

The
PALIMPSEST
MARCH 1941
CONTENTS

From Connecticut to Iowa 65
RUTH A. GALLAHER

Friend of the Farm Wife 79
GENEVA WATERS

A Grand Rally 89
HOMER L. CALKIN

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

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

THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

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

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society

ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XXII

ISSUED IN MARCH 1941

NO. 3

COPYRIGHT 1941 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



From Connecticut to Iowa

In a dignified old home in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, there lives a very old lady, Emeline Larrabee Perkins, widow of a judge and sister of a former Governor of Iowa. She was born on February 9, 1837, and the days of her years more than span the history of Iowa as a separate Territory and State. But this is not the only tie that connects her life with Iowa; she is the only surviving member of a family of nine children born and reared in Connecticut, six of whom came west — four to Iowa. Her son is a resident of Sac City. One hundred and four years have left her hearing excellent, her sight fairly good, her mind still alert. Her reminiscences suggested this story of the transplanting of part of a family from New England to the West, a cross section of that free movement of people which made America.

To get perspective on this family let us go back in history two hundred years before the birth of Emeline Larrabee, back to Greenfield Larrabee,

an "original emigrant", who was, it appears, brought before the court in New London, Connecticut, charged with breaking the Sabbath. His offense does not sound grave today: he had done some work on his vessel in the harbor to safeguard it during a storm. What the verdict was or the penalty, if he was found guilty, is not reported. Ten years later William Larrabee (a name later familiar to Iowa ears), listed as a "stranger", was accused of the same offense. What lay back of these two men or what their relationship was is not recorded in the family annals.

There are indications that they came from England, but family tradition says the name was originally French, perhaps "L'Arabie", and that the family had been connected with the Huguenot cause in France. It may be that some members of a French family fled to England to escape the fate of St. Bartholomew's Day. At any rate there were Larrabee families at an early day all along the New England coast from Maine to Connecticut and even south to Virginia. In spite of the early "criminal" records of Greenfield and William Larrabee, their descendants and relatives appear to have been highly respected citizens.

It is easy to get lost in genealogical details, but let us trace some of the links which connected the "original emigrant" with the little old lady in Fond

du Lac and the Iowa Larrabees. Greenfield Larrabee, it appears, had a son John who moved from Norwich to Windham, built a house, and was given a grant of land on condition that he keep a ferry for seven years. There another John Larrabee was born. His wife (her name seems to have been Hannah) was said to have sat up nights spinning to earn money to buy a communion service for the Windham Congregational Church.

The next generation was represented by Timothy Larrabee, who was a distinguished lawyer and for years served as state's attorney for Windham County. One of his fourteen children was Frederick, a seaman until marriage transformed him into a hotel keeper and jailer at Windham. One of Frederick Larrabee's children was Adam A. Larrabee, the father of the members of the family who came to Iowa and Wisconsin. Through his mother, Adam Larrabee was a cousin of Captain Frank Allyn whose ship, the *Cadmus*, brought Lafayette to New York in the summer of 1824.

Adam Larrabee was appointed a cadet at West Point in 1808. He accepted, "pledging my sacred honor and my life in defense of my country and its liberties". This pledge he soon fulfilled. During the War of 1812, Lieutenant Larrabee was shot through the lungs, but finally recovered and

lived to be eighty-two. Following the close of the war Adam Larrabee, then a captain, found peacetime army service unsatisfactory and resigned his commission. Two years later (in 1817) Mr. Larrabee married Hannah Gallup Lester and established his home on the Lester estate. He supervised the farm, served in the Connecticut legislature, and for over fifty years was one of the trustees of the Norwich savings bank.

Six sons and three daughters were born of this marriage. Since the mother died five weeks after the birth of the youngest child, the father's responsibilities were heavy. The oldest child, a son named Nathan F., became a sea captain and followed that life for forty years. Perhaps it was because Larrabee men usually quit the sea when they married that Captain Larrabee remained a bachelor. The second son, Charles, was employed on a whaling ship until his marriage. Then he settled down as manager of his father's six-hundred-acre farm at Windham. A younger brother, Henry, was established on a similar estate which the mother had inherited.

