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**PALIMPSEST**  
AUGUST 1941  
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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

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## 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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## Rural Pioneering

Our farm five miles north of West Branch in Cedar County consisted of 160 acres. There were no improvements on the land when father, William M. Collins, bought it in 1850. For some years only a few acres were fenced and under cultivation. It took time and much hard labor to improve the wild land, so that for years a part of almost every farm "laid out to the commons". It was everybody's pasture.

Northwest of us there was a big slough which was green in the spring long before the upland grass could be seen. Much of the time the ground was wet and the water was never far below the surface, but in midsummer the slough got dry enough for men to go in with their scythes and mow the coarse grass for hay. There was always a good crop of slough grass. It was the custom as well as common courtesy for each man to mow the same part each year. If a careless settler overstepped the proper bounds trouble ensued.

Cattle could roam at will on the commons many miles from home. One cow, the leader of the herd, carried a bell and all the rest followed "the old bell cow". From afar the cattle seemed to scent the early grass in the "Big Slough". One of my first remembrances of early spring is the dingle lingle of cowbells in the morning as herds came from miles around to graze on the fresh young grass. As the upland grass became more plentiful they stayed nearer home. When they had eaten their fill they lay down in the shade and chewed their cuds through the heat of the day. Toward evening, as a rule, they grazed toward their home where they were penned for the night and milked. After the morning milking "the bars were let down" and they wandered forth for another day.

Even dumb animals have a love for home, and usually the cattle were not far away when evening came. Once in a while, however, they would wander afar with some other herd and it would take hours to find them. If the owner did not appear before late milking time and the farmer knew the cows did not belong in his neighborhood they were milked "to keep their bags from spoiling", which was a kindness to the cows as well as to their owner.

Sometimes a cow would become unruly and de-

cide not to be driven home. I remember one such exhibition of perversity by "Old Black Betsy"—the bell cow was always called old. One evening father went for the cows about the usual time. The horses were all in the field at work, so he went afoot as he frequently did, expecting to find the cattle nearby for we had heard the bell all afternoon. He found them about a mile away and started them home. When they came to the creek they stopped to drink and then meandered slowly toward the barnyard. All except Betsy. She tossed her head and started down the creek, plunged into the brush, and stopped. She was as black as midnight except for a spot of white on her forehead. It was dusk and beginning to sprinkle rain. When father worked his way through the brush too near to suit her, she would find a new place to hide and hold her head still so there was no sound of the bell. She crossed the creek several times, finally coming out at a ford. There she took to the road and went home in a very sedate manner. She was soon quietly chewing her cud in the yard. Mother had milked the other cows, the boys had come from the field, done the chores, lighted the candle in the old tin lantern, and were about to go in search of father when he arrived tired, wet, hungry, and with a desire to butcher old Betsy.

A plentiful supply of pure water was one of the most essential requirements for both the pioneer settlers and their stock. Springs were utilized wherever possible. Sometimes water was hauled in barrels from a creek or river for family use. A hole dug in a ravine or near a stream served as a reservoir. To reach the water in these shallow unlined wells a bucket was hung on a hook near the end of a pole which extended down into the bucket. When the bucket touched the water the pole was pressed down to make the bucket dip. But these shallow surface wells were not satisfactory. Not being lined, they would "cave in", and others had to be dug.

Sometimes these shallow wells were some distance from the house and many trips were required to supply a household. In some families a water yoke was used. This was a piece of wood some three feet long, heavier in the middle where it was hollowed out on one side and notched in the middle to fit over the shoulders and around the neck of the bearer. The hollow was padded with cloth. The yoke tapered outward and straps of leather were fastened near each end. These straps were of a length so that when the buckets were hung on the hooks at the lower end, the yoke being across a man's shoulders, he could hold the bails with his hands to steady them and

thus carry the weight of the water on his shoulders.

