The Palimpsest

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials 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 records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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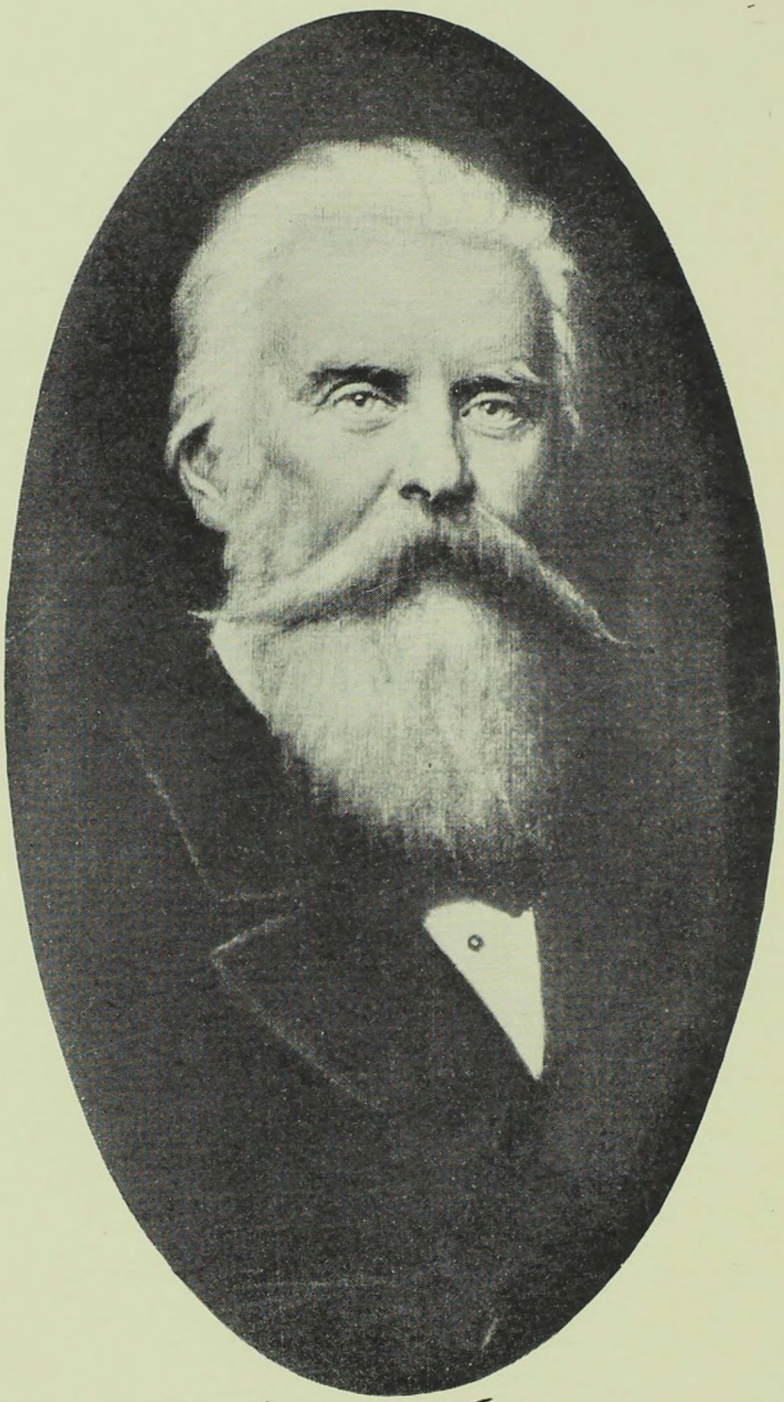

Nicholas Fejérváry

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Nicholas Fejervary

In the northwest part of Davenport, high on the bluffs overlooking the city and the river beyond, is situated the large and beautiful Fejérváry Park. Magnificent vistas of flowers and distant landscape appear at every turn of the winding drives, while the zoo with its herd of bison is a perennial attraction. Near the center of the park a stately brick mansion with imposing verandas, surrounded by spacious lawns, graces a slight eminence. About the place there is an air of the elegance and distinction of other days. Obviously it was once a home of wealth and refinement. If a stranger should ask who had once lived there, he would be told that it was the residence of Nicholas Fejérváry, a Hungarian nobleman, who had come to Davenport in 1852. The park which bears his name and includes his former home, which was given to the city by his daughter in 1902, is a lasting memorial to one of the

most picturesque and benevolent citizens of Davenport.

The period of political unrest in Europe between the years of 1840 and 1850 may have been fortunate for the United States, for it was during that decade that many men of distinction and ability left their native land. These patriots in the cause of popular government, who rose in their distress against their oppressors, turned to America as a country of their own ideals. Very soon after Iowa became a State these immigrants pushed westward and joined the American settlers in the pioneer movement. Liberty-loving themselves, they preferred homes on free soil, and the rich agricultural possibilities of Iowa offered many opportunities in farming and business. Among them came Nicholas Fejérváry.

