

# Palimpsest

VOLUME 54

NUMBER 1

JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1973



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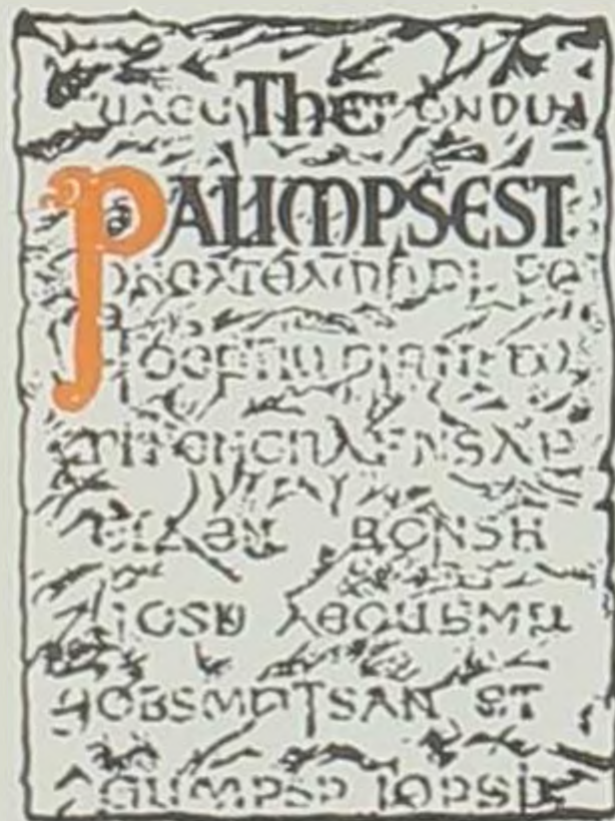
JANUARY / FEBRUARY 1973

Peter T. Harstad and L. Edward Purcell  
Associate Editors

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Cover: A reproduction of a Buffalo Bill Cody Wild West poster, around the turn of the century. See 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.

# An Iowan with Buffalo Bill: Charles Eldridge Griffin in Europe, 1903-1906

by  
H. Roger Grant\*

Since colonial times Americans have enjoyed live entertainment. Troupes of jugglers, aerialists, acrobats, magicians, and clowns have toured the country just as they have done in Europe since the Middle Ages. During the late eighteenth century some of these performers began to join animal trainers to form the circus as we now know it. Circuses enjoyed almost universal popularity. They were an exciting form of entertainment and as Hamlin Garland would later note, "The circus relieved the dullness of farm life."

In the 1880's more than fifty circuses operated in America, although most were small and shortlived. By World War I the number of circuses dropped considerably while their size steadily increased. Just as consolidation movements swept American industry following the great depression of the 1890's, circus companies, too, banded together or bought out their principal rivals. Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey, and Forepaugh-Sells dominated

\*The author is indebted to John W. Griffin of Albia for supplying material relating to Mr. Griffin's uncle.

the industry by the turn of the century and in 1907 the Ringlings took control of the latter two firms.<sup>1</sup>

With the end of frontier conditions in the late nineteenth century, the American public, now nostalgically viewing the Indian as a "noble savage," and craving the raw excitement of a vanishing phase of their history, flocked to a new variation of the circus, the Wild West show.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the circus, the Wild West show featured scenes and events depicting life in the trans-Mississippi West. The first true Wild West show appeared in 1882 when William Frederick Cody, "Buffalo Bill," launched his "Cowboy Fun" extravaganza in North Platte, Nebraska.

Born in Scott County, Iowa in 1846, Cody embodied all the romance of the West.<sup>3</sup> In his youth he was a daring pony express rider. Later, he became a professional hunter supplying buffalo meat to construction gangs of the Kansas Pacific Railroad. He also was a scout and guide for the army during several post-Civil War Indian campaigns. In the 1870's, however, Cody left the frontier for the melodrama stage. A born showman and organizer, Buffalo Bill converted popular

<sup>1</sup>There are numerous circus histories. The best over-all studies are Earl Chapin May, *The Circus from Rome to Ringling* (New York: Duffield & Green, 1932) and George L. Chindahl, *A History of the Circus in America* (Caldwell, Ida.: The Caxton Printers, 1959).

<sup>2</sup>While the complete history of the Wild West show has not been written, the leading work is Don Russell, *The Wild West: A History of the Wild West Shows* (Fort Worth: Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, 1970).

<sup>3</sup>For Buffalo Bill's own colorful story see Don Russell, *The Lives and Legends of Buffalo Bill* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1960) and William Frederick Cody, *Story of the Wild West and Camp-Fire Chats* (Philadelphia: Historical Publishing Company, 1888).

interest in the West into a prosperous business venture. His new show featured a variety of riding, roping, and shooting acts along with pageant-like productions characterizing Western life: stage coach robberies, cavalry-Indian shoot-outs, and buffalo hunts. By 1887 the Cody company had toured the United States and Europe in an extensive and successful series of engagements. In fact, Buffalo Bill and his show continued to visit England and the continent until the fall of

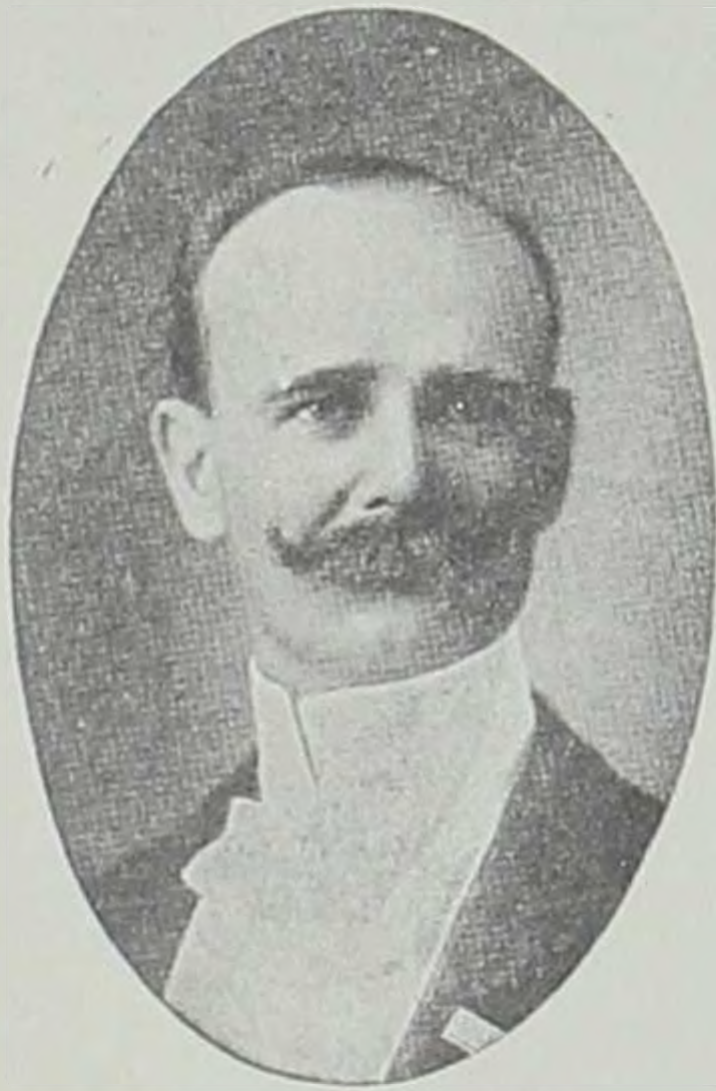
1892, but then did not return to Europe until a decade later.

Although Buffalo Bill's troupe is perhaps the best known Wild West show, many others appeared from the late eighties well into the twentieth century. Pawnee Bill's Historic Wild West, Col. Zack Mulhall's Wild West, Dr. E. F. Carver's Wild America, and the Miller Brothers' 101 Ranch Show were among the more famous. Like Buffalo Bill's Wild West, these shows stressed the colorful and episodic.

An Iowan, Charles Eldridge Griffin, was associated with both the circus and the Wild West show during their golden age. Although Griffin was never a central figure in either entertainment form, he authored the only book-length commentary on Buffalo Bill's second great tour of Europe. Published in Albia, Iowa in 1908 by the Stage Publishing Company, *Four Years in Europe with Buffalo Bill* is not only a valuable collector's item (only 500 copies were printed) but provides useful glimpses into the operations of the show and the attitudes of one troupe member toward a variety of subjects. Moreover, Griffin the entertainer represents an important social type. His background, activities, and triumphs were probably typical of hundreds of other performers during the years between the Civil War and World War I.

Griffin was born on June 16, 1859 in St. Joseph, Missouri. When a child, his family moved to Albia, the seat of Monroe County. Here Griffin's father, John W. H.

FOUR YEARS IN EUROPE  
WITH  
BUFFALO BILL



BY

CHARLES ELDRIDGE GRIFFIN

A DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE OF THE BIG AMERICAN SHOW'S  
SUCCESSFUL TOUR IN FOREIGN LANDS, ILLUSTRATED  
WITH ORIGINAL PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR.



ALBIA, IOWA:  
STAGE PUBLISHING CO.  
1908.

The title page of *Four Years in Europe*. Most of the photographs which accompany this article are from Griffin's book.

Griffin, served as Monroe County superintendent of schools and later as county clerk of courts. Charles' mother, Fanny, quickly became known for her musical abilities, particularly organ playing. Talent, however, was not limited solely to Mrs. Griffin. In time Charles and three other Griffin children, Frank, Fred, and Lucia B., gained a degree of fame for their special abilities. Frank and Fred joined Charles in the circus business and Lucia B. became a popular platform speaker. All of the Griffins were known for their extroverted personalities.

Although information concerning Charles Griffin's early show business career is tantalizingly obscure, it is known that as a sixteen year-old he toured country school houses, town halls, and county fairs with his own "one man valise troupe." In all probability it was here that young Griffin began to perfect his talents as a magician and ventriloquist.

In 1881, Griffin, now an established Iowa entertainer, joined his first show, Hilliard & DeMott's Circus, as a "magician and lecturer." After that company folded, he traveled to France to become general manager of the Paris Pavilion Shows. Next, Griffin, who called himself "The Comic Yankee Conjuror," joined Pullman & Mack's Circus. He stayed with this group for its short existence, 1884 to 1885. As a sign of his growing popularity and skill, he then affiliated with the nationally famous Sells Brothers' Circus as a "lecturer in side show and featured in concert (Fire Act)." In 1886, however,

he left Peter and Lewis Sells to become a member of the newly formed Hurlburt & Hunting Circus in New York City, later known as Bob Hunting's New York Circus. Griffin stayed with Hunting for twelve seasons. Here he owned and operated the side show, and in 1898 he held a similar position with Frank A. Robbin's Circus.

