

# Palimpsest

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MARCH / APRIL 1973



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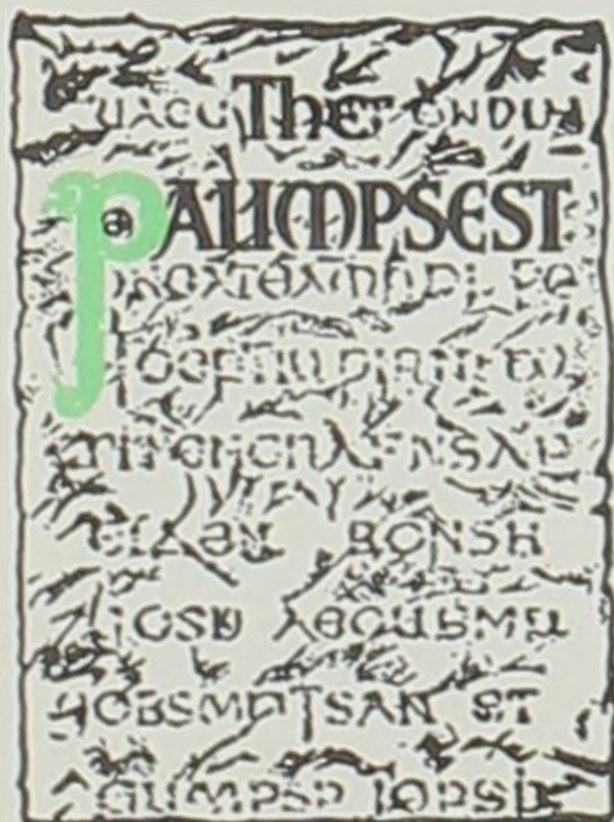
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L. Edward Purcell, Editor

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Cover: *Peter Melendy, one of Iowa's ablest federal marshals. Story on p. 2.*



### *The Meaning of the 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.



# The U.S. Marshal on Iowa's Frontier

by

Philip D. Jordan

Shots shattered the early morning stillness and ripped through the body of a Deputy United States Marshal. He died, as have scores of federal marshals, in a blaze of bullets and in a manner reminiscent of typical frontier gunfights. Yet Deputy Dick McKinney's life was not snuffed out in a Texas saloon shoot-out nor was he ambushed in a gulch in the wild Indian Territory of the southwest a century ago. He was slain near a dark alley in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on July 20, 1972.

United States Marshals and their deputies, ever since Iowa was a part of the Territory of Wisconsin, have enforced in one fashion or another federal statutes.

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This article is based primarily upon Letters of Application and Recommendation during the presidential administrations of the chronological period discussed; on Letters Sent by the Department of Justice: Instructions to United States Attorneys and Marshals for the same period. Both collections are held in the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D. C. Published annual reports of the Attorney General of the United States were indispensable, as were annual reports of the Department of Justice. Fourteen Iowa newspapers, ranging from 1837 until 1900, provided local details. Finally, much material was drawn from the author's crime catalogue and index, comprising eighteen file drawers. All this, of course, was supplemented by the United States *Statutes-at-Large*, Iowa Codes, decisions of District Courts, and articles in legal journals.

During the 1970's, they arrested a young man charged with the illegal importation of hashish from Africa into the United States. They seized a fully loaded automatic pistol from a prisoner being escorted into the United States District Court in Des Moines, and they took into custody in Des Moines members of a group of citizen band radio operators indicted by a grand jury and charged with violating fourteen regulations of the Federal Communications Commission. Marshals transferred, on order of the United States Bureau of Prisons, federal prisoners housed in Iowa's Polk County Jail to the Story County Jail in Nevada. In Pella they arrested a veterinarian charged with failure to keep proper records of drugs. They seized in Des Moines about a thousand bottles of silver polish alleged to contain soluble cyanide.

All this sounds exciting enough, for the public, accustomed to television portrayal of the United States Marshal and his deputies, expects dramatic episodes in which federal officers, grim-faced, hard-riding, pistol-packing men, wager lives dedicated to law and order against the nefarious and deadly actions of those who live outside the law. Although Americans expect lawmen to triumph, they sometimes secretly admire boldness and ruthlessness of rascals clever enough to pass the counterfeiter's long-green, sly enough to outwit Wells Fargo agents, and devious enough to make and sell illegal whiskey without being caught.

The United States Marshal, like the



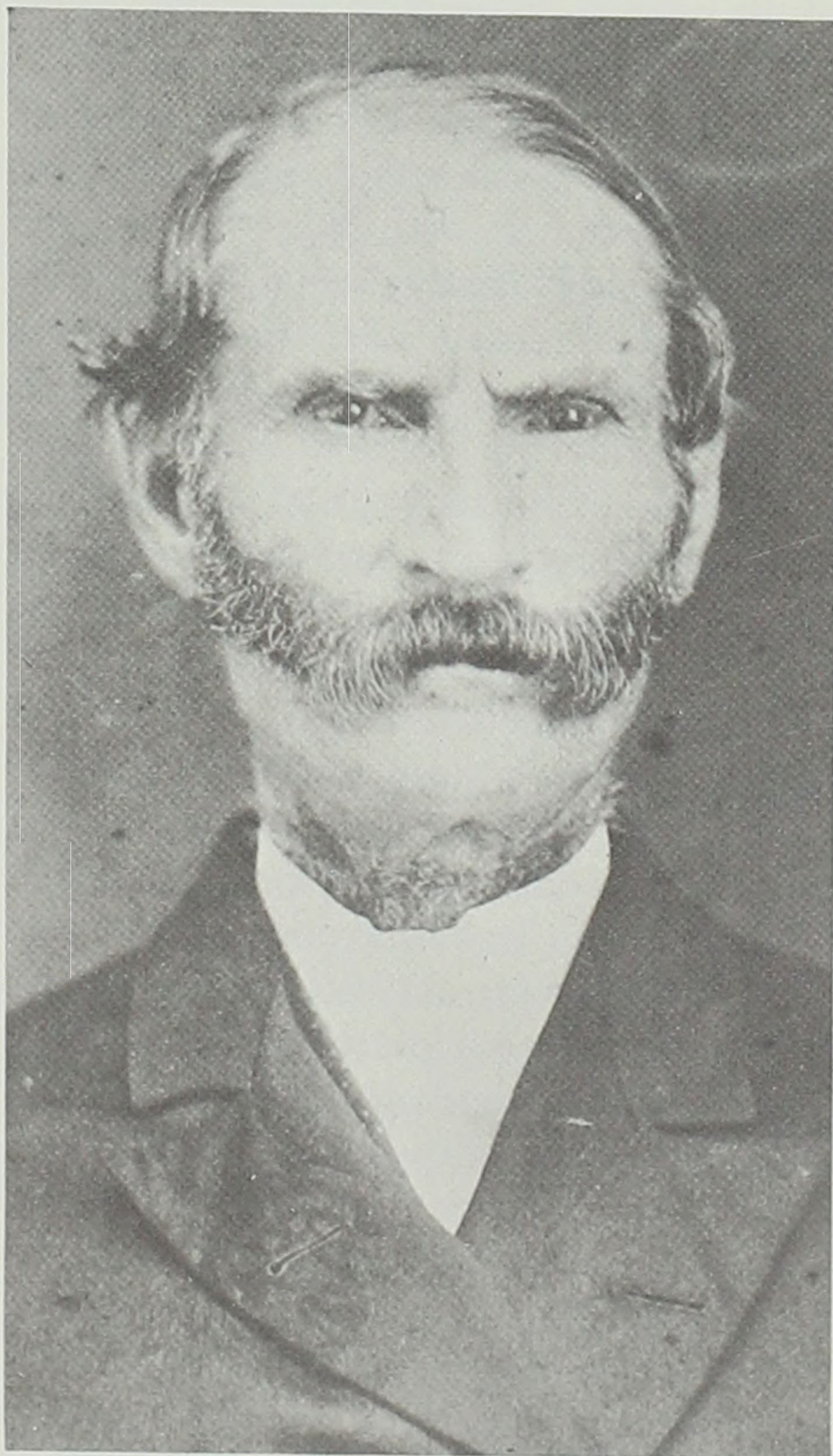
Texas Ranger and the Royal Canadian Mountie, is, in the public mind, a hero of gigantic proportions. The star he wears is never blemished, the horse he rides never tires, the Colt in his hand always barks and invariably sends its slug straight between the eyes. In short, the peace officer is confused with the law he symbolizes; the spectacular pursuits and arrests conceal the fact that no matter how colorful the crime the nub of the matter is that the marshal is serving process; and the daily duties of marshals and deputies are based not upon whim, but upon clearly defined authority and equally specific restrictions.

When Iowa marshals arrested a Pella veterinarian, transferred federal prisoners from one jail to another, and seized a quantity of silver polish, they were, in essence, performing as did Hawk-Eye marshals a century and more ago. The type of offense had changed, but the legal procedure remained much the same. The marshals, cooperating with federal courts, federal attorneys, and federal commissioners, were acting in accordance with instructions. Their duty, then as now, was the enforcement of federal statutes.

This narrative covers the period from 1838, when Iowa became a territory, until 1890, when the frontier officially was closed, a period during which some seventeen individuals received presidential appointments as marshal. The number of regular and special deputies appointed by them is impossible to determine. Of the appointees, seven were removed either

for cause or through changes in national politics, and four resigned. This is neither surprising nor startling, for Iowa inherited a system almost as old as the nation itself. The Judiciary Act of 1789 created the office of United States District Marshal and prescribed its duties.

Originally, each marshal was charged with only two specific duties. He must at-



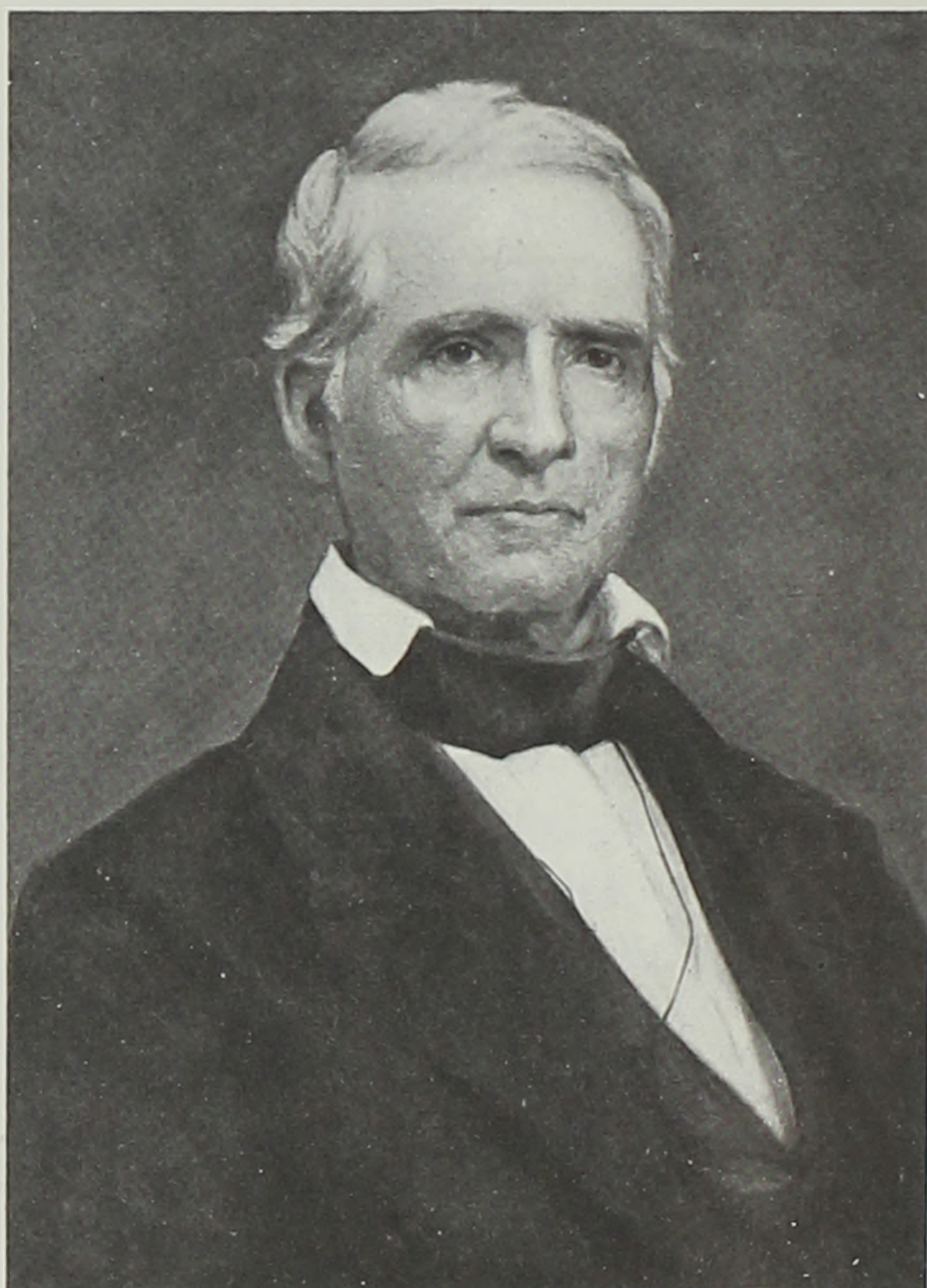
*Courtesy of Iowa Department of History and Archives.*

