

The **P**ALIMPSEST

JULY 1946

CONTENTS

Iowa Adopts a Constitution 193

JACOB A. SWISHER

Keokuk in Big League Baseball 204

FREDERIC C. SMITH

A Century of Verse 217

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

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

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

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

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

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

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.

PRICE — 10 cents per copy: \$1 per year: free to Members

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

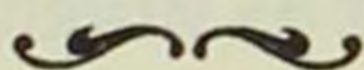
EDITED BY RUTH A. GALLAHER

VOL. XXVII

ISSUED IN JULY 1946

No. 7

COPYRIGHT 1946 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



Iowa Adopts a Constitution

Monday, August 3, 1846, was election day in the Territory of Iowa, the date set for the voters to decide upon the adoption or rejection of a State constitution. It was a momentous question — one fraught with many conflicting interests and opinions.

The question of statehood for Iowa had been argued pro and con for more than half a decade. In 1844 a constitutional convention had been held in the Capitol at Iowa City, and a constitution had been drafted. Because the boundaries prescribed by Congress were not satisfactory, that constitution was twice rejected by the people.

In May, 1846, a second constitutional convention convened at Iowa City, and another constitution was drafted. The question at the August election was whether or not this constitution would be adopted. The debate relative to the constitution and statehood presented at least three separate and distinct lines of argument.

First, there were those who favored or opposed statehood *per se*. During Territorial days, the Governor, the Secretary of the Territory, and the Judges of the Territorial Supreme Court were appointed by the President of the United States, and their salaries, as well as other expenses, were paid by the Federal government. Many residents of Iowa were quite willing that these expenses should continue to be borne by the United States and were opposed to statehood on that issue.

On the other hand, there were those who believed that, although statehood would tend to increase taxes, internal improvements would come more rapidly, immigration would be encouraged, and conditions quite generally would be better if Iowa became a State. Thus, quite aside from political issues as defined by the various political parties and aside from any particular provisions in the proposed constitution, some citizens opposed or favored statehood for what they considered economic reasons.

There was also a line of cleavage between citizens who favored or opposed statehood because of partisan considerations. The Democratic Party was dominant in Iowa in 1846 and it seemed reasonably certain that if statehood were accepted, that party would have sufficient strength to elect virtually all of the State officers

as well as the two Senators and the Representative. Accordingly, there was a decided tendency for Democrats to favor statehood; while members of the Whig Party quite generally were opposed to the change.

There were also many citizens who centered their attention on certain provisions in the newly proposed constitution and favored or opposed its adoption because of these provisions. Even a citizen who had decided on the basis of the advantage or disadvantage of statehood or for political reasons might study the proposed constitution to find provisions in it which would support his viewpoint. As a result there was much vigorous campaigning during the months preceding the August election and the provisions of the proposed fundamental law were critically discussed.

The constitution was not a perfect instrument, most people agreed, and it was not difficult for critics to find what they considered serious defects in it. Many objected to the prohibition of banking corporations. Others pounced on the provision for popular election of district court judges. Some still objected to the boundaries. Others opposed the limitation on the State debt.

One of the most able and most severe critics of the proposed constitution was William Penn Clarke of Iowa City, one of the leading Whigs

of his day. In addressing the electors of Muscatine, Johnson, and Iowa counties, Mr. Clarke very carefully analyzed the constitution and pointed out the defects as he saw them. In his introductory remarks he expressed the view that the adoption of the constitution as written would "prove greatly detrimental, if not entirely ruinous to the nearest and dearest interests of the people, by retarding the growth of the proposed State, in population, commerce, wealth and prosperity."

Under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, opposition to banks and bank money had become nation-wide. The "Miners' Bank of DuBuque" had been a local storm center of the bank question in Iowa. Because of the widespread opposition to banks, the Democratic delegates had inserted in the constitution of 1846 a clause which prohibited the establishment of banking corporations in Iowa.

Mr. Clarke objected to this clause and referred to banks as institutions "which are the inventions of trade, and which exist, not only in all the States of this Union, but in every civilized nation of any commercial or political importance."

