

The **P**ALIMPSEST

MAY 1947

CONTENTS

The Cradle of the University 129

JACOB A. SWISHER

Old Gold 144

CORNELIA MALLETT BARNHART

Commemorating Emancipation 150

RAYMOND J. SCHLICHER

Comment by the Editor 158

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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

EDITED BY RUTH A. GALLAHER

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The Cradle of the University

Faneuil Hall in Boston is familiarly known as the "Cradle of Liberty" because it was the "meeting place of American patriots during the Revolutionary period" and the Mechanics' Academy in Iowa City may, with equal propriety, be referred to as the "Cradle" of the State University of Iowa. For it was in this building that the University's educational program began.

How did the Mechanics' Academy come to be? The story goes back to the first half of the nineteenth century when men began to recognize that training of the mind would make the hands more efficient. Artisans, craftsmen, and mechanics frequently banded themselves together in mutual aid associations, not only for the development of craftsmanship, but for the promotion of cultural education as well. Such an organization was the Mechanic's (later written Mechanics') Mutual Aid Association of Iowa City, which was formed in 1841 to "promote such measures as may tend to

the advancement of the mechanical arts; and also whatever may tend to the promotion of education, and the advancement of the arts and the sciences."

The Iowa Legislative Assembly, meeting in Butler's Capitol, gave substantial aid to this Association, on January 4, 1842, by incorporating it and granting it a building site, on condition that within two years a building worth not less than one thousand dollars should be erected upon the proposed site, and with the further provision that title should revert to the State if the land ceased to be used for literary purposes. The site thus donated consisted of the south half of the west half of block sixty, known as the "school reserve". It was situated directly north of Iowa Avenue and east of Linn Street — the site of the building now known as East Hall. Two years later the north half of the school reserve was also donated to the Mechanics' Association on the same terms.

The Association consisted of more than forty members, with James N. Ball, president, Thomas Comb and Louis S. Swafford, vice presidents, Edward Lanning, secretary, and A. G. Adams, treasurer. The work of erecting the building was a coöperative task. James N. Ball, a stone cutter, contributed of his skill toward supplying the building with a secure foundation. Sylvanus Johnson, another member of the Association,

“made and furnished the brick for the building”, while Louis S. Swafford, a carpenter, made all the window frames — “they being all of oak lumber, from Felkner’s mill”. Other members of the Association worked on the building as carpenters, brick masons, stone cutters, plasterers, and painters.

The building project was begun in the spring of 1842 and on June 14th the cornerstone was laid. That was a gala day for Iowa City and its approximately one thousand inhabitants — the occasion of a public parade in which there was a city-wide interest. A procession which formed in front of Butler’s Capitol on Washington Street was composed of members of the Association, invited guests, teachers and pupils of the schools of the city, and citizens, numbering in all over two hundred. The route of the procession was west to Clinton Street, south to Burlington, east to Dubuque, north to Iowa Avenue, thence east to the place of building. Music for the occasion was furnished by the Methodist Protestant Church choir, Rev. Michael Hummer of the Presbyterian Church acted as chaplain, and Rev. John Libby, then pastor of the Methodist Protestant Church, delivered the oration.

With the aid of many hands the building project moved forward with dispatch. It took the

form of a substantial two-story brick structure, with a basement. The building was approximately thirty by sixty feet in dimensions and was surmounted by a belfry. A tablet some two by one and one-half feet in size, placed about half way up in the center of the front wall, probably gave the name and date, but this inscription is not recorded.

Because of the generous aid given by many workmen, little money was expended in the building project. Indeed, it is said, less than fifty dollars in money "actually passed hands" in the erection of this building, valued at between three and four thousand dollars. At that time it was said to be the best school building in the Territory of Iowa. When the building was ready for occupancy it was supplied with a carefully selected library, which was maintained for several years, with Louis S. Swafford as librarian.

