁶⁰ The Mount Pleasant company, it seems, was not only very well equipped but carried with them three thousand dollars in cash. Not long after the arrival of the company in California, however, the three thousand dollars were reported spent and two members of the company, the sons of General McMillan, were reported dead.⁶¹

Jackson County.—“Our neighboring county of Jackson”, wrote the editor of the *Dubuque Miners' Express* on April 17, 1849, “will probably send an equal, if not greater number [than Dubuque County] of the hardy tillers of a most valuable soil, who fondly hope . . . to reap a larger and more substantial fortune in the glittering sands of the Pacific shore.” That the emigration was truly large is corroborated by a statement in the *Davenport Gazette* of March 1st, reprinted from the *Jackson County Demo-*

⁵⁸ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), December 5, 1849.

⁵⁹ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

⁶⁰ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 17, 1849.

⁶¹ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

crat, to the effect that over forty families were preparing to go to California, with the intention of settling there.

The absence of Jackson County newspapers for the spring of 1849, however, makes a detailed presentation of the organization of the local companies impossible. It seems probable, from the letters of the emigrants, that companies were organized at Andrew, Maquoketa, and possibly Bellevue. A company referred to as the "Marshall company" seems to have originated in the vicinity of Andrew and probably comprised many of the families mentioned by the *Jackson County Democrat* as intending to remain in California. Of the movements of this company nothing is known till it arrived at Salt Lake on August 20th.⁶²

From a letter of D. S. Wright in the *Western Democrat* of February 22, 1850, it appears that a group of Jackson County emigrants proceeded to Council Bluffs and there associated themselves with the Iowa City company — the Sacramento company — under Loring Wheeler. One of the officers of this company was Captain D. H. T. Moss of Galena, who was accompanied by his wife and children.⁶³ Wright's letter mentions the death of Mrs. Moss in such a way as to imply that she was a member of his company.

It is also probable that some of the Jackson County emigrants became members of the splendidly equipped Spartan Band reported at Council Bluffs under the leadership of Colonel John Sawin, but the only evidence for this assumption is the fact that G. W. Pope of Jackson County was appointed one of its judges.⁶⁴

⁶² See the section, "Iowans En Route", pp. 358-365.

⁶³ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

⁶⁴ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849. G. W. Pope was probably the Reverend Pope from the vicinity of Sabula. — *Western Democrat* (Andrew), January 18 and April 5, 1850. For a list of the officers of the Spartan Band see the account of Jefferson County, p. 341, footnote.

The only organization meeting recorded including emigrants from Jackson County is that reported in the *Davenport Gazette* of March 1st. The meeting took place at Thorn's Mill, the location of which has not been established, on February 22nd, and was attended by citizens from Jones, Jackson, Cedar, and Clinton counties. As has already been pointed out (see *Cedar County* and *Clinton County*), the company here formed agreed to rendezvous at Iowa City on the first of April, and at the frontier probably joined the Sacramento company under the command of Loring Wheeler. No further information concerning the organization or identity of this company has been discovered.

It appears, therefore, by way of summary, that the emigration from Jackson County was large, probably in the neighborhood of one hundred persons, and that it comprised an unusually large number of women and children. It proceeded in three or more organizations to Council Bluffs. Here the various companies joined other units. All arrived in California in the fall of 1849 with the exception of the Marshall company as will be shown later.

Jefferson County. — Not wishing, perhaps, to be instrumental in disturbing local tranquillity by printing news about which he was skeptical, the editor of the *Fairfield Iowa Sentinel* had maintained a discreet silence during the early excitement occasioned by the rumors of California gold. But with the publication of the President's message in the local paper late in December, 1848, the contagion, apparently, could no longer be avoided. How quickly thereafter the California fever set in at Fairfield may be judged from the fact that while on January 5, 1849, the *Fairfield* editor reported merely "some talk" of emigrating in the spring, a week later he printed a notice calling

attention to the first California meeting. This meeting, which was to be held at the courthouse on Monday, January 15th, was called "for the purpose of devising the best means for an outfit . . . and to ascertain how many were planning to go from the town of Fairfield and the county."⁶⁵

That anything definite in the way of organization was attempted at this meeting is not indicated. Apparently, however, during the weeks immediately following, the fever in and about Fairfield had abated, for on January 26th the editor predicts that few cases are likely to prove fatal. He calls attention to the fact, however, that the Iowa-California company, being organized at Iowa City, would leave that place on April 1st and would very probably pass through Fairfield on its way west. He believed it would be advantageous for local people desiring to emigrate to join that company.⁶⁶

But the editor's suggestion was not acted upon. Nor had the fever abated nearly so much as he had supposed. On February 13th, a second California meeting was held, at which "A number of persons, citizens of Jefferson County, who contemplate emigrating to California early in the ensuing spring, met in the Iowa Drug Store." R. W. Steel was called to the chair, and J. N. Bell was appointed secretary. A committee of five, composed of Messrs. Shedd, Hardin, Jenkins, Rice, and Myers, was appointed for the purpose of drafting a code of rules for the better organization of the Fairfield company. Before adjourning, the group decided to meet again the following Monday evening at six o'clock, in the Presbyterian church. All who planned to make the trip were requested to attend.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), January 12, 1849.

⁶⁶ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), February 2, 1849.

⁶⁷ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), February 16, 1849.

The Fairfield paper fails to report the nature of the business taken up at the Monday evening meeting. One may presume, however, that the committee of five presented its plan of organization, that a general discussion ensued, and that before the evening was over the Fairfield-California company had become a reality.

In the meantime, while the Fairfield company was being formed, a county company was also in the process of organization. Where the group met, when it was organized, and what its personnel was, are not reported in the local paper. It appears likely, as will be shown later, that this company was even larger than the Fairfield company.

It was on Thursday, April 19th, that the Fairfield group, with the exception of two teams which were to leave the following Monday, departed for the Missouri River. As locally reported, the company consisted of thirty-three persons and eleven teams. Included in the number were one woman and three children, the family of Willard Markham.⁶⁸

Whether by accident or agreement, it is evident that the two companies from Jefferson County departed about the same day and proceeded by way of Fort Des Moines and Clark's Road to the same point on the Missouri River, namely Trader's Point. At this rendezvous both companies, in conjunction with at least three other groups, formed a regiment called the Spartan Band. If the figures given may be trusted, this band numbered 57 wagons and 163 persons. It was splendidly organized and was reported by observers as a fine body of men, fitted out with all the necessities of life.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), April 20, 1849.

⁶⁹ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), April 20, 1849. The officers of the Spartan Band were as follows: John Sawin, of Aurora, Illinois, colonel; C. Rufus Street, Esq., of Buchanan, Michigan, adjutant; W. H. Holwart, M. D., of Southport, Wisconsin, surgeon; Absalom Maxwell, of Illinois, chief judge;

The officers of the Jefferson company (apparently the county company) were R. L. Smith, captain, Daniel Campbell, lieutenant, and J. Rogers, sergeant. The company, as here reported, numbered 12 wagons and 40 men.