Three sons were thus provided for in Connecticut; but there were three other sons and three daughters. What suggested Iowa to them is, perhaps, now forgotten. The first of the children of Adam Larrabee to make the journey to Iowa

seems to have been John, the third son in the family, but little can be learned of his plans or of his trip west.

The eldest daughter, Hannah (then twenty-three) married Elias H. Williams on April 26, 1849, and the newly wedded couple started at once for their new home in Iowa. Williams, a well-to-do man of thirty, had come out to Clayton County as early as 1846 and had already acquired some property there.

Soon after her arrival at Garnavillo, Iowa, Hannah Williams wrote a letter to her younger sister Ellen, dating it May 30, 1849. An earlier letter from Chicago had described the journey up to that point, so the narrative begins there. Her husband secured "a waggon and a span of pretty horses" for the drive across northern Illinois into Iowa and the young couple made the journey in comparative ease. The roads were good and the writer expressed surprise at the number of villages "like our own in Connecticut" along the way.

Leaving Chicago Wednesday morning, they spent Sunday in Freeport and reached the Mississippi River on Tuesday afternoon. There, because of a strong wind, they had to wait until nightfall to cross. Of the journey just beyond Dubuque she wrote: "of all the roads I ever saw —

Connecticut can furnish no parallel — up and down the bluffs — through ditches — sloughs (slews) they call them here — through heavy timber — across the Turkey and on on until you suddenly come out on the high prairie of Clayton and beautiful land it is too without question”.

They drove through the village of Garnavillo, which she described as having more space but fewer buildings than Gale's Ferry (Connecticut). Finally they reached the cabin which was to be their temporary home. Her husband had made arrangements to have an addition built on while he went east for his bride, but this was not completed and Hannah wrote that he “looked completely downcast”. She admits that she was not quite prepared for the log cabin (considering the home she left, this was not surprising), but, like a true helpmeet she added, “I would not for the world have showed other than a cheerful face on Elias' account”.

The cabin appears from her description to have been the usual frontier dwelling of the better class. The main room had a bed, table, six chairs, cupboard, water pail, chip basket, and “better than all is half of one side of the room with closely strewed book shelves”. Above was an attic room just high enough for her to stand erect, reached by a ladder. In it were stored chests and boxes

and three beds were spread upon the floor. There was also a cellar, so shallow that she says no ladder was required since "one can jump into it — haven't tried it as yet".

After telling of changes they hoped to make, young Mrs. Williams describes a lovely grove surrounding the cabin — crabapple and wild plum trees among which grew honeysuckle vines. Then she passes to the neighbors. Mr. and Mrs. Hill and several others had called. Mr. Hill was apparently Reverend James J. Hill of the Iowa band, then located at Garnavillo. She notes the number of babies in the neighborhood and adds "so you see it depends on Mary and I to sustain the credit of old Ct. and we have no idea of being outdone."

Although she insisted she had not been homesick, she was "hoping for the time when we get letters again." Across one page she writes "Elias . . . calls from the porch — says tell her we have pigs in Iowa". She adds "so they have around this door too." No doubt the honeysuckle vines were to be short lived.

The dreams of Hannah Larrabee Williams came true. Her husband became one of the noted lawyers and judges of Clayton County and northeast Iowa. Later he served for a short time on the Iowa Supreme Court. Often she and her younger sister Emeline rode over the "high prai-

rie" with him as he carried on his profession. And her dream of a family also materialized. Four children were born, only one of whom is now living — Mrs. E. N. Baily of Sac City.

In her letter to Ellen, Hannah Williams says that "John" helped her husband plant seeds they had brought from Connecticut, or was "cruising about amusing himself as he pleases". This was evidently her brother, John Larrabee, some two years older. In May, 1852, he married Ardelia P. Burnham in Connecticut and then returned to Iowa, hoping to establish a home for his bride. This transplanting, however, ended in tragedy for John Larrabee died of dysentery on the third of September, 1852.