Courtly, dignified, a gentleman of the old school of European courtesy, spare of build and of medium height, his distinguished appearance accentuated by a flowing mustache and generous beard, he moved quietly and unassumingly in the life of the growing city where he is still remembered and admired. Of those who have been prominent in the history of Davenport, the figure of this Hungarian cavalier is conspicuously colorful.

Nicholas Fejérváry, a descendant of an old and distinguished line of Hungarian landowners and patriots, was born on May 27, 1811, in Pest, now united with Buda across the Danube to form Budapest, the capital of Hungary. Carefully schooled in

Latin, then the legal language of his country, and in French by a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, the boy rapidly developed an aptitude for languages which later enabled him to become an accomplished linguist. Although he spoke German, the language of his country's conquerors, he steadfastly refused to learn to write it.

His youth was typical of the boy of aristocratic parentage on a large European estate seventy-five years ago. In his contact with the peasants, he came to understand their problems and their viewpoint, while his normal life in the open developed an interest in the soil which remained with him always.

Upon his graduation from the legal department of the University of Pest, like most cultured Hungarians he took an active part in politics. At this time unrest against the high-handed and arbitrary rule of Austria was prevalent throughout Hungary. The suppression of newspapers, the elaborate spy system, the curtailment of privileges, and the disbanding of public meetings only served to kindle the already smoldering fires of patriotism among the Hungarians. Naturally the young statesman studied and discussed the sad plight of his country. Unusually well-read, interested in political reform and its progress in foreign countries, keenly discerning in public affairs, endowed with sound judgment, and displaying an unfaltering devotion to his country, Mr. Fejérváry was regarded by revolutionary leaders as one of the foremost patriots of the day.

During this period of political activity he married Karolina Karasz de Horgos, a lady of refinement and culture, and retired from public life to his country estate in 1845. The years that followed were probably the richest and happiest of his European experience. Although the dread disease of cholera claimed some of his intimate household and the cloud of revolution hung on the horizon, it was a period of peace and fulfillment for him. Two children were born, Nicholas and Celestine.

In 1847 the long-expected and hoped-for revolution occurred. Although Nicholas Fejérváry had no active part in the conflict, he was in many ways closely allied with the cause. When the stroke for freedom failed and martial law was established throughout the land, after many of his friends had been executed or exiled and their lands confiscated, Mr. Fejérváry at last decided to leave Hungary and its unhappy reminders of former days. So, after a year's sojourn in Belgium, he set sail for the United States with his family in May, 1852, hoping to forget the misfortunes of oppression and revolution.

The problem of choosing a home in the new world was a grave one and Mr. Fejérváry studied it with his usual care and foresight. Deciding against the commercial East and the slave South he determined to make a journey to the West and see for himself the opportunities which awaited the settler. Thus he came to realize the vastness of the country and its unlimited resources, he witnessed a "mighty em-

pire moving west'', yet he sensed its hardships, its crude life barren of the associations of his former interests, and the privations of those who cast their lot in a new country. Feeling that Mrs. Fejérváry's health was too delicate to undergo the journey westward and the life there he returned to New York discouraged and in doubt. But it was Mrs. Fejérváry who decided that the new home should be in the West, for, understanding woman that she was, she saw that beneath her husband's doubt and concern for her health was an eagerness to be a part of this rich country in the making. Afterward she mirthfully records ''that the thing which gave her real inconvenience was not having a maid to do her hair.''

Coming to Davenport by way of Erie, Cleveland, and Chicago, (and rumor has it that he carried a gripsack full of gold), Mr. Fejérváry purchased a tract of land on the bluffs of the city, now part of Fejérváry Park. There he proceeded to plan and erect an imposing house of red brick, combining in architecture and setting much of the old-world atmosphere and charm. As was his usual custom, every decision, every detail, had his careful consideration. He personally superintended the construction of the house and the development of the grounds. Most of the brick for the house were made on the spot with machinery brought from New York for the purpose. Once, on a hot summer day when the foreman was overcome by sunstroke, Mr.

Fejérváry put on a smock and served the machine expertly himself.

Upon completion the house and grounds formed a pleasing example of a fine estate. The beauty of the site and the commanding view it afforded made the Fejérváry residence at once one of the show places of Davenport. With the vineyards and orchards, delightful arbors and running brooks it suggested the age-old security and contentment that is the heritage of wealth and culture. Quite naturally the spacious home of such a hospitable owner and his gracious wife became a place of meeting and refuge for many an exiled Hungarian, and no one was turned away without aid and advice from their more fortunate countryman.

