

The PALIMPSEST

JULY 1935

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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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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Chinch Bugs Rampant

Will you come into my parlor?
Said the spider to the fly.
'Tis the prettiest little parlor
That ever you did spy.

Bugs seldom achieve renown in verse. As yet no maker of rhyme, no teller of tales, has arisen to describe in dramatic fashion the habits and peculiarities, the hiding places and modes of travel employed by that little but mighty creature so widely known as the chinch bug. Yet, in reality, chinch bugs are more destructive than spiders and more numerous than flies.

Chinch bugs are of relatively recent origin. They first appeared in the wheat fields of North Carolina a hundred and fifty years ago. Being thrifty pioneers, they came westward with the early settlers — always flourishing when food and climatic conditions were favorable. They came in destructive numbers to Missouri in 1839 and to Illinois in 1840. Their invasion of Iowa in 1846,

simultaneously with the coming of the Mormons, gave them the local appellation of "mormon lice".

The chinch bug is a voracious insect which feeds entirely upon the sap of green succulent plants belonging to the grass family. Barley, oats, wheat, rye, millet, corn, and sorghum cane are the principal crops attacked. The insect will also eat timothy, Kafir-corn, blue-grass, foxtail, and many forage and wild grasses. Alfalfa, clovers, soybeans, cowpeas, sweet clover, and other soil-building legumes, however, are immune. Flax, buckwheat, rape, beets, melons, and potatoes are also free from attacks.

These pestilent little insects are quick maturing creatures. Hatched during the spring or summer months, they are adults in a few weeks. When winter comes they seek secluded grassy places in which to hibernate. Clump-forming grasses are much preferred, as they offer the best protection from the winter's cold. In regions where such grasses are prevalent, the bugs congregate in masses between the stems and in the upper turf layer and soil about the crowns of these plants. A single plant stool sometimes conceals as many as 30,000 bugs — the original "grass roots convention". They become as crowded, it would seem, as was the old lady and her children in the shoe. Where bunch grasses are scarce, the insects

may winter in timothy stubble, blue-grass, or sedges. Frequently they take their long winter nap beneath the loose bark of dead trees, under leaves, sticks, or other debris in grassy areas along fence rows, hedges, ditches, and the borders of woodlands.

With the advent of warm weather the bugs begin to move from their hibernation quarters. They swarm out into the sun and start looking for food. Presently the innumerable host moves into the small grain and grass fields nearby. The rapidity of this movement is influenced by the prevailing weather. A few sunny days with the temperature above 70° will find many bugs in flight. About three weeks later the female insects begin to lay their eggs, and what prolific layers they are! Within a few weeks a single insect will deposit at least 200 eggs. Ten days after the egg deposition, tiny bright reddish nymphs emerge and begin to feed upon succulent cereal or other grass plants. Thus a regiment of a thousand chinch bugs may in a few weeks develop into an invading army a hundred thousand strong. Rapidly these insects pass through five stages of development each time casting off their old coat for a new and larger one of a darker hue. In the final stage they are equipped with wings, and then for the first time they are able to fly as the parent did.

But more. Chinch bugs produce two and sometimes three generations in a single year. One writer explains the rapid process of multiplication by saying that if two thousand insects are left in a field, "the females will at a low estimate produce a family of two hundred each; say half are males; the first product is two hundred thousand; the second product the same year is twenty millions; and the third two thousand millions".

Chinch bug infestations have been frequent in Iowa since 1846. While Union and Confederate armies were fighting at Bull Run in July, 1861, chinch bugs were devouring crops in southeastern Iowa. One farmer tried to protect his corn by "pouring boiling water over every hill in the first row just as the bugs entered the field". In 1871 twenty-one counties in southern Iowa reported that spring wheat was almost a failure because of chinch bugs. Many fields in Washington, Appanoose, Monroe, Montgomery, and Madison counties were plowed up and replanted to other crops. Indeed, none of the counties of southern Iowa entirely escaped the ravages of chinch bugs. In Appanoose County alone losses were estimated at \$50,000. Two years later and again in 1879 similar losses were reported in southern Iowa.

