

The **P**ALIMPSEST

FEBRUARY 1946

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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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THE PALIMPSEST

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The Fourth Estate in 1846

Newspapers reflect the interests, attitudes, and activities of people and the times in which they live; and the newspapers of 1846 reveal a great deal about life in Iowa at that time. How many newspapers were there in Iowa in 1846? Where were they located? Who edited them? What did they print? What was "news" a hundred years ago?

The beginning of the year 1846 found nine newspapers within the area that was to become the State of Iowa. Two were "born" during the year and one died, leaving ten papers in Iowa at the close of 1846. A majority of these eleven newspapers were located in towns along the Mississippi. Burlington, Davenport, Dubuque, Fort Madison, Keokuk, and Muscatine (then Bloomington) were the river towns which boasted weekly papers. Iowa City, the capital, and Keosauqua were the only inland towns with newspapers in 1846.

In Burlington the Democratic *Territorial Ga-*

zette and Burlington Advertiser (later the *Iowa State Gazette*), and the Whig *Hawk-Eye* were vying for patronage one hundred years ago. This *Gazette*, the third paper to be established in Iowa and the first Iowa paper to openly announce its politics, had been founded by James Clarke in 1837. In 1846 Samuel Royal Thurston and James Tizzard were editor and publisher, in the absence of Clarke who had been called away from his editorial duties to become Territorial Governor of Iowa late in 1845. Thurston, a lawyer from Maine, made his Iowa editorship a stepping stone in his career. He later went to Oregon and served as Delegate to Congress from that Territory.

The Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, on the other hand, had been from its beginning in 1839 "a most radical, outspoken and fearless advocate of the principles of the [Whig] party it affiliated with." The name "Hawk-Eye" adopted by this paper in 1843 did much to popularize that nickname for Iowa residents. This sobriquet as applied to Iowans had been suggested by James G. Edwards in the Fort Madison *Patriot* in 1838. In 1846 Edwards and J. M. Broadwell were editors and proprietors of the *Hawk-Eye*.

The Davenport *Gazette* had been founded in August, 1841, with Alfred Sanders as owner and editor. It is said that when Sanders arrived in

Davenport, the townspeople crowded about the wharf to see his printing press unloaded and there was great excitement among the spectators when the press was accidentally dropped into the river. It was rescued, however, and was soon in operation.

Following this spectacular beginning, the history of the *Gazette*, Whig in politics, was smooth and uneventful. Its quiet existence was undoubtedly due in part to the steadying influence of Sanders who remained in the editor's chair until 1861. In 1846 the *Gazette* was Davenport's only paper. Its owners at that time were Levi Davis and Sanders, and its slogan was, "It should be held as an eternal truth, that what is morally wrong can never be politically right."

Dubuque, where the first Iowa newspaper, the *Dubuque Visitor*, had been started in 1836, was the home of the *Miners' Express* in 1846. Owned by George Greene and Democratic in its sympathies, this paper was sometimes called "The Thunderer", because, like the *London Times*, it "swayed at will the old democracy of this portion of the West."

The year Iowa became a State, Fort Madison residents were reading the *Lee County Democrat*, a newspaper which later became the *Plain Dealer*. This newspaper, established as the Fort Madison

Courier, had originally been neutral in politics, but it was a Democratic organ in 1846, with R. Wilson Albright as owner and T. S. Espy as editor.

At Keokuk, the *Iowa Argus and Lee County Advertiser* began its brief career in January of 1846, with William Pattee as editor. Pattee later became Auditor of State. His Democratic paper lived only a few months. A resident of Keokuk, in speaking of the paper's death, said, "the long name was too much of a load to carry".

The *Bloomington Herald*, forerunner of the *Muscatine Journal*, issued its first edition in 1840. Although the *Herald* was originally a Democratic paper, with the beginning of M. T. Emerson's editorship on April 17, 1846, it left the ranks of Democratic publications to ally itself with the Whigs. Emerson's regime as editor ended with his sudden death on September 13, 1846. He was succeeded by N. L. Stout and William P. Israel as editor and publisher.

