

The **P**ALIMPSEST

MARCH 1947

CONTENTS

The State Centennial Stamp 65

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The Postage Stamp Centennial 78

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Shipping the Fat Cattle 85

JANETTE STEVENSON MURRAY

Comment by the Editor 95

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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

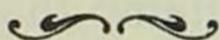
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The State Centennial Stamp

Since August 3, 1946, Iowans have been stamp conscious, especially in regard to commemorative postage stamps, for it was on that day that Iowa City became for twenty-four hours the "Stamp Center of the World". The city demonstrated its right to that title by recording the second largest number of "first day covers" in the history of stamp collecting.

But the Iowa statehood centennial stamp was not the first commemorative issued for Iowa, nor the first to be intimately associated with Iowa. The Trans-Mississippi-Omaha series of 1898, the Louisiana Purchase series of 1904, the George Rogers Clark stamp of 1929, the Wisconsin tercentenary stamp of 1934, the Oregon Trail stamp of 1936, the Northwest Ordinance and the Northwest Territory commemoratives of 1937 and 1938, the Pony Express of 1940, the Union Pacific of 1944, and the Santa Fé commemorative of 1946, indicate the close relationship between Iowa and

American history. The honor of having the first day cancellation of the stamp issued in honor of the National Industrial Recovery Act (N. R. A.) was given to the town of Nira, Iowa, on August 17, 1933.

The first postage stamp that directly commemorated the Hawkeye State was issued in 1938 in honor of the Iowa territorial centennial. This stamp holds a unique position in American philately, since Iowa was the first Territory to be so commemorated.

The first efforts on the part of the Iowa Territorial Centennial Committee and other Iowans to secure a commemorative stamp met with an emphatic refusal by the Post Office Department on the ground that stamps had never been issued in honor of Territories. On May 9, 1938, President Roosevelt expressed sympathy with Iowa's desire for a stamp but regretted he could not overrule the decision of the Post Office Department. When the entire Iowa delegation rallied around Senator Clyde Herring and Congressman Fred Bierman in their fight and threatened to introduce a bill in Congress to compel the Post Office Department to issue an Iowa stamp, the Department finally capitulated and Senator Herring jubilantly wired the Centennial Committee of the success of his long fight.

A number of Iowa towns promptly requested that the honor of the first day's sale of the territorial stamp be granted to them. Burlington was a logical choice since it had been the territorial capital in 1838. Dubuque stressed her claim of being the oldest city and was actually celebrating her 150th anniversary when Iowa was observing its territorial centennial. Iowa City's claim rested on the fact that it served as the capital for three-fourths of the territorial period and for the first eleven years of statehood. Moreover, the Old Capitol at Iowa City had been selected as the central design for the stamp. Des Moines was the State capital and the largest city.

The Centennial Committee at first sought to have the stamps placed on sale simultaneously in all Iowa post offices in order to avoid discrimination against any city, but the Post Office Department declared this would be unprecedented, extremely expensive, and unfair to stamp collectors. After considerable delay the Post Office Department finally wired the Iowa Centennial Committee on June 6th stating that one place would have to be designated and suggesting August 24th at Des Moines during State Fair Week. The Committee agreed and awarded the first day's sale of the stamps to Des Moines.

Iowa received nationwide and even interna-

tional publicity from its first commemorative stamp, a purple three-cent stamp of special delivery size featuring the Old Capitol at Iowa City. A total of 47,064,300 were printed, of which 245,200 were sold at the Fair and in Des Moines on August 24th. Among the notables who received one or more of the 209,860 "first day covers" (envelopes bearing the postmark of the office awarded the first day of sale) were President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Harold Ickes, Shirley Temple, Adolphe Menjou, and Mary Pickford.

Eight years later, on January 7, 1946, Congressman Henry O. Talle wrote Postmaster General Robert E. Hannegan urging that a three-cent postage stamp be issued to commemorate the centennial of the admission of Iowa into the Union. A fortnight previously Governor Robert D. Blue had appointed the Iowa State Centennial Committee and Congressman Talle suggested that this committee "be given an opportunity to propose a suitable design for the stamp".

