

The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1936

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Iowa Newspaper Centennial

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THE EDITOR

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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

Superintendent

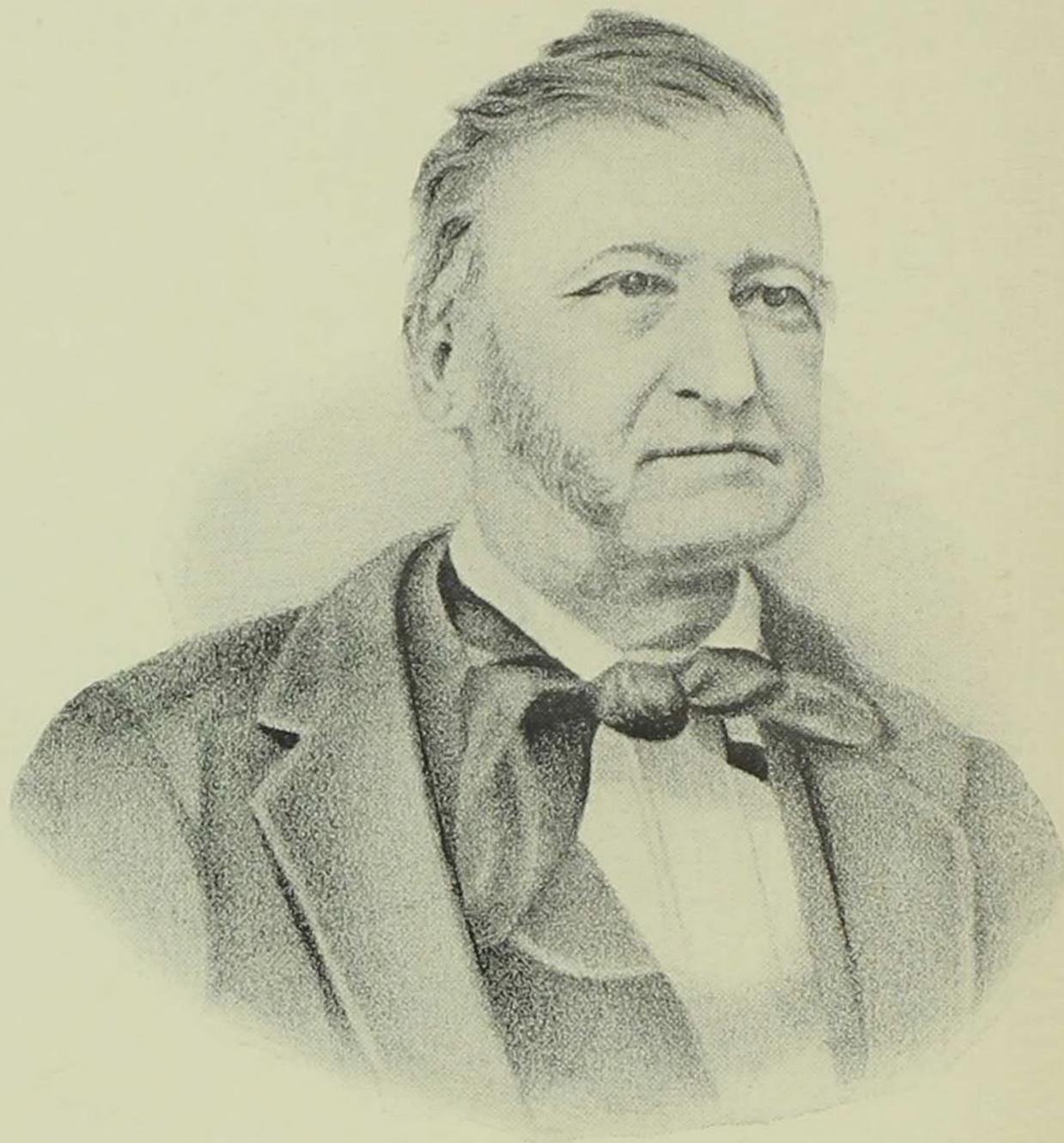
THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

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.

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John King.

THE PALIMPSEST

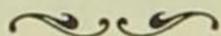
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Du Buque Visitor

A lone horseman was making his way slowly over the trackless prairies of northern Illinois. He was a strong, vigorous, alert young man of about thirty, and his course was ever westward toward the setting sun. Swimming streams and floundering through sloughs, John King was determined to seek his fortune in the newly-opened Black Hawk Purchase.