Editor Stout was an abolitionist and announced himself as such on the editorial pages of the *Herald*. In commenting on a news item from the *St. Louis Gazette* he revealed his sympathies: "A committee of nine, in the Legislature of Alabama . . . expressed their apprehension that Kentucky, Maryland, and Virginia will soon abolish

slavery, and that North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas will follow their example. . . . 'God grant it, and to His name be everlasting praise.' "

Iowa City, as the capital of Iowa, was the home of opposing political papers, the Whig *Iowa Standard* and the Democratic *Iowa Capital Reporter*. The *Iowa Standard* had begun publication in Bloomington, the original seat of government, and had been moved to Iowa City in 1841. Its slogan in 1846 was "Impartially devoted to the dissemination of Truth and Popular Intelligence." During that year it was purchased by Silas Foster, and Eastin Morris became its editor.

The *Iowa Capital Reporter* had issued its first copy in 1841 with the slogan, "He is a freeman whom the truth makes free." Abraham H. and Garret D. Palmer were owners and editors in 1846. On January 14th, a "New Prospectus of the Iowa Capital Reporter" stated:

"The Reporter will be especially devoted to the advocacy and promulgation of sound democratic doctrines, and will aim to secure harmony of sentiment, and concert of action among the Democracy, throughout our Territory, or prospective State. . . . The various departments of Literature, Agriculture, Foreign, Domestic, Political and Miscellaneous news, will each receive its due share of attention."

Keosauqua in Van Buren County was the birthplace of the *Des Moines Valley Whig*, when J. B. Howell and James H. Cowles established the paper in June, 1846. This paper was moved to Keokuk in 1849 to become the *Des Moines Valley Whig and Keokuk Register*, and finally adopted the name *Keokuk Gate City* in 1855.

The *Iowa Democrat and Des Moines River Intelligencer* was also published in Keosauqua in 1846. It had begun publication there in 1843 as a neutral paper. In 1846, however, it was advocating Democratic principles under the leadership of James and Jesse Shepherd.

These were the newspapers in Iowa of 1846. They were similar in that they were all four-page weeklies, but they differed in size and number of columns and in yearly subscription rates, which varied according to when the subscriber paid his bill. The *Bloomington Herald* and the *Iowa Standard* were \$2.00 per year if paid in advance or \$3.00 at the end of the year. The *Iowa Capital Reporter* was \$2.00 if paid in advance, \$2.50 within the first six months, \$3.00 within the last six months, and \$3.50 after expiration of the year. Because of its Democratic sympathies, the *Reporter's* income was increased by contracts for public printing. The amount due this firm early in 1846 for legislative print jobs was \$1,837.

Velma Critz Stout says, "The relationships between a pioneer editor and his public might become strained because of that public's neglect of a much-needed subscription remittance. . . . Too soon did newspaper proprietors realize the wide gap separating announcement of the subscription rates and actual payment of the same rates. Little money flowed into their pockets and every year ended with the editors rich in promises and poor in specie." Often these early editors were paid in wood, eggs, meat, potatoes, or sorghum. The *Iowa Capital Reporter* in 1846 stated, "Produce will be received in payment of subscription at the office, and at such other points where arrangements can be made for disposing of it", while the *Davenport Gazette* pleaded, "Those desiring us to receive wood on subscription will please deliver it soon."

What was news a century ago? An examination of several typical papers indicates the type of printed material which appealed to the reader of 1846.

Poetry of some kind almost always appeared on page one. "Seemingly the fondness of pioneer readers for sentimental or eclectic doggerel was recognized by the editors," if we may take the countless verses which appear as evidence. Titles such as "The Dying Girl", "Be a Child Again",

"One Hour With Thee", and "I Love the Ladies — Everyone" indicate something of the favorite subjects for would-be poets. An unknown writer in the *Iowa Standard* for August 12, 1846, had a word to say about "Bachelors".

As lone as clouds in Autumn eves,
As a tree without its leaves,
As a shirt without its sleeves —
Such are bachelors.

In other papers "The Magnetic Telegraph", much discussed in 1846, was honored in verse, "Laura" was eulogized by her lover, and the Mexican War was heralded in poetry. President Polk submitted his war message to Congress on May 11, 1846, and a poem in the June 12th issue of the *Bloomington Herald* was entitled "To Arms!"

Awake! arise! ye men of might!
The glorious hour is nigh —
Your eagle pauses in his flight,
And screams his battle cry!