On my father's farm about a quarter of a mile from the house was a ravine in which a spring bubbled up clear and sparkling, never a very great flow but always running. Father dug out a place and nailed some boards together making a box about three feet square with no bottom. This bottomless box he placed in the hole he had made around the spring, filled in around the sides neatly, and fastened a cover on the box with leather hinges. An outlet was made in one side of the box a little below the top. When the water rose to this outlet it was carried away to the nearby creek in what we always spoke of as "the spring run". But one year after a long hard winter the spring became choked, the water ceased to flow, and no investigation ever explained why. An old man who used to come through the country selling medicine said, "Why, that is the work of a white weasel." We never saw the weasel, white or otherwise, but our beautiful crystal spring was gone forever.

Only a narrow branch of the Big Slough crossed our land. Father ditched it with a spade so that the land was well drained. On the east side where the slope was gentle we later had a beautiful timothy meadow. On the west side the rise

was steeper and at one place where a ravine came down from the upland there was a patch of timber which was always called "the little grove", for father never cut it. There the earliest flowers were found—hepaticas, lady's-slippers, Dutchman's-breeches, and others.

On this slope, soon after the spring closed, father opened a stone quarry. Near the quarry and the drainage ditch he dug a well and walled it with stone. He also made a pump for the well. This pump was square, made of boards. A pole with a leather valve at the lower end was hinged to a handle at the top. It was very crude, but it did the work. If the pump joints began to leak they were daubed with tar. Every pioneer farmer had a tar-bucket which usually hung at the rear end of his wagon, for tar was used not only to "grease" the wagon but to keep the joints tight.

Some years previous to this time my uncle had built and for a short time lived in a small, one story frame house on the west side of our farm. But he did not take kindly to farming. He was a blacksmith and went back to his trade. Mother liked the location of the little frame house and so for two or three years in the early sixties we moved there each spring after mother had thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed it.

All summer we hauled water from the old well

in a barrel laid in the front bob of a sled. The boys could drive close to the well, place a trough from the pump spout to a homemade funnel in the bung hole of the barrel, pump it full, and drive home. This was done very early in the morning or late in the evening. If the barrel was kept in the shade the water kept cool and good until the barrel was empty.

But when winter approached we moved back to the log cabin, nearer to water and in a more protected location. As our house furnishings were few it did not take long to move.

Shelter had to be provided for the horses, oxen, and cows. Some log barns were built, but the straw sheds or stables were very common. These were made by setting forked posts in the ground, laying poles from fork to fork, fastening cross poles on these, and then stacking straw on top and around this rude frame leaving one or more openings for doors. This made a very comfortable place for the stock. By renewing the straw at threshing time the barn was kept in good repair.

Some farmers were so shiftless and improvident that they built no shelter for their cattle and let the poor creatures live as best they could by feeding on straw stacked out in the field with only the straw stack to break the fierceness of the wintry winds and snows. But human nature was much

the same then as it is now, and most men either from natural kindness of heart or to prevent financial loss provided the best shelter that the material at hand would afford.

Hogs were not raised very extensively for some years, because of the lack of hog-tight fences. Most farmers raised and butchered just enough for their own meat. As more land was fenced, more hogs were raised.

Those who raised hogs for market had to haul them on sleds to Muscatine. When the weather was cold enough and the sledding was good, a number of men would spend two or three days butchering. The carcasses, frozen stiff with their feet sticking up, were piled like logs on the sleds. I distinctly remember the procession of sleds loaded with gleaming white hogs in the early morning, the sled runners creaking on the frozen snow as they started on their two-days' trip to Muscatine and back.

Butchering was quite an event, at least to the younger members of the family, especially if the year's supply of meat was butchered at one time. With knives whetted to razor edge and tubs filled with scalding water the slaughter began early in the forenoon. Each hog was hoisted by the hind legs with rope and tackle, scraped, disemboweled, and rinsed with cold water. In the evening the

carcasses were taken down, carried into the house, laid on a strong plank "meat bench", cut up into smooth shoulders, hams, sides, and other pieces, and packed in a barrel of brine "strong enough of salt to bear up an egg". The heads and feet were chopped off, cleaned, and soaked ready for head cheese and pickled pig's feet. Every waste scrap, such as the rind cut from the pork when it was fried, was carefully saved for soap grease. The fresh scraps of fat were rendered for lard or to use in a tin grease lamp with a rag wick.

