

In Quest of Tourists in 1887

SIoux CITY — A TOWN THAT REALLY HAD A MAGNET

In olden days, fairs were held throughout Europe to attract visitors from near and far to their commercial markets. Once this Nation was founded, State and County fairs developed almost automatically. Thus, the first Iowa State Fair was held at Fairfield in 1854, the same year the Chrystal Palace at Sydenham, England, began attracting world-wide attention. On a National scale, the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876 thrilled the Nation and the World.

Eleven years later, in 1887, Philadelphia observed the Centennial of the signing of the Constitution of the United States in Independence Hall. Among the scores of dignitaries attending (which included President Grover Cleveland) were two Iowans — John A. Kasson, President of the Constitutional Centennial Commission, who delivered an introductory address, and Justice Samuel Freeman Miller of the United States Supreme Court, who delivered the principal oration of the day. Philadelphia was jammed with 300,000 visitors.

Immediately after visiting Philadelphia, President Cleveland set out on a 4,500 mile tour of the West and South in the private car of George M. Pullman, the same car used by Presidents Grant and Arthur. There were attractions to view along the way: one at Grapeville in Western Pennsylvania to see the new spectacular exhibition of natural gas. Brief stops were

made at Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, and Terre Haute. St. Louis was a major two-day attraction on his westward trip. Leaving St. Louis, the train passed through Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison, and then headed northwest to Minneapolis and St. Paul. After visiting the Twin-Cities, the Presidential itinerary called for stops at Omaha, St. Joseph, Kansas City, and Memphis.

However, the President broke his itinerary to visit Sioux City, the only town so honored on his westward journey. But Sioux City had a real magnet — its magnificent Corn Palace, the first one ever built. President Cleveland found his half-hour visit to the Sioux City Corn Palace truly profitable, asserting it was the "first new thing he had seen on his trip." Another distinguished Eastern visitor, Chauncey DePew, declared Sioux City would of necessity become the "Metropolis of the Northwest."

This issue of THE PALIMPSEST is a salute to three Iowa towns that were proud of their history and of the product best identified with their growth. Their citizens had exhibited imagination, resourcefulness, and enterprise. Today a score of Iowa communities could match the Sioux City Corn Palace, the Ottumwa Coal Palace, and the colorful Blue Grass Palace at Creston. Festivals such as these, if wisely carried out, would attract thousands. It would take the united efforts of all citizens to equal the Pella Tulip Festival. Iowa would become infinitely richer in its history, its culture, and its economy, if more communities would develop such Festivals.

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