Mr. Fejérváry possessed shrewd business ability. By far-sighted investments in real estate, particularly in the business district of Davenport, he considerably increased his wealth. He did not dispose of his Hungarian estates, however, and after his death his daughter returned to live there. Scrupulously honest in all business affairs, his word was held to be as good as his bond. One Davenport historian records that "in the pioneer west interest was two per cent per month or twenty-five per cent per year. He, however, never took more than the lawful ten per cent. He believed in the honesty of men and was never rash in adverse judgment; if he caught any one in dishonesty, that person need never approach him again."

Mr. Fejérváry was accustomed to attend to his business affairs in person, depending upon no one else to collect the rent or oversee repairs and improvements. Some Davenport citizens recall very ceremonious calls of a landlord who acknowledged their greetings with a short military bow and a broad sweep of the hat. No woman entered his office that he did not rise and remain standing until she was seated.

When the family first settled in Davenport the schools were not deemed to be suitable for the two children, so Mrs. Fejérváry, who had been educated by a pupil of Johann Pestalozzi, assumed the responsibility for their education, with the able assistance of her husband. The library in the Fejérváry home was uncommonly extensive and it must have been a delightful place for the children. When Nicholas was fifteen he entered Griswold College in Davenport. The war cut short his academic career, however, for he enlisted at the age of seventeen and was killed soon afterward. His tragic fate was a terrible blow to his father, and although Mr. Fejérváry made a brave attempt to carry on for his wife and daughter much of the joy in life passed with the death of the boy who held all the promise of splendid manhood.

In May, 1859, the Davenport *Democrat* carried this news item: "Louis Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, writes to Nikolas Fejervary to return to Hungary and aid in the struggle for liberty". But

Mr. Fejérváry did not respond to the plea of his famous countryman. Possibly he realized that the time was not at hand for the winning of independence.

During the Civil War he was an ardent supporter of the Union, for he realized clearly that the tremendous struggle within the United States involved universal principles. Afterward he was a moving spirit in raising funds for the Civil War monument erected on Main Street as a tribute to those who died in the cause of freedom.

In politics Mr. Fejérváry did not definitely ally himself with any party — although he probably voted most frequently with the Republicans. He supported Horace Greeley in 1872 and later became an enthusiastic admirer of Grover Cleveland. A large portrait of President Cleveland hung in the library and Mr. Fejérváry often referred to him in conversations.

Although reared in the Catholic faith, Mr. Fejérváry had no intercourse with the church for many years. His religious views were strongly inclined toward the tenets of freethinking: certainly he was a firm advocate of toleration. While his friends were always welcome in his house, Sunday was the day he particularly enjoyed company. Once he remarked to a chance caller, "My daughter is at church. I don't go to church. Come here whenever you wish."

Worthy causes found him always ready to give of

his time and money, and the many charitable activities of his wife and daughter received his earnest support. Little kindnesses, such as sending Hungarian newspapers and magazines to his less fortunate countrymen and the saving of foreign stamps for youthful collectors, served to endear him to a wide circle of friends.

During his later years, Mr. Fejérváry was not active in public affairs — he never held a public office. He was for a long time, however, a member of the governing board of the Cook Home for Aged Women. Perhaps it was from that service that he learned the blessings of such an institution, for early in the nineties he determined to endow a similar home for aged men. Acquiring five acres of land (now well within the city), he proceeded to erect a suitable building and provide sufficient financial support for its proper maintenance. The Fejérváry Home was opened in 1893, but a peculiar clause in the qualifications for admission prevented many worthy aged men from sharing its benefits. According to the original plan only those men who had farmed twenty years in Scott County and were American born could be housed there. How few men who have farmed twenty years in Scott County are in need of such a home! In 1907, with the consent of his daughter, this provision was set aside.

The death of Mr. Fejérváry on September 19, 1895, marked the passing of one of the most picturesque and public spirited citizens Davenport has

ever known. Coming to Iowa, not as an exile or a fugitive but as an immigrant, he gave without stint the best that he had to his adopted country. A gentleman in the true sense of the word, and a scholar, the name of Nicholas Fejérváry remains the symbol of a man who gave more to life than he accepted from it.

Marie E. Meyer

On the Frontier in 1845

The steamer *Independence* reached this port (St. Louis) yesterday from Council Bluffs, situated on the Missouri River, about three hundred miles above Fort Leavenworth. She brought down four hundred and thirty packs of robes, peltries, and furs, the largest proportion of them for the American Fur Company. The *Independence* left here on the fifteenth of May with a cargo of about one hundred and twenty-five tons, principally corn and flour, for the government, which was delivered at the Bluffs for the use of the Pawnee and Ioway tribes of Indians, who were to meet commissioners on the part of the United States at that point on the first of June, for the purpose of negotiating a treaty.

