

Winter in Old Dubuque

Dubuque, with its many hills, has always been a coasting paradise for boys and girls. The writer can recall many a thrilling trip down Madison Street and particularly Fourteenth Street. Starting at Alta Vista Street he would begin the swift descent past Cox, Walnut, Prairie, Henion, Dell, Cornell, and on to Bluff, where the real danger of cross streets began. At Bluff Street one had already traveled half a mile down two steep hills. The descent thereafter was Locust, Main, Iowa, Clay, White, Jackson, Washington, Elm, and on a few occasions even to Pine Street. The smaller individual sleds seldom got beyond White or Jackson, but the big bobsleds, with eight to twelve lads sixteen to eighteen years old, would sometimes reach the railroad tracks on Pine Street.

Representatives John Duffy and Thomas Patrick O'Toole of Dubuque recently reminded the writer of such large bobsleds as the *Nonpareil*, the *White Ghost*, and the *Bucket-of-Blood*. The latter was appropriately named for if a collision ever occurred on one of the many street crossings the result would have been disastrous. Fortunately, most of these experiences date back to 1910-1916 when the horseless carriage was still a novelty, particularly in the winter months.

Next to coasting, Dubuque lads loved to hitch their sleds to the sleighs owned by such firms as Martin-Strelau, Thomas J. Mulgrew, and Conlin & Kearns. Most of the drivers were friendly but occasionally a surly one cracked his whip at his horses, and sometimes at the would-be hitchhiker.

A copy of the February, 1920, Dubuque High School literary magazine — *The Echo* — was re-recently unearthed by Representative Duffy. It contained a description of an old-fashioned sleigh ride recorded by the Athletic Editor — now the editor of THE PALIMPSEST. It appears the football team had invited the cheer leaders and other loyal girls to go on a bobsled ride to the home of Roy Bartels, a guard on the 1919 football team, who lived in Center Grove. Coach Blaney Matthews was invited to make the trip.

It was a jovial crowd indeed that met on Eighth and Locust for the purpose of having a good time. When the bob came there was a center rush for places and the result was that before things finally quieted down most of the fellows were sorry they had not brought their headgears and shoulder pads along. Our destination was the home of our old friend, "Country Cousin." We arrived at Center Grove and prepared for the evening's festivities. Blaney made the first number on the program a hot one for the football men. Considering that we had been knocked around enough for one season, we were entirely unprepared for our part. The villain gently coaxed us to get under a sheet with him and soothingly told us that one of the girls, who were standing near us, would tap us gen-

tly with an iron rod. It would then be our duty to catch the young vixen.

It hurt, verily, it did, since Blaney himself applied the scourge four times before he allowed us to go and hide our heads in shame. It is inconceivable to think the aforesaid Mr. Matthews would be guilty of such violence. The remainder of the evening was spent in dancing and other sports. At an early hour (?), a delightful luncheon was served by the mother and sisters of our host.

The journey back to the city was then begun and the metropolis of Center Grove and the suburban West Du-
buque were awakened by our merry shouts and jovial singing.

On March 6, 1860, the editor of the *Vinton Eagle* recorded with a chuckle the experiences of a Milwaukee editor on skates.

Last night, about gas light time, after reading a glowing description of life on skates, we prepared for our first attempt, and sallied forth to join the merry crowd. We had on a pair of stoga boots, trousers' legs tucked inside, a Robert tailed coat and white hat. We went down on the ice, and gave a boy two shillings in good coin of the realm, for the use of his implements. . . .

Encouraged at the sight of some ladies on the bridge looking at the skaters, we struck out. A slant to the right with the right foot — a slant to the left with the left foot — and just then we saw something on the ice, and stooped over to pick up! On our feet again — two slants to the right and one to the left, accompanied with loss of confidence. Another stride with the right foot, and we sat down with fearful rapidity, with very little if any elegance! What a set down it was, for we made a dent in

the ice not unlike a Connecticut butter bowl! Just then one of the ladies remarked — "Oh, look Mary, that feller with the white hat ain't got his skates on the right place!" Ditto, thought we. Just then a ragged little devil sung out as he passed us — "*Hello, old timber legs!*" and we rose suddenly and put after him. Three slides to the right — two to the left, and away went our legs — one to the east, and the other to the west, causing an immense fissure in our pants, and another picture of a butter tray in the cold — *oh! how cold — ice!* . . . Once more we tried skating — made for the shore — sat down and counted damages.

Two shillings in cash thrown away. Seven lateral and one "fronteral" bumps on the ice. One immense fissure in as handsome a pair of ten dollar cassimers as a man ever put his legs in. One rupture on the knee extending to the bone. Four buttons from our vest, a "fragmented" watch crystal, and a back ache big enough to divide amongst the children of Israel. . . . We have got through skating. It's a humbug. It's a vexation of spirit, of business, of flesh, and a tearer of trowsers. It's a head-bumping, back-aching, leg wearing institution, and we warn people against skating. We tried it, and shan't be able to walk for a month. . . .

From brief experiences on Lake Peosta, Hooper's Cut, the Boat Harbor, and Eagle Point the writer solemnly subscribes his "Amen" to the Milwaukee editor's remarks.

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