Born in Shepherdstown, Virginia, in 1803, King had moved to Chillicothe, Ohio, in 1829. Four years later the irresistible urge to "go west" obsessed him and he set out on horseback. In Illinois he found the squatters prostrated with fever and ague. Every cabin at which he stopped for the night had its shaking, moaning victims. Undaunted by this introduction to a new country, King urged his hosts to that better land of hog and hominy where the "shakes" were unknown. As he approached the Galena mineral region he sometimes traveled all day without seeing a person.

On September 11, 1833, John King reached the Mississippi opposite Dubuque and gazed with mingled hope and admiration at the tall timber-crowned bluffs before him. When he landed from the rough flat boat that served as a ferry, he had barely three dollars in his pocket. What he lacked in wealth he made up for in determination and soon he was mining for lead with his partner Alexander George on the "Bee Branch". He steadily rose in the esteem of his companions and it was not long before he was appointed chief justice of Dubuque County.

By the fall of 1835 Dubuque could boast of having a church, stores and taverns, saloons, and scores of log cabins. The rough mining community lacked one thing, however, to break the dull monotony of its drab existence. It had no newspaper. King felt the need of a newspaper, for all too often he had walked to Galena in order to secure a copy. He decided to satisfy that want.

Before the close of navigation in 1835 King set out to pick up a press and find a printer. On March 31, 1836, he drew up a contract with William Cary Jones of Chillicothe, Ohio, whereby he bound himself "to pay the said Wm. C. Jones the sum of three hundred and fifty dollars, fifty dollars of which to be in hand paid, and the balance in sums as they become due on demand; and fur-

ther, to provide the said Wm. C. Jones with suitable boarding and lodging during one year, from and after the 20th day of April proximo — in consideration that the said Wm. C. Jones do go to the town of Dubuque in Michigan territory, with the said John King, and there for the term of one year as aforesaid, do faithfully perform the duties of foreman in the printing office of the said John King, and likewise such other duties in superintending the publication of the newspaper as may be required.”

King next journeyed to Cincinnati where he bought a Smith hand press. Invented in 1822, this press was superior to any which had been used before. It had a cast iron frame but in place of the characteristic screw with levers of other early presses, Smith substituted a “toggle joint” that was at once simple and effective. King also purchased some plain type and enough material to issue a small weekly newspaper.

Back in Dubuque he and Jones set up their printing shop in a two-story log cabin twenty by twenty-five feet in dimensions, erected by Pascal Mallet in 1834 for a residence. While Jones busied himself at his work, King crossed over to Galena where he found a fellow Virginian, Andrew Keesecker, literally composing editorials with the printer’s stick. King prevailed upon

Keesecker to join in the venture and to Keesecker belongs the credit for setting the type and running the press for the first Iowa newspaper.

The first issue of the *Du Buque Visitor* appeared on May 11, 1836, at "Du Buque, (Lead Mines,) Wisconsin Territory". Its folio line read, "Truth Our Guide. The Public Good Our Aim". The paper was printed on an "Imperial sheet" which, folded once the narrow way, formed pages twenty by twenty-six inches in size. Each of the four pages carried six columns. Small as the paper was compared by modern standards, the "Visitor" was larger than the editors had anticipated. This fact, coupled with the high cost of wages and provisions, compelled them to set the subscription rate at three dollars a year in advance or four dollars if paid at the end of the year.

In the prospectus the editors promised to "cherish and advocate republican principles" and "encourage and foster such measures as will perpetuate our happy form of Government, and promote the best interests of the community". The paper was pledged to pursue an "impartial, independent, and honorable course" and to open its columns to "all Political Essays, if penned in the spirit of free inquiry." Foreign and domestic news would be printed and contributions were invited upon "moral, literary, and scientific sub-

jects". The cause of virtue would be preserved and the paper rendered "useful to the Farmer, Mechanic, Miner, and Merchant." Land sales in the western country would be given particular attention. It was the "sanguine belief" of the editors that such a paper would be "no indifferent acquisition to our honorable, respected, and enterprising fellow-citizens."

Eastern readers must have been impressed by the information that Dubuque was the "Capital of Du Buque County" and the prospective "Seat of Justice of the Territory of Wisconsin". The town was "handsomely situated" on the west bank of the Mississippi in the Black Hawk Purchase. Its "magic growth" was almost without a parallel. "Within three years", the prospectus declared, "this region was in possession of the wild, untutored savage. We now see the village containing near one thousand inhabitants; sixty Stores and Groceries; four Taverns; two Churches; a number of Mechanic Shops, Trading Establishments, &c." The soil was described as inferior to none, the climate temperate and salubrious. The pure atmosphere inspired "vigor and health, even in those who emigrate to the country debilitated by disease." Inexhaustible mineral resources destined Dubuque to "become a mighty city, and sit as Queen of the West."