But this did not deter other Larrabees from coming to Iowa. The year after John's death William (born on January 20, 1832) joined his sister and her husband in Clayton County. He was, it appears, able to take advantage of the opportunities on the frontier. He taught school, managed his brother-in-law's Grand Meadow farm near Postville, and in 1857 bought a flour mill at Clermont in Fayette County. This he operated until 1873. At Clermont he settled down as miller, farmer, banker, and railroad builder. There too he renewed his acquaintance with Anna M. Appelman, who had come with her family to

Iowa from Mystic, Connecticut, and on September 12, 1861, they were married, the bride wearing a dress of sheer Swiss muslin.

How narrowly William Larrabee escaped the fate of his brother John, he himself told years after the event. In December, 1856, he started on foot to Winona, Minnesota, to enter some land he had selected. It was a winter of unprecedented snow and blizzards and between Rochester and Winona the young man lost the road. He was without an overcoat and his feet were protected only by socks and cowhide boots. Toward midnight, half numbed, drowsy, and exhausted, he began to visualize his death, the possible feast of the wolves, and the finding of his skeleton. It occurred to him that people would say he had been drunk, although he had never tasted liquor, and he resolved never to ascribe accidents to drink unless he knew the facts. Fortunately his anxiety was needless. At last he saw a glimmer of light. It was from a settler's cabin and the future Governor of Iowa was soon warmed and fed. On this trip and the return William Larrabee walked some six hundred miles.

At the beginning of the Civil War William Larrabee tried to enlist but was rejected because he had lost the sight of one eye. In 1868 he was elected to the State Senate and retained that office

until 1885 when he resigned to accept the Republican nomination as Governor. His two terms as chief executive of Iowa were marked by efforts to regulate the railroads, the story of which he told in *The Railroad Question*.

The interest of William Larrabee and Elias Williams in railroad building recalls an incident which shows a lighter, more romantic side of pioneer character. When a young cousin of Mrs. Larrabee was married at a remote station on a branch line, a special train was provided to convey the couple and their party to the new home.

In private life William Larrabee maintained the fine traditions of the family. He worked hard, sometimes twenty hours a day in his mill, but he also took time to read and collected a fine library. It was a whimsical habit of his whenever he acquired a new book to write his name on the page which bore the number corresponding to his age at the time. He was also a liberal supporter of church and school and one of his monuments at Clermont is a school building.

William Larrabee was known not only as a good businessman, but as one who knew the quality of mercy. A farmer who had found it impossible to pay even the interest on a note because of the ravages of chinch bugs told this story long years afterward. Mr. Larrabee had bought this

note and the farmer went to him, actually trembling with anxiety, expecting foreclosure. Instead Mr. Larrabee reduced the interest rate from ten to eight per cent, told the man to pay when he could, and inquired whether he needed money for living expenses.

On his estate near Clermont he built a commodious home, comparing favorably with the old Larrabee home in Connecticut, and named it Montauk. There he and his wife reared their family of seven children — Charles (living in Fort Dodge), Augusta (Mrs. Victor Dolliver), Julia (Mrs. Don Love), Anna (in the old home at Clermont), William, Jr., Frederic (of Fort Dodge), and Helen (Mrs. C. B. Robbins).

Next to come to Iowa was Frank, the youngest of the Larrabee sons, who started in 1855 on his twenty-first birthday. His life, except for political activities, followed the usual pattern. He ran a farm of which he was joint owner and taught school during the winter. Then he went into partnership in a mill at Clayton. In 1872 he moved to McGregor where he and his brother William bought the controlling interest in the First National Bank from two Merrill brothers. It is an interesting coincidence that one of the Larrabee brothers and one of the Merrill brothers afterward became Governor of Iowa.

Frank Larrabee's public service was limited to several terms on the McGregor school board, but he continued as president of the bank until 1912 when he retired, celebrating also that year the fiftieth anniversary of his marriage to Sarah M. Copp who had been reared in Groton, Connecticut. Three daughters were born of this marriage — Rachel, Katie, who died while at school in the east, and Betsey. Betsey taught English at Ames for a number of years, but in 1914 Mr. and Mrs. Frank Larrabee and their two surviving daughters returned to Groton to live.