In May, 1843, the trustees of the Academy announced that the services of Mrs. Sarah C. Morey, "an accomplished lady favorably known as a teacher, both here and elsewhere, have been secured". Under her leadership as principal of the girls' department, they said, "parents can have no excuse for withholding their patronage." The cost of instruction was to be paid by the patrons of the school at rates that varied according to the

branches taught. For the common branches the charge was to be three dollars for a term of three months. Other subjects ranged as high as six dollars per session of three months. "Music on the Piano" was "extra", costing ten dollars per term.

In August, 1843, it was reported that the school was in very good condition, although some things were not conducted in a manner to please all members of the committee. It was conceded, however, that "we cannot expect to get teachers that will be perfect in everything". At that time there were 42 boys and 63 girls in attendance. The total income from tuition for five months was estimated at \$319.52 and the salary of teachers amounted to \$247, leaving a balance of \$72.52 to the credit of the Association. A little later in the fall, the trustees announced that Hugh and William Hamilton, graduates of Kenyon College, Ohio, had been secured "to conduct the male department", and that Mrs. George S. Hampton, "a lady favorably known to this community, will take charge of the female department." In October, 1843, members of the Association were urged to secure pupils for the Academy. About the same time, also, orders were issued to assess an extra charge of thirty-one cents per pupil for fuel during the winter session.

In the spring of 1844 there was competition for the teaching positions. One lady agreed to take charge of the girls' department and pay the Association eighteen and three-fourths per cent of all collectible bills for tuition. Mrs. Morey and Miss H. M. Owen offered to conduct this department for twenty-five per cent of the income, provided the trustees advertised the school and collected the bills. Dr. William Reynolds said that he would take charge of one room and pay \$60 a year for the use of it. The Hamilton brothers offered to take one room and keep up the classical department for a year for ninety per cent of the collectible bills. The two women and the Hamilton brothers were engaged.

In the fall of 1844 it was announced that the male and female departments of the Academy would be combined under the direction of the Hamilton brothers, and that any kind of merchantable produce or labor would be accepted in payment of tuition. Board could be obtained for \$1.25 per week, and students would have the use of the library free of charge. In May of the following year the two departments were again separated, the boys' department under the leadership of A. B. McCalmont, and the girls' department under the direction of Mrs. M. M. Simmons and Miss L. F. McIlvaine. For the fall term, the prin-

cipals were Dr. William Reynolds and Miss McIlvaine.

In November, 1845, the upper story of the Academy building was leased to the Masonic lodge. A little later the Masons agreed that the Odd Fellows might also use the hall for their meetings. The first floor and the basement continued to be used for school purposes. For several years thereafter the entire building was used for private schools conducted by various individuals, including Dr. William Reynolds, H. W. Lathrop, D. S. Warren, and Mrs. Sarah C. Morey. In July, 1853, Iowa City, then newly incorporated, rented it for the first public school established by the city, with H. W. Lathrop as principal and Miss Nancy McCaddon as assistant, at salaries respectively of \$450 and \$250 per year. The annual rental paid by the city for the use of the building was \$230.

In the meantime attempts were being made to organize the University which had been established by law in 1847. On May 8, 1854, a committee of the trustees reported that a conditional contract had been drawn for the rental of the Mechanics' Academy building "for the accommodation of the Faculty and students", at \$135, from April 15 to November 1, 1854. It was not, however, until the spring of 1855 that the University

opened its first classes for a brief term of sixteen weeks. The rent paid was \$300 per year.

To promote punctual attendance at classes, the trustees, in April, 1855, purchased a bell from the Constitutional Presbyterian Church (New School) for \$76.45 and had it installed in the belfry of the Academy. How long this bell hung there is not recorded. Possibly it was removed when the building became a dormitory in 1866. An old bell now on the University campus bears the date 1844, the year previous to the building of the old stone church from which the Academy bell came. Is this the old Academy bell? Would that the tongues of bells could talk.

But let us not digress too far. The Academy building served as the center of University activities until 1858, when the Capitol, soon known as the Central Building, became available for University purposes. What use was made of the Academy building during the years 1858-1860 when most of the University classes were suspended is not recorded, but in 1860 the Normal Department, which had functioned in the Capitol building, was installed in the rooms of the old Academy and for a time the building bore a sign, "State Normal School". The trustees, however, objected to this claim of a department to independence, so the sign was removed.