Poets' names did not usually appear in these early papers, but if the poet was a local resident and the poem was original, such facts were carefully noted. More frequently, the literary selections were "lifted" from uncited sources, and published to answer popular demand. Plagiarism and copyrights were ignored by frontier editors.

"Selected Tales" and sentimental stories consistently appeared as part of the front page in 1846. Readers apparently delighted in romantic and tragic tales such as "The Bridal Eve" in which a beautiful bride was scalped and killed by Indians. "The Lesson: A Tale of Domestic Life", appearing in the *Iowa Standard* on September 9, 1846, was less gory, but equally as romantic. Here the rich young hero masqueraded as a poor mechanic in order to win a wife on his own merits. Other tales included "The Lucky Crown Piece", "Ambition's Victim", and "Female Stratagem — An Arabian Story".

Articles on agriculture, household hints, travelogues, and biographical sketches of George Washington, John Jacob Astor, or General Winfield Scott also appeared on page one of the pioneer paper. One column was often devoted to the business cards of local land agents, insurance agents, attorneys, physicians, dentists, watchmakers, and saddlers. Occasionally political news appeared on the front page, but ordinarily it was reserved for page two.

Page two was, indeed, the editor's domain; there he might write spiritedly about party news — conventions, candidates, and elections. "It is hard at this time to realize", wrote D. C. Mott, "what an important part politics had in the news-

paper business during that period [1836-1860]. Waves of political feeling and excitement surged back and forth throughout the new territory and state." The Mexican War, slavery, the Oregon boundary dispute, and the drawing up of a new State constitution were questions to "excite the spirit of party strife to fever heat."

In May of 1846 when a constitutional convention met to frame a new constitution for Iowa, editors, Whig and Democrat, were quick to praise and criticize this document. It was printed in newspapers during June and July, and on August 3rd the vote on adoption of the constitution was held. More than two weeks later the results of the voting were still not known. On August 19th the editor of the *Iowa Standard* wrote: "It seems to be generally conceded, although we have not received the official returns of the late election, that the Constitution has been adopted by a small majority. If this be the case, no time should be lost before making preparation for the change from a Territorial to a State government."

Progress of the Mexican War was another topic for discussion on editorial pages. On May 15th, the *Bloomington Herald* quoted a communication from General Zachary Taylor, "I have the honor to apprise you that hostilities have actually commenced between my forces and those of the

Mexicans". Although the Whigs criticized the war on the ground that the Democrats had provoked it, they patriotically supported it with a "my country right or wrong" attitude. Notices of meetings to organize volunteers and an original "Hawkeye War Song" were news items in 1846.

The tariff and national currency were also subjects for debate by 1846 editors. The Whigs favored a protective tariff, whereas the Democrats, especially those of the South, advocated free trade. Hard money (specie) vs. paper money was another controversial subject.

Editorial headlines in the June 24th *Iowa Standard* declared, "Gratifying Intelligence. The Oregon Boundary Settled!" The Oregon boundary dispute was given great emphasis on editorial pages early in 1846. The Democrats, remembering their "Fifty-four forty or fight" slogan, believed there should be no compromise with England. The Whigs, referring to the "Oregon farce", said they were "heartily tired and sick of the many manoeuverings of those who have the control of this question of notice in the present Congress." Apparently, both parties were glad of the settlement, however, feeling that a war with Mexico was quite enough to handle at one time.

Page two of the 1846 newspaper contained more than editorial comments: local, national, and

foreign news stories appeared there. Local news was, however, apparently considered of little importance, for it was often completely overshadowed by editorial reprints or by a report of a flood in New Orleans or a famine in Ireland. "Brevity was a jewel in the crown of pioneer journalism", and this was certainly evidenced in the reports of local happenings. Probably these news items were already common knowledge in a small community.

River towns, of course, were concerned with the condition of the Mississippi and activities connected with it. "The Mississippi, at this point, is still well up, but falling slowly", or "The River has risen 10 or 12 inches at this place" are typical reports. In April of 1846, the arrival of immigrants at Bloomington was announced: "Eighty emigrants landed at this place from the steamer *Fortune*, on Wednesday morning last.— They come to seek new homes on the rich prairies of this and adjoining counties."

