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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

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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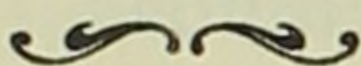
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Indian Affairs in 1845

While the settlement of the prairies in the Iowa, Skunk, and Des Moines River valleys was progressing rapidly during the year that Iowa sought admission into the Union as a State, the tenure of the Indians became more unsettled. The Sauks and Foxes were pledged by treaty to abandon their favorite hunting grounds and move to Kansas. The Potawatomi around Council Bluffs knew that their residence there was temporary. And although the Winnebago had never been happy in the Neutral Ground, they were reluctant to surrender their claim to that region. Yet the frontier of settlement was continually pressing upon the domain of the red men with evil consequences for both races.

Though game was scarce and whisky vendors plentiful, the Indians tended to follow their customary manner of living. "With about the same regularity that the seasons of the year successively pass on, their seasons of employment and idleness

follow each other — the period lost in idleness and its attendant dissipation greatly preponderating over that devoted to any serviceable occupation", wrote John Beach, agent for the Sauks and Foxes, in his annual report on September 1, 1845. "Having received their annuities," early in the fall, he continued, "they disperse over the country for the purpose of hunting and remain so scattered until spring, inhabiting their temporary lodges made of mats, which they erect under the protection of some densely wooded bottom land, and moving from place to place as circumstances may require. Since they have been confined to the possession of the small tract which they now occupy, its destitution of game has compelled them to visit and remain about the border settlements during the winter.

"As soon as the sap commences to run, the Indians move to their 'sugar camps,' and employ themselves in the manufacture of sugar and molasses as long as they can. After which, they repair to their permanent villages; and, having once more placed their bark lodges in habitable order, the time has arrived for the commencement of their agricultural operations. These are somewhat limited, and mostly performed by the females, being confined to the planting of a little corn, beans, and melons, in the small patches broken up with hoes

in the soft timbered ground, though of late the men have shown an increasing disposition to assist, and have applied to me for the purchase of horses, harness, and ploughs, from their agricultural fund.

“From the time of planting until their payment, except the month of June, (usually consumed in a buffalo hunt,) the Indians hang about their villages, addicted to the most constant and revolting intoxication, the facilities for which are so deplorably numerous, and will continue to increase until greater certainty of detection and the *penitentiary* shall be made to await all those who are guilty of the *crime* of producing it.”

Many of the Indians realized that the old happy hunting days were gone. They were filled with regret. They had no desire to adopt the pursuits of the white men, for they had seen the worst of “civilization”. And yet the wisest of the chiefs, like Keokuk, knew that the braves would have to turn from the hunt to the cultivation of the soil for their livelihood. “As to assuming any of the habits or customs of civilization, these Indians are as averse as ever”, declared Agent Beach. “In regard to some few of their ancient manners, and especially of their superstitions — perhaps, too, in respect to their vindictiveness, cruelty, and other unamiable traits of early character, the last fifty years of intercourse with our countrymen may be

supposed, of necessity, to have modified some habits, and to have softened some asperities of their original nature, yet, in general, they are as much savages, and as anxious to continue such, as they were a half century ago.

“But the new circumstances under which they are soon to be placed, and their own expectations in respect to them; the much diminished size of the country which they will occupy, the reported scarcity of game, and the influence of the example of those tribes more or less civilized, by which they will be surrounded, will, I confidently hope, exert a beneficial tendency at least upon the rising generation, gradual though it may be.”

But long residence among the Indians had taught John Beach to be skeptical of the beneficent influence of the white men with whom the Indians usually associated — “men whose licentious dispositions, love of gain, and propensities for the most sensual indulgences, unchecked by any respect either for their own characters or the opinions of the more virtuous, will ever draw them to our frontiers as long as a hope of success in their shameless course may exist”. To him it was no subject of astonishment that our education appeared to “consist in knowing how most effectually to cheat them; our civilization in knowing how to pander to the worst propensities of nature, and

then beholding the criminal and inhuman results with a cold indifference — a worse than heathen apathy; while our religion is readily summed up in the consideration of dollars and cents.”