*Gideon S. Bailey, Iowa's first marshal after statehood.*



tend sittings of district and circuit courts and also sessions of the United States Supreme Court when sitting in a marshal's district. He was to exercise in his district all lawful precepts directed to him under the authority of the United States. He was permitted, when occasion warranted, to draw upon all necessary assistance. This meant, in the common law tradition, he could raise and direct a posse. The marshal could appoint deputies. A performance bond was required of the marshal, and both he and his deputies were obligated to take an oath that they would faithfully and honestly execute their duties and upheld federal laws. Marshals were appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

Unfortunately, in Iowa and elsewhere presidential appointment soon resulted in the naming to office of individuals whose only qualifications were that they were loyal party henchmen, had served their country valiantly in time of war, were relatives of congressmen or senators, or possessed business or professional influence. Farmers, tradesmen, and struggling lawyers, believing a marshalship would bulge a lean purse, prayed, pleaded, and petitioned for appointment. A marshal's income was based upon an established fee system. He, for example, received a fixed amount for attending court, for serving warrants and summons, and for transporting prisoners. Fees in many instances fell short of expectation, and government accounting of money received and spent proved a constant irritation, not only be-



*Governor Henry Dodge.*

cause officers were unable to cope with the mechanics of government bookkeeping but also because too many viewed a marshalship as only an office which permitted them to root ruthlessly in an always full pork barrel. Not until 1896 were marshals placed on salaries.

As the nation expanded, so did a marshal's duties. When Iowa was a part of the Territory of Wisconsin, marshals were taking the federal census, hiring jails in which to house federal prisoners, and serving as fiscal agents of federal courts. In the latter capacity they purchased candles, fuel, furniture, and flags. They paid fees



earned by jurors and witnesses and the salary of clerks of court. Their police power was considerably enlarged from former years for in 1792 they had been granted the same authority in executing the laws of the United States in their districts as were sheriffs in their counties.

Captain Francis Gehon, territorial marshal of Wisconsin and the first federal marshal of the Territory of Iowa, was an almost perfect example of a misfit who epitomized the weakness of political appointment, the inability to keep proper accounts, and the callousness of self-interest. Originally from Peru, Du Buque County, Wisconsin, Gehon was highly recommended both by George W. Jones, territorial delegate, and by Governor Henry Dodge. He was endorsed as a respectable man who had actively defended his country in the war of 1832 against Black Hawk. Jones, who also served in the Black Hawk campaign and who knew Gehon well, believed Gehon had managed the marshal's office in Wisconsin so well that he was "entitled" to appointment in Iowa. President Van Buren agreed and appointed him on June 26, 1838.

Four months later, Jones, enough of a lawyer and a wise enough Democrat to know on which side his political bread was buttered, wrote Levi Woodbury, Secretary of the Treasury, a letter which was both self-defensive and apologetic. He said he and Dodge had requested and received a large sum of money for Gehon's use in his official capacity. He suggested the propriety of requiring Gehon to make

an immediate settlement of all his accounts. Gehon, continued Jones, not only had failed to make payments to witnesses and jurors, as required by law but also had given his due bills for their services in attending courts. "He had been in the habit," said Jones, "of selling the Gold which he had rec'd from the Govt. for depreciated bank notes and then offers these depreciated notes to Jurors, etc."

Governor Dodge was no novice in law-enforcement activities. Neither was he naive in his understanding of the duties of marshals. He, as a young man, filled the office of sheriff of the St. Genevieve District in Missouri for sixteen years. President Madison in 1813 appointed him United States Marshal for the Territory of Missouri. With this background it is difficult to understand why Dodge supported Gehon as long as he did. A plausible explanation is that the Governor permitted Jones and W. W. Chapman, territorial delegates, to garrote Gehon politically with his silent blessing.

Indeed, after a Grand Jury in November 1840 reported it had found Gehon owed the Treasury Department \$3996.40 on the settlement of his accounts for the previous September, it was difficult and inexpedient for anyone to defend him. When the same jury which had reported so unfavorably upon Gehon sought payment for their jury service from the marshal, as was proper, the constable who sought to deliver the jurors' fee schedule to Gehon was unable to do so. He endorsed the document and returned it to



the court with this notation: "I certify that I carried this letter to the house of the U.S. Marshal of this territory and was informed by Mrs. Gehon (the wife of Genl. Gehon) that the Marshal was absent from town." The upstart jurors were obligated to wait for wages.

Such revenge, temporary as it was, only kindled the fire that eventually consumed Gehon. He sought on December 27, 1840 and again on February 26, 1841, to cool antagonism and regain favor by writing John Forsyth, Secretary of State, and William H. Harrison, President-elect. He told Forsyth that not only were his accounts in order but also that the government owed him some twenty-four hundred dollars. Speaking of the Grand Jury action, Gehon explained that he had planned to be in Du Buque in time to attend the sessions, but was prevented by the sudden fall of water in the Mississippi. Even if he had reached home when the Grand Jury met, he went on, nothing would have prevented complaint because jury members were composed of "my personal and political enemies." He intended to pay the jurors promptly. He maintained he always had acted in good faith toward the government and its creditors.

After introducing himself to Harrison as the United States Marshal of the Territory of Iowa and informing him that the office had been more of an expense than a profit, Gehon said his commission expired in July 1842. "Truth and candor," he went on, "requires me to say that I have always belonged to that party which opposed your election to that exalted station you are now about to occupy." Nevertheless and despite false and slanderous charges brought against him, he hoped

Harrison would permit him to retain the office.

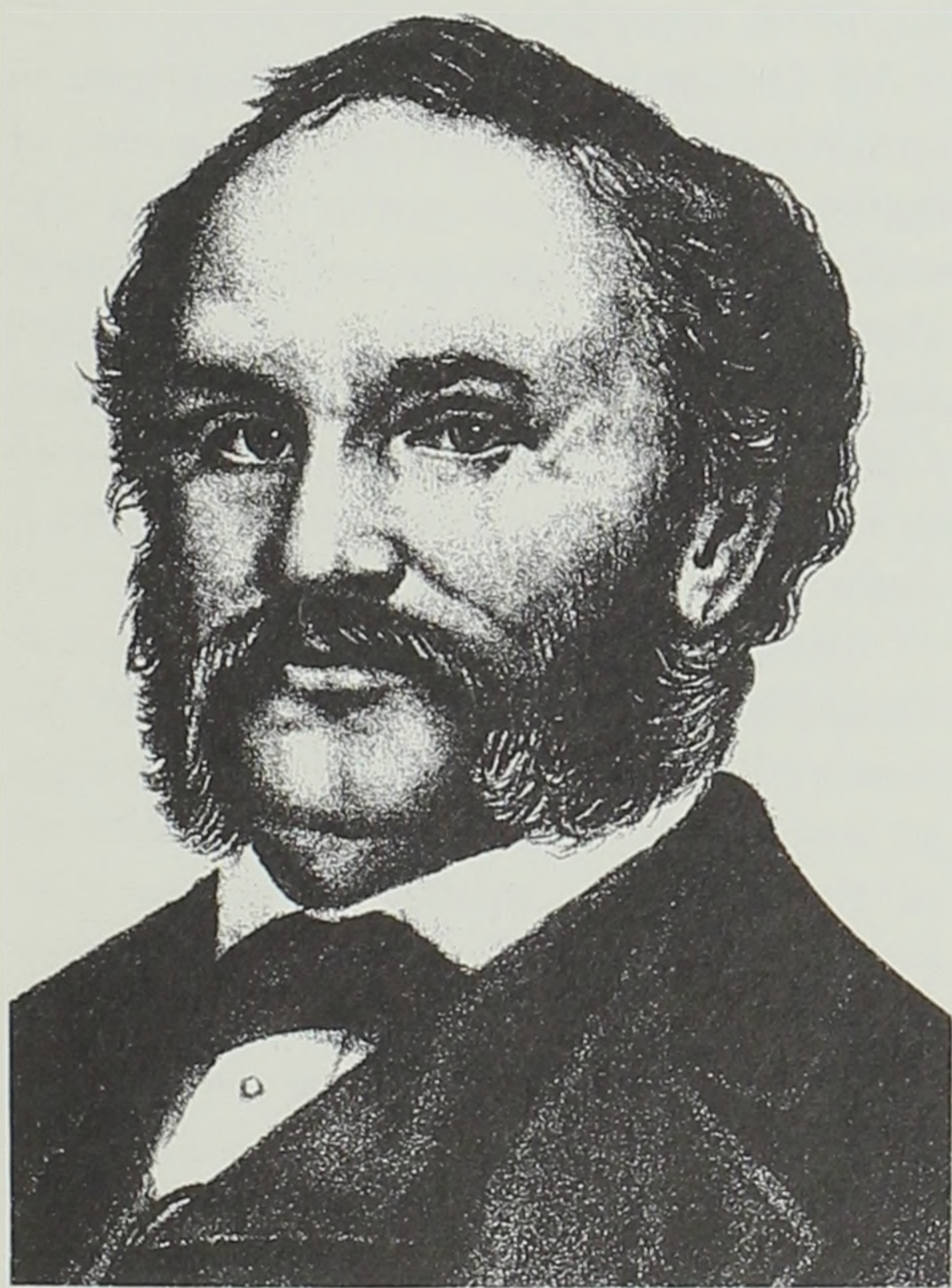
Gehon, of course, made only passing reference in his letter to Forsyth of the role he played—or did not play—in the border dispute in 1839 between Iowa and Missouri. Although urged to intervene by Governor Lucas and the two justices of the Supreme Court of Iowa, Charles Mason and Joseph Williams, Gehon's assistance was slight, although he swore he spent money out of his own pocket in the attempt.

All this was of little avail, for Marshal Gehon himself wove and set the snare which trapped him. He was replaced by Thomas B. Johnson, whose commission was dated March 25, 1841. One incompetent was substituted for another. Johnson, said a petition signed by numerous residents of Bloomington, was a family man, enjoyed the confidence of the people, was of good morals and sober habits, and was possessed to a "handsome" degree of the qualifications of marshal. Originally from Indianapolis, Indiana, Johnson received the unqualified recommendation of friends there. Albert M. Lea, an Iowan and United States Commissioner to aid in determining the southern boundary of the state, was more perceptive.

Lea, in December 1841, wrote Daniel Webster that Johnson's private character was "bad, very bad, and he is intellectually incompetent to perform his duties." Previously Burlington citizens had signed a petition saying almost the same thing. J. H. Clay Mudd also warned Webster. Stephen Whicher, United States Attorney for Iowa, declared that Johnson was peculiarly irresponsible and that morally and politically he had nothing to lose.



