

# The **P**ALIMPSEST

JULY 1945

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PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT IOWA CITY IOWA  
UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912



## 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

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## THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

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

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the 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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PRICE — 10 cents per copy: \$1 per year: free to Members

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XXVI

ISSUED IN JULY 1945

NO. 7

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## Independence Day In 1845

On July 4, 1845, the United States observed the sixty-ninth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. During this period the thirteen original States had increased to twenty-seven with the admission of Florida on March 3, 1845. In this same period the population of the nation had multiplied ten-fold. In the campaign of 1844, James K. Polk, a Democrat, had been elected President on such burning issues as the annexation of Texas and acquisition of Oregon. John C. Fremont had explored the Rockies, Brigham Young was preparing to lead his Mormon followers across Iowa, the railroad and the telegraph were being extended westward with unparalleled speed, steamships were crossing the Atlantic in less than two weeks — the whole nation was aglow with the spirit of Manifest Destiny.

Possibly no other region was more conscious of this spirit than the Territory of Iowa. Its pioneers had watched a wilderness transformed into a



thriving Territory within the space of twelve years. These pioneers had framed a State constitution in 1844 only to reject it when the United States Congress had dared to reduce the area of the new commonwealth. Enterprising, self-reliant, and politically astute, the voters of Iowa were determined that the State to be carved out between the Mississippi and Missouri should be commensurate with their dreams in size and resources. Meanwhile, good citizens that they were, they had prepared to join their fellow Americans in the observance of Independence Day in 1845.

The population of the Territory of Iowa was approaching one hundred thousand in 1845. Iowa City was the capital, Burlington and Dubuque were the largest cities, while Davenport, Muscatine, and Fort Madison were flourishing towns. The observance of Independence Day, however, was not restricted to the larger cities. The story of various local celebrations may be gleaned from the scattered files of newspapers that were published in the Territory of Iowa a century ago.

Although a file of a Dubuque newspaper is not available for this period, a Burlington editor fortunately reported that the program of fireworks, if carried out at Dubuque on July 4th, would be "one of the most magnificent exhibitions of the kind ever witnessed in this country." Burlington it-



self observed Independence Day in a very appropriate style in 1845. "In the morning", according to the *Hawk-Eye* of July 10th, "the Sabbath School children and Teachers convened in the Methodist Church, where patriotic addresses were delivered to them by Messrs. W. H. Starr, C. C. Shackford and C. Hendrie. After the address the schools were marshaled by Col. Geo. Partridge and marched thro' some of the principal streets, accompanied by the Burlington City Band. They then partook of a bountiful collation prepared for them by the ladies of the city, and appeared highly delighted with the entertainment. There were nearly four hundred children in the procession and this made quite an imposing appearance."

At noon the older folks assembled at the Methodist Church where the Reverend A. Coleman officiated as Chaplain. After the Declaration of Independence was read, C. C. Shackford delivered a "chaste and eloquent" oration which was received with great favor by all. The exercises were interspersed with "first rate music" by the band and the choir, the former having a big stake in the day's activities since the proceeds from the ticket sale for the dinner which followed was to be used to buy new band instruments.

After the patriotic exercises in the Methodist



Church, the citizens formed a procession and marched to the Market House where a sumptuous dinner was prepared by Captain Wightman. The editor regretted that the toasts were not handed in for publication in the *Hawk-Eye* but praised Governor John Chambers for the sentiment expressed in "Our Boundaries,— Give us room".

The program at Burlington did not end with dinner and toasts. "In the evening," the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* recorded, "Mr. Tallant, Pyrotechnist, gave a display of Fire-works, and Mr. Kern let off a large Balloon, which made one of the grandest ascensions we ever saw. It kept in sight about three quarters of an hour bearing a westerly direction, and we have not heard from it since. In addition to the Balloon and Fire works, a large Ball came off at the New Hotel which was kept up until morning. The whole made up a very pleasant celebration."

The other towns in Iowa did not observe Independence Day with the same enthusiasm exhibited in 1838, when citizens could celebrate both the natal day of the United States and the birthday of the newly created Territory of Iowa. As usual newspaper editors took the initiative in attempting to stir up a good old-fashioned Fourth of July. "Do the citizens of this place or of this county intend celebrating the approaching anniversary?" queried



the Davenport *Gazette* on June 12, 1845. If so, the editor felt that "preliminary arrangements" should soon be made, and offered the columns of the *Gazette* for their publication. Apparently Davenport decided to observe a "safe and sane" Fourth, for on July 3rd the editor commented as follows in his Weekly Gossip column.