The prohibition of banks, he said, was not a prohibition of the circulation of bank paper; the question was "*whether we will have banks of our own, and a currency of our own creation, and*

under our control, or whether we will become dependent on other States for such a circulating medium; trusting to the solvency and good faith of their institutions and affording them a market for their issues, without receiving any of the profits of the business." If a safe and sound currency were provided, capital could be employed advantageously, notes of foreign institutions would be kept out, local banks would draw capital to them, and, to use Mr. Clarke's words, "no country needs the *rhino* more than this."

Mr. Clarke also argued that population, with its many industrial interests, would follow capital. "Where money is plenty, there labor is amply rewarded, and all classes of society flourish." By prohibiting the creation of banks, declared Mr. Clarke, Iowans were only handicapping themselves — substituting foreign currency for home currency — making "Iowa the plunder ground of all the Banks in the Union".

Opponents of the constitution also contended that its provisions would virtually prohibit the construction of internal improvements and public works. The article of the constitution dealing with State debts provided for a State debt limitation of \$100,000. Another article provided that corporations should not be created by special laws, except for political or municipal purposes.

Members of the Whig Party argued that these two provisions together would block internal improvements. The State could not anticipate such improvements without power to incur indebtedness to carry out the project.

Railroads and improvements of that type, it was argued, never had been and never would be constructed under a general law, which might be repealed at any session of the General Assembly. Mr. Clarke went so far as to say: "If the framers of the Constitution had been *honest* men, and boldly avowed their intentions, they would have said in plain terms, that the people shall never be allowed to make such improvements."

A third objection to the constitution arose from the clause which provided for an *elective* judiciary, except the Judges of the State Supreme Court, who were to be chosen by the joint vote of both houses of the General Assembly. The opponents of the constitution did not deny the right or the competency of the people to elect their judicial officers, but they "viewed with alarm" a constitutional provision of this type which would "place upon the bench *political partisans*" and "elevate to the judiciary second or third rate men in point of talents and legal acquirements". On the other hand Democratic defenders of the constitution urged that the people had a right to

choose any kind of men they wished to fill all public offices.

It was also pointed out, on the other hand, that the constitution did not provide for the right of the people to elect county and township officers. There was nothing to prevent the legislature from appointing such officials or authorizing the Governor to appoint them. This was referred to by the opposition as being a "fatal" omission. In this, as in other particulars, it was said, "the substantial interests of the community have been wholly disregarded."

Members of the Whig Party, always hopeful of a majority and a chance to change the objectionable provisions, found another defect in the proposed constitution; it did not make provision for amendments. It was argued that if a constitution were adopted without provision for amendment, defects might be recognized later, yet the people would be loath to incur the expense of another convention, and so the defects might be perpetuated for many years. It was charged in some quarters that members of the Democratic Party, with deliberation and design, had framed the constitution in this form and had included in it "certain partisan dogmas" which they wished to perpetuate. This made the constitution a partisan document which should be rejected.

The question of State boundaries had been the paramount issue in the discussion of the constitution of 1844, and dissatisfaction with the boundaries fixed by Congress was chiefly responsible for that instrument's being twice rejected by the people. Happily, however, the boundary question was not a serious issue in connection with the constitution of 1846.

While the people of Iowa were preparing for the second constitutional convention, Congress had been considering new boundaries for Iowa. On December 19, 1845, Augustus Caesar Dodge, the Iowa Delegate in Congress, introduced in the House of Representatives a bill to give Iowa the boundaries defined in the original constitution of 1844, the Missouri River forming the western boundary and the St. Peter's River making part of the northern boundary. This bill also provided for the repeal of the act of March 3, 1845, by which Congress had materially changed the boundaries of the proposed State and reduced the size of Iowa. On March 27, 1846, Stephen A. Douglas, a member of the Committee on Territories, offered an amendment to this bill, setting forth the present boundaries of Iowa. While this measure was pending in Congress, the constitutional convention had met at Iowa City in May and had incorporated in the constitution of 1846 the boun-

daries as suggested by the Committee on Territories.