In the 1890's Griffin began writing and publishing side-show books and pamphlets. While never best sellers, his works were read widely by fellow entertainers and starry-eyed youngsters who hoped to leave home for an exciting life with the circus. In all, Griffin penned fourteen specialty publications, including *Griffin's Book of Wonders: A Description of Various Acts, Strange Phenomena, Illusions, &c, Taught at the Griffin Conjuring College; How to Charm Snakes; Satan's Supper; or Secrets of a Fire King* (which went through nineteen editions); *New and Sure Key to Ventriloquism*; and *How to Become a Contortionist*. After the turn of the century he acquired his own publishing house in Albia, the Stage Publishing Company, which reprinted earlier works and published additional titles, including his well-known *Four Years in Europe with Buffalo Bill*. Between 1897 and 1901 he was part owner of the *Maquoketa (Iowa) Weekly Excelsior*.

Griffin took a giant step professionally after leaving the Robbin's Circus. In 1899 he became a performer and stage manager for Ringling Brothers' side show. Based in Baraboo, Wisconsin, the five Ringling



Buffalo Bill Historical Center, Cody, Wyoming.

A French version of Buffalo Bill's famous "I'm Coming" slogan, probably dating from 1905.



"Les Gallerie de les Phenomen" or the Side Show, Paris, 1906.

Brothers had built their circus into a gigantic corporation by the late nineties. Little is known about Griffin's four years with the Ringlings, except that he entertained thousands with his sleight of hand and ventriloquist acts, remembered as "the very best." His wife Octavia, a snake charmer, joined him as did his brothers Frank and Fred, and Fred's wife Julia, a mind reader.

While the Ringling Brothers' Circus was in Canton, Ohio, in June 1902, James A. Bailey of Barnum & Bailey fame visited the show. At this time the two circuses were fierce rivals and Bailey was there to buy talent. He sought personnel not for his own circus but for Buffalo Bill's Wild West show. Bailey, whose own company had toured Europe from 1897 to 1902, recently had traded territory and equipment with Buffalo Bill, thus allowing Bailey to increase his American business while enabling Buffalo Bill to work the lucrative European market. Among the showpeople hired in Canton were



**CHARLES ELDRIDGE GRIFFIN,**

The Comic Yankee Conjuror.

Who for four years pleased and perplexed the Royalty and Peasantry of Europe.

Re-engaged for Season of 1907 as Manager of Privileges with Buffalo Bill's Wild West.

**Looking Backward**

1875 to 1880 Country School Houses, Town Halls and County Fairs with my own one man valise troupe; 1881-2 magician and lecturer with Hilliard & Demott's Circus; 1883 gen'l mgr. Paris Pavilion Shows; 1884 mgr. side show Pullman & Mack's Circus; 1885 lecturer in side show and featured in concert (Fire Act) with Sells Bros.' Circus; 1886 to 1897 twelve consecutive seasons owner and manager of privileges with "Bob" Hunting's New York Circus; 1898 owner and manager side show with Frank A. Robbin's Circus; 1899 to 1902 lecturer and stage manager Ringling Bros.' Side Show; 1903 went to England with Buffalo Bill's Wild West as lecturer and magician (under Lew Graham); Winter 1903-1904 at Bostock's Hippodrome, Paris; 1904-1905-1906 manager of privileges with Buffalo Bill's Wild West in Europe; Winter 1904-5 Music Halls of Great Britain and Waverly Market Carnival, Edinboro, under Sir H. E. Moss.

*Dear Bro -*  
 London 5/19 1907  
 glad to get your telegram yesterday  
 no date from me tried to see if  
 do you really think there is much  
 hope for this see very ill if they  
 decide an operation will be necessary  
 could you give me hand from the  
 letter head that I had started  
 my deal check. It seems like  
 you are ~~not~~ home. I also  
 found the big glass marble  
 from my marble and me  
 about fifty years ago.  
 I was about for you  
 and I think my hope  
 I remember how happy  
 I was to get it -  
 hope you and Rob  
 (long well - We are  
 all about as  
 usual. He and  
 mother King don  
 improved 100  
 still we live  
 in Englewood  
 you care  
 Bro -  
 1667  
 Jay

An example of Griffin's letterhead. The impulse to advertise was so strong that almost no room was left for a message. This is a nostalgic letter to Griffin's brother.



Charles Griffin and his family. "I was among the lucky ones," Griffin later remarked, "and when I received my contract I felt highly elated at the prospect of a European tour with the most successful amusement institution of modern times."

In December 1902 the Buffalo Bill show sailed for England. Charles, his wife Octavia, and Fred and Julia Griffin, however, did not leave America until late March 1903. After landing at Liverpool, the Griffin contingent joined the show at Manchester. Charles immediately assumed his duties as performer of "Yankee magic" in the side show, working closely with the side show's manager Lew Graham.

Throughout England Buffalo Bill's Wild West presented its standard program. The side show offered a variety of popular acts: Punch and Judy shows; two bands, "Sig. Sagatta's Belgian Hare Band" and "Tito Altobelli's Italian Band;" numbers featuring magic, ventriloquism,

fire-eating, snake charming, and mind reading; and the "Wonders of the Known World." The latter curiosities featured the "Blue Man," the "Three-legged Man," two "Tattooed Men," "Grace Gilbert, the Auburn Bearded Venus," a "Scotch Piper and Polyphonist," and Professor James T. Jukes, "one of the Original P. T. Barnum Bohemian Glass Blowers." At the main show the public heard the "Star Spangled Banner" overture played by Colonel William Sweeney and his thirty-six member Cowboy Band. They then thrilled to the Grand Review. This colorful performance, reminiscent of the circus parade, included "Rough Riders of the World, genuine Sioux and Cheyenne Indians, Cowboys, Cossacks, Mexicans, Scouts and Guides, veteran members of the United States Cavalry, a group of Western Girl Rough Riders, and a detachment of colorguards, soldiers of the armies of America, England, Germany, Japan, Russia, Arabia and Mexico." The Grand Review had been an integral part of all Wild West shows



*A long line of ticket buyers, waiting to get into the Wild West in Paris, 1905.*



A "Bunch" (to use Griffin's description) of the Wild West in front of the Colosseum in Rome. A strange mixture of Italian workmen, American showmen, and Sioux, the latter decked out in uniform Wild West outfits.

since their inception. Frequently the Review was followed by the "Race of Races"—a spirited horseback contest between American cowboy, Indian, Mexican, Arabian, and Cossack riders which illustrated their differing styles of horsemanship. Next to occur were artillery drills, various military exercises, reenactments of pony express relay rides, attacks on wagon trains, buffalo hunts, and train hold-ups. As the show's program for 1907 noted, no performance was complete without the appearance of Colonel Cody: "The original Buffalo Bill, the last of the great scouts the first to conceive, originate and

produce this class of realistic entertainment. He will give an exhibition of expert shooting from horseback, while galloping around the arena."

Buffalo Bill's Wild West had instant audience appeal. This can be explained by the colorful and fast-moving acts themselves and the fact they mirrored popularly-held assumptions. In both Europe and America the populace frequently glorified military life, expressed an extreme brand of national and racial pride, and firmly believed in the eventual triumph of Western civilization over the world's heathens. Not surprisingly, the greatest applause

often came with a cowboy victory over an Indian or Mexican during the "Race of Races." As Griffin himself said, "We gave them a show that was full of action and something that they wanted and expected to see."

During the 1903 season, the 800-member show moved from Manchester to Birmingham and then to Wales and back to various English cities closing on October 23 at Burton-on-Trent. "We had a very pleasant and prosperous season, notwithstanding the fact that the elements were against us most of the time," noted Griffin. "Three hundred and thirty-three performances were given, and it can be recorded with satisfaction that only one performance was omitted . . . and that made necessary as a matter of public safety on account of the high gale prevailing at the time."

Although most members of the Buffalo Bill show returned to the United States at the end of the 1903 season, Griffin and his wife stayed in England. After extensive sight-seeing in the London area, Charles accepted a four week engagement at Frank C. Bostock's Hippodrome in Paris, "one of the finest amusement temples in the world." Here the "Comic Yankee Conjuror" once again displayed his talents.

Buffalo Bill's second successful season in Great Britain began in April 1904. The show visited various English and Welsh cities and performed in Scotland for the first time. When Lew Graham resigned as side show manager before the start of

the season to accept a similar post with Ringling Brothers, Griffin took his place. He would keep this job for the remainder of the European tour and for one year after the show returned to America. After the 1904 season closed the Griffins once more wintered in England. Charles again found a temporary position. Instead of returning to Paris, he traveled to Edinburgh for the twentieth annual Waverly Market Carnival. Here he had a three week contract with Sir Henry E. Moss, the well-known British entertainment tycoon.

The third season abroad shifted to the Continent when the show opened in Paris in April 1905. Griffin, who did not speak French, took a cram course from the Berlitz School of Languages in London prior to rejoining the show. His twenty French lessons were some preparation for his ventriloquist and magic acts. "Well, I got along pretty fair, considering that I did not know the meaning of half the words I was saying. Anyway it amused them, so I was satisfied. I honestly believe that more people came in the side show in Paris to hear and laugh at my 'rotten' French than anything else, and when I found that a certain word or expression excited their risibilities, I never changed it."

The Paris stand from April 2 to June 4 was exceedingly successful. According to historian Don Russell, it was "the most prosperous in tent-show history." From the French capital, the show zigzagged across the country, stopping in Cher-



"A Sad Farewell," soon to be shot.

bourg, Rouen, Le Havre, Lille, Lyons, St. Malo, Bordeaux, and several other cities. In the midst of popular success a minor disaster struck the show. In early July show officials discovered to their great dismay that glanders had broken out among the horses. This disease was highly infectious among animals and could be transmitted to humans. By the time the Wild West closed the season in November at Marseilles, nearly two hundred horses had been shot, leaving only about one hundred. The show was able to keep the glanders problem a virtual secret and Griffin boasted in his *Four Years in Europe* that "the story has never been publicly told until now."