Except for a gradually increasing proportion of advertising, the initial issue set the standard for subsequent numbers. A selection from Catherine Sedgwick's new novel, *The Linwoods*, a story of the Revolutionary War, filled more than three columns. From the *Utica Evangelical Advocate* the editors gleaned a two-column article by Reverend J. M. Austin on education. Small excerpts on "The Worth and Devotion of Woman's Love", "Religion", and "Ingratitude", filled the remainder of page one. From the first the editors did not hesitate to pirate material from other newspapers and periodicals. On August 3rd the "Visitor" admitted that its columns were "frequently enriched" by extracts in prose and verse from such magazines as the *Knickerbocker*, the *Zodiac*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Rural Repository*.

Page two contained a speech by George Wallace Jones on the Wisconsin Territorial bill and another by Zadoc Casey presenting a bill to create the office of Surveyor of public lands in Michigan Territory west of the Mississippi. Subscribers must have read with some pride that Senator John J. Crittenden, of the committee on public lands, had reported a bill for laying out Fort Madison, Burlington, Belleview, Dubuque, and Peru. A local bard who all too aptly signed himself "Poor Yorick" was responsible for an original song "To

Spring" written on a bleak day in the last of April. A column lecture on the formation of character, a report on the Indian wars in Florida, the burning of a negro at Saint Louis, and brief items regarding steamboat arrivals, the weather, mail routes, new lead discoveries, and the need of cattle, illustrate the varied interests of the editor. Unfortunately the local items were fragmentary in character.

Territorial, national, and foreign news could be found on the second page. The names of Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, and Santa Anna were familiar to subscribers to the "Visitor" as they read of the struggle for Texas independence. The preëmption law and the problem of public lands lay closer home than any others.

Almost five columns of the third page of the first "Visitor" were given to advertising. The bulk of this was local in character, though subsequent issues contained advertisements of Peru, Mineral Point, Galena, and Saint Louis merchants and professional men. E. Lockwood, Emerson & Crider, Wheeler and Loomis, George S. Nightingale, Quigley & Butterworth, Davis Gillilan, and O'Ferral & Cox were prominent advertisers. Philip C. Morhiser claimed to render general satisfaction as a house, sign, and ornamental painter.

C. H. Gratiot offered for sale dry goods, boots and shoes, silk and fur hats, Tuscan and straw

bonnets, guns, axes, shovels, spades, hay forks, rakes, bed cords, plough lines, manila rope, lump sugar, tin ware, and liquor. "The Cheapest Must Prevail", declared A. Levi, whose groceries and provisions, despite his nationality, included mess and prime pork. Baptiste Lapage sold all kinds of "Confectionery — Nuts, Oranges, Lemons, Raisins, Apples, Pies, Fruit, Crackers, and Wines" in his Main Street store. John M. David did expert tailoring. The medical profession was represented in the first issue by Dr. R. Murray, Horatio Newhall, and F. Andross.

The fourth page of the "Visitor" contained a poem on "The Dying Girl" and "The Excellency of Woman". Two variety articles, one on "Prairie Scenery", and the other on "Mountain Scenery", were followed by a rather long story about "The First Steamboat". Two-thirds of a column was devoted to laws against gambling and a like amount of space to a treatise on evil speaking. Briefer accounts were inserted on such subjects as newspapers, wives, and marriage.

Subsequent issues of the "Visitor" devoted ever increasing space to advertising. A charge of one dollar was made for a single insertion of a "square" or less. Each subsequent insertion cost fifty cents, while yearly advertisers were granted liberal discounts.

On June 15th the "Visitor" reached the sixth week of its existence and William C. Jones was taken into the firm as junior editor. No change in the policy of making the paper "strictly Wisconsin in its character" was contemplated. Its purposes were to "make known the great mineral resources of our infant territory, as far and as fast as they are developed; its soil, climate, and productions; its past and passing history, and future prospects; the doings of the general government in relation to it, and the acts of its own immediate public functionaries".

King and Jones proclaimed that a full, impartial, and authentic record of the first Territorial legislature would be reported. They pledged wholehearted support to Governor Henry Dodge but did not propose to meddle in national politics. "The hardy adventurers to this new country", they concluded, "have enough to do to take care of their own interests, without fighting the battles of the States. When we are permitted to participate in the Federal Government, and have a voice in electing those who administer her affairs, it will be time enough to engage in the disagreeable business of party strife."

King hoped to increase the size of the paper but this was never done. On August 3rd the editors announced that they had ordered a supply of

smaller type to allow the inclusion of a larger quantity of reading material and invited original articles from literary friends. "The present number", concluded an editorial bow, "completes the first quarter of the *Du Buque Visitor* — the first and only journal printed West of the Mississippi river and north of the state of Missouri. The editors embrace this occasion to tender their unfeigned thanks to the public for the liberal support extended to them; and to offer their assurances that their efforts to deserve patronage will not be abated."