The greatest damages were incurred, however, in 1887 and 1934, in each of which years there

was an estimated loss of more than \$25,000,000. Both seasons were unusually dry and had been preceded by conditions most favorable for the propagation of the bugs. Only ten counties in northwest Iowa escaped the ravages of the pest in 1887, while in 1934, though not as wide-spread, the infestation was even more destructive. Farmers took heroic measures to protect their crops, but in each instance rainy weather in the following year was their most effective ally.

During the years between epidemics, chinch bugs have not been entirely absent, but natural enemies have kept them in control. Periodically, however, they devastate the fields and will continue to do so when conditions are favorable.

How to stop an invasion by chinch bugs is a matter of much concern even in this age of scientific farming. But fifty years ago much less was known of methods to combat these evils. When the infestation of 1887 was at its height farmers were at a loss to know which way to turn or what to do. In July of that year a correspondent of the *Iowa State Register* said: "I see some correspondents and county papers are commenting upon the 'chintz' bug. I never expect to be over-burdened with 'chintz', but we have a surplus of chinch and would like some information about them and what we may expect from them in the future. They

have destroyed a good share of the wheat during the last week and now they are beginning on oats and corn. If there had been no wheat sown would there have been so many bugs? How do they live over winter, and how do they get into the wheat first of any thing? What would have been the effect of Paris green if it had been sprinkled on before the wheat headed? Would the rains have washed it off so that the straw would be safe for fodder?" The Agricultural Editor replied in a brief note saying that he had given out all the information that he had relative to chinch bugs, and invited other correspondents to answer the above questions.

Early in August, 1887, an extensive article appeared in the *Iowa State Press* which discussed the number and appearance of chinch bugs, the damages done by the insect, its natural enemies, the effect of weather upon it, and modes of artificial extermination. It was suggested even at that early time that much might be accomplished by the burning of rubbish, early plowing and rolling the fields, the use of coal tar and coal oil emulsion. The writer did not go so far, however, as to suggest the use of Paris green, and it was said that "in a favorable chinch bug season man is to a great extent powerless to stop the destructive ravages of the advancing millions of these diminu-

tive crop enemies". The weather, it was said, was one of the chief determining factors.

In more recent years much improvement has been made in the method of fighting chinch bugs. Yet the fact remains that the weather is the most significant factor. In a bulletin recently published by the Iowa State College, it is said: "The insect is very susceptible to weather conditions during the egg-laying and hatching periods. Dry, hot weather from the latter part of April to early June and the forepart of July to September is very favorable to the young stages; in contrast, heavy, driving rains during these periods destroy many eggs and newly hatched nymphs." Extremely cold weather or even an inundation of the plant on which the insect is hibernating will not, however, necessarily destroy the adult bug. Heavy rains in June, 1935, probably did more to alleviate the chinch-bug menace in Iowa than all human efforts.

Modern artificial barriers against the advance of chinch bugs are of various types. Dust furrows along corn fields have long been employed. Chemical barriers, however, are much more effective. In preparation for a chemical barrier, a furrow is plowed along the edge of the field, throwing the dirt toward the corn. The soil is then thoroughly pulverized, smoothed, and packed.

Crude creosote or oil is poured in a straight line about three-fourths of an inch wide on the smooth compact surface along the brow of the ridge. The barrier may be made more effective by building "paper fences" — strips of creosote-soaked paper being placed along the furrow. Post holes dug at frequent intervals along the furrow aid in trapping the bugs. But whatever plan may be used the task of eradication is an enormous one.

In the summer of 1934 chinch bugs infested southeastern Iowa in the greatest numbers ever known in the history of the State. Farmers seemed helpless in preventing the advance of bugs. Government aid was called for, and Civilian Conservation Corps units were sent into the infested area to combat the insects. On June 23rd two companies of CCC recruits were ordered "to open trench warfare immediately against the chinch bug army along the Keokuk county battle line". Two hundred carloads of creosote had been ordered to the front. "The battle", it was said, "will be waged furiously because in two or three weeks the pests will sprout wings making the fight more difficult". As in other warfare, tents were pitched, farm homes were converted into barracks, and enormous casualties were inflicted upon the enemy.