Another member of the Larrabee family came to Iowa by way of Wisconsin when George B. Perkins, son of the little old lady of Fond du Lac, became a resident of Iowa in 1896. He has since served two terms as a Representative and two terms as State Senator.

Might-have-beens are seldom interesting, but the story of the transplanting of these Larrabees to Iowa recalls another William Larrabee who was invited to Iowa and refused to come. In 1854 the trustees of the State University of Iowa were looking for a president for the institution. They offered the position to William C. Larrabee, then Superintendent of Public Instruction in Indiana. He came out to Iowa City, but finally rejected the offer.

This William Larrabee belonged to a Maine branch of the Larrabee clan and had become an active member of the Methodist Church. Family traditions, family names, and family characteristics indicate that these Maine Larrabees and those of Connecticut may have been related, but genealogists do not give any connection.

Emeline Larrabee never lived in Iowa, but she came out with her father on a visit the year before Lincoln was elected President. The trip from Chicago to Galena included a ride on a new invention, a sleeping car. On another occasion she was taken for a sleigh ride on the ice of the Mississippi. But her home was to be in Wisconsin, not Iowa, for she married George Perkins, a lawyer of Fond du Lac. Only two of her four children are still living — George B. Perkins of Sac City and Miss Frances Perkins of Madison, Wisconsin. Ellen Larrabee also spent the latter part of her life in Wisconsin, dying at her sister's home in 1907.

The coming of the Larrabees and many more like them helped to make Iowa what it was during the last half of the nineteenth century. These settlers found highly fertile soil in Iowa where a Commonwealth was being built. They were quick to seize opportunities, shrewd, hard-working, honest, and persistent, more tolerant than they

had been in New England, more Puritan than the settlers from the South. They and their descendants became progressive farmers, bankers, lawyers, promoters of railroads, businessmen, members of school boards, mayors of cities, members of the legislature, and one a Governor of the State.

The little old lady who sits among her keepsakes at Fond du Lac has seen all this happen. These were her people, handing down from generation to generation the qualities which made them resist persecution in France, led them, perhaps as refugees, to England and from there to Connecticut, and finally brought them to the new frontier in Iowa.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

Friend of the Farm Wife

Among the many tributes paid to Herbert Quick, one is especially characteristic of this notable and kindly Iowan — “he had a tremendous capacity for loving the whole human scene and its natural background.” Only a cursory acquaintance with the many and varied interests of Mr. Quick will bring a realization of the fittingness of such a characterization. A more thorough study of his life and works confirms this feeling, and also establishes the conviction that if there was any one part of the human scene and its natural background that he loved more than another, it was that part in which rural life was predominant. Indeed, more specifically it seems that the women and children in the rural scene held a special place in his thoughts and affection, not only because he wanted to see life made easier and happier for them for their own sake, but also because he believed this was vital to the life of our country.

This latter idea he expressed in these impressive lines: “The pride of the nation once lay in its sturdy farmers. From their ranks came our statesmen, our scholars, our financiers. The

farmers fought our battles and built our railroads and bridges. They have been the soldiers of progress. And unless we can still maintain a farm life in which the greatnesses of American life can flower, the armies of progress will suffer that decadence which comes to the hosts of any nation when they come from pavements instead of from meadows and plowed fields. The farm woman must bear these oncoming hosts of strong men, or they will not be borne. And unless the farm women can live under conditions which make for happiness, health and pride, our whole nation will be weakened."

That it pays to make the women happy was one of Herbert Quick's firm convictions. He believed that it paid to emancipate slaves, and "especially when those slaves are our wives, our mothers, our daughters." Throughout his writings dealing with rural life, and these constitute the greater part of his literary work, there are almost innumerable references to the hard and unsatisfying life led by the women on the farms. As a boy on an Iowa farm during the years immediately following the Civil War, he had seen much of poverty, hardship, and heartbreaking disappointment; as an agricultural journalist, he spent much of his time visiting and investigating the farms in the Middle West and over the United States as a

whole. These experiences, backed by his knowledge of the life his mother, sisters, and women neighbors lived, led him to the conclusion that men on farms were much more contented and happy than were the women. He was also convinced that the prizes of progress and invention were going to the man of the farm and that, in this respect, the women had not received a fair deal. Against this he protested. Any farm that could afford a silo, a cream separator, or well-equipped barns could afford a bathroom, a washing machine, and other modern conveniences that make the home a good place for a woman to live, work, and raise her children, and thus develop in her the love for farm life.

