

# The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1949

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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

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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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# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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## Burlington Backgrounds

From the days of the Indians, all who have had their homes in the rich midland lying between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers have valued it for its wealth of promises — promise of bountiful crops from a deep, rich soil; of homes for those willing to work; of freedom for untrammelled development of the spirit. This was indeed a place where men might reasonably expect to grow to their full stature. The Indians called the land "Iowa" which meant, in their tongue, "The Pleasant Land," or "This is the Place."

When my mother came to Iowa in the winter of 1860, there was no bridge at Burlington to span the majestic river which marks the eastern boundary of the State. Little Kate Darrow, a big-eyed, laughing, observant child, very proud of having been allowed to travel alone all the way from Chicago, used to tell me later how, the railroad having stopped at the river's edge, she had been driven across the Mississippi's frozen waters in a stylish "cutter" to her sister's home.

As her brother-in-law turned his mare's head toward the western shore, he called Kate's attention to the ragged silhouette of the town clearly defined against the sky. There in the middle of the picture, at the lowest topographic point, was what had been the center of Burlington's early life, the steamboat landing. The sleigh crossing the icebound stream now made for that same landing.

On this site had once stood the Indian village of "Shokokon," a word that meant "Flint Hills," for the stone outcropping there, flinty and hard, made superior arrowheads. But Kate saw no Indians. They had been gone some time now. In the 1830's Black Hawk and his Sauk warriors had resisted the efforts of the whites to dislodge them from their village at the mouth of the Rock River. Vanquished at Bad Axe by such men as Colonel Henry Dodge, the Sauk and Fox signed a treaty relinquishing approximately six million acres of rich land along the western bank of the Mississippi — a strip known as the Black Hawk Purchase. By June 1, 1833, the Indians had vacated this area and permanent white settlement began.

Among the settlers who had streamed in to stake out claims at what is now Burlington were certain notable personalities. Dr. William R. Ross came up from Quincy, Illinois, with a stock of

merchandise and set up the first store. Dr. Ross carried the first mails, made the first survey (with an old rickety compass and a rope in lieu of a surveyor's chain), built the first church, organized the first school, handled the first bank deposits, arranged for the first elections, and welcomed to his own cabin the first court. One of the most important things he did was to promote a Vigilance Association, thus giving notice to the lawless elements that they had better keep away from Burlington if they wanted to avoid trouble.

Another pioneer was James W. Grimes — a comely youth who "always smiled with his eyes." Although only nineteen years old, Grimes was a graduate of Dartmouth College and an attorney-at-law. Grimes was destined to become Iowa's third governor, and later represented the young State in the United States Senate.

In the fourth year of settlement, Charles Mason (a native of New York state and a graduate of West Point Academy) arrived in Burlington. A man of striking physical attractiveness and distinguished legal gifts, Mason was shortly appointed the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa.

David Rorer, a peppery little Southern lawyer, had his fingers in many early Burlington enterprises. He it was who drew up the first charter and ordinances, laid out many streets, and named

some of them. It is even claimed Rorer suggested the nickname for Iowa. With Illinois on the east being called the "Sucker State" and Missouri to the south dubbed the "Puke State," men like Rorer were alert to find a more dignified designation. It is said that Rorer suggested "Hawkeye State" to James G. Edwards, who in turn recommended it in the first issue of his *Fort Madison Patriot*.

Like the Indians, the Burlington pioneers had hugged the shore of the Mississippi; but, after a quarter of a century, the settlement was a thriving town climbing from the bottom lands to higher ground. Business was still conducted at the river level but homes had been moved to the loftier, more healthful bluffs lying to the north and south of the steamboat landing and spreading westward onto the prairie land. Generally speaking, citizens were classified as residents of North Hill, South Hill, West Hill, and Prospect Hill.

Early in the history of the settlement, its name had been changed at the earnest solicitation of John B. Gray, a homesick son of Vermont, from "Flint Hills" to "Burlington." There were those who had wanted to christen it "Catfish Bend." I feel, personally, indebted to Mr. Gray; I can't imagine myself willing to come to earth trailing my "clouds of glory" to a place called "Catfish Bend."

Kate Darrow first saw the sprawling town of Burlington at the close of one of the most vibrant periods in its history. By 1836, three years after the Black Hawk Purchase, churches, schools, and courts had been set up. By 1850 cholera had twice stalked the Upper Mississippi Valley towns, claiming many victims. Meanwhile, in 1848 and 1849, events occurred on opposite sides of the world — in Central Europe and in California — which greatly influenced the future of Burlington.

The revolutions of 1848 brought to Iowa many Europeans hopeful of escaping Old World tyranny with its military conscription, oppressive taxation, and belittling class distinctions. Large numbers of Germans, for example, settled in Burlington where, as cobblers, blacksmiths, carpenters, and saddlers they contributed usefully to community development. By 1860 people of German stock were playing an important role in Burlington industry.

When gold was discovered in California, hordes of men stormed across Iowa to reach the golden coast. And then it was that the wealth of Iowa soil was revealed — at a time, too, when the McCormick reaper and other inventions greatly increased production. A rich prize was Iowa, richer far than California's shining sands, 56,000 square miles of black soil, practically every foot of which was tillable.

From the East, from the South, and from the states of the Old Northwest, settlers had rushed in, people who in racial stamina, patriotic ardor, and intellectual vigor were of unparalleled superiority. They had come by every means of transportation and over many routes. Those who came by waterways came down the Ohio or up the Mississippi to Saint Louis, whence they boarded an Upper Mississippi steamboat for Iowa. Grandmother Brown and her family came by way of the Ohio. Fewer came by way of the Great Lakes to Chicago, where they could continue by stage or covered wagon, and after 1855 by railroad. Many of those who came overland followed the newly-opened National Road westward.

Prior to 1855 the Mississippi dominated the lives of Burlingtonians. The Great River was the main highway to the Black Hawk Purchase; it had given them easy access to the East and South; and it served as the main artery for both exports and imports. After 1855 the iron horse threatened the supremacy of the Great River.

Among the eastern capitalists interested in extending railroads westward from Chicago was John Murray Forbes of Massachusetts. As a lad of seventeen, Forbes had gone to China and amassed a fortune in seven years as the confidential agent of a Chinese mandarin. Influenced somewhat by James W. Grimes (who made a trip

to Boston to talk with him), Forbes helped finance construction of a railroad which became the "Chicago, Burlington and Quincy."