A distinctive feature of the *Du Buque Visitor* was the number of men connected with its history during the brief span of its existence. William C. Jones relinquished his interest on August 31st and King promptly offered liberal wages to any journeyman printer of good moral habits who made immediate application. Jones found his political opinions adverse to a large majority of the inhabitants of Dubuque and could no longer "conceal or disguise his decided and strong antipathy" for the Jacksonian administration. Since King was decidedly friendly to the Democrats, his partner thought it only fair to resign and avoid any action which might be prejudicial to the newspaper.

John King continued the publication although his political course elicited many complaints from

the thousand subscribers. "It would be much easier", he wrote on October 19, 1836, "to turn the Mississippi, and make it flow from whence it came, or to shoulder an Egyptian Pyramid, than to please all, and he who is so silly as to attempt the latter, deserves to be tied in an Indiana swamp in mosquito time, and punctured to death by them." Financial problems were of more concern to King and on November 9, 1836, he informed those who owed him for job-work that a little "cash" was indispensable in order to sustain the "Visitor".

On December 21, 1836, King announced the sale of the "Visitor" to William W. Chapman, a native of Virginia who had arrived at Burlington in 1835 and opened a law office. Soon afterward Chapman was appointed prosecuting attorney by the Governor of Michigan Territory. The ownership of a newspaper was a powerful vehicle for any politically ambitious frontiersman and Chapman was not slow to take the "Visitor" when the opportunity was presented. He promised to avoid "personal altercation" and keep the paper free from everything savoring of "defamation or scurrility". He pledged himself to boost Dubuque and the Iowa District. Instead of maintaining the non-partisan attitude of his predecessor, Chapman flung his support to the "illustrious" Andrew

Jackson. His loyalty to the cause of democracy was soon rewarded by his appointment as attorney for the Territory of Wisconsin.

Not long after Chapman took his new office, the Dubuque "Visitor" fell into the hands of its third and last owner — William H. Turner. It continued under his editorship until May 17, 1837, when the first volume of fifty-two issues was completed. Thereupon the establishment was sold to William W. Coriell, John King, and John B. Russell. Apparently no issue was published the following Wednesday but on Saturday, June 3, 1837, the first issue of the *Iowa News* appeared.

Throughout its existence the "Visitor" was the only paper in the Black Hawk Purchase. The steady influx of settlers and the increase in business is attested by the number of advertisements which almost tripled in the space of one year. Although its subscribers and advertisers could hardly appreciate its contemporary importance, the old files (thirty-four issues in the library of the State Historical Department at Des Moines) constitute the most important single documentary source on Iowa history a hundred years ago.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

The First Five Years

"Where is the Wilderness that once was wide around thee!"

With this exclamation of prophetic optimism *The Western Adventurer and Herald of the Upper Mississippi* was presented on June 28, 1837, to the inhabitants of the little settlement at the head of the Des Moines Rapids. The potential subscription list could not have been long. According to the first issue, Fort Des Moines "has ceased to exist; the United States troops, formerly stationed here, have been ordered elsewhere by the Government". The Des Moines Land Company had taken possession of the fort and was busy planning a new town "to be called Montrose". It was in the office of the land company that publication of the newspaper was begun. Both in spirit and scope the title of this four-page, seven-column sheet was indicative of the hopes of Iowa pioneers, particularly the editors.

With nothing more than an old font of type, a hand press, partisan zeal, and irrepressible confidence, the early printers in Iowa boldly assumed the position of oracles and purveyors of news. They wrote vigorous editorials, clipped items from

other papers, mentioned a few local happenings, copied stories and poems from current books and magazines, gathered advertisements, and begged for subscriptions. In most instances the glowing prospects soon faded. Weeks when no paper appeared became more frequent. Hope flickered and went out. But the editor only gathered up his meager equipment, moved to another town, and began all over again.

During the decade between the publication of the first issue of the *Du Buque Visitor* on May 11, 1836, and the admission of Iowa into the Union on December 28, 1846, approximately two dozen newspapers were started. Ten of them still survived at the end of the Territorial period. They lived and died on politics. The agitation for statehood prompted the establishment of several papers, and public printing nurtured the organ of the dominant party at the capital. Though a few of the present Iowa newspapers trace their origin to Territorial times, most of the pioneer sheets were short lived.

The *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, the third paper to be published in Iowa, drew its life blood from the legislative proceedings of Wisconsin Territory. Founded at Belmont in 1836, it followed the government when the capital was moved to Burlington in 1837.