The officers of the Fairfield company were J. T. Hardin, captain, Randall Rice, lieutenant, and William Baker, sergeant. Eleven wagons and twenty-five men were credited to the company at this point. On the basis of these figures, therefore, the migration from Jefferson County totaled 23 wagons and 65 men.⁷⁰

Johnson County. — Despite the absence of the Johnson County news files for the year 1849, sufficient data are available from other files of the period to indicate that Iowa's capital city took the gold fever seriously and early. From the name of the company formed and from comments in the Burlington, Fairfield, and Muscatine papers, it is certain that the Iowa City emigrants, during the early days of their organization at least, planned to form a State company by inviting emigrants from other counties to join them.⁷¹ The date of the first meeting is not reported, but it appears to have taken place very early, possibly in December of 1848. At any rate, on the evening of January 13, 1849, "after several preparatory meetings", an association was formed. Doctor William McCormick was appointed president, C. C. Catlett, secretary, and A. H.

H. E. Hall, Esq., of Southport, Wisconsin, second judge; G. W. Pope, of Jackson County, Iowa, third judge; Elijah Eliot, wagon master. See *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

⁷⁰ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849. The totals here given are slightly larger than the estimated totals printed by the Fairfield editor on April 20, 1849, which were between 50 and 60 persons and between 15 and 20 teams. Shortly after his arrival in the gold region, J. T. Hardin was drowned in the Feather River. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 6, 1850.

⁷¹ See *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, February 1, 1849; *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), February 2, 1849; and *The Bloomington Herald*, January 27, 1849.

Palmer, former editor of the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, corresponding secretary. After this meeting the following compact was presented:

We the undersigned, for the purpose of forming an association to emigrate to California, early in the ensuing spring, do hereby agree and solemnly pledge ourselves to, and with each other mutually to start, proceed, and emigrate thither together, at such time and by such route as may be deemed expedient, and also to aid, protect and defend each other to the utmost of our abilities, in the enjoyment of life, liberty and security in the privileges and possessions of each respectively, under any circumstances, both on the route to and after arrival in California; to the faithful performance of which compact, according to its letter and spirit, we do hereby severally pledge to each other our sacred honor.⁷²

The compact was signed by twenty-nine persons, among whom were two of Iowa's most prominent citizens, John J. Selman, "President of the late senate",⁷³ and Loring Wheeler, State Senator from Clinton and Scott counties.⁷⁴ With the organization thus completed, the company was ready to listen to a report on outfit. Palmer, Catlett, and G. W. Hess, who had been appointed at a previous meeting to draft a code of rules to insure uniformity in matters relating to teams and loadings, offered the following regulations:

Teams. — The teams of said expedition shall consist, as per resolution, of oxen and cows, which are required to be in good condition, and sound, not under four nor over seven years old. Each team shall be provided with at least one extra yoke, a full set of bows, rings, staples, and staple keys, and one full set of shoes fitted, add nails for shoeing.

Waggons. — To be of light make, staunch and new — or nearly so — with falling poles and wide deep and long beds.

⁷² *Keokuk Register*, February 8, 1849.

⁷³ *Keokuk Register*, February 8, 1849; *The Davenport Gazette*, February 15, 1849.

⁷⁴ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), February 2, 1849.

Loading. — The loading for each waggon shall not exceed two thousand pounds for three, or twenty-six hundred pounds to four yoke of cattle, and no waggon unless unusually strong shall be loaded to exceed 2600 lbs.

Each member of the association before starting will be required to provide himself with the articles of provision, arms, amunition, implements and utensils below enumerated.

Sustenance. — Flour in sacks 200 lbs., bacon hams 150 lbs., dried meat 25 lbs., salt 50 lbs., tea, sugar and coffee, if accustomed to their use, 55 lbs., a few lbs. of pepper with such spices, dried fruit and other convenient articles of luxury as he may choose, also 10 lbs. of soap.

Arms and Amunition. — A good rifle, one revolving or two good holster pistols, a large knife and hatchet for belt, 10 lbs. of gunpowder, 30 lbs. of lead, and 5000 percussion caps.

Tools, etc. — One hand saw, two falling axes, one drawing knife, one 1 inch and one 1/2 inch chisel, one 1 inch and 1/2 inch auger, two gimblets large and small, and 3 lbs. of wrought nails to each waggon.

Tents bedding, etc. — Two large blankets, and 1 buffalo robe for each, and 1 tent cloth of linen drilling, with poles, etc. properly prepared for every four men.

Cooking utensils. — One tea kettle, one frying pan, one spider, one coffee pot, to each wagon, with tin ware, knives, forks, and spoons, two substantial well ironed buckets, or one bucket and one camp kettle which is preferable, a strong 5 gallon can for milk, and two large jars for water.

Time of starting. — Each member of the association is required to be in readiness to proceed at one day's notice at any time thereafter that a majority of the company may deem proper.

Note. — A slight deviation from the items of the list of provisions may be permitted, but their equivalents in substance and quality, will be required.

The estimated cost of the above outfit is \$300. The distance to be travelled is 2100 miles, the average day's travel 15 miles, and the probable time required to perform the journey 140 days.⁷⁵

The report,⁷⁶ with some amendments, was adopted unani-

⁷⁵ *Keokuk Register*, February 8, 1849.

⁷⁶ *Keokuk Register*, February 8, 1849.

mously. The size of the company was limited to one hundred persons and the time for departure set at April 1, 1849.⁷⁷

From here on the information becomes meagre. By March 1st the company is reported to have numbered over fifty persons,⁷⁸ but the final number and the actual date of departure are not indicated. On May 20th, however, when we pick them up again at St. Francis, the company is travelling under a new name, the "Sacramento Company", and is under the command of Loring Wheeler, of Clinton County, as colonel.⁷⁹

By June 1st they had crossed the Missouri River. On the evening of that day "the delegation from Iowa City and vicinity went into an organization with others, numbering in all, 49 wagons and about 150 men.⁸⁰ Early in the morning of June 2nd the train started west. Some time prior to June 16th, however, it was found expedient to divide. Most, though probably not all, of the Iowa City company now proceeded in a detachment including 29 wagons, 72 men, 4 women, and 3 children. The officers of the train were as follows: Loring Wheeler, Clinton County, colonel; C. C. Catlett, Iowa City, adjutant; D. H. T. Moss, Galena, Illinois, and G. W. Hess, Iowa City, captains; and A. R. Cotton and A. Bowen, sergeants.⁸¹

Lee County. — Of the emigration from Lee County, information exists only with regard to the company organized

⁷⁷ *The Iowa Sentinel* (Fairfield), February 2, 1849.

⁷⁸ *Keokuk Register*, March 1, 1849.

⁷⁹ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

⁸⁰ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, October 12, 1849.

⁸¹ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849. It is not clear from C. C. Catlett's letter, which lists the officers, whether the officers mentioned commanded the train or merely the wing. It is probable, however, that they commanded the train.

at Keokuk. Even of this company very little is available concerning the personnel.

Active interest in the California migration came here, as elsewhere, early in January, 1849, as a result of the President's message. On Saturday evening, January 27th, in response to a public notice announcing a California meeting, a large audience assembled to exchange opinions relative to emigration in the spring. At this meeting Lyman E. Johnson was called to the chair and J. P. Reed was elected secretary. The discussion was opened by William C. Reed, who briefly stated the object of the meeting. Thereafter followed a talk by a Mr. Dixon who spoke about twenty minutes on the localities of placers. There is no particular reason to assume that Dixon's talk was unduly optimistic, yet when he had finished a Mr. Hayden arose, and in an amusing speech, attempted to show the absurdity of supposing that the gold region could enrich all instead of only a few.

