

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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In the Beginning

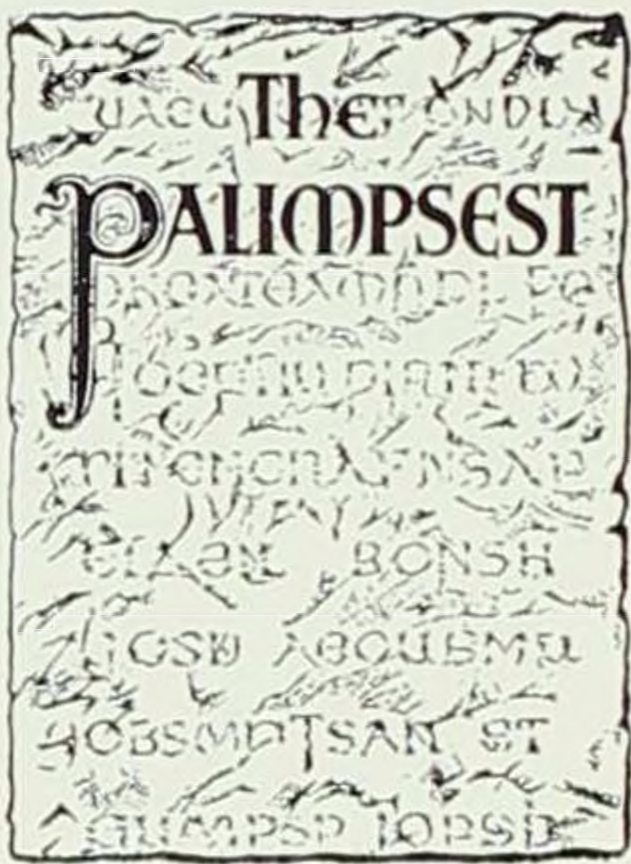
AN INVITATION TO JOIN THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
Membership open to anyone 18 years old or a high school graduate

The State Historical Society of Iowa was established by law at Iowa City in 1857. It published its first quarterly magazine — *The Annals of Iowa*, in 1863, one of the first such publications in the United States. Over the past century it has published almost 100 books, 90 volumes of its historical quarterly, and 45 volumes of its unique popular monthly — *The Palimpsest*. This outstanding publication program won the following tribute from Dr. Paul M. Angle, Director of the Chicago Historical Society: *States older than Iowa may have larger historical literatures, but no state has had its past so thoroughly explored and so widely disseminated by its own historical society.*

The Society's library contains 90,000 books, 30,000 pamphlets, 12,000 bound volumes of newspapers, 4,500 rolls of microfilm, and a rich store of maps, pictures, and manuscripts.

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Colonel Alexander, the first permanent settler in what is now Fayette, located in Westfield



The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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SUPERINTENDENT
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY, IOWA

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I would like to become a member of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Membership is \$3 a year. My Bonus Packet will contain:

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M. H. "Sodie" Alderson is Director of Public Relations at Upper Iowa University.

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In the Beginning

In 1854 a pioneer mother living in the vicinity of what is now Fayette asked her presiding elder what it would cost to send two of her daughters to the nearest college. "About a thousand dollars apiece to send them through college," was his reply. He suggested that she send them to the Methodist school at Mt. Vernon. "But that is so far away . . . why can't we have a college here for our children?" was her next question. "Why not, indeed!" exclaimed the elder. And thus was the idea for establishing Upper Iowa University first launched by Mrs. Robert Alexander.

In subsequent conversations her husband, Colonel Robert Alexander, offered to donate \$10,000 toward a college for northeastern Iowa. A son-in-law, Samuel Robertson, offered \$5,000 and 10 acres of land. Other residents of the area contributed or pledged sums of money, and the plans for a new college were underway.

Colonel Alexander, the first permanent settler in what is now Fayette, located in Westfield

Township in June 1849. He was at that time 60 years old, a typical frontiersman, and a veteran of the Black Hawk War. In his previous trade as a hatter and hotel owner in Indiana, Colonel Alexander had accumulated \$18,000 in gold, and this he carried with him to Iowa in a small green trunk — a trunk still in the possession of Upper Iowa University. A part of this fortune he invested in land, including the present site of Fayette. By 1854 he had purchased over 8,000 acres. Colonel Alexander was joined by his son-in-law, James E. Robertson, in the spring of 1850, and by another son-in-law, Samuel H. Robertson, a year later.

In discussing the proposed college, the first plan for a building was to erect a two-story unit of rubble stone at a cost of \$8,000. A contract was let to John Griffith, who was then building a store in the area. Griffith employed Charles West, who had recently come from Brooklyn to West Union, as foreman for the job.