In the meantime, Mr. Forbes had decided to back the Hannibal and St. Joseph across northern Missouri and the Burlington and Missouri River railroad which had been projected across southern Iowa. By the time Kate came to Iowa, the Burlington had been constructed to Ottumwa. She may have noticed, on that first morning (in 1860), the station of the old "B & M" railroad not far from the water front and she could have seen a youth named Charles Elliott Perkins working there — a man destined later to become president of "The Burlington Route."

In its early years, Burlington was known as a rough river town. Naturally, whatever lawlessness was abroad at first had traveled the river route, as later it took to riding the rails. In 1844 there had been riots down the river around the Mormon center at Nauvoo, Illinois. When a mob had stormed the jail at Carthage, shooting down the Mormon leaders confined there, several Iowa lawyers had taken alarm. They were not minded to let their state be run at loose ends.

Another regulating influence had been powerfully at work. Men of missionary spirit representing numerous religious sects had come into the Upper Mississippi Valley. The church for which

Dr. Ross dug the cellar and made the brick was a Methodist meeting house — later known as “Old Zion.” Then, in 1839, Father Samuel Charles Mazzuchelli of the Dominican Order, called together the few Catholics at Burlington and celebrated mass with them in the cabin of a poor settler. When he left, two years later, the Catholics had a brick church designed by Mazzuchelli.

Other denominations followed. In 1840, the Episcopalians had founded their “Christ Church.” From the halls of Andover Theological Seminary in Massachusetts came a crusading group of eleven young men in 1843 who were known as “The Iowa Band.” In tender years, I used to think “The Iowa Band” was some kind of a nice musical organization that had marched into Burlington in early days with our Dr. Salter “going on before.” William Salter, the youngest of the eleven, was a youth of personal beauty and refined charm, of distinguished gifts and rare devotion who became the pastor of the Congregational Church dedicated in 1846. In 1845 the Presbyterians had come, and, four years later, the Reverend G. J. Johnson, known throughout southeastern Iowa as “a veritable dynamo of mental and spiritual force” had set up a Baptist church. Yes, Burlington, with its aristocratic English name, had settled down into law-abiding ways and was now a prosperous, well-conducted town populated by

exceptionally fine people in 1860 when Kate Darrow first saw it.

In 1868, when my father arrived in the Hawkeye State, the Mississippi had been bridged at Burlington. Edward William Connor and his brother, Francis Fisher Connor, were two buoyant young Canadians who had left their home in Ontario to seek their fortunes among "the Yankees" in the States. Peering out of the car windows, as they crossed the river on the new bridge, they thought they liked the looks of Burlington.

In the interval between the arrival of Kate Darrow and the appearance of Ned Connor on the Iowa scene, development of the West paused while the nation settled the slavery question. When war was declared, "Old Zion" became headquarters for recruiting officers.

With the war over, railroad building was renewed by John Murray Forbes. Charles Elliott Perkins went back east to marry his cousin, Edith Forbes of Milton, Massachusetts, who was also Forbes' niece. By 1866, Perkins had become Forbes' right-hand man in the management of his railroad interests.

A shift in the relationship between the river and the railroad became noticeable now. River traffic fell off as the transportation of troops ceased and railroads extended their lines further, although the social prestige of the lumber barons

held long after the railroad station had supplanted the steamboat landing as a center of interest.

Keeping the C. B. & Q. in order was the job of Thomas Jefferson Potter, its general manager. Potter was an ex-soldier discharged from the Army in the spring of 1866 after four years as a volunteer cavalryman during which time his invaluable wife, Jane Wood Potter, niece of his commanding officer, had shared his experiences on the western plains. That Tom Potter was more benevolently inclined towards the masses than was Charles E. Perkins, president of the Burlington, who had begun his railroad work humbly enough as a \$30-a-month clerk, I have no reason to believe, but Mr. Perkins was regarded as an outsider from the East with various aristocratic labels on him. He was spoken of as "Mister" Perkins, whereas Mr. Potter was just plain "Tom."

The people of Burlington took pride in Tom's meteoric rise; they cited it often as an example of the great opportunities offered in America to aspiring youth. "Just think! Tom Potter was once a peanut boy on the railroad! And now he is its General Manager." Whether or not Tom Potter ever peddled peanuts on the Burlington, or any other railroad, such legends made a good story. And, meanwhile, across the plains and mountains a vast railway network was pushing westward.

HARRIET CONNOR BROWN

## Schoolday Memories

It was about the time of the great Chicago fire that Ned Connor and Kate Darrow were married. I appeared on the scene the following year and soon began to take personal note of Iowa's educational institutions, especially its homes and schools and churches.

I had been sipping perhaps five years at the Pierian spring of home instruction when I crossed the threshold of my first school, a Sunday School. Arrayed in what my Grandma Darrow called our best "Sunday-go-to-meeting" dresses, Fannie Potter and I were sent across the street to Maple Hall above Mr. Donahue's Dry Goods and Grocery Store. There North Hill's Christ Church had established a branch Sunday School for little South Hill children.

I see, now, how consistent it was for me to be getting acquainted with things spiritual by way of the Episcopalian formula, for, when my parents were married in a Methodist Church by a Congregational minister — good Dr. Salter — it was according to the Episcopalian ritual. They had met at a Methodist Church sociable where Kate was singing "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," her head thrown back, no doubt, in the

proud, laughing way she had. A homesick young Canadian, Ned Connor, with a sister named "Maggie" at home, capitulated at once to the charms of the singer. It was easy to understand how Dr. Salter, the Congregational minister, came into their wedding ceremony, for people of every denomination called upon Dr. Salter to christen, marry, or bury them. I can account for the Methodist Church and the Congregational clergyman but I cannot account for the Episcopalian formula, unless it was that Kate was disposed to have a stylish wedding. Born, therefore, under a triple aegis, as it were, I might seem to have been entitled, logically, to some personal choice in the matter of Sunday School. With fine impartiality, I tried them all in time.

I was early subjected to the more formal processes of secular education. A lady was imported from the distant East to try out new theories of pedagogy on a favored few of us in a Burlington kindergarten, probably one of the first west of the Mississippi. The experience was brief and characterized by an atmosphere of mystery. It began with a disappointment. I thought I was going to play in a garden. Instead, I found myself seated with other squirming youngsters on a broad veranda overlooking a sweep of lawn, clumsily crooking my fat fingers to the plaiting of paper mats. I never did find out, at least in those early

years, what the mat-making, the marching, and the singing were all about, but I regarded with special interest the boy who lived in the house where the kindergarten was held. He had a funny name — Werner Boecklin. He wore a jaunty plaid sash around his middle, which was nice in itself but queer, seeing that his mama had slight regard for sashes, or even for skirts. Fascinated, I had stared at her that first day as she came toward us across the lawn. "The lady that wears pants" was the label that she bore among us. Her costume consisted of long pantaloons of shepherd's plaid topped by a full-skirted cutaway. She was a challenging figure in the Victorian world of the seventies.