The first meeting of the State Centennial Committee was held in Des Moines on January 16, 1946. A number of sub-committees were appointed, including one on a commemorative stamp and coin. Ralph Evans of Davenport was chairman of this sub-committee and Mrs. Mary Humes-

ton of Albia was the other member. William J. Petersen of Iowa City was added later. On January 23rd Postmaster General Hannegan wrote Congressman Talle that his department would doubtless recognize Iowa statehood with a "special issue" and that he would be "very glad to have the benefit of the committee's views as to effective subject matter". The Talle-Hannegan letters were printed in the *Congressional Record* on January 24th and immediately precipitated widespread interest and discussion in Iowa.

At a meeting of the State Centennial Committee on February 27th, a motion was made that the Committee adopt the suggestion of Charles M. Fouts, a 14-year-old Albia high school lad, that the Blashfield painting "Westward" in the Capitol at Des Moines be recommended as the design for the Iowa centennial stamp. Various members pointed out that the immense size of the mural, its intricate detail, and the dimness of the painting might make difficult its reproduction on a stamp, but the Committee decided to approve the design and let the Post Office Department determine whether or not it could be used.

Scarcely had this news been released when a chorus of objections arose, and additional suggestions began pouring in. As early as December 20, 1945, the Burlington *Hawkeye-Gazette* had car-

ried a suggestion that a view of Burlington in 1855 would serve well as a design for a commemorative stamp. Newspapers throughout Iowa reproduced designs advocated by local readers. Fully half of those suggesting designs urged that the map of Iowa appear on the new Iowa stamp. Equally popular was the idea of corn panels along both sides of the stamp. The Iowa motto — "Our Liberties We Prize And Our Rights We Will Maintain" — was included in almost half the designs submitted to the Centennial Committee.

Some of the proposed designs symbolized the agricultural interests of the Hawkeye State, usually by pictures of corn, oats, horses, cattle, and pigs, and land under the plow. One of the most artistic of the designs submitted depicted a modern farm with a pioneer farm in the clouds. At least three others showed a farm and tractor, but substituted the eagle and motto in the sky for the pioneer farm. Two of these three contained both the map and cornstalks.

On April 19th the Post Office Department announced that engravers had found the painting "Westward" too detailed for good reproduction and asked the State Centennial Committee to submit a simpler design. This precipitated another barrage of suggestions. Finally, after several personal conferences with post office officials, Ralph

Evans, the chairman of the stamp committee, authorized the Post Office Department to designate an artist to prepare a design showing the Iowa flag superimposed on an outline map of the State with cornstalks for panels. Victor S. McCloskey, Jr., of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, prepared a design, using a Rand-McNally map, an Iowa flag copied from the *National Geographic*, and cornstalks furnished by the Department of Agriculture. He did such an excellent job that the sub-committee accepted his design with only minor changes. Matthew D. Fenton engraved the picture and vignette of the Iowa stamp, while J. S. Edmondson engraved the ornamental frame, the lettering, and the numerals.

This beautiful commemorative three-cent stamp was approved by the sub-committee on stamp and coin at a meeting held at Iowa City on May 24, 1946. At this same meeting the sub-committee selected the blue color of the Texas statehood stamp with the green used in the Coast Guard stamp as its second choice. The Post Office Department struck off sheets of both colors and concurred with the sub-committee in its choice of the Texas blue. The issue was to number 125,000,000.

The sub-committee also acted on two other important items — the place and date of the first day

of issue for Iowa's commemorative stamp. As early as December, 1945, Burlingtonians had bestirred themselves for this honor, mindful of the fact that they had lost out in 1938. Des Moines, however, seemed to hold the inside track, for the Post Office Department had been following the precedent of awarding the honor to the State capital.

The claim of Iowa City to this honor was, however, well presented. The constitutional conventions of 1844, 1846, and 1857 had been held in the Old Capitol at Iowa City, Iowa's richest historic shrine. The first State government was inaugurated there. The Republican Party was born in the Old Capitol on February 22, 1856. The building had housed both the Territorial and the State Supreme Courts. After the removal of the capital to Des Moines the Old Capitol had been given to the State University of Iowa for educational purposes. Confronted with such a mass of historical evidence the Iowa Centennial Committee voted that Iowa City be awarded the first day sale and that the sale be held on August 3, 1946.