"There are no doubt those living to-day enjoying health and rejoicing in the prospect of a temporary happiness on the morrow, who on the eve of that day will slumber in death, violently caused by an improper mode of celebrating it. Hardly an Anniversary day has passed since the Declaration, but that in celebrating it, accidents have occurred from the premature discharge of cannon. We opine that we will not have to chronicle such a casualty as having happened in this county, as its citizens have unanimously agreed to spend the day in the most quiet manner. We perceive our neighbors intend keeping the day by a general turn out of the Sabbath School Scholars. They failed to extend an invitation to the citizens of this place, but we trust such negligence will be disregarded, as it no doubt was entirely unintentional. The cordial welcome usually extended to our citizens, we trust, will cause those fond of such displays to pass the day in Rock Island."

A number of prominent Iowans participated in



a unique Independence Day celebration aboard the steamboat *War Eagle* at Galena. After an old-fashioned Fourth of July dinner, the *War Eagle's* brass band struck up "Hail Columbia". Toastmaster Johnson of Bloomington (Muscatine) introduced the postprandial program with a toast to the Day we Celebrate. By special request Wilson Primm of St. Louis sang the "Star Spangled Banner". The editor of the *Davenport Gazette*, Alfred Sanders, responded with a toast to the Ladies. J. O. Phister toasted Bloomington and Burlington with the hope, "May Muscatine Slough never swallow the one, and Flint Hills crush the other."

At Iowa City the following announcement appeared in the *Iowa Capital Reporter* of May 31st. "The citizens of Iowa City and vicinity, who are favorable to celebrating in a proper manner, the approaching anniversary of our National Freedom, are requested to meet at the Convention Chamber on Tuesday evening, next, June 3d, for the purpose of making the necessary arrangements."

Apparently no concerted action was taken at this meeting for on June 25th the same paper noted that the Methodist Episcopal Sabbath School would celebrate the sixty-ninth anniversary of American Independence at the church. Parents



of the children and the public were invited to attend the exercises.

Although most of the larger towns did not observe the Fourth of July with the usual fanfare in 1845, many people did go out in the country to celebrate with rural communities. The editor of the *Iowa Capital Reporter* observed "joy and hilarity" among the two hundred citizens who celebrated Independence Day at John Fry's farm on Old Man's Creek in Johnson County. The people of that neighborhood gathered on the morning of July 4th, appointed Thomas M. Elliott as President of the Day, elected Thomas M. Smyth as Secretary, and named William Elliott, Edward Carson, Garret D. Eccles, and Martial Fry as marshals. A line of procession was then formed and marched to the "soul inspiring strains of the fife and drum." After returning to the starting point, all bowed their heads while the Reverend P. G. Patterson offered prayer. The Declaration of Independence was read by Calvin Cole. Almon H. Humphrey then delivered the Oration in a creditable manner. The procession reformed after the speaking and marched to a grove where a sumptuous dinner had been prepared.

After the removal of the cloth the celebrants cheered loudly as thirteen regular and twenty-one volunteer toasts were offered. The first regular



toast was to Our Country while the second honored the Tree of Liberty. The celebrants next quaffed toasts to the President and Vice President, the Army and Navy, and the Memory of George Washington. The bereavement of all Americans over the recent death of Andrew Jackson was acknowledged in a toast praising the "noble qualities" of Old Hickory as a "Hero and Statesman". Toasts were also drunk to the memory of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence, the Heroes of Bunker Hill, to Warren and Montgomery, and to William Henry Harrison, whose name would be revered as long as freemen live. Tributes to America and Ireland, Our Flag, and the Union concluded the regular toasts.