In his book *The Fairview Idea* (1919), which is "a story of the new rural life", Herbert Quick told of a farmer who retired to a nearby town. One reason was his wife's poor health; years of hard work had been too much for her. "Every day she had carried many buckets of water from the well, and if the windmill didn't happen to be going she had pumped it herself. Her husband had built a concrete drinking tank for the cattle; all they had to do was to come and drink what they wanted. But for the woman who was his partner in life, he had provided nothing but an iron pump handle and a gravel path. . . . He

had money enough to build the finest farmhouse in the county, but he was so busy farming that he hadn't the time to build a home in which he and his family could be comfortable. A man doesn't feel the need of a good house as much as a woman does; he doesn't have to work in it."

Whenever the author referred to this position of the women on the farms, he emphasized the idea that the farmer's wife was not discontented with her husband nor with this treatment of her. She might even in some cases throw the weight of her vote against expenditures necessary to emancipate her from unnecessary drudgery. The mortgage on the farm was a nightmare as baleful to her as to her husband. She knew his business and was as solicitous as he for management that would bring profit.

Following the turn of the century, however, a farm wife here and there saw that the whole scheme of family life would fall to ruin if the rural homes suffered in comparison with the homes of those friends and relatives who lived on wages in town. She and her husband were coming to realize that it does not pay to build the farm up into a profitable property which is despised by the very children for whom they were giving their lives. When the tired and harassed farm wife comes to the point of asking herself whether it is worthwhile to

stay on the farm, she thinks secondarily of the disadvantages of work and living which have frazzled her nerves and depressed her spirits. She thinks first of her children. "That," said Herbert Quick, "is the Eternal Mother". "I can stand it", she says, "but I want my daughters to live where they will have better advantages".

That the farm wife had not been entirely without relief from the march of progress, Mr. Quick acknowledged in an article entitled "Women on the Farms", published in the October, 1913, issue of *Good Housekeeping*. The invention of cream separators and the establishment of creameries had freed her from some of the drudgery of the old-fashioned dairy farm. She no longer made cheese because the cheese factory can do it better and more cheaply. Labor-saving machinery had decreased the number of ravenous mouths she was expected to feed. These things helped her, however, because they were introduced as profitable innovations and not as woman-saving ones. Additional conveniences and devices would continue to come to the farm for the same reasons, the author predicted.

That a movement for better things among farm women was gaining headway was Mr. Quick's opinion at that time. They were determined to remain no longer in the rôle of the old-fashioned

wife "who washed and mopped, and baked and brewed, and spun a run and went a-visiting in the afternoons." This movement on the part of the farm wives to create a more satisfying rural home life and thus build a stronger rural morale, Mr. Quick found to be characterized by "a demand for happiness and ease and the fruits of progress in the house as well as out of it."

If a vote could be taken of the farmers' wives of the nation as to the improvement most generally needed in the home, Mr. Quick believed the referendum would be overwhelmingly in favor of running water in the house. When the country woman is visited by her town cousin, she hates to have that running water skeleton in the closet, that ghost that rises up when friends from the city are considered as visitors. There have been very good civilizations in which bathing facilities were confined to ponds and streams, the author acknowledged, but, he continued, "that is not our type of civilization; we have taught the bath as an appurtenance to civilization. It may be a reflection on our ancestors to make bathrooms an essential to self-respect, for many of them lived clean lives and died in the odor of sanctity. But, that was before the age of extensive advertising of bathtubs and the discovery of bacteria; before plumbers were found in every village. If we only

knew, we should find millions of farm people and folks of farm parentage who have been floated away from the countryside on currents of hot and cold water running into town and city residences."