In time I learned that Werner's papa was a brother of the famous Arnold Boecklin whose "Island of the Dead" and other eerie paintings I was to admire in the famous galleries of the world. But, though of Germanic stock, the Boecklins were Swiss. I see now how fitting it was that, when the philosophy of Pestalozzi and Froebel was first given expression in the rural Iowa regions beyond the Mississippi, it should find hospitable shelter in a home of Swiss origin. I see, too, how the Old World was reaching in to touch all that developing area.

"I remember," Anna Lalor once told me, "that Mrs. Boecklin was always hospitable to new ideas.

I used to hear her discuss the habitability of Mars. I met Annie Besant at her house one time." Mrs. Boecklin wrote a pamphlet called "Milk for Babes" in which she advocated better care of cows, this at a time when Burlington cows were following their own sweet will all over the landscape.

Sometimes the kindergarten met in the parlors of the Lalor children's home. Their papa, John Edward Lalor, was chief engineer of "The Burlington" and was nearly always "out West," extending its lines in Nebraska and Colorado. On his staff were three notable young men of distinguished name interested in the development of "The Burlington — Will Irving, a nephew of Washington Irving; Horace Sumner, a nephew of Charles Sumner; and C. M. Higginson, a nephew of Thomas Wentworth Higginson. Mr. Lalor — "J. E." as he was usually called — was of Irish background like my father and from the same Canadian town. By reason of his physical and mental endowments, he was highly regarded at our house. "Knows Gaelic," I used to hear my father say, and I caught the note of respect in his comment long before Anna had helped to establish the Lalor Foundation for Scientific Research, long before, as an eminent educator in our federal government, she visited Ireland, to find the present Irish government, Eire, reviving Gaelic.

In the fall of 1878 I entered South Hill School. After that, Fannie Potter's playhouse was no longer the sole center of my social life. By right of her playhouse, Fannie queened it over the other little girls around Maple Hall. Like her father, she was masterful but generous. Indifferent to details, she got her way in the main things because she could always exclude us, if she would, from the playhouse. That delightful structure was a painted cottage with vines growing over it, with doors and windows and shutters just like grown folks' establishments. It had not always graced the Potter lawn. It had first been the office of the Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, but when that growing organ of Republicanism moved to larger quarters, Frank Hatton, then editor, let Tom Potter, Democrat though he was, have the little building for his children's use. Now my interest was to be divided between the playhouse and the schoolhouse. But I like to remember those early years around Maple Hall corner because they were happy years, full of excitement.

I thought of South Hill School as a venerable institution but it was only just entering on the second quarter-century of its existence. It was a dignified, two-storied, ten room structure surrounded by a picket fence and surmounted by a cupola in which swung a pealing bell for which everybody entertained the greatest respect. In

the northern yard was a clump of locust trees fragrantly overhanging a long wood pile. Sticks from the wood pile were conveyed by the red-bearded, pop-eyed, old janitor to the big stoves in every room. On the south, the school yard inclined, invitingly, to the sun. Beyond the school fence, the slope continued steeply down to a ravine, where a brook, a tunnel, and a spring made fascinating places to visit at recess. And the long hill with its exciting bump at the bottom was marvelous for coasting.

The classrooms were pleasant places. We had curtains at the windows, plants on the window sills, pictures on the walls, and a library collected by common effort. Thanks to the watchful eye of our principal, the meticulous William J. Sampson, the premises were spotless. I recall that he once made Hannah Casparson and me oil the big wooden staircase which we had daringly slid down one night, leaving in the soft wellow wood the marks of our ravaging heels.

In the next seven and a half years, under the tutelage of Miss Cox, Miss Crawford, Miss Troxel, Miss Young, Miss Brown, Miss Kaiser, Miss Littlefield, and Miss Todd, all directed by "Billy" Sampson and supervised by Robert G. Saunderson, I picked up some crumbs of learning. In the process I usually enjoyed myself, especially when "Saundy" was present.

We were always glad when "Saundy" visited our room. The teacher was glad too. I remember how Miss Brown laughed one day with the rest of us when she had set Peggy Nairn up before the class to eat the pickle she had been slyly consuming behind her geography and, just then, in came "Saundy." Catching the sudden twinkle in his eye, Peggy's tears turned to grins and she waved her pickle at him.

I find myself wondering what memories I have of our school superintendent to confirm the impression of his wide-spread popularity and effectiveness. I don't think he talked much; but I remember well how delightfully, how understandingly, he smiled at one out of his pale eyes. He was a tall, well-formed, big-nosed man with a handsome head thinly thatched with sandy hair. Born in Ireland, he had had some editorial experience on New York papers before he came west and entered the educational field. I can see him driving from school to school in his cool, speculative way — to North Hill and North Oak, South Hill and South Boundary, West Hill, Sunnyside, Germania, and Hibernia — one long leg dangling nonchalantly over the edge of his light sulky. He knew a good school when he saw it. Under his guidance we became fluent readers, correct spellers, easy penmen, ready reciters, capable calculators, and sometimes really eager students.

Lessons were only incidental at first; it was school life itself that furnished the big excitement. "Readin', 'Ritin' and 'Rithmetic'" were tricks one had to learn in order to propitiate teachers and get a chance for recess companionships. Reading made me little trouble; in no time at all the printed page just suddenly came alive. But writing was for me a fairly difficult art, associated in my mind with the arrival in our town of the first celebrity I took note of — General Ulysses S. Grant. I wrote my Canadian grandpa of how I had shaken the General's hand, adding "This is the first letter I ever wrote with ink." It looked it. Soon I was not only inscribing my sentiments boldly on every surface, but also entering furiously into the circulation of my own and other children's autograph albums. I had one page in my autograph album that excelled in interest anything my friends had. It was the page on which our neighbor, Bob Burdette, the celebrated funny man of *The Hawk-Eye*, had written:

Oh, Che-die Connor!

On my word of honor,

I hope you will never forget

That the names at both ends

Are the names of two friends,

Your name and mine — R. J. Burdette.

I read the lines back to him after he had written them and I was proud, indeed, when he said:

"Why, Chedie Connor, to think you can read 'ritin' like that!"

It wasn't until I reached Miss Young's room, that the number lessons began to give me trouble. To add, to multiply, to subtract seemed to be in harmony with human inclination, but not so to divide. What entanglements — what toil and tears — in the business of dividing! In time, I came to see that even big folks were resistant to the point of fighting when division was proposed.