Of the twenty-one volunteer toasts offered at Old Man's Creek in 1845, fully half dealt with Iowa and the local scene. Garret D. Eccles hailed the "Fair Daughters of Columbia", while Lemuel Humphrey countered with "Iowa — May her sons and daughters be as virtuous as her soil is productive." Eccles rose again and again to voice patriotic sentiments. Thomas Smyth, the secretary of the celebration, was almost as fervent as Eccles, proposing toasts to the Orator of the Day, the Surviving Officers and Soldiers of the Revolution, and the Day we Celebrate. Colbert Anderson hoped that the ground which "drank the blood of the



sons of the Revolution would never give bread to tyrants." William Elliott hailed the Volunteers of the United States while Martial Fry remembered the Sages and Heroes of the Revolution. George Paul toasted the "Citizens of Old Man's Creek — true and unflinching patriots, they celebrate this day in a manner becoming the sons of '76." To the "Ladies of Old Man's Creek", Charles H. Berryhill gallantly declared "our arms their protection, their arms our reward." Equally gracious was Almon H. Humphrey in hoping that the ladies who had prepared the dinner would "live long to enjoy the blessings of liberty and fare as sumptuously as we have this day." A. H. Palmer closed by toasting Old Man's Creek Precinct. "In respect to the virtues of industry and public spirit, cordial and generous hospitality, and a deep and abiding love of country, her citizens will suffer nothing by a comparison with those of any older portion of our common country. If the entire population of the Territory emulates them in these virtues, we may rest assured that the day is at hand when Iowa will make her advent as the twenty-eighth star in the glorious constellation of the American Union, and assume that pre-eminent rank among her sister states, for which the God of Nature has designed her."

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN



## Iowa Birds Then and Now

It was in 1843 that John James Audubon explored the western border of Iowa while on an expedition up the Missouri River to secure material for his *Quadrupeds of North America*. His daily account of the journey has proved of great historical value as to early-day navigation, hunting, wildlife, and Indians. Of particular interest is his record of birds found in the Iowa country, since it reveals that many present species were here a century ago while others have become extinct.

The eastern goldfinch, now the ornithological symbol of Iowa, was not listed in Audubon's record for Iowa, though he saw it in the northwestern corner of Missouri. This bird was unanimously adopted as the State bird by the legislature in 1933 at the request of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. The goldfinch is one of the most light-hearted of Iowa's permanent residents.

Audubon recorded the names of fifty-two birds sighted in the territory along the Missouri River now included in the State of Iowa. At present, it has been reliably reported that Iowa is the habitat of 289 species of birds. In addition there are fifty-six rare or accidental visitors. Nineteen



species have been added to the Iowa list recently, since they have been reported frequently in recent years. Six species have been dropped from the Iowa list as now extinct here. One hundred and thirty-five species of birds breed in Iowa according to reliable nesting records of the last twenty years.

Iowa, lying in the great triangle between the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, is favorably located on the flyways of vast numbers of migrating wild ducks, geese, and swans. Before reaching the southwest corner of Iowa Territory on May 8, 1843, Audubon noticed, besides parrakeets, a "new Finch", and many other small birds, "an abundance of Ducks, some White Pelicans," and several sandhill cranes. Four days later, near the mouth of the Little Sioux River he reported "more Geese than usual as well as Mallards and Wood Ducks." Wood ducks in years past became very uncommon, but restricted shooting has somewhat restored them.

Vast numbers of migrating water fowl are ushered north through Iowa in the spring by State and Federal game wardens, and south in the fall by the sportsmen. The mallard, blue-winged teal, wood duck, redhead, ruddy duck, shoveller, and pintail occasionally nest in Iowa, mainly in the wildlife refuges. In the fall migrations the mal-



lards are the most numerous, followed by the blue-winged teal, pintail, green-winged teal, lesser scaup, canvas-back, shoveller, redhead, baldpate, ruddy, gadwall, ring-necked, buffle-head, and hooded mergansers. Iowa is still a happy hunting ground for ducks.

On Audubon's return trip down the Missouri, he reached the mouth of the Big Sioux River on October 1st and reported "Geese very abundant", but the party stopped to shoot turkeys on the future site of Sioux City. None of the night-flying, weird-honking geese nest in Iowa. The more numerous of these birds of passage today are the blue geese, followed by the lesser snow geese, Canada, and white-fronted geese.

Audubon listed "plenty of Sandhill Cranes" as well as "two Swans, several Pelicans, and abundance of Geese and Ducks" near the mouth of the Little Sioux on October 3rd. None of the trumpeter swans and only occasionally the whistling swans now rest in Iowa on their migratory flights. The sandhill cranes still migrate through Iowa but they are rare. Since most of the marshes have been drained, native water birds have tended to disappear, but the nests of American coots can still be found. The king and Virginia rails and the gallinules pass through Iowa, occasionally nesting here.