We learn from the officers of the *Independence* that, after a difficult and dangerous passage of about fifteen days, they reached the place of their destination, where they found the Ioways and a large number of Indians belonging to the Oto tribe, in almost a starving condition, having been driven in from the plains by the Pawnees, who are continually committing depredations upon the neighboring tribes, and more particularly upon the defence-

[This item about conditions in the vicinity of Council Bluffs in the spring of 1845 is here reprinted from *Niles' National Register*, Vol. 68, p. 258, June 28, 1845. It appeared originally in the St. Louis *New Era*.— THE EDITOR]

less women and children of the cowardly Ioways and Otoes. These attacks of the Pawnees, together with their own indolence and unfrugal way of living, had compelled the Ioways and Otoes to come in to the Bluffs to avoid starving.

The Pawnees are a daring, reckless set of scoundrels, roving from place to place, having no fixed quarter to live in, and taking good care never to let pass an opportunity to depredate upon their more fortunate and weaker neighbors. With the object of making them occupy a more steady position, and to prevent, if possible, their frequent depredations upon the weaker tribes, a new treaty is to be formed with them.

The Sioux are said to be the only tribe in that quarter that the Pawnees stand in fear of. Recently a party of the former met eight Pawnees on the plains a short distance back of the Iowa point, four of whom they caught, killed, and scalped, flaying them, and stretched their skins over hoops, which they brought into the fort as trophies of victory. It is for the purpose of putting a stop to such scenes of bloodshed that the United States government sent commissioners to the Bluffs to treat with them.

The commissioners are also empowered to hold a treaty with the Pottawattamies for the purpose of purchasing their lands and removing them south of the Missouri. They are said to be a powerful and warlike tribe, much further advanced in civilization than most of the northwestern tribes.

The *Independence* reached the Bluffs on the 29th ultimo, discharged her cargo, took on a large number of robes and furs, and started back on the 2d instant. Up to the time of her departure, but few of the commissioners had arrived at Bellevue, Nebraska, the place of meeting for the Indian council.

The fur companies in that region are fast consolidating into the powerful and extensive associations known as the American Fur Company, who have this last winter purchased, besides the claims of the Union Fur Company, those of John Baptiste Roy and the Coopers, and arrangements are about to be made between them and the companies of Pierson and Ewing, by which it is said they will obtain the whole business in that section. The officers of the *Independence* report having met six boats belonging to them from Fort Pierre, heavily laden with robes and under the charge of Mr. Whiting, their agent, a short distance below St. Joseph, descending the river. They will perhaps reach this city in a few days.

Bowen's Prairie

Few travellers along the military road between Cascade and Monticello realize that they pass the site of the village of Bowen's Prairie, which during the latter half of the nineteenth century was a prosperous little settlement. To-day the region is a quiet farming community, and the remnants of bygone years are decreasing. As the visitor approaches from the east, he sees an old brick schoolhouse, and across the road a small cemetery. The schoolhouse is crumbling, its long diagonal cracks patched with mortar. The cemetery, with its uneven fence and its gates slightly ajar, is in a state of semipreservation. On the graves of some of the pioneers — for no one is buried there any more — the grass is kept trimmed by loving descendants. In other parts, the weeds have grown high, obscuring the worn headstones.

West of the cemetery the farmhouses are built more closely together, and stand very near the highway. Some are rather new, while others, although freshly painted, bear the marks of earlier days. One group of dwellings is particularly compact, the houses being placed almost as if comprising a city block. On one corner stands the old Congregational Church, discolored and weatherbeaten, with the boards beginning to wear away. Unused for many

years, it is one of the last landmarks of the former village.

It was nearly a century ago that the settlement of Bowen's Prairie was started. Hugh Bowen and John Flinn came to Iowa from Ohio in 1836, to seek a permanent home in the newly opened land. Charmed by the "beautiful scenery, the fertile soil, the salubrious springs, and other desirable attractions," they chose this location as being admirably fitted for farming.

The whole stretch of high, level prairie upland which lies between the north and south forks of the Maquoketa River west of Cascade and east of Plum Creek soon acquired the name of its first settler. Others came to make their homes "on Bowen's Prairie", and so the name became attached to an area comprising nearly two townships. The original settlement, which gradually developed into a village, was also called Bowen's Prairie, and it is to that restricted community that most of this story refers.

Hugh Bowen was well qualified to be the father of a community. He was a bachelor in the prime of life, a veteran of the Black Hawk War, and was both physically and mentally able to cope with the problems of pioneer life. R. J. Cleaveland, an early resident of Rome Township, Jones County, described him as being "erect as an Indian and clad in buckskin like one; of great energy and rare simplicity of character. He was a noble specimen of a Western man, untainted by the vices, and entirely free from

all the silken disguises, subterfuges and hypocracies which prevail in old settled countries; undaunted and fearless as a lion in the discharge of his duty; simple and confiding as a child in all the little suavities and amenities of life and illy prepared to guard against the advances of the well-dressed fancy-man, black-leg, gambler of the present day [1879]."