Mr. Dodge agreed to the boundaries suggested by the committee, and in advocating the passage of the measure extending Iowa's western boundary to the Missouri River, he said: "a very large portion of the people of Iowa believe and desire that their ultimate seat of government should be on the Des Moines river." Because of this statement Dodge was accused of laboring to "promote the interests of speculators and landjobbers in the south-west." Indeed, some opponents of the constitution claimed that the boundaries set forth in it might result in the removal of the capital from Iowa City.

In June, 1846, the Congressional act setting forth the boundaries was approved by the House of Representatives and sent to the Senate. It passed the Senate on August 1st. On August 3rd the people in Iowa voted upon the constitution. The Congressional act relative to boundaries was signed by President James K. Polk on August 4th — one day after the people had approved the constitution, although the result of the election was not yet known. Thus the two instruments were approved — one by the Congress, the other by the people, each independent of the other. But Iowa was not yet a State.

On September 9th, a little more than a month after the election was held, the votes were still not all reported, but Governor James Clarke ascertained that the majority in favor of the constitution, listed as 456 out of a total vote of 18,528, exceeded the total vote cast at the last preceding election in the counties not yet heard from, Delaware and Buchanan. This margin, he believed, made it manifest that a majority vote had been cast in favor of adopting the constitution and he proclaimed Monday, the 26th of October, as the date for holding an election for State officers. The Governor was justified in ordering the election, for the missing votes from Delaware and Buchanan counties as finally recorded showed eighty-eight for the constitution and sixty-nine against it, adding nineteen to the total majority, making it 475.

On the date designated, the election was held and Ansel Briggs, Democratic candidate for Governor, was elected for a term of four years. The Democratic Party also elected a majority of the members of the First General Assembly. On Thursday, December 3, 1846, in the Hall of Representatives in the Stone Capitol in Iowa City the new Governor was inaugurated.

A few days after the inauguration of Governor Briggs, Augustus Caesar Dodge, Delegate to

Congress, presented in the House of Representatives a copy of the constitution and introduced a bill for Iowa's formal admission to the Union. The measure passed the House and was reported to the Senate. After some debate it passed the Senate, on December twenty-fourth. Four days later it received the approval of President James K. Polk and thus, on December 28, 1846, Iowa was admitted as the twenty-ninth State of the Union.

JACOB A. SWISHER

Keokuk in Big League Baseball

To the present generation of baseball fans in Keokuk, the story of the participation of a local club in big league baseball is only a legend; but six or seven decades ago it was possible for old-timers to say, quite smugly no doubt, "that, of course, was when Keokuk was in the National League". Strictly speaking it was not the National League to which the Keokuk Westerns belonged; it was the National Association of Professional Baseball Players, organized in 1871. The National League took its place later. It is, incidentally, a coincidence that baseball rivalry began the year Iowa was admitted as a State, the first game between rival New York teams having been played on June 19, 1846.

Except for old newspaper clippings and a few faded letters, there is little recorded history of the glamorous days when players from the "Gate City" of Iowa rubbed elbows with professionals from the eastern cities as well as those from Chicago and St. Louis. Philadelphia had three teams in the Association — the Athletics, the Centennials, and the Philadelphias (now the Phillies). The Centennials dropped out along the way. St.

Louis entered the Red Stockings, probably forerunners of the Cardinals, and the Brown Stockings, later known to baseball fans as the St. Louis Browns.

Just how a small town like Keokuk landed in a big league berth naturally arouses speculation. The early seventies saw considerable eastern capital flowing into Keokuk and the city enjoyed one of its boom periods. This brought outside interests into the sports picture, especially in baseball, horse racing, and rowing. D. L. Hughes, a prominent Keokuk sportsman of those days, in a letter written in 1921, recalled that Keokuk had a fast, independent baseball team in 1874, also called the Westerns, which booked games with bigger clubs, among them the Mutuals of New York.

Henry Chadwick, in a history of the game included in an old baseball guide, wrote that players controlled the early leagues or associations. It would be the natural thing for the Keokuk players to wish to continue this big-time competition and in this they must have received the support of the fans. At any rate, an application to join the National Association was made late in 1874 or early in 1875, and the bid was accepted. William Trimble was named manager of the Keokuk team. John N. Irwin (who was appointed Governor of Arizona Territory in 1890 and went

to Portugal in 1899 as minister from this country) was named president of the local club.