At the site of Council Bluffs Audubon noticed two yellow-crowned night herons, which now are only accidental wanderers this far north. However, many of the picturesque non-game birds nest here, such as the belted kingfisher, least bittern, pied-billed grebe, green heron, black-crowned night heron, and great blue heron, the latter mentioned by Audubon. Increasing in their southern breeding areas, the little blue heron and the American egret are now found in Iowa on their post-breeding flight, only rarely nesting here. Ornithologists enjoy reporting the "find" of an American egret or a little blue heron in Iowa.

White pelicans, noted by Audubon along the Little Sioux River, are still seen during migrations, together with cormorants and loons. The large, circling gulls which add such beauty to Iowa lakes for a month or two in the spring are the herring, ring-billed, and Franklin's gulls, the latter being the "black-headed gulls" mentioned by Audubon. The black and Forster's terns are abundant spring and fall visitors, a few black terns probably nest here, while the common tern is rather uncommon, and the Caspian tern has but recently been included in the Iowa list. All are beautiful birds as they dip and turn in their flight.

None of the common species of shore birds was mentioned by Audubon along the Iowa border, but



he saw yellowshanks, tell-tale godwits, and solitary snipes in northwest Missouri. Only three commonly nest in Iowa — the spotted sandpiper, the killdeer, and the upland plover. The common migrating species include the lesser yellow-legs, semipalmated, solitary, pectoral, and least sandpipers. Less numerous, but perhaps more distinctive, are the black-bellied, golden, and semipalmated plovers, Wilson's snipe, American woodcock, and Wilson's phalarope. Fewer still, but therefore more exciting to find, are the greater yellow-legs, stilt sandpiper, Hudsonian and marbled godwits, sanderling, and dowitcher. Perhaps a few of these twenty shore birds might have been included in Audubon's notation on May 8th — "we saw many small birds, but nothing new or very rare."

On his return trip in October he might have seen many upland game birds if he had taken an excursion to the Iowa prairies beyond the bluffs, for grouse and quail nested there. Large numbers of bob-white quail still find cover in the southern half of the State, and the alien ring-necked pheasants have increased rapidly in the northern half. The Hungarian partridge nests in the northwest section of Iowa, while the rare ruffed grouse is slowly increasing in the northeast section, and the once-common prairie chicken is again sighted in widely



separated areas. The regulations of the State Conservation Commission and "plantings" are credited for this increase of upland game birds.

Audubon mentioned seeing turkey buzzards, a fish hawk, and a swallow-tailed hawk here a century ago. Turkey vultures are occasionally found during the summer, and a few scattered bald eagles. Prairie falcons occur, but are rare. Among the beneficial hawks nesting in Iowa are the red-tailed, marsh, sparrow, Cooper's, broad-winged, red-shouldered, and Swainson's hawks, while the very rare duck and pigeon hawks are not increasing in numbers. The "swallow-tailed hawk" or kite listed by Audubon, sometimes called the "snake hawk", has in recent years almost entirely disappeared from the State. The "fish hawk", now called osprey, is an uncommon migrant and only a rare summer resident along Iowa's larger streams.

The mysterious nocturnal habits of the owls add interest to Iowa bird life. The most common permanent residents are the screech owls, barred owls, and great-horned owls. Not so common are the American long-eared, short-eared, and barn owls.

Nearly every Iowa pond, lake, or creek is policed by the military belted kingfisher. There also are the "red-winged starlings" and the "yellow-



headed troupials" listed by Audubon, while circling overhead are the bank, cliff, rough-winged, and "green-backed" swallows he frequently mentioned. The "raven" and "fish crow" he reported are now almost extinct here. Audubon was interested in "two magpies in a cage, that had been caught in nooses, by the legs", at the dragoon camp. "Their actions, voice, and general looks, assured me as much as ever, that they are the same species as found in Europe." Magpies are now uncommon migrants in Iowa.