That was not all. Whicher wrote President Tyler that the marshal was marked by blackleg habits, the lowest vulgarity, and a foul mouth. Mudd, a close observer of the Iowa scene, not only endorsed Whicher's characterization but also stated flatly that Johnson was a defaulter and "does not pay off the jurors although he had drawn the money from the Treasury for that purpose." The signers of Johnson's bond met in Bloomington in Decem-



*Senator James W. Grimes.*

ber 1842, and requested the Secretary of the Treasury to withhold further monies from the marshal. They urged Johnson's removal and the appointment of Isaac Leffler.

Leffler, a native Virginian, wielded considerable influence. He knew his way around Washington and, as a congress-

man from 1827 to 1829, kept his political fences in good repair. He was recommended for a judgeship in 1836 for the Territory of Wisconsin and served as chief justice of the first judicial tribunal of Des Moines County. A staunch Whig, he was a hard-working member of the first Iowa territorial legislature. Leffler had scant difficulty in securing the marshalship. He was appointed on March 25, 1843. Yet with all his political acumen, he was removed on January 16, 1844. Like his predecessors, Leffler apparently used the marshalship for personal gain and found difficulty in keeping straight his accounts. Although he prospered as an attorney in Burlington, his political future was less successful. President Fillmore named him receiver of public moneys for the Chariton land district of Iowa in 1852, but less than a year later President Pierce removed him.

With Leffler's removal Iowa Democrats, anxious to avoid further embarrassment, urged in the strongest possible terms the appointment of Gideon S. Bailey. A staunch party man, a defender of Governor Robert Lucas, and a friend of Augustus Caesar Dodge, Bailey was an ideal candidate. Furthermore, he fairly itched with desire. Originally appointed marshal on July 3, 1845, he conducted the office with such prudence and efficiency that little adverse criticism resulted. Indeed, he was reappointed, serving until 1850. Thomas H. Benton, Jr., wrote President Polk from Iowa City that Bailey had discharged his duties with honor.

Bailey, in a long, tightly-written letter, told Polk that he not only desired reappointment for its own sake but also that there was another—a primary—reason why



he wished to retain the office. "There are," he said, "between nine and ten thousand dollars yet to disburse under the Territorial form of Government. I can disburse it more to the advantage of the people and Government (because familiar with the state and condition of business) than any one else and could make it to much advantage to myself." Then he added: "As to the prompt and satisfactory manner that I have performed the duties of the office I refer you to the Treasury Department. In Iowa I have never heard any complaint."

Whether marshals discharged their duties properly or improperly, their official lives were not easy. They were the slaves of many masters. In some instances, as when taking the census, they reported directly to the President. The Secretary of State might call upon them. In 1820, their supervisor was the Secretary of the Treasury, and in 1849, the Secretary of the Interior. Details concerning suits involving the Treasury Department were reported directly to the Solicitor of the Treasury. Definitive supervision was not settled until August 2, 1861, when the Attorney General was given control. These supervisory powers were reaffirmed by the Act of June 22, 1870, which created the Department of Justice.

Numerous marshals, reasonably honest and relatively competent, unwittingly hanged themselves in a noose of red tape and were buried under an avalanche of government paper. Others simply could not comprehend reams of complicated in-

structions sent them. Moreover, officials in Washington frequently were slow in replying to inquiries, and marshals could be equally sluggish in submitting promptly reports and financial accounts. Leffler, for example, wrote the Comptroller of the Treasury in October 1843, requesting instructions. His reply was dated January 24, 1844, some four months later.

All Leffler wanted to learn was how to handle judicial expenses—the costs of maintaining federal courts—in Iowa. He was told in clear enough language to send abstracts of all such expenditures to the Secretary of the Treasury. Then followed a paragraph so typically complicated and so representative of instructions sent marshals that it merits quoting in full.

"The abstracts which you may furnish should be so full, as to enable me to determine, whether the bills of cost, or expenses therein mentioned, are payable out of the Judicial appropriations—the revenue, or by the P[ost] O[ffice] Department: all bills for services rendered, or supplies furnished, should be not only examined and allowed by the Judge, but certified by the Clerk, according to Law; and, *probable cause of action*, in suits for the recovery of fines—penalties, or forfeitures, which fail—must be certified by the Judge—or, the Officer instituting the same must pay the costs &c: but, when fine or penalties are recovered; or, forfeitures decreed, the costs are chargeable *primarily* on their avails—and, only, in case these are insufficient, on the revenues, or judicial appropriation, as the case may be."



Even if such directions were clear to a nonlegal mind and even if a marshal were determined to follow them, he at times was unable to do so. Inclement weather, irregular mail service, no roads or impassable roads, the moving about of witnesses, the untidy bookkeeping of merchants from whom court supplies were purchased, the work load of clerks of court—all these and more frequently made prompt and proper return of abstracts difficult if not impossible. Marshals throughout the nation found themselves behind in their accounting to the government. Leffler, a year after his removal, echoed the sentiment of other marshals when he maintained that he was not in arrears. "I challenge," he said, "the whole government to show that I have credit for one dollar that has not been paid except fourteen to James Clarke, for which he holds my note."

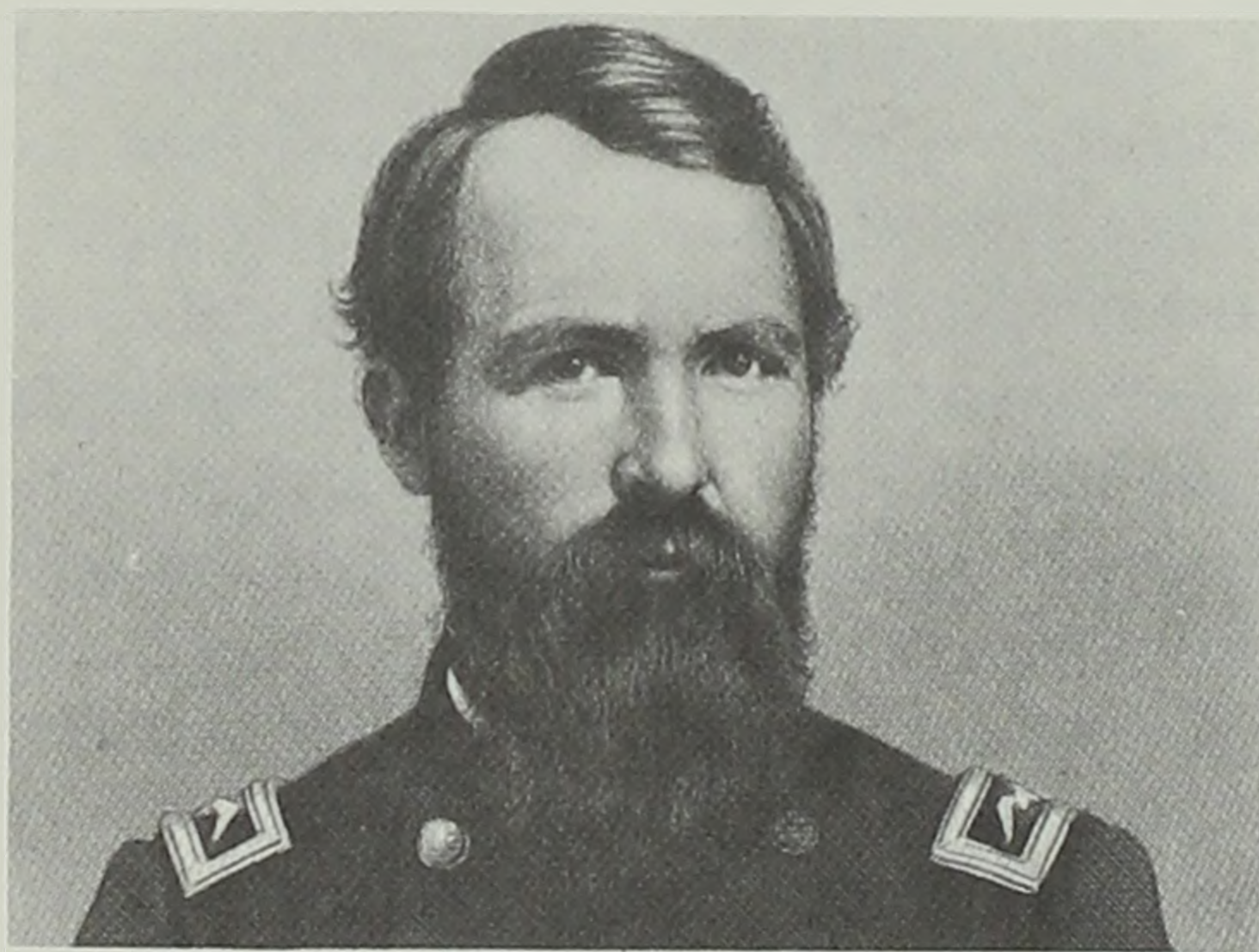
Several Iowans served as marshal shortly before and during the Civil War, an important period for Iowa marshals. Laurel Summers, a Democrat and legislator in 1841, was well known and competent. He held office from April 1858 until May 1861. His removal was not for cause, but due to a national Republican victory. During the war years, a staunch, pro-Lincoln man, Herbert M. Hoxie, served faithfully and well. Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood, fearing Copperhead sentiments in southern Iowa, sent Hoxie to border counties to suggest plans for defense in event of invasion from Missouri. Largely

a psychological gesture, Hoxie's visit had the desired effect of cooling anti-war activity. He resigned the office and was succeeded on March 3, 1865 by Peter Melendy, an outstanding individual who long had served both community and state in a variety of business, cultural, and political activities.

Melendy, undoubtedly one of the distinguished, if not the most distinguished, of all early Iowa marshals, was born in 1823 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He came to the Hawk-Eye State in 1857 to settle in the primitive village of Cedar Falls. There, following his agricultural and business bent, Melendy threw himself into horticultural and literary pursuits, wrote for the Cedar Falls *Banner*, was editor of *Field and Garden*, supported county and state fairs, and served as trustee on the first board of the state agricultural college at Ames. He endorsed and supported not only the Cedar Falls and Minnesota Railroad but also the Iowa Central Railroad.

Not until the eve of the Civil War did Melendy assume an active role in politics. Then he swung full support behind the Republicans and Lincoln. After Hoxie left office, the Iowa congressional delegation and Asahel W. Hubbard, Iowa congressman, persuaded Lincoln to appoint Melendy. His commission was dated March 3, 1865. The record clearly indicates that he took his duties seriously and performed them efficiently. Yet, after Lincoln's assassination and the coming to office of President Johnson, Melendy was removed on purely political grounds. The dismis-





*Courtesy of Iowa Department of History and Archives.*

*George W. Clark, the marshal who replaced Peter Melendy in 1867. He had risen to general's rank during the War.*

sal smarted.

"Appointed U.S. Marshal by Lincoln for 4 years 3rd of March, 1865," Melendy wrote. "Was turned out by A Johnson 12th of October 1866 because I would not eat dirt or forsake my principles. Appointed for a second time by Grant March 1871 for 4 years." In 1879, he secured a low-paid position as quartermaster in the War Department.

One incident involving an Iowan and an out-of-state marshal casts light on the power and function of the office. Perhaps no low-level squabble, during the Civil War, irritated Iowans more than did a confrontation between Senator James W. Grimes, credited with bringing Iowa into the Republican fold, and Ward Hill Lamon, close friend and former law partner of Lincoln's. The President appointed Lamon marshal of the District of Washington in April 1861. Among Lamon's official duties was jurisdiction over the

Washington Jail, a place which Grimes said compared with the French Bastille and the dungeons of Venice. The Senator was in a position to know, for he, as Chairman of the District of Columbia, inspected it. Lamon countered by refusing further inspections. Thereupon, Grimes attempted to appeal directly to the President.