In other Iowa localities and in various parts of

the United States similar emergency measures were adopted to combat the insects. Indeed, it has been said that "thousands of men dug millions of rods of furrows, poured millions of gallons of oil in thousands of miles of barriers and even fired grain-fields in a desperate fight against the chinch bugs". But despite this, millions of dollars of damage was done to the crops.

The food supply for the insects is a matter of major importance. The bugs are apt to appear first in wheat or barley fields, from which they may migrate into fields of oats or corn. Thus it has frequently been suggested that if there were no wheat, the insects would be much less likely to develop, and the growing of wheat has sometimes been abandoned in accordance with this theory. If there is merit in this method of procedure, however, care should be taken to substitute, not oats or corn, but clover, alfalfa, or some other crop which is immune from attack. A correspondent some years ago noted that farmers frequently planted their crops in such a manner as to be most advantageous to bugs.

"It would be amusing if it were not so pathetic", he said, "to read the many letters I get, something in this wise: 'I planted wheat on sod land, the chinch bugs destroyed it so badly that in February I plowed it up and sowed oats, this, too went

the same way; I then planted corn, and when it was a foot high the little bugs came by the millions and destroyed that; I then planted the land to Kafir corn, and that will be ruined if you can not help me.' What could I do for such a man? Had the bugs laid out a programme for their daily sustenance, no better commissary-general could have been obtained for them."

Another writer a little more facetious than the rest offered directions for the propagation of chinch bugs. "The best way to raise chinch-bugs", he said, "is to take the improved stalk-cutter and cut your corn-stalks, sow the land to wheat; and the second best plan is to sow it to oats, and in both cases to simply plow in your grain with a cultivator. This plan leaves most of the corn-stalks partly exposed, with the butt of the old blades just in the right position to shelter the eggs and young bugs from the wet weather".

This writer is obviously suggesting that slothful and careless farming propagates chinch bugs, while careful management and diligence does much to retard them. Withal, however, bugs are bugs and when food is readily available and climatic conditions are favorable it is difficult indeed to exterminate them.

J. A. SWISHER

The Iowa Pioneer Phalanx

History sometimes weaves strange patterns, bringing into harmony colored threads from many lands and times. A liberty-loving Frenchman, for example, fathered the thought which developed into a socialistic community upon the Iowa frontier. Flourishing for a time in the hope that all men might find happiness and economic security, the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx, situated on the Des Moines River about nine miles southwest of Oskaloosa, failed because the ambitions of its founders were destroyed by individual greed and lust for personal gain. The narrative begins in a handsome Parisian study and ends in an abandoned Iowa grist-mill.

On a spring morning in 1832 an American student, young, gay, and yet introspective, met for the first time François Marie Charles Fourier, about whom all intellectual Paris was talking. Albert Brisbane had heard of Fourier's social theories, and he was anxious to know this new philosopher who "combined exuberant imagination, boundless optimism, and senseless vanity with acute intelligence, a gift of penetrating observation, and great courage." Originally a humble

shop assistant and then a small merchant, Fourier early learned the discipline imposed by poverty upon the middle classes. Privilege, he already knew, flowed naturally from power. And capital always spelled both power and privilege.

Brisbane, before going to Fourier's office, had read the volumes which for a time were to alter Europe's intellectual pattern and were to serve as source books in the good life for many Americans. *Traité de l'Association Domestique Agricole au Attraction Industrielle* and *Le Nouveau Monde, Industriel et Sociétaire*, together with the *Fragments* and *The Passions of the Human Soul* were books read and thumbed, not only by the French nobility, but also by American reformers. And Fourier himself flamed in both the Old World and the New as a prophet and social messiah.

The man who greeted Brisbane that May morning and who became the household god of the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx was sixty years of age. "Fourier had a large gray eye," wrote the young student, "the pupil of which was so small that it seemed a mere pin-point. This gave great intensity to his look. The nose was rather aquiline, and the corners of the large mouth curved downward — the lion mouth. This, with a strong, firm chin, completed a fixed, abstract, settled expression of countenance. The head was remarkably round,

almost a sphere; the brow large, slightly retreating, formed a regular arch. The *ensemble* of the face expressed great intensity; and I may remark here that during the subsequent three years of my association with Fourier, I never saw him smile."