Although there are several woodland nesting birds which are songless, such as the phoebe, crested, least, and alder flycatchers, and the migrating olive-sided and yellow-bellied flycatchers, Iowa is favored with numerous nesting woodland birds which sing from early spring to midsummer. Bird friends enjoy the "purity" song of the returning bluebirds, the lavish song of the song sparrow, the "sweet and low" of the tiny blue-gray gnatcatcher, the preaching red-eyed vireo, the voluble yellowthroat, the plaintive pewee, the varied warble of the redstart, the gossiping yellow-breasted chat, the "che-wink" of the towhee, the hoarse warble of the scarlet tanager, the cheery goldfinch, the ringing tones of the wood thrush, and the low, emphatic warble of the Bell's vireo which Audubon named for one of his boat companions.



May is the month of pure joy for Iowa ornithologists, for then the great wave of colorful songsters, the warblers, linger here on their northern journey. It is both a joy and a test of ear and eye to identify these active soloists. Audubon saw many of them in northern Missouri, but he soon outran most of the little migrants. First to arrive is the "yellow-rumped" (myrtle) warbler which Audubon listed as being shot by Harris, followed by the brilliant "Blackburnian warbler" and "yellow-winged warbler" which he saw near the Little Sioux River on May 12th. In addition Iowans welcome the dreamy black-throated green warbler, the large and poky black-polls, the chestnut cap and wagging tail of the palm warbler, Wilson's yellow suit and black cap, Canada's yellow dress and necklace of black beads, the chestnut-sided warbler, the mourning warbler whose songs and habits resemble our nesting northern yellowthroat, the black and white warbler with its creeper-like habits, the prothonotary's deep yellow tuxedo, the tiny elusive blue-winged warbler, the restless orange-crowned tree-top singer, the parula's lazy, sleepy song, the Nashville's "che-see", and the tardy Tennessee. When it is warbler time in Iowa the avian world reaches its climax in color and song.

There are numerous troubadours among the



migrating sparrows, often called "buntings" and "finches" by Audubon, among which are heard the morning anthem of the fox sparrow, the clear, sad cadence of the white-crowned sparrow, the "pea-bo-dy-bird" of the white-throated sparrow, the sputtering warble of the Lincoln, the insect trill of the grasshopper sparrow, the broken trill of the swamp sparrow, the squeaky song of the Leconte, the high-pitched trill of the Savannah, the happy trill of the lark sparrow, the cicada song of the clay-colored, and the whistled notes of the Harris sparrow which was named by Audubon for a boat companion. Audubon mentioned particularly field sparrows, chipping sparrows, lark and Henslow's "buntings", and Savannah and Lincoln's "finches".

Although he observed that "Robins are very scarce", he saw some of their cousins, the thrushes. The Wilson's, gray-cheeked, olive-backed, hermit, and wood thrushes are said to be the most beautiful singers in the avian choir. The best songster of the group, the wood thrush, remains in Iowa throughout the summer.

Iowa is favored with many roadside carolers nesting in nearby fields, meadows, and bushes, greeting the passerby with their songs. First is heard the prairie horned lark's bubbling warble on soaring wings, followed by the "spring-o'-the-year" song of the eastern meadowlark, which is



thinner and less musical than the western meadow-lark's wild, clear whistle — both heard in Iowa. A few bobolinks are heard singing about "Robert of Lincoln", while our State bird is one of the happiest of roadside singers. Then arrive the brown thrashers, the first among the mockers, and two birds mentioned by Audubon — the brown-capped chipping sparrows singing in their rapid monotone, and the pink-billed field sparrows with their plaintive song. After the lively notes of the song sparrow, the vesper sparrow offers his soft, sweet version of the same melody. The Henslow's weak notes are lost in the piercing rounds of the yellow warbler and in the inquiries of the northern yellowthroat with his black mask asking "Which way sir? Which is it?"

Inspired by these songs the eastern kingbirds and the encroaching Arkansas kingbirds add their piping notes, while the bronzed grackles and the cowbirds (the latter mentioned by Audubon) try to do likewise. The innumerable dickcissels and the indigo buntings give a continuous performance from the telegraph wires. Migrant shrikes serve as highway patrolmen of the air in summer and the northwestern shrikes take charge during the winter months.