When, said Grimes, he attempted to "approach the foostool of power at the other end of the avenue," servants declined to announce him. Furious at what he believed to be the high-handed action of a United States Marshal and angered at what he believed to be a deliberate snub on Lincoln's part, Grimes made the issue public. He spoke of the matter, he wrote, "not because I suppose the influence of this marshal extends so far as to exclude me from the Executive mansion, as well as from the jail, but as a reason why I state publicly here what I intended to state privately there." Lincoln did nothing. As a result, Congress in 1864 transferred all the power over the jail from the marshal to a warden.

This episode, slight as it was and lost as it has been in the welter of greater problems during Lincoln's presidency, nevertheless points up the fact that federal marshals could, if they wished, exercise tremendous influence. Indeed, it throws peripheral light upon the Iowa scene, where some marshals and their deputies believed their star shone brighter than the statutes. Throughout the nation, the Department of Justice was cautioning





*Civil War marshal, Herbert M. Hoxie.*



United States attorneys and commissioners to watch closely not only marshals' accounts but also their actions. Auditors became more vigilant, and complaints by the military and by citizens were thoroughly investigated.

By the turn of the century Iowa marshals were no longer serving process and hunting down wanted men as they did in pioneer days of early statehood. Earlier, for example, they attempted to prohibit lumbermen from depredations of trespass on public lands on the Upper Iowa and Cedar rivers. Then they transported in chains alleged mail robbers. Then they sold prairie and timber land to satisfy writs of execution. In those early days Deputies D. Sheward and N. Park Woods took the census for Des Moines County, and others performed the same chore throughout the state. During the Civil War, W. H. F. Gurley, United States Attorney for Iowa, advised marshals how to seize rebel property within the area. Twentieth-century marshals were no longer expected to apprehend editors of "treasonable" newspapers as had Hoxie in 1862 when he arrested D. A. Mahoney of the *Dubuque Herald*. A few days later, Hoxie hired in Burlington a special locomotive to make a flying trip to Fairfield, where he arrested David Sheward, editor of the *Constitution and the Union*.

Yet, then as now, duties were arduous and dangers ever present. Hoxie, imbued with the prevalent idea that war veterans should be rewarded with employment, appointed two ex-cavalrymen, J. M. Woodruff and J. L. Bashore, deputies. Woodruff came from Knoxville and Bashore lived in Centerville. On October 1, 1864, the deputies, mounted and properly armed,

rode into Sugar Creek Township, Poweshiek County, to round up draft evaders whom local patriots believed to be Copperheads. A gun battle followed in which both deputies were killed. Both Josiah B. Grinnell, clergyman and congressman, and Governor William M. Stone offered rewards for the arrest and delivery of John and Joseph Fleener, slayers of the deputies.

Some duties, despite occasional bloody episodes, changed little through the years and patterned a marshal's life with never-ending sameness. The distilling and selling of illegal liquor, the theft of horses, and the making of bogus money were crimes which cut heavily into law officers' time. Bootleggers busied themselves not only in caves along the Mississippi River but also in cleverly concealed hideaways in ravines and gullies in the interior. A pitchfork biting into a straw pile might strike not fodder but a keg of corn. Marshal George W. Clark, who served from 1867 until 1871, had been in office less than four months when he and a deputy raided an illegal distillery in Des Moines County. They seized a hundred bushels of rye, fifty bushels of corn, a steam boiler, two yeast tubs, a scale, a mash tub, and three barrels of distilled spirits. Frequently, county sheriffs or local marshals picked up and held for federal marshals sellers of illegal whiskey. Jack Sullivan, for example, a retail liquor dealer of Wapello County in 1879, was charged with violation of United States revenue laws. Time and again, marshals throughout the state sold at public auction high wines to satisfy district court decrees.

Horse theft, like pioneers, preachers, poachers, and promoters, followed the



frontier to Iowa. The crime was the pioneer's scourge. Iowa territorial marshals frequently complained of gangs which ran off horses. With an increase of population, horse theft increased. Davenport's *Iowa Sun and Rock Island News*, beginning September 4, 1839, ran a standing reward for the apprehension of a renegade who took a bright, sorrel mare from its owner in Scott County. "There was a time in this state," reported the *Dubuque Miners' Daily Express*, October 1, 1851, "when it was impossible for an honest man to keep a good horse." Other editors of river-town newspapers spoke consistently of the loss of horses. Both the Mexican and Civil wars not only increased the demand but also the price of horses. Government procurement agents cared little if the mounts they purchased were stolen. Federal marshals frequently worked closely with county sheriffs and local peace officers to curtail, if not stop, the thieving.

Anti-horse thief associations, vigilante committees, and posted signs reading "Watch Out for Horse Thieves" accomplished little. Melendy in 1866 set a trap near Cedar Falls and captured a gang of thieves. A decade later, Marshal John W. Chapman, who served from 1875 to 1879, was plagued by the bold activities of horse stealers, who after a theft boldly shipped stolen stock by river steamer or, with equal effrontery, drove them down public roads. Scores of letters to marshals from federal attorneys commented upon horse thieving.

Counterfeiting, like horse theft, came early into the state. Indeed, since colonial times, the making and passing of bogus money was a concern which legislatures sought by statutes to curtail and prevent.

When during the Jacksonian period the charter of the United States Bank expired and federal funds were deposited in state banks, counterfeiters found a golden opportunity. They duplicated paper money issued by hundreds of banks. Coins, as well as land warrants and military bounty papers, were illegally reproduced.

Iowa fell heir to all types of counterfeiting. Its marshals, not always sufficiently knowledgeable to distinguish between a genuine bill and a piece of fake long-green, frequently relied, as did bankers and merchants, upon a variety of counterfeit detectors. Published by several editors and appearing regularly, these pamphlets not only warned readers against fake bills in circulation but also illustrated their pages with drawings of both genuine and imitation paper. The editor of Muscatine's *Iowa Democratic Enquirer* spoke glowingly in October 1852 of the usefulness of *Dye's Bank Note Mirror*, a guide with a national circulation.

Nevertheless counterfeit manuals proved to be little help, since illegal activity continued throughout the state. In 1842, Iowa marshals apprehended in Montrose a slippery gentleman and charged him with circulating counterfeit ten-dollar bills. Bellevue, long considered by peace officers to be a breeding place where all manner of crime increased, was flooded in 1853 with notes of various denominations purportedly issued by the Chemung Bank, Elmira, New York. Five years later, to select another example almost at random, Marshal Laurel Summers, who held office from 1853 to 1861, arrested in Dubuque Newman S. Barber. A raid on his residence netted a complete set of dies, a kit of counterfeiting tools, and a quantity of





Bank note courtesy of Dean Oakes.

The five-dollar State Bank of Iowa note which was so successfully counterfeited around 1862. This example is genuine. The bogus notes were perfect, except for the reversal of the letter "a" in the lower left-hand corner in the legend "American Bank Note Company."

unfinished coins. At Maquoketa, a marshal's net caught an enterprising young man whose pockets were crowded with crudely made coins.

The Civil War proved a counterfeiting headache for federal marshals. Bad money flooded not only Iowa but also the nation. Chaotic banking transactions, fluctuations in the price of gold, huge military expenditures—all these and more provided golden opportunity for counterfeiters. Nearly one-third of all currency in circulation during the Civil War was counterfeited. Iowa merchants, bankers, and commission men were beside themselves. They turned for relief to sheriffs and federal marshals. Dozens of individuals were arrested and quantities of bogus bills were seized. In Burlington, for example, marshals worked long and hard in 1862 to discover who passed a number of fake five-dollar bills issued on the State Bank of Iowa. They were unsuccessful. Nevertheless, S. F. Phillips, acting attorney general, and

Benjamin H. Brewster, attorney general, continued to prod marshals into greater activity against counterfeiters. Marshals were authorized to employ special deputies, to investigate more diligently, to devote more time.

The close of the war, instead of diminishing counterfeiting, only increased it. Return of veterans, unemployment, and the Panic of 1873 combined with other factors to offer makers of spurious coin and paper greater opportunity for illegal gain. Iowa marshals, despite valiant, if not always persistent efforts, did the best they could.

During the 1870's, Colonel R. Root, a two-hundred-pound deputy, residing in Mt. Pleasant, arrested in Keokuk two alleged counterfeiters who had come up from Texas and Missouri to try their luck in the Gate City. He transported counterfeiters apprehended in Dubuque from there to the penitentiary in Fort Madison to await trial in the federal court at Keo-





*Courtesy of Iowa Department of History and Archives.*

*Richard Root, "two-hundred-pound deputy," who helped break up a large counterfeiting ring in Keokuk.*



kuk. Marshal Chapman and Deputy Root in 1878 broke up in Keokuk one of the largest counterfeiting operations ever known in the state. So many suspects, both men and women, were arrested and such a quantity of counterfeiting apparatus was seized in a house near the levee that Colonel E. M. Steadman, chief of the Secret Service district of Nebraska and Iowa, assisted federal marshals and local police. Major suspects eventually were sentenced to prison.

Yet, sensational as was the Keokuk round-up, the raid and subsequent trials and convictions scarcely dampened the enthusiasm of illegal coiners and printers. Early in 1879, Sheriff Tom Raisor, acting on a marshal's tip, arrested in Allerton, W. C. Watson, charging him with making counterfeit half dollars. Taken before a United States Commissioner, Watson was tried and convicted in a federal district court and sentenced to one year in the penitentiary. George Baker, also of Allerton, who was an ungrateful associate of Watson and who had "squealed" on him, was sentenced to six months. A Deputy United States Marshal with aid of local officers arrested on February 10, 1879, Sterling Stewart, a Kansan, who had moved to Iowa County. He was tried, convicted, and sentenced to a year in the Fort Madison penitentiary on a charge of passing counterfeit fifty-dollar bank notes.

Counterfeiting, however, was not without its dangers. When in September 1882 Deputy United States Marshal Burr Vermila tracked Richard Revell from Keokuk

to Monroe, he anticipated little trouble. In his pocket the deputy carried a warrant charging Revell with counterfeiting and violating the revenue laws. Each man was armed. Revell, when first apprehended offered no resistance, but no sooner had Vermila seated him in a buggy than he drew a pistol. Thereupon Marshal Vermila shot his prisoner through the heart.

To call the roll of all who "passed the queer" and to recite a litany of their successes and failures would be an endless task. Marshals found them operating from respectable boarding houses, from lodgings of ill repute, and from steamboat cabins. Many manufactured their inks. Some laboriously carved out engraving tools. Almost all cast their own molds for producing coins. Women not only circulated bills and coins but also aided in manufacturing them. Among the "heroines" of Iowa counterfeiting, each of whom was withdrawn from circulation by federal marshals, was the motherly appearing Jeannette Ritter of Ottumwa, who at age fifty specialized in trade dollars, half dollars, and quarters. Another was Amanda Fancy, arrested in Keokuk in 1878, for passing bogus half dollars. Acquitted then for lack of evidence, she soon was picked up, tried, and convicted. Still another was Dolores McFee, a spritely young beauty of twenty-two years, who rode steamboats in the role of a recently bereaved widow. Dolores was highly successful in persuading pursers to give her genuine money in exchange for counterfeits.



So rapid was Iowa's growth by the 1880's and so greatly did the crime rate increase that it no longer was possible for marshals to keep up with court-related activities and with criminal investigations. The District Court of Iowa, first established March 3, 1845, no longer could cope with the increased work load. On July 20, 1882, this single federal judicial was split into a northern and a southern district with a United States Marshal in charge of each district. Chapman continued as marshal of the southern district, and George C. Heberling was named marshal for the northern district. He, however, served less than a year, for his commission was only a temporary one. His successor, George C. Perkins, was suspended in 1885, and Perkins' successor, William M. Desmond, was removed in 1889. Edward Knott headed the northern district from 1898 until 1907, and George M. Christian the southern district from 1898 to 1902. Each was competent and neither was removed.