A notice in the *Keokuk Gate City* of March 11, 1875, stated that the Westerns would meet to organize for the season on March 20th. At this meeting, Joe Simmons was elected captain and uniforms were selected. These were to be similar to those worn in the previous year, white with blue stockings and trimmings. On the bosom of the shirt and on the cuff of each sleeve was a letter K, "making the appropriate trio of K's". The news report added that "hats would be worn instead of caps". These, no doubt, were the soft-crowned, small-brimmed type.

The admission price for all home games was set at fifty cents, "children and vehicles, 25 cents". The ball diamond, work on which already was well started, was located across from the present Rand Park, and was called Perry Park.

In the issue of the morning of May 2, 1875, the *Gate City* announced that the "baseball season of 1875 will be formally inaugurated here tomorrow by the White Stockings of Chicago and the Keokuks." The time of arrival of the White Stockings was even considered of sufficient interest to be announced as 10:20 o'clock in the morning of the day for the game. They were reported to be accompanied by "citizens of Chicago in such

numbers that it is decided to hold the evening train until after the game".

Rain, however, spoiled this opening game which was then set for May 5th. At that time the White Stockings defeated the Westerns by the lop-sided score of 15 to 1 before a crowd of 1,000 fans. The *Gate City* explained the defeat by observing that "the Westerns by loose fielding lost their first tilt in the professional arena". The box score of that contest may be of interest since both clubs presented quite an array of talent.

Keokuk		R	1B	PO	A	Chicago		R	1B	PO	A
Hallihan	ss	1	2	1	2	Higham	c	2	1	7	0
Quinn	cf	0	0	2	0	Hastings	cf	0	1	0	1
Simmons	1b	0	2	10	0	Warren	3b	3	2	4	4
Jones	lf	0	0	1	0	Devlin	rf	3	2	0	0
Riley	rf	0	1	1	0	Hines	lf	1	2	3	0
Goldey	3b	0	1	2	3	Keerl	2b	1	0	0	1
Miller	2b	0	0	1	4	Peters	ss	2	2	1	3
Barnie	c	0	0	7	2	Glen	1b	1	1	11	0
Golden	p	0	0	1	2	Zetlein	p	2	2	1	1
Totals		1	6	26	13			15	13	27	10

Runs earned, Keokuk 0, Chicago 1

Total base hits, Keokuk 6, Chicago 13

Passed balls, Barnie 8, Higham 3

Time, 3 hours

Umpire, F. Bordman, Chicago

Scorer, G. Stahl

In the above box score, as the newspaper carried it, there is no explanation for the 26 "put outs" for Keokuk instead of the usual 27. Perhaps the scorer failed to record one or a batter was retired arbitrarily. The small number of runs earned indicates that the local club made a great many errors. While there are no copies of scoring rules for this period, it is probable that earned runs were much the same as now — those untainted by any misplays. The large number of passed balls for each catcher was due to the fact that catchers stood far back of the plate and took the balls on the first hop. The scorer's practice of abbreviating names is found in the Keokuk half of the box score. "Goldey" is remembered by old fans as "Goldsmith".

"Our public should not judge the Keokuks, however, by the result of yesterday's game", the reporter suggested in announcing that the second game of the Chicago series would be played on the afternoon of May 6th. "With experience in the professional arena," he predicted, "they will gain confidence, and that's about all they need to enable them to play a good game." Belying this prophecy, the Keokuk team again bowed to the White Stockings by a score of 7 to 1. The alibi this time was that the umpire, who was from Chicago, made an erroneous decision.

On the afternoon of May 7th, "Victory Perched Upon the Banner of Keokuk", according to headlines in the *Gate City*. This was the first appearance in Perry Park of the Red Stockings of St. Louis, and the Westerns were the victors, 15 to 2. Waxing almost lyrical in his praise of the team, the reporter for the *Gate City* wrote: "our boys are nearly all stalwart, muscular and some of them rather fleshy, while the Reds are small. The Keokuks played a magnificent game, one far in advance of any previous effort and give their friends encouragement that they will take high rank in the professional arena".