Joseph J. Lawler, Third Assistant Postmaster General, asked why the first day of issue had been moved from December 28th to August 3rd. There was no precedent for the release of statehood stamps except on anniversaries. The sub-com-

mittee explained that it was guided in its recommendation by the wishes of the Iowa Centennial Committee, a majority of whose members felt that the immediate issue of the commemorative stamp would be a potent factor in stimulating centennial celebrations throughout Iowa, as well as serving as one of the most effective mediums for publicizing the occasion. The committee also pointed out that it was on August 3, 1846, that the people of Iowa adopted their first State Constitution.

On June 24, 1946, the following telegram from Congressman Thomas E. Martin was received at Iowa City: "Post Office Department has just announced that original issue of Iowa centennial stamp will be made at Iowa City August 3. It will be a three cent blue stamp and will have map of State of Iowa and the Iowa Flag and two panels of corn stalks. The design was submitted by the Iowa Centennial Commission. Congratulations."

The Centennial Committee was naturally hopeful that the Iowa City sale should rank with the best in the nation. The record for State commemorative first day covers was held by Tennessee with 463,512. Texas was second with 397,866. But Texas had $2\frac{1}{2}$ times Iowa's population and Nashville was ten times as large as Iowa City. To overcome these disadvantages, various agricultural, industrial, commercial, religious, and educational

groups were encouraged to get out envelopes with individual designs to tell the history of the organizations and to advertise Iowa. The idea was greeted with enthusiasm. The publishers of the *Des Moines Register*, the Maytag Company, the Rath Packing Company, Sargent & Company, Station WOC, Carr, Adams & Collier, the Torch Press, and other organizations issued such cacheted envelopes. These accounted for approximately one-fifth of the total number of first day covers postmarked at Iowa City.

Formal invitations to the presentation ceremonies were sent out by the Postmaster General to Governor Robert D. Blue and other State officials, to members of the Iowa Centennial Committee, and to other prominent Iowans. Iowa-born Admiral William D. Leahy was named to represent President Truman at the ceremony.

Requests for the Iowa stamp commenced pouring into the Iowa City post office from the forty-eight States and U. S. possessions, from Canada, and from many foreign lands. Ranging in number from one to ten (the limit for personal orders for envelopes to be stamped by a post office) these orders ultimately reached a total of 298,942 covers. Of this number 223,584 requested a single stamp, while 57,474 asked for blocks of four and plate blocks. Postal employees were at first con-

founded by requests for stamps with "an electric eye", a "guide line", or a "bull's-eye cancellation", but before August third arrived they had learned an entirely new vocabulary.

The morning of August third was warm and sunny, and a thousand people jammed the west approach of the Old Capitol to witness the impressive ceremony when Joseph E. Lawler, Third Assistant Postmaster General, presented the first sheets of the Iowa statehood centennial stamps to Governor Robert D. Blue and Admiral William D. Leahy. Postmaster Walter J. Barrow presided at the ceremony and Mayor Wilber J. Teeters and President Virgil M. Hancher greeted the visitors. Short speeches were made by Governor Blue and Admiral Leahy after they had been presented with their stamps. The ceremony was broadcast over Station WSUI and lined out through stations WHO and WOC.

Following this program Postmaster Barrow gave a luncheon at the Jefferson Hotel honoring Admiral Leahy, Governor Blue, Third Assistant Postmaster General Lawler, and R. E. Fellers, Superintendent, Division of Stamps. The luncheon was attended by Mayor Teeters representing Iowa City and President Hancher of the State University, by Ralph Evans, Mrs. Mary Humes-ton, and William J. Petersen of the Iowa Centen-

nial Committee, and by D. C. Nolan and Robert Gage of the Iowa City Chamber of Commerce.

While these events were taking place Iowans from near and far jammed the post office and substations to purchase the attractive blue stamps. The first private purchaser was Paul Stoner, a graduate student from Lawrence, Kansas, who bought one hundred and eight stamps. Throughout the day long lines formed at the post office. In the basement a special machine cancelled approximately 120,000 covers while a picked force of ex-servicemen hand-cancelled orders calling for that type of postmark.