Mr. Johnson, the chairman, who had apparently been growing impatient at the turn Mr. Hayden's talk had taken, presently arose and made what the local editor describes as the best digested and most energetic speech of the evening. He stated that in his opinion the object of the meeting was to compare notes relative to California, to ascertain who planned to go, and to make the necessary preparations for the migration. As for himself, he announced, he intended to go, and should like to see a party formed.⁸²

Although the meeting adjourned without having come to any definite decision, the determination on the part of many to hazard the emigration seems to have increased steadily. "The 'yellow fever' has reached the boiling heat", wrote the editor of the *Keokuk Register* on February 1, 1849.

⁸² *Keokuk Register*, February 1, 1849.

“Everybody talks of going to the land of promise Our opinion is that a good many who are anxious to ‘see the elephant’, will be satisfied with a description from those who have had a sight.”

On February 13th, a second and more successful organization meeting was held. Lyman E. Johnson again occupied the chair, but a new secretary, J. Neely Johnson, was appointed. A company was now formed with articles of incorporation substantially similar to those of the Iowa-California compact. How many persons signed the company’s roster at this meeting is not indicated, but by February 22nd the association numbered thirty members. Regular meetings were scheduled each Tuesday evening.⁸³

The fact that business was transacted at the Tuesday evening meetings may be inferred from the following comment in the *Keokuk Weekly Dispatch* of March 1st. Some allowance may have to be made for the obvious humorous exaggeration of the editor.

The California boys have resolved to fit up an extra team to be loaded with the necessary blacksmith’s and wagon maker’s tools, one of each trade belonging to the company, and agreeing to perform all the requisite labor in payment for the transportation of their tools. It is also to convey four swivels, to be used on *real* Native Americans, called Indians, in case of hostilities springing up, and on the 4th of July to fire a salute on the summit of the mountains, over a big dish of bean soup and a pile of buffalo tongues. They will have with them a gum elastic buoy, or float, for the purpose of taking their wagons and teams across streams, thus obviating the delay that would otherwise ensue. A chest of medicine is also to be taken, as joint stock, and a physician goes with it, so to get sick, get well, or die will be an easy job. Most of the company belonging to the Ancient Order of Free Masons, they are to take with them a Dispensation from the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, for a “Lodge” in that “Vest Wilderness,” so that their works other than that of digging gold,

⁸³ *Keokuk Register*, February 22, 1849.

may be seen and known of men. And further it is understood that the Rev. Mr. Longstreet will officiate as chaplain.

On Friday evening, March 9th, a special meeting of the Keokuk and California Emigrating Association, as the organization now called itself, assembled to transact important business. The nature of the business is not definitely indicated, but an editorial in the same issue of the *Keokuk Register* announcing the meeting, offers a probable clue.

“The California b’hoys are making preparation for the ‘start.’ The *first* day of April is the day. (By the way, not a bad one.) — Pots and porridge, — soap, sugar and sausage; beef, buckwheat cakes and bologna; wheat, whiskey and whetting appetites; gin, ginger-pop are some of the articles stowed away in the tail end of the wagon.”⁸⁴

At this point, unfortunately, information concerning the Keokuk company practically ceases. The only remaining glimpse is furnished by one of the emigrants, William Head, in a letter dated April 27, 1849. This communication reveals that the Keokuk company had proceeded to St. Joseph, and had already crossed the Missouri River. At the time the letter was written it was in process of reorganization with other units.⁸⁵

Linn County. — The only information with regard to the emigration from this county is an estimate in the *Dubuque Miners’ Express* of February 6, 1849, which places the number of emigrants at “some fifty or more”.

Louisa County. — A company of thirteen men from Toolsborough was reported at St. Joseph on April 29, 1849. One of the men was accompanied by his family.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ *Keokuk Register*, March 8, 1849.

⁸⁵ *Keokuk Weekly Dispatch*, May 10, 1849.

⁸⁶ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 17, 1849.

Mahaska County. — While it is probable that some emigrants from Mahaska County joined the California gold rush, no direct information has been discovered. A. B. Hulbert, in his *Forty-niners*, quotes a letter written by an emigrant at Independence, Missouri, to his wife at Bellefontaine, Iowa, but no record of such a town in Iowa exists. There was a town in Mahaska County called "Bell Fountain", and the probability is that the two names refer to the same place. The letter contains no information with regard to other emigrants in the party. It is reproduced here partly because of its possible relation to Mahaska County and partly because of its highly amusing character. According to Hulbert's narrative, "Robert", the writer of the letter, had celebrated his impending departure from civilization to the point where he had "forgotten the gentle art of penmanship". He was sober enough to know, however, that this was his last opportunity to write. In his perplexity he takes another drink, after which only dictation remains possible.

Mrs. Robert S——

Bellefontaine, Iowa

Dear Wife: Kiss the baby. Border line, all well. Kiss the baby. Independence, Missouri River, Kiss the baby. Had a good time. Last letter. Cross the river. Tell baby California. Dear wife all well. Tell Johnnie papa plenty of money California. Kiss the baby.

Robert

Muscatine County. — "Notwithstanding all our preaching against going to California", wrote the editor of the Bloomington (now Muscatine) *Herald*, on January 27, 1849, "a goodly number of our fellow citizens are taking the gold fever, and will probably be carried off by it in the spring." For the benefit of those who had determined to go, the editor called attention to the effort at Iowa City to

organize a State company and reprinted from the *Iowa City Republican*, the Iowa-California Compact, relating to outfit and union of interests. Only large parties, he argued, bound by compact to preserve each other's rights and interests, could successfully terminate so hazardous an undertaking. He therefore urged all persons who desired to attach themselves to the Iowa City company to write immediately.

Whether or not the editor's suggestions served to delay the organization at Muscatine by calling attention to the company forming at Iowa City, the fact remains that a full month elapsed before the local company was organized. By March 3rd, however, the Muscatine-California Emigrant Association had been formed and had adopted the comprehensive report previously presented.⁸⁷

A month later, on Thursday, April 5th, the Muscatine emigrants departed.⁸⁸ The company, consisting of perhaps seventeen persons, included among other locally prominent citizens, the Honorable S. C. Hastings, Chief Justice of the Iowa Supreme Court, and at least one woman, a Mrs. Richman.⁸⁹ John J. Selman of Muscatine, President of the Iowa Senate, joined the Iowa City company.

On April 30th, after a muddy trip with ox teams through southwestern Iowa, the company arrived at St. Joseph.⁹⁰ Here it reorganized with other units, forming a band of twenty wagons and about fifty men. This organization crossed the Missouri River on May 12th under the leader-

⁸⁷ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 3, 1849.

⁸⁸ For a list of the emigrants of Muscatine County, see the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), April 7 and June 30, 1849, and the *Muscatine Journal*, May 19, 1849.

⁸⁹ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), June 23, 1849.

⁹⁰ *Muscatine Journal*, May 19, 1849, and the *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), May 24, 1849. Judge S. C. Hastings, who went to St. Joseph by boat, probably made arrangements for the arrival of the Muscatine teams. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 30, 1849.

ship of T. C. Dorrell, but by May 29th it had split into two wings, the smaller of which included nine men from Bloomington.⁹¹ The other Bloomington emigrants were probably in the larger wing.

Polk County.—Information regarding the emigration from Polk County is meagre at best. The news files covering the first seven months of 1849 unfortunately no longer exist. Nevertheless, by collating the printed letters from the emigrants, it is possible to gather a few facts concerning the emigration from this county.