From November 1905 until March 1906, the Buffalo Bill show wintered in

Marseilles. The final season in Europe opened there on March 4. Rather than touring France for a second consecutive season, the show moved to Italy, stopping in Genoa, Spezia, Livorno, and Rome. Italians enthusiastically greeted Buffalo Bill's Wild West. As Griffin wrote: "Never in the twenty-four years' history of the Wild West was there such a crowd of people to welcome its arrival [in Rome]. The streets were blocked and traffic suspended in the vicinity of the station. The police reserves were called out, and they finally cleared the way for us to the Piazza d'Armi, where we were to exhibit." As in England and France nobility and prominent politicians were in attendance. The showmen and the "blue bloods" seemed to admire one another. This rapport simi-

larly extended to the commonfolk, for the show throughout its existence provided considerable cross-class appeal.

From Italy, Buffalo Bill's Wild West journeyed into the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Performances came in Trieste, Agram (Zagreb), Vienna, Budapest, and in a number of smaller communities. The show briefly visited czarist Russia. Then in August 1906, the Wild West arrived in Germany. At Dresden it enjoyed an unusually fine four-day stand. "I never saw so many people on a show ground in my life as there were at Dresden, Sunday afternoon, August 19," remarked Griffin. "Although our seating capacity was about 17,000 people, we could not accommodate half of those who desired admission." After a successful tour of the country, the show went to Belgium, closing the 1906 season in Ghent on September 21. "Take it all in all, the tour was a most successful one, both financially and artistically," Buffalo Bill then sold most of the animals, shipped the railroad cars and show wagons to the Barnum & Bailey winter quarters in England, and sent the remaining livestock, mostly the bucking bronchos and other Wild West paraphernalia, back to New York. Nearly all of the show's personnel returned immediately to America, but Griffin took a much needed vacation in England. "When we closed our season . . . , I felt as though I was on the verge of nervous prostration, having been at a high nervous tension all Summer . . . ." He and Octavia arrived back in New York in late October 1906.

Although Griffin's *Four Years in Europe with Buffalo Bill* contains much narrative material, it clearly reveals the author's views toward Europe and Europeans. It is

likely that Griffin's conclusions were fairly typical of other Wild West entertainers. For example, he liked the British, not suffering from the Anglophobia that plagued so many of his fellow countrymen. Perhaps this was because he felt at home throughout the country, particularly London. Griffin noted that, "There are American shoe stores, American quick lunches, American pharmacies, American barbers, American dentists, American bars, American this and American that." As a ventriloquist, the fact that he did not have to learn or memorize a new language might have made him inclined toward the British. Moreover, business was good in England and this likely put Griffin in a pro-English mood. He particularly liked English politeness and their "wholesome regard for law and order."

Griffin had different views toward the French. Although business was good in France and there were numerous tourist attractions to enjoy, the country bothered him. "There are two classes of people in Paris," he complained, "one class is there for the sole purpose of making money, and the other class to spend it. They are both working overtime, and as a result you pay top prices for everything." Griffin blasted some who attended Wild West performances. "The Hooligan element was very much in evidence there, reminding one of the early days in America, when the 'bad' element of a section regarded the advent of a circus as an intrusion or menace, and would attack the show people for no other reason than that they were strangers." He grumbled, too, about the French money situation. "I never saw so much bad coin in my life as in France, and particularly Marseilles. It is not con-

sidered bad form to pass out a counterfeit piece if you have been unwise enough to accept one. The government does not seem to make any effort to keep bad money out of circulation."

Griffin admitted that he was pleasantly surprised with Italy. "Many of us had it down as a land of anarchists, with bombs and stilettoes, but we found the people the most peaceable and most subject to police control than any country we visited outside of England." He generally had the same thoughts about the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and he seemed sympathetic to the problems of the various ethnic groups in that sprawling nation. "We think we have a race problem in America, but it is more complicated and acute [here] . . . , and it is not a matter of color, either. The majority of the peasantry are on a par, educationally, with the negroes of our Southern States, and the poor Jew is far more persecuted." Finally, Griffin appeared favorably inclined toward both the Germans and Belgians, although he admitted that he wished he could perform in the English language. These people were orderly and respected authority, ideal traits for "law and order" advocate Griffin.

*Four Years in Europe* also indicates the author's attitude toward Buffalo Bill. Griffin worshipped Cody. As he said in the book's introduction, "It is really too bad that everybody cannot know the Colonel as his friends know him. He is truly one of the best fellows in the world—open hearted and generous to a fault.

Why, his managers have to hedge him in and keep the people from him during the season, otherwise he would have his tents filled with free tickets . . ." Such a feeling of admiration toward Buffalo Bill was common and perhaps explains why the great showman consistently kept the loyalty of his employees.

Apparently Charles Griffin's four active years in Europe proved too much for him. Shortly after arriving back in the United States, he suffered a mild stroke. Nevertheless this indefatigable showman dem-



W. J. Cody  
"Buffalo Bill"  
1906  
To: Chas. E. Griffin

A photo of Cody himself, inscribed to Griffin, and printed at the front of *Four Years in Europe*.







### Other Books by Same Author

(NOT TO BE HAD ELSEWHERE)

**Now is the Time to Learn an Act and Start in Vaudeville,**

**Ventriloquism**—Complete in three lessons; instructions for making and operating the "Talking Hand," and three new dialogues. By mail, postpaid, \$1.00.

**Faust's Fantastic Feats with Fire**—Twenty tricks, representing all that is known in the art of Fire Eating. Fully illustrated. Postpaid, \$1.00.

**Juggling and Balancing**—Fourteen lessons in Juggling, Balancing and Spinning. \$1.00.

**Rope and Wire Walking Made Easy**—Eleven lessons. Fully illustrated. \$1.00.

**How to Become a Contortionist**—With instructions for making and using Limber Lizard Oil, together with seven illustrations and nine lessons in Front and Backward Bending, Leg Mania, etc. \$1.00.

**Stage Dancing**—Ten lessons. \$1.00.

**"Living Portraits"**—New monologue, introducing imitations of Irish, Dutch, Tramp and Jew Characters. \$1.00.

**Black Face Monologue**—Fifteen minutes, with song. \$1.00.

**Magic Kettle Act**—Without liquid air. \$1.00.

**Magic Cauldron (New)**—A sequel to the Magic Kettle. \$1.00.

**ESTABLISHED 30 YEARS.**

**ALL BY MAIL POSTPAID.**

STAGE PUB. CO. - Box 431, Albia, Iowa

*Advertisements proclaiming Griffin's side show library. See p. 14.*

onstrated his loyalty for Buffalo Bill and rejoined the show for the 1907 season. This ended his affiliation with a national entertainment group. Returning to Albia that fall, Griffin concentrated on publishing and writing. However, he entertained

local residents with performances at Albia's opera house. Soon he was the victim of a more serious stroke and as a nephew remembers "he wasn't able to do anything." Griffin died in Albia on January 3, 1914 at the age of fifty-four.

## SATAN'S SUPPER

or

## Secrets of a Fire King

*This is an excerpt from one of Griffin's most successful books, copyrighted in 1895. At an earlier point in his career, Griffin billed himself as "Mons. F. Le Costro." Readers are advised to heed the author's cautionary remarks.*

## CAUTION

As a certain amount of danger attends the performance of all Fire Tricks the student should carefully observe the following: Read the instructions over carefully and be sure you understand every trick before you commence to practice.

Keep your gasoline and kerosene bottle well corked and at least a foot away from fire.

Do not under any circumstances draw your breath in while practicing. If you do you will suck the flames into your throat and lungs and it will kill you. So be careful.

It is advisable to have a bucket of water handy in case of accident. If your clothes catch on fire wrap yourself up in a quilt or blanket.

. . .

Original Expose of Fire Eating Phenomena  
by Mons. F. Le Costro  
[C. E. Griffin]

## How To Be a Fire King

First procure the following articles and place them on your table in a convenient manner:

1. Candle and candle stick.
2. Fire pot, like tinnets use, with charcoal fire.
3. Bottle of gasoline and kerosene mixed, equal parts.
4. Two saucers.
5. A table fork.
6. A quantity of cotton batting, all picked out so as to make as big a "flash" as possible.
7. A stick of red sealing wax (Denison's No. 2).
8. A few small pieces of brimstone whittled into round balls and covered with cotton to protect the teeth.
9. Fake tin cup, described in No. 4.
10. An iron ladle and an iron spoon.
11. Fusible metal as described in No. 5.
12. Piece of light colored resin.
13. A large red bandana handkerchief.
14. Most important of all—a box of storaxine, the magic fire preparation. Greatest thing in the world for scalds and burns. Price for large box, 50 cents; small box 25 cents.

## RECEIPT FOR MAKING STORAXINE.

1 Bar Ivory Soap, cut up fine. 1 Pound Brown Sugar, 2 Ounces Liquid Storax (not the gum). Dissolve in hot water and add a wine glass full of carbolic acid.

Just before giving your exhibition rub this ointment on the parts most likely to come in contact with the fire—the lips, tongue and roof of mouth—after which you rinse the mouth out with good, strong vinegar. You are now ready for business. A few years ago I had run out of printed copies of this explanation, and receiving an order from a young man who all but intimated that he would like the reply by telegraph, I wrote out the instructions and sent him the Ms. A few days later I received the following letter:

"DEAR PROFESSOR—Your instructions, 'Secret of a Fire King,' received. Something must be wrong. I did as you told me and burnt myself like Hell."

Something was wrong. I had forgot to mention STORAXINE, THE MAGIC FIRE PREPARATION.

Now I don't mean to say that STORAXINE will render the skin perfectly impervious to fire, but it is a great help and is the best preparation that has ever been tried for this purpose. For scalds and burns it is unsurpassed. Rub the Storaxine on a clean cotton cloth and tie around the affected part.

## MODUS OPERANDI

Each Trick Explained Separately.

1. BURNING COALS.—Take several pieces of burnt or charred cotton, place them in a saucer, pour a little kerosene and gasoline (mixed equal parts) over them. Light with candle and eat with a fork.



2. MELTED SEALING WAX.—Take a stick of ordinary express sealing wax (Denison's No. 2 is the best) in one hand and a candle in the other. Melt the wax over the candle and place it blazing on your tongue. The moisture from your mouth cools it instantly. Be careful not to get any on the lips, chin or hands. Chew and remove in handkerchief.