Sausage was made by placing scraps of meat on a block and chopping them as fine as possible with an ax, seasoning with pepper and salt, and usually packing in jars. This was a tedious job and not very satisfactory. Years later when a neighbor bought a sausage mill, or grinder, as he called it, he was in great demand at butchering season, going from place to place so that if we wanted sausage made we had the casing ready and he ground, seasoned, and stuffed it by the pound. This was always done in the evening.

Soap making was a big job, but very important, for there was no soap to be had except homemade soft soap. Lye was leached from wood ashes, which had been kept dry until soap-making time. An ash hopper was constructed of slabs or clap-

boards set on end on a board bench. Around the base of the hopper a gutter was cut in the board, a little lower at one end, to carry off the lye. The cracks were stopped and a little straw or slough grass was placed in the bottom of the hopper to keep the ashes from washing through with the lye.

After the hopper was filled with ashes, preferably hardwood ashes, a depression was made in the center and this was kept full of water till the lye started to drip and run into an earthenware crock or an iron pot which had to be watched and emptied before it ran over and wasted the lye. The strong, acrid liquid was put into a big iron kettle which was hung on a pole between two stakes, a fire was built under the kettle, and the grease was added to the lye and boiled until it was dissolved. Now if the right strength of lye had been used and the right portion of grease, it was soap. If the lye was too strong, water had to be added; if too weak, more lye was added and boiled down. If the lye was all right and too much grease was used, when the soap got cold the extra grease could be scraped off and used again in another kettle of soap or for lights. One who understood soap making and had nice clean grease could make an article jelly-like in consistency ranging in color from amber to almost as white as lard. Homemade soft soap was used

for all purposes except shaving and to wash the babies. There was generally a piece of castile soap for those purposes.

One Sunday when the family was away from home, except my brother and I, a neighbor boy about fifteen came to ask if father had a sharp razor. He wanted to shave.

Brother replied, "Yes, everything our father has is sharp."

The boy grinned. "S'pose that means you?"

Brother, however, was probably thinking that father would never use dull or rusty tools. He explained that inasmuch as father had not shaved for a long time there was no shaving soap.

"Well," said the boy, "haven't you got any soft soap?"

Yes, we had plenty of that. And so he proceeded to shave with soft soap. I don't know whether it was the razor or the soap which took the soft beard off his face.

We had no soft water for washing clothes. On wash day a kettle of ashes and water was put on the stove and boiled. The lye thus made was dipped off into the wash boiler, enough to "break the water". A scum which rose to the top was skimmed off and the water was ready for use. Clothes all had to be washed in a tub on the washboard and wrung by hand.

Every housekeeper had her bluing bag. Indigo was bought by the ounce. It came in lumps any shape or size. A piece was put in the bluing bag, which was tossed into the rinse water and squeezed till the water was the right blue.

Starching was usually done with wheat-flour starch, but for "fine shirt" bosoms, collars, and cuffs there was "clear starch" which came in lumps, and was very inferior to the laundry starch of today. If it was not cooked properly, there would be trouble in ironing. The starch would stick to the iron, roll up on the clothes, and scorch, worrying the tired, hot, and impatient housewife who toiled back and forth from the table to the stove to change irons. Dresses and petticoats were wide and long, tucked and ruffled. Oh, the ironing!

Sewing was all done by hand. And there was as much or more work on a garment as there was after sewing machines were used. Tucking, ruffing, shirring, hemming, filling, everything—"seam and gusset and band, band and gusset and seam".