The second game of the Westerns with the St. Louis Red Stockings resulted in a victory for the St. Louis team by the score of 6 to 1, and the newspaper reports of this game began to reflect a critical attitude on the part of the fans toward the "stalwarts" of the previous day. In those days, even as now, fans wanted a winning team, and a hero today might easily turn out to be a bum tomorrow.

Rain washed out the game scheduled for May 12th against the St. Louis Brown Stockings, and the Westerns resumed their losing ways on the thirteenth when the Brown Stockings walloped them 16 to 6. The Keokuks were credited with having "redeemed themselves" on May four-

teenth when they held the score with the Brown Stockings down to 4 to 2. Once again this loss was blamed on poor umpiring, and the *Gate City* reporter commented that against the Browns, "lions of the west, our boys gave their best game so far".

The Keokuk team took to the road after this game and invaded the home grounds of the Chicago White Stockings, losing the first tilt, 7 to 6, in ten innings. A telegram to the *Gate City* declared that the "Keokuk boys displayed unexpected ability" even in defeat. The message did not enlarge on this ability, so perhaps it was a case of wishful thinking.

The White Stockings then administered a second defeat to the Keokuk players, who according to the telegraphic report of the game to the *Gate City*, "did their best work at bat being able to knock Zetlein (White Stocking pitcher) all over the inclosure, but their fielding was miserable. The Whites found it difficult to get to Golden's pitching only four hits being made". The score of 6 to 2 against Keokuk dropped the team to tenth place in the league standing.

From Chicago the Westerns moved to St. Louis, where their defeat at the hands of the Red Stockings, by a score of 7 to 1, was captioned in the *Gate City* "The Same Old Story". In the

comment on the game, the editor expressed the opinion that the team "either lacks nerve or confidence". Another defeat by a score of 3 to 2, and the loss of an extra-association game to the Louisville, Ky., Eagles brought the caustic comment from the *Gate City* "boys for heaven's sake come home and practise awhile".

The game with the Louisville club illustrated one of the evils referred to by Chadwick who said that control of the Association by the players produced contract breaking, failure to meet engagements, and pool gambling. It was evident that the players counted on making something on the side when they barn-stormed into the Louisville club's territory. After the Louisville game the Westerns played an obscure club and won the game, which brought the comment in the *Gate City*, "Hooray, the Keokuks got away with another little amateur club".

Club officials took occasion to inform the fans that the team was being reorganized for the next game at home which was scheduled for June 10th with the Boston club. Not over 1,000 attended this game which Boston won 6 to 4. Bad as the club may have looked on the basis of its losing scores, two old time newspapermen who witnessed this game have left interesting accounts which would indicate that the Westerns were not

wholly outclassed by the team from the Hub. J. M. Davidson, writing in the *Carthage* (Ill.) *Republican* in 1921, recalled that he "went over to Keokuk in an equipage, the motor power of which was the famous Easterday mule team to see the Boston club which is in the height of its renown".

"To our surprise," wrote Mr. Davidson, "Boston had to be content with the big end of a 6 to 4 score. . . . The Bostons played steadily. Mr. Spalding was the greatest pitcher I ever saw considering that he used the old straight arm pitch without curves or drops. No fancy motion, quiet and deliberate and yet he could change the speed of the ball so effectively he had the batters helpless."

While Keokuk played "nervously", according to Mr. Davidson, "it appeared that they were on their tiptoes to make as good showing as possible". As an illustration of this on-their-toes attitude, he described a put-out at first base, where a ball had been thrown to cut off a runner who had slashed the ball to the infield. "The baseman muffed the ball, but quick as a flash he dropped to the ground, his foot on the base. He reached out and succeeded in touching the ball with one finger as the runner reached the base. The umpire ruled the runner out and the baseman got a hearty round of applause."