Mammoth beets, potatoes, or radishes were subjects of local news. On July 10th, the *Bloomington Herald* reported: "A radish from the garden of Mr. Thomas Morford, weighing 4 1-2 lbs., and measuring about 20 inches in length, has been left at our office." The *Davenport Gazette* described a big pumpkin grown in Scott County,

measuring 6 ft., 7 and a half inches in circumference and weighing 150 lbs!

Murders were not, apparently, considered sensational news. The May 8th *Bloomington Herald* carried the simple statements, "The notorious O. P. Rockwell was arrested in Nauvoo, on Friday last, charged with the murder of Franklin P. Worrell. He was taken to Quincy and lodged in jail." Compare that brief account with our present day murder news stories embellished with pictures, glaring headlines, and sensational details.

Marriage notices were also unadorned and far different from the accounts printed on 1946 society pages. A few lines similar to the following might announce the culmination of a romance.

"MARRIED, — in Montpelier township, on the 27th of May, by Rev. A. B. Robbins, Mr. JOHN S. SILVERTHORN to Miss EVELINE B. PORTER, all of this county." A statement such as the following might announce a separation: "Notice — Whereas my wife Catherine has left my bed and board without any just cause or provocation; this is therefore to warn all persons against harboring or trusting her on my account, as I will pay no debts of her contracting after this date".

Obituaries, sometimes bordered in black, appeared frequently, but there were no birth announcements.

Notices of church meetings, political conventions, or circuses might appear on pages two or three, cheek by jowl with advertisements for ice cream saloons and hotels. The schedules of packet ships were important news items in river towns, and they often consumed many column inches.

Patent medicine salesmen used more than their share of column space in the 1846 newspaper. Long testimonials gave evidence of the curative powers of "Dr. Bragg's Indian Queen Vegetable Sugar Coated Pills", "Buchan's Hungarian Balsam of Life", The Great Chinese Remedy for Coughs — "Ginseng Panacea", "Wistar's Balsam of Wild Cherry", and "Jew David's or Hebrew Plaster".

"Purify the Blood" with "Moffat's Vegetable Life Pills and Phoenix Bitters" said one advertiser. "They are known by their fruits; their good works testify for them". This tonic was supposed to cure asthma, acute and chronic rheumatism, affections of the bladder and kidneys, bilious fevers and liver complaints, colds and coughs, foulness of complexion, gout, giddiness, jaundice, leprosy, palpitation of the heart, ulcers, and worms. And all this without a vitamin.

Dry goods merchants listed their wares on pages three and four without the benefit of present

day illustrations to attract the public eye. Bold type often announced:

6 P's Broad Cloth,	15 P's Linsey,
10 " Cassimere,	200 " Calicoes,
12 " Flannel,	8 " Ticking,
20 " Kentucky Jeans,	30 " Bleached Cotton,
8 Pair Machinaw	10 " Drilling,
Blankets,	8 " Canton Flannel,
15 Dozen Comforters,	20 " Colored
20 P's Satinets,	Cambrick.
3 Hhds New Orleans	5 Chests Tea,
Sugar,	10 Bbls. Molasses,
25 Sacks Rio Coffee,	75 Bbls Kanawha Salt,
8 Boxes Tobacco,	10 Bags Shot.

Ready made clothing such as vests, pants, coats, "ladies' white corded skirts", gloves, shawls, bustles, and hosiery were available. Also advertised were boots and shoes, hats and caps "of the latest style, and of good quality", hardware, crockery, glassware, and "fancy articles" such as tooth brushes, cologne, "pink saucers", and tooth powders.

An unusual feature of page three or four in these 1846 papers was the unclaimed letter list. The names of addressees were listed alphabetically, and a postmaster's note followed: "N. B. Persons calling for any of the above letters, will

please say they are advertised, or they may not get them." By an act of 1845, two cents additional postage was charged on these letters. If they were not claimed they were eventually sent to the national dead letter office.

If any space remained on the last page of an 1846 newspaper after the advertisers finished proclaiming their wares, the editor filled it in with jokes and anecdotes. "A GOOD ONE" is a typical filler. "A Western editor gives the following as the most approved method of killing fleas in those parts: place the animal on a small pine board, and hedge him in with putty; then read to him an account of all the railroad and steamboat accidents which have happened the last twelve months. As soon as he becomes frightened so as not to be able to stir, draw out his teeth, and he will starve to death!"