Meanwhile the big commercial dealers had a corps of assistants at work in the Community Building and in their rooms at the Hotel Jefferson. Unlike the post office force, these men were not able to start stamping their covers until 7 a. m. on August third, when the stamps went on sale, so they were allowed to work over Sunday and bring their covers in for cancellation early the next week. The post office itself did not finish its own servicing work until a week later, partly because of the number of orders on hand, and partly because of delayed requests from foreign countries.

One dealer, V. A. McGrew of Marshalltown, prepared 40,000 covers for mailing and "Capt." Fluegel of Washington, D. C., serviced over

30,000. Fred Spielman, a veteran Fairfield stamp dealer who had attended "First Day of Issue" sales for years, arrived at Iowa City with two striking picture cachets — one of "Buffalo Bill" and the other showing Mrs. Dixie Gebhardt sewing the Iowa flag. Three of these dealers serviced almost one-sixth of the total first day covers.

It was not until August 13th that Postmaster Barrows made his final report to the Superintendent of Stamps at Washington. Of the allotment of three million stamps sent to Iowa City, a total of 1,067,000 had been sold the first day. The number of first day covers was equally impressive — 435,320 had been cancelled by machine and 82,185 had been cancelled by hand, a total of 517,505. Only the New York World's Fair issue of 585,565 in 1939 eclipsed the Iowa City sale.

The Iowa City stamp sale demonstrated to most Iowans that stamp collecting is a "big business" and not merely a hobby for youngsters. It also proved an effective device in stimulating interest in the Iowa State Centennial. The thirty-five first class post offices in Iowa were allowed to place stamps on sale immediately following August third. As swiftly as possible the remaining Iowa post offices were supplied with the stamps.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The Postage Stamp Centennial

The first pioneers to enter the Black Hawk Purchase found the postal service little different from that existing when Washington was president. Mail was carried on horseback, by stagecoach, by steamboat, and after 1838 in some places by railroad. Since no railroad reached Iowa until 1854, it required an average of from a month to six weeks for letters and papers to travel from the Atlantic seaboard to Iowaland. Frequently the mail was actually lost, or it was damaged by water to such an extent that it became illegible.

The failure to reduce rates for fully half a century was a serious factor in curtailing the use of the mails. The act of 1792 had fixed the rates for single letters at prices ranging from six cents for under thirty miles on a graduated scale up to twenty-five cents for any distance over four hundred miles. Since the settlers in the Black Hawk Purchase were generally far from relatives and friends the twenty-five cent fee usually prevailed, and that was no trifling sum for the average pioneer. Their inability to pay was probably reflected in the decrease in per capita postage expenditures from 26 cents in 1837 to 22 cents in 1845, despite

the fact that hundreds of new postal routes had been established each year in the United States during this same period.

The high postage rate was only one of the problems involved in early mail delivery. For over half a century the Post Office Department of the United States permitted letters to be mailed either prepaid or "collect on delivery". If the sender paid the postage, the postmaster noted on the space reserved for the address the amount of the postage and indicated that it had been "paid". These notations were usually made with pen and ink but some resourceful postmasters provided special stamps or designs to indicate that the postage had been received. In 1845, for example, the New York Postmaster provided a five-cent stamp. These came to be known as "Postmasters' Provisionals". Most postmasters used only a design stamped on the space reserved for the address. A letter to Thomas McKnight at Dubuque, dated December 29, 1840, for example, has "25" written in the upper right hand corner. In the upper left hand corner is an oval stamp bearing the printed words "St. Genevieve" and "Missouri". Between these names someone wrote "5 Jany."

Prepaid mail was easy to deliver. Any pioneer would take a prepaid letter to a neighbor. But if the postage was to be collected, the story was

usually much longer. First the addressee had to be notified that a letter for him had been received at the post office. Then he had to collect the postage charges in coin. Many are the frontier tales of long journeys made to find some friend who had twenty-five cents in good hard cash. With coins in hand, or in pocket, the addressee had to make the trip to the post office to get his letter. Fortunate indeed was the man who, after all this trouble, received good news in his letter.