Spelling was an exciting memory game, but geography was a puzzling business in those days, a confusing jumble of hard names and meaningless statistics. Yet the study of "Our Country" opened up vast areas of enchantment for the inquiring child, vistas which the rich and roaring stories I used to hear at our fireside helped to populate. My father's friend, Tom Carter, used to come over from Prospect Hill with his old Irish father and his two pretty sisters, and Tom and Ned would amuse the company with accounts of what they had seen and done, while peddling "The Futprints of Time" — as Tom always facetiously called the great work of the Root Publishing House — "down South" and "out West." When Tom took his lawyer's shingle out to Montana, I missed his Sunday visits, recalling the genial pink and white look of him when I sat upon his knee, neither of us suspecting that some day I

would report his doing as a senator in charge of the Republican National Committee's programs.

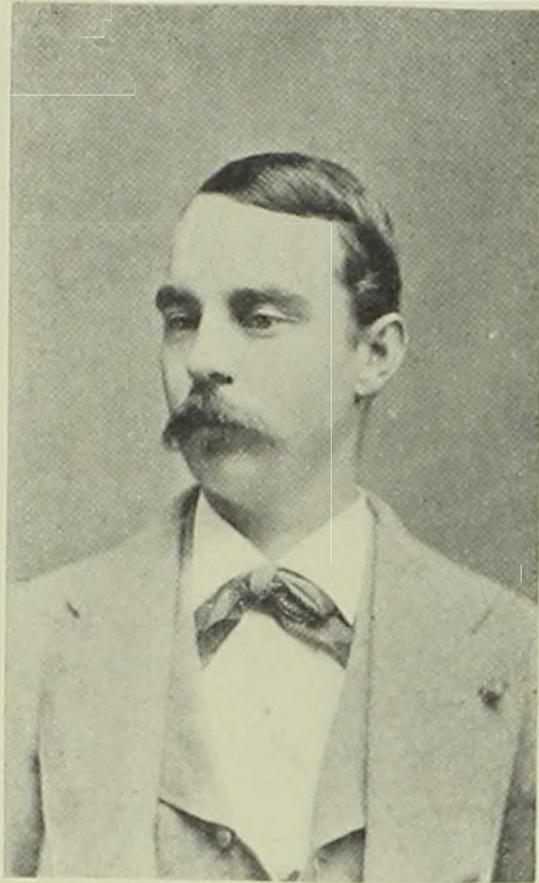
Tied in with our school lessons were the more exciting extra-curricular activities of music and dancing, of singing and skating. And running through experiences of all kinds was the subtle indoctrination in manners, etiquette, and deportment — not to mention religion and ethics.

After a while, books got their clutch on me. Though the trick of reading came easily enough, the habit of it had waited on more pressing interests. My first literary enthusiasm came to me by way of a circus parade. Mr. George F. Parker, editor of the *Burlington Gazette*, bestowed on brother Frankie and me, together with a pass to "Forepaugh's Greatest Show on Earth," a copy of Otis' priceless book, *Toby Tyler or Ten Weeks with a Circus*. Never was there such a treasured volume. It made real the spectacle of the sawdust ring; it translated for us the meaning of the glittering parade that traversed our streets when the circus came to town. I spelled it out for myself and then I read it to brother Frankie and later to sister Katie and got Grandma to read it aloud to all of us, and I loved every word of it.

I used to wonder how Toby could bear to leave the enchanted world of the circus, after he had once gained access to it. What if Mr. Lord, the peanut man, were hard on him? There were all



KATE DARROW



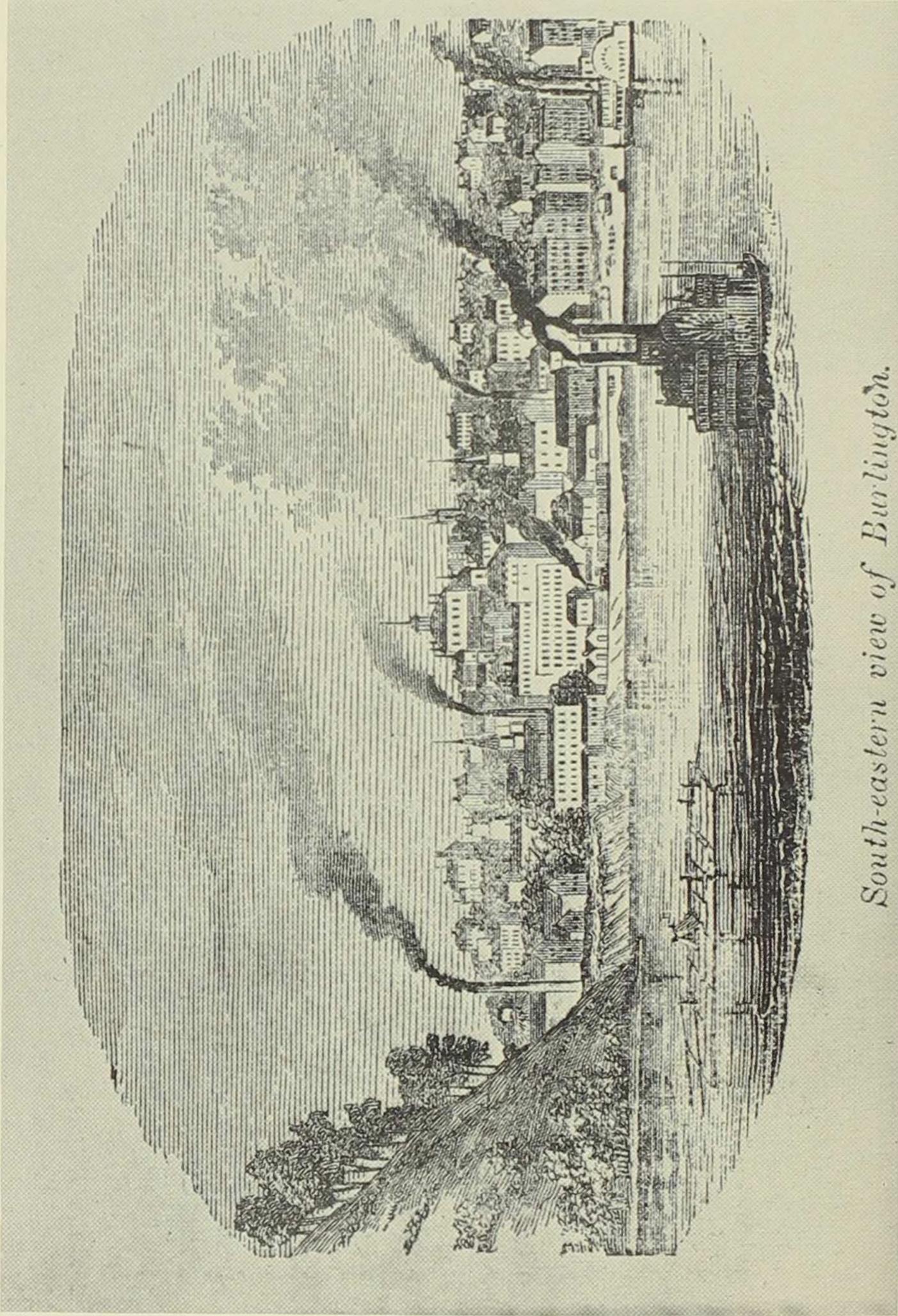
NED CONNOR

About the time of their marriage in 1871.