It was with considerable satisfaction, therefore, that Agent Beach reported that the Sauks and Foxes were preparing to move beyond the Missouri River to their permanent reservation. The Sauks, “under the good management of Keokuk”, were only awaiting the payment of their annuities, before commencing their migration. The Foxes, he knew, were “less satisfied with the idea of leaving the country which, from long possession,” they called home. Nevertheless, he believed that they intended to go without opposition.

In this prediction he was too sanguine. Keokuk and most of the Sauks were on their way before the end of September and arrived by a direct route before cold weather, but Hardfish with the remnant of the old Black Hawk faction tarried among the Potawatomi with whom they had spent the previous winter. The Foxes under Poweshiek began their march on October 8th and were out of their country by the 11th according to the treaty stipulation. But in passing through the land of the Potawatomi they accepted an invitation of their friends to stop there. Jealous of Sauk leadership, influenced by prejudiced advice, and home-

sick for their old villages beside the Iowa River, they were easily persuaded to remain in Iowa. Only a few moons ago they were living peaceably among the white settlers in their former haunts near the graves of their ancestors. Now they welcomed an opportunity to linger in familiar territory. A year elapsed before they could be induced to join the Sauks in Kansas.

Uncertainty of the future was a prominent factor of Indian discontent. Again and again the natives had been moved westward to "permanent" reservations, only to be ousted in a few years and relocated on poorer land close to hostile tribes. The Winnebago never felt at home in the Neutral Ground between the Sioux on the north and the Sauks and Foxes on the south. They were continually going back to Wisconsin. Military detachments from Fort Atkinson would round them up and bring them back, but they would "almost immediately wander off again". According to the sub-agent at Turkey River in September, 1845, about half of the tribe was then "in Wisconsin and along the Mississippi." Yet when Henry Dodge called a council at Fort Atkinson in June, 1845, to persuade the Winnebago to sell the Neutral Ground and find a permanent reservation west of the Missouri River or north of the Minnesota River they rejected his proposals. He was con-

vinced that the Indians were unduly influenced by traders and half-breeds who had selfish interests. The negotiations failed. Governor Dodge recommended that an exploring party of Winnebago chiefs be sent into the Sioux country to select a permanent residence.

Much the same conditions prevailed among the Potawatomi in southwestern Iowa. With the removal of the Sauks and Foxes they were exposed to the white frontier on the east as well as on the south. They knew that their seasons in Iowa were numbered and so they made no effort to emulate the settled habits of civilized people. But they bargained so shrewdly with Thomas H. Harvey, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, when the government proposed to buy their land in 1845, that he called them "veterans in diplomacy". The most sensible of the Indians desired to be permanently settled and were anxious to negotiate, but they were equally solicitous that the terms should be favorable because it was probably the last treaty they would ever make.

According to Richard S. Elliott, sub-agent at "Point Aux Poulos, on the northeast bank of the Missouri river, about twenty miles below the mouth of Boyer's river, and opposite Bellevue," not much progress could be made in civilizing the Potawatomi until the principle of private property

was established. "We must give them not only permanent homes as tribes," he said, "but, as soon as possible, we must permit something in the nature of fee simple rights in individuals to attach to appropriate and allotted parts of their national domain. These will give a settlement to the family, and affect the habits of all its members. A permanent home once selected and established, the individual will, in due course of time, rejoice in the difference between the fireside scenes of a neat and comfortable cottage, and those of an Indian lodge. Home comforts and enjoyments will cluster around him, acting as a constant stimulus to exertion, because they are a certain reward for it."

School was also regarded as a civilizing influence, but none was maintained for the Potawatomi at the Council Bluffs agency. Elliott advocated mission schools in the Indian country under the management of well qualified persons of cultivated minds "who can rise superior to the bigotry of sectarianism". He was convinced that the inculcation of the arts of civilized life would require instruction of the very young. The boys should "be dressed in the costume of the white man, and taught to use the axe, to make fence and plough, to plant, cure, and husband the different crops, to take care of stock, and to work at the carpenter's, miller's, smith, and other trades. The same course

of training, in pursuits suitable for them, must be adopted with the girls."