But a new day was dawning for the United States postal service and the young State of Iowa was destined to benefit by it. On March 3, 1845, the very day John Tyler signed the bill admitting Iowa into the Union under the Constitution of 1844, the president signed a bill limiting the franking privilege, authorizing "star route" contracts, and reducing postage rates. The latter was particularly important to a frontier State for it meant that henceforth Iowans would pay five cents for distances less than 300 miles, and ten cents for letters destined to go over 300 miles. This meant single one-sheet coverless letters weighing under one-half ounce. The effect of this reduction in rates in 1845 was quickly reflected in the tremendous increase in letter writing. In 1844 a total of 38,135,592 letters had been sent; by 1851 this number had increased to 83,252,735.

The second great innovation occurred when Congress authorized on March 3, 1847, the issuance of adhesive postage stamps. The famous 1847 series consisted of the Benjamin Franklin five-cent stamp in brown and the George Washington ten-cent stamp in black. During a period of four years about 3,700,000 five-cent stamps were issued and unredeemed. Only about 900,000 ten-cent stamps were issued during this same period.

The figures concerning the number of early stamps pale beside the 125,000,000 Iowa statehood centennial stamps issued in 1946 and the latter figure is dwarfed by the total of 656 billion stamps sold from the more than seven hundred varieties issued since 1847. The early stamps were usually printed in sheets of one hundred and had to be scissored apart. The first perforated stamps appeared in February, 1857.

In all probability no 1847 stamps were used in Iowa. One authority declares that fragmentary records in Washington indicate that a few such stamps were sent to some Iowa post offices. An equally competent authority asserts that no 1847 stamps were sold in Iowa and that any used here were probably brought in by travelers from the East. Horace Poole of Dubuque, whose Iowa cover collection won first prize at the Trans-Mis-

Mississippi Philatelic Society meeting at Des Moines in 1946, knows of only one man who had an Iowa cover with an 1847 stamp. It was sent from Farmington to Keosauqua. Since the five-cent and ten-cent stamps issued in 1847 were discontinued on July 1, 1851, when postage was reduced, few Iowans probably used them.

What is the reason for the scarcity of these early stamps? The position of Iowa on the frontier with its relatively scattered population is one factor. Few personal letters were written in those early years; it is said that ninety-eight letters out of one hundred concerned business affairs. Furthermore, many people still preferred to send their letters collect because they felt more confident of their delivery. Since the use of these early stamps was not compulsory and the number printed was relatively small, it is not surprising that the eminent authority, Carroll Chase, should estimate that "only about one letter in fifty bore a stamp".

It thus appears that conditions in Iowa remained much the same during the period 1847-1851 as in the stampless cover period. The issue of the stamps in the series of 1851 brought into use a three-cent stamp for single letters going not more than three thousand miles, and six cents over that distance. The series included the first one-cent stamp and a one-cent carrier's stamp. The provi-

sion for stamps did not, however, end the stampless period, for the prepayment of postage by postage stamps was not compulsory until January 1, 1856. Even then, post offices sometimes ran out of stamps and postmasters resorted to the "paid" rubber stamp that had been in vogue in the stampless era. Postage stamps, however, were here to stay. They were convenient and their use gave a simple and effective check on postal income. During the last half century stamps came to be used to commemorate historic events and to honor countries, States, and persons.

Thus the birth of the State of Iowa is intimately associated with some of the most far-reaching reforms in postal history; for the introduction of cheap postage meant a sharp break with the old idea of postage for "revenue" and the emphasis of "service" as the motto of the post office. The wisdom of the "service" policy of the United States Post Office is attested by the marvelous growth of postal service. Between 1845 and 1945 the nation underwent a seven-fold increase in population. During this same century the number of pieces of mail increased not seven-fold, but a thousand-fold!