Stockings were made by hand through the whole process, from shearing the wool from the sheep's back, scouring, carding, and spinning it into yarn, dyeing the yarn and knitting it into stockings, socks, gloves, mittens, and scarfs or "comforters". Some of the comforters were knit

in tubular form, about six inches wide, and long enough to go around the neck of the wearer and cross on his chest. His coat was buttoned over it. Others were knit flat, back and forth, twelve to eighteen inches wide, and two to two and a half yards long. They were worn something like a shawl, crossed in front with the ends fastened behind or one end thrown over the shoulder. If a girl wanted to make her sweetheart a real nice present she would knit a comforter for him, or a pair of double mittens.

Very few men wore overcoats before the Civil War. I don't think I ever saw a boy's overcoat until long after that time. Those large comforters must have been a real comfort indeed. I have seen pictures of boys skating, the ends of their comforters flying out like streamers. (Was there ever a boy who did not like to skate? But girls did not skate. It would have been unladylike.)

All women wore shawls or cloaks, which were made of wool goods fashioned with a yoke to fit the shoulders, to which a straight piece of cloth was gathered or pleated and sewed on, and extended to the bottom of their long, full dress skirts. The cloak was lined throughout, perhaps interlined, which made it very warm and comfortable. It was "all buttoned down before", like "Old Grimes's" coat, and had an opening on each

side through which the wearer could put her hands. These slits could be buttoned if desired.

The winter head covering for women was either a quilted hood or a nubia, knit of yarn and resembling the men's long comforters, except the comforters were fringed at the end while the nubia was gathered across the end and a tassel of the yarn attached by a short cord. Nubias were worn around the head and neck, with one end poked under the last hitch around the neck. Sunbonnets, or shakers, were worn in summer.

Men and boys wore cloth caps in winter or perhaps fur caps homemade from the skin of some animal they had caught. It might be coon, muskrat, or squirrel. In the summer they wore "chip" hats or homemade straw ones.

A woman would take a pair of scissors, go to the oat field, cut close to the ground as many straws as she needed. Or after the grain was cut a sheaf was brought to the house. She would strip the blades off and cut the lower joint of the straw close to the joint. She then had a long, smooth, glistening straw. These straws were soaked a few minutes in a pan of water to soften them so they would not break in the process of braiding.

Taking seven straws, she ties them together tightly with the large ends even. Holding the

tied end toward her, she spreads the straws and begins her braid. With the right hand she folds the right-hand straw neatly over the one next to it and under the two next. Then with the left hand she folds the left-hand straw over the next and under the next two. This process is repeated: over one and under two, over one and under two. Of course the straws are not all the same length, and so when she comes to the end of a straw she takes another from the softened bunch, lays the butt end of it on the short end of the one needing a splice and proceeds. Over one and under two.

When her braid is long enough to make the size of hat desired she begins to sew it. The braid must be kept damp. She doubles the tied end squarely back under the braid to hide the end and sews it firmly in place, then, holding the edge of the braid under the edge of this beginning just far enough to sew through both at once, she sews "through and through" and round and round, till the top of the hat crown is large enough. Then she holds the braid tightly, turning squarely down for the sides of the crown. When it is tall enough, she crowds the braid so as to turn it out to form the brim.

SUSAN I. DUBELL

## A 'Tater Patch for Soldiers

The summer of 1863 brought bitter disappointment to Northerners who had hoped for a speedy termination of the Civil War. During 1861 and 1862, Cedar Falls with but sixteen hundred inhabitants had sent two companies of soldiers to the front. As casualty lists in wounded and dead from the Iowa Third and Thirty-first Regiments lengthened, local citizens grappled with two grim aspects of the national emergency — wheat, corn, and wool for the men at the front, and clothing and food for their families at home, many of whom were without means of support.

On June 1, 1861, the people of Cedar Falls had watched the entrainment of the first contingent of soldiers. Each of the hundred boys carried away with him as a gift from the citizens a fatigue uniform — trousers, shirt, belt, and cap. Each man left knowing that a fund of \$500 had been locally subscribed for general relief of soldiers' families. Within a few weeks a Soldiers' Aid Society began to function actively. It sought to encourage the knitting of socks and men's shawl-like scarves, and urged farmers to draw upon their shrinking reserves of dried apples, onions, and turnips.