The Sauks and Foxes were opposed to schools and the cultivation of the soil. Even the "energetic and talented" Keokuk, whom Beach praised for "his aptness to understand motives and arguments, and to appreciate the condition of his people," could see no good in book learning. While the confederated tribes had "faithfully and promptly performed all their treaty obligations," according to Governor John Chambers, and had "generally conducted themselves with much greater propriety than could have been expected from a people so perfectly savage in their habits of living," they would not send their children to school.

Although Governor Chambers thought the Winnebago was the most indolent and degenerate tribe, the school on Turkey River was probably as successful as any. Acting Principal H. N. Thissell reported on September 19, 1845, an enrollment of eighty-three boys and eighty-three girls, a daily average attendance of sixty, and the employment of four teachers. Thirty-eight pupils were learning the alphabet, seventy-five were in the primer, fifty-three were in the first reader or beyond, thirty were studying arithmetic, and thirty-six were involved in geography. But attendance was so irregular that progress was rather spasmodic.

Early in the previous spring "several families who had largely patronized the school were induced, by no good motives on the part of those who influenced them, to remove to such a distance from the school that their children could not attend". Nevertheless the clothing department had produced 438 garments during the year, many of the Indian girls could sew well, and eight had learned to knit.

Conditions were much the same among the Sioux farther north in the Territory of Iowa. At the Traverse des Sioux school there were sometimes "eight or ten scholars, and then, again, obeying impulses of their being, they were away on the prairie, or in the woods seeking roots or game for a subsistence." Nevertheless several boys learned to read a little in their own language. Much of the time at the Lac Qui Parle mission school was "spent in teaching the native females to spin, knit, weave, sew, &c." These Indians were so miserably poor that Missionary Thomas Williamson believed a few hundred dollars worth of provisions would do more to counteract British influence than military expeditions to drive out the half-breed traders.

For several years a band of "half-breeds of the Red River", residing in the Hudson's Bay Company domain north of the border, had been "in the practice of making excursions into our territories

to hunt the buffalo, and not only interfere and sometimes come in conflict with the Indians residing within the jurisdiction of the United States, but destroy a great number of buffaloes, — some years as many as thirty thousand." Being aliens, they claimed they were not subject to the laws governing intercourse with the Indians.

To give visible evidence of law on the frontier, the dragoons stationed in the Territory of Iowa were ordered to march through the Sioux country far to the north. Captain E. V. Sumner, who commanded the expedition, left Fort Atkinson on June 3, 1845, with Company B and ten days later joined Captain Allen with Company I from Fort Des Moines. Together they proceeded over wet prairies and swollen streams to the mouth of the Blue Earth River and thence up the Minnesota River to Lac Qui Parle where a council was held with a large band of Wahpeton Sioux. Captain Sumner told them, and other bands which he met on the march, that the government was interested in their welfare but would not tolerate any interference with the white settlers.

Near Devil's Lake (in North Dakota) he found some of the British half-breeds — about 180 men with their families. They insisted that they had no intention of doing anything unlawful but were merely following their lifelong custom of hunting

on the land of their Indian parents. They said they would be glad to move to the United States, but Captain Sumner demurred at such an immigration. They asked for time to find new hunting grounds, but he gave them little encouragement to hope for such a concession. On the whole he regarded them as more of a nuisance than a threat.

Returning by the same route, the dragoons arrived at Traverse des Sioux on August 7th. Three Indian murderers were captured on the march and sent to Dubuque for trial. The Sioux brave who had stolen three horses and a mule from Captain Allen's expedition in the previous summer, and boasted about it far and wide, was arrested to prove that criminals could not escape. After two months of hard riding, the squadron divided and Company I turned south up the Blue Earth Valley and returned to Fort Des Moines. Captain Sumner arrived at Fort Atkinson with Company B on August 19th.