Between 1789 and 1851 the total postal expenditures were \$111,790,393 compared with receipts totaling \$113,748,998. During the fiscal year ending June 30, 1945, the postal revenue totaled

\$1,314,000,000, or almost twelve times the total revenue from 1789 to 1851. Happily for those who urged cheap postal rates — and many Iowa editors joined this chorus — the year's surplus in 1945 was \$162,642,089, a sum greater than the total postal revenue from Washington's inauguration to the issue of three-cent stamps in 1851. The growth of Iowa might be linked up in no small measure with the inauguration of cheap postage and convenient postage stamps a century ago.

WILIAM J. PETERSEN

Shipping the Fat Cattle

“We’re shipping the steers tomorrow. They have to be loaded before noon”, father said one day as mother met him at the gate when he drove up. The family never knew definitely about shipping until father (William Stevenson) got home from Traer with the market reports the day before. The Chicago *Drover’s Journal* came weekly; but when the cattle neared the shipping stage, father had to keep in touch with the market reports that came to Traer. “I think I can do better in Chicago”, father explained, “than by taking what ‘Johnny’ Campbell offers.” Campbell was a local buyer and shipper in Traer, a Civil War veteran, wiry, impulsive, and good-hearted, known all over the county and popular with everyone.

This was in the nineties — a half century after the first settlers in Tranquillity had begun raising livestock. Having had experience in Scotland, these men saw that selling hay would not pay and that marketing wheat meant too much hauling; so they began breeding hogs and cattle — marketing farm products in a more concentrated form. “Give a steer two acres of grass”, said “Uncle” John Wilson, father of “Tama Jim” Wilson, “he’ll eat

it and grow fat." Drovers of cattle were driven long distances to market centers — Muscatine, then Iowa City, later Cedar Rapids or Waterloo, and, after the Civil War, Toledo. It took about three hours for the cattle to make the six miles into Traer.

When shipping the steers, certain rules were usually observed. If sold to a local buyer, they were to be given no water at the farm the morning they were shipped but got it later in town after being weighed.

The rule against watering cattle before marketing was sometimes evaded. A Tranquillity farmer once sold two carloads of his fat cattle to "Johnny" Campbell. This farmer had scales and the cattle were to be weighed at the farm — before they drank water. Campbell drove out the night before in order to get an early start. After breakfast, the farmer prevailed upon Mr. Campbell to sit down with the family for worship and the latter reluctantly agreed. The reading in Leviticus was long, the prayer still longer. Gifted in prayer, the farmer pictured our sinful estate, petitioned the Lord with power, to guide not only those present in the paths of righteousness but also the rulers of the nation, the State, and the county; to remember the missionaries and the heathen in foreign lands, the afflicted, and the poor.

As Campbell knelt first on one knee and then on the other, his restlessness grew with every finely-rounded period. Shifting his chair, he saw the hired man pumping water for the steers in the feedyard. With a smothered ejaculation not applicable to the prayer, Campbell hurried out. There was no more water for the steers until after they were weighed.

Shipping the cattle was always a big event at the Stevenson home. Everyone was up early. When all was ready, the steers were let out on the road from the lower end of the feedlot. These forty steers, enough to fill two cars, came racing up the hill past the house, wild with the new freedom after several months of inactivity — even though it meant a contented gorging beside the long feed troughs. Father hurried close behind them. When they were well started, he got into the single buggy waiting at the gate and drove off following the cattle. One hired man walked behind the herd; the other, ahead on horseback, kept the steers from going too fast and getting scattered, turned them at corners, and stopped gaps. They cracked long cattle whips. Snap, the dog, went along.

The arrival of the fat cattle in Traer meant excitement around the stockyards and lots of work between their arrival and loading. They were

weighed, fed with corn and hay, and then watered.

Because of lack of a local switching engine only one car could be loaded at each stockyard ramp before the freight train pulled in, usually before noon in Traer. When the train arrived cars had to be hurriedly "spotted" and moved up to the ramp to be filled with steers. Prodding the cattle up the ramps into the cars while the train waited was grueling work for the cattle owner and his men. Loading hogs was easier. In that case corn mixed with cinders was sprinkled down the middle of the car. One hog would see it, go up, and begin eating; then all would follow up the ramp.