When Brisbane returned to the United States to share in the many curious social experiments of the fabulous forties, he introduced and sponsored the principles of Fourierism. The genial and gullible Horace Greeley, editor of the *New York Tribune*, himself conditioned by poverty, found in this new social and economic philosophy what he thought to be the panacea for national ills. Greeley, believing "society, as we find it, is organized rapacity," opened the columns of the *Tribune* in 1842 to Fourierism. Brisbane edited a daily column devoted to singing the praises of his French master. The result was startling.

Fourieristic societies, known as phalanxes, sprang up along the eastern coastal plain and almost immediately began to penetrate the States of the Old Northwest. The Alphadelphia Phalanx in Michigan, the Integral and Sangamon phalanxes of Illinois, and the Prairie Home Community of Ohio — these were among the more important western experiments in community living. Before the movement ran its course, about thirty-four settlements had been founded in ten States.

Over eight thousand persons, it was estimated, had subscribed to the philosophy. They had carved from the great public domain nearly forty-five thousand acres of land.

The Iowa experiment had its genesis in Watertown, New York. There the Fourier Association of Jefferson County made definite plans to emigrate to the Territory of Iowa in the spring of 1843. About three hundred persons, said *Niles' Register*, "will emigrate to the southern part of Iowa on the 7th of April next, the birthday of Fourier. They have recently commenced a paper at Watertown, called the 'Iowa Pioneer Phalanx.' They have sent an agent to Europe to induce people to join them."

Time, unfortunately, has erased many significant facts pertaining to the movement of the Watertown group from New York to the Iowa frontier. That men and women, bound by a written agreement to abide by Fourieristic principles, did come is certain. If they followed the logical route from Watertown to the Des Moines country they probably loaded children, supplies, and prized possessions upon an Ontario steamboat, and made the slow, but comparatively easy journey, through the Great Lakes to straggling Chicago. In this frontier town, "sitting upon the shores of the lake in wretched dishabille," the im-

migrants may have rested before beginning the long trek overland to the Mississippi. Then, too, it was necessary to outfit and lay in supplies for the prairie journey. Coffee, bacon, powder, and shot — these were frontier necessities. Sharp axes and awkward ploughs were included also, as were lengths of rope and extra leather for harness and shoes.

Sometime during the summer of 1843 the group moved out across the rich Illinois prairies. Crossing the Mississippi, perhaps at Burlington, the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx angled through the Des Moines River bottoms until it reached what was soon to become Mahaska County. About nine miles from Oskaloosa, near a bend in the river, the party found an ideal mill-site. Close by stood the small cabin of Dr. E. A. Boyer, himself a newcomer to that region. Although Dr. Boyer may have been interested in Fourier's social philosophy, he was not a member of the Watertown contingent.

Along the banks of the Des Moines the group, assisted by Dr. Boyer, made claim to about three hundred and twenty acres of fertile lands in Sections 27, 28, and 33 of what was later to be Scott Township. This country, except in high water, was ideal farming, grazing, and hunting land. Willows, cottonwoods, elms, sycamores, and the

black and burr oak afforded the socialists shade and logs for cabin and fireplace. Black walnut was abundant. Bee trees, as large as a hollow flour barrel, treasured honey-comb which bees had filched from prairie flowers.

"The fine bodies of timber on the river bluffs and bottom-land, and fringing the Des Moines," exclaimed a settler, "with the adjoining stretches of undulating prairies, were bedecked in spring-time with the richest and choicest wild flowers, in all their native beauty. The Des Moines River, with its sloping banks covered with grass down to its clear-as-crystal waters, flowing smoothly over its fine bed of gravel, full of numerous fish of various kinds, innumerable birds and water-fowls, including swans, pelicans, wild geese, black loons, and ducks of many different kinds, floating leisurely on the water, or resting on the numerous sandbars projecting out into the river. Deer, wild turkey, squirrels, pigeons, pheasants, and wolves were plentiful."