HARRIET "CHEDIE" CONNOR

At age three and as a pupil at South Hill School.



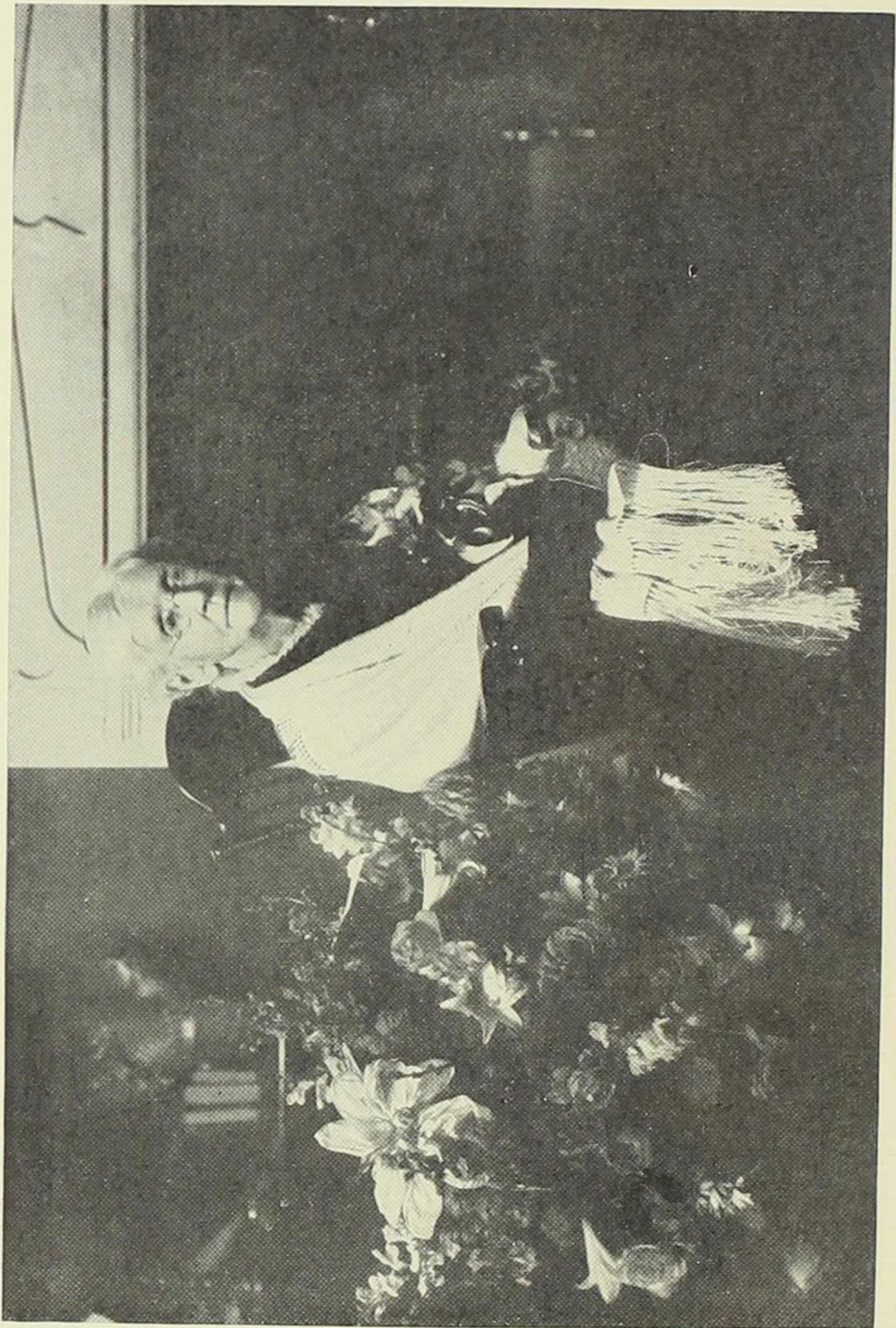
*South-eastern view of Burlington.*

The view shows the appearance of the city, about 1865, as seen from near the South Bluff: the eastern terminus of the Burlington and Missouri Railroad, the Court House, and other public buildings, on the elevated ground in the distance, appear in the central part; the North Bluff and Steamboat Landing on the right.

distance, appear in the central part; the North Bluff and Steamboat Landing on the right.



VIEW OF BURLINGTON, 1871



GRANDMOTHER BROWN ON HER ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY

the other nice people that Toby knew, the Living Skeleton and the Fat Lady and the Albino Girl. And how he must have loved it, riding bareback in tinsel tights, after he once learned how! And just to think how he lost his monkey trying to get back home! I cried hard when "Mr. Stubbs" died, and thought it sweet of Toby to line his grave with violets.

Mr. Parker had come to Burlington to see what he could do to resuscitate the Democratic party in the Hawkeye State. Despite the undoubted ability of Iowa's first Democratic leaders — Robert Lucas, Charles Mason, David Rorer, Augustus Caesar Dodge, Jonathan C. Hall, and others—Whig-Republican standards soon supplanted Democratic banners in Iowa. This was due, largely, to the influence of James W. Grimes, and to Editor Edwards in his conduct of *The Hawk-Eye*.

But Iowa's Democratic leaders, though retired from active campaigning, were still effectively vocal. Judge Rorer, short, thick, intense, explosive little man, was about town a dozen years after I knew Burlington, talking excitedly, at times, on political themes. Judge Mason and General Dodge were in demand as speakers at the anniversary celebrations of Iowa's early days and they never lacked admirers and imitators among Burlington's younger generation, as Charles Mason Remey, the Judge's grandson, could attest.