Such was the fourth estate in 1846. Wire photos, comics, glaring headlines, sports news, society pages, and stock market reports were absent from the pages of pioneer papers. Yet those papers of 1846 serve as a "mirror" of those times just as present day papers reflect our times, for "an adequate history of any people can scarcely be written without an examination of its journalism."

CORNELIA MALLET BARNHART

Selecting Convention Delegates

One hundred years ago methods of nomination and election were primitive. For example, when provision was made in June, 1845, to re-submit to the people of the Territory of Iowa, the constitution drafted in 1844, the law stipulated that it should "be the duty of the judges of the election, to interrogate the qualified electors when they approach the polls to vote, whether, they are in favor of, or against the Constitution; to which interrogatory the elector shall answer simply, 'constitution,' or 'no constitution;' and the clerk of said election shall thereupon write down his name in a column headed, 'constitution,' or 'no constitution,' in accordance with the vote of said elector." Thus there was at that time a *viva voce* election.

A year later, the constitution of 1844 having been finally discarded, provision was made for the calling of a new convention to be composed of thirty-two members. Des Moines, Lee, and Van Buren counties were each authorized to elect three delegates; Jefferson and Henry counties were each to have two delegates; and Davis, Wapello, Mahaska, Keokuk, Washington, Louisa, Muscatine, Johnson, Cedar, Scott, Clinton, Jackson,

Jones, and Clayton counties were each to have one delegate. Iowa, Marion, Polk, and Jasper counties together were to have one delegate, Linn and Benton together were given one delegate. Appanoose and Kishkekosh also had one between them, while Dubuque, Delaware, Buchanan, Fayette, and Black Hawk counties together were to have two delegates.

The Democratic Party, in power in Iowa at that time, made provision for the nomination of its delegates in the several counties by means of county conventions. These were, of course, extra-legal and procedure was informal. That various methods of representation were developing is shown by the fact that in March, 1845, the editor of the *Capital Reporter* recommended that representation in Johnson County be as follows: from Iowa City precinct 18, from Old Man's Creek 6, Clear Creek 6, and Monroe Township 4. He suggested that this ratio had previously been used. Just when this method evolved, or by whom it was first suggested is not clear. Apparently it was based roughly upon population or upon voting strength of the several precincts.

On March 11, 1846, the Iowa City *Capital Reporter* said: "The Democracy of Linn county are to assemble in mass meeting at Marion, on Tuesday, the 17th inst., to nominate a Delegate to the

convention for the formation of a constitution." At the same time it said: "The Democratic Delegates for Lee, three in number, are to be nominated by a county convention composed of delegates from each township, on Saturday, the 14th ult."

Three weeks later the same paper, reporting on the convention in Lee County, said:

"The invincible Democracy of the banner county met on the 14th ult., and nominated for Delegates, Josiah Kent, Geo. Berry and David Galland — 'all good men and true, and taken fresh from the ranks of the people,' as we are informed by both the Lee County Democrat and Keokuk Argus. Lee County was a recognized Democratic stronghold, and the prophecy of a complete Democratic victory was fulfilled, but that was the only county in the Territory that sent three Democratic delegates to the convention.

There was less unity and less strength among the Whigs, and various plans were devised to secure at least some Whig representation in the constitutional convention. In the hope of inducing some members of the Democratic Party to vote for representative Whigs, the Whig leaders suggested "No Party" conventions. The plan was a unique one, and offered two modes of procedure.

"First — let as many candidates for Delegate

as choose to run, come upon the track, in every county, without the intervention of caucuses or party meetings, and from the number allow the voters to make their selection, free of party bias or constraint; or secondly, let men of all parties meet together, and nominate as candidates the best men the counties afford, looking to their capacity and intelligence."

This plan made no appeal whatever to members of the Democratic Party. On February 11, 1846, the *Iowa City Capital Reporter* said:

"The whig press, and particularly our joking neighbor of the Hawk-eye, is constantly harping upon the themes of a 'party constitution' and a 'no-party constitution' — strenuously urging the latter upon the favorable consideration of the people. Now the whigs claim, we believe, to be a *party*, and a pretty considerable of a party at that, if we are to judge from their blustering about the principle, '*locofoco misrule*,' and all that. A tree is to be known by its fruits; and . . . the whigs of Iowa, who are the sole advocates of this incomprehensible thing, this *sui generis*, called a no-party constitution, are fairly entitled to the cognomen of the *no-party party*."