No sooner had the settlers squatted upon their half-section than they began to build substantial log cabins, to put in a late crop, and to hunt otters, wolves, raccoons, wildcats, mink, muskrats, and a few beavers. Dr. Boyer shot ninety-three wolves during the first winter the Fourierists were in Iowa.

With homes constructed, crops planted, and

winter supplies stored away, the Association, if it acted as did all other American phalanxes, drew up an elaborate system of pledges and rules for government. Each individual was assigned specific tasks and all adults, women included, were permitted a vote upon matters relating to the welfare of the enterprise. No provision was made for trying or punishing offenders; neither were there rules governing those individuals who preferred eating to working. The constitutions sometimes contained Fourier's definition of happiness, and usually made reference to the ploughshare (symbolizing production) and the pruning hook (symbolizing correction). These were the insignia of all American phalanxes. "Happiness", said Fourier, "consists in the possession of a vast number of desires combined with a full opportunity for satisfying them all."

John Pope's family, the Nortons, and George and John Rose, all immigrants subscribing to the French socialistic system, believed with Fourier that human motives are on the whole good, and if given free play will result in happiness. The second cardinal precept to which the members of the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx pledged themselves concerned commerce. "Commerce is morally and materially pernicious, and corrupts human disposition: it is the base soul of the civilization that is

approaching its term and that will be replaced by the associated and cooperative mode of economy and life." The redemption of mankind, therefore, would be accomplished by free associations of capitalists, workers, and talented officials. The product of labor was to be divided as follows: labor to receive five-twelfths; capital, four-twelfths; and talent, three-twelfths. "Free love, education of the children at the cost of the group, seven meals daily, opera and drama, joy of life — all this would be made possible by the phalanstery system, so that men might hope to attain an average age of 144 years and a height of seven feet." The Iowa phalanx certainly did not aspire to many of the specific goals listed above, but there is no doubt that the group believed that both economic security and social advantage would be derived from the association system.

Structurally, as well as socially, the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx followed the prescribed pattern common to all American Fourierist societies. "The houses were built in a long row, all as one house, then partitioned off two rooms for each family. Back of them were the dining room, kitchen, wash room, milk house, etc. All kinds of farm work was carried on systematically. Every one had his or her work to do. Two women did the cooking, and took care of the milk. A man

with certain boys to help him took care of the cows and did the milking and churning. Another man with boys' help did all the gardening, brought the vegetables all cleaned to the kitchen ready for the cooks. Three women with young girls to help did the washing. Others did the ironing. One woman taught the school. . . . The cooks washed the kitchen utensils and cleaned up the kitchen. Two women did the spinning, for in those days we had the yarn spun and knit the stockings for large and small, young and old."

Such specialization of labor, however, was not sufficient to keep the community running. There were some commodities which the group could not produce. When staples ran low, therefore, settlers made the tedious journey to young Oskaloosa, nine miles away. Their heavy lynch-pin wagons, drawn by oxen, creaked along primitive roads. Although the Sauks and Foxes were peaceful enough, a long rifle frequently lay across the driver's knees. Its presence brought comfort, for the forest was not subdued at the time when Fourierists did their shopping in the frontier village of Oskaloosa.

Trading in town was a serious business for these social utopians — all were poor. Consequently, they purchased by barter when possible. Corn, smoked hams or bacon, a few hides, and

sometimes fresh fish were exchanged for tobacco, nails, whisky, and quinine. Fourteen pounds of salt cost forty-three cents. Jeans sold for \$1.12½ per yard and cassinette was marked \$1.37 per yard. A dozen buttons of the plainest type could hardly be secured for less than twelve and a half cents. Sturdy boots came to about five dollars. Even tallow candles were expensive. And a complete set of iron skillets, lids, and kettle was beyond the reach of these dreamers of social equality.