At the time Oliver M. Spencer became president of the University in 1862, the Normal Department was returned to the Central Building (Old Capitol) but the "model school" was conducted in the basement of the Academy building. For three years, 1862 to 1865, the State Historical Society of Iowa occupied the first floor. Thus for more than a score of years, the building erected and owned by the Mechanics' Mutual Aid Association of Iowa City played a varied role in the economic and cultural program of the city and the University.

By 1866, however, the corporation had almost disappeared. Members had died, moved away, or lost interest. Most of the shares of stock had finally come into possession of Robert Hutchinson, one of the original incorporators. The question was raised whether the title to the property should not revert to the State since, it was asserted, the management did not meet the conditions of the original grant.

Meanwhile the University had grown slowly but surely and it needed more room. The Mechanics' Academy building was conveniently situated. It was only two blocks from the central University campus and was surrounded by "a handsome grove of stately oaks". The University decided to acquire the property and in March,

1866, the General Assembly of Iowa passed an act which declared that the title to the lot on which the Mechanics' Academy building stood had reverted to the State, because it was no longer used for "literary" purposes. This law transferred the title in fee to the University, with the provision, however, that the State should not be liable for the claims of any party or parties whatsoever.

The act opened the way for the University to make such barter or purchase as was necessary to satisfy the remaining claims of the stockholders, chiefly Mr. Hutchinson. Thereupon the University transferred to Mr. Hutchinson a lot on College Street in Iowa City in exchange for his remaining rights in the property and the Mechanics' Academy building became University property.

A committee was authorized to have the building refitted in a suitable manner for students' rooms and the sum of \$500 was allocated for that purpose. Thus the old building became a dormitory, subjected to all the defacements that characterized college dormitories in the decade of the seventies. Its abuses were well described by H. W. Lathrop, historian, when he said: "This old building then became the scene of so many pranks and so much mischief by the students occupying it, that it was nicknamed the 'Old Sin Trap'." The sobriquet was sometimes spelled "Syntrap".

After the old building had served for a time as a dormitory and had suffered much at the hands of its careless occupants, it was again rejuvenated and remodeled to serve yet another useful and worthy purpose. In June, 1873, two physicians — Dr. J. C. Shrader and Dr. E. F. Clapp — reported that “through the munificence of the board of regents of the State University, the west half of the block in Iowa City heretofore known as the Mechanics’ Academy, has been set apart for *hospital* purposes, to be managed by the members of the medical department of the University and by such members of the *regular profession* in Iowa City as may be necessary to insure the successful operation of the same.”

To guarantee the successful operation of this hospital, Johnson County was asked “to pay for six patients per week at the rate of four dollars per week, each patient, throughout the year”, and to pay at the same rate for any county patient that might be sent to the hospital. Provision was also made for the care of insane patients. The hospital was placed under the care and supervision of the Sisters of Mercy and was, therefore, called Mercy Hospital. It was not, however, a Catholic institution, but was maintained under the direction of the Board of Regents of the State University.

Before the Academy building had been legally

transferred to the University, a frame addition had been erected at the rear — or east side — of the building. When the building was revamped for hospital purposes, this addition was remodeled to make it about forty feet square and two stories high. This provided the amphitheatre. To aid in the remodeling of the building and the maintenance of the hospital, Iowa City contributed \$600 and private citizens “swelled the sum to nearly \$4,000”.