Hewing down the trees on the site they had chosen for their home, Bowen and Flinn constructed the first log cabin in the neighborhood. The structure did not long stand alone, for other men who were also seeking greater opportunities came from the east and joined the two hardy pioneers. Among these early patriarchs of the prairie were Moses Collins, Charles and Joshua Johnston, Alfred Weatherford, Thomas Denson, Gillespie Laughlin, Franklin Dalby, and Thomas Dickson. They were a rugged lot, with a vigor and determination that characterized the future generations on Bowen's Prairie.

Some of these early settlers were heads of families, while others, like Bowen himself, were bachelors. One of the latter group, William Moore, was not to remain single long, for he was courting Elvira Neal. The affair culminated in their marriage in 1837, and the tongues of both men and women buzzed with pleasurable excitement over the first wedding on the prairie. Happiness was predominant, overcoming trifling difficulties. The ceremony was to take place on Bowen's Prairie, and Jacob Hamilton,

a justice of the peace at Whitewater in Dubuque County, promised to officiate. Dressed in his best homespun, he came to the scene of the wedding on the appointed day, only to realize that he was outside his jurisdiction! The bride and bridegroom were momentarily disconsolate; it looked as if the wedding must be postponed. But the bride's face brightened when the justice suggested that the wedding be transferred to a spot just over the Dubuque County line, three or four miles distant. Accordingly Mr. Moore and Miss Neal, Mr. Hamilton, and Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Dickson, the only attendants, walked along the narrow road to the neighboring county. With the blue sky as a canopy, and a group of massive oak trees as a background, the marriage vows were exchanged. The only music was the song of thrushes, the only flowers, woodland blossoms; yet it is hard to imagine a more romantic setting. How much more beautiful and impressive was the ceremony than if it had been performed in the dimness of a log cabin!

Contrast this happy occasion with an event which occurred on the prairie in the following April, 1838, an event which brought sighs of sorrow whenever it was recalled for years afterward. Alfred Denson, a six-year-old boy, had been playing near his parents' cabin, with his mother watching him occasionally. At meal-time his mother went to the door to call him, but her calls brought no response. She went into the yard, shouting the boy's name,

and after looking in vain in all directions, decided that he was lost.

Mrs. Denson hastened to tell her husband, who spread the alarm throughout the neighborhood, after he had made a futile examination in the vicinity of his cabin. Thirty men, eager to find the lad, organized searching parties. Night came on, but torches were lighted as they resolutely continued to look for him. They searched the woods and valleys for miles around, crying "Alfred! Alfred!", and turning over every log, looking into every hollow tree and thicket. For four days and nights they tramped, their fears increasing daily. On the fifth day they found what they had sought, yet dreaded to find — the lad's body. It was in the timber only two miles from his home; he had apparently died the first night of cold and exposure. Sorrowfully the men carried the body to the Denson cabin, where the anxious parents, who by that time had given up hope for their child's safety, were gently notified. All the residents of the prairie gathered for the simple burial services.

The first white child born in Richland Township was Martha Ann Dixon, whose birth occurred in 1839. Mary E. Moore, born April 12, 1840, was the second. Her parents were the couple who had been married in the out-of-door ceremony two years before. Mary Moore grew to young womanhood on Bowen's Prairie, was married to Thomas A. King, and is now living with her son at West Union.

While Bowen's Prairie was still young, political development of Iowa Territory made elections necessary. The first election on Bowen's Prairie took place in 1838, in the cabin of Barrett Whittemore, who had just come from New Hampshire. Whittemore, later known as "the old schoolmaster of the prairie," was one of the most active workers in building up the settlement. When ground was broken at Iowa City in May, 1839, for the foundation of the Old Stone Capitol, it was Barrett Whittemore who was plowman.

At this first election eleven votes were cast. On August 5, 1839, a general election was held, and Hugh Bowen was named as the first sheriff of Jones County. One candidate for justice of the peace was accused of not being able to spell or sign his name. Denying the charge, he proceeded to show the voters he could qualify, and when he spelled Daniel "Danill," he produced an affidavit that he had always spelled his name that way.

In 1839 the sight of United States soldiers constructing the military road from Dubuque to Iowa City became familiar to the Bowen's Prairie settlers. In May the surveying engineers passed through the prairie, locating the highway substantially where it now passes. James L. Langworthy of Dubuque was in charge of the construction of the road.