Of the organization of the Polk County emigrants before their departure, little information is available. It appears, however, that two separate companies were formed, or if only one, that it comprised groups from Fort Des Moines and from the county.⁹² The larger group numbered over twenty persons, all men, among whom was a physician, Doctor Lansdale.⁹³

The number of persons making up the smaller group is not indicated, but it comprised six wagons, one of which contained the wife and children of A. S. Howard. Accompanying this group also was Doctor McMillen⁹⁴—probably the H. W. McMillen listed below. At the Missouri River, the smaller group, remaining intact, joined other units. It

⁹¹ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), June 23 and June 30, 1849.

⁹² Some of the Polk County emigrants were apparently bound for Oregon.—See H. W. McMillen's letter, in *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), February 22, 1850.

⁹³ A letter from L. McHenry contains a list of the most of the members of this group. The following names appear: O. P. Welker, John Brewer, James Smith, J. S. Kemble, E. Rose, H. Cable, C. Goodenough, J. Frederick, B. Smith, Jacob Thraikill, A. W. Blair, P. How, Dr. Lansdale, I. Cooper, E. Keeler, C. D. Reinking, H. Bowers.—See *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), November 9, 1849. One person from Des Moines, Ed Marvin, went by way of Panama.—*The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), January 18, 1850.

⁹⁴ Letter of Austin S. Howard in *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), November 16, 1849.

left Council Bluffs on May 16th, in the largest organization to be formed there, a regiment made up of 64 wagons and a total of 232 persons. Of these, 210 were "soldiers reported fit to do duty", the remaining 22 presumably being women and children. The regiment was officered by J. M. Wright, captain; C. Bostwick, lieutenant; H. C. Hannon, guide; and H. W. McMillen — probably Dr. McMillen — of Des Moines, secretary.⁹⁵

Scott County. — Although the gold fever struck Scott County early in January, 1849, and appeared to be spreading with considerable rapidity, it soon became apparent that the attack would assume a relatively mild form.⁹⁶ Influenced, perhaps, by the organization of a California company at Rock Island at a meeting on the evening of January 5th, prospective emigrants from Scott County called a meeting at Davenport on Monday evening, January 8th. According to the local editor, "the matter of emigration was talked over pretty extensively, but resulted . . . in nothing decisive."⁹⁷

While it seems probable that further California meetings were held in Davenport or elsewhere in Scott County between January and March, 1849, none is reported. One individual, William Eldridge, deciding not to wait for the overland emigration, left Davenport on January 29th for New Orleans to make the trip by water. Eldridge was the first individual to leave Scott County for the gold fields.⁹⁸ From letters of the Scott County emigrants *en route* it appears that an effort to organize a single company had

⁹⁵ Letter from H. W. McMillen in *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), February 22, 1850.

⁹⁶ *The Davenport Gazette*, January 4, 1849.

⁹⁷ *The Davenport Gazette*, January 11, 1849.

⁹⁸ *The Davenport Gazette*, May 3, 1849. For a note on Eldridge's experiences on the way to California see the section, "Iowans En Route", pp. 360, 361.

either been abandoned or never seriously attempted, for we find the gold-seekers from Scott County organized in small and separate units.

The first overlanders to leave were probably two men named Cheever and Frye. Whether they travelled alone or in company with other emigrants from the county is not recorded. They went by way of St. Joseph and on May 20th were reported a day's journey in advance of a second party from Scott County.⁹⁹

Of this second party, probably the chief group of Scott County emigrants, information is more complete. It was composed of eight persons with accommodations in three wagons drawn by ox teams. It had left Davenport on Monday, April 9th.¹⁰⁰ This company of men, among whom was a physician, Doctor Brown, proceeded to St. Joseph and there reorganized with other units into a company of fifty-seven men. They left the frontier about May 12th.¹⁰¹ On June 14th, in sight of the Rockies, the three Davenport teams were reported as still together and getting along well.¹⁰²

Altogether, about twenty persons from Scott County joined the gold rush.¹⁰³

Van Buren County. — On April 29, 1849, a company of emigrants from Farmington was reported at St. Joseph. It numbered 22 men.¹⁰⁴ A company was also organized, it seems at Bonaparte. On July 13th, this company was reported to be out of Salt Lake and well in advance of the

⁹⁹ *The Davenport Gazette*, June 21, 1849.

¹⁰⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, April 12, 1849, and January 10, 1850.

¹⁰¹ *The Davenport Gazette*, June 21, 1849.

¹⁰² *The Davenport Gazette*, August 16, 1849.

¹⁰³ *The Davenport Gazette*, April 12, 1849.

¹⁰⁴ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 17, 1849.

main emigration. The number of emigrants was not indicated.¹⁰⁵

IOWA TRAILS TO THE MISSOURI

Having chosen their point of departure on the Missouri River, the Iowa companies had yet to choose the best trails to arrive at these points. Those heading for the Bluffs could expect to encounter fairly well defined roads into Fort Des Moines, but beyond, in the intervening one hundred and fifty miles of mostly virgin country, anything could be expected. Trails to St. Joseph and Independence were better defined, since these, for the most part, traversed settled country. A wise choice was imperative. The wagons were large and heavily loaded.¹⁰⁶ As a result of spring rains and thaws, the roads were muddy. The streams were running full, and some of the smaller ones had to be forded. Even ferry points had to be chosen with care, for the ponderous wagons required exceptionally sturdy river equipment and experienced manipulation. Then, too, some trails offered better camping facilities with respect to water, feed, and timber.

To lighten the burden of travel across Iowa and thus to save the teams at the very start, many of the emigrants starting from points along the Mississippi River and heading for St. Joseph or other points along the Missouri, sent their loading by boat. A few light-draft passenger steamers were making the run for California emigrants.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), November 2, 1849.

¹⁰⁶ The loading ordinarily weighed between two and three thousand pounds. (See outfit reports for Iowa City and Muscatine companies, pp. 342-345, 349-351.) The total load, including wagon, must have approximated two tons.

¹⁰⁷ While some Iowans may have chosen Independence as a frontier point, most of them went by way of St. Joseph or Council Bluffs. One boat, at least, the *Uncle Toby*, was advertised as leaving Bloomington (Muscatine) direct for Council Bluffs on April 9, 1849. There was to be no reshipping. — *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 31, 1849.

Companies originating in northeastern Iowa and heading for Council Bluffs ordinarily passed through Iowa City. Here was a good ferry and a choice of two roads to the Missouri. The upper, or northern route, as it was called, led from Iowa City to Trading House, 25 Miles; to Snook's Grove (Bob Hutchinson's residence), 24 miles; to Newton, 34 miles; to Fort Des Moines, 30 miles.¹⁰⁸ At Fort Des Moines, where the emigrant could expect to strike poor trails to the river, he found a new but excellent road called Clark's Road.¹⁰⁹ Out of Des Moines it led to Camp Luce, on Badger Creek, 12 miles; to Brown's Ford on North River, 6 miles; to Happy Grove, 7 miles; to Marvin's Grove, on the head of Cedar Creek, 6 miles; to Tucker's Grove, 10 miles; to Allen's Grove, at Middle River crossing, 8 miles; to the east fork of the Nodaway, 15 miles; to the west branch of the Nodaway, 12 miles; to Campbell's Grove, 14 miles; to East Nishnabotony, 13 miles; to Indian Creek, 1 mile; to Mount Scott, 17 miles; to West Nishnabotony, 5 miles; to Silver Creek, 10 miles; to Keg Creek, 8 miles. Here the road forked at the corner of a sod fence, the right fork leading to the principal Mormon town of Kaneshville, and the left fork to Trader's Point 8 miles distant.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), August 31, 1849.