The Democratic press made vigorous appeals to members of its own party to organize for the contest. "Organize! Organize!" was the popular

Democratic slogan. "We have on two or three occasions", said a leading editor, "called attention of the Iowa Democracy to the importance of an early and efficient organization, in view of the approaching canvass for the election of Delegates to the Convention which is to form a Constitution for the future state of Iowa — This is not done from any apprehension that our opponents can, by any possibility, succeed in securing a majority in the Convention; but should our friends place too much reliance upon their superior numerical strength, and consequently relapse into indifference and suffer supineness to prevail among them, they may be taken by surprise, and when the crisis arrives, find themselves unprepared, even in some strong democratic counties, to meet the underhanded game by which the whigs are already striving to divide and distract our forces."

In Johnson County the *Iowa City Standard* called for a mass meeting of citizens, "without distinction of party," to meet on Saturday, March 14th. Although this meeting was in name a "no party" convention, in reality it must have been essentially Whig, for it nominated as its candidate for the office of delegate, Eastin Morris, editor of the *Standard* and an ardent Whig.

The Democrats met on the same day at the Capitol Building with each precinct in the county

represented. "There was no clashing of interest . . . no strife or log-rolling", no solicitation of delegates "to vote for this, or that particular candidate." The nomination was "the free and unbiased expression of the Democracy, fully and fairly represented." The able and distinguished lawyer, Curtis Bates, was named as the Democratic candidate, apparently with little opposition.

Although the methods of nomination may have varied in the different counties, it is probable that elections in all cases were by ballot in accordance with the law of 1843 which provided that:

"The manner of voting shall be by the electors approaching the ballot box at any time when the poll is opened, and by presenting their ticket to one of the judges who shall deposit the same immediately into a ballot box prepared for that purpose, and the clerk shall take down the name of all such voters."

Township trustees served as judges of election and the township clerk acted as one of the clerks. He was to choose "some suitable person" for the second clerk. If townships had not been organized the county commissioners were authorized to appoint three "capable and discreet persons, possessing the qualifications of electors" to act as judges. They were to appoint two persons with similar qualifications as clerks.

The tickets might be pieces of paper with the names of the candidates he favored written on it by the voter. In some cases these slips were printed by the party leaders and passed out to the voters. This made "scratching" tickets difficult, but the hand-written ballots might contain any variation of names. These voters of 1846 were party conscious but they were also individualistic.

The polls were to be open from nine o'clock in the morning until six in the afternoon, but the closing hour could be extended to nine P. M. if the judges so desired. Judges and clerks received a dollar a day with, apparently, no extra pay for overtime.

In Clayton County the Democrats nominated David Olmstead. The Democratic press reported that "the whigs *'tried on'* their amalgamation project; but it wouldn't fit." At all events the Democrats were agreed upon the selection of Olmstead, and at the ensuing election he was elected as the Clayton County delegate to the convention.

In Washington County, Nathan Baker, "a highly respected citizen and a true and tried democrat," received the Democratic nomination. "'A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether,' on the part of the untterrified Democracy of Washington," it was said, "will secure his triumphant

election." But the Democratic commentators had not reckoned sufficiently with the opposition party. The Whigs, too, had a candidate in the person of Stewart Goodrell, and when the votes were counted it was found that the Whig candidate had won.

In Jefferson County the Democrats held a nominating convention on March 9th, with "an unusually full attendance from all the townships in the county, and every thing went off harmoniously and with the best possible feeling." There was a strong disposition in the convention to nominate Ver Planck Van Antwerp, but he declined the honor, expressing the belief that his duties as Receiver of the Land Office would not permit him to serve as a delegate to the convention. Thereupon, Colonel William G. Coop and Sulifand S. Ross, "two sterling and veteran democrats", were nominated. These men, it was said, had been "tried in the crucible" and found to be "the pure stuff". At the election which followed, they were elected as the Jefferson County delegates.

In Van Buren County there appears to have been something of a bi-partisan convention. At any rate the convention reported the selection of William Steele and Thomas Dibble, two prominent Democrats, and Erastus Hoskins, a staunch Whig. These convention nominees were later

elected and thus it came about that Van Buren County was represented in the constitutional convention of 1846 by two Democrats and a Whig.