While the settlement was being developed with all the energy of the residents, there was still time for

diversion. In later years the Jones County fair was established on Bowen's Prairie, and an incident that took place during August, 1839, was perhaps a forerunner of this annual exhibition. Charles Johnston and Alfred Weatherford wagered a gallon of whisky on the outcome of a horse race. Their horses were to run eighty rods to a "stake and rider" fence. The contest was exciting. As the horses neared the goal, Johnston slackened the pace, but Weatherford, with an eye on the whisky jug, kept on "with all the madness of a Calmuck Tartar". Within twenty feet of the fence his horse slipped, throwing the rider and demolishing the fence. However, Weatherford was jubilant, for he won the whisky.

When the land sales for Jones County were announced to begin on June 22, 1840, the settlers were disturbed, for they feared that outsiders might attempt to buy some of their claims. Two sections of Richland Township were sold on June 25th for $1,600. Many of the purchasers borrowed money at twenty-five or thirty per cent interest, because the government demanded cash. During the auction, the sales room was surrounded by a group of determined men, who were ready to inflict punishment on any one who dared to raise the bid of an actual settler. The government representatives, George L. Nightingale, auctioneer, and Thomas McKnight, receiver, wisely desired to avoid conflict, and made certain that the bona fide residents obtained the tracts they sought.

Bowen's Prairie became a separate election precinct on July 6, 1840. In the same year Hugh Bowen was appointed to take the official census. His report showed 290 males and 185 females residing on land which four years before had been inhabited only by Indians.

With an eager desire for knowledge, these men and women were not slow to take advantage of an act passed by the Territorial legislature providing for the establishment of common schools. Barrett Whittemore constructed the first schoolhouse on the prairie, completing it on October 19, 1840, and taught the twenty-nine pupils who enrolled in the first session, which opened on June 21, 1841. This term lasted until March 4, 1842, with but two vacations. The children apparently had more frequent vacations than those allotted, however, for the average attendance was fifteen pupils — half of the enrollment. Work at home or inability to reach the school because of bad weather were the common causes for absence. The tuition was $3 a quarter, except for children under seven years, for whom the rate was $2.50. For many years Whittemore continued as schoolmaster, teaching the settlers' children from such books as McGuffey's readers, Webster's elementary speller, and arithmetics by Smith, Pike, Daboll, and Smiley.

For years the schoolhouse was also the center of community activities; "spell downs", singing schools, and elections were held within its walls.

The settlers were of a social nature, and glad to break the routine of pioneer life with neighborhood gatherings. In June, 1841, the schoolhouse was the scene of the first of a series of religious meetings conducted by the Rev. Ira Blanchard, a Baptist minister from Castle Grove Township. He made appointments to preach there every fourth Sunday, and at his second meeting on July 24th, about seventy-five persons were present, the largest number assembled in Jones County up to that time. Some of the audience came fifteen miles to hear the sermon. John Gillman had conducted the first religious service on Bowen's Prairie on February 28, 1838, and preached every three weeks thereafter. Then each family had to be notified personally, but with the advent of the school, it was possible to reach many of the households by announcing a meeting to the pupils.

Gradually Bowen's Prairie was coming in closer contact with the rest of the middle west. In 1840 the weekly mail was still brought on horseback over the new military road, but in 1844 Frink and Walker started a four-horse stage coach which ran daily from Dubuque to Iowa City. The arrival of the stage was always an important event, and both driver and passengers were questioned eagerly for news from the east.

It was not until March 24, 1849, that a post office was established at Bowen's Prairie. Hitherto mail had been addressed to Cascade. Ebenezer Little

was appointed the first postmaster, his home serving also as an office. The mail itself was kept in a walnut secretary. Mr. Little was of Puritan descent, and possessed an uncompromising conscience. At one time Mrs. F. M. Hicks, his daughter, received a newspaper from a New York man who enclosed his written card, but Postmaster Little would not let her read the paper until the sender had forwarded extra postage for the written matter.

News of gold in California rang in the ears of many Bowen's Prairie men, who saw this as a means of obtaining capital to improve their farms. Not a few groups assembled supplies, and resolutely set out for the west during the late forties. Mrs. Thomas King relates that among the first of the men bound for California was a Scotchman named Micklejohns, who conceived the idea that he could make a fortune selling honey there. He set out for the west in 1844 with a hive of bees on a wheelbarrow, and was never heard from again. Many of the gold seekers crossed the western prairies directly, while others went back east and took the water route to California, going around Cape Horn, or crossing the Isthmus of Panama by foot. The majority went by water at least one way.

Meanwhile their wives and children were left alone in the log cabins on Bowen's Prairie, spending lonely days thinking of husbands and fathers whom they might never see again. Some of the gold seekers were lost, but most of them returned safely

to their Iowa homes after absences of from eighteen months to two years. Nor were their journeys fruitless, for several washed enough gold to buy fertile farm land and to build substantial homes.