3. BRIMSTONE ON TONGUE.—Take two or three small round pieces of brimstone (stick or sulphur) and wrap cotton around it. Put these in a saucer and pour a little of your mixture of kerosene and gasolene (squeezing the surplus oil into saucer), light it by your candle and place it in the open palm of your hand. You can hold it there a full minute without its burning if your hand has been annointed with STORAXINE. Now throw back your head and place the burning ball on your tongue. A freshly blown out candle may be ignited from the flame, which makes it more effective. After lighting candle chew up the brimstone and apparently swallow it, but in reality remove the brimstone under cover of handkerchief. When you try this trick you will notice that the brimstone does not burn at all. You only use brimstone for the effect the chewing of it gives. The cotton protects the teeth. To make it appear still more real throw a piece in your furnace. As they smell the burning brimstone no one will doubt its being brimstone that you are eating.

4. TO DRINK BOILING LIQUOR.—For this experiment have a tin cup made with a double bottom. Have a hole or slit in one side of the "fake" bottom large enough to let the liquor run through. Pour a little liquor (water answers as well) into the cup and set it over your fire until it boils, then pour a little on the floor from the side which has the slit in *fake* bottom, thus showing how hot it is. Now place the *other* side to your mouth and pretend to drink. The liquor remains in the cup *under the fake bottom*.

5. BURNING PITCH BALLS.—Take a piece of light colored resin and small wad of cotton. Roll this into a ball about the size of a marble. Place this on a fork, ignite it with a candle and put in your mouth, quickly changing it from one part of the mouth to another. When it quits "sizzling" wipe off your mouth and lips, and in so doing remove the ball in your bandana.

6. MELTED LEAD.—This is not really lead, but a fusable metal composed of the following metals mixed and melted together:

- 3 oz. lead
- 2 oz. lock tin
- 5 oz. bismuth

The above combination of metals will melt in boiling water. Melt a piece about the size of a silver quarter in your iron ladle. Pour out of ladle into iron spoon, and then into your mouth. Roll it around with your tongue until it becomes congealed, then spit it out into one of the committee's hands. He will drop it mighty quick, which always raises a laugh in your favor.

7. AFTER SUPPER SMOKE OR HUMAN VOLCANO.—Eat common cotton batting by chewing a large bunch into a small wad and renewing same while taking another mouthful. When ready to finish you secretly light a small piece of cotton and after it has quit blazing and is only a live coal, place it in a larger bunch of cotton, place the whole in your mouth and blow when fire and sparks will come forth in a most wonderful manner. Remove the cotton in your bandanna, make a polite bow and retire.

#### HOW TO BE A SWORD SWALLOWER

I always finish this act with sword swallowing, and it makes an excellent finale, giving the act an effect of realism unsurpassed. I furnish best spring steel swords with full directions for swallowing same without danger or fear of detection for only \$3.00. Price of secret only \$1.00.

## "'Indian Look-Out,' below Iowa City."

by  
David Goodwin

*The following article by a Johnson County native shows the rewards and frustrations of historical research. Although not by training an historian, the author is an indefatigable researcher among diversified and widely scattered records. On one level, the article might be understood as an historical puzzle to be solved: what was, and is, Indian Lookout? On a more theoretical level the article might be regarded as the writer's attempt to locate himself in time and place. More specifically in this same context, it might be viewed as the author's collection and interpretation of data about the land he owns and the place where he lives. Dr. Goodwin has a deep respect for the past of this particular place and he is concerned about its future. Modern highway engineers propose, in the words of a "Draft Environmental Statement," to construct Freeway 518 "approximately one-half mile west of the true and historically significant Indian Lookout."*

*A growing realization of our times is that people must respect places and use them wisely in the interests of society as a whole and of individual members of society, as well as in the interests of the environment itself. Historical information about places is important because it can offer valuable perspective for decision makers. Yet by itself, such perspective does not dictate a specific course of action.*

*Regardless of how this article is interpreted, it is a good example of an adventure in history at the local level. The Editors.*

Four miles south of the Old Stone Capitol stands Indian Lookout, a steep and wooded bluff bounding on the west the spacious Iowa River valley. The natural beauty of the location mingled with history and legend in the minds of the early settlers, and sparked the genius of one of Iowa's early artists. Once recognized as a prime point of interest, it is now unfamiliar to the people of the immediate locality. This landmark invites re-discovery.

### The Legend

Legends thrive upon conviction and evidence—often more of the former than the latter. When writing about Indian Lookout, local nineteenth century historians drew upon their own memories as well as upon stories passed down by word of mouth. A settler of the year 1839, Captain F. M. Irish, wrote in his 1868 *History of Johnson County, Iowa*:<sup>1</sup>

Passing from Iowa City, on the west side of the Iowa, to the southward, the first object of note is the hill called the Indian Lookout, a high, towering knob or point. In the river valley, to the east of this hill and the river, the Indians once occupied a town or village. This spot they had inhabited for a long time previous to the settlement of the country by the whites, and continued to inhabit it after their coming. Here it was that these dusky people spent their idle hours in feasting and dancing, and on the lofty hill to the west the old men kept watch and ward. A most suitable place was the top of this hill for such guardianship, for it towers

<sup>1</sup>*Annals of Iowa* (1st ser.), 6, No. 4 (October 1868), 323.

above all the surrounding country. To the east, from its top, can be seen the most of Scott and Pleasant Valley townships. To the south and west, on a clear morning, is presented a most lovely view. Stretched out before and beneath you is the broad valley of Old Man's creek, checkered with farms, dotted with farm houses, and bordered by the heavy timber on the creek, relieved by a dim background of the distant hills beyond.

This account generates more confusion than clarity about the location of Indian Lookout and the story behind it. The elevation is indeed well above the river valley which lies to the east, but modern topographic data show that Indian Lookout does not tower above other bluffs below Iowa City. Irish's assertion that most of Scott township is visible from this vantage point is hyperbole.

When Professor Charles Tuttle wrote his *History of Iowa* in 1876, he questioned the associations which Captain Irish and others had ascribed to Indian Lookout. Tuttle explained that below Iowa City there is "a singular looking peak or peculiarly rounded hill . . . which has been named 'Indian Lookout,' but whether that title describes the use to which it was really put, or is merely due to the lively fancies of the new coming white men, cannot be determined." (p. 554). In the copy of Tuttle's book at the Iowa City Public Library there is an example of conviction sustaining legend. Someone has pointed an arrow toward Tuttle's "lively fancies" and written as marginalia: "Bunk. This was where the Indians kept their lookout & counsel [sic] fires."

Based on evidence furnished him by W. F. Smith of Washington Township, the anonymous compiler of an 1883 *History of Johnson County* gives a different orientation to the legend which he discusses under the heading, "The Old-Man's Creek Story." (p. 762).

The Musquakies and other Sac and Fox tribes were at mortal enmity with certain Sioux tribes on the headwaters of the Iowa river, and beyond. And when the Sac and Foxes were ready to make a foray on their up stream enemies they would send their non-combatants onto Papato [Old Man's] creek for concealment . . . . In Liberty township, about four or five miles up the creek from its mouth, and then about a mile from the creek there is a high knoll of land between the creek and the river; from the top of this knoll both streams can be seen; and also the surrounding country for a great many miles. This place is called the 'Indian lookout,' and formed a waymark to reckon localities from in its neighborhood by the early settlers, but had been used by the Indians to watch for their returning warriors coming down the river with good or bad news, or with enemies pursuing, and communicate it by a short run of a mile or two to the home camp, when the canoes would have to go eight or ten miles farther around by the way of the streams.

The compiler then asserts, "Mr. Smith's explanation has at least the merit of practical probability and common sense to it . . ." Indeed, modern observation proves that both the Iowa River and Old Man's Creek can be seen from Indian Lookout. However, a note printed at the bottom of the page questions Smith's concept of location. "Mr. D. W. Wood reports that



Courtesy of the University of Iowa Library, Special Collections.

**Figure One.** George Yewell's pencil sketch of "Indian Look-Out, below Iowa City," dated October 28, 1854. This drawing was evidently made on the hunting trip which Yewell describes during his 1854 visit to Iowa. Compare it to Figure Two.

the 'Indian Lookout' is on the Etzel farm, near Jerry Stover's, or about on the line between West Lucas and Liberty townships." As we shall see, Wood was correct in his location.

The most important fact emerging from this division of opinion is that confusion existed already in 1883. Local residents, fond of telling the legendary tale of Indian Lookout, were no longer certain of just where the place was. What the early settlers meant by the term is the topic of much of the remainder of this article. Before examining this question, the plausibility of the legend, particularly the 1883 version, deserves further comment.

Some of the legendary significance of Indian Lookout stems from its association

with the Sac and Fox tribes which inhabited the region when white men first traveled and settled Johnson County.

As Cyrus Sanders approached the area in 1839 he recorded in his journal:<sup>2</sup>

April 5th. Started on to Napoleon arrived there a little while before night found it a place beautifully situated on the Iowa river with one miserable hut in it took up quarters there

April 6th Went down the river 2½ miles to a trading house kept by the American fur company saw a great many Indians—

April 10th Went down to the trading house found several hundred Indians camped near it visited several lodges and among the rest that of one of their chiefs and took a smoke with him he appeared very friendly and would often repeat Nish-

<sup>2</sup>Iowa Journal of History and Politics, 37, No. 1 (January 1939), 65-66.

a-shin Moco-man (ie good White man). bought a buckskin to face my pantaloons and a pair of shoes

April 12th. Finished my pantaloons about noon when the Sheriff came along and invited me to go with him to summons the first Jurors that were ever summoned in Johnson County it being a good chance to see the country and get acquainted with the people I of course went along, it took us two days to complete our circuit—

Some of the early traders who preceded Sanders to Iowa mingled with these aborigines and were fluent in their dialects. Prominent in this group are Andrew D. Stephen and the fur trader, John Gilbert. As late as 1838 the Fox Chief Poweshiek presided over a large village a mile and a

quarter directly east of Indian Lookout on the east side of the Iowa River. Perhaps such men as Gilbert or Stephen picked up the story of Indian Lookout through contact with the local tribesmen.

Verbal evidence from the Indians themselves is hard to come by, but Edgar Harlan, Curator of the Iowa Department of History, interviewed Poweshiek's descendants living at Tama in 1928 and learned from a man named Young Bear:<sup>3</sup>

In the old days our people had experienced hard times. They were constantly in danger of being attacked by other Indians, and so the men are taught to be alert and watchful, and to observe every

<sup>3</sup>"An Original Study of Mesquakie (Fox) Life, IV," *Annals of Iowa* (3rd ser.), 20, No. 2 (October 1935), 126.