Christian and Knott carried federal law enforcement as marshals across the year 1890, which formally signaled the closing of the frontier, into the beginning of a period of modern enforcement. Those good, old days when one marshal upheld the courts and the law by himself were gone. The old times when marshals lived by fees alone had disappeared. Marshals no longer traveled only by horse, buggy, or steamboat, but went about their duties on trains and, in some instances, in automobiles. Even the names of early marshals

and their deputies were hard to come by. No frontier Iowa marshal was forged by time into a folk hero such as Wyatt Earp, who never was a hero anyway.

Marshals Christian and Knott each received an annual salary of four thousand dollars, a sum which would have shocked Gehon or Leffler. Each supervised a staff consisting of a chief office deputy, an office deputy or a clerk, and several field deputies. Each received from the United States expenses of travel and subsistence.

Yet, except perhaps for one change, Iowa's pioneer marshals might have felt somewhat at home at the turn of the century. Early marshals transported federal prisoners to prison in Fort Madison. This, during the tenure of Christian and Knott, no longer was possible. Federal prisoners in 1900 were taken to United States penitentiaries at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, or Atlanta, Georgia, or perhaps to McNeil's Island, Washington. Otherwise the job had changed little—Iowa marshals were still, as they had been, servants of the court and upholders of federal statutes.



## A Young Woman in Iowa

by

Elizabeth Wright Heller

Elizabeth Amelia Wright was born in Lone Rock, Wisconsin on July 16, 1860, the daughter of Rev. William Carey and Permelia Holcomb Wright. Elizabeth, or "Lizzie" as she was called, did not enjoy a happy childhood. Her mother died when Elizabeth was three. After her father married Hannah Lloyd Jones in 1865, the girl became the victim of a stepmother's antagonism—at least according to Elizabeth's own account. At the age of nine, Elizabeth moved with her family to McGregor, Iowa. The Wright household grew steadily through Elizabeth's younger years and included her half-brother, Frank Lloyd Wright, later to become one of America's great architects. The family later moved to Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

At age sixteen, Elizabeth left her father's home to live with her uncle Albert Holcomb (her real mother's brother) and his wife Nellie. This couple gave the girl bed and board, but not, evidently, an affectionate home. Elizabeth felt their kindness was based on "duty" rather than love. Despite lack of warmth, the Holcombs made certain that Elizabeth received an adequate education. She attended normal school, and in 1877 she entered Rockford Female Seminary in Rockford, Illinois. There she was a student at the same time as Jane Addams and Ellen Starr, two women later to become famous for their pioneer social work at Hull House in Chicago.

By 1880, Elizabeth, with no real home, came to Iowa at the urging of a college friend. She settled at Marengo in Iowa County.

The village Elizabeth came to was a bustling place, probably typical of dozens of other small Iowa towns. She was particularly sensitive to

the delicate social structure of the community. Her comments indicate that there were definite patterns prescribed for a young, unmarried woman, "earning her own living." Everyone in the small community had a well-defined place, as Elizabeth's reluctance to wear her fancy hat illustrates. Likewise, the respect shown Elizabeth's womanhood by her male colleagues points up the nineteenth century notion of femininity.

Throughout Elizabeth's careers as milliner, printer, and teacher, she exhibited a strong will and self confidence. She gives a fascinating glimpse into late nineteenth-century life in Iowa. It is interesting to note, for example, that Ann Swezey owned only one of three millinery shops in town, according to an 1880 Marengo business directory. Elizabeth's job as printer was perhaps the least conventional, although women journalists or even typesetters were not unknown at the time. J. G. Sehorn, editor of the Democrat, was a much traveled man and an experienced editor, having published papers in Iowa City and Columbus Junction. His paper was only five years old when Elizabeth set its type and was noted locally for its fine power driven press. Elizabeth's friendly patron, editor F. S. Spring of the Republican, was the proprietor of what had been the county's first paper. He had been a journalist in Pennsylvania and New York before moving to Iowa.

Teaching was traditionally one of the more accepted roles for single women of the time. Elizabeth described what must have been a typical experience. Teachers were certified on a graded scale by the results of testing. For example, Iowa County had 292 applicants for teaching certificates in 1879: 107 receiving the first grade (or highest) certificate, 133 the second grade, twenty-five the third grade, and twenty-seven being rejected. It is interesting that new applicants alone for 1879 totaled one percent of the county's population. While Elizabeth's teaching career was short-lived, it was obviously very important to her.

Following is part of a 300 page autobiography



entitled "The Story of My Life," which Mrs. Heller wrote before her death on March 3, 1950, and which is now on deposit at the State Historical Society of Iowa. This portion deals with the period between her arrival in Iowa by 1880 and her marriage to John Heller in November 1881. These excerpts have been chosen and arranged by Mrs. Heller's granddaughter, Hope Rogers of Vinton, Iowa. They have been placed in chronological order and some minor alterations have been made in punctuation.

The Editor

#### The Millinery Shop

Lille Stivers (of Toledo, Iowa) wrote me to come out to Iowa and get a school or a music class, and she would help me. So that was what I did. I felt that I was starting out in the world for myself, and to make a living for myself, and I was homeless. But as usual I found friends.

Lille claimed me for a good visit first, and we surely had a good time, and her parents were very nice to me. Her father was a lawyer. Wallace Lout, whom she afterwards married, was a law student in his office and boarded with them. I was too late to get a school, but they furnished me a team and driver to take me up to Beaman and some other place, but so many people were moving away that I did not get enough music scholars to pay.

Then Lizzie Danskin near Marengo, Iowa, wanted me to come down and make her a visit, so I did so, and stopped at her brother's at Watkins to see about music scholars, but without success. Then I hired a livery rig to take me to Danskin's at Marengo.



Elizabeth Wright in 1877.

I went to the Presbyterian Church with the family and there I met Mrs. Swezey, at that time a prosperous milliner, who took quite a fancy to me.

Then at Lizzie's I met Alice Belt and she took a great notion to me and insisted on my coming over and visiting her for awhile, so I did, and while there Mrs. Swezey sent word to Lizzie or saw her in town and wanted me to come and stay with her awhile, . . . . So I went there, and stayed for some time. I met Kate Porter there and Menia Baumer, who did hair work in Mrs. Swezey's shop, and became great friends.

It was fun to sell hats and I had very good luck at it. I was considered a very good looking girl and I had a wonderful complexion without any artificial assist-



ance, and I had a face that could wear any kind of a hat, so I tried them on myself to show them off, and usually made a sale. I used to tell Mrs. Swezey that she ought to hire me for a dummy to try hats on and pay me a large salary.

Mrs. Swezey had a thriving business there. She used to go into Chicago twice a year to buy goods and had a millinery opening after she came back every spring and fall. She liked having me around to help show off the goods, which I enjoyed doing. She always thought a great deal of me and was a very good friend to me. Menia used to say that "Mrs. Swezey thinks you are the only girl that was ever born and raised."

One time Menia and I decided to have bonnets just alike, only in different colors. They were black felt and Menia's was to be trimmed with wine color and mine with pale blue and black. Mrs. Swezey went to work and made mine up to suit herself. I had a plume the fall before and she put that on. Then she made the ties, which were long, out of a beautiful black brocaded ribbon, edged with pale blue plush, an inch or more wide. They were simply elegant and the bonnet was lovely and looked like a pattern hat right from Chicago and like it cost about ten dollars. I looked fine in it too, but I wouldn't wear it. I told her it wouldn't look right for me to come out in such an expensive looking hat as that with my little wages and that I had nothing to correspond with it, and folks would talk about me, so I just couldn't wear it.

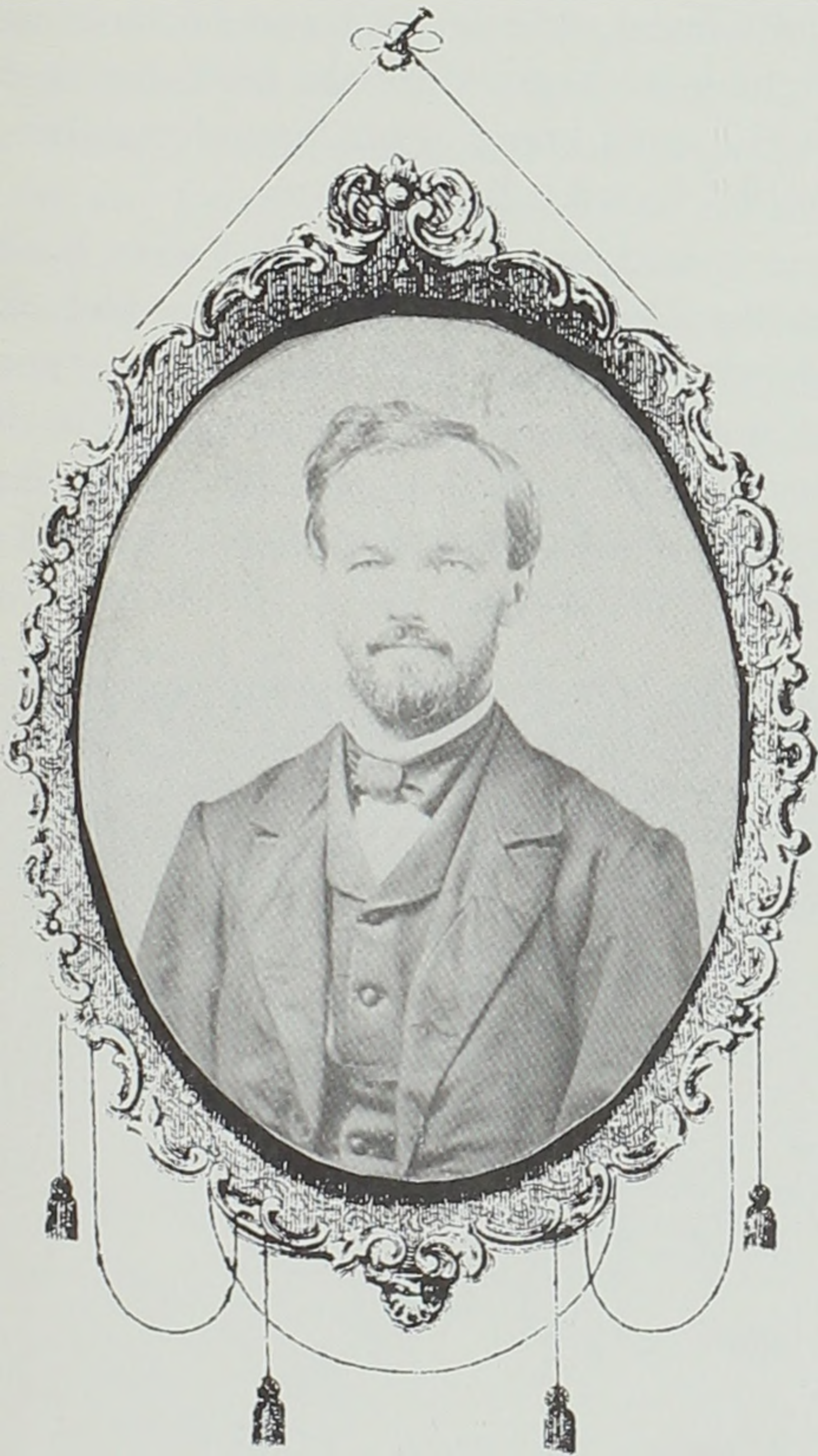
She was terribly disappointed and got out of patience with me and declared she had nothing else in the store that she would put on it. I had to take off the trimming and go out to a store and get two-toned ribbon like Menia's and fix it over myself, only I left the plume on. It was white edged or shading into tan.

Well, it was pretty, anyway, but Mrs. Swezey would hardly speak to me for weeks. And years afterwards I saw those beautiful ties tucked away in a drawer and she had never used them for anything or anybody. It was too bad, but I think I was right. Girls are not so particular about dressing according to their means or circumstances nowadays, but that is the way I was brought up. People were quick to say things if a girl dressed beyond her means when earning her own living.