The return of the Iowans from California marked the beginning of the most successful decade for the prairie settlement. The men began to farm in earnest; they were no longer pioneers, but residents of a settled community. They considered conveniences and improvements for which previously they had neither time nor money.

The building of the Bowen's Prairie Congregational Church in 1853-1854 was one of the first signs of community development. Since 1844 the New England descendants had worshipped at Cascade, but memories of the trim white churches "back east" were strong. A Bowen's Prairie Congregational Society was therefore organized on April 2, 1853, and in October, the foundation for a church building was laid. By the following June the structure was completed and dedicated with appropriate services. The first pastor was the Rev. E. Wright of Anamosa, who with four other men and five women constituted the list of charter members.

The neat frame church was the pride of Bowen's Prairie, admired even by those who were of other denominations. The choir at one time was composed of sixty voices with Otis Whittemore as director, and their singing brought visitors from all parts of the county. The steeple of the church contained

a bell which called the congregation to worship every Sunday. Part of the funds for the bell were contributed by Asa Bowen, Otis and Barrett Whittemore, and other men, while an additional $100 was raised at a bell festival.

Otis Whittemore, who had donated the land for the church site, also gave a plot to the Methodist congregation for a building place in 1858. The Rev. Mr. Briar, who had been conducting Methodist services as a circuit rider, found a sufficient number of worshippers to start a definite organization.

It was the Congregational Church, however, which formed the nucleus for the actual settlement which to-day is pointed out as the Bowen's Prairie of the past. New houses were grouped closely around it, with the steeple towering above the other buildings as an inspiration. The cemetery was a short distance to the east, and in 1854 Otis Whittemore opened a store near-by, at which he sold dry goods and groceries for many years. C. G. Banghart was at one time proprietor of another store. In 1853 the immediate territory around the church was divided into lots, and again on July 21, 1856, another plat of a hundred lots was recorded. Thus Bowen's Prairie began to assume the outward appearances of a town, although a portion of the residents lived in a radius of four or five miles. The village was never incorporated.

The Civil War was perhaps the turning point in the growth of Bowen's Prairie. Until the sixties

the community had been constantly increasing in population and prosperity, but the onrush of the war, with increasing calls for enlistment, checked the development temporarily. Afterward, Bowen's Prairie seemed unable to recuperate.

Until July 19, 1861, Jones County had sent no company of its own to the Union army. Four men from Bowen's Prairie — Howard Smith, Orin Crane, Theodore Hopkins, and Isaac White — had enlisted in Captain William E. Leffingwell's mounted company. "Their departure for the seat of war was the occasion of a very pleasant scene which occurred at their rendezvous in the beautiful grove near the residence of Otis Whittemore. The Home Guards of Bowen's Prairie escorted them some miles on their way, after a solemn leave-taking."

Isaac White had not yet enlisted, but when Curtis Stone rode up on his finest horse, White said, "If I had that horse, I would enlist, too."

"Take it," was Stone's reply. "It is yours." White vaulted into the saddle and started for the place of encampment.

On the same date the following month, a newly organized company of Jones County volunteers met at Clark's grove near Monticello, for the presentation of a flag by the women of Bowen's Prairie. Men from Scotch Grove, Clay Township, and other communities arrived during the morning, and after partaking of a dinner furnished by the landlord of the Monticello House formed a procession of sixty-

four teams. The parade went to the grove with banners flying and drums beating, and was met by a procession from Bowen's Prairie. Emma Crane, representing the women of Bowen's Prairie, presented the flag with a "flowery and fiery" speech, exhorting the soldiers to be loyal to the Union and to be courageous in battle. Captain David Harper gave the acceptance with a pledge that his men would return with the flag or on it.

Similar incidents followed, as the calls for volunteers became more frequent and insistent. The majority of Bowen's Prairie residents were intensely loyal, but a few who criticized the Union were compelled "by hempen persuasion" to take the oath of allegiance. While the men were in the South fighting for their country, the women and old men operated the farms, and in their spare time the women scraped lint for use in military hospitals.

The days after the close of the war when the husbands and fathers were reunited with their families were joyous occasions. Tales of heroism and suffering were related to eager wives and children. A reunion for Jones County soldiers was held on August 14, 1865, at Clark's grove, the same place which the men had left three and four years before with heavy hearts. A large southern flag captured in Columbia, South Carolina, was proudly displayed by Company H of the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry, whose roll carried many of the Bowen's Prairie soldiers.

But the trials of the war were soon forgotten in

the zeal to renew farming activities. The men had perhaps aged more than their years implied, but they had a quickened interest in their homes and the welfare of their families. Interest in education grew. Many of the farmers sent their sons to Lenox College at Hopkinton after they finished the district school, while others enrolled in the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts at Ames. The general custom was for these young men to attend college a term, and then teach a country school for a like period.