¹⁰⁹ This road was apparently named after Doctor H. M. Clark of Andrew, Iowa, who with Townsend, Wheeling, and others operated a ferry across the Missouri River at St. Francis. The road led, of course, from Des Moines directly to his ferry. For an advertisement of the ferry see *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), August 31, 1849; for the identity of Doctor H. M. Clark, see letter from Jonathan Clark in the *Western Democrat* (Andrew), March 1, 1850, and an editorial summary of a letter from James C. Mitchell in the *Western Democrat* (Andrew), June 14, 1850.

¹¹⁰ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849. Some of the Dubuque teams, however, crossed the Des Moines River at Martin's Ferry, below Fort Des Moines, struck the Mormon trail at Pisgah, and proceeded on what was probably the Eddyville to Kaneshville road. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 20, 1849.

A member of the Hawk-Eye company described the road as follows:

After crossing the North river at Brown's ford, the road runs on a fine divide between Middle river and Cedar Creek to Marvin's Grove, — water and timber plenty; thence to Tucker's Grove on Middle river, half a mile from the divide, without slough, timber in sight on each side of the road, to Allen's Grove, at the Badger, bottom or ridge to suit the traveller; to East Nodaway, ridge road; to West Nodaway, ridge; Campbell's Grove, stream bridged — this is a delightful spot — high land to Nishnabotony. In fact, all concur in saying that this is the best ground for a road in the state, and the only good road for all northern emigrants . . . it is fifty miles nearer than any other to the Missouri river, and much the best. Good teams can easily make the distance in six days, as most of us have done.¹¹¹

The lower road struck southwest and crossed the Des Moines River at Eddyville. From here it led to Clark's Point, 13 miles; to Watson's, 20 miles; to Pisgah, 40 miles; to Ferrin's Ferry, at the junction of the northern and southern roads, 60 miles. This road, however, was probably not taken by North Iowa emigrants to any appreciable extent, for the upper road required only twelve days to the Missouri River from Iowa City, while the lower road required fourteen days from Eddyville.¹¹²

Companies originating in east central Iowa and heading for St. Joseph, as for example the Muscatine company, passed through Fredonia, Brighton, Iowaville, Collins's Ferry on the Chariton, thence across the Missouri line to Gay's Mills on the Grand River, to Rochester on the Little Platte, and so to St. Joseph.

¹¹¹ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), July 26, 1849.

¹¹² *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), August 31, 1849. Clark's Point was in the northeastern corner of Monroe County; Watson's in the central part of Lucas County; Pisgah, the old Mormon town, in Union County, about one mile north of the present town of Talmage; Ferrin's Ferry at the old Indian village, about one mile east of the present town of Lewis, in Cass County.

The Muscatine company made this trip "between showers and under the worst roads possible". At Iowa-ville, according to a member of the company, "the ferryman actually charged an exorbitant price for ferrying, made every man ferry himself, and laughed at our situation, and seemed to enjoy it very much. Thus with the rest of the route, except at Collin's Ferry on the Chariton."¹¹³

Companies originating in southeast Iowa probably chose St. Joseph as a point of departure. Those who went north found the Eddyville crossing convenient. Another trail leading north out of Keokuk and keeping to the divide between the Des Moines and the Skunk rivers all the way to Fort Des Moines may also have been used. By the summer of 1849 this road was especially recommended by Samuel R. Curtis of Keokuk. In a letter to the *Des Moines Valley Whig and Register*, he claimed that so many routes had been proposed north and south of Keokuk that people paid little attention to the proposals. He then proceeded to show that South Pass, which received nine-tenths of the overland emigrants, lay on a line with Davenport, Iowa, which he conceded to be a good crossing. "But by crossing the Mississippi at Keokuk, you strike the ridge of land which is now the great emigrant and wagon road west of the Mississippi. This ridge is the best natural highway in the world, being drained on the north by the Skunk River and on the south by the Des Moines."¹¹⁴

By these highways, to use Samuel R. Curtis's euphemistic term, the California companies crossed the State. Iowa suddenly, and for a number of years to follow, became deeply road conscious.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), May 26, 1849.

¹¹⁴ Reprinted in *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), September 28, 1849.

¹¹⁵ The struggle for emigrant trade was also being waged on the Missouri River. In the summer of 1849, Council Bluffs was vigorously campaigning to

IOWANS EN ROUTE

The story of the Iowa forty-niners *en route* to California differs so little in essential particulars from that of the forty-niners generally that a detailed recital, even so far as one were possible, need not be attempted. A few of the experiences of the Iowa emigrants, however, seem worthy of comment, partly because of their typical nature and partly because of their severity. Thus the story of W. H. Merritt of Dubuque, one of the first Iowans to join the rush, is presented chiefly for what probably were typical experiences of the early emigrants who chose the water route by way of New Orleans and the Isthmus.

Merritt and three others left Dubuque on January 1, 1849. In order to make a quick trip, they decided to go by way of New Orleans, despite the fact that the cholera had broken out along the whole lower river. Details of the trip to St. Louis, Merritt does not record, but since it was winter and the river was frozen, it may be presumed that his party traveled by wagon or stage. At St. Louis, learning that the cholera was particularly severe at New Orleans, they remained a week and then took passage on a boat for the South. Unfortunately, the ice was still in the river, and just above Cairo it jammed up so that the boat could not go on. Merritt and his party got off, hired a man with a cart and two yoke of oxen to haul their baggage into Cairo,

capture crossing trade. Des Moines, recognizing its community of interest with Council Bluffs, widely advertised the advantages of the Bluff's crossing. *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), August 31, 1849, argued that "Besides being over 300 miles nearer than Independence, it saves the difficult and dangerous crossings of the two fords of the Kansas River, the Platte River, and others, and insures the protection of the United States troops. . . .

"The roads to this ferry from the various crossings of the Mississippi . . . are good, well supplied with wood and water, . . . and at St. Francis and Council Bluffs all articles . . . that will be needed in crossing the mountains, can be had on reasonable terms, as well as experienced guides and mountaineers; in fact, it is designed to be prepared with such articles as the traveller may need to add to his comfort and safety."

where they hoped to catch another boat. Arrived at Cairo, the ox cart driver demanded a dollar from each in the party instead of the fifty cents previously agreed upon. The argument which ensued ended when the Dubuque men, angered over the insolence of the driver, rushed the wagon, tumbled the driver over the side, tossed him fifty cents each, and took off their baggage.

At Cairo they again boarded a boat and after a pleasant trip of six days arrived at New Orleans on January 25, 1849.¹¹⁶ Two days later, by good fortune, they were able to leave the pestilential city on board a small vessel carrying seventy-four passengers, all bound for the gold mines. A storm on the Gulf which tossed them about for a week delayed their arrival at Chagres until February 20th.¹¹⁷ How long they remained there is not known, but the trip up the Chagres River to Gorgona, a distance of forty-five miles, took three days. At Gorgona they spent a week. Here they apparently sat down to take stock of their situation and to check expenses. They had brought with them, from New Orleans probably, a surplus of provisions which they had hoped to dispose of in California at speculative prices. They now discovered that the freight charges on their loadings were running very high; in fact, from Panama to California these charges would amount to twice the original cost of the goods. They decided to sell, but the fact that hundreds of others were also attempting to dispose of their goods, sent the price of commodities so low that the Dubuque men lost almost their entire investment.