On investigation of the local quarries, Charles West suggested the building be constructed from local limestone blocks. Accordingly, the first contract was cancelled and a new one with Griffith and West was drawn up. The new contract called for \$20,000 to enclose and roof the building, and an additional \$10,000 for finishing the interior work. A century later it cost in excess of \$300,000 to remodel and renovate the same building.

The college construction was begun in May

1855, and the walls of the first story were erected. In the fall the Alexanders and the Robertsons, representing the private company which had begun the enterprise, presented to the Iowa State Conference of Methodists, then in session, an opportunity to take charge of the new institution. The offer was accepted and a Board of Trustees was appointed.

The first meeting of the Board was held at the home of J. E. Robertson on March 12, 1856. At this meeting Articles of Incorporation were adopted. The new Board authorized the building committee to borrow \$4,000 "at 25% interest" to finish the interior work of the building. William H. Poor was chosen principal of the Seminary, at a salary of \$550 a year.

One of the Reverend Poor's first acts was to order a bell for the new Seminary. The bell, costing \$462.60, was shipped from West Troy, New York to Dubuque and was hauled by ox team to Fayette.

On January 7, 1857, although only the first two floors and a section of the third were completed, classes began in the new "Fayette Seminary of the Upper Iowa Conference." Students had to climb to the third floor dormitory spaces by means of ladder-ramps.

On the first faculty were the Reverend W. H. Poor as principal; his father, David, steward; Clark Poor, teacher of primary department and

penmanship; Mrs. Clark Poor, music; Miss Rice, preceptress and teacher of English and French; and Nathan S. Cornell, mathematics. When the Reverend Poor resigned as principal in April, at the end of the first term, Nathan S. Cornell was named acting principal and E. C. Byam was named business agent. The lives of these two men were destined to take a strange turn a few years later. When the Civil War broke out, Nathan S. Cornell became a colonel in the Rebel Army. He was captured during the conflict by Colonel E. C. Byam of the Federal Army.

The Finance Committee reported the indebtedness of the institution to be \$21,683, and the assets, not including the building, to be \$19,738. The estimated expense of the first year's conduct of the school was \$4,512.

On September 17, 1857, the Fayette Seminary opened for its first full year. The Reverend Lucius H. Bugbee, A.M., was named as principal. Regular classes were formed, and academic work began in earnest. The first public examinations, which were attended by members of the Board, were held on December 23. At a meeting of the Board the next day the name of the institution was changed to "Collegiate Institute," and a classification of studies was made.

The first commencement was held July 15, 1858. On the preceding evening the Reverend Philo E. Brown of Dubuque gave a lecture, and Jesse Cle-

ment, the editor of the *Dubuque Daily Times*, recited a poem. The next morning the commencement exercises were held in the J. E. Robertson Grove. President R. S. Foster of Northwestern University delivered the address.

That same day new Articles of Incorporation were adopted and the name of the school again was changed, this time to "Upper Iowa University." The by-laws of the Board of Trustees were also completely revised.

On February 8, 1859, the Board resolved to hold a regular inauguration ceremony for Professor Bugbee at the commencement to be held on July 21. At the resulting ceremony the Reverend Thomas M. Eddy, editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, delivered the address, presented the keys to Lucius H. Bugbee, and formally installed him as Upper Iowa's first president. The register of students at that time showed 5 sophomores and 10 freshmen in the Collegiate Department; 17 students in the Female Collegiate Department; and 142 students in the Normal and Preparatory Departments for a total enrollment of 174.

Candidates for admission to the freshman class had to show proficiency in English grammar, geography, history, arithmetic, elementary algebra, Latin grammar, Latin reader (Caesar and Virgil) as well as Greek grammar. Students had to be 10 years of age for admission into the Nor-

mal and Preparatory Departments and 14 for admission into the Collegiate courses.

The first catalogue contained the following description of the campus: "The location is healthy and beautiful. The population of Fayette is between 600 and 700, and free from those demoralizing influences frequently prevalent in colleges." Furthermore, there were no saloons or dance halls.

In addition to the normal Bachelor degrees, the college was empowered to award the degrees of Master of Arts, Master of Science, and Master of Accounts "on every Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science of three years standing who has been engaged since his graduation in appropriate pursuit and has sustained a good moral character." It was pointed out, however, that these degrees would only be conferred "on proper application accompanied with the usual fee of \$5."

Tuition in the Collegiate Department was \$27 per year. Incidental expenses were \$1.50. Room rent for a furnished room was \$12 per year. Those taking extra courses, such as a foreign language, music, painting, or instruction on the guitar, paid incidental fees ranging from \$1 up. Board could be obtained "at from \$1.50 to \$2 per week."