Farming was established on a sounder basis; the men began to raise better stock and to plan their work more scientifically. In 1867 the Ross cheese factory was started on Bowen's Prairie, near the residence of F. M. Hicks. It was a two-story building, twenty-six by one hundred feet in size, and as "neat and tidy as an old maid's band box," according to a representative of the Monticello *Express* who visited the place. The factory received the milk of one hundred and fifty cows, and manufactured as much as four hundred pounds of cheese a day.

The period of reconstruction, however, was not conducive to general prosperity, and while the Bowen's Prairie residents were financially able to weather the period of hard times, the settlement as a whole did not progress. Furthermore, the first settlers were growing old, and as the sixties and the seventies slipped by, they dreamed of spending their declining years in well-earned rest and comfort. As

a result many removed to Monticello, while a few went to Cascade. In both towns they built fine homes and did much to improve the communities. Their farms were sold to energetic young Germans who had emigrated to the United States, and to Irish farmers who had been living in the Cascade and Dubuque neighborhoods. The influx of Germans was noticed particularly in 1868, when a German Reformed Church was built in Richland Township on the south edge of the Bowen's Prairie district. The Rev. George Rettig was the first pastor. After a few years the organization of the church was changed to German Presbyterian. Services are still held there for a large congregation.

Even in 1879 the settlement was dwindling. The *History of Jones County* published in that year asserted, "Twenty years ago this was a village of considerable importance, but the building up of Monticello caused the removal of business to that place."

In 1893 the Congregational church on the prairie was passing into disuse, and was transferred back to the building society. In a few more years it was closed entirely, except for an occasional funeral, most of the members having affiliated with the Monticello Congregational Church. The building was eventually sold, the bell being purchased by the Golden Congregational Church at Buck Creek in Delaware County. When a group of men from that community came to remove the bell, they were halted in the church yard by Susie Flint, an old woman who

lived in the shadow of the house of worship. With a shotgun under her arm, she defied the men to enter the church, and it was only after considerable pacification that she relented.

The post office department records the official death of Bowen's Prairie on November 29, 1902, when the village post office of Bowen — the latter part of the name had been removed in June, 1883 — was discontinued. For some years the office had been virtually inactive, but the establishment of rural routes from Monticello and Cascade made its use entirely unnecessary.

Thus the opening of the twentieth century saw the disappearance of one of the earliest settlements in east central Iowa. In less than sixty years it had been born, had enjoyed a steady increase in population, and then gradually slumped. What caused the death of a village that at one time had been so flourishing? Perhaps the question is best answered in the prophetic comment: "Had Bowen's Prairie secured a railroad, it would have been one of the most important towns in the county."

THEODORE F. KOOP

Comment by the Editor

ALTITUDE AND SETTLEMENT

Is there any relation between altitude and human migration? pondered the Mentor, not aware that he spoke aloud.

Why do you wonder, inquired the Man from Iowa, who happened to overhear the query.

In the habitat of other forms of life, altitude seems to be very important, if not, indeed, a determining factor, continued the Mentor, scarcely cognizant of his auditor. Various types of vegetation seek their proper levels where conditions are most favorable. Alpine flowers do not flourish at sea level, nor do orchids bloom on the mountain top. There is a big difference between the jack rabbit of the plains and the cony of the Rockies. Perhaps the same natural law applies to human kind.

What you say may be true of extremes, commented the Iowan, with an air of doubt, but can the rule be applied to a large area in which the differences in elevation are relatively slight? Corn seems to grow as tall in Lee as in Dickinson County. Mountain ranges have indeed been effective barriers between racial groups, but what possible influence did altitude have on the settlement of Iowa?

No doubt accessibility, building material and fuel,

water power, navigability of rivers, and the peculiar assumption that the prairie was sterile, replied the Mentor, were dominant factors, yet altitude was incidental to most of them. Trace the advance of the settlers across your Commonwealth, and you will find that they followed in general the courses of the wooded streams — and the direction of the valleys indicates the lay of the land. Is it not a fact that the highest portion of Iowa was settled last?

Yes, agreed the Iowan, but that might be explained by the remoteness of that section from the source of migration.

Only partially, insisted the Mentor. Council Bluffs and Sioux City on the Missouri River were thriving towns before Clarinda and Cherokee were founded, while Des Moines was the capital of the State when Mason City was only a frontier village. The pioneers, like an inundation, sought the lower levels first, without regard for latitude and longitude. A map of the spread and rise of population in Iowa according to the several censuses might show surprising likeness to the physical topography of the State.

It just occurs to me, added the Man from Iowa, that this year Mason City, Marshalltown, and probably several other cities are celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of their establishment. If some enterprising geographer should draw a line through all such places he would thereby locate the boundary of the frontier in 1853. Then we might see how much altitude had to do with settlement.

J. E. B.

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