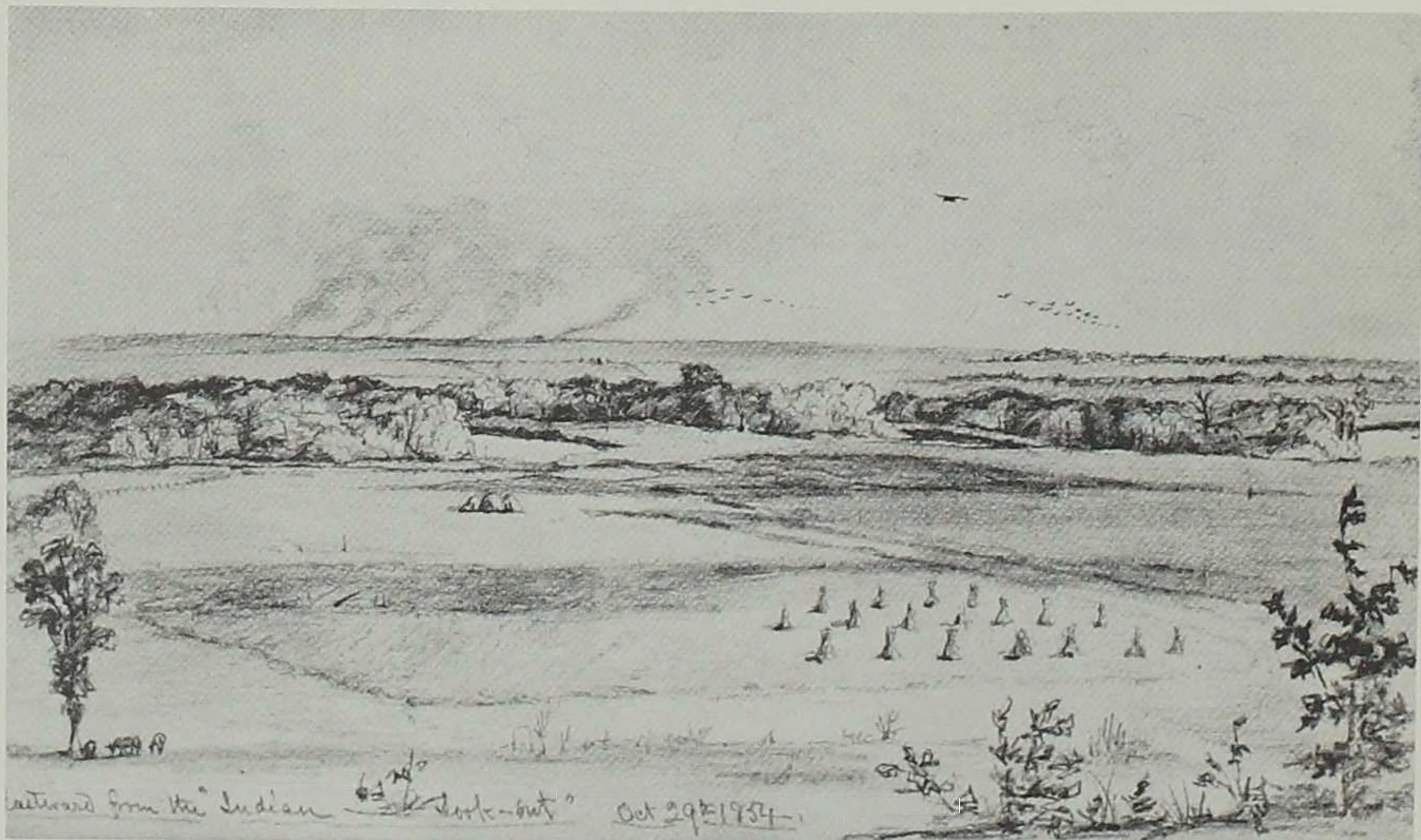
**Figure Two.** A view of the bluff south of Iowa City taken by the author in 1971. The camera is looking southeast toward the southeastern quarter of Section 33. The relationship of the horizon line, the valley floor, and the angle of the bluff is strikingly similar to Yewell's sketch.

sign and know it. . . . And many times in the villages the men are sent out to be on the lookout and to see if they can find any strange signs, and so it is that their men are always prepared and always ready to answer any call to protect their homes.

The practice of vigilance at "lookouts" is thus corroborated by both white and Indian sources and is a natural activity of a hunting culture, particularly when people are wary of their neighbors. The "perpetual warfare" of the Sac and Fox with the Sioux is well documented in memoir, letter, and treaty and needs no elaboration here. Looking backward from

the perspective of the 1830's, the Sac and Fox were themselves recent settlers of Johnson County and may have followed earlier habits and paths.

In short, the 1883 account of the legend of Indian Lookout, if corrected for location, is both plausible and in harmony with normal patterns of Indian life. It is within reason to assume the legend is based on fact, especially in light of further evidence. One of the important problems, however, is the confusion which arose in the nineteenth century over the exact location of Indian Lookout.



*Courtesy of the University of Iowa Library, Special Collections.*

**Figure Three.** Another of Yewell's sketches, dated October 29, 1854, a view from Indian Lookout, looking eastward.

## G.H.Y.

“‘Indian Look-Out,’ below Iowa City. G.H.Y. Oct 28th 1854”—reads the inscription on the pencil drawing which is the earliest known depiction of this location. The artist was an early Iowan who has provided further verbal and graphic information about the landmark.

George Henry Yewell (1830-1923) was a distinguished and cosmopolitan painter and portraitist. Among his works are some of Iowa's masterpieces, including portraits of such Iowa notables as Governors Robert Lucas and Samuel J. Kirkwood. Born in Maryland in 1830, Yewell came to Iowa City with his mother in 1841. An earnest diarist, his entry for November 11, 1849 (preserved in the Yewell collection in the University of Iowa Library) shows that Yewell participated actively in the rituals of western life:

To-morrow we go upon our Annual Fall Hunt. Spent the day making preparations for it. Our party will be Jacob H. Stover, Thomas Hess, Thomas M. Banbury, Morgan Reno, Dewitt Berryhill and myself. To these add Old Jake's dog "Ponto" and the grey mare.

12th — The morning was clear and frosty. Seven o'clock found us all at Stover's door, and we were soon under way, crossing the river at Metcalf's. At the "Indian Look-out" we loaded our guns, and after crossing Old Man's creek at Uncle Johnny Smith's, four of them made a circuit to the right . . . .

Yewell left Iowa in 1851 to attend art

classes at the New York Academy of Design, but when he returned home for a working visit in 1854 he again went on a fall hunt "five miles in the country, and staid three days enjoying myself immensely." On this occasion we also know the results were greater than a successful hunt.

We rambled over the prairies upon foot and horseback. *I made some pencil sketches*, and improved my stock of health and spirits greatly. There is everything to be gained in 'going to Nature' no matter in what way it is done . . . . one of the boys shot a fine, fat buck in the prairie not more than half-a-mile from the house. We hitched up the wagon—went out and hauled him to the house—strung him up—rolled up our sleeves and skinned and dressed him, and lived upon venison the remainder of the time. [Emphasis added.]

When he made the sketch inscribed "Indian Look-Out" on October 28, 1854, Yewell recently had worked on his first commission, namely, "to make a series of vignette drawings of buildings, residences and street views of the town, to grace the margin of a new map of Iowa City." The artist's handiwork illustrated J. H. Millar's map of 1854. Fifteen of Yewell's drawings survive from this period of his Iowa City residence. The modern locations of seven of these scenes can be accurately fixed, no fewer than five involving the Indian Lookout neighborhood.

Indian Lookout was destined to enter into at least one more facet of Yewell's life. On July 4, 1855, he took Miss Mary

E. Coast on a picnic jaunt "to the 'Indian Lookout,' a high bluff where an extensive view is obtained of the winding river, woods, fields, prairies, and groves." Yewell's allusion to lofty heights (similar to that of Irish) must be considered in proper context. On this July 4th outing the young artist was afflicted with a form of giddiness not necessarily related to altitude: Miss Coast later became Mrs. George Yewell.

Yewell's contribution to our knowledge of Indian Lookout is considerable, and unique in its testimony. The sketch of the site provides a visual link of a kind unavailable from other sources. His picture of Indian Lookout helps confirm the identity of the landmark.

## The Public Records

The graphic appeal of Yewell's testimony is buttressed by the more formal designation of Indian Lookout in the early public records of Johnson County. The references are scattered and in a way, a puzzle to the modern inquisitor. A careful sifting of the evidence shows, however, that Indian Lookout was and is a definite place. To proceed we must carefully pick out bits and pieces of information from sources which may not be directly related to one another. Certain key elements allow us to trace the existence of the landmark.

Documents surrounding a road proposed by Nathaniel McClure, south of Iowa City, form the first clues. The John-

July Session AD 1841. 2<sup>d</sup> day  
 Nathaniel McClure this day makes application by  
 Petition for the view of a County Road, commencing at  
 the Dubuque Road at a place called the Indian Look  
Out near John Gardners House thence in a South  
 Westwardly direction in the nearest and most con-  
 -venient route to Nathaniel McClures House. Thence  
 to the line dividing Johnson and Washington Counties  
 "in a direction towards Coopers Ford on English River"  
 And the Commissioners being satisfied that the proper  
 advertisements have been set up - It is ordered that  
 James Fremble, William C. Maffey and Smiley

Figure Four. A reproduction of the Johnson County Commissioners' "Minutes" for July 6, 1841.



son County Board of Commissioners recorded in their *Minutes* for July 6, 1841:

Nathaniel McClure this day makes application by Petition, for the view of a County Road, commencing at the Dubuque Road at a place called the "Indian Look" Out near John Gardners House thence in a South Westwardly direction on the nearest and most convenient route to Nathaniel McClures House. Thence to the line dividing Johnson and Washington Counties in a 'direction' towards Coopers Ford on English River.

Three important conclusions emerge from the petition: first, that Indian Lookout was by name a reference point for early Johnson County inhabitants; second, the Dubuque Road will be an important focus of information which should help to locate Indian Lookout more accurately; and third, John Gardner's house—undoubtedly the closest habitation in the neighborhood—may be a ready way to our goal. Keeping in mind these facts, and referring frequently to maps and surveys, we begin to fit the pieces together.