English sparrows and starlings have not yet driven out the song birds nesting about our homes



and orchards. The bluebirds with their mellow warble, the mourning doves with their plaintive notes, the black-billed and yellow-billed cuckoos with their predictions of the weather, the military warble of the robins, the whistling carol of the rose-breasted grosbeak, the busy wrens, and brilliant Baltimore orioles contribute to the charm of Iowa towns and country. Audubon declared that the woods a few miles above the Missouri boundary were "fairly alive with House Wrens" on May 9th, and he noticed also some martins, grosbeaks, a bluebird, and a northern titmouse. The orioles he had left behind in Missouri. Iowans now enjoy also the brilliant song of the cardinals, the twittering notes of the barn swallows, the mockery of the catbirds, and the sweet trill of the warbling vireos.

Iowa's winter landscape is made interesting by the numerous woodpeckers and the little brown creepers spiraling up the trees. The hairy and downy woodpeckers remain with us, and many of the red-headed and red-bellied woodpeckers and northern flickers prefer Iowa winters, while the red-shafted flicker and yellow-bellied sapsucker are rarely found here. Audubon mentioned the pileated woodpecker, an uncommon bird in Iowa for years, but now rapidly increasing its range in the woods along our streams.



The Iowa Ornithologists' Union members have identified from forty to seventy-five permanent resident birds on their Christmas bird census hikes. Nearly always included in these lists are the red-tailed, sharp-shinned, and sparrow hawks, the bob-white quail, ring-necked pheasant, mourning doves, the long-eared, short-eared, barred, and screech owls, the red-headed, red-bellied, hairy, and downy woodpeckers, and flickers. Winter days in Iowa are enlivened with the rollicking songs and antics of the black-capped chickadee, the "yank, yank, yank" of the white and red-breasted nuthatches, and the scream of the gangster blue jay.

Iowa receives a few winter callers which nest near the Arctic circle and migrate south for the winter, among which are flocks of tree sparrows, slate-colored juncos, fluffy redpolls, the elegant Bohemian waxwing tramps, and the gypsying Lapland longspurs. A few northern shrikes, American rough-legged hawks, goshawks, saw-whet owls, and snowy owls drop down to call during the winter months. Among erratic visitors during cold weather are Carolina wrens, winter wrens, and purple finches, while occasionally flocks of red crossbills and pine siskins come to feed in our coniferous trees, paying with their songs as they circle in flight.



Audubon spent only seven days in May and six in October along the western border of Iowa over a hundred years ago. His observations were very limited and his records incomplete, but the birds he mentioned constitute an important list in the ornithological history of Iowa. Like any amateur, this famous naturalist was excited over each discovery. Perhaps his greatest thrill in Iowa occurred on May 10th while he was sitting in front of Captain J. H. K. Burgwin's tent on the present site of Council Bluffs. Hearing a strange bird call from a tree overhead, he "looked up and saw the first Yellow-headed Troupial alive that ever came across my own migrations." He observed the habits of these blackbirds with interest and collected several specimens. They are still found mainly on the Missouri slope. But the parrakeets and turkeys he saw there are gone.

FAYE BRICE MACMARTIN



## An Iowa Anecdote

### CROSSING THE MISSISSIPPI

Michael Henely and his young wife, Mary Jane Kirkley Henely, with their small son, Martin, under two years of age, pioneered westward from Marietta, Ohio, in the winter of 1851-52. Quite typically they brought their possessions in a covered wagon. With others venturing their fortunes in the new State of Iowa, they were obliged to stop on the east bank of the Mississippi River at Savanna, Illinois where they awaited the freezing of the Father of Waters before they could cross to Sabula, in Iowa. Meanwhile, they found accommodations at the hotel and impatiently observed the weather, hoping for a cold snap. Finally the temperature dropped and the ice in the river froze to a thickness guaranteed by the local dwellers to be perfectly safe for the transportation of wagons and people.

The story of that crossing has become as much of a legend in the Henely family as that of Eliza's escape over the ice in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Mary Jane enjoyed relating the adventure to her children and grandchildren.

"While the ice was pronounced safe for us to



travel across it," she used to say, "Michael was not willing that the baby and I should accompany him until he had himself tested it.

"He gave me the money belt in which our funds were being carried and asked me to put it on. He said that if anything should happen to him while making the crossing we would not be left without means to return to the old home.

"Obediently I put on the money belt. I wrapped the baby in my prized Broché shawl that had been my mother's, Margaret Kirkley's. The weather was now quite cold but with the baby snugly wrapped I carried him in my arms to where our wagon was waiting for the trip. Michael mounted to the seat and while he did so I quietly placed the baby in the back of the wagon and jumped in myself. We were more than halfway across the river when Michael discovered that we were there with him. He was very angry at first to think I had done this, but we were nearer the Iowa side so we continued on our way arriving safely — a united family. Of course I was forgiven for what I had done, risking my life and the baby's life, as he described it.