Some idea of the benefit of political patronage can be gathered from the item of \$2568.41 paid to the proprietors as printers for the first Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Wisconsin. James Clarke, the brilliant and aggressive editor, kept in political favor. Beneath the name plate of the "Gazette" after it was moved to Burlington appeared the line: "In this paper the Laws, Resolves, and Public Treaties of the United States are Published by authority." Clarke became Secretary of Iowa Territory in 1839 and in 1845 he was appointed Governor.

If the *Iowa News*, which was first issued on June 3, 1837, is considered the direct successor of the *Du Buque Visitor* with only the name and volume number changed, then only two new papers were started in Iowa in 1837. The following year witnessed the beginning of two more. James G. Edwards bought the press and type of the Montrose "Western Adventurer", whose bold exploit in frontier journalism had already ended in disaster, and started the *Fort Madison Patriot* on March 24, 1838. But the "Patriot" lived only five months. At the behest of zealous Whigs, Editor Edwards moved his press and type to Burlington, the capital, and began publishing the *Iowa Patriot* on June 6, 1839. Three months later the name was changed to *Hawk-Eye and Iowa*

Patriot. The "Iowa Patriot" part was dropped on October 17, 1839.

With a sweeping bow the *Iowa Sun and Davenport and Rock Island News* appeared upon the scene of Iowa journalism on August 4, 1838. It was the first to be printed in Davenport and the fifth in the Territory. "Like the Sun which distributes light and heat over the beautiful prairies of Iowa on a broad and liberal and impartial scale," announced Editor A. Logan with ecstatic gusto, "Our paper (observing this instructive economy of Nature) will cast its rays over the moral and political landscape, regardless of those petty interests and local considerations which might contract its beams."

Whatever else it lacked, the "Sun and News" was not deficient in ambition. For four years it disseminated orthodox Democratic doctrine, extending its influence as far west as the capital at Iowa City. At last, however, the editor gave heed to his motto: "And Man Went Forth to Till the Ground". Having decided to forsake the pen and follow the plow, Logan allowed the "Sun" to set. His equipment was sold to some Mormons who started a paper at Buffalo a few miles down the river. They called it *The Bride and the Lamb's Wife*, a title that was later changed to the *Buffalo Ensign*.

The year 1839 was unproductive of new papers. In 1840, however, two more weekly journals were started, both at Bloomington (Muscatine) and within four days of each other. With an eye to the future, *The Iowa Standard* was "printed and published simultaneously at Bloomington and Iowa City", the first issue appearing on October 23, 1840. Early in June, 1841, Editor William Crum moved his paper to Iowa City, increased the size to six columns, and changed the name to *Iowa City Standard*. By that time the Whigs were in control and Crum was soon able to announce that his paper was authorized to publish the laws.

The *Bloomington Herald* was born on October 27, 1840, in a wretched cabin no better than a stable. In those humble surroundings the progenitor of the present Muscatine "Journal" began publication. Though the birth of the paper may have been inauspicious, good fortune smiled upon it, particularly in the character of its foster parents. When the "Herald" had just passed its sixth anniversary with a circulation of about 500, a thirteen-year-old apprentice boy came to work in the shop for his board and clothes. Five years later, that boy became the editor and for half a century he, John Mahin, made his newspaper a vital force in the community it served.

During the first five years of the history of jour-

nalism in Iowa, eight newspapers were established. The first was at Dubuque, the second at Montrose, the third at Burlington, the fourth at Fort Madison, the fifth at Davenport, the sixth at Burlington, and the seventh and eighth at Bloomington. Six of them still survived at the beginning of 1841. The second half of the Territorial decade witnessed the origin of newspapers at Iowa City, Keosauqua, and Keokuk; another attempt at Fort Madison; and the rise of competitors in the other towns.

In the yellowing pages of these old papers the story of the creation of the Commonwealth of Iowa can be traced. The files are alive with political events; the blazing of westward trails; the origin of commercial enterprises; the development of transportation facilities; the initiation of cultural activities; and the controversies over such moral questions as slavery and temperance. In the life of the Territory the newspapers played a conspicuous part.

Editors had troubles aplenty. Winter blizzards whistled through the chinks of log cabins, filling type cases with snow and freezing the printer's fingers. Summer droughts, spring floods, and delinquent accounts delayed shipments of paper from Saint Louis. In such emergencies the day of publication was postponed: sometimes a week

was skipped altogether. Sudden changes in the size and shape of the sheet might be due to a fresh supply of paper as well as new management.

So-called subscribers seem to have been frozen assets. When ardent appeals for cash failed to thaw them, the editor offered to accept almost anything — wood, grain, barrels, lumber, poultry, butter, eggs, or old clothes. Democrats were as poor pay as Whigs.