These they packed into barrels and shipped to the South.

As prices for commodities rose and as the supply of ready money sharply lessened, it became increasingly difficult to obtain funds for relief. Treacle was substituted for sugar, scorched barley for coffee, and corn meal for wheat flour. By the close of April, 1863, the Soldiers' Aid Society had exhausted its exchequer and seemingly faced the end of its resources. During that month in response to an urgent appeal from Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer who was one of the State Sanitary Agents of Iowa, it dispatched a barrel, "filled with old cloth for bandages, old linen, lawn, and gingham dress skirts, half-worn shirts and drawers." In the same month the Society appealed to the farmers for root vegetables still stored in potato caves or dug-outs. The same appeal was sent to all the towns on the Dubuque and Sioux City Railroad from Cedar Falls to Dubuque. Out of the fifty-seven barrels shipped from these towns to Dubuque and from there on the *James Means* to Vicksburg, the people of Cedar Falls supplied a large quantity of catsup, a half barrel each of pickled cabbage and sauerkraut, and ten barrels of vegetables — onions, turnips, and potatoes. Yet each week more and more calls came in personal appeals from the soldiers and from the Sani-

tary Commission which had been organized to promote the welfare of men in the army.

On May 23rd, the local Soldiers' Aid Society, disheartened by insidious Copperhead propaganda and by the appalling needs of hospitals and camps and demands at home, gathered for their weekly meeting at the home of Henry Wright at the corner of Washington and Twelfth streets. That afternoon one by one they discarded as no longer practicable "ice-cream parties", amateur musicals, programs of pantomimes and dramatic readings, and house-to-house solicitations — plans which for nearly two years the community had loyally supported.

A half hour later, when Dempsey Overman pushed open the door of the square parlor, depression had settled upon the group. Rather glumly they returned his cheerful grin. Without preliminaries he broke the gloom with a plan which he had been formulating all day as he plowed his ten-acre tract fronting on Walnut and Twelfth streets. He proposed to harrow and furrow one acre of that tract, turn it over rent-free to the Society, and suggested that they raise potatoes for the soldiers and their families. He was very confident that certain public-spirited gentlemen could be counted upon to supply ten bushels of seed potatoes which he had calculated would

be sufficient. If the members present saw fit to accept his proposal, all they would have to do was to plant, tend, and harvest the crop.

The shadows of discouragement lifted. Questions and suggestions came from all sides of the parlor. Dempsey Overman volunteered to interview the owners of seed potatoes.

"You might name it the 'Tater Patch'", drawled one member.

"Why can't we turn the planting into an old-fashioned pioneer bee and invite the public?" suggested another.

Before the meeting broke up, Mrs. B. F. Perkins, President of the Society, had appointed the necessary committees and the secretary had recorded in her minutes a proposed "Potato Planting Bee" for June 3rd to be followed by a "Hoeing Bee" and still later by a "Harvest Bee".

As secretary, Mrs. Lennox H. Barnes duly explained the idea of the 'Tater Patch to the public. In the edition of the *Gazette* for May 29th, she invited all who were interested in war relief to assemble at the Dempsey Overman home on the following Tuesday and to participate in the "Planting Bee". A picnic supper was offered as a reward.

On the afternoon of June 3rd twice as many women as men appeared. The ladies, it seems,

willingly volunteered their services, following the men down the rows and dropping the potatoes into the holes with the primary result that the tubers "disappeared like magic", and with the secondary one that, after the spades had been wiped clean of black Iowa loam, both the gentlemen and their "lady assistants" were ready to enjoy their picnic supper, spread out upon the grass before the two-story brick house of Dempsey Overman.