C. P. Whitney of Keosauqua, who also saw the game, has left in a letter some memoirs of the occasion in which he calls Spalding a curve ball pitcher and asserted that he wore something on his fingers to curve the ball. "And that is what beat the Keokuks for they were unable to hit the ball until the end of the game", was his explanation. According to Mr. Whitney, the Western pitcher, Mike Golden, was a speed artist "who threw a terrific straight ball and beat up all the catchers" with this delivery. One catcher named Clinker, who was a harness maker by trade, and who lived near Milton, Iowa, "tied his fingers together and had the sand to stay on the job", Mr. Whitney wrote. "In those days the catcher stood behind the plate without mask or glove or any kind of protection, and all the rest played barehanded with the same hard ball as is used now."

The end of the professional road loomed large for the Westerns when the *Gate City* for June 12th carried the headline, "Boston Skips Off", meaning that the visitors from the east left Keokuk, determined not to play the second game of the current series. Manager William Trimble of the Keokuk team filed a protest with Harry Wright, president of the Association, claiming a forfeiture of the game, but without effect.

The Westerns played only one more game,

that with the Mutuals of New York. The game, on the Keokuk diamond, was halted in the fifth inning on account of rain, with the score 1 to 0 in favor of the New York team. "It was the finest game witnessed here", wrote the reporter for the *Gate City*.

On June 17th, the *Gate City* announced that the Keokuk team had been disbanded, after a meeting of the board of directors had been "convinced that the organization could not be permanently maintained for the reason that the population is not sufficient to furnish audiences necessary to induce professional nines to come and play full series of games."

The directors also claimed that "both Boston and the Mutuals (of New York) profess to have lost money by their trips here and we are satisfied that they did". This might be taken to indicate that the receipts at the gate were not sufficient to pay traveling expenses, and division of funds which the Association no doubt had approved. Morale in baseball circles was at a low ebb in 1875 and most of the clubs were faced with bankruptcy.

Seven of the thirteen teams in the Association finished the season of 1875 in what Chadwick designated as the first division, and six, including the defunct Westerns, in the second division. If

there had been a pennant it appears that Boston would have taken it. The final standing was as follows:

First Division

	Won	Lost	Pct.
Boston	71	8	.809
Philadelphia (Athletics)	55	28	.756
Hartford	54	28	.639
St. Louis (Brown Stockings)	49	39	.574
Philadelphia	37	31	.544
Chicago (White Stockings)	30	37	.448
New York (Mutuals)	29	38	.426

Second Division

St. Louis (Red Stockings)	4	14	.222
Washington	4	22	.156
New Haven	7	39	.152
Philadelphia (Centennials)	2	13	.133
Keokuk (Westerns)	1	12	.077
Brooklyn (Atlantics)	2	42	.065

Judging from the alacrity with which the remaining clubs in the Association snatched up the various Keokuk players who were turned loose when the club disbanded, the poor showing of the Westerns was not altogether the fault of the individual players. Miller went to the Chicago White Stockings, Carbine to the St. Louis Red

Stockings, and Hallihan and Barnie to the New York Mutuals. Three clubs bid for Simmons and two offered berths to Riley. Jones joined the Louisville, Ky., Olympics, not included in the Association. Golden and Quinn decided to drop baseball as a profession.

Through all of Keokuk's baseball history — amateur, semi-professional, and professional — runs the theme of the months spent in fast company of the National Association clubs. Like the glow in the sky that survives the sunset, the glamor of those weeks still highlights the picture of local baseball, and will be cherished, however legendary it now seems, as long as baseball remains the national pastime.

FREDERIC C. SMITH

A Century of Verse

Songs and chants and poems are part of the inherited culture of all peoples, but who has recorded the lullabies which Ioway, Sioux, and Sauk Indian mothers sang to their children or the chants of the braves during a ceremonial corn dance? Who knows what songs were heard in Iowaland as the French *voyageurs* paddled their pack-laden canoes up and down the Mississippi River?

Yellowed letters show that pioneers on their westward trip into Iowa gathered around the campfires to sing "How Firm a Foundation" or blended English and Scotch voices in the old ballads such as "Barbara Allen" and "Annie Laurie". In the days before the Civil War, settlers sang Stephen Foster's melodies — "O, My Darling Nellie Gray" and "Old Folks at Home". At farewell gatherings before they sent sons to Shiloh or to Vicksburg, Iowans sang "We'll Rally Round the Flag, Boys".