The military authorities thought that the marches of the dragoons had a very salutary effect upon the Indians, but the Indian agents were more concerned about the liquor traffic than the occasional depredations of aboriginal thieves or half-breed poachers. "Were it not for the facility the Sioux now possess to obtain whiskey," reported Amos J. Bruce of the St. Peter's Agency,

"their situation, compared with that of the adjoining tribes, would be enviable; but, like all of the same race, the greater proportion of the Sioux are much addicted to liquor; and there is no hope that it will not in the end lead to their destruction, unless means are taken, at an early date, to restrain abandoned white men from introducing it among them. It is not an uncommon occurrence for Indians to come a distance of three or four hundred miles to obtain whiskey, for which they will give their horses, guns, traps, &c., &c., in exchange."

Conditions were no better in the Council Bluffs area. "The grog shops along the line in the State of Missouri" furnished the Potawatomi with as much liquor as they wanted, declared Agent Elliott. This was worse than if the licensed traders had supplied the whisky, "for when an Indian gets into one of those grog-shops, literally 'dens of thieves,' he does not get away until he has got rid of horse, saddle, blanket, gun, and whatever property he may have with him, if the dealer can possibly make him drunk enough to carry on the plunder effectually. To supply those who do not choose to go for it, messengers are sent with kegs on horseback, and a revel at the wigwam or village follows."

The evil was aggravated among the tribes that

received large annuities. The Sauks and Foxes were entitled to more than \$70,000 in 1845 and while most of it was probably consumed by debts many of the braves had too much cash for whisky. Keokuk set the bad example. "What a noble Indian that would be," exclaimed Governor Chambers, "but for his intemperate habits!"

The Winnebago should have been the most prosperous tribe in Iowa because they received the largest annuities, but they were actually "the most drunken, worthless, and degraded" Indians in the Territory. Scarcely was the \$48,000 annuity distributed in 1845 before it found its way to the whisky sellers. A considerable proportion of the goods furnished by the government was also traded for liquor. In this way the thirsty savages were reduced to abject poverty. Governor James Clarke despaired of protecting the Indians "against their depraved appetites", since all attempts to "enforce the laws against the unprincipled men who furnish them with liquor have thus far proved abortive".

In 1846, arrangements were made to remove the Potawatomi and Winnebago beyond the borders of the new State. And so the Indian problem in Iowa was solved by elimination.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

Crying in the Bottoms

According to the treaty of October 11, 1842, the Sauks and Foxes agreed to leave Iowa within three years. Early in the autumn of 1845 the Indians assembled at the Agency near Fort Des Moines at the mouth of the Raccoon River to receive their annuity payments and prepare to migrate west of the Missouri River. Of that occasion and conditions at the Fort, Editor J. Leland T. Mitchell printed the following account in his Keosauqua Times. — The Editor.

A few weeks since we were compelled to leave home upon business which detained us longer than we expected. During our absence we passed through the fertile and flourishing counties of Wapello and Mahaska, and through a portion of what is called the "three year tract," and as far up as Raccoon Forks. At this point is situated Fort Des Moines, garrisoned we believe by two companies of United States troops, under the command of Captain James Allen.

As to the Forks and its immediate vicinity we can not say we are so particularly pleased, the location being too low, from which cause the river at this point overflows its banks and hence is the cause of so much sickness. But from the head of

the "Narrows" of the Des Moines River, a more beautiful or finer country the sun never shone upon. Many of the curious have often thought and still think that the Forks will be the location of the Seat of Government for the future State of Iowa, but we hardly think so. In our humble opinion it will either be located above on the Des Moines Fork, or it will be situated some distance below the Forks. However, it is a mere matter of supposition at best and we therefore leave the subject for contemplation at some future day.