A second duty which he frequently mentioned as being almost as objectionable to the farm wife as the carrying of water into the house was the cleaning of kerosene lamps. In "The New Farm Wife", published in the *Ladies' Home Journal* in April, 1919, Mr. Quick wrote that the city cousin "may flood her home with electric light by pressing a button, or at worst, go from fixture to fixture lighting the gas. But she has no smell of oil on her hands, no cleaning of lamps, no lack of light". And the new farm wife in *The Fairview Idea* demanded "a central lighting system to relieve me of the disgusting and never-ending task of filling, cleaning and lighting kerosene lamps".

During the second decade of the twentieth century, the women on the farms became increasingly aware that many of the conveniences enjoyed by the women in city homes were possibilities on any farm and, while expense might be a barrier, it frequently was not an insurmountable one, particularly when the husband would give sympathetic coöperation.

The American farm women constitute our largest class of economically useful women, Mr.

Quick believed. This is shown by the fact that marriage is regarded as a burden by the poor man in the city, but is almost a necessity for the poor man who works a farm. "The poultry products of the nation are worth as much as the cotton crop, exceed the wheat crop by \$400,000,000 yearly, and are worth more than the combined values of the oat, rye, barley and potato crops", Herbert Quick wrote in 1919. This enormous product if lost to us would be felt ruinously at once in an increased cost of living. It must be credited mainly to the woman on the farm, for it is she who produces nine-tenths of the poultry products — the fowls and eggs — of the nation.

"Give her credit also", proposed Mr. Quick, "for butter, cheese, vegetables, pickles, preserves and a thousand other things. Allow her, too, her share in preparing the meals for the men who grow the rest of the food for us, and for keeping their houses. Remember, also, that she bears our sturdiest children while she helps to feed us all. And then ask yourself who has done anything for the farm woman. She has been left to shift for herself and must still do so. She still bakes her own bread, scrubs her own floors, washes her own dishes, cans, preserves and dries her own fruits and vegetables. She has bent faithfully, dutifully, uncomplainingly over these tasks."

In some of his discussions of rural life, Herbert Quick wrote that the women of the cities complain that they have lost their economic usefulness in the household and demand a share in the productive work of the world. "No such wail ever arises from the women on the farm; their hands are full of necessary and productive work from morning till night, and in large measure this work is done without the modern aids to housework which city women possess".

That the farm wife was asking for and receiving to an increasing degree the conveniences and advantages enjoyed by the city housewife was evident to the author during the later years of his life. Moreover, she was no longer content to have these improvements confined to her own home and family; she was working for a better and fuller community life for herself, her children, her husband, and her neighbors. Societies and clubs were being organized. "Thousands of farm women were studying where they formerly succumbed; advancing where they formerly retreated." That the work was only begun he well realized, but because the farm wife was asking and receiving aids to her work, and because in some sections rural isolation was "giving way to socialization, intellectual barrenness to fertility", and neighborhoods were becoming integrated

again, Mr. Quick believed there was cause to feel encouraged and hopeful concerning the conditions under which the farm wife of the future would carry on her work.

“The World War taught us the meaning of morale — the way people feel about things”, wrote this staunch and understanding friend of agriculture. “Destroy the morale of an army and it will run from its shadow. The morale of the rural population began to suffer when cities began offering women and children a better chance in the world than seemed attainable in the country. It is for the new farm wife to restore rural morale; to do so she needs the assistance of the rest of the community to get rid of those things that affect the general tone of feeling with regard to rural life”, he argued, for this generation “knows that the fate of a community and the nation depends upon better living conditions on the farm”.

Perhaps no more fitting conclusion could be given to a discussion of Herbert Quick's very deep and sincere interest in the well-being of the farm wife than to quote his tribute not only to her but to all womankind. In restoring the rural morale the new farm wife “will be doing what women have always done — look after the welfare of the race”.