Yet the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx lived well and comfortably. When the United States government surveyors ran the first lines in Scott Township, they recorded with approbation the fine stands of timber and the fertile fields accessible to the Watertown immigrants. But there were few luxuries, and the experiment in community living gradually succumbed to the acquisitiveness of individual ambition. The common storehouse still held bundles of golden wheat and bins of yellow corn. Turnips, squashes, and pumpkins still lay buried deep beneath the frost line. And in the dusky, tightly-chinked smoke-houses still hung hams and hind quarters over slowly smouldering hickory fires. But the enthusiasm of the group was dying out. The ambitious, there as elsewhere, felt they were carrying the lazy upon their shoulders. Women wanted their own homes, not

merely a two-room cell in a long row of dormitories. Mutterings grew, were silenced, and then increased.

By the summer of 1844, news of this group's curious French philosophy was penetrating the Territory. By some, the Fourierists were thought criminals, like the famous "Brown Gang" at Bellevue. Others believed the group harmless fools. Many considered them atheists and in league with that scalawag Abner Kneeland. Preachers worried about their souls.

News of the phalanx finally reached the ears of members of the Andover Band, that group of eleven young men who came to Iowa in 1843 under commissions from the American Home Missionary Society. The Reverend William Salter was so impressed when he heard of the colony's existence that he took pains to enter the details in his notes. A friend of Salter's, the Reverend Benjamin Spaulding, visited the settlement and later included an account of his experiences in a report to his superiors.

In September, 1844, the phalanx consisted of about fifty persons, according to Spaulding. "A part of these only had come from Watertown, others having joined them since their arrival. They have in their possession a mill site, regarded by many as the finest which the Des Moines af-

fords. Here, at some future day, they hope to be able to erect a mill, which, from the increase of their numbers and wealth, shall eventually grow into a splendid manufacturing establishment. Their cabins are joined to each other in a continuous range, and seem like a little city in the wilderness. They have farm, stock, and other property in common, share their labors in common, board at a common table, and hope, in the economy of such an arrangement, to find wealth, and in the pleasures of social intercourse, to find happiness. They believe, in common with the founder of their system, that most of the evils which we suffer, social and moral, spring solely from the jarring of individual interests, and would at once disappear under a proper organization of society. They believe that he has discovered, and that they are carrying out, that principle of unity 'under which the interests of all will blend in the most delightful harmony, and that hatred must of course cease when its causes are cut off.' Their motto is 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.'

"We, of course, were deeply anxious to see the development of so holy a principle, and as they seemed equally ready to exhibit the merits of their system, we discussed it with the utmost freedom. We ventured to bring forward another principle as lying still deeper than the above: 'Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.' The propriety of this requirement was readily admitted, but it was urged that God was a spirit, and could read at a glance all the thoughts and feelings of our hearts, and therefore any external form of worship was unnecessary; besides those who *profess* most often *feel* the least. On the other hand, it was urged, that God positively commands us to worship him, and that the *expression* of our love to him was as natural, and for some reasons as necessary, as that of our love to men; besides, those who *express* most love to *men*, often *feel* the least.

"We hazarded a few inquiries as to the practical operation of their system, and learned, not much to our surprise, that there *had* been, in a few instances, difficulties between *different families*, '*probably* the result of short acquaintance,' and that 'the matter had all been talked over, and at last happily settled,' and that 'nothing of the kind would *probably* occur again.' I have since, however, met several individuals who were *then* prominent members of the association, having joined it at Watertown, but have left on account of some dissatisfaction with the practical workings of the system.

"No objection was offered to holding meetings for those who wished to attend, at night or on the

Sabbath, or any time when we might find it convenient. The use of a room was politely offered to us. We therefore made an appointment for the next Sabbath, and found a congregation of women and children, with a few men; others, *acting up* to their professions, were too busily employed doing good to themselves, and their fellow men, to waste any time in the unnecessary worship of God. Here we found a few professors of religion of different denominations. We left a few tracts, which were read with interest by some, and ridiculed by others. A Cumberland Presbyterian had preached once or twice. Besides this there had been no other preaching."

The dissatisfaction found by the Reverend Mr. Spaulding increased, rather than diminished. Individuals gradually left the phalanx to locate land of their own. The mill, small and insignificant compared with the dream structure, ground less grain. Patches of corn grew steadily smaller. The common dining room fed fewer socialistic mouths, and the general assembly fell into disuse.