While at the Forks we witnessed the last payment of the Sauks and Foxes in Iowa, and were also present at several of their councils with the U. S. Agent, John Beach, which to us was very interesting having never before attended one. The first council was held several days previous to the payment. It was a deputation from the Fox tribe to inform the Agent that they would be prepared on the morrow to hear what he had to say to the combined tribes. On the morrow the two tribes met the Agent in general council. Owing to the indisposition of Mr. Beach, the council was short and soon adjourned until the next day. On the next day Lieutenant [Robert S.] Granger, of the U. S. Army, acted for the Agent. The Lieutenant sat near the doorway, the Sauks on his left hand and the Foxes on his right.

Keokuk is the head chief of the Sauks. His appearance is striking and commanding, with a keen and penetrating eye that seems to flash fire. It is said that he is upwards of sixty years of age, but from the firmness of his walk and apparent activity one would not take him to be over forty-five or fifty. On Keokuk's left sat his eldest son, a fine looking young Indian, with an eye like a hawk. Near him sat Appanoose, one of the head chiefs of the Sauk nation, and farther to the left and rather aside to themselves sat the two sons of old Black Hawk, Naseaskuk and Essomesot [spelled Wasawmesaw by Catlin], without exception the two finest looking men in the tribe, and their appearance still tells that they are the offspring of a mighty chieftain. The other head men sat in ranges of semicircles back of Keokuk and the others that we have mentioned.

On the opposite side sat Poweshiek, the head chief of the Foxes, backed in semicircles by the prominent chiefs of his tribe. His appearance is not so striking as Keokuk's but there is something in his countenance which denotes a warm heart. One expression of his we well remember. Speaking to the Agent of having to leave the land they had sold to the United States, he said he "knew it was right that they should leave, but, says he, there will be *crying in the bottoms.*" How natural

the expression of the old chief. Here was the land where their fathers had lived for ages, and here rested the bones of some of their greatest chiefs and most renowned warriors for whom it was fit that there should be "crying in the bottoms".

Several chiefs spoke upon the subject of their leaving and other matters connected with their tribe, but Poweshiek's regret still hung upon our memory. It brought to our mind many an eloquent expression and beautiful thought made by these warriors of the forest. There is a song of Indian lament which reads:

Land where the brightest waters flow;
Land where the loveliest forests grow,
Where the warrior draws the bow,
Native land, farewell.

He who made yon stream and tree,
Made the white man, red man, free,
Gave the Indian's home to be
'Mid the forest wilds.

Have the waters ceased to flow?
Have the forests ceased to grow?
Why do our brothers bid us go
From our native homes?

Here in infancy we played;
Here our happy wigwam made:
Here our fathers' graves are laid,
Must we leave them all?

Taking the Sauks and Foxes as a tribe, we never beheld finer looking men anywhere — tall, erect, and graceful, they appear the very picture of "nature's noblemen." The number of this tribe amounts to 2457 souls [Beach reported 2278]. The Foxes number forty-three more than the Sauks. The time was when this tribe numbered its thousands, but now they are passing away and in a few years they will only be "known among the things that were" — dissipation and the encroachments of the pale face have done the deed.

During our stay we visited the garrison several times, and upon one occasion had the pleasure of witnessing an Indian war dance, and to one who had never before seen them it was quite a novel sight. After the dance was over the Indians to the number of seventy-five or one hundred then paraded on horseback to the tattoo of their drum, all the time singing their wild war songs. Having formed a solid square they marched in front of one of the officer's quarters, when what was our surprise to observe that preparations were making to *treat* them. A soldier of the infantry, we believe, took a large jug and went to the Sutler's Store and returned with it filled, the jug was then set before the Indians and they were *invited to drink*, and this was done in the presence of *several of the commissioned officers of the Fort*.

We must say that when we saw this we were not a little surprised, knowing well that it was a settled policy of the United States Government to have the Indians kept as far as possible from the baneful influence of liquor, and that companies of men had been sent out to seize upon all liquors brought into the Indian country, and we wondered how it could be possible that men who were placed there to enforce the laws and policy of the Government would thus violate them in so open and outrageous a manner. The natural enquiry with us then was why is this permitted? Is it a common occurrence? To the latter question we frequently received the answer that it was so common that no notice was taken of it.