GENEVA WATERS

A Grand Rally

The citizens of Mt. Ayr and the surrounding country in Ringgold County planned a Fourth of July celebration in 1878. It was in the form of a "Grand Rally of the Veterans of the Late War". With this in mind a meeting of the soldiers who had participated in the Civil War was called during the early part of June. Lieutenant John McFarland, of the Twenty-ninth Iowa Infantry, presided and preliminary arrangements were made. The program committee chosen that day consisted of Captain E. L. Williams, Edward B. Heaton, and Thomas Liggett. Among other things they were instructed either to find a speaker of the day or to provide for an address by one of the committee. D. B. Marshall was appointed drum major.

Before the rally of the old soldiers could be held with success, they needed practice in marching. The *Ringgold Record* on June 13th notified the veterans of Mt. Ayr Township to meet in town on Saturday, June 15th, to elect officers and to organize. The veterans living in Liberty Township were to meet at the Bennett school the next Monday. G. A. Kinblade was in charge of the

soldiers of Lotts Creek. In asking them to meet at Caledonia on June 25th, he said, "We can have a grand time. Let us all come." Indeed, all the soldiers in the county were urged to organize and attend the festivities. Money was raised and extensive preparations were made. Fifers and drummers were requested to report to Marshall the day before the Fourth at Mt. Ayr. The veterans in all townships, however, did not organize as the time was too short.

So well developed were the early plans that the editor of the *Record* boasted three weeks before the celebration that, "If any town in Southwestern Iowa will have a grand time on the Fourth, Mt. Ayr will have it." One of his reasons was the fact that the Mt. Ayr band, "one of the best in southern Iowa", was to be there "to discourse sweet sounds to the Fourth of July revelers". Just a week before the rally, reports from all parts of the county indicated that many people were planning to come to Mt. Ayr. Even the *Argus* of Bedford, in neighboring Taylor County, was commenting on the celebration.

The soldiers who were to participate in the demonstration were called into camp on the third of July to perfect their organization. The program as arranged for the next day was an elaborate one with Reveille at sunrise, Sick Call at 8 o'clock,

Guard Mount at 9, Company Drill at 9:31, Battalion Drill at 11:30, Skirmish Drill at 2 p. m., and Dress Parade at 3 p. m. Edward B. Heaton had been commissioned to provide hard tack and pork for the soldiers' rations.

The crowd commenced to gather in Mt. Ayr on the evening before the Fourth. All the next day until noon the roads were lined with the patriotic people of Ringgold County riding horseback, walking, and traveling in wagons and surries. There were also a number of people from the neighboring counties of Taylor, Worth, and Decatur. Estimates placed the size of the crowd from five thousand to somewhat higher figures.

On the morning of the Fourth a good many skeptics prophesied that there would be rain during the day. This seemed very probable as the sun was obscured by heavy, black clouds, and the air seemed laden with the usual oppressive heat that so often goes before a rain. Indeed, the weather offered a serious obstacle to many people who gave up the idea of coming to town for fear of being caught in a storm. The committee in charge rejoiced, however, to see the clouds roll away, and the "day shine forth hot enough for anybody."

One thing marred the day's celebration. A number of "roughs" carried their exuberance "too

high" and were taken down to the "lock-up". Somehow they secured an iron bar and escaped. But they did not venture to "make themselves very numerous around town" during the remainder of the day. Those who returned the next morning were each fined five dollars and costs.

For the afternoon program the old soldiers provided the principal attraction, and "they acquitted themselves well". The very limited time for organization prevented them from being thoroughly drilled and caused the ranks to be rather thin. A number of veterans on the grounds had not formed companies and so did not participate. On the whole, however, the maneuvers were a complete success and everybody appeared to be pleased. The band did so well that their listeners "stood wrapped in admiration", while the glee club was repeatedly cheered, although they too had had little time for practice.

As a test of General Grant's popularity, some one in the crowd proposed three cheers for him. They were given with a vim, and some thought thrice three more would have been given had they been asked for. "Those were not partisan cheers, but the almost unanimous sentiments of the multitude", reported the *Ringgold Record*.