By March 9th, Merritt and his party had arrived at Panama. On the fifteenth they were still waiting for a boat to California but expected very soon to get away on a sailboat on which they had bargained for passage at two hun-

¹¹⁶ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 17, 1849.

¹¹⁷ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 1, 1849.

dred dollars each.¹¹⁸ For some reason, however, they missed their passage and on March 29th were still in Panama. The tropical sun, the bad water and housing, the uncalculated expense of the journey, the weary delays, and the utter uncertainty of getting away had by this time drained all the enthusiasm from Merritt's letters. Discouraged and ill, but still determined to go on, he writes to friends in Dubuque, "Had we taken more time for reflection and instead of running into the current of universal excitement . . . provided means for an early start by land, we should not have been swept 'Crusoe' like upon this barren rock to while away weeks and months in dreaming about the gold mines of California, without the possibility of reaching them."¹¹⁹ It was not until many weeks later, on May 3rd, that Merritt left Panama. Of his trip to San Francisco and of his arrival there he does not speak in later letters. It is extremely doubtful, however, that he arrived there before June 1st, making his entire trip at least six months long.

That the difficulties of the water route were not necessarily over once the emigrants had embarked at Panama is shown by the experience of William Eldridge, a Scott County emigrant who had left Davenport on January 29, 1849. Eldridge had arrived at Chagres on February 27th, and on March 18th had sailed from Panama on the brig *Phoenix*. But it was July 4th before he saw San Francisco. The following extract from his letter explains the difficulties he encountered:

After the longest and most tedious and long suffering passage recorded in history, I arrived at this place (San Francisco), being within a few days of four months, after leaving Rialgo.

We encountered a tremendous storm and got blown out to sea.

¹¹⁸ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 8, 1849.

¹¹⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), June 20, 1849.

Lost several of our most important sails and spars, consequently were so crippled that we could scarcely make any headway at all. . . . We were over forty days without bread and not a pound of flour on board. We lived thirty days on a pint of mush for breakfast, no dinner, and a single slap jack for supper made of rice and corn ground together in a coffee mill.¹²⁰

While the Iowans who had ventured upon the water route were making their way up the coast of Mexico and California, the overlanders were following each other in a long train across the plains. Starting out from the Missouri in large units and organized in military fashion as a protection against Indians and other hazards, they soon discovered, especially after the confluence of the trains from the crossings at Independence and St. Joseph, with those from Council Bluffs, that the congested conditions of the road and the camps made a division into smaller groups expedient. Other alleged causes for making the divisions were the quarrels that arose among the emigrants.

That discord marred the amity of at least one of the Iowa companies is evident from the letter of H. H. Downer, a member of the Iowa City company. This was written on July 28th, after the company had been on the road nearly two and a half months. An extract of the letter follows: "It seems, this trip, instead of being calculated to bring about warm feelings, among acquaintances, and stronger ties of friendship, has an opposite tendency, for every mess I have seen or heard of, has more or less disturbance — they become disgusted with themselves, owing perhaps, to the perplexities attending an excursion of this kind, especially to those unacquainted with a frontier life. It furnishes the materials for a person to become perfect in the study of human nature."¹²¹ It must be added, however,

¹²⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, December 20, 1849.

¹²¹ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), October 12, 1849. The organization to which the Iowa City company belonged appears to have suffered strife al-

through. Those who remained had plenty of dead oxen to eat; we got along pretty well. They were very poor, not a particle of marrow in their bones. Not half of the wagons or cattle got through. Sometimes we had to leave 5 or 6 wagons in a place and double teams in order to get along.¹²³

Fearing further exposure to the desperate hazards of the Spanish Trail and relying upon a kind Providence to get them through, a company of eleven men left the train at the rim of the Great Salt Lake basin to pack through on a course directly west over the mountains. Two of the eleven got through alive, one of whom was Mr. Pinney, apparently of Jackson County.¹²⁴ Another group to split from the train and take a westerly course to the mines was a company referred to as "Preacher Brier and company". How many of this group, in addition to Brier, were from Jackson County is not indicated. "After traveling two weeks with their wagons they left them and packed on their oxen, wandered through the mountains, and came out five weeks after us. — They had no bread for two months, nothing but dead beef as we term it, without salt. Four of that company died for the want of food; they were all very poor, weak and pale."¹²⁵

The main party, continuing southward, crossed the Sierras about January 1, 1850. Some came out as far south as San Diego, others at Santa Barbara, the larger group at Los Angeles in the latter part of February in a perfectly destitute condition, on foot, and without provisions of any kind "save the flesh cut from the carcasses of animals which died on the way."¹²⁶

While hardships seem to have been the common lot of most of the emigrants in the region beyond Salt Lake, it is

¹²³ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), June 7, 1850.

¹²⁴ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), May 24, 1850.

¹²⁵ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), June 7, 1850.

¹²⁶ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), May 24, 1850.

not true that all Iowans suffered as intensely as indicated by the experiences just narrated. The Brooks company of Burlington, as we have seen, made one of the fastest trips on record, arriving at the diggings 98 days out of St. Joseph. The Davenport company was also fortunate. G. W. Lambert, a member of the company, in a letter from Sacramento City, dated October 2, 1849, reported: "We have all of us who started from Davenport, got through safe, with our two wagons We six have messed together and traveled together from Davenport to Sacramento City"

"We have not lost an ox or broke a wagon since we left home, or any of us had serious sickness on the route."¹²⁷

That Lambert was well aware of widespread suffering in other emigrant groups, however, is evident, for after pointing out the almost intolerable situations of others, he cried, "God save the families of women and children that are yet behind."

IMMIGRATION TO IOWA

When news of the immense emigration to California reached Iowa, it was predicted by many in the State that the settlement of Iowa would cease until the gold mania had subsided.¹²⁸ Coupled with these predictions were the fears that Iowa would suffer a serious reduction of population as a consequence of the emigration from her own borders and that, as a result, her "rich and fertile prairies so easily converted into productive fields must lay yet a few years longer in all their primitive and wild romantic luxuriance."¹²⁹

It soon became apparent, however, that these fears were

¹²⁷ *The Davenport Gazette*, January 10, 1850.

¹²⁸ *The Davenport Gazette*, September 20, 1849; *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 16, 1849; and *Muscatine Journal*, July 23, 1849.