The County Commissioners appointed "viewers" to examine the location of McClure's road. These officials then went into the field, established the route, and recorded their findings in the *Record of Roads*. This evidence is preserved and states (p. 21):

Field Notes of Old Man's Creek or McClure's Road

Commencing at the old Indian look out near Gardners house

Thence South 38° West 320 Perches

Thence South 44° West 182 do . . .

It is here officially confirmed that Gardner's house was near Indian Lookout and also near the junction of the Dubuque and McClure roads. The reference to Old Man's Creek further strengthens the leg-

endary evidence.

A number of leads have been established to determine the location of Indian Lookout, already known as "old" in 1841. We first concentrate on Gardner, his property, and his family. Deed and federal patent records show that John Gardner was the first white owner of the southeast quarter of Section 33, and the adjacent southwest quarter of Section 34 in West Lucas Township.

Various sources yield many additional facts about this obscure South Carolinian. His household consisted of eight people in 1838 and the same number in 1847. His neighbor was Yale Hamilton. He was assessed 21¢ in personal property tax in 1838 and he served on the first grand jury in Johnson County (the body Cyrus Sanders helped summon while wearing his buckskin faced pantaloons). An important fact is that Gardner did not register a claim with the Johnson County Claim Association. His daughter married Jerry Stover, who was identified in the 1883 account.

But where on his property did Gardner build his house? The public records are silent, except for one fact: Gardner sold the south 80 acres of Section 34 a year after he bought them. In our quest for further knowledge the Gardners themselves seem uncooperative; in 1853, bucking the westward movement, the family moved back to Indiana, their home before coming to Iowa.

The Dubuque Road, associated with Indian Lookout by McClure's petition, furnishes a fresh set of clues. Of the documents describing this early federal "military road," one item has been neglected by historians—the very one which is most



informative, and may lead to the solution of our puzzle.

The Territorial Legislature had passed an act in 1839 calling for a road to be located from Dubuque, through the seat of government (soon to be the "City of Iowa"), to the Missouri border. R. C. Tilghman, an engineer of the Bureau of Topographic Engineers of the War Department, surveyed the route in the summer of 1839. He later reported that below the seat of government, "the line passes over a Prairie to Harris' Creek, Old man's creek, and thence to Davis' creek along a ridge, having crossed English river, thence over a level prairie to Mount Pleasant. . . ." The map of Tilghman's survey apparently has never before been published. It consists of seven large sheets, some dated 1839 on the back. As drawn, the map is upside down: north is at the bottom, south at the top. Figure Five shows the map with proper orientation (north at the top). (The inscriptions are then upside down, but it is easier to understand Tilghman's meaning.)

**Figure Five.** R. C. Tilghman's map of his survey of the Dubuque Road in 1839. This field map was drawn upside down, with north at the bottom. In order to clarify its relationship to other maps, it is shown here with north at the top. While this makes it necessary to turn the map in order to read the inscriptions, we can more easily compare it to Figure Six, a modern topographic map of the area. Key features of Tilghman's map are the location of the Dubuque Road (solid line down the middle) and the approximate location of Yale Hamilton's field (labeled as such, near the center of the map). The old Indian trail is shown as a dotted line. Tilghman's rendering of the bluff line is approximate. The course of the Iowa River has changed considerably since 1839.

Besides the location of the route of the Dubuque Road, Tilghman's map is important to the argument because the one settler it names in this area is Yale Hamilton. We know Hamilton was Gardner's neighbor from Claim Association data and the evidence of federal land patents. The Hamilton place, moreover, is one of the features drawn on Tilghman's map. Unfortunately, Tilghman's field notes are missing, never having been received in Washington. However, step by step, we can substitute independent and even more accurate records.

The Johnson County Claim Association Records give Hamilton's claim of September 12, 1838 in metes and bounds:

. . . beginning at a certain Dry Elm stub thence running west One mile to a certain white Oak tree thence south  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile to a certain hickory Stake Standing in the Prairie then East to a certain black oak tree standing on the Bank of the River thence North a  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile to the place of beginning.

This places Hamilton west of the river and clarifies Tilghman's cartography. When the federal land surveyor, John Frierson, came along in August 1839, he drew "Yale Hamilton's field" astride the line between Section 28 and 33, just east of a ravine. Frierson's field notes are explicit about topography:

East Random between Secs 28 and 33—  
 15 chains Enter a deep ravine . . .  
 55 chains 50 links Descend bluff into Iowa bottom and enter Yale Hamilton's field  
 75 chains Leave Hamilton's field

Thus Tilghman's route for the Dubuque

Road hugs the foot of the bluff on the west past "Hamilton's," and climbs the hill to the south. There it leaves the dotted "Indian Trail to Old Mans' Creek"—the map so designates it farther along.

### Reconstructions

The next step is to transfer Tilghman's information to the modern topographic map (see Figure Six), and determine where in Section 33 the 1839 Road lay. There is really no choice. The lowly gravel road up the hill must be a still-in-use segment of the Dubuque Road. The road to the southwest can only be the McClure Road, which will furnish further proof. (Its bearing can be easily checked with a protractor and compared with the McClure Road Field Notes.) The bluff extending from that point to the southeast must be the Indian Lookout.

Could the house (black square) or barn (rectangle) at the crest of the hill be Gardner's house? It is tempting to reach this conclusion. Homesteads and farm buildings have a way of staying put over the years. Using the information of McClure's petition, either location would fit. Anyone tramping over Gardner's original half-section would consider these sites. They would be on the Indian Trail, the best prospect for a road through the "desolate wilderness" of 1839 and one central to the property, sheltered from the higher prairie, and provided with flowing springs the year around.

Let us double-check our deductions, however logical, and especially those about Gardner's house.

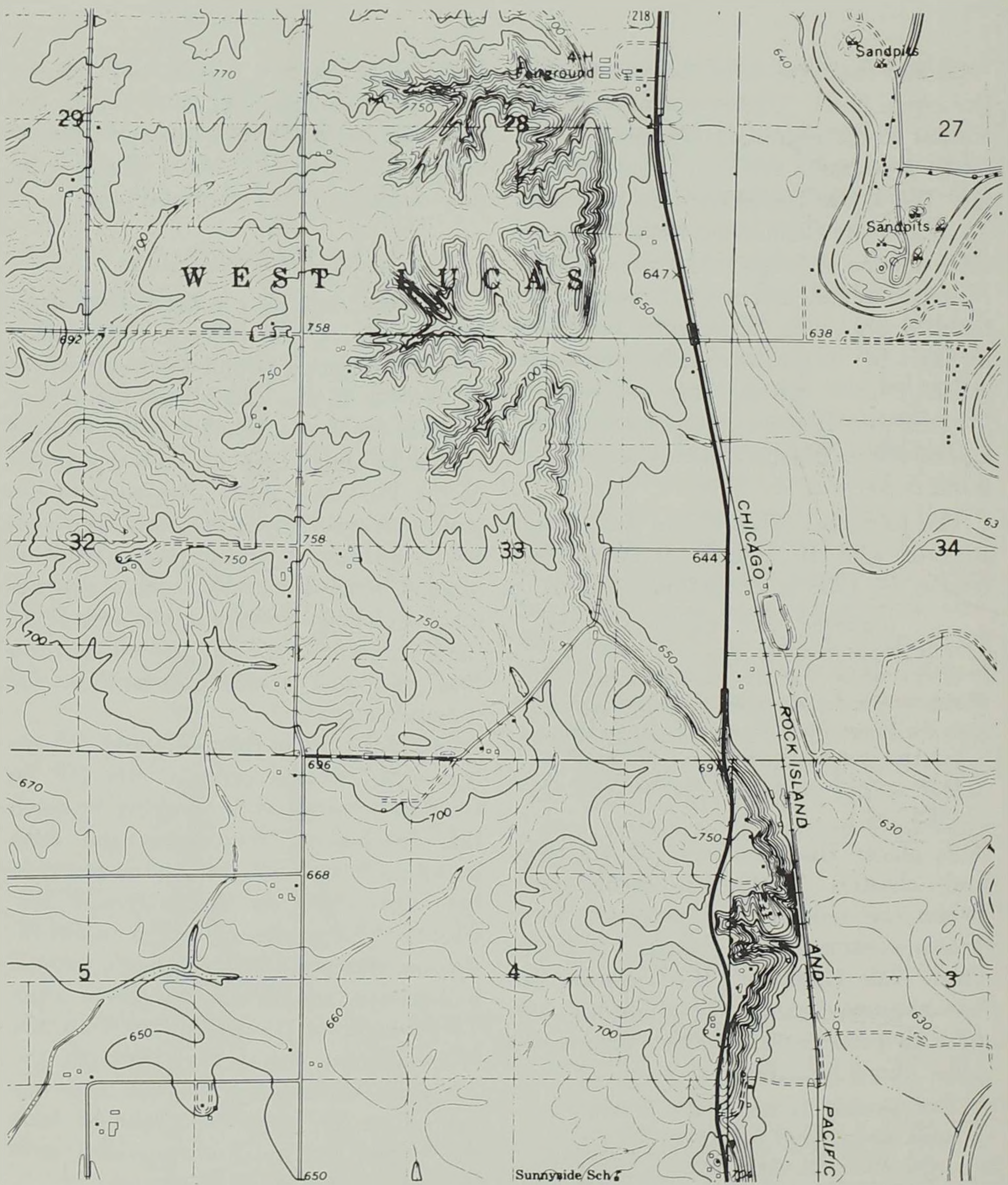


Figure Six. A 1965 USGS topographic map of the Indian Lookout area, showing Section 33. The solid black line is Highway 218. The gravel road turns off 218 at "644" and is designated by a double line (middle of the map). The gravel road first turns south to the crest of the bluff and then to the southwest. The black square and rectangle are at the point where the road turns southwest.

Additional information jolts us. An elderly daughter of Jerry Stover recalled in 1943 that family lore placed the Gardners on the *north* 80 acres of Section 34.<sup>4</sup> Suppose this memory could be verified; suppose indeed that Gardner had lived on *either* 80-acre tract of Section 34; suppose his house had been (as seems likely) the *only* house in the vicinity. Gardner's house would still have appeared to be *near* the beginning of the McClure Road by the viewers assembled there.