The editor of *The University Reporter* said in November, 1873:

“We visited, a few days since, that fine addition to our medical department, ‘Mercy Hospital.’ This hospital is old ‘Syntrap’ reconstructed and much modified. . . . The old, dingy, battered walls of ‘Syntrap’ have been repaired and nicely painted. Good substantial steps, leading to the doors at either end of the main building, have been substituted for the old rickety ones so promiscuously carved by the penknives of ‘the boys.’ The rear, or frame part of the building, has been raised to an equal height with the main part, and a broad covered stairway connects the upper story of this to the first floor of the main building.” There, upon turning to the left and ringing a bell, one would be “courteously received by one of the ‘Sisters of Mercy’”. Detailed descriptions were

likewise given of the "Reception Room", the "Male Ward", "Lecture Hall", "Dispensary", and the "Female Ward" on the second floor. After 1886 the old Academy building shared hospital service with the new Mercy Hospital unit opened in the old Dostal residence.

The years marched on. Time and misuse bore heavily on the old building. At length it was decided to raze the Mechanics' Academy and erect on its site a new and modern hospital. Accordingly, in January, 1897, the University Board of Regents advertised for bids for the purchase and removal, or the removal alone, of the antiquated building. The notices relative to these bids said:

"The old Medical Hospital now to be removed consists of a brick front and very thick walls, 54 feet and 4 inches long and 26 feet 6 inches wide and three stories high.

"The frame part, built to the brick, is about 42 feet long and 43 feet wide and two stories high."

E. H. Jayne and Company of Iowa City contracted to raze the entire hospital building and to place the brick and stone, the doors and windows, and the lumber in separate piles out of the way of workmen, for the sum of \$225 — the work to be completed by April 7, 1897. The fulfillment of this contract constituted the closing chapter in the history of this distinguished old building.

When the building was torn down in the spring of 1897, Colonel Albert W. Swalm of Oskaloosa, a member of the Board of Regents, directed that wood taken from the belfry tower be used to make gavels or souvenir mallets, and that one of these souvenirs be presented to each of the various colleges of the State. Such gavels were presented to Luther, Penn, Western, Lenox, Grinnell, Cornell, Tabor, and perhaps to other colleges, as well as to various individuals throughout the State.

Colonel Swalm also sent to Mr. O. A. Byington, who was then serving as a member of the Twenty-sixth General Assembly, fifty canes made from wood taken from the old Academy building to be distributed to members of the House of Representatives. Unfortunately the shipment of canes was missent and only thirty-eight were left for members of the House. Whereupon Mr. Byington ordered sixty-five more so that each member of the House might have a souvenir cane.

When the cornerstone of the old Academy building, laid in 1842, was removed in 1897, no trace was found of any contents, although a newspaper account of the ceremony attending the laying of the stone relates that a list of the objects deposited in the box was read. When the walls of the new hospital — now East Hall — were erected, the old cornerstone that had been in the

Academy building for 55 years, was supplied with new contents and placed in the wall at the lower south entrance of the new building, where the inscription: "Mechanics' Academy founded June 14th, A. D. 1842" might be easily read. It is there no longer. When the new medical unit was erected west of the Iowa River, the old cornerstone was taken from its second resting place and set in the front wall of the laboratory building at the east approach. The tablet which adorned the front wall of the original building has disappeared.

Candlesticks, gavels, and canes made from the stair posts and the belfry are in private hands. The bell *may* be preserved on the University campus. These fragments are the only physical remains of the Mechanics' Academy, but memory recalls that the first University classes were held within its walls, that its bell first rang out the call for assembly and classes, that the building served as the first hospital, and that the embryo of the University library began there. The Mechanics' Academy building was truly the "cradle of the University".

JACOB A. SWISHER

Old Gold

The services of the eighty-sixth spring commencement at the State University of Iowa were drawing to a close. It was June 8, 1946, and President Virgil M. Hancher had just finished his charge to the graduates, when the majestic strains of the University hymn began to sound through the fieldhouse. The assembled audience stood and sang with emotion akin to reverence:

We shall sing and be glad with the days as they fly
In the time that we spend in thy halls,
And in sadness we'll part when the days have gone by,
And our paths turn away from thy walls.
Till the waters no more in thy river shall run,
Till the stars in the heavens grow cold,
We shall sing of the glory and fame thou hast won,
And the love that we bear for Old Gold.