Shepherd Leffler, Doctor Enos Lowe, and John A. Wright were nominated by the Democratic Party in Des Moines County. These men had all three served in the constitutional convention of 1844, Mr. Leffler having served as president of that convention. The *Capital Reporter* declared these men "are all the right stamp . . . to frame a civil code for a free and enlightened people." The Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, the Whig newspaper, declined entering into the contest — "declaring a determination to throw the responsibility wholly upon the Democracy" — "awful to relate", responded the Iowa *City Reporter*.

But the end was not yet. The Whigs, working quietly and quite unobserved, nominated a candidate of their own, in the person of G. W. Bowie. They induced a few of the Democrats to vote for him, just "in fun". When the votes were counted, it was discovered that Bowie was elected as one of the three delegates from Des Moines County, John A. Wright having lost out.

The *Capital Reporter*, commenting upon this election, said: "It appears to be a decree of fate, that old Desmoines shall always have a mixed representation. She is certainly an ill-starred

county. When will she wash out this leprous spot of federalism, and appear clad in the pure unspotted robes of democracy? G. W. Bowie, independent Whig, was elected over J. D. Wright, democrat, *in pure fun*. What think you of that, gentle reader? — Elected *in fun!*"

The Burlington *Gazette*, commenting upon the situation, said:

"Mr. Bowie's election was not looked for by either party, and grew partly out of burlesque, and partly from the general opinion that there would be no whig in the field, so that the democrats did not come to the polls. The vote stood, for Leffler 480, Lowe, 475, Bowie 473, Wright 463. A large number of democratic votes were cast for Bowie, the whigs playing the game of swap, and making a butt of it themselves, the democrats joining in the sport, thinking there would be no danger of his election". Accordingly, Des Moines County, like Van Buren County, was represented in the convention by two Democrats and a Whig.

In Linn and Benton counties the Democrats nominated Dr. Socrates H. Tryon, while the Whigs nominated Major McKean, who it was said "could not be beaten". The election showed unusual Democratic strength, for Dr. Tryon won by a majority of eighty-eight votes — a larger ma-

jority than Augustus Caesar Dodge had secured at the previous election in that area.

Commenting upon the results of the election in these counties, the *Capital Reporter* said: "We would bring out our rooster to crow over their victory, were it not that he might be somewhat disconcerted by the sad tidings from Muscatine County." In that county, Colonel Nealey, the Democratic nominee, had met defeat at the hand of J. Scott Richman, the Whig candidate.

In the Scott County contest Judge James Grant, the Democratic candidate, was elected over A. Hyde, the Whig contestant. This was an occasion for an unusual editorial comment.

"All hail, the gallant democracy of Scott!" said one commentator. "Having skinned all the coons in the last great hunt, 'A. Hyde' was brought forth on the 6th inst; which they dressed very handsomely, and have realized a magnificent 'Grant' from the operation."

In Louisa County it was at first reported that the Whigs had won. In the end John Ronalds, the Democratic candidate, was elected by a majority of one vote.

In Henry County, the Whigs did not advocate a "no-party" constitution, nor did they talk of amalgamation; they held a convention of their own, nominated two staunch Whigs — Geo.

Hobson and Alvin Saunders, and elected both of them. Henry was the only county in the Territory which was represented in the convention by more than one member of the Whig Party.

Of the remaining counties, Cedar, Davis, Clinton, Jackson, and Jones selected Democratic delegates in the persons of Dr. Samuel A. Bissell, John J. Selman, Henry P. Haun, William Hubbell, and Sylvester G. Matson respectively. On the other hand, Wapello, Mahaska, and Keokuk counties selected Whig delegates in the persons of Jos. H. Hedrick, Stephen B. Shelledy, and Sanford Harned. Appanoose and Kishkekosh counties together were represented by Wareham G. Clark, a staunch Democrat, while the counties of Iowa, Polk, Jasper, and Marion named John Conrey, Democrat, and Dubuque, Delaware, Buchanan, Fayette, and Black Hawk were represented by two delegates — Thomas McCraney, a Democrat, and Francis K. O'Ferrall, a Whig.