These stock trains had no definite schedule, and the men who went with their cattle had to watch for the starting of the train. One day when a farmer living near Amity Church was shipping several loads from Traer, the train started without him. Used to going barefoot, he took off his shoes and, holding them in his hand, sprinted after the train and caught the caboose just as it crossed Coon Creek at the edge of town.

Shipping was almost always on Monday or Tuesday. This meant a Wednesday and Thursday market in Chicago (time has been cut in half now-a-days). The two-day run made it necessary to feed and water the cattle on the train. Usually

the cars were bedded with straw and the racks were filled with hay before shipping. These hay racks were made by nailing slats diagonally from ceiling to side. They ran along both sides of the car except in front of the big door.

After the racks were filled with hay from trap doors on the tops of cars, tramps often sneaked in on top of the hay and rode there, warm and secure from molestation. It was their favorite way of riding into Chicago. The cattle nibbled at the hay from between the slats and drank from cast iron troughs about half way up on both sides of the car. These troughs were partly outside of the car and could be easily filled.

Sealing the doors of the cars put the cattle in care of the railroad. A higher rate was charged for stock than for most other freight and this type of shipping was valued and well looked after. The farmer got out during waits on sidings to look at his cattle and with pike poles or ordinary canes prodded up the ones that were down. If they were not gotten up, they might be trampled to death.

The farmer rode in the caboose going into Chicago. It was bleak, drafty, and dusty, with berths to be pulled down for the trainmen but only long, hard seats along the sides with black oilcloth cushions for the farmers. Sometimes there were so

many cattlemen the railroad had to put on a passenger car. With two carloads of cattle, a farmer got a pass home on a passenger train.

Chicago drinking water was, conveniently, considered unwholesome by North Tama cattlemen. One church elder arranged for his future son-in-law, a graduate student at the University of Chicago, to meet him at the stockyards. "Come and have a glass of beer", said the elder, "I never drink water in Chicago." It seemed eminently respectable for the shippers to drink beer and even good Scotch whisky at the bar in the stock exchange with the other stockmen.

Finally, father's cattle were in a pen in the Chicago stockyards. There were acres of pens with stout plank fences, the top board wide enough for men to walk along as they inspected, bargained, bought, and sold. Horsemen in the narrow roadways between the pens, galloped from place to place, ready to drive the steers into the maws of the great packing houses that flanked the yards.

The W. W. Wilson Commission Company of Chicago was founded in the nineties by West Wilson, brother of "Tama Jim" and father of Margaret Wilson, author of *The Able McLaughlins*. West Wilson managed the business for thirty years and sold most of the cattle shipped by the "lairds" of Tama, estimating that approxi-

mately \$30,000,000 worth of livestock from Tama County and vicinity passed through his hands.

There were many questions for the Chicago livestock salesman to decide, for he had the entire responsibility for the stock sale. Whether to sell in the morning or hold, hoping for a strong finish in the late afternoon? What particular kind of livestock did each buyer like? Was he playing the eastern buyers on the market against local Chicago packers and getting the highest price for his client?

When father got back from Chicago, we shared mother's interest as to the market he had struck. It was a good one this time. Then we wondered what he had brought. Unless he had special business and stayed over, father had little time in Chicago and his presents were usually confined to fruit, candy, or something from "Jack-knife Ben's" little joint near the stockyards. Being a showman, Jack-knife Ben liked to stand out in front and bark his wares as he did when he started with \$8 worth of jack knives on a barrel top. For many years he did a thriving business in cutlery with the visiting farmers. One neighbor even got from Jack-knife Ben the glasses he wore for years. They "just suited" his eyes. We were not interested in the butcher knives, razors, and scissors that father brought but gave attention to the pearl-handled penknife to sharpen our pencils at school.

Many of the cattle shipped to the Chicago markets were originally "feeders" — animals bought in other places and fattened in North Tama. Hugh Stevenson rode horseback or in a single buggy all through this part of Iowa in early days, visiting farms, and picking up yearling and two-year-old steers. These he and a helper on horseback drove away, gathering a large herd as they went along. He carried money enough to pay for the cattle he bought — say \$3,000 for a trip down into Poweshiek County. There was no checking system then and carrying large sums of cash was considered dangerous for it caused many of the mysterious disappearances in those days.