Perhaps someone in that 1946 commencement audience chanced to wonder whence came the "Old Gold" of which they sang. The story began at a senior class meeting held in April, 1887, when a class member, Marvin H. Dey, suggested that a committee be appointed to decide upon the adoption of "College Colors" and a "College Yell", matters in which, he said, "we are sadly

behind the times". A committee was appointed with Mr. Dey as chairman and "gold" was recommended by this committee as the official University color. A mass meeting was called and the report of the committee was submitted and approved. One of the girls was wearing a bow of old-gold ribbon and this she tore into small pieces which were passed around to the group. The "sample" color soon became a general favorite.

"Bows and scraps of the *old-gold* ribbon are now the common adornment of S.U.I. youth and maid and the 'ever-busted' senior who is unable to steal or borrow old-gold is feign to bedeck himself in faded yellow and then to use his powers of argument in persuading others that he is right on top of the style", commented the *Vidette-Reporter*, semi-weekly publication of the State University of Iowa, on May 7, 1887.

At a baseball game between the State University and Cornell College, played at Mount Vernon on May 14, 1887, it was reported that the town's entire stock of old-gold ribbon was sold out to University students who adorned their hats, buttonholes, canes, and umbrellas with it. Some even tied the ribbon about their "graceful limbs at the bottom of their knickerbockers, by virtue of which they passed as 'Knights of the Garter.'"

By 1891 old gold had apparently been unoffi-

cially accepted as the University color, but an editorial in the *Vidette-Reporter* in the fall of 1892 condemned "the practice of wearing class, society and fraternity colors at inter-collegiate contests." It closed by saying, "We hope that in the future only the old gold will be worn by our students on such occasions and that other colors will be reserved for home field day and inter-class contests."

As might well be expected, it was often difficult for University supporters to obtain old-gold ribbon, and many shades of yellow and orange came to be used as substitutes. In 1894 a writer for the *S.U.I. Quill* was concerned with this problem: "The University colors as displayed at our recent field day were of all shades from old gold to a light orange. There is a decided difference between old gold and gold. Certainly we should have but one color or else combine the two. Old gold had always been accepted until last fall, when gold began to predominate. Which color do we accept as official?"

The *Vidette-Reporter* went even further in the controversy over colors and sponsored an election to determine whether gold or old gold was to be the color worn by University students at the State Field Meet on June 1, 1894. The Y.W.C.A. girls were sponsoring a fair on the day before the

meet, and the election was held at their request in order that they might know what color their novelties — banners, canes, and fans — should be. In announcing the election, the newspaper urged students, alumni, and faculty members to vote, and added: "The VIDETTE-REPORTER has always supported the 'old gold' and merchants have advertised with us that they were prepared to furnish the genuine 'old gold.' If it can be obtained we see no reason for changing and have no sympathy with those who desire a change simply to be changing." The outcome of the election was announced two days later by the headline, "Old Gold Wins". The vote was 213 for old gold and 98 for gold.

The next year, in February, 1895, President Charles A. Schaeffer met with the deans of the several departments and the presidents of the various classes to consider the advisability of adopting uniform class and department colors. After due consideration the committee decided upon old gold for the University, with the following department (college) colors: Liberal Arts, black; Law, royal purple; Medicine, red; Dentistry, pink; Homeopathic Medicine, white; and Pharmacy, lilac. Fifty years later the caps of the candidates for degrees revealed the following college colors: Graduate, black; Liberal Arts, white; Law, purple;

Medicine, green; Pharmacy, olive; Dentistry, lilac; Engineering, orange; Commerce, drab; and School of Nursing, salmon.

Not long after the decision had been made concerning colors, students began to realize that there should be an official University song. The *S.U.I. Quill* called attention to this lack on October 20, 1900, but it was not until the spring of 1905 that President George E. MacLean gave the matter publicity by offering a prize of twenty dollars for the best University song submitted by the first of April. Seventeen lyrics were entered in the competition.