Happily, with regard to the Indian Lookout, McClure Road information confirms our conclusions. Before proceeding with that story, it is useful to have at hand the succession of owners of the southeast quarter of Section 33. After the Gardners, they are Phineas Harris (March-September, 1853); David S. and Lucy Miller of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania (1853-1865); Leonhard Etzel (1865-1866); Anne Etzel (1866-1892); John and Iva Tucker (1892-1907); Louis and Carrie Ruppenkamp (1907-1959); Ralph and Beulah Rayner (1959-1961 and 1964); and the author's family (1961 and 1964-present).

The confirmations of the location of Indian Lookout come from two later changes in the McClure Road recorded in the official *Record of Roads*. An 1856 petition of Jerry Stover (the widower of Gardner's daughter returned from California, now remarried, and settled for life in his house on the McClure Road in Section 4, Liberty Township) located

this portion of the road precisely for the first time by showing its relationship to section lines. Additionally, in a change sought by Isaac Smith in 1862 there is the final confirmation (see Figure Seven). Here the Indian Lookout is platted and located in the surveyor's Field Notes for all time; it is indeed the massif pointing diagonally to the southeast from the intersection of the Dubuque and McClure Roads. By 1862 the house *at* the Indian Lookout is David and Lucy Miller's. It faced east. The proof is complete.

The loose threads of legend and evidence now tie together. David Wood, the lawyer who set the record straight in 1883, was correct in asserting that Indian Lookout was on the Etzel farm. Tilghman, in the stretch from Hamilton's to the top of Indian Lookout, recognized the wisdom of countless Indian footsteps when he superimposed the Dubuque Road on the Indian trail. Tilghman's route went straight on over the hill, while the Indian trail followed the crest of the bluff before turning southward. Who is to deny that this section of bluff may have been, in fact as well as legend, an Indian "look-out"?

How far southward did the term apply? All the sources quoted here agree that it was a particular "knob," "point," "high Bluff," "rounded hill," or "High knoll"—not an indefinite extension of bluff. This is consonant with the Yewell sketch, the map data, and the account which confines the term to the 160-acre Etzel farm.

The latter interpretation also fits with

<sup>4</sup>Euphemia Trine, "History of Joseph Stover and His Descendants," May 1, 1943, unpublished typescript.

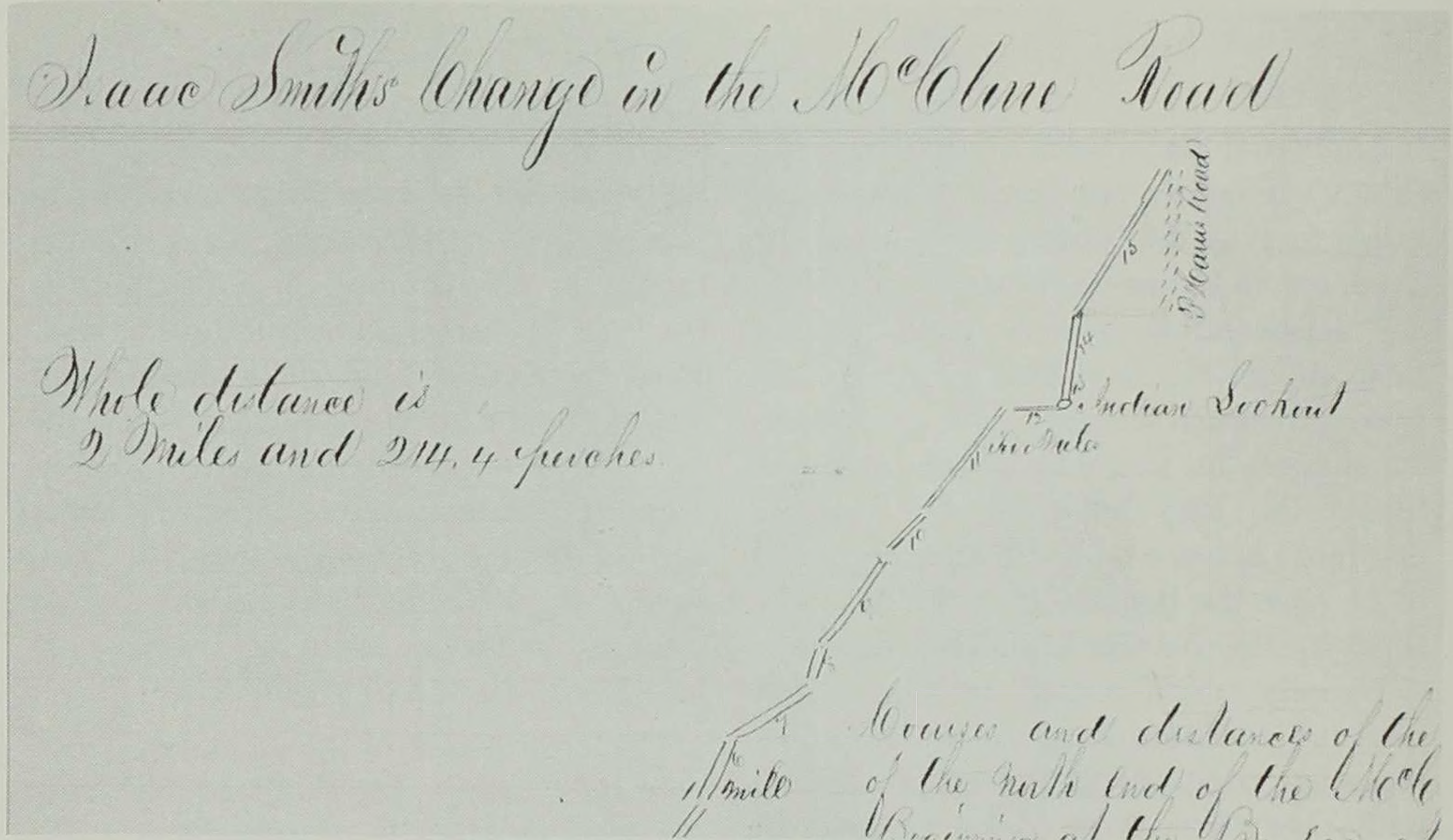


Figure Seven. The plat of the 1862 change in the McClure Road. Indian Lookout is clearly identified next to David and Lucy Miller's house in the southeast quarter of Section 33. The detail (below) shows the numbered field notes which correspond to the map. Stations 11, 12, and 13 pinpoint the location.

11	N	35° E	76	Miller's house
12	N	77 1/2° E	10	To Indian Lookout
13	N	16° E	6	In front of Miller's house
11	N	35° E	76	

the entry in *Iowa, A Guide to the Hawkeye State* prepared in 1938 as a project of the Iowa Writers' Program. This source leads readers on a tour to Iowa City and points south:

- IOWA CITY, 24 m. (685 alt., 15,340 pop.)
- Points of Interest: State University; Old Capitol.
- South of Iowa City are numerous hills and valleys covered with thick woods . . . .
- At 27.5 m. is the junction with a dirt road. Left on this road is INDIAN LOOKOUT,

0.5 m. a high bluff commanding a view of several miles up and down the river. Legend has it that Indian squaws watched here for the return of their braves from wars with other tribes.

These directions can still be followed to the site. The dirt road is now graveled; it leaves the highway at "644" on the topographic map, and after a quarter-mile turns into the Indian trail-become-Dubuque Road.

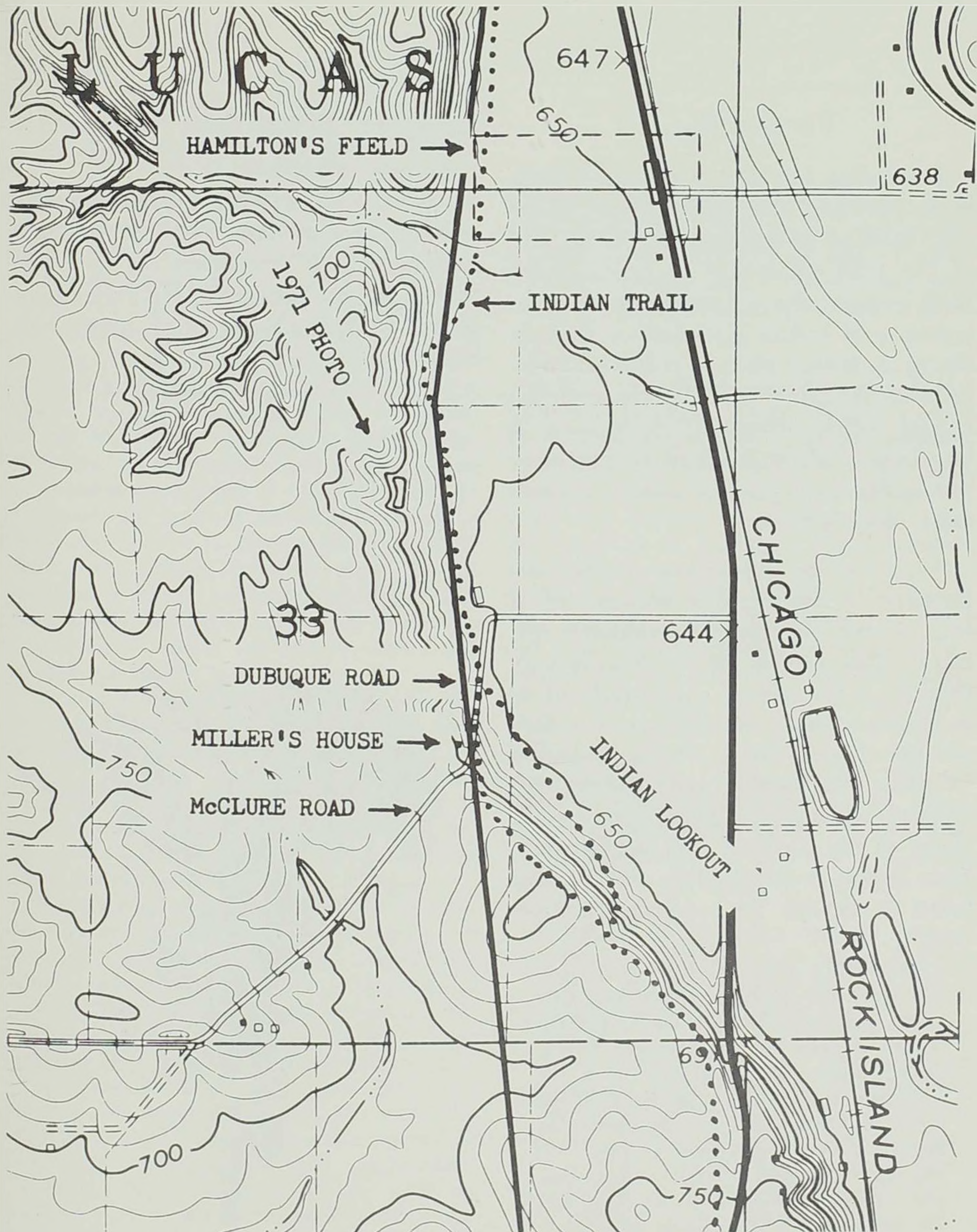


Figure Eight. A labeled version of the 1965 topographic map showing Hamilton's field, the Indian trail (dotted line), the vantage point of the 1971 photo, the location of the Dubuque Road (solid line down the middle), Miller's house, the McClure Road, and Indian Lookout.