For the sake of humanity, the poor Indian and the good name of our beloved country, we wish the proper authorities had been there to witness the act and to punish the perpetrators of it according to their deserts. We believe that every commissioned officer of the garrison is guilty of either having given the Indians liquor or has been cognizant of the fact of its having been given to them. And it is a fact that the location of Fort Des Moines among the Sauk and Fox Indians (under its present commander), for the last two years, has corrupted them more and lowered them deeper in the scale of vice and degradation, than all their

intercourse with the whites for the ten years previous. Captain Allen thinks nothing of TREATING the Indians to LIQUOR, and the night before the payment he sent a bottle of liquor to Poweshiek with his compliments by his servant, (a man by the name of Wells), and bottles of liquor to several of the head chiefs of the Foxes.

Now these are facts which have transpired so far from civilized society that they might never have been heard of; but believing it to be our duty to show to the public and the country the abuses that have been practised by their servants, we have taken upon ourselves this exposition, and when duty calls we must obey. The honor, upon which rests the duty of men occupying the position that these officers do, and more especially the commandant, should compel them to observe and enforce the laws rather than break them with impunity. It is said by those living near the garrison that Captain A. and the Sutler had a particular object in view in making the Indians drunk about the time of the payment. As to this we know not, but we do believe there has been and is great corruption *there*, and that if justice was done Capt. Allen would be dismissed from the United States service and the Sutler never allowed again to enter the Indian country. Allen's course has no doubt been dishonorable and disgraceful, as well as un-

officerlike. During one of the councils, several of the Indians were very much intoxicated, and a friend of ours asked the Captain where he supposed the Indians got so much liquor. His reply was: "The bottoms were full of it." Now if he knew such to be the fact or even supposed so, it was his duty to have those bottoms cleared.

Since penning the above we have received a letter from a friend who was at the Raccoon Forks the same time we were, but remained some time after we left. In speaking of the Indians he says: "On Sunday and Monday, after you left, there hardly could be seen a sober Indian or squaw. Where they got their *rotgut* I can not say; but such fighting of both sexes, I never witnessed in my life. Agent Beach made the second order on Captain Allen, to clear the country of at least the whisky peddlers, but he paid no attention to what Mr. Beach wished done."

The Powder House Explosion

Work is said to be a panacea for many things and once in my case it was a life preserver. But for the fortuitous circumstance of being employed, I might have been with my boyhood friends when the powder house exploded. On many occasions we had played around the building at the north edge of town where H. L. Spencer stored powder to be used for blasting in the coal mines. We had been together at noon on the tragic day, and talked of going out to the powder magazine for target practice with a new repeating rifle. But I had to forego that pleasure.

During the summer of 1881 I had worked for W. S. Mays, an early Oskaloosa pharmacist, and when school began in the fall I had contracted to put in certain hours at the drug store. And so, on January 5, 1882, I had to spend the afternoon washing a big consignment of bottles that had been unloaded at the store. The washing was done in a large iron sink, and after the bottles had been dried and fitted with corks they were placed on shelves above the sink. Something like ten gross of the bottles had been thus treated and made ready for instant use as occasion demanded.

Above the drug store, a Dr. Johnson had his office, and he had just installed an air-pressure atomizer, one of the first apparatus of its kind brought to town. Mr. Mays and a couple of other gentlemen were seated about the stove, and W. A. Wells, the prescription clerk, was selling an old-fashioned music box — one of those that contained pronged cylinders which picked off tunes by coming in contact with needles of various lengths and thicknesses.