On April 3, 1905, a committee of four — J. G. Gilchrist, H. E. Gordon, H. J. Prentiss, and Alice B. Chase — awarded the prize to John Carl Parish, a senior in the College of Liberal Arts, for his lyric, "Old Gold", set to the well-known tune, "Fair Harvard". In announcing their decision the committee members explained that they had "sought for a song which should express the true university spirit in words and music that would have survival power." They believed "Old Gold" met these qualifications.

At the forty-ninth annual commencement in June, 1909, "Old Gold" was first sung by the audience as a part of the commencement program. Since that time, the singing of "Old Gold" has

become a tradition at most University functions. The question asked by the *Daily Iowan* in 1905 — “Shall this song live?” — has been answered. Years have demonstrated that “Old Gold” does have the “sentiment expressed in words that give pleasure and have the power to move”.

This year, as the University of Iowa celebrates its one hundredth anniversary, we remember the loyal students of former days who originated the wearing of the old gold. If we let our thoughts carry us forward to 2047 when the University of Iowa will be celebrating its bicentennial, we may imagine that the commencement audience will again pledge their loyalty:

Oh, heir of the glory of pioneer days,
Let thy spirit be proud as of old,
For thou shalt find blessing and honor and praise
In the daughters and sons of Old Gold.

CORNELIA MALLET BARNHART

Commemorating Emancipation

Thursday, August 27, 1942, was a hot, humid day in Fort Madison, Iowa. A carnival was in full swing along the river front. Hundreds of lights flickered on the ferris-wheel and merry-go-round while the monotonous music blended with the raucous noises of the barkers, the voices of excited children, and the overtones from the milling crowds of people.

A scant four blocks away from the carnival stands and the Father of Waters, in Old Settlers' Park, the major share of Fort Madison's Negro population — with a considerable number from Burlington, Ottumwa, and Keokuk — were participating in an all-day celebration in commemoration of Emancipation Day.

Under the auspices of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church of Fort Madison, pastored by the Reverend A. L. Preston, the people were revelling in this day which one of their group said "really and genuinely belongs to us as American Negroes." There was historical significance in this celebration on the banks of the Mississippi River for Iowa had furnished a soil in which freedom could develop.

On December 28, 1846, Iowa became the twenty-ninth State of the Union and the fourth commonwealth to be created out of the Louisiana Purchase. The three States previously carved from the Purchase — Louisiana, Arkansas, and Missouri — all permitted slavery, thus making Iowa the first free State to be organized from the magnificent territory secured from Napoleon in 1803.

Historically Iowa had received the heritage of freedom from the old Northwest Territory. The prohibition of slavery in the Iowa area was proclaimed by the Missouri Compromise, and in 1839 the Supreme Court of the Territory of Iowa, in its first decision, ruled that slavery was prohibited in Iowa and that the laws "should extend equal protection to men of all colors and conditions". The Constitution of 1846 declared in forceful language: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, unless for the punishment of crimes, shall ever be tolerated in this State." The Constitution of 1857 included the same prohibition.

Just how important freedom was regarded by the early Iowa pioneers was well defined by the brilliant Congregational minister of Burlington, the Reverend William Salter, when he wrote: "To breathe the air of freedom, to live where labor was honored, and there were no slaves, was

the inspiring motive, more than any other, which led the people of Iowa to make it their home." A decade and a half after Iowa's admission to the Union the outbreak of Civil War hostilities began. Iowans immediately, and with nearly unprecedented enthusiasm, rallied to the support of the Union.

Being fully aware that emancipation must occur, President Lincoln, late in July or early in August, 1862, announced to the cabinet his determination to issue such a proclamation. Upon the advice of William H. Seward, Secretary of State, Lincoln impatiently awaited something approximating a Federal military victory as an opportune time to issue an emancipation proclamation applying to slaves in the disloyal States. The Union victory at Antietam, Maryland, on September 18 and 19, 1862, presented the desired background.

On September 22nd the President issued his preliminary proclamation to the effect that on January 1, 1863, "all persons held as slaves within any state, or designated part of a state, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforth, and forever free". By this pronouncement President Lincoln set free 5,000,000 Negro slaves. The Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Con-

stitution forever prohibited the institution of slavery anywhere in the United States.