After the potatoes were well started, abundant showers in early July made it imperative that the 'Tater Patch be weeded and cultivated. Mrs. Barnes apprized the public of the Patch's need of hoers and again promised "a Pik-Nik supper" to all who would present themselves for work on the afternoon of July 23rd. "The young ladies and gentlemen are requested to attend", she explained, "the ladies to contribute their mite toward the supper and the gents their hoes to the work. Do not forget, — on next Tuesday afternoon at D. C. Overman's — Society and 'Tater Bee combined."

The response was excellent. Before sundown the men had eradicated the weeds and fully earned their ham sandwiches and pound cake, and even relished their coffee substitute of oven-browned barley. On this occasion they were thanked for their cordial coöperation, for their hoeing skill,

and for clearing the 'Tater Patch project of all financial indebtedness.

Unfortunately the date set for the final Potato Digging Bee coincided with heaviest fall work of the farmers. Only four men answered the call of Mrs. Barnes and the Aid Society. The potatoes, however, were dug and heaped into piles before nightfall, for with spades, baskets, and determination the women harvested the crop. Editor "Hank" Perkins, who was doing his own and his brother's work at the *Gazette* office while George D. Perkins lay in an army hospital, drove up to the tract for a short time. On Friday in his news column he lauded the potato diggers by writing, "These women of the Soldiers' Aid Society deserve the highest praise which can be bestowed upon them for their self-sacrificing efforts in behalf of our brave soldiers. If our gallant boys," at Vicksburg, "could have witnessed our fair ones with rolled up sleeves and blackened hands digging potatoes — the fruits of patriotism, care, and toil, their hearts would have been warmed with grateful pride."

The Society had reason to congratulate itself, for the 'taters, when sacked, had increased tenfold. Sixty bushels were delivered at the Dubuque and Sioux City depot for transfer to the Sanitary Commission and forty bushels were re-

served for the needs of soldiers' families during the approaching winter. With potatoes selling locally at thirty cents a bushel, and at Vicksburg at the rate of fifteen pounds for a dollar, the Soldiers' 'Tater Patch amply justified Dempsey Overman's tithing-acre loan and the labors of the Aid Society.

LUELLA M. WRIGHT

## A County Seat Scrap

One hundred years ago in 1841, seven of the most prominent men then in Delaware County were named at a mass meeting to settle one of the most prevalent questions in local politics. Where should the county seat be located? Roland Aubrey, Joel Bailey, Leroy Jackson, Cyrus Keeler, John W. Penn, William H. Whiteside, and S. P. Whittaker were all highly respected and representative citizens. Their decision, it was thought, would have considerable influence.

It was not a new problem. As early as December, 1839, the Iowa Territorial legislature authorized the political organization of Delaware County and appointed S. B. Umstead of Clayton County, Shadrach Burliston of Jackson County, and Paul Cain of Dubuque County to locate the county seat on or before May 1, 1840. The settlers, however, were opposed to the organization of a new county and so the commissioners neglected to perform their duty. At the extra session of the legislature in July, 1840, a new statute was enacted appointing William Smith of Dubuque County, William Jones of Jackson County, and Thomas Denson of Jones

County "to meet at the house of William Eads" in the northern part of the county on the first Monday in October, or within ten days thereafter, "and proceed to permanently locate the county seat".

At least two of the commissioners, Smith and Denson, and perhaps Jones, met and traveled over the county for about two weeks. Though they visited various locations, such as Bailey's Ford and Penn's Grove, they could not decide upon the best place. Smith favored Eads's Grove for personal reasons and Denson held out for Silver Lake, the present site of Delhi. According to legend Smith and Denson, realizing that they would not be paid for their two weeks' work if they did not reach a decision, agreed to flip a dollar. Just why the third member of the commission was not called upon to decide the issue is not clear. The dollar was tossed and Smith won. Consequently Eads's Grove was chosen for the county seat and named "Elizabeth" in honor of Elizabeth Bennett, one of the first white women who lived in the county. It was on section three in Delaware Township, later the site of Millheim.