Mrs. Swezey often wanted me to stay with her and promised to get a piano and build a new house and take me into partnership with her. But I knew she was hard to get along with, and I knew I did not like millinery work, and I did not want to go in with her.

Mrs. Swezey did finally build a big brick building but it cost her more than she expected. She borrowed from the Building and Loan and got cheated badly. From then on she got more in debt and gradually went down hill till she lost everything. Poor soul. She died not many years ago, poor and lonely and unhappy. I used to feel sorry for her and did what I could for her and she liked to come and see me when we were living in Marengo.





*William C. Wright, Elizabeth's father.*

She always thought I was just about right.

Mrs. Swezey had a friend who was the wife of an editor, Mrs. Sehorn. I told her that I thought I would like to work in a printing office and she said she would tell Mr. Sehorn. Then he came over to see me. He was quite favorable toward trying me out. He said he thought it would be a good thing to have a lady in the office, for she would have a good influence, and she wouldn't get drunk on Saturday nights



*Permelia Holcomb Wright, Elizabeth's mother.*

and raise hell around. So he engaged me, and I moved again.

#### The Printing Office

I went into the *Democrat* office to work and boarded in the editor's family. I only got a small salary till I learned to set type well, and I learned fast. In six weeks I could set a type as fast as I ever could, and I received two dollars a week



and my board, which was very good pay for a girl in those days. I was glad to get it and I liked the work and had a good time. And I was saving my proof to see how much type I could set in a day.

Mr. Sehorn was publishing the *Victor Index* at that time (as well as the *Marengo Democrat*) and brought Mrs. Richards down to edit it there, and she had a little girl named Lola. They were added to the family and there were ten of us in all, with Grandma Norton who owned the house, and the hired girl and two of the men, Steve Downard and Henry Rosenquest.

He used to send me out on errands frequently; sometimes to get five cents worth of beefsteak for a family of ten, and sometimes for pills or even brandy when he had one of his terrible headaches.

One day the London Circus was in town. I was planning to attend with Mr. Rosenquest that evening. The town was full of folks and it was raining and a lot of women came into the house to get out of the rain, and there was much confusion. The living rooms were right back of the office and the doors open.

All at once Mr. Sehorn called me out of the composing room into the office and informed me I would have to get dinner, as Saidie was sick. It was eleven o'clock and I didn't know the first thing about anything in their kitchen and all those folks were around.

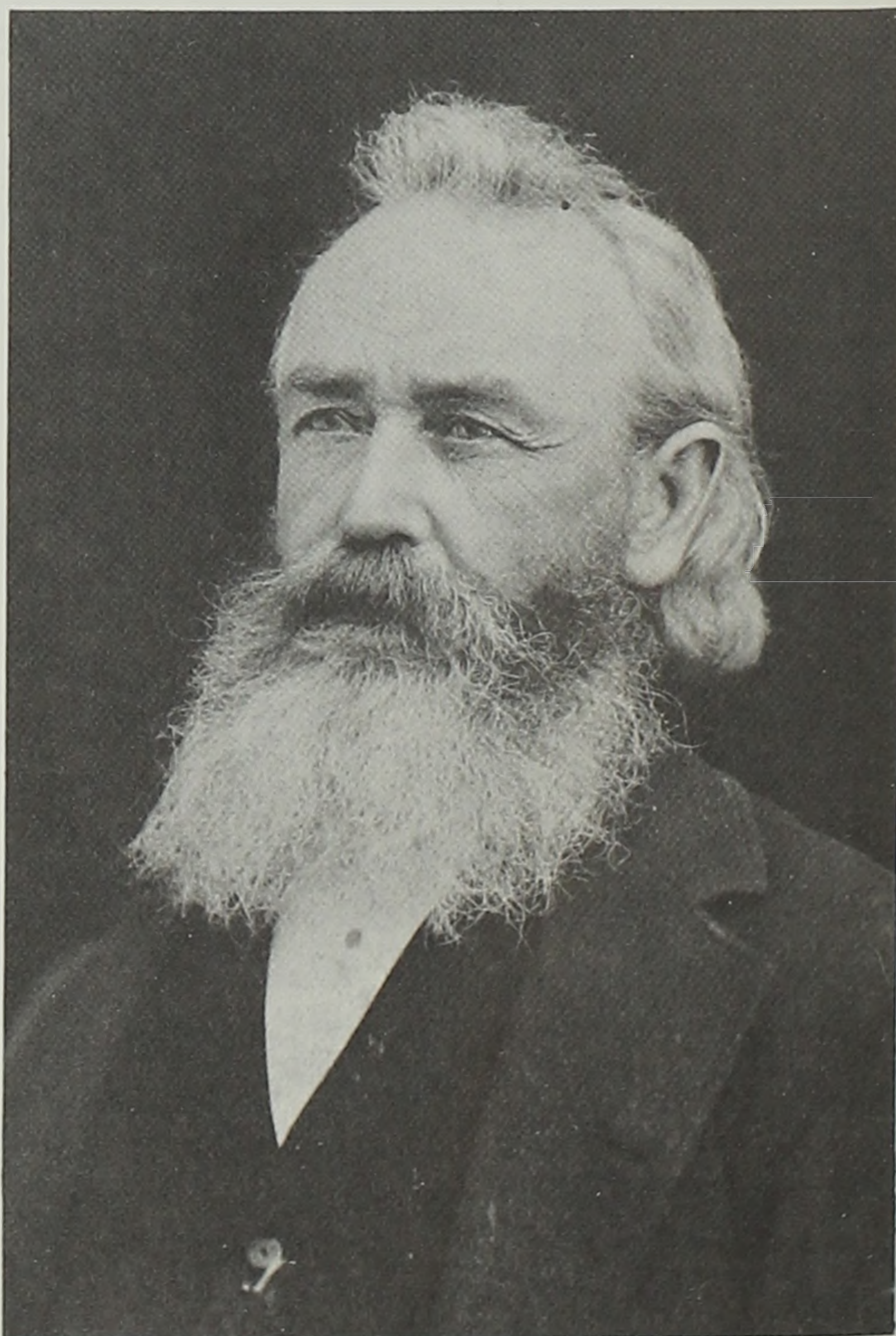
I said, "Why, I can't get the dinner."

Then he got mad and said, "What the hell is the use of keeping anybody around if they can't do anything?" Then he grumbled something and said, "You can consider yourself discharged."

So I considered it, stopped work, and

went right over to the office of the *Marengo Republican* and applied for a job, telling old Mr. Spering, the editor, how it was. It happened that one of his men, Ed Cowles, was leaving and he took me right in to begin work the next day, and said I could board at his home for awhile, until I found a better place.

I moved over there. When I went back to the *Democrat* office the boys had all struck, and Mrs. Richards took me one side and told me that if I would go back to work it would be all right and Mr. Sehorn would apologize. I said one dismissal was enough and I would not run



F. E. Spering, editor of the *Marengo Republican*.



the risk of another. Mr. Sehorn said he was sorry if he had said anything unbecoming for a gentleman to say to a lady, but the fact was he was not himself as he had one of his terrible headaches. I guess he had been drinking too much.

I said I would overlook it but I wouldn't stay any longer. And I moved out. All the boys asked me to come back, too, but said they didn't blame me for not staying.

The night after I left the *Democrat* office I went to the London Circus with Mr. Rosenquest. He was a very handsome man and I liked him. But he did not stay in town very long. He went to Des Moines and worked on the *Register*.

I had made a decided change for the better in my affairs and felt very much pleased over it. Mr. Spering was a very nice man and was very nice to me always, in a fatherly sort of way, and I liked Mrs. Spering too. Nothing more was said of my getting another boarding place. Mrs. Spering's niece, Jennie Vanderwort, lived with them and was in high school. We got along very well. The house was small and had only one story, so Jennie and I roomed together. Mrs. Spering sewed for folks a good deal and had many callers.

Mr. Spering was a very kindhearted man. He had a dog called Sandy and a cat called Tim. If either one was in his chair when he went to sit up to the table he would lift them off the cushion very kindly and set them down in another chair. At the office I have seen him sit on the front edge of his arm chair so as not to disturb Sandy in the back of it, scolding and grumbling at him, however, for getting in his way.

The firm was Spering and Crenshaw but Mr. Crenshaw was postmaster and

was not in the office much, so Mr. Spering ran the paper alone.

Bert Hull, a nice boy about my own age, was what was called the "printer's devil" as that was the name given to the youngest boy in the office who did the cleaning, etc., and was learning the trade. Charley Edwards also worked there, and tried to do the job printing until Joe Kohler came from Davenport.

The office ran the whole length of the building and the composing room and cases were in the back part and the printing presses in the middle, and the office proper occupied the front, but all was in one room.

Mrs. Swezey's millinery shop was next door and when we ran out of copy I would slip out the back door and into her shop and when copy came, Bert would come out the back door and whistle and I would come back. All would be quiet until I came in and Bert and I were talking, when Mr. Spering would exclaim from the office, "Hello Elizabeth! You've got back, have you?"

The old court house was close by and the lawyers, county officers, and many others often came in on business or to talk to Mr. Spering. They were always very gentlemanly and never talked anything that would be considered improper before a lady, and always treated me with respect. Everyone did, for that matter. I was very careful, too, and attended strictly to my own business and never gave anyone the slightest reason to talk about me and I think they never did, at least not in any derogatory way. But I had a good time and made some good friends almost from the start.

I used to want a little gold printer's



stick to wear for a badge and was always raving about it. The first Christmas the boys presented me with a large heavy package and all stood around and watched me unwrap it. I had given them each some little foolish thing and made them quite a speech about it, then they gave me this. I unwrapped for quite awhile and then went on unwrapping until at last I found a brick. I removed it and more wrappings until I came to a tiny box and inside was my gold printer's stick. I was surely delighted and let them know it. I wore that stick constantly for years.

For quite awhile I wore a jacket and skirt and a collar like a man's, and a little white necktie also like men wore, and I fastened the stick on the bow tie. I used to launder it and then make the bow and hook it in so I wouldn't have to tie it so much and it always looked nice and the stick was made like a breast pin, only smaller. I was very proud of it. I liked the work in the office, too. There was something fascinating about setting type and I never tired of it.

Joe Kohler tried to go with me but I did not want to go with him and soon got to going with Will Burgy more than anyone else except Edward G. Seamands, who worked in the office for some time. He was a poet and used to write poetry to me and made love to me that way. He was a southerner and quite interesting, and claimed to have been a sailor.

Mr. Seamands was quite romantic, and I liked him pretty well. He was very gentlemanly and was a good talker and of

course that appealed to me, as did his poems and declarations of admirations, affection, etc.

Now, I actually can't remember what story he told me, or stories about himself, nor what he was going to do. It has all gone from me, but they were all very plausible and he wanted to marry me as soon as he got into the business he was negotiating for, whatever it was. He gave me a lot of references to give my father when I wrote him, which I did after he had left town. He wrote me most beautiful letters every day or two after he left. It is funny I can't remember even where he went. But father wrote to the references and in the course of time he traced him out and found that he was a married man and had a wife in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Of course I wrote him about it and he replied with a long letter explaining how he had been tricked into marrying her by a supposed friend, to save himself, and how he left her when he found out about it. Of course I sent that to my father and he told me very emphatically that I was never to see him again nor write to him nor anything or I would be no child of his. So I decided that I cared more for my father than I did for him and so followed his advice. I remember now that I went with Bill Burgy afterwards.

The next summer after I went into the *Republican* office, Mrs. Sperring went back East for a visit and left Jennie and me to keep house. I was to make the bread, for Jennie didn't know how, and Mr. Sperring gave me two forenoons out



of the office every week so I could bake the bread. I had the best luck with my bread and learned to make the nicest rolls of a neighbor, Mrs. Taner. I had a chance to sew a lot those forenoons. I always had time to do my own washing and ironing too. Aunt Nellie used to send me a dress occasionally, and of course I did my own sewing.

One time the boys in the office were teasing me about Will Burgy, when Charley Edwards said he heard Mrs. Eyrick, who was Will's mother, telling him, "Now Willie, you never marry that printer girl; she can't cook, she can't bake bread, she can't do anything."