The main feature of the afternoon program for the thousands congregated in the public square

in the center of Mt. Ayr was the address of the day. The program committee had followed the second alternative suggested to them on the day of organization in June by having one of their own members deliver the patriotic oration.

Edward B. Heaton, a veteran of Company G of the Thirtieth Iowa Infantry and of the Eleventh Ohio Cavalry, was chosen as speaker. Perhaps there was no more versatile man in Ringgold County at that time than Heaton. In the first place he was county surveyor. Moreover, he was at various times a farmer, school teacher, preacher, writer, and singing master. This was the man whose speech that day was considered an "able effort" and "worthy of perusal".

The orator of the day began by addressing his fellow soldiers and citizens. "Once more have we gathered ourselves together to commemorate the birth of a great nation, the mightiest, as well as the one representative republic on the globe. Once again have we met to renew our vows of love and fealty to that flag, that, wherever it floats, is the emblem of liberty and equal rights, and the symbol of the most beneficent form of government known to man."

He thought it was not difficult to read in the eyes of the soldiers that day a deep love for their country — a love that had sustained them on

many a long, weary march; that had inspired them with courage to withstand the shock of conflict; that made them invincible to traitors; that saved to the world and to the descendants of American citizens a "glorious country one and indivisible".

The county surveyor stressed the fact that the gathering that day in Mt. Ayr was not only in honor of the soldiers, but "also to bequeath to the young who are fast taking our places that gift, that dower of patriotism in which is grounded the foundations and which guarantees the stability and perpetuity of our institutions. We fought in hope, we live in hope that when our summons comes to join the grand army on the other shore, our places shall be filled by worthy sons of sires who carried the stars and stripes, the blazonry of heaven, upon a hundred fields of victory."

Heaton then considered national affairs. "Thirteen Fourths of July have passed since we laid aside the bayonet and the sabre and resumed the implements of peace. Those years have beheld a national progress unequalled in the annals of the world. New States have sprung into life, other stars have beamed in the national firmament. The West and the East have joined together in bonds of iron, the North and the South are fraternizing in bonds of fellowship more enduring than ribs of steel. That 'I am an American citizen' is uttered

with pride and confidence" whether by a citizen of Georgia or of Minnesota. All these things had transpired in spite of the fact that "the close of great wars, especially of civil wars, have always been followed by years of great social and moral, as well as financial depression and demoralization."

Since many soldiers were present who had been members of regiments from Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, and other States, he did not address himself to Iowa veterans alone. "It would be invidious", he thought, to give precedence to any special group. "Blessed be an All-wise Providence, as our trials and hardships and privations were one and common to all, so the beneficent results are universal, and one common glory is the meed of all."

Heaton thought it was especially fitting to remember those who had died in action. Miller fell on the Yazoo. Conly slept at Helena. Others lay on various southern battlefields. "Shall they have died in vain? No! by all the blessed privileges that we enjoy. No! by all the hardships that we endured. By the hope and faith that we have in the immortality of our institutions, they shall not die, but live, and live, and each generation shall upon this birthday of our Liberties rise up and call them blessed."

The speech ended with a prophecy. "Our names will shine with the steady lustre of the men of the revolution", he predicted. "In the future, when your strength fails, your chair shall be lifted upon the platform so that the people may see the gray-haired veteran who did what he could to suppress the rebellion."

This completed the formal program of the celebration that afternoon. By sunset many of the people had returned to their homes. There were some "festive dancers", however, who held forth until midnight. "Thus passed the most successful celebration ever held in Mt. Ayr."

The Grand Rally was so popular that the veterans met the following week to form a more permanent organization and elect officers. John McFarland was chosen Colonel, I. W. Keller, Lieutenant Colonel, W. H. Alexander, Major, W. H. Struthers, Adjutant, and E. B. Heaton, Sergeant Major. A number of people expressed the hope that the "regiment" would attract all the old soldiers in the county. If the veteran militia could be organized in a proper manner, the State would furnish arms, and the next reunion would be an even greater success.

HOMER L. CALKIN

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857

Located at Iowa City Iowa

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

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

MEMBERSHIP

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

Address all Communications to

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Iowa City Iowa