Suddenly there was a terrific shock. As the store rocked from the concussion, every bottle above me crashed into the iron sink, and about a third of the big shelf bottles fell to the floor. The plate glass windows in the store front fell out and consternation seized every one. The silence that followed the crash was broken by Mr. Mays who exclaimed, "There goes Doc Johnson's air machine." But a moment later Dr. Johnson came running down to see what had happened. A hurried conference with the people in Huber's hardware store next door led to another surmise. All agreed it must have been the big boiler in "Johnson's novelty iron works" that had exploded. Being a boy of fourteen it was easy for me to beat the crowd to the foundry a block away. We found the boiler intact and the employees with their grimy faces as much at sea as we were. There

were few telephones in those days, and it took some time for the news to spread around as to what had really happened.

Early in the evening the editor of the *Oskaloosa Herald* issued an "Extra" describing the tragedy in detail. The story carried by that faded sheet of paper can not now be better told than to quote extensively.

"Oskaloosa, Iowa, Thursday, 5 P. M., January 5, 1882. At about four o'clock this afternoon the city was startled by a terrible shock, that caused every building to shake and sway as if it dangled in the lap of an earthquake. Instant examination was made, after the general shower of broken glass had been watched and escaped in nearly all of the buildings of the city. All the steam boilers being found intact, attention was directed to the powder magazine of H. L. Spencer & Co., situated in an open space about one-half mile north of the public square and about two hundred and fifty yards east of Market Street, and to which the crowd at once sped.

"A terrible sight there met them. On the north side of a great pit that had once been the powder magazine the bodies of three boys were found shattered, mangled, and disemboweled — all of them having their heads or portions of them blown away, while their poor bodies were burned full of

rents, almost beyond recognition. When friends identified them, it was found that John Phillips, son of the Mayor of the city, Jerald Joyce, and John Steadham, were the victims of the calamity.

“Two of the boys — Phillips and Steadman — were members of the High School and Prof. H. H. Seerley speaks of them in the highest praise, as boys of great promise and good in all things that make up a good scholar. Johnny Phillips was a pupil in Miss Perry’s room, and was one of her brightest scholars. One of his last acts in the school room was distributing the Christmas presents from the teacher to each of her pupils. Joyce was in the intermediate department and was a bright boy.

“The cause of the woe that has thus come upon these families and of the great damage inflicted upon hundreds of houses was found to be in the fact that these unfortunate boys had used the powder magazine as a target — the weapon being a magazine breech-loading rifle which the Mayor had drawn on New Years in a small raffle. The boys were seen shooting at the building from a short distance and then going up to see the results of their skill. They afterward fired another shot, and then came the horror of explosion — and that is all that can now be learned of it.”

Upon further inquiry the fact was established

“that the magazine had been used as a target by a great many grown men — large-eared asses — that it was peppered full of holes by shot guns and rifles. One person who has been delivering powder at the magazine states that on one occasion he went there and found that some one had shot into the building, cutting a hole in a keg, so that the powder emptied itself on the floor. The town has been fortunate to escape the calamity as long as it did.

“L. F. Cole, John Shaw, and Phillip Mitchell were engaged at carpenter work on Mr. White’s new residence, about three hundred yards to the northwest of the magazine. They saw the boys shoot and called to them to quit it. But they went up close to the magazine, looking at the target, having fired several shots. The boys were then seen quite close to the magazine, one leaning on it, the other two being near by. Next the men found themselves knocked down, but not seriously injured. They were first on the ground.

“The body of the son of Mr. Phillips was found about fifty yards down the hill. His clothing was nearly all gone; the back portion of the head carried away, and his body otherwise mangled and bruised. John Steadham was blown through a wire fence about one hundred yards away, and fearfully torn and mangled. Jerald Joyce was

found in the creek about one hundred and fifty yards away, with his head almost completely gone. Fragments of their bodies were found widely scattered, and tenderly gathered up and placed with the remains.

“There were two rifles found in the wreck, the Joyce boy having taken a combined rifle and shotgun belonging to his uncle, John Harkness, to test it with young Phillips’s gun. Our city is saddened by this great and sudden calamity, and the sympathy of all will go out to the bereaved parents, whose homes have thus been made disconsolate and woeful.