But these were songs, remembered but not written by the pioneers. In a land where each man did almost everything for himself, it is not surprising that settlers on the frontier tried their

hands at verse-making. All through Iowa history, indeed, men and women have dabbled in verse; a few have written genuine poetry. Even Robert Lucas, Iowa's first Territorial Governor, spent much of his time during his last years composing religious poems and paraphrasing the Psalms into verse.

The first published poetry in Iowa was in the newspapers. As early as 1838 the Davenport *Sun* printed "Fort Armstrong", a poem written to commemorate the closing of the fort at Rock Island, and the same year a legislator, who called himself "Hawkeye", contributed to the *Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser* several original poems which idealized the Indians and glorified the prairies. It was in June of 1838 that Thomas Gregg printed "The Indian Girl's Burial" by Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney. So popular was the lady's poetry that Iowans named a town for her.

Some of this early verse was folklore, stories told in rhyme, several persons taking part in the composition. Such was "Hummer's Bell", one stanza of which was improvised by John P. Cook for the amusement of a crowd of men. It was completed by W. H. Tuthill. Such, too, was the lyric of the "Iowa Corn Song" first drafted by George Hamilton on the way to the Shriner Convention

at Los Angeles. In 1923 Shriners rollicked down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D. C., singing "We're from Ioway", hands held high to show the height of Iowa's corn stalks.

Iowa editors sometimes wrote the verses they published. At Delhi lived J. L. McCreery, editor of the *Delaware County Journal* and author of many poems, most of which have been long forgotten. One, "There Is No Death", erroneously ascribed to Edward Bulwer Lytton, became widely known, partly because of McCreery's prodigal use of printer's ink to establish paternity for the poem, and partly for its intrinsic value.

Another one-poem writer was Arabella Eugenia Smith, a school mistress at Tabor, who wrote "If I Should Die Tonight". This poem, like "There Is No Death", was attributed to various writers, including Henry Ward Beecher, but her claim to authorship was finally established. Not a little of the poem's popularity was due to a parody written by Ben King.

But writing verses is not the only aspect of popularizing poetry. Not enough credit has been given to the country editors of Iowa in shaping the poetical taste of their readers. Early editors in Iowa introduced many readers of their country weeklies to "The Children's Hour" and "The Chambered Nautilus"; and, as the Civil War ap-

proached, to the reflections of "John P. Robinson, he" from the *Bigelow Papers*.

Of even greater importance in shaping poetical taste for maturing Iowans was the famous series of readers published by William Holmes McGuffey. Prairie-bred boys and girls who grew up in Iowa between 1840 and 1890 not only learned "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" and "Maude Muller", but were introduced to Byron, Milton, and Shakespeare.

Several Iowa lyrics have attained national fame. In 1857 a young man from Wisconsin visited Bradford, in Chickasaw County. As William Savage Pitts walked about, he paused to watch the sunset lights filter through the trees in a wooded glade nearby. In visionary mood he beheld a church at the head of the valley and his vision inspired both the words and music for "The Little Brown Church in the Vale".

Equally famous but of far different origin is "Sherman's March to the Sea", written late in December of 1864 by an Iowan while he was a prisoner of war at Columbia, South Carolina. Major S. H. M. Byers developed into a man of catholic tastes and activities, in turn lawyer, soldier, diplomat, author, and connoisseur of art. Today he is best known as the author of a "Song of Iowa" which practically every school child in

the State has sung to the tune of "My Maryland".

You ask what land I love the best

Iowa, 'tis Iowa.

Perhaps the first Iowan to demonstrate that the prairies and rivers of his adopted State rightly represented materials for literature was Leonard Brown, a teacher in several academies in Iowa. As early as 1883 he declared, "Encourage Iowa talent and leave the Italian to ply his vocation of artist in Italy." All in all Brown published three volumes of verses. As his especial province he chose to picture Iowa's past. He made it his avocation to hunt out the sites of Indian war dances, camps, and cemeteries; he collected Indian arrowheads and the legends of the Sauk, Fox, and Ioway.