All in all, thirty-two delegates were selected to attend the convention which met on May 4, 1846, to frame the constitution of 1846. Of these twenty-two were Democrats and ten were Whigs, chosen by democracy in action on the frontier.

JACOB A. SWISHER

When Men Were Men!

The combination can and bottle opener is a relatively recent invention of this effete modern age. We understand that in the older, bolder pioneer days, when men were men, they simply bit the top off any bottle whose liquid contents they coveted. But casting aside all mythology and superstition, the early Iowan was evidently able to maintain himself with aplomb and assurance in any situation. This is evidenced by a story of one of the first settlers in Winnebago County, Thomas Bearce, who came to north Iowa early in 1855.

The hardships and privations of these early settlers are almost beyond comprehension today. There were no mills, no roads, no stores, in that northern outpost of frontier settlement, and more than once the settler, in the severest of cold weather and prairie blizzard, traversed the trackless wastes to Decorah, nearly a hundred miles away, and returned through drift and wind, drawing upon a handsled the provisions necessary to save his starving family huddled in a cabin in the willow underbrush somewhere along Lime Creek. Many of these hardy souls were of Scandinavian descent and these intrepid Vikings sometimes used

their inventive genius to build larger sleds, rigged out with sails and a rudder, so that they sailed away before the wintry blasts over the billowing snow like the phantom ships of their forebears.

Occasionally an encounter with a marauding band of Indians or a truculent bear broke the more prosaic routine of their trapping and tramping. At least, it lent exciting material for future historians. Probably as fierce an encounter as was ever known in this region is said to have occurred but a short distance above the present site of Forest City between the afore-mentioned Thos. Bearce and a big black bear. Our authority for this story is a history of Winnebago County, published in booklet form by William C. Hayward, editor of the *Winnebago Press*, in 1873.

Bearce had practically exhausted his supply of provisions; his larder, one frosty morning in 1856, showed but a peck of beans and ten pounds of flour. In the hope of replenishing his meager stores with some fresh game, he shouldered his double-barrelled gun and struck out in search of deer or smaller game.

When about a mile and a half from where the Winnebago County courthouse now stands he heard a rustling in some bushes. But now let us quote directly from the historian of 1873:

“He raised his gun in readiness for a shot at the

expected deer, when out stepped a bear, black as Satan, and large as a small elephant. Mr. B. levelled his gun and fired both barrels at once; but as luck would have it, just as he pulled the triggers, a small stick he was standing on, rolled, his foot slipped, and the gun was thrown out of range. The buckshot went rattling through the tree tops, while old bruin made a charge on Mr. B., who, throwing away his gun, seized a dirk knife which he happened to have fastened to his belt, and braced himself for the contest. The bear raising upon his hindlegs sprang upon him with open jaws, crushing him to the ground and rolling completely over him. As he fell Mr. B. plunged his knife to the hilt in old bruin's body, but reached no vital spot, and only enraged him the more; again and again the knife was plunged into the body; in the meantime however the beast had torn nearly all the flesh from Mr. B.'s face, had nearly crushed his left hand and lacerated him fearfully in many places. The snow for a rod around was literally soaked with blood that flowed from both; and still both fought on with all the desperation of rage on one side and despair on the other. They rolled over, groans and cries followed each additional wound, and still with maddening fierceness they fought on; but at last, by a lucky strike the knife reached old bruin's heart and he rolled over,

dead at last. Mr. B. with the last stroke of the knife had summoned all his entire strength, and as the knife went home he fainted. In a short time, however, he recovered sufficiently to crawl to the edge of the timber, where he was discovered by one of the neighbors and taken care of."

This is seemingly the best authenticated account of a story that has been repeated a thousand times and in almost as many versions. The *Forest City Republican* in its Diamond Jubilee issue of August 14, 1930, repeated the tale. It also gave the story as recalled by Duncan R. Clark, one of the remaining oldsters of that time.

Clark's account had Bearce trapping beaver and unarmed when attacked. In the wrestling match that followed, the trapper, according to this story, grasped the bear's tongue at its base and by forcing his clenched fist down the bear's throat eventually strangled the immense animal but only after he had sustained a broken collar bone, a dislocated shoulder, a useless left hand, sore ribs, and a badly torn face and body. His story concludes with assistance coming in the form of a group of friendly Winnebago Indians.

RAY MURRAY

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