The catalogue advised parents and guardians that "young men in college have little need of pocket money. It is better that their funds be placed in the hands of one of the professors whose discretion may regulate their expenditures."

The entire college, of course, was contained in the one building. The president and his family lived on the first floor, which also housed the chapel and music room. On the second floor were recitation rooms, commercial rooms, a parlor, museum, and the library. The third floor was a dormitory, with the boys occupying the north wing and the girls the south wing. A solid partition separated the two. Rooms were heated by individual stoves, and wood and water had to be carried in from outside. Young ladies were charged for the price of wood carried to their rooms; boys had to provide for themselves.

Fayette was listed as being on "daily stage runs from Independence, Postville, and McGregor." There were also stage communications from Manchester on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. This was considered quite an advantage, with the town being described as a "quiet educational retreat, removed from the corrupting influences which affect the morals, as are found in towns located on public thoroughfares."

Rooms in college hall, which was called Old Sem, were described as being equipped with a table, two chairs, wardrobe, wash stand, commode, bedstead, straw bed mattress, and stove. Students were expected to furnish any additional articles that might be needed "such as bedding, mirror, pail, wash bowl, pitcher, wood, light, broom, soap, towels, etc."

Upper Iowa University was founded by Christian men who believed that the highest development of the mind could be secured only under the elevating influence of the Bible and that real success in life could not be reached apart from an unwavering loyalty to the great principles of Christianity. Accordingly, devotional services, which were required of all, were held twice daily.

All this was spelled out in the following list of regulations which went into effect shortly after the school opened:

1. The students shall arise in the morning at the ringing of the bell, sweep and arrange their rooms and at the toll of the bell shall assemble for prayer in the chapel; the same signal shall assemble them for evening prayer.

2. No student shall be unnecessarily absent from his room, leave the University yard, or visit the room of a fellow student during hours of study without permission or order from one of the officers.

3. The students shall punctually perform every duty enjoined by the officers; diligently employ the hours of study; and on being notified by the bell or otherwise to attend recitation, lecture, or other exercises, shall without delay retire to rooms appointed.

4. There shall be annually a public examination and exhibition which every student shall attend.

5. As a precaution against fire every student shall have his pail filled with water before he retires at night.

6. During the hours of recess no student shall indulge in halooing, loud talking, running, jumping, whistling, or making other disturbances in the rooms or halls of the University.

7. No student shall in any way injure the University building or anything else connected with the institution and in case damage is done he will be held responsible.

8. No student shall throw ashes, dirt, or other filthy materials from the windows of the building.

9. All students are required to cherish a respectful deference for the authority of the Faculty, and in all their social intercourse and relations to preserve a correct and becoming deportment.

10. Any student refusing to give any information in reference to another student when required by the Faculty shall be liable to such punishment as they may judge proper.

11. Playing games of chance in the Seminary or elsewhere is totally forbidden.

12. Cleanliness of person and neatness of apparel are ever to be observed.

13. No student shall leave town, or absent himself from his room overnight or go abroad to spend the Sabbath with his friends or others without special permission.

14. At the ringing of the bell for meals those students boarding in the institution shall assemble without confusion or disorder in the dining hall and take such seats as are assigned them, which they shall occupy until a change be directed.

15. No student shall speak, make a noise, or meddle with any article upon the table until the religious services of the table are performed. Perfect propriety and decorum must be observed by every student while at the table. No one shall retire until the table is duly dismissed, after which the students shall leave the room in good order.

16. No students shall visit taverns, grocers, or other public places for the purposes of pleasure or entertainment; nor use spirits, liquors, or tobacco in any form in the

University building, nor employ immodest or profane language of any description.

17. A strict observance of the Christian Sabbath will be required of all the students and on no account will unnecessary noise be allowed, nor may students on that day go abroad into the fields or frequent the village, or collect in each others room without express permission. Propriety and decorum must be maintained throughout the day and attendance at church in the morning and afternoon at such places as their parents or guardians may require will be expected of all students.

18. The Faculty may have access at all times to the rooms of the students.

19. No student shall make any fire in his stove after half past nine o'clock in the evening, and everyone shall retire by ten.

20. Female students shall be under the same restrictions as the males with regard to the above regulations. In case of confinement by sickness, however, permission is given to visit each other at their rooms.

21. No male student is permitted to visit or enter that part of the building assigned exclusively to the females except those in the immediate employ only.

22. If any male student has a relative in the female department whom he wishes to see, he will be permitted to go to the parlor, request her to be sent for, and there converse with her.

Thus life began at Upper Iowa University.