Advertising began to increase about 1841. Dry goods stores used newspaper space to help sell their bonnets and worsteds. Patent medicine advertisements, telling of nostrums to cure every imaginable human ailment, kept the wolf from more than one publisher's door. In some instances such ads provided the chief source of revenue.

When snow, drifting high in the roads, kept the stagecoach from bringing in the weekly exchanges, the editors apologized for their lack of national news and substituted some literary bit such as "The Truant Beau, Caught and Caged". Apparently local items were held in low esteem. Very little space was devoted to them. The announcement that a cow had given "birth to three heifer calves"; the arrest of a woman "who stole a bolt of ribbon from I. Myler"; and even a \$10,000 damage suit, in which a "fair one sued for heart-ache sustained by a gentleman's refusal to marry

her", were relegated to page three, whereas page one was filled with clippings and the business cards of lawyers, doctors, dentists, and land agents.

Gradually, however, the emphasis shifted from borrowed stories to current happenings of the countryside. Social activities, conventions of temperance advocates, and the public quarrels of rival editors occupied more and more space. With this growing independence of exchanges, the influence and vitality of the pioneer newspapers increased. Several came of age before the war.

As the years passed, the press grew in political power. Editors were appointed postmasters. Money was actually paid for subscriptions and the number of hams proffered in lieu of currency decreased. The print shops acquired fresh paint and new doors, and steam presses replaced the temperamental makeshifts operated by hand. The itinerant printer with his "shirt-tail full of type" became more settled in his ways and more permanent in his residence. One by one the younger brothers (certainly the pioneer newspapers had no feminine characteristics) of the old *Du Buque Visitor* grew to startling proportions until in size, appearance, and advertising they little resembled their humble predecessor.

VELMA CRITZ STOUT

Some Prominent Editors

"Let us only suffer any person to tell his story, morning and evening, but for a twelvemonth, and he will become our master", wrote Edmund Burke concerning the influence of journalists on public opinion. If newspapers were powerful factors in formulating public opinion during the American and French revolutions, Iowa editors have been no less influential in our crises. Prior to the Civil War, editors were not only bitterly partisan in their politics, but they frequently became the self-appointed protagonists of a score of social, religious, and educational ideas.

At least three men among the early journalists of Iowa served their constituents faithfully and well, without making political preferment their principal object. One of these, James G. Edwards, founded the *Fort Madison Patriot*, which was the first Whig paper in Iowa. It was Edwards who suggested that residents of the new Territory adopt the cognomen "Hawk-Eyes" as suggested by David Rorer. Later he moved to Burlington where he established the Burlington "Hawk-Eye". For twelve years Edwards continued his strenuous editorial life in Burlington, dying

of cholera in 1851 before he had attained the age of fifty. Just before his death Edwards declared: "We do not say that a political editor can not be useful, as such, but we do say that he can not be as much as the one who has not the prejudice of party opposition to contend with".

Another notable pioneer journalist was Alfred Sanders who came from Ohio to Davenport in 1841 and established the *Davenport Gazette*, a weekly Whig newspaper. For more than twenty years his paper was one of the "most potential forces" in the growth of Davenport and Iowa. The size of the nine-column page was enormous — large enough to "accommodate the Mississippi River that flowed under its nameplate." Publication of a tri-weekly edition began on September 3, 1853, and the first daily appeared about a year later. Addison H. Sanders, brother of Alfred, became editor of the *Daily Davenport Gazette* in October, 1856. It is said that no newspaper in Iowa had a wider influence.

Few men have wielded greater power than John Mahin of Muscatine who entered the printers' trade in 1847. Five years later he became editor of the Muscatine "Journal", a position he held, with a few short intermissions, for fifty years. A firm, unflinching advocate of temperance, Mahin was one of the most fearless and uncompromising

foes of saloons. His house was dynamited by conspirators of the liquor interests, but such violence did not silence his criticism of the liquor scofflaws.

"RET" CLARKSON

Most prominent among Iowa editors after the Civil War were James S. Clarkson and Richard P. Clarkson. Born in Indiana, the Clarksons came to Iowa in 1855 with their father, Coker F. Clarkson. Following the war, James and his brother Richard drifted to Des Moines where they found employment on the *Iowa State Register*, Richard as a typesetter and James as a reporter. In 1870 the Clarksons with their father bought the "Register" and made it a great State paper. James S. Clarkson, or "Ret" as he was familiarly known, had a reputation for being able to write three-fourths of the paper in one evening. He wrote with a pencil, furnishing an almost interminable amount of copy.