A man with a truer sense of the fitness of mood, word, and rhythm was Tacitus Hussey, who wrote one of Iowa's songs — "Iowa Beautiful Land". In 1896 he published a book of poems, *The River Bend and Other Poems*, celebrating the Des Moines River. Among these is a delightful poem in dialect, "The Prodigals", frankly imitative of James Whitcomb Riley.

Interest in poetry found commercial expression in Iowa in 1894 when a man named Thomas W. Herringshaw published a volume of verse written by Iowans under the title *Poets and Poetry of*

Iowa. It contained "poems" by some one hundred and fifty Iowans, almost equally divided between men and women. He planned annual editions, but the one volume seems to have glutted the market.

In 1894 Hamlin Garland published a little volume called *Prairie Songs*. The book was bound in green cloth with three golden stalks of corn in full ear on the front and back covers. In one poem, called "Plowing", he depicted the farmer boy's delight when cold weather put a stop to the endless round of fall plowing; another presents very realistically the life story of a prairie mother who died at forty-six from the strain of child-bearing and the wearying routine of farm work.

When Johnson Brigham began the *Midland Monthly* in the late nineties, many young poets took advantage of its pages. In this magazine appeared the poems of Selden S. Whitcomb, the teacher-poet at Grinnell, Hamlin Garland, Emerson Hough, and Ellis Parker Butler.

The *Midland*, published in Iowa City and edited by John T. Frederick and Frank Luther Mott, furnished a medium for the younger poets of Iowa and the Midwest. Ruth Suckow's first contributions were in verse. One of the contributing editors was Edwin Ford Piper. Before his death in 1939 he published four volumes of poetry:

Barbed Wire, Barbed Wire and Other Poems, Rimrock Road, and last of all a book of sonnets called *The Canterbury Pilgrims*.

At Waubeek, Jay G. Sigmund delighted in the out of doors and recaptured the spirit of the early settlers — the herb doctors, the retired farmer. Like Leonard Brown and Edwin Ford Piper he gathered Indian lore. These he built into several volumes of verse which were published in the 1920's — *Pinions, Land of Maize*, and *The Drowsy Ones*.

Though his occupation was that of selling insurance in Cedar Rapids, Sigmund found time to encourage young writers. One of the young poets was James Hearst of Cedar Falls, handicapped by a severe accident while he was in the R. O. T. C. His two books, *Country Men* and *The Sun in the Morning*, recount country scenes, the friendliness of farm neighbors, and without moralizing he weaves into his verses a quiet and reflective philosophy of life.

At present, through excellent courses in poetry at the University of Iowa, Drake, Cornell, Grinnell, and other colleges, through creative writing groups, the Federated Women's Clubs, the Poetry Society of Iowa, and numerous other organizations, many people in the State are composing excellent poetry today. *A Book of Iowa Poets*

and *Iowa Poets* contain, among many others, poems from the pens of Raymond Kresensky, Sadie Seagrave, and Lewis Worthington Smith. Jessie Welborn Smith in a pamphlet, *What of the Iowa Poets*, has well summarized the work of present-day Iowa writers of verse.

A young poet who has published a half dozen volumes of verse and who is now heading the Writer's Work Shop at the University of Iowa is Paul Engle, who has published *Break the Heart's Anger* and *American Song*. In 1945 he published a slender volume containing sixty-four sonnets which he called *American Child*, poems about his little daughter Mary. The last one ends with this prayer:

"Let this, her land, be always such a place
Where having freedom is like having bread.
Where a clean landscape of a new child's face
Is seldom by the boast of blood defiled,
Where on the streets and alleys without dread
Plays all day long the proud spontaneous child."

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857
Located at Iowa City Iowa

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Iowa Journal of History and Politics
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine
The Public Archives Series
The Iowa Biographical Series
The Iowa Economic History Series
The Iowa Social History Series
The Iowa Applied History Series
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
The Iowa Centennial History
The Miscellaneous Publications
The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$50.00.

Address all Communications to

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Iowa City Iowa