Since the time of the Emancipation Proclamation American Negroes have celebrated various dates as Emancipation Day. According to Lawrence C. Jones, principal of the Piney Woods School, the date most generally observed in the southern States is January first, the date the Proclamation went into effect. September twenty-second, the date when the Proclamation was issued, is the second most widely celebrated day. In other sections of the country, other dates are used by the Negroes for the celebrations. According to *The Negro Year Book* for 1931-1932, the dates of the celebrations usually have some connection with the date that slavery happened to be declared abolished in a particular State or community. "The Negroes of Texas celebrate June 19, the date in 1865 when General Robert S. Granger, who had command of the military district of Texas, issued a proclamation notifying the Negroes of Texas that they were free. Some emancipation celebrations may have reference to the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, particularly the ratification of this amendment by an individual state. . . . The observance in Illinois and some other Middle Western states, of August 2, 3, or 4 may have to do

with the abolishing of slavery in that state on August 2, 1824."

These statements do not explain why the celebration at Fort Madison was held on August twenty-seventh; nor did the speakers give any explanation of the choice of this date. Possibly it was just a convenient date for an outdoor meeting. At any rate the celebration was held on the last Thursday in August.

Picnic tables had been pulled close together and bounteous baskets of food were rapidly disappearing. Numerous cases of pop and containers of ice cream were located near a conspicuous sign advertising "Chicken barbecue — Southern style." Happy people were participating in the hilarity of the occasion — eating, laughing, and making merry.

Neatly dressed children, scrubbed until their black faces and arms fairly shone, raced about with ample supplies of food in both hands and mouths, doing their share toward having a glorious day. William Shepherd, assistant chairman, and Lillian Shepherd, secretary, of the Bethel congregation, were efficiently keeping the activities moving along. At dusk the supper hour came to an end. The tables were cleared and the few who had to leave did so, but quietly and quickly some seventy-five colored citizens gathered around

the circular bandstand to listen to the speeches of the evening.

The invocation was given by the Reverend Mr. Parker from Ottumwa who prayed fervently "for the boys who have gone — some to the North, some to the South, some to the East, and some to the West. Bless those who are directing the affairs of the government . . . remembering the stories that have come down to us of the days of bondage, tonight we have come together here to give Almighty God thanks for his kindness and goodness."

The first speaker of the evening was L. C. Burton, mayor of Fort Madison, who welcomed those gathered in Old Settlers' Park. Mayor Burton spoke of the obvious unfairness of racial discrimination, reminding his listeners, however, that the public schools of the State of Iowa had so far done far better by the Negro people than had the churches. Continuing, the mayor admonished his audience, "self-pity is nearly as bad as discriminatory practices. Self-pity obliterates some things which you may have accomplished. In fact, through self-pity you might lose what you have gained by emancipation." Many of the people present had sons and husbands fighting abroad and Mr. Burton concluded his remarks by pointing out that "even though there are some inequali-

ties in the armed forces, you may rest assured that colored boys who are fighting will have the best of equipment and hospitalization, along with good and ample supplies of food."

The main address of the evening, "The Heritage of the American Negro", was delivered by the Reverend E. C. Allen, for twenty years pastor of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Davenport, Iowa. As the minister took his place on the bandstand, his commanding appearance, his kindly and warm personality, and the genuine interest he manifested in his theme, seemed to dramatize, temporarily at least, his entire race. Tall and handsome, possessed of a rich, full voice, the speaker recalled the memorial erected by the children of Israel beyond the Jordan River and declared that the Negroes, like the Israelites, should be prepared to explain "when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean you by these stones?" The minister reminded his listeners that the black man possessed, by nature, a religious personality. He emphasized that "better Negro citizenship will come from better Christian treatment — not only from those of the opposite color, but from one's own fellow-men." Southern "justice" was deplored by the speaker, who reminded those present that the mode of justice exemplified by lynching would

serve to make Hitler, Mussolini, and the Japanese Emperor more bold and inculcate in them a feeling of superiority over the American way of life.