"But what would you have done? It would no doubt have been the same thing I did.

"Finally, I convinced my husband that I was not willing to be left out of whatever fate awaited



him, that I preferred we should live or die together. I have never been sorry that I went as an unexpected and an unwanted passenger."

Safely across the ice the little family took up land in Jones County, not far from Monticello, where they established a happy home. While Michael Henely might have chosen more fertile farm land, he followed the policy of the settlers of those days and selected a homestead with both wood and water on it.

Four sons grew up in the Henely home — Martin, William, Edmund, and Eugene. For many years, Eugene's wife, Louise Miller Henely, has been the proud possessor of the Broché shawl. Eventually it will belong to Margaret Kirkley Henely Black, the great granddaughter of the original owner, Margaret Kirkley, who will cherish the family heirloom.

LOUISE MILLER HENELY



## The Little Giant

Perhaps no national figure was more in the public eye during the decade of the 1850's than Stephen A. Douglas, United States Senator from Illinois, who was known everywhere as the "Little Giant". It appears that this sobriquet described both his physical and his mental stature.

As portrayed by a correspondent of the *New York Times*, he was a man "not above the middle height; but the easy and natural dignity of his manner stamps him at once as one born to command. His massive head rivets undivided attention. It is a head of the antique, with something of the infinite in its expression of power; a head difficult to describe, but better worth description than any other in the country. Mr. Douglas has a brow of unusual size, covered with heavy masses of dark-brown hair, now beginning to be sprinkled with silver. His forehead is high, open, and splendidly developed, based on dark, thick eyebrows of great width. His eyes, large and deeply set, are of the darkest and most brilliant hue. The mouth is cleanly cut, finely arched, but with something of bitter, sad expression. The chin is square and vigorous, and is full of eddying dimples — the



muscles and nerves showing great mobility, and every thought having some external reflection in the sensitive and expressive features."

As in world affairs, the history of a nation, when viewed in retrospect, presents many critical periods and events upon which all subsequent history seems to hinge. In the life of our own country, the 1858 senatorial campaign of the incumbent Stephen A. Douglas, wherein he was opposed by Abraham Lincoln, was such a decisive occasion, for had Douglas been defeated by Lincoln, the latter, probably, would never have become President. And who can say, in that circumstance, what course the destiny of the nation might have taken.

No phase of this important campaign stands out more prominently than the memorable series of debates between Lincoln and Douglas during the late summer and early autumn of 1858. Seven in number, these speeches are now considered among the highlights of American political history, and, it is said, they compared favorably with earlier notable debates, such as those between Daniel Webster and his contemporaries. Commencing at Ottawa, on August 21st, the senatorial candidates swung around through a series of joint meetings at Freeport, Jonesboro, Charleston, Galesburg, Quincy, and Alton.



These debates were attended by thousands of people and were widely publicized in the newspapers of Illinois and many other States throughout the nation. After each debate an interval elapsed, ranging from a few days to about three weeks, which gave ample opportunity for partisan followers to digest the import of the ideas presented, and for full discussion of the issues. With each new debate ever increasing interest was shown. Toward the close of the series, local business was suspended so that everybody could hear the Little Giant and his mighty challenger.

During the period between debate engagements, each candidate went about his own affairs, meeting and mingling with the voters, looking after his political fences, and accepting as many invitations to make addresses along the way as was convenient. It was Lincoln's policy to follow Douglas whenever possible, to answer his arguments. Among other places along the Iowa border where Lincoln spoke were Augusta, Toulon, Monmouth, Carthage, and Oquawka; while Douglas spoke at Galena, Rock Island, and also at Oquawka on October 4th, preceding the Galesburg debate of October 7th.

Douglas's appearance at Oquawka was made the occasion of considerable interest in Burlington, some twenty miles down the river. Being the for-



mer Iowa capital, Burlington had always been civic minded and was the center of much political activity. The rival newspapers, the *Hawk-Eye* and the *Gazette*, it seems, never lost an opportunity to take advantage of a situation which might prove embarrassing to the other. While the *Gazette* bore the Democratic cudgel, the *Hawk-Eye* as stoutly brandished the Republican club.