¹²⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), April 17, 1849.

unwarranted, and that instead of suffering a loss of population, the State was about to receive an immigration of unprecedented size. Some of the newcomers were California emigrants from the more eastern States who had grown weary of the hardships of the journey and, attracted by the fertility of the Iowa soil, determined to settle here.¹³⁰

By far the larger number, however, were emigrants who came for the express purpose of making their homes in Iowa. All through the spring and summer of 1849 these emigrants came pouring in, some by boat up the Mississippi, a much larger number by covered wagon, making crossings at all the ferry points along the river from Dubuque to Keokuk. "Thousands are leaving the sickly climate of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Missouri", wrote the elated editor of the Dubuque *Miners' Express*, "to seek a home of comfort, health and happiness upon the beautiful prairies of Iowa."¹³¹ At Burlington alone a total of approximately fifteen hundred wagons and eight thousand settlers were reported to have crossed the Mississippi River ferry.¹³²

Whether the count at Burlington and at other Mississippi crossings carefully discriminated between settlers and California-bound emigrants is, of course, problematical. The fact remains, that by late October the estimates of immigration into the State of Iowa ranged from thirty to fifty thousand persons, thus exceeding by far the highest calculations and hopes.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), April 21, 1849; *The Davenport Gazette*, September 20, 1849.

¹³¹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), May 16, 1849. The destination of most of these settlers, according to the Dubuque editor, was either north Iowa or the Valley of the Des Moines River.

¹³² *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), October 26, 1849.

¹³³ *The Davenport Gazette*, October 25, 1849.

COST OF EMIGRATION

An estimate of the cost of outfitting, including only such supplies and equipment as were considered indispensable for the long and arduous journey to the gold coast, has already been presented in the report on outfit of the Iowa City company. In the judgment of the authors of that report, the expense for each emigrant would amount to approximately three hundred dollars. While it may be questioned that all Iowa companies measured up to the requirements of the Iowa City company in the matter of outfit, the probability is that most of them did. Certainly it is safe to assume that the estimate reflected a minimum rather than a maximum cost, and that in a great number of instances the value of the loading far exceeded this estimate.¹³⁴

Added to the expense of outfitting was the amount of ready cash each emigrant considered prudent to carry with him. Beginning his march fully equipped at the very edge of the frontier, the Iowa overlander probably saw little need for carrying large sums, but some cash was necessary to defray the cost of ferriage and feed, particularly on the trip to the Missouri River, to hire guides when necessary,

¹³⁴ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850; *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), March 3, 1849. In the spring of 1850, when the second rush was getting under way in Johnson County, the investment of each emigrant was estimated at \$350.00.—*The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), April 5, 1850. Another estimate is the following from the *Western Democrat* (Andrew), March 1, 1850: two good mules, at \$65.00 each, \$130.00; one riding saddle, \$10.00; one pack saddle, \$8.00; one riding bridle, \$2.50; two halters, \$2.00; two piquet ropes with iron pins, \$2.00; three good blankets, \$18.00; one short rifle, \$10.00; two rifle barrel pistols, \$12.00; one knife, scabbard and belt, \$2.50; seventy pounds of flour, \$2.80; thirty-five pounds of bacon, \$1.50; twenty-five pounds of sugar, \$1.60; ten pounds of coffee, \$1.00; one pound of tea, \$1.00; camp furniture and sundries, such as mustard, pepper, salt, etc., \$5.00. Total \$208.90. It will be observed, however, that the outfit here reported is a pack-mule outfit, lightly loaded. On the assumption that commodity prices in Iowa were fairly stable during the period between the rushes of 1849 and 1850, the estimate of \$300.00 for the heavily loaded wagon outfits of 1849 appears reasonable.

and to meet general emergencies. While no reliable estimate of the average amount of money carried by individual emigrants can be derived from the amount known to have been carried by a single company, it is nevertheless worth noting that the company at Mount Pleasant, composed of eleven men, started with three thousand dollars in cash, and spent it on their trip to California.

There is no reason to believe that the above figure, which represents an average of approximately \$273 for each emigrant, is high. Iowans were well aware that commodity prices in California were exorbitant, and must have anticipated the probable necessity of making at least some purchases upon their arrival there. If we accept the figure, therefore, as a fair average, it becomes evident that every prospective Iowa gold-seeker was faced with the necessity of investing approximately six hundred dollars in the venture, to say nothing of the loss of income. The figure may have some bearing on the fact that in the rush of forty-nine so many of the emigrants were men of local prominence.

An estimate of the total emigration from the State of Iowa, made on April 17, 1849, at a date, therefore, when the editors could get a fairly reliable check on the numbers emigrating from the various communities, placed the number at from 1000 to 1200 persons. Accepting the more conservative figure as a basis for computation and assuming that each individual invested six hundred dollars in the venture, the rush to California in the spring of forty-nine called for a cash outlay of at least six hundred thousand dollars; and if to this is added the loss of income, the gold rush cost Iowans well over a million.

SUCSESSES OF THE IOWANS IN CALIFORNIA

To generalize about the successes of the Iowa gold-seekers in California is extremely difficult. For obvious rea-

sons, the facts upon which a warranted generalization might be based are too largely inaccessible. The printed letters of the emigrants, which furnish the most direct evidence available on the subject, are inadequate, for they represent only a very small proportion of the total number of letters written. In many of the letters the reported earnings are plainly based upon mere rumor. In others it is difficult to determine whether the amounts mentioned represent net or gross earnings.

A further complication arises from the fact that some editors, especially in the spring of 1850, when a new emigration to the gold fields was getting under way, refrained from publishing many of the "exaggerated tales afloat, of the fortunes made in gold mining," fearing that by printing them they might give impetus to a yet greater emigration.¹³⁵

It is extremely doubtful, however, from such reports as are given, whether the Iowa forty-niners who returned home brought with them, on the whole, sufficient wealth to cover their expenses in the venture. Tending to corroborate this conclusion is the statement of a Davenport editor in connection with the return of Mr. C. Burgoon, a forty-niner from Allen's Grove in Scott County. Burgoon, after an absence of twenty months, had reached home with a net earning of \$1500. The editor, computing this to be about \$75 a month, remarks that Burgoon, even at this wage, "was more fortunate than many another one who has returned in safety."¹³⁶

In order to show the extent and the nature of some of the successes reported in the letters of the emigrants and in the editorials of the local newspapers, the following list of individual items is offered:

¹³⁵ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), April 5, 1850.

¹³⁶ *The Davenport Gazette*, December 11, 1850.

Noah Reeder, Jackson County, returned home with gold nuggets, one of which weighs 5½ ounces.¹³⁷

“Mr. Pope from near Sabula has just returned with, (says madame rumor) about \$75,000.”¹³⁸

Mr. E. Doe “brings with him 3 or 4 thousand dollars. This is we believe, the reward of the digging, as he engaged in no speculation while there.”¹³⁹

Doctor Brown, Davenport, “has been very successful with all his patients and his name stands very high as a physician.” No earnings at the gold mines reported.¹⁴⁰

I. Thomas, together with Emory and Thompson, all from Allen’s Grove, made \$300 the first four days, and the next week divided 2 pounds. “This week we made only a \$100 each.”¹⁴¹

Presley Dunlap, Burlington, arrived in California on August 17. The next day he took a job in a store at \$300 the month and board. Later he was made sheriff at Sacramento City. “The fees are fair — 1 oz. for serving a summons, \$10 for subpoena, \$2 a mile for travel, and 10 per cent on all collections.”¹⁴²

Mr. Klauberg, Burlington, worked two weeks and got \$240. C. H. Jordan got \$400 in two weeks. He hoped to send \$1000 home by the November mail.¹⁴³

The two McCulloughs and Mr. Starkie, Burlington, returned with about \$3700 each.

John S. David, also of Burlington, was reported “mak-

¹³⁷ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), January 25, 1850.

¹³⁸ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), April 5, 1850.

¹³⁹ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), June 14, 1850.

¹⁴⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, February 14, 1850.