As we gossiped together, in the nineties, about our friends and relatives in Burlington, Mason used to tell me how General Dodge would come with his grandson, young Henry, to call on Mason's grandfather, the Judge. "They used to set Henry up on the woodbox to make a Democratic speech," Mason narrated. "And how those two old men would throw back their heads and laugh and laugh to hear Henry pouring out all the Democratic slogans and catch words! And Henry would get excited when they laughed and wave his arms and shout some more and I would nearly burst with envy of Henry's oratorical powers."

Even during that period I was not quite without interest in political matters. The campaign of Garfield and Arthur versus Hancock and English in the fall of 1880 had impressed me. I remember watching from the fence corner the torchlight parade going past the house and noting that the torches were dripping and smoking, as well as flaring, and that the men who carried them wore oilcloth capes to protect their coats from the drips. What it was all about I did not know. I only knew that I was for Garfield and Arthur, of course, because my papa was. May Crawford in the next house was for Hancock and English, because her papa was. We waved our rival emblems defiantly at each other.

The tragic consequence of Garfield's success at

the polls registered at first only slightly with me. I had not yet formed the newspaper habit. While the nation watched anxiously for the bulletins issued from the bedside of the assassinated President, I pursued my own summer interests, coaxing my mother to let me go barefoot and then lingering in the shade of the ice wagon to catch the cooling drip of the melting ice on my hot feet. Or reluctantly I took long naps on torrid afternoons until it was cool enough to be dressed up in crisp summer clothes to be taken to an ice cream parlor. Or I went to a "show" with May Crawford in Jennie McCosh's barn, paying my entrance fee with green postage stamps which my mother had told me, to my bewilderment, were "just as good" as three pennies. But, when September came, the national distress reached me.

I wakened suddenly in the night, deeply shaken and alarmed. I remember crying out in fear and my mother coming to my bedside, kneeling there beside me, putting her arms around me, and saying: "The President has died. That is why all the bells are tolling."

And then, the next day, at last, the common sorrow reached me. There on our front stoop were piled yards and yards of black and white cotton cambric which my father and mother twined together into one strand and draped about our little porch and over our front door, and Frankie and

I were big enough to help. All because President Garfield was dead, shot by a man named Guiteau!

In the next years, other books followed *Toby Tyler* in quick succession. Curled up in "the dog chair," an easy chair in our living room, the arms of which terminated in dog heads, reading my head off, I entered the "Never-Never Land." Uncle Frank had given that chair to my parents as a wedding present. I know now that it was of ordinary dimensions, but there was a time when, sunk in its depths, with legs crossed under me, "the dog chair" seemed to envelop me and isolate me from the ordinary realities of life.

It was the time for fairy stories, for tales of the childhood of the race, of the mysterious half-world of demi-gods and genii that everybody knows have perished from the earth but must once have been, or else, why would there be so many stories about them? Grandma Darrow remembered a meadow in Ireland where "the little people," as they called the fairies over there, came out to dance in the moonlight on the green. And Anna Lalor told me that, on her father's farm in Ireland, there was a "holy" well. It was not a matter that a little girl would talk about in public, of course, but there *was* a time when I nursed a secret expectation that sometime, I, too, might meet a fairy. Gradually, a corroding doubt destroyed the expectation; perhaps I wasn't good enough; perhaps

the fairies wouldn't show themselves to a girl who had "tantrums"; perhaps they didn't come out at all here in America. Such early-morning speculations put me in a trance-like state that must have been trying for a busy mama, hurrying to get her brood breakfasted and off to school. "Here, Chedie, you've held that leg long enough. Suppose you put on the other stocking now," I would sometimes hear my mother say.

And then, with our first lessons in American history, I read thrilling tales of the early explorers, stories of kings and courts, of plots and counterplots, of mysterious lands mostly to the south of us, where fountains of youth and cities of human sacrifice might be found.

A sensation of pride went through our history class when the familiar name of our own great Mississippi came into the story. A Spaniard named Hernando de Soto had discovered it and had been buried in it, far to the south of us. But up here, close to where we lived, a French trader named Louis Joliet and a priest named Jacques Marquette had lingered six days, hunting, fishing, and feasting with the friendly Indians. The French chronicler reported that the Iowa air had been balmy and filled with the songs of birds; that the hills—our own "bluffs"—were heavily wooded; that the valleys—our "bottom lands"—were covered with grass as high as men's should-

ers; that the deep ravines — like our Fox Abraham's Glen in Burlington — were edged with flowers and foliage; that the plains back of the Great River were dotted with grazing herds of elk and deer and buffalo. It was obvious that to those visitors of long ago, as to us in South Hill School, Iowa had seemed "The Pleasant Land."

To myself, I seemed to live in a settled civilization in those days. Yet, as I read the exciting stories of the conquest of the great West, of Indians, highwaymen, cattle kings, and cowmen, I think there was still some tang of the wilderness in the Iowa of the eighties. Little girls were not supposed to read "dime novels," though big boys had entertaining literature like this tucked away between the pages of their geographies or stuffed in the tops of boots to read when teacher's back was turned. About the time I celebrated my tenth birthday I was disposed, like the boys, to regret that Indians and bandits no longer adorned the landscape. Nor was I above spending a summer afternoon up in a cherry tree gloating over the exploits of Sitting Bull and Geronimo, of Kit Carson and Jesse James.

Among my father's piles of paper-bound books, I found a story or two of Captain King's depicting army life on the plains where the only excitement that bored soldiers could hope for, to relieve monotony, was a raid of "the Redskins." And often,

when Mrs. Potter dropped in, I would hear her telling Mama about the ways of Indians she had observed when she and her Tom were stationed at an army post. On more recent travel across the plains behind the new Iron Horse, bandits were more likely to make trouble than were Indians. "We stopped at a watering tank out on the desert," she said; "I wondered what was up. The men were all running hither and yon. Why, there was a dead man in the tank! Murdered, yes, but by whom? Indians? Highwaymen? What worried us was fear of a hold-up by the same gang."

My interest in all these stories was stimulated by the pictures in Grandma Darrow's scrapbook of Sitting Bull and his braves. Sitting Bull belonged to current history, one might say, for the massacre by the Sioux of General George A. Custer and his men at the Little Big Horn River in Montana occurred in 1876; but Grandma's interest in Indians also covered the Sauk and Fox who belonged to what seemed to me like ancient history. She had a picture of Black Hawk with his shaven head, and one long lone tuft of hair on the crown. He had been dead nearly half a century although there were people living in Burlington who had actually seen him in the flesh. Dr. Salter was one. As a youth, back East, William Salter had "looked with wondering eyes," as he put it, upon Black Hawk and Keokuk on the occasion of their visit

to "the Great White Father" in Washington. It makes me realize how immature is our American civilization when I think that, although I, myself, never saw an Indian in my childhood except under a circus tent, there were residents of my home town who had known Iowa when only the so-called savages lived there.