"Ret" Clarkson attracted State-wide attention in 1872 when he bitterly attacked Senator James Harlan. This unjust criticism resulted in the election of William B. Allison to the Senate. From that time on Clarkson was in control of State politics. But there were two men whom he could not manage — Senator Allison and Governor John H. Gear. He dominated some of the lesser papers,

which allowed him to do their thinking in return for State printing, post offices, and similar favors. The legislators subscribed for many copies of the "Register" to send to their constituents at public expense. Always active in Republican campaigns, "Ret" was rewarded in 1889 with the position of First Assistant Postmaster General, in control of the appointment of thousands of postmasters. He sold his interest in the "Register" to his brother and dropped out of Iowa journalism.

GEORGE DOUGLAS PERKINS

High among the pioneer editors stands George D. Perkins who, during forty-five years, made *The Sioux City Journal* one of the best papers in the State. Though a conservative in politics, he was unusually progressive in journalism. Among the Iowa "firsts" claimed by the "Journal" are: the first perfecting press in the State, the first photo-engraving plant, the first linotype machine, the first newspaper employing a cartoonist, the first Monday morning edition, the first newspaper publishing morning and evening editions.

Perkins was a rigorous taskmaster, severe in all his requirements. He had always been obliged to work hard and he made everybody in the office work hard. He read the "Journal" carefully every morning and evening: not the slightest er-

ror escaped his vigilant eyes. He had an aversion to upper-case style in newspaper printing. Once he is said to have stalked out of his office roaring, "I want it distinctly understood that nothing is to be capitalized in this paper except God and George D. Perkins!" Nevertheless, his insistence upon high standards made the "Journal" a splendid training school for journalists.

In 1890, Perkins was elected Representative in Congress from the eleventh Iowa district. From 1891 to 1899 he spent practically all of his time in Washington but he regarded this merely as a leave of absence and was glad to get back to journalism. His experience in Washington gave him a wider knowledge of national and international problems. When he returned to his editorial desk, he wrote with unsurpassed clarity and confidence. Having earned a reputation for sound judgment, keen insight, and absolute integrity, he exerted a profound influence upon public opinion through his editorials and lay sermons.

His employees, says A. F. Allen, "cherish with pride the recollection of his eminence in statesmanship and his achievements in journalism, but they esteem him more as a friend, and the recollection most highly prized concerns their daily contact with him in the labor of making the newspaper. It was in that contact that his fellow workers not

only learned to know him, but also to respect, admire and love him."

DAVID BRANT

Still another pioneer editor was David Brant, who has been described as the "standpatter of the standpats". Contemptuous of reformers, he exposed their weaknesses mercilessly, for he was a masterly editorial writer. His approach to politics was that of a critic, not an office seeker. He was not selfish enough to make a good politician, nor for that matter, to make a good business man.

"The personal element in politics counted tremendously with my father", explained his son Irving. "He hated a trimmer or a hypocrite with all his heart, and an aristocratic manner stirred his wrath. A cold personality chilled him. The result of this was that he was more inclined to test an issue by the personality of the man involved than by impersonal consideration of the issue itself. Often, to my mind, he went wrong on issues; he seldom went wrong on men, except to praise those he liked. He had a great faculty for making friends and a keen memory of names. Once when asked for a list of voters along a Linn County highway, he recited off hand the names of every farmer on the road."

David Brant began to attend political conven-

tions in 1875. He served in the press gallery at Des Moines, representing the Cedar Rapids "Gazette", Sioux City "Tribune", Muscatine "Journal", and Chicago "Record". Next he published the Walker "News" for seven years and for five years was city editor of the Cedar Rapids "Gazette". He was elected to the Twenty-sixth General Assembly and served through the regular session and the code-revision session in 1897. Too plain spoken to please the railroad bosses, he was defeated for re-election. After editing the Clinton "Herald" for three years he bought the Iowa City "Republican" in 1901 and published it for eighteen years, until his death in 1919.

SAMUEL MERCER CLARK

Newspaper men during the three decades from 1870 to 1900 will agree that "Sam Clark", editor of the Keokuk "Gate City" for thirty years, was one of the first-magnitude stars in the galaxy of those who have glorified the editorial pages of Iowa newspapers. Some of them have publicly recorded that he was the most brilliant of them all. He wrote at a time when the editorial page was at its zenith. It was highly charged with the personality of the editor, and commanded the highest respect of the readers.

Clark made the most of his opportunity. Read-

ers of the "Gate City" would not make up their minds about any question until they had read what he had to say about it. The inexorable honesty of nature thrilled him as a boy and made him despise deception all the remainder of his life. Hours spent alone out of doors taught him to think clearly and profoundly and helped him to attain a serene philosophy.