This gradual decline of the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx was representative of the entire movement in the United States. Brisbane tired of Fourierism after a few years, and in 1847 Greeley, after a series of sharp debates with the editor of the *New York Courier and Express*, abruptly dropped

Fourieristic news from the columns of the *Tribune*. The many magazines and newspapers devoted entirely to Fourier's philosophy soon lost their circulation and died. Among the most notable of these read by members of the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx were *The Phalanx*, *The Harbinger*, *The Social Reformer*, *Pioneer Phalanx*, and *The Spirit of the Age*.

About May 10, 1845, the settlement on the Des Moines River dissolved its compact, satisfied that the system would not work "either to the satisfaction or advantage of the individuals concerned; or, to use the language of one who has been a member of the company, 'it would not do while men remained as selfish as they were now.' "

Weeds soon overran the garden patches and cabin walls crumpled before the blows of winter winds and snows. Within a few years only some graves and dilapidated buildings marked the spot of an idealistic social experiment. The Reverend Mr. Spaulding was perhaps uncharitable when he righteously wrote: "It is truly a matter of gratitude to God that so many mistaken schemes are falling to the ground, and that the true principles of the religion of Christ are becoming daily more known and regarded by the community at large."

PHILIP D. JORDAN

The Fourth at Webster City

In the second issue of his Hamilton Freeman, Charles Aldrich described the celebration of Independence Day at the little frontier town of Webster City in 1857. No better commentary upon the character, habits, loyalty, and hopes of the people of that community could have been written. — The Editor.

“Our folks” celebrated the 81st Anniversary of our National Independence, in good, old-fashioned, patriotic style. The festivities commenced with a Grand Ball at the Willson House, the evening previous. A large number of young people were in attendance, who whiled away the night in the mazes of the gay dance, and only dispersed when the National Salute was fired at sunrise.

At 10 a. m. the Procession was formed on the Public Square, under the direction of the Marshal, Col. JOHN PEAKE, and his assistants. The procession was headed by a Military Company, organized for the occasion, then came the citizens generally, and after these, the Sunday Schools of this vicinity — the whole presenting a very fine appearance. A commodious stand and seats had been erected in the grove just back of town, to which the people marched.

A. MOON, Esq., presided. Rev. J. K. LARGE was introduced to the audience, and opened the exercises with a most eloquent and impressive prayer. J. J. WADSWORTH, Esq., read in a very clear and distinct manner, that "old abolition document," the Declaration of Independence. J. F. DUNCOMBE, Esq., having failed to redeem his promise to deliver the Oration, S. B. ROSENKRANS, Esq., of this village, took the stand and delivered an Address to which he had been able to devote only a few hours of preparation. It was a very fine production, abounding in happy hits and stirring eloquence. He was frequently and loudly applauded, and few speakers could have given better satisfaction to a Webster City audience.

The exercises at the grove were interspersed with the singing of several patriotic songs, by a Choir formed for the occasion in this village. All who had a part assigned them in these proceedings acquitted themselves in a highly creditable manner. After the benediction was pronounced, the procession was again formed, and marched back to the Willson House, where the guests sat down to a bountiful Dinner.

According to custom appropriate toasts were read after dinner, beginning with "The Day we Celebrate." Then followed others to the memory of George Washington, the President of the

United States, the Governor of Iowa, our Army and Navy, the heroes of the Revolution, the Congress of 1776, the Dubuque and Pacific Rail Road, and the "Women of the Age in which we Live — May they never forget the blessings of religion, or fail in perpetuating its influences upon our race." To most of these toasts the citizens responded with cheers, though to some they drank in silence. The last Toast, the Pulpit and the Press, was responded to by Rev. Mr. Large, in a short, but neat and appropriate speech.

Several Volunteer Toasts were then offered, in honor of the President of the Day, the Orator, the Ladies, &c., &c., but the following are all we have been able to obtain for publication:

Col. John Peake — He has by his courtesy and noble bearing won the admiration of the men — May he be equally successful in winning the confidence and love of the ladies.