HARRIET CONNOR BROWN

## A Town Looks Back

My memories of Burlington's Semi-Centennial celebration of the beginnings of her permanent settlement are vague, but I was there. I cannot say that I recall a single one of the distinguished visitors, who sat on the stand in North Hill Park that morning of June 1, 1883, or who addressed the Praise Service at the Congregational Church two evenings later. But I do remember Burlington's crowd-filled streets, the banners flying from every building, the profusion of evergreens and flowers, the march of the paraders. And I have read the printed accounts to help refresh my memory.

The opening day of the Semi-Centennial was sunny but cool. From earliest dawn strangers had been streaming into town on every train and steamboat. Bands played all day long, and not one accident marred the joy of the occasion. How different Burlington was in 1883 from the Flint Hills of 1833! Once the forest home of a few red men, it was now an orderly city of 20,000 white men. Banners and emblems everywhere reminded us of the great changes which fifty years had brought.

"Welcome to all: Pioneers, Old Settlers and

Every One, Thrice Welcome" was the greeting displayed at the steamboat landing. At the corner of Main and Valley streets was a picture of an ox team drawing a prairie schooner, labeled "Go West, Young Man!" On the reverse appeared a beautiful residence with fountains and flowers and the inscription "Fifty Years After." While no Indians were present, Black Hawk was not forgotten. "Peace to his ashes," read the legend below his picture. The progress of transportation was memorialized in a banner on one side of which was portrayed "First engine in Burlington, J. C. Hall" and on the reverse a C. B. & Q. "Mogul" locomotive. Another banner read: "Shokokon, Flint Hills; After Fifty Years, Burlington, the Orchard City!" Most arresting of all was the streamer that proclaimed: "Iowa the Beautiful; Iowa the Banner State, Iowa, The Pleasant Land, This is the Place."

To children like myself gazing enraptured from the curbstone the chief interest of the day was in the big parade that swept through the streets at noon heralded by the booming of fifty guns to commemorate the passage of fifty years since permanent settlement. Two thousand people were in the procession. With excitement, we recognized Willie Potter — "Master Willie Potter," according to the official program — riding stiffly by us on a horse as "orderly to the Chief Marshal."

"Hi there, Willie!" we called, but Willie stared straight ahead, ignoring our salutations, his thin, pale face very solemn.

Preceded by a Ladies' Band — a veritable novelty then — and a platoon of uniformed police, Buren R. Sherman, the Governor of Iowa, and John Zaiser, the Mayor of Burlington, rode through the streets in an open carriage drawn by four white horses. There followed twenty carriages in which sat the old pioneers of 1833.

Then came the marching ranks of Odd Fellows and various "Ancient Orders": United Workmen, Druids, Hibernians. A lodge of colored Masons trod closely on the heels of the Knights of Pythias. Members of the German Mutual Aid Society and the Swedish Gotha Society followed. Local musicians — the Orchard City Band and the Burlington Brass Band — kept the first divisions of the procession moving briskly along, but a band from Monmouth, Illinois, at the rear was less successful in holding "The Grip Sack Brigade of Traveling Salesmen" to their step, for the drummers were inclined to lag a bit, waving gaily to friends along the way. Not a single soldier was in the procession, nor an Indian either.

In the afternoon there was a regatta on the river with races by young men of the Boat Club in their graceful shells. With the coming of night the city blazed with light. Chinese lanterns sway-

ed in festoons and rockets zigzagged across the sky. From an elevation which I think was probably South Hill Square, I gazed with brother Frankie and sister Katie, at the exhibition of fireworks set off from flatboats anchored in the river. What I remember particularly was an illuminated piece representing George Washington on horseback. And then, at last, in letters of gold across the black sky the words "Flint Hills, 1833 — Burlington, 1883."

It is pleasant to know that among the pioneers present were good Dr. Ross and "his estimable lady," who for many years had been residing in another part of the State. Dr. Ross was called on for a review of early events and he did not forget to mention that his had been the first marriage among Flint Hills residents.

"I was married under a sycamore tree on the east bank of the river, December 3, 1833," Dr. Ross told the Burlington citizens of 1883. Since no government had yet been established in the Black Hawk Purchase, the couple could not obtain a marriage license west of the Mississippi. It was getting late in the year and navigation might soon be blocked. As soon as he knew that Miss Matilda was willing to join her lot with his, Dr. Ross hurried to Monmouth, Illinois, for the indispensable license. He asked Judge Allen to meet him on the eastern shore of the river on December 3. At the

appointed time the whole population of the new settlement crossed the river on a flatboat for the rendezvous with the judge under the sycamore tree. So Dr. Ross, first in all pioneer activities, was first to marry also. And now, here was the fine old couple, helping to celebrate the semi-centennial of Burlington and doubtless thinking, sentimentally, of their own approaching Golden Wedding Day.

The central figure of the commemoration exercises was General Augustus Caesar Dodge, and properly so. Ex-Mayor A. G. Adams and Thomas Hedge, Jr., our future congressman, served as vice-presidents of the celebration. Dr. Salter, who had been named Chaplain, gave a moving prayer at the exercises in North Hill Park. But it was General Dodge who exemplified more than any one else present the events that we had assembled to celebrate. As an Indian fighter, as legislator, and as diplomat, General Dodge had played a leading part in the events by which the first fifty years of Iowa's history had been shaped.

As a youth, he had been aide-de-camp to his father, Colonel Henry Dodge. The Dodges knew the ways of Indian warfare, for no less than five of Henry Dodge's uncles had fallen under the Indian hatchet in the settlement of Kentucky.

After the Black Hawk War, Henry Dodge had been appointed Governor of Wisconsin Territory

and his son, Augustus Caesar Dodge, had settled in Burlington. When the Territory of Iowa was established, Augustus was elected Delegate to Congress from the new Territory. Arriving in Washington in 1840, he was joined by his father in 1841, who had been elected Delegate from Wisconsin Territory. Later, when statehood came to their respective constituencies, father and son moved up together to the Senate. It is the only case in the history of the United States when father and son sat side by side successively, first in the lower house as Delegates, and then in the upper house as Senators. In a Congress that boasted such outstanding personalities as Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and John C. Calhoun, the Democrats of Wisconsin and Iowa were proud to claim the two Dodges.

With great dignity and amazing zest for his seventy-odd years, General Dodge presided at the Semi-Centennial exercises. "From his capacious, accurate, and ready memory" he poured forth "treasures of information concerning the beginnings of the Commonwealth." At the morning session he reviewed the chief historical events, telling of the French Explorers, of the Black Hawk War, of the Flint Hills Settlement. At the Praise Service in the Congregational Church his speech was rich in personal reminiscences concerning the hardships of pioneer life, the horrors

of Indian warfare, the terrors of cholera, and the many trials of Iowa's statehood.