“The damage done is very great. Most of the houses in the north half of the city are badly wrecked — doors and windows, and all light wood work broken and shattered; stables completely wrecked; chimneys all toppled and flues cracked from top to bottom. The wreck of the plate glass windows on the business streets was nearly complete, and the real money damage can not be covered by less than fifty to one thousand dollars. The powder was owned by the American Powder Company, of Boston, and numbered about five hundred kegs.

“Take that part of the city bounded by Harrison Street on the south, and extending east and west to the city limits — about three quarters of a

mile wide and two miles long — and nearly every house is injured — ranging in damage from \$5 to \$2,000. Many of the residences were wrecked — the walls being driven in or askew, and badly twisted, rendering the damage enormous. Among the houses which are the worst wrecked is that of John Hoffman, whose fine house situated northwest of the magazine was shattered and wrecked very badly, and it will cost \$1,000 to repair it. Milo Rice will suffer a loss of \$800. Prof. Tebbetts suffers as badly as Mr. Hoffman and in addition a fifty pound rock, one of the magazine's foundation stones, was hurled through the house on the east side, and crushed the interior. Mrs. Edison also received a similar visitor which entered the dormitory and knocked a hole in the chimney — her damage is not less than \$500, if not much more. The John L. Roberts residence is a bad wreck and suffered from a bombardment of stone. Mr. Moorman's house, one of the nearest, is completely wrecked. Penn College is in a most dilapidated state — some fifty lights of glass, with many sash being broken out. Doors and locks were swept away in sad wreck."

So extensive was the destruction that the schools were closed for a week. Some families had to seek shelter with neighbors and "quite a number of persons", according to the newspaper,

had "to be aided to repair and reconstruct" their homes. "Our people will have to make large donations and to this end, that aid may be properly administered, the city relief association will take immediate action."

Building material was in great demand and carpenters had more than they could do. Fortunately there was a good stock of window glass of ordinary size in town. To obtain plate glass for store windows the telegraph was freely used.

The damage was not entirely confined to property. Besides the boys who lost their lives, a few persons were hurt by falling debris. At the home of Levi Hambleton, where a piece of glass was driven through an inch board and into a brick wall, two children of R. H. McCoskey were cut by flying glass. A child of H. B. Drake was severely injured by falling plaster.

The shock of the explosion was felt far beyond the city limits of Oskaloosa. At John Fry's farm, four miles north, "glass was broken, and doors forced open. Plastering was also broken at the house of W. H. Prine, five miles west. Mr. Jarvis, from Rose Hill (ten miles distant), says that the shock was felt severely there; doors were jarred open, and things set to dancing; cattle were knocked down where they were standing in the field. At New Sharon (twelve miles away), Mr.

H. J. Vail reports that nearly everybody rushed into the streets, supposing that a boiler had exploded; doors were opened as far away as that, and chimneys damaged. Judge L. C. Blanchard was over at Montezuma (25 miles away) attending court. The concussion there was sufficiently strong to set all the windows rattling, shaking the building, and people rushed out, supposing that a cyclone had struck their town."

It later developed that the shock was felt for distances of thirty-five to forty miles in all directions. Judge D. W. Hamilton of Grinnell was teaching school at the time in the northeast corner of Keokuk County thirty miles from Oskaloosa and he was sure he had felt an earthquake. It was several days before he found out what had happened.

As stated in the *Herald* "Extra", there was scarcely a pane of glass left intact in town. The stocks of window glass on hand were soon exhausted, but they lasted longer than did the supply of putty. The aforesaid prescription clerk, W. A. Wells, was filled with many bright ideas, and in this case was far too resourceful in my youthful opinion. He knew that whiting and linseed oil ground together would make good putty. So we started our hand-power drug mill and for two days kept it moving. Maybe you think I was

not glad that we had only a barrel and a half of whiting and less than a barrel of oil on hand. That was enough for me.

And what queer things people will do. Though the entire community was saddened by the occasion, many people had watch chains and all kinds of jewelry made from bits of plate glass windows, and wore the ornaments for years as mementoes of the great catastrophe.

PHIL HOFFMANN

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