In June, 1864, he was admitted to the bar, but it was manna to his soul when, less than a week after his admission, James B. Howell offered him the associate editorship of the "Gate City". Soon he became the editor. Able and always interested in the discussion of politics, economics, education, science, art, poetry, philosophy, and mythology, he made his page a banquet of food for the mind. He was bold, original, and independent in his thinking. Some of his editorial admirers called him the master stylist of the Iowa press. Many of his sentences were vividly beautiful. At least one young editorial writer during those years used to think that he would gladly give five years of his life to be able to think and write like Sam Clark.

ALBERT WINFIELD SWALM

Among the best known editors in Iowa a generation ago, says David C. Mott, was Albert Winfield Swalm. "For twenty years no im-

portant gathering of Iowa people seemed quite complete without the colorful figure of Al Swalm." In an interview he explained, "You see I belonged to the pre-historic period. To prove this I have only to tell you that when first I worked in a printing office down at Oskaloosa, it was part of my regular duty to mould the candles with which the office was lighted. The office couldn't afford illuminating oil in those days."

On returning from the war, Swalm secured a position as printer with the "Iowa Visitor" at Indianola. His pay at first was four dollars a week and board. "Ret" Clarkson of the Des Moines "Register" was attracted by the free, easy, and racy style of his writing, with the result that Swalm accepted Clarkson's offer of the position as city reporter on the "Register". When Clarkson advanced to the editorship of the paper, Swalm became city editor.

At the age of twenty-four, he started the Grand Junction "Head-Light" in Greene County. The town was three months old and had three hundred inhabitants. Only about one-fourth of the four-page, eight-column, hand-printed sheet was filled with advertising. A year or so later he was found working on the Jefferson "Bee".

In October, 1872, he and Miss Pauline Given of Des Moines were married. They purchased the

Fort Dodge "Messenger" in 1874 and edited it for four years. Having spent two years in Europe, they returned to Iowa, bought the Oskaloosa "Herald" in 1881, and published it until 1897 when Mr. Swalm became consul at Montevideo, Uruguay. In 1903 he was sent to the consulate at Southampton, England. Failing health led to his transfer to the consulate at Hamilton, Bermuda, in 1919. There he died three years later.

Al Swalm was a genial, cheerful man with a boyishness that clung to him until late in life. His was a picturesque personality; a little over six feet tall, slender, dark, and with straight black hair worn to his shoulders, which helped give him a peculiar appearance. He was often mistaken by strangers for an American Indian. In his newspaper career, says Mr. Mott, he was "a mingling of the editor and the politician, a brilliant paragrapher, a pungent and original writer, a strong partisan, and an intense patriot and a lovable man."

FRED J. LAZELL

Comment by the Editor

MASTER EDITORS

The ethics of the racketeer seems to be prevalent. Too many people measure character in terms of financial success or Machiavellian principles of expediency. The popular test appears to be not whether a man is honest and decent, but whether he has escaped being caught at disgraceful conduct. Threats of the gangster are akin to pressure politics and manipulation of markets. Private gain at any price seems to be the prevailing attitude.

If civilization is to survive, idealism and merit must be held in high esteem. Monuments are erected for services rendered, not for profits made. As long as a man is not without honor for unselfish work among his neighbors, wisdom and virtue will triumph over cunning and deceit.

In recognition of worthy living and in contrast to the ethical standards of the racketeer, the Iowa Press Association in April, 1932, awarded the title of Master Editor-Publisher to Joseph W. Grawe of Waverly, Harvey Ingham of Des Moines, and Elmer E. Taylor of Traer. A committee of five judges, after careful investigation, reported that each of these veterans of Iowa journalism, having

“worked hard, lived honorably, thought soundly, and influenced unselfishly,” was entitled to the “highest honors in his profession.”

Each year men who have long maintained high achievement in editing and managing their newspapers and have shown “superior worth in their relationships to family, community and state” are honored with the title of Master Editor-Publisher. In 1933, E. P. Adler of Davenport, W. G. Ray of Grinnell, and Ed. M. Smith of Winterset were named; in 1934 the distinction was awarded to Grant L. Caswell of Des Moines, William C. Jarnagin of Storm Lake, F. A. Moscrip of Marshalltown, and William P. Wortman of Malvern; and in 1935 the roll of honor was lengthened by the addition of M. A. Aasgaard of Lake Mills and John C. Hartman of Waterloo. Through the generosity of Grant L. Caswell, the managing director of the Iowa Press Association, a silver plaque is presented to each Master Editor-Publisher.

This is the centennial anniversary of journalism in Iowa. For a hundred years the newspapers have chronicled the times and guided public opinion. The Commonwealth owes deep gratitude to the men who have had the courage and ability to develop traditions of responsible leadership.

J. E. B.

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