Mr. Sperring spoke up and said, "I'll bet nineteen cents and a half, Elizabeth, that you can make better bread than she can."

Another thing that I enjoyed very much in the printing office was the entertainments, theaters, concerts, and such like, for the editors always received complimentary tickets because of the advertising they gave them and write-ups afterwards. Mr. Sperring always got one for me, including me in his "family," whenever they gave enough and sometimes the office force got theirs separately.

If the company happened to be pretty tight with their free tickets I usually had an opportunity to go with someone else without cost. So I missed very few of the entertainments that came. But if it happened to be on Wednesday night and we were late getting to press, I had to feed the press and so did not get to go. That was a great disappointment to me.

By feeding the press I mean I had to stand up high beside the large machine which was turned by a man hired for the purpose. His name was Rinaldo Smith and he was not overly intelligent. If I happened to miss one accidentally I had to "throw off the impression" and the big cylinder went around without printing and then Rinaldo would get mad.

I had the big pile of papers on a table above the press and took one at a time and brought it down where the claws would catch and carry it around the cylinder to be printed and lay it off on another table, so I had to attend strictly to my business as it kept me busy, but I liked it and seldom made a mistake.

The papers were all run through twice if printed all at home, but they usually had what we called a "patent side" which was already printed. As many county papers had the same patent side it furnished good reading matter cheaply. It took about two hours to get the papers printed.

I had two little boy friends who were great admirers of mine and they liked to stand up beside me and watch me feed the press, but I could never have but one of them there at a time. The boys were Fred Feenan, a lawyer's boy, and Jimmie Gilbert, the photographer's son. One day Jimmie somehow got his foot caught in the machinery and was hurt quite badly, so after that I would not let either of them stand up there. Mr. Gilbert, Jimmie's father, used to often take tin type pictures of us girls and especially me, for



a little or nothing when he had time, so I had lots of pictures taken. There would seldom be more than two or three of a kind. They were taken on tin plates and then developed so we could get them in a few minutes and it was great fun.

There were many interesting things about the work. There was one girl named Della Dillon who was a dwarf and used to contribute a good many pieces for the paper and used so many more words than necessary. Once I told Mrs. Spering that I could write her article and say the same thing in nearly half the words that she did, so just for fun I tried it at home and did it. But of course that was just for my own amusement, for I always had an ambition to be a writer. But after I went to work for my living I did not have time to indulge myself in that pastime.

I used to follow Mrs. Spering's advice about going with certain men for she knew more about what was proper or best than I did and we always got along very well. I always was very careful about my reputation and I knew that girls of Maren-go could do lots of things that would be overlooked because of their family's position but which would ostracize me, being a stranger, so I was very careful. I never heard of anything that was ever said against me, and certainly no man ever said anything improper or disrespectful to me.

The second year that I was in the office Susie Heller came to learn the milliner trade, as Mrs. Swezey always had several apprentices learning, so of course I got



*"Aunt Nellie" Holcomb.*

acquainted with her.

Susie Heller invited Menia Baumer and I out to her home to spend New Year's and the week end, and of course we were delighted to have an outing together. We went up to Ladora on the morning train where someone was to meet us. But no one was there, so we went over to Denny's hotel, as Menia was acquainted with them, and Susie's brother Sime was at the depot. He escorted us over there and John [Heller] came after us.

That was a winter of very deep snows and the sleighing was fine. Menia and I were both in the highest spirits and would have had a good time anywhere together, and we certainly did have a good time. John asked John Shover to stay over Sunday and help entertain us, which he did. We had oyster stew for supper, and we ate a race to see who could eat the most.



Sunday night we went to Koszta to church in the big sled, and John and Menia sat up on the seat and John Shover sat between Susie and I in the bottom of the sled and put an arm around each of us. It was a very cold night and I said I never was so grateful for a man's coat sleeve as I was that night. When we got home the teacher had gone to bed and let the fire go out.

Menia and I danced a galop to get warm while John got the fire to going.

The first night Menia and I talked most of the night, as girls did and probably do yet. We tied our toes together as girls used to do the first time they slept together, to see which would be married first. In the morning I had the shortest piece—of course it broke in the night—and the end didn't go around my toe once. But Menia's end went around several times, so she said I would be married within a year. I hooted at the idea.

John [Heller] told me that I ought to teach school and I said that I had always wanted and intended to, but never had. So he said he could get me a school if I would take it. I didn't know whether I could get a certificate or not.

Some time later in the winter John came into the printing office and said he could get me a school in either his district or No. 4 and he wanted to know if I would take it. I said I would have to think it over. He wanted to know how long it would take—five minutes? I told him a week or two.

So I went to see Mr. David Hughes,

who was County Superintendent then, and he said teachers were rather scarce, and he thought it would be a good idea. He said I could take part of the examination one month and part the next, so I wouldn't have to take so much time out of the office at one time.

I borrowed some books of Fanny McKusker, Blanche's sister, and studied up some, as I hadn't looked into a school book for two years. I took the first part of the exam the last of February and the rest the last of March and got a Second Grade Certificate.

Mr. Spering was interested and didn't blame me for going where I could do better, but he and the boys were all sorry to have me leave and I was sorry to leave, too. They had all been so nice to me and I had had a good time and been happy there. We were all sorry to say goodbye.

#### The Schoolma'am

I bid the printing office and its force goodbye and moved out to the country to teach school. There were tears in Mr. Spering's eyes when I said goodbye, and they were all looking out of the window. It was a late spring after a hard winter and we sat on the front steps on Easter Sunday with a big snowbank in the yard.

Most of my scholars were in the primary. My oldest scholars read in the third reader. I was sorry, for I was better prepared to teach older and more advanced children and would have found it more interesting, but I did the best I could with them. My favorite was Frankie Mantz, just

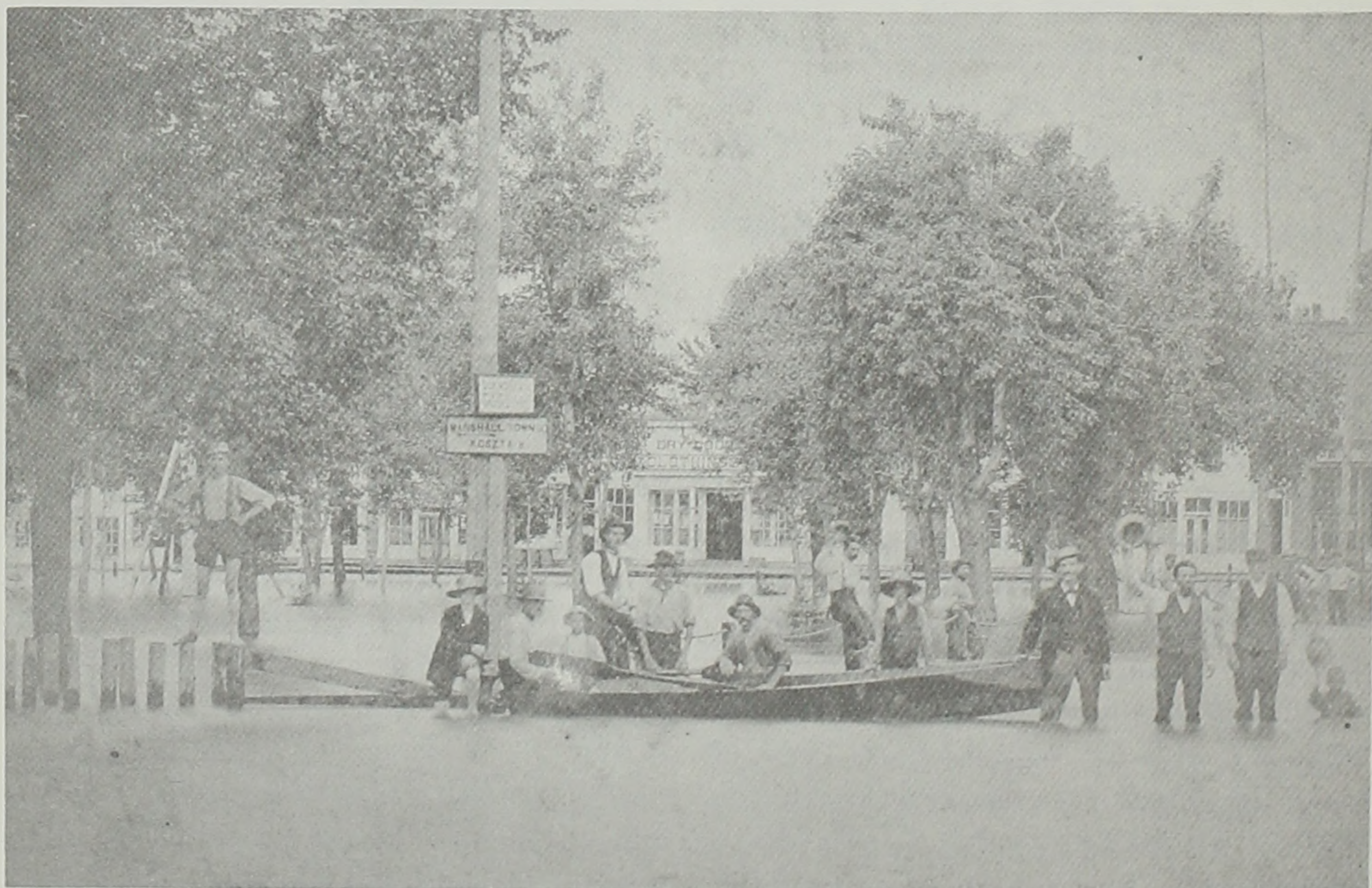


five, and starting in. When I quit at the end of four months, he could read well in his first reader and spell every word in it much better than his older brother, Everett, who could read in the third book. Byron Border and Oliver Rummelhart were also starting, but were not nearly so bright as Frankie, who afterwards became a lawyer.

My scholars were Roy and Ollie, age 7 and 6; Minnie and Josie Shea, age 9 and 5; Hattie and Byron Border, 8 and 5; Lucinda and Oliver Rummelhart, 7 and 5; Everett and Frankie Mantz, 9 and 5; Rosa Moitzfield, 6. Ollie didn't come so much, but as she learned easier than Roy she did better than he did. I encouraged Roy and helped him all I possibly could and he got a pretty good start, so I think he kept up with her better after that.

Once Everett Mantz half laid down in his seat and I told him to sit up. He replied, "I don't have to." So I immediately walked over to his seat, ran my fingers through his front hair and yanked him up by it. He sat up, but the next day he came to school with his hair shingled as short as it could be.

We had some frightful storms during school hours as well as other times that summer. The schoolhouse was set on a hill and the wind had a good sweep at it in every direction and sometimes the children were frightened and so was I. I remember one time the clouds looked so threatening, and the wind all went down, and it was very still for some time except the muttering of distant thunder. Then, all at once, the wind began to sing through the grass with an ominous sicken-



*Downtown Marengo during the 1881 flood.*



ing sound, and then in a minute or two the storm was upon us in all its fury.

Frankie Mantz was reading and he always shouted out his words at the top of his voice, but soon I couldn't hear him. The roar of the thunder and wind and rain was deafening, and it was so dark we could hardly see except for the lightning. The school house creaked and groaned and shook so we thought it would go over any minute. There were only the two Mantz boys and Roy that day, and I dismissed school and we all sat up in the northwest corner on a recitation seat. We couldn't even talk so we could hear for awhile, and sometimes we stopped up our ears. But it passed over, and no harm done.

Another time in the afternoon the children were frightened, and the storm came up quickly. The children came running in at recess and wanted to go up to Hellers—it was much more protected up there and was near by, so I told them to run, but I stayed.

John was working at his brother Morris's, and he came down with his team on the way home, and he stopped at the house till the storm was over. He held the horses close to the little schoolhouse and stood in the door.