When the decision became known, particularly the flippant manner in which it was made, most of the citizens were very dissatisfied. At a mass meeting in the southern part of the county, reso-

lutions denouncing the commissioners and repudiating the selection were adopted. A petition to the legislature asking that the county seat be located by an election was signed by almost every settler in the county except those living near Eads's Grove. Apparently the county refused to compensate the county-seat commissioners because the Territorial legislature passed a law on February 10, 1842, ordering the local authorities to pay the three men three dollars a day for their services in locating the county seat at Elizabeth. Smith presented a bill for \$42.00 which was allowed, but there was no money in the treasury to pay him. Denson's claim for \$36.00 was also allowed in 1844.

Following the petition of the citizens the legislature provided a method of relocating the county seat by a popular vote at the next general election in August, 1841. All qualified voters in the county were allowed to vote for any place. If "any one point" should receive a majority it was to be declared the county seat. But if not, then a second election was to be held on the third Monday in August, 1841, at which the voters would choose between the two places which received the highest number of votes in the first election.

To facilitate the selection another mass meeting was held and various aspects of the problem were

discussed. The committee of seven was appointed to canvass the rival locations. Four of them — Joel Bailey, Roland Aubrey, William H. Whiteside, and Leroy Jackson — viewed the geographical center of the county but found it undesirable. Next they looked at a site on the Maquoketa River, and thence proceeded to the vicinity of Silver Lake. It was a beautiful spot in the woods, and a large spring was another attraction.

As they approached the lake, according to tradition, a large deer suddenly sprang up and stood looking at the party. The men stopped instantly and as Aubrey raised his gun to fire, Jackson exclaimed, "Now Aubrey, kill that deer and we will stick the county seat stake right here." Aubrey's aim was unerring and the deer fell dead within a few yards. Jackson's remark was accepted in earnest and the present site of Delhi was recommended.

In the election on August 2nd, thirty-one votes were cast on the county-seat location. The place nominated by the committee received twenty-five and Elizabeth six. Charles W. Hobbs carried the ballots to Dubuque, where the county clerk announced the result.

In January, 1842, however, the county seat was still without a name. Several names were suggested. J. W. Penn thought that "Chester"

would do. "Marysville" was mentioned in honor of Mrs. Mary E. A. Hobbs. Mr. Bailey and Mr. Keeler suggested that since Delhi was the county seat of Delaware County in New York, Delhi would be an appropriate name for the new seat of justice. A vote was taken by the settlers who had gathered for the meeting of the county commissioners and Delhi received the greatest number of votes. Thereupon, on January 18, 1842, the commissioners ordered that the new county seat "be and it is hereby called and named Delhi." At the same time they ordered the county surveyor to lay out the town.

In February and March the settlers from surrounding cabins gathered in Delhi with axes and teams to build a courthouse. Some cut the logs in the timber, others hauled them across the lake over the ice, while others raised them to form a commodious log building eighteen by twenty-four feet in dimensions and two stories high. No carpenter could be found to finish the building, however, because the county had no funds, and so it stood uncompleted for several years. Though the commissioners met there in July, 1844, they had to go elsewhere for their winter sessions, since the courthouse had no fireplace.

Thomas S. Wilson convened the first district court at Delhi on September 30, 1844. The grand

jury, finding the upper room of the log courthouse too public for their deliberations because of the thin floor and trapdoor entrance, retired with United States Marshall William E. Leffingwell to a nearby grove. The jurymen sat on a fallen log while the foreman had an old stump for his chair. No cases were presented and so the first grand jury soon returned to court and was discharged.

The need of a habitable courthouse was, of course, apparent. The main obstacle was lack of funds. For nearly five years the county could not raise enough money to get title to the quarter section on which Delhi was located. Finally, in 1846, two citizens lent \$200 at 20 per cent interest for that purpose. Early in May the county clerk began to sell town lots for a minimum price of five dollars. Gradually some funds began to accumulate in the treasury, but most of the proceeds had to be used to pay the county debts. Finally, in 1850, the commissioners decided to advertise for contractors to build a new courthouse and jail. Two local men took the job and accepted town lots as compensation. County warrants were discounted fifty per cent, but at last the log and frame building was completed in 1853. During the next three or four years Delhi became a thriving community, and a new brick courthouse was built.