To the school children of Burlington, General Dodge was a romantic figure. He used to tell the shuddering youngsters how his own brother, Henry LaFayette Dodge, had been captured by the Apaches in New Mexico in 1857 and burned to death at the stake. He himself, when less than fifteen years old, had participated in the Winnebago war of 1827. "Don't you remember, he had a gashed ear," Mason Remey, Judge Mason's grandson, reminded me. "I used to stare at it and wonder if the Indians had tried to tomahawk *him*."

General Dodge was happy in having with him, that Semi-Centennial day, his old companion-in-arms, George Wallace Jones, his associate in the Black Hawk War and his colleague for two terms in the Senate. Senator Jones told stories of how he and the general had campaigned together in the Black Hawk War, sleeping side by side, with their saddles for pillows; and he told how, later, as senators, they had worked together, drawing up bills for preemption and homestead rights, for improvement of the Mississippi, and for railroad land grants in Iowa.

Senator Dodge had indicated in his introduction what Senator Jones' special work had been. Grasping his friend's hand and holding it up, he said laughingly: "In early days the pioneers al-

ways estimated a workman by his chips. Here, ladies and gentleman, is the hand that chipped Wisconsin out of Michigan; that chipped Iowa out of Wisconsin; that chipped for us six hundred and forty acres of land covering this original town at a mere nominal price; and to the same hand more than any other man or representative, we are indebted for our railroad grants."

There was dancing that night at the Boat Club House in which Senator Jones, seventy-nine years old, participated gaily. In his time he was reputed to have been the Chesterfield of Washington society. He lived to be 93 years old, with a reputation to the last, for being fastidious about the polish of his boots and the twist of his mustache. I was interested, in 1933, to hear Louis Murphy, the newly-elected Democratic senator from Iowa tell how, as a boy, he admired the dapper figure of old Senator Jones strolling through the streets of Dubuque in his long black velvet cloak.

The official record indicates that General Dodge and his lady "looked on awhile during the forepart of the night," at the dancing at the Boat House. Six months after this, General Dodge was dead. The children of North Hill School marched to his funeral, proud of having contributed each ten cents — or perhaps it was fifteen — toward a floral offering which, Mason Remey said, was an imposing Gates Ajar with a stuffed pigeon on top.

As was natural, the speeches of that anniversary day centered on the achievements of the past. Miles of railroad now replaced the old-time stagecoach routes. Highly-cultivated farms lay now where formerly dreary miles of uninhabited prairie stretched. As Richard Spencer said: "The few cabins have given place to large, well-furnished farm houses, filled with rich and happy people; the few villages have grown to flourishing cities with an intelligent and industrious population."

The official Orator of the Day, John H. Craig of Keokuk, reviewed the course of past events in a brilliant address. In making his estimate of Iowa's material advancement, Craig, whose oratory "had few equals in the State," said: "A vast system of railroads, all built within the last fifty years, extending from the Atlantic, including great trunk lines across the state of Iowa connecting with the central line across the mountains to the Golden Gate of the Pacific, forms a splendid 'Portage' across the continent, and places Iowa in direct communication with the oldest and most populous nations of the globe; so that now the locomotive, with its 'breath of flame and nerves of steel,' speedier than the swiftest winged ship, brings the commerce of the Orient to your doors and drops its treasures into your laps."

Most of the speakers noted with pride Iowa's progress in matters of education. "Iowa now an-

nually expends for her schools vastly more than the entire original value of the millions of acres embraced in the Black Hawk Purchase," wrote J. K. Graves of Dubuque. Yes — "today Iowa has more churches and school-houses and less ignorance and vice according to population than any other state in the Union," exulted W. B. Culbertson of Burlington. And Theodore S. Parvin, who had once lived in Burlington as Secretary to the first Governor, Robert Lucas, capped the climax when he told his audience that he had just "journeyed in palace cars pulled by iron steeds" from Boston to San Francisco, and found that Iowa rather than the former city was indeed "the hub of the universe."

After more than sixty years, it is the clear voice of Richard Spencer that seems most vividly to epitomize that day. I recall him as a gentle old man of modest mien, looking thoughtfully upon us younger folk. "Is it too much to hope," he asked, "that when our children and our children's children come to celebrate . . . a completed century, a *moral order* with no abatement in physical progress or intellectual activity may be established here so far in advance of present attainments as to challenge universal admiration?"

HARRIET CONNOR BROWN

## Harriet Connor Brown

The author of this issue of *The Palimpsest* was born in Burlington in 1872. As a child Harriet Connor sat on "Bob" Burdette's lap, shook hands with U. S. Grant, and heard such great Iowans as William Salter, Augustus C. Dodge, and George Wallace Jones. She received her early education at Burlington, and graduated from Cornell University in 1894, winning prizes in literature and oratory as well as the Phi Beta Kappa key. On graduating from Cornell she was awarded a one-year scholarship to the Willard School in Berlin by the Association of Collegiate Alumnae — the predecessor of the American Association of University Women.

After teaching one year in Burlington High School, Harriet Connor began her journalistic career by covering the Republican National Convention at Saint Louis in 1896. As a free lance writer for the *Burlington Gazette* she heard William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech at the Democratic National Convention at Chicago. In the fall of 1896 she went to New York City and began contributing to the *Sun*, the *Press*, and the *Tribune*. She also wrote articles for Theodore Dreiser's magazine — *Every Month*.

In the spring of 1897 she married Herbert Brown and spent the next two years with him in Mexico. Returning to the United States, Mrs. Brown reported the Republican Convention of 1900, the assassination of McKinley, and wrote for General Leonard Wood his "Report on the Mineral Resources of Cuba" published by the War Department. For thirty years beginning in 1903, the Browns lived in Washington, D. C.

Although she wrote on many subjects and about many great events, Harriet Connor Brown achieved her greatest fame when she won the *Atlantic Monthly* award in 1929 for *Grandmother Brown's Hundred Years 1827-1927*, which has become a standard reference work for students of Midwestern pioneer life. Using the local scene for her first book, she saw it become a best seller. Perhaps the only woman to achieve fame by immortalizing her mother-in-law, Harriet Connor Brown has just completed a companion volume to *Grandmother Brown's Hundred Years* which deals with the railroad-building generation as she remembers it in girlhood days when Iowa was a gateway to the Far West. "A Daughter of Hawkeyeland" gives a hint of the background for this new book.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

# The State Historical Society of Iowa

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