## Perspective

The Indian Lookout of George Yewell, of the 1841 and 1862 public records, of the 1883 account (as corrected by Wood), and of the 1938 *Guide* are all one and the same location. Since Yewell's day the appearance of Indian Lookout has scarcely changed. It was already a special place in Johnson County in 1841. Although the legend which brought it recognition is largely beyond the reach of investigation, the Indian Lookout is secure as a landmark of early Iowa.

A sense of the importance of place, the harmony of the world of nature and of man, a reverence for the abundance and beauty that sustain life: they were only shadows of the ethic of a defeated culture in Johnson County on Independence Day of 1838. It was the day Iowa became a Territory. The settlers gathered at John Gilbert's trading post. The special significance of the occasion was explained to their neighbor, Poweshiek, and he was asked to respond. He is reported to have said:<sup>5</sup>

Soon I shall go to a new home and you will plant corn where my dead sleep. Our towns, the paths we have made, and the flowers we love will soon be yours. I have moved many times and have seen the white man put his feet in the tracks of the Indian and make the earth into fields and gardens. I know that I must go away and you will be so glad when I am gone that you will soon forget that the meat and the lodge-fire of the Indian have been

forever free to the stranger and at all times he has asked for what he has fought for, the right to be free.

After the Indian trails were replaced by settlers' roads or forgotten, after the area had become a crossroads for a fertile region, its name persisted, reminding people of their predecessors of many millennia.



June 2 Sept 16<sup>th</sup> 1874

<sup>5</sup>C. R. Aurner, *Leading Events in Johnson County Iowa* (Cedar Rapids: Western Hist. Press, 1912), I, 59.



## Book Review:

Clarence A. Andrews, *A Literary History of Iowa* (Iowa City: The University of Iowa Press, 1972), 256 pp., plus bibliography and index, \$12.50.

What is the purpose of a book review? The answer varies from magazine to magazine. In academic journals, book reviews serve not only to inform scholars how a book fits into their world, but also to establish the credentials of the reviewer. In literary magazines, reviews provide a forum for critics to appraise the work of writers. A book review in the *Palimpsest* should be, I think, slightly different. Members of the Society are interested in Iowa history; therefore, when a notable book is published on a historical Iowa topic, the readers should be informed. The reviewer should have no axe to grind. In addition to alerting members to the book, some attempt should be made to state whether or not the author performed his tasks well. Books cost considerable sums these days and members should not have to take a \$10 or \$12 gamble.

It is in this spirit that I report on Clarence Andrews' *A Literary History of Iowa*, a long overdue and much needed book. Such a book should collect and compress the sweep of Iowa literature into one volume, where a sense of literary tradition and specific information can be neatly gathered. Andrews fulfills some of these obligations and falls short of others.

From one historical point of view, Andrews' method of organization causes problems. The book does not follow a chronology of authorship (early writers first) but rather a chronology of subject matter. The first chapters deal with the historical events of the early nineteenth century, whether they were put on paper then or now. Thus, Abel Beach, an early pioneer and poet, is discussed in the same paragraph with MacKinlay Kantor. This practice is confusing to the reader, especially since three chapters later Andrews drops this structure and takes up authors more or less in chronological order. Andrews says in his introduction that he shows the historical and social context of Iowa literature, but he does so in the most elementary way.

Individual authors are treated unevenly, some minor figures given fairly lengthy consideration while others of seemingly equal note are barely mentioned. Overall, there is an unfinished quality to the book, including prose that is often awkward or unclear.

There are, however, positive things to say for Andrews' work. The chapters devoted to Iowa's better known authors, Hamlin Garland, Herbert Quick, Ruth Suckow, Phil Stong and Frederick Manfred, are excellent. Andrews explains their work in an orderly and perceptive fashion. More importantly, because he quotes national critics, the reputation of the state's literature comes into perspective.

The great attribute of the book is to make it clear that Iowa's heritage includes a powerful and consistent literary tradition. A remarkable number of Iowans have written epic series about the land, the people, and the Iowa experience. There is a long list of writers from Garland to Paul Corey, who have created fascinating fictional communities and played out fully the inherent creative possibilities. Pittsville, Siouxland, and the Middle Border are the most famous, but almost every important Iowa author seems to have been touched in some way by this inspiration.

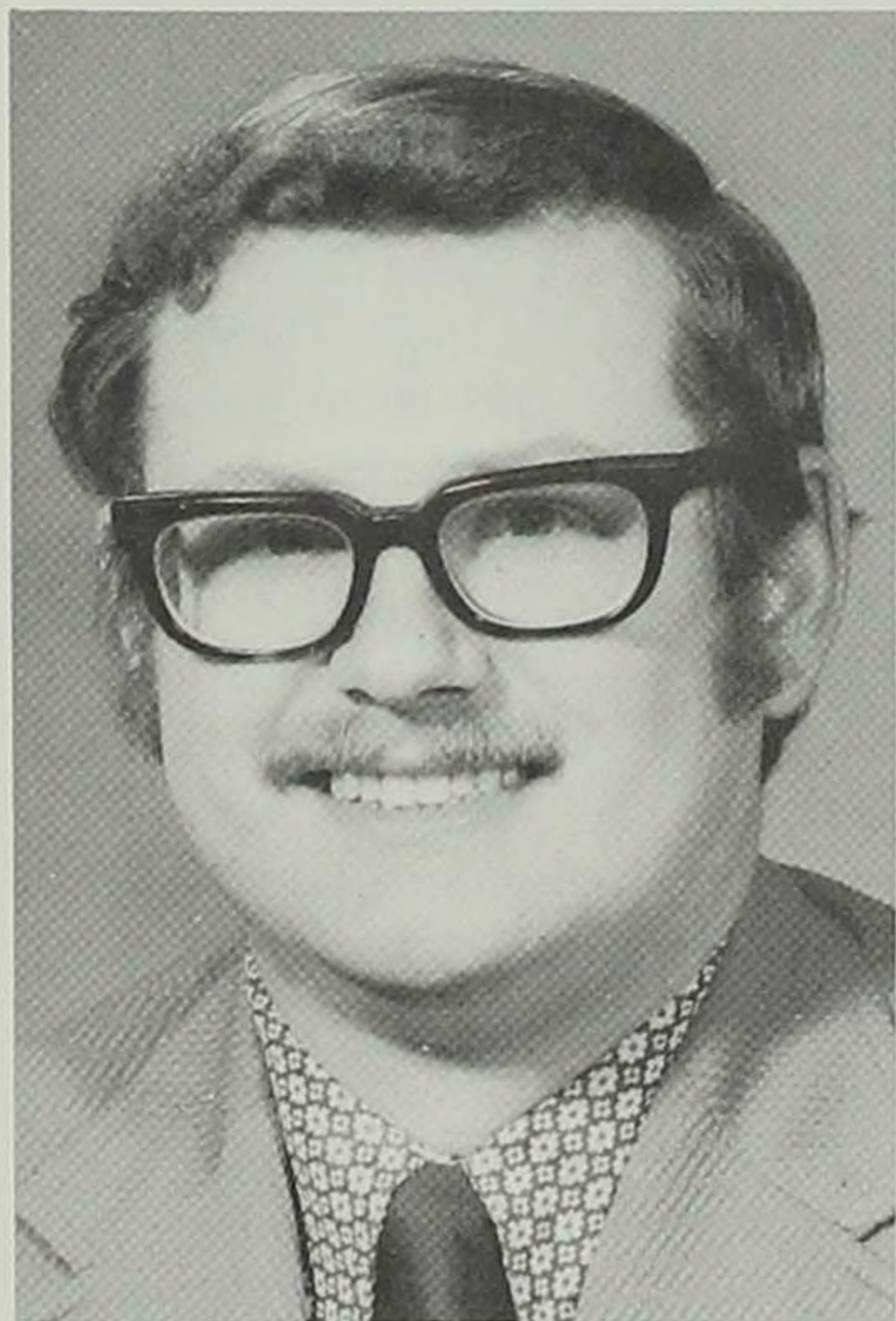
If nothing else, Clarence Andrews has revealed the depth of the literary history of Iowa.

Andrews ends his study of the past with a thought for the future of Iowa letters:

"Iowa, what is there to sing? As the nation faces its bicentennial, beset with fear and plagued with doubt, perhaps a new generation of writers and artists, raised in the lush green of an Iowa farm or the streets of an Iowa small town, or even in one of the state's larger cities, will find answers to the first and, at the same time, solutions to the latter—and a new Iowa literature will arise. (p. 256).

L.E.P.

## CONTRIBUTORS:



H. ROGER GRANT is Assistant Professor of History at the University of Akron. He is originally from Albia. Professor Grant attended Simpson College in Indianola where he was a champion inter-collegiate debater and editor of the student newspaper. He was named as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow in 1966 upon graduation from Simpson. In 1970, he received a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri at Columbia, where he specialized in recent U.S. history and history of the frontier. He has published several articles, most recently on state insurance reform in the Progressive era.

DR. DAVID GOODWIN is a native of Iowa City who received his degrees from The University of Iowa. A physician by training, he has been interested in the research of gout. The author wishes to mention the helpfulness of Frank Paluka and Robert McCown of the Special Collections Department of the University of Iowa Library where Yewell's sketch books and paper reside. The drawings of George Yewell and the excerpts from his journals are published with the permission of Thomas E. Perry of Columbus Junction, Iowa. John Porter Bloom and Frederick W. Pernell of the National Archives were also very helpful.



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