¹⁴¹ *The Davenport Gazette*, February 7, 1850.

¹⁴² *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, January 3, 1850.

¹⁴³ *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, November 29, 1849.

ing money fast in Sacramento City in rents and speculation."¹⁴⁴

The Honorable S. C. Hastings, Muscatine, became owner and manager of the Eagle theatre in Sacramento. Later he was reported in the brokerage business. "He is going it strong . . . and has already made a fortune."¹⁴⁵

Jacob Thraikill, Fort Des Moines, cleared \$1100 by April 9, 1850.¹⁴⁶

J. M. Douglass, Dubuque County, found that the California gold mines "are a perfect farce . . . My advise to you is, not to come by any means, if you are making 10 cents per day where you are, for many are not doing that here."¹⁴⁷

John Coffee, Dubuque County, reported earnings from 10 to 25 dollars a day. His wife and daughter made from 12 to 18 dollars a day taking in washing.¹⁴⁸

Mr. Dixon, of Colesburg, "returned with \$3600, all solid."¹⁴⁹

It is evident from the list just given that the success of many of the Iowans was in pursuits other than digging for gold. Professional and business men soon discovered, apparently, that a resumption of their previous occupations was more lucrative than mining, and infinitely less strenuous. While it might appear from the items showing large

¹⁴⁴ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

¹⁴⁵ *Western Democrat* (Andrew), April 8, 1850; *The Davenport Gazette*, January 21, 1850. In California, Hastings served as Attorney General and later as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.—Gue's *History of Iowa*, Vol. IV, p. 121.

¹⁴⁶ *The Iowa Star* (Fort Des Moines), June 14, 1850.

¹⁴⁷ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), October 17, 1849.

¹⁴⁸ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 16, 1850.

¹⁴⁹ *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 13, 1850.

daily earnings at the mines that gold digging was extremely profitable, it must be remembered that the exorbitant cost of provisions on the one hand, and inclement weather, sickness, and other unfavorable factors on the other, seriously reduced, over a period of time, the average net earnings of the miners.

When it is furthermore pointed out that the list above includes practically all the larger sums which Iowa forty-niners were reported to have brought back, and that it definitely reflects the earnings of those who were considered successful, one must conclude that even the successful ones, with few exceptions, returned home with rather modest sums for all their hardships and pains. Many, of course, brought nothing home.

IOWA DEATHS IN THE GOLD RUSH

The following list of deaths among the Iowa forty-niners was made up from the printed letters of the emigrants. That it falls considerably short of a complete list is evident from the fact that relatively few of these letters have been preserved. One may assume, furthermore, that in consequence of the disorganization and confusion which the companies suffered, especially when they reached the western deserts, some of the Iowans who were reported "not yet in" or "unaccounted for" were, in fact, dead. Whatever the total number may have been, it is worthy of note that the editor of the *Davenport Gazette*, who could check the number of deaths in the exchange papers that came to his office, regarded Iowa's share among the dead as distinctly large.¹⁵⁰

Lt. Beckett, Des Moines County. — *The Davenport Gazette*, January 3, 1850.

¹⁵⁰ *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

- Charles Blake, Dubuque County. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 6, 1850.
- Mrs. F. A. Chenoweth, Maquoketa, died of cholera at Fort Laramie. — *The Davenport Gazette*, September 6, 1849.
- Augustus Coriell, Dubuque County, killed at the mines by explosion when a companion threw a lighted cigar butt among the powder kegs. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 2, 1850.
- John H. Denslow, Cedar County, died of cholera just beyond St. Joseph. — *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* (Muscatine), June 23, 1849.
- Jas. Depui, Dubuque County, killed by Indians attempting to steal cattle. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), January 30, 1850.
- Mr. Emory (probably W. H. Emory), Scott County. — *The Davenport Gazette*, March 28, 1850.
- Mr. Fisk, Maquoketa, died on the plains about July 5, 1849. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), September 19, 1849.
- V. Glenat, Dubuque County, inflammation of the lungs. Buried 170 miles west of Fort Laramie in a canoe found nearby. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 6, 1850.
- James T. Hardin, Jefferson County, drowned in Feather River, California. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 6, 1850.
- R. W. Hart, Dubuque County. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), February 6, 1850.
- Joseph Hempstead, Dubuque County, cancer of the stomach. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), not dated.
- Joshua Holland, Des Moines County. — *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, December 27, 1849.
- James Kibbee, Dubuque County, died at San Diego,

Cal., December 25, 1849. — *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), March 6, 1850.

Son of D. W. Kilbourne, Lee County. — *The Davenport Gazette*, January 3, 1850.

Two sons of General McMillan, Henry County. — *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

Major John B. Newhall, died of cholera, May 7, 1849, at Independence, Missouri. — *Burlington Hawk-Eye*, May 24, 1849.

Mr. Nutt, Des Moines County. — *The Davenport Gazette*, March 7, 1850.

CONCLUSION

While it can confidently be asserted that relatively few of the Iowa forty-niners achieved wealth in the California mines and that most of those who returned failed, during their absence, to earn enough to cover the cost of the venture, it can likewise be asserted that the State of Iowa, lying in the path of a great portion of the emigration, was distinctly benefited by the gold rush. Certainly the fears of the Iowa editors that the gold rush would embarrass the young State by reducing its population, adversely affecting business, and retarding its progress generally, proved quite unfounded. The twelve hundred, approximately, who joined the rush were quickly replaced by thousands of new settlers in an immigration of unprecedented size. Business, instead of languishing, was considerably stimulated not only by the heavy purchases of the local emigrants to California, but also by the trade of hundreds of others who passed through the State.

If commodity prices sagged in some communities because emigrating merchants endeavored to dispose of their stocks in time to join the overland rush, the effect appears to have been temporary and of little consequence. At the principal crossings along the Mississippi and the Missouri

business was brisk and competition keen. The rivalry that sprang up between the crossing towns resulted in immediate improvements in ferry equipment, in the determination of the best routes of travel across the State, and in the bridging of streams along these routes. Inland ferry points such as Iowa City, Eddyville, Fort Des Moines, and others along the major routes of travel took on new importance and enjoyed a flourishing seasonal business.

On the farms the difficulties anticipated from the California emigration also failed to materialize. The early organization of the emigrating companies allowed farmers who were affected by the loss of help to make proper adjustments when the crop was put in, while in the fall the influx of the new settlers supplied needed help for the harvest.

A particularly important, though a somewhat less tangible effect of the gold rush upon Iowa, was the increased knowledge of the State which came not only to the Iowans themselves but to all the emigrants who traversed it. A selection of the most favorable trails to the points of departure on the Missouri River involved important considerations, for this stretch of the journey had to be made in the rainy season. Consequently the emigrants studied the maps of Iowa diligently, informed themselves with regard to rivers and ferries, bottom roads and ridge roads, outfitting stations and camps, and made comparisons in such features as particularly interested them. When later, on their way to the frontier, the emigrants had an opportunity to observe at first hand the country through which they passed, and beheld its beauty and fertility, it is not surprising that many wondered why, with such wealth at their very doors, they were engaged in a hazardous venture for gold in far-off California. Nor is it surprising that many emigrants, oppressed by the hardships of the

plains, the mountains, and the deserts, and carrying with them the remembrance of the Iowa country in spring time, resolved to return there eventually to make their permanent homes.

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