It was such a stormy summer that the little ones and those that lived farthest away did not come lots of days if it acted threatening. Sometimes we had such storms at night and often I thought sure the schoolhouse would be blown away, but it was always there in the morning.

Once the Iowa River came up over Marengo and Koszta and in Marengo they went around in boats. John took Susie and I down to Koszta one evening and right

in the street we had to put our feet up on the dashboard to keep them out of the water which ran right through John's new high buggy. Men were wading through water which came almost up to their shoulders. That was the summer after the big snows of the winter.

There was vacation during the hot weather after two months of school, and they [Hellers] wanted me to stay out there, so I did most of the time except the two weeks of the Teacher's Institute. I enjoyed that. Prof. Henry Sabin was State Superintendent about that time but he was at the Institute as one of the instructors. He was a wonderful man and such a good one. I read one of his books for teachers and think every teacher ought to read it. One could tell by it that he was one of the best.

Just one incident stands out clearly in my mind about that Institute; it was called a Normal I believe, Normal Institute, and Normal for short. Prof. Sabin had put on the blackboard the first two or three words of each line of Longfellow's *Rainy Day*, a piece that I always loved. He asked how many could tell what it was and I answered. Then he asked how many could repeat the poem and I was the only one. Anyway, he called on me and I recited it. When I finished I saw the tears stood in his eyes and I felt that that was the highest compliment I ever could have had.

John came down after me for over Sunday.

Every Saturday Susie and I took the team and buggy and went somewhere, quite often to Marengo. It was a nice team and before we got near town Susie would begin to pull their heads up and get them on their mettle and then when



we got in town they would sail in with their heads high, stepping high, and looking their best.

One day in harvest time Susie and I took the best team to Marengo and when Morris came down to help he inquired where the team was. John told him, "Susan and the schoolma'am went to Marengo with them."

Morris said, "I suppose if the schoolma'am wants a horse she can have it, even if we have to stop work."

And John replied, "You bet she can."

John used to take us both out some but he took me alone more. Often in the evening during the week and always Sunday evenings, he took me out for a buggy ride. And he certainly "pressed his suit" with ardor, although I objected and discouraged his efforts.

John was a good man and had good principles, and he was so dependable and thought so much of me. He also thought I was the best looking girl he ever knew, and I doubt if he ever changed his mind about it. He was pretty good looking himself.

John was always so good to his sister, Susie, which argued well for the way he would treat his wife. He was fourteen years older than I was, and I had often said I was going to marry a man who was much older than I and be "an old man's darling." So eventually he won out, although I confess I did not want to get married.

I had been having a better time every year and would have liked to go on that

way.

However, I have always maintained that love is a growth if founded on respect and friendship or a general liking, and so I found it. I really think it is more lasting than some of this sentimental love that so many profess and that is such an ardent flame and then dies out so soon.

After the fall term of school closed, I decided to go back to Wisconsin to be married, as Aunt Nellie wanted me to and said she would buy my wedding outfit to a certain amount. So I packed up and John took me to Marengo.

I went straight to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where my brother Charlie was living. His wife, Sophia, and I went shopping together or perhaps I should say she went with me, as I did most of the shopping.

I bought my whole wardrobe: underwear, slippers, coat, hat, and navy blue cashmere and satin for my dress and dolman. I was quite extravagant in my wedding hat. It was a white beaver with wide rim and had a long white plume with shaded tan-like edges, fastened on with one long loop and the end tied with pale blue satin ribbon. It was very becoming and very pretty. Then I got a fur cap for common winter wear and my coat was heavy wool, quite light with flecks of darker color in it and trimmed with both black and white.

When I reached Lone Rock, Aunt Nellie had a dressmaker make up my dress and wrap. I think it was \$50.00 Aunt Nellie paid on my outfit, and I had most all of my money from teaching, for John



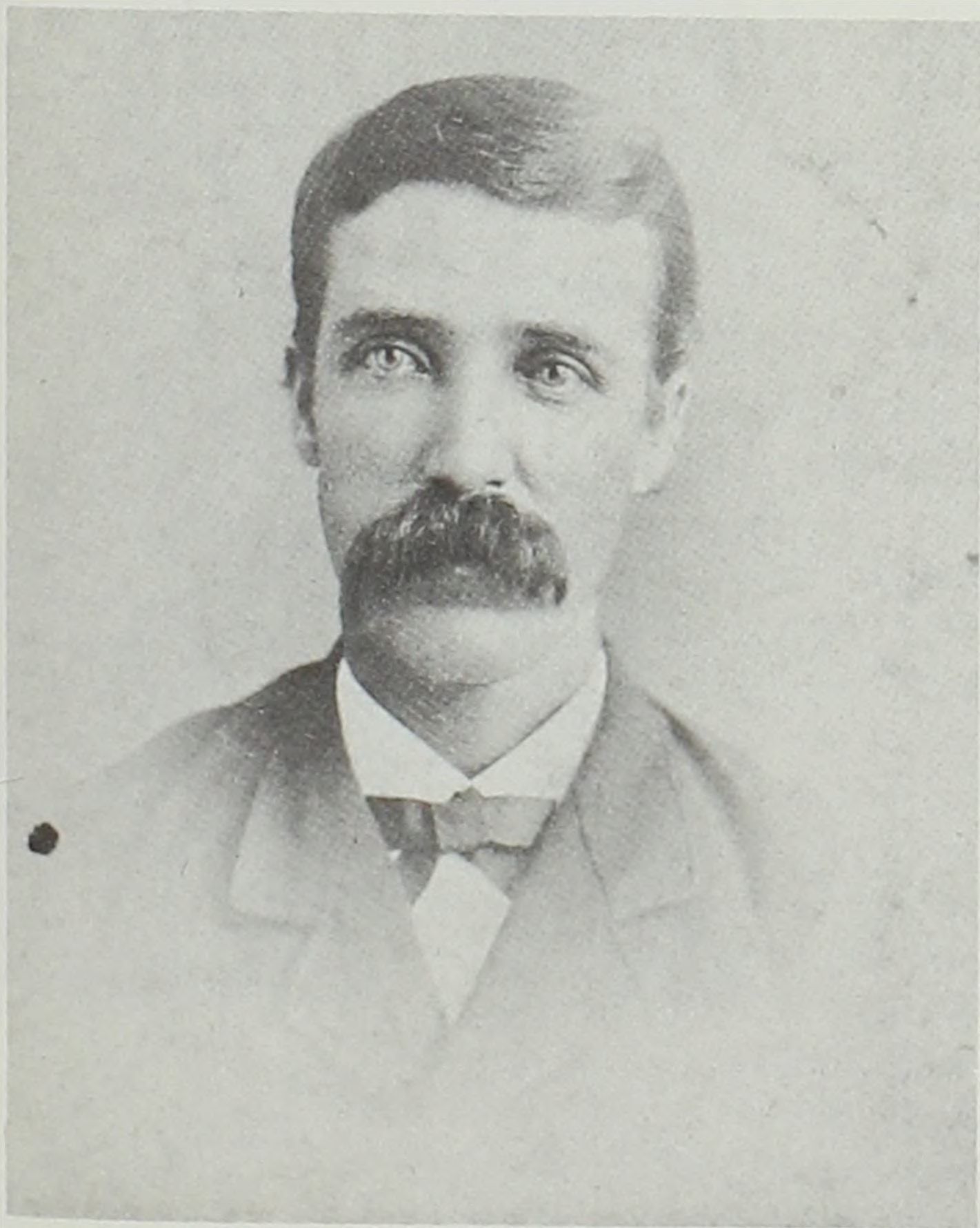
wouldn't take a cent for my board. He said he wouldn't, even if I didn't marry him, which rather touched my heart too.

Thanksgiving in 1881 came on the 24th and John arrived on the evening of the 22nd. He stayed at the hotel nights and for breakfast. Thanksgiving was a beautiful day; I told Aunt Nellie there was only one cloud and that was a pretty one.

We all four went to Madison on the

early train as Mother had requested that I be married in my father's house.

Father performed the ceremony, as I had always wanted him to. He made it very impressive and gave us a good talk at the beginning. I wept. I had told Aunt Nellie I was afraid I would and she said she would spank me if I did. I asked her afterwards why she didn't and she said I didn't belong to her now.

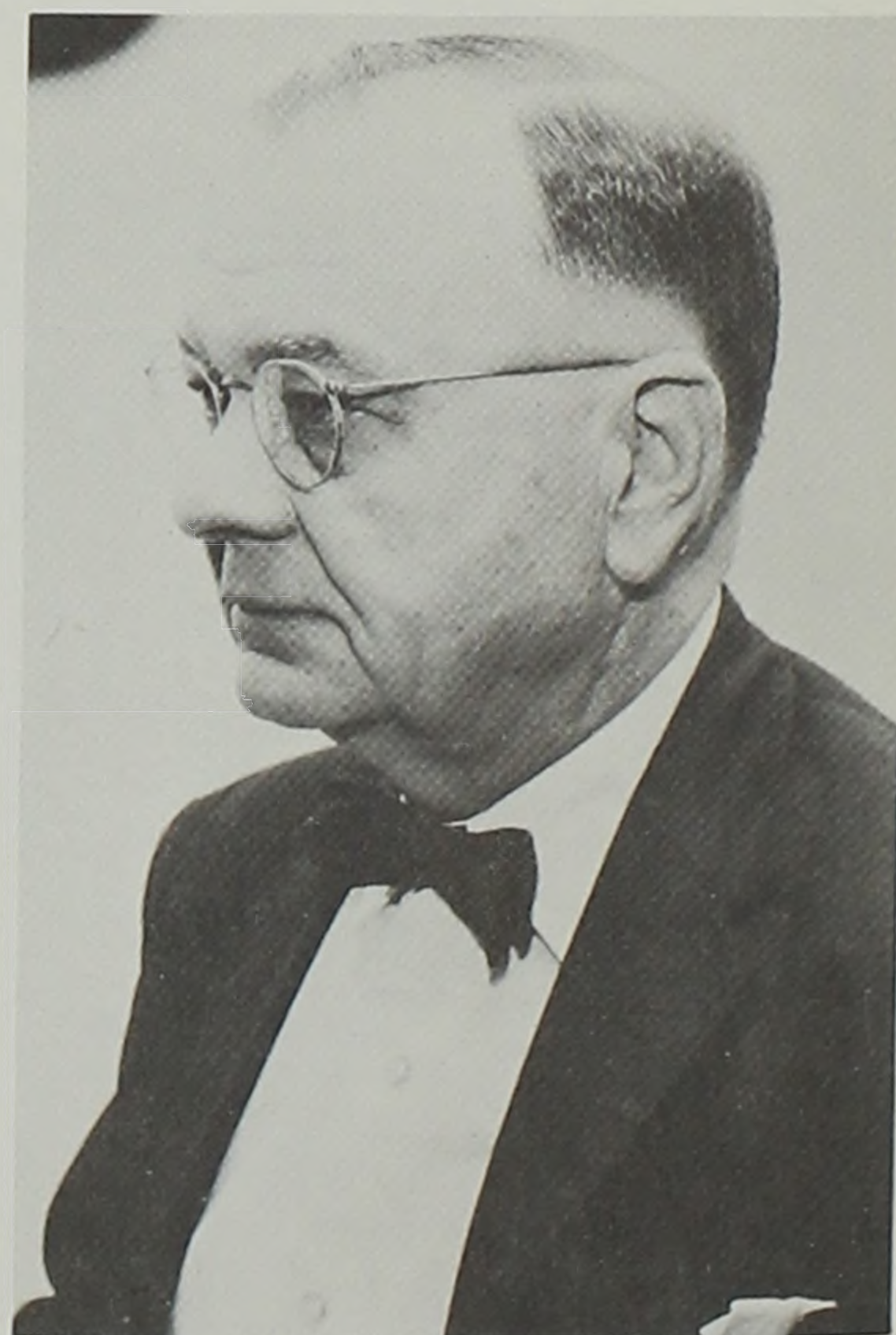


*John and Elizabeth Heller at the time of their marriage.*



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