In his concluding remarks the minister proudly recalled the exploits of the heroic Crispus Attucks, who led the attack which resulted in the Boston Massacre, and the "ebony giant", Black Sampson, of Brandywine Creek fame, along with other American Negro martyrs who had unselfishly given their lives for the cause of liberty and freedom. Reaching a fervent pitch the pastor drove home his final remarks. The Negro, he said, "can point to a clean record so far as the American flag is concerned. Never has the hand of the Black Man blemished the white of purity. Never has the Black Man's hand been raised in opposition to loyalty to his flag."

As the crowd settled back after this stirring address the minister of St. John's African Methodist Church in Burlington rose, lifted his arms reverently above the crowd, tilted his head so that he might look into the twinkling stars above, and pronounced the benediction on the day's activities. He closed with words that are music to the Negroes' ears, and yet have a strange interpretation in the American social order — "and now tonight we are free."

RAYMOND J. SCHLICHER

Comment by the Editor

SLAVERY IN IOWA

The story of the Emancipation Day celebration at Fort Madison in 1942 recalls the early days in Iowaland when the shadow of slavery, that "peculiar institution", lay across the area of the Louisiana Purchase. Slavery was the antithesis of democracy, freedom, and individual responsibility — three characteristics which undergirded the frontier — but it satisfied a perverted human desire to exploit the labor of the less fortunate.

That the shadow of slavery did cross the prairies of Iowa is indicated by frontier incidents, by census records, and by court decisions. The first "slave" mentioned in Iowa history was the young Indian lad given to Father Marquette by the Indian chief at the mouth of the Iowa River. Indians frequently spared women and children of their enemies, keeping them as servants, wives, or adopted children.

When the first white traders, soldiers, miners, and government representatives began to sift into the Iowa area, a few brought Negro slaves with them. The Missouri Compromise had prohibited

slavery north of Missouri, but the frontier paid scant attention to legal technicalities. Isaac R. Campbell, living on the present site of the city of Keokuk in 1834, had with him a slave named John who, it was said, was saving money to buy his freedom. Colonel Stephen W. Kearny, who came to Fort Des Moines near the mouth of the Des Moines River in 1834, had a mulatto slave woman as a family servant. She left Iowa with the Kearny family, still a slave.

When the Methodists at Dubuque built the first church in Iowa in 1834, three contributors are described as "collered", two donating twenty-five cents and one fifty cents. All three were said to be slaves. Some four years later a pioneer named Shapley P. Ross brought to Bentonsport two Negro slaves. He later sent the woman back to Missouri and the man ran away. About the same time Josiah Smart, an educated man who had chosen life on the frontier with an Indian wife, purchased two female slaves in Missouri and kept them as servants at his home at the Indian agency on the site of Agency. A contractor who built some of the buildings is also said to have brought two women slaves to do the cooking for his crew.

After the establishment of the Territory of Iowa in 1838, the status of the few slaves in the area was questioned. In 1839 a Missouri slave

owner attempted to repossess a slave named Ralph whom he had permitted to go to Dubuque to earn money with which to purchase his freedom. In the first decision it rendered the Territorial Supreme Court declared that Ralph was not a fugitive slave because he had come to Iowa with the permission of his master and he was not a slave under the Iowa law because Iowa did not recognize slavery. He had defaulted on the terms of a contract, but slavery was not a penalty for that.

When the census was taken in 1840 the enumerator reported one hundred and seventy-two free colored persons in Iowa Territory, about one-third in Dubuque County. In spite of the Missouri Compromise and the decision of the Iowa Supreme Court in the Ralph case, he also listed sixteen slaves in Iowa, all in Dubuque County. Was Ralph still listed as a slave? There is no record.

No slaves were recorded in the census of 1850, but the Dred Scott decision of 1856 again threw the shadow of slavery across the country, until the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment made freedom the law of the land. There was once slavery in Iowa; it might be well for all Iowans, white as well as Negro, to celebrate its disappearance.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

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