Hugh Stevenson formed a partnership with John Young, mother's brother. Uncle John took care of the distribution of feeders in Traer, while Hugh traveled, by train in later years, buying western feeders in carload lots in Kansas City, Omaha, and Minneapolis. Stevenson, a natural-born judge of beef cattle, was a typical livestock buyer, a "hail fellow well met", with a keen eye and a quick wit — the "life of the party". John Young, a quiet, reserved man of affairs, was later a county supervisor, bank president, owner of farms and town property. These men made an ideal business combination.

Although "Stevenson and Young" dealt mostly

in feeders, Stevenson once, against Young's advice, bought Peter Whannel's fat cattle for shipping to Chicago. "I know there is money in the cattle", he said. They made \$300 and gave Peter half of it.

I once asked my father how much a buyer usually made shipping a car of fat cattle to Chicago — they nearly all went there in those days. He said W. W. Wilson, later in Chicago, estimated that when in the livestock business in Traer, he made about \$20 a carload — \$1 a head. A fat steer weighed from 1100 to 1400 pounds then and sold at from five to seven dollars a hundred in Chicago.

Dean C. F. Curtis of the Iowa College of Agriculture marketed eighteen steers of various breeds in January, 1893. Their average gain, he reported, had been 2.4 pounds per day. On a diet of fine cut new corn or ground corn and oil meal in the month of October the average daily gain was 4.1 pounds.

Cattle feeding was a major industry in Tama County. There were sometimes 500 steers at one time in the William Fleming feedyards near Dinsdale. "Jimmy" Mutch, when 72 years of age, placed 800 hogs and 140 head of cattle on the Chicago market at one shipment. Later on, twenty carloads were shipped at one time from the siding on the W. H. Sprole farm east of Traer.

When Editor Elmer E. Taylor of the Traer *Star-Clipper* said in 1942: "Looking back fifty years I am convinced that the average farmer lost as much money in feeding cattle as he made", he was not referring to the Tranquillity men, for they were not "average" farmers but the sons of Scotch farmers with a background of cattle-breeding and shrewd business methods.

JANETTE STEVENSON MURRAY

Comment by the Editor

THE EVOLUTION OF STAMPS

To many Americans the announcement that 1947 is the centennial anniversary of the use of postage stamps in the United States will come as a surprise. How could anyone send a letter without a stamp? But, like many an everyday convenience, stamps which the user can "lick and stick" were late in making their appearance.

The idea of stamps, no doubt, goes back to the signet ring of the ancient monarch and the imprint of the ring on clay or wax came to be the symbol of authority. From this came the great seal and the lesser seals affixed to legal documents.

Few things in life are free and there came to be a charge for the affixing of a seal. The idea spread to the tax-gatherers, and so it happened that the first acquaintance of the early American colonists with stamps was a revenue measure, the Stamp Act of 1765. History books frequently give the impression that the British government sent over sheets of stamps which were to be affixed to all the papers and articles listed in the act.

The Stamp Act itself was rather vague as to the system to be used, but it appears that the govern-

ment was to provide, at a price including the tax, sheets of vellum or paper already stamped with some design and all legal documents must be written on these sheets. In some cases the authorized official might affix a seal or stamp the paper with some design. Each pack of playing cards had to be wrapped in a sheet of stamped paper. There were no separate stamps which could be purchased and used whenever needed. The use of stamped paper for wrapping an article was not a new idea. Covers, stamped to indicate that the charge for delivering the enclosed letters had been paid, were used in Paris as early as 1653. These were the original stamped envelopes.

Postage stamps were authorized in England by a law of Parliament in 1839. The following year the first adhesive postage stamps made their appearance, bearing the picture of Queen Victoria printed in black. The idea was brought to New York in 1842 when Henry T. Windsor started a private postal system and issued a three-cent stamp. In 1845 the postmasters in New York and St. Louis issued adhesive stamps as a convenience for marking prepaid letters. Other postmasters followed their example, and in 1847 the United States Post Office Department issued its first postage stamps and postmasters' "provisionals" were banned.

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