To the above, presented on behalf of the Ladies, the "Col." made a brief but appropriate response. The following sentiment was then read:

The Pioneer Farmers of Hamilton County — Men who bore the unceasing brunt of toil and privation in opening to civilization one of the most fertile and lovely regions of the West — May they live long to enjoy the substantial blessings they have helped to create.

Mr. Peter Lyon was called out to respond to this toast. He was surprised to see such a large and happy audience before him — something he never anticipated when he came to this county. When he came here six years ago, there were but four settlers along the Boone River. No houses here. Provisions were very scarce, and had to be brought from Ft. Des Moines. There was no grist-mill in this vicinity, and he purchased a small hand-mill to grind his corn. He thought this was earning his meal "by the sweat of his brow." He had to use his "thinking cap" then, and he found it a very necessary article. He had frequently seen nearly as many elk grazing on our village plat as there were people before him; and he had shot one only a few rods from the spot he then occupied. He detailed at some length the toils and privations of the early settlers, frequently producing convulsions of laughter among the audience, by his quaint sayings and pithy anecdotes. He had expected to live and die here, with only his few border neighbors around him; but he was pleased beyond the power of expression to see so many increasing evidences of a thrifty civilization about him. When he closed, three hearty cheers were given for the "Old Pioneer."

Judge Maxwell also entertained the audience with some interesting reminiscences of the first

settlements here. He came here to enter land for purposes of speculation, but the great beauty and fertility of the country had induced him to remain and become a farmer. He came down in good strong terms upon "land-sharks," though he admitted having been one to some extent himself. The great want of Hamilton County was practical farmers. He was improving his land as rapidly as possible, and it gave him great pleasure to see so many in the same business. He was a southern man, and he considered the Yankees a shrewd, trafficking, tricky people; but he liked to live among them.

The "Merry Boys of Webster City" came out in the afternoon, in their very fantastic and grotesque costume. They had Border Ruffians, "cullud pussons," Irishmen, Yankees, "milicious ossifers," and a great variety of other characters, all of whom performed their parts in a manner that excited infinite mirth. They danced a Cotillion on the Public Square, and sang two original songs, composed for the occasion, after which they vanished as mysteriously as they had appeared.

The weather was fine, the attendance large, nobody drunk, and every one was pleased with the proceedings from first to last.

CHARLES ALDRICH

Comment by the Editor

FIRST IN FREEDOM

When William Salter called Iowa the first free State in the Louisiana Purchase, he meant that this was the first Commonwealth west of the Mississippi River to prohibit slavery. But freedom is more than the absence of bondage: freedom is equality of opportunity, the will to aspire, and a deep sense of justice. Iowa was created in the spirit of liberty; the pioneers cherished their particular hopes; tolerance prevailed; and the oppressed of other lands were welcome. To the prairies beyond the Father of Waters came political outcasts, strange religious sects, and social reformers. Revolutionists, adventurers, aristocrats, communists, utopians, inspirationists, atheists, monks, and polygamists — all found the Eldorado they sought.

Like a mighty earthquake, the French Revolution shook the foundations of the social structure, toppled the political edifice, and ruined the economic mansion of the old regime. Amid the turbulence which followed that cataclysm many architects appeared with ingenious plans for reconstruction. Earnest men they were, endowed

with contagious enthusiasm and armed with undaunted confidence in their dreams of human perfection. Zealous disciples of eccentric Charles Fourier and romantic Etienne Cabet, fascinated by promises of social harmony and economic security, yearned to try their schemes. Beside the Des Moines River in Mahaska County a phalanx of Fourierists discovered that their plan of communistic association was an empty illusion. A band of French artisans and shopkeepers likewise attempted to establish an ideal community near Corning, modeled upon Cabet's imaginary Icaria. Neither was restrained in the quest for happiness.

Perhaps liberty is characteristic of a new country. Pioneering is essentially individualistic. Every one is free to stretch himself to the uttermost in spirit, in thought, and in enterprise. Iowa has never levied a high tariff on new ideas to protect indigenous attitudes.

J. E. B.

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