About this time, however, a new town in the county began to show signs of growth. When it became certain that the Dubuque and Pacific railroad would pass nearby, Burrington (now Manchester) began to boom. In 1857, some fifteen or twenty buildings were erected. The railroad arrived in October, 1859. During the war years Manchester became the commercial center of the county.

To the advantages already acquired the citizens of Manchester hoped to add the prestige of being the county seat. In the spring of 1869 petitions for an election on relocating the seat of justice were circulated throughout the county, and a subscription was started to raise \$12,000 toward the erection of a new courthouse. In the midst of the campaign, however, a dispute arose among Manchester residents regarding the location of the building.

At the beginning of the contest, Earlville and Delaware were also ambitious to become the county seat but these towns had their claims defeated by the canvass of the board of supervisors in June as their petitions did not contain sufficient signatures. Delhi, meantime, with the support of the Davenport and St. Paul Railway Company, was making its own fight to keep the county seat in its original location. Their efforts

were successful for, when a vote was taken in October, Manchester was defeated by a majority of 367.

By 1874, the people of Manchester again united their strength and started several petitions to remove the seat of local government. Remonstrances were also circulated and it seems that some individuals, not wishing to show partiality, signed both for and against moving the county seat. The board decided that the Manchester petition was insufficient and Delhi was once more the victor.

In the following year, however, Manchester was ready for another trial. Delaware and Earlville again entered the contest, and for a time Manchester devoted most of her efforts to defeating these two places. Every nook and cranny of the county was canvassed by agents bearing either a petition substantiating the Manchester claims or a remonstrance against the change.

When the Manchester advocates presented their petitions, they were met by the entire bar of Delhi who were on hand to defeat any proposed change. After the presentation of the Manchester petitions, the Delhi supporters offered a remonstrance which, it was claimed, contained the names of 300 of those who had signed the petition. Manchester at once offered what was known as a

re-petition and asked that the names on this document be counted as a part of the petition.

This precipitated one of the most complex legal tangles ever witnessed in the county. Practically every attorney offered an opinion. Finally it was decided that if Manchester could bring the signers of the petition before the county board of supervisors to sign an affidavit their names would be counted. On the first day ninety-two appeared and signed. Another such day's work would have meant victory for Manchester, but one of the members of the board suddenly became dissatisfied with the previous day's ruling, thus cancelling the decision under which Manchester had been working. This ended the personal appearances before the board and when the petitions and remonstrances were canvassed, it was found that a majority was against Manchester. The defeated parties appealed to the Supreme Court but the court refused to order the election sought.

In the fall of 1876, Earlville started another campaign and succeeded in securing an election — the first on the county seat question since 1841 — but was overwhelmingly defeated. The Earlville people had offered to supply \$10,000 to build the courthouse.

Four years later Manchester started another

agitation for removal. Delhi had not grown for several years and many people were finding it inconvenient for the transaction of public business. Again there was a contest between petitioners and remonstrators but this time Manchester won by 133 names and the election was held on November 2nd. When the votes were counted it was found that 2115 had been cast for Manchester and only 1628 for Delhi. Thereupon Manchester was officially "declared to be the county seat of Delaware County". Though the Delhi faction appealed to the Supreme Court the decision of the people stood.

As soon as the election returns had been officially canvassed, Sheriff E. S. Cowles sent a man on horseback to inform the people of Delhi. It is said that the messenger made the distance of nine miles in one hour. With a company of militia to prevent violence the county officials promptly removed the public records. Wagons were loaded in the rain and, with torches lighting the way, the cavalcade proceeded to Manchester, there to be greeted by bonfires, torch lights, and a country dance. The night was spent in celebrating the final victory of the battle which had lasted more than a decade.

WILLIAM R. FERGUSON

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