"It is not generally known how Stephen A. Douglas received the sobriquet of 'Little Giant'," declared the editor of the *Hawk-Eye* on September 19, 1858, but went on to allege that he was "indebted to Joe Smith, the Mormon Prophet for first applying it to him. It was elicited during an exciting discussion in the Illinois legislature upon the Mormon difficulties, in which Douglas cut a conspicuous figure in the defence of the Saints, when their great leader, in giving vent to his unbounding admiration for Douglas, called him the 'Little Giant'."

While this is an interesting explanation, if true, the purpose of publishing it at that time was probably not historical. Readers of the *Hawk-Eye* were expected to construe the story as being derogatory to Douglas, inasmuch as the Mormons were then in bad repute in southeastern Iowa. Meanwhile, the *Gazette* was favorable to Douglas. "Bear in mind", announced a local item on



October 3rd, "that the steamer Keokuk will leave the landing Monday morning, at precisely 8 o'clock, for Oquawka. All who desire to hear Hon. Stephen A. Douglas, will not fail to go. Fare to Oquawka and return only 75 cents."

On October 5th, the *Gazette* contained the following account of Douglas's speech at Oquawka, typical of the partisan spirit of the times. "We attended the great and enthusiastic democratic gathering at Oquawka yesterday, and listened to one of those masterly efforts of 'Judge Douglas,' in which the 'living lion' strips the 'dead dog' Lincoln, of his very hide. Not a position was assumed by the Speaker which was not clearly defined — not a charge referred to, which was not boldly and satisfactorily refuted.

"Thousands were present on the ground and they gave their undivided attention to the 'Little Giant' for at least two hours and a half, without seeming to be the least wearied. Even his enemies remained sitting or standing, during the entire time occupied in his speech.

"After the meeting at Oquawka, Douglas came aboard the steamer Keokuk and took passage to Burlington and addressed a large concourse of people in this city last night."

According to the *Hawk-Eye* of October 5th, the Burlington rally for Douglas was a "BAD SELL".



Apparently the Democrats "got up an extemporaneous Douglas demonstration last night of which they are a little sick. They printed bills, employed the band and drummed up a large crowd at Mozart Hall to hear Douglas. He came from Oquawka in the Keokuk, made a very tame speech of half an hour which disappointed everybody and materially lengthened the visages of his admirers. Since he undertook to take Abe to his milk Douglas has lost his pluck. His bold and defiant manner is not exhibited. There is very little of the 'Giant' about him. His speech was a small potato affair.

"Mr. Starr undertook to cover the retreat of Douglas and followed up his meagre speech with a lengthened harangue after the manner of Mr. Starr, which we consider a very proper finale."

As might be expected, the *Gazette* was obliged to challenge such a prejudiced version. "The *Hawk-Eye* of yesterday contains a most contemptible allusion to the speech of Mr. Douglas", observed the Democratic advocate; "but what else might we expect from the editor of such a sheet. Mr. Douglas has been speaking almost daily for weeks past and had that very day addressed the people of Oquawka for three hours in the open air, hence it could not be expected that he would address our citizens at any length. But the *Hawk-*



*Eye's* fling is too contemptible to elicit further notice at our hands — it will but return to plague its author while it falls harmless at the feet of the 'Little Giant'."

On the same day, the *Hawk-Eye* published an item which was not intended to be complimentary. "It is rumored", gossiped the Republican editor, "that if Douglas is defeated for U. S. Senator, he will remove to Minnesota and try to be returned at the first vacancy which may occur in that state. It has been a good move for Shields, and it might prove an equally lucky one for the 'Little Giant,' but before the next vacancy occurs, Mr. Douglas should remember that Minnesota will be a Republican constituency."

And thus did this particular political storm at Burlington blow over. On Saturday evening, October 9th, following their joint debate at Galesburg on October 7th, Lincoln spoke before a large gathering in Grimes Hall at Burlington. He too came down the river on a packet from Oquawka, where he had spoken on the afternoon of the same day. Those who listened to his logical discourse, "replete with sound argument, clear, concise and vigorous, earnest, impassioned and eloquent," recognized in him a man fully able to cope with the political skill of the "Little Giant".

BEN HUR WILSON



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