

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Records of the March

The march of three companies of United States Dragoons through the interior of Iowa in the summer of 1835 was in many respects the most important exploration of that region. Little was known of the country soon to be opened for settlement. The official reports of the expedition and Albert M. Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory, with a map*, published in 1836 did much to attract favorable attention toward Iowaland.

Few activities on the frontier a hundred years ago were as fully recorded as this military expedition. An unknown member of Company I kept a diary in which he described the events of each day. This old manuscript was published in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. VII, pp. 364-378, July, 1909. It is the most vivid account of the march.

Lieutenant Lea acted as topographer of the expedition. He took notes on the character of the country, plotted the route with a pocket compass,

estimated the distances travelled, and collected information from every available source. His field notes appear to have been lost or destroyed after he used them for his official reports and in the preparation of his little book.

On September 8, 1835, Lea submitted a detailed report upon the navigability of the Des Moines River to his commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Stephen W. Kearny. Six days later Kearny included this letter with his own report of the expedition to the Adjutant General in Washington. He said that existing maps were very imperfect, but he hoped to forward soon a map "as correct as circumstances would admit" and "made with great care" by Lieutenant Lea.

Lea submitted his map on November 4th and the next day Kearny sent it to the War Department. Accompanying the map was an explanatory "Memoir" written by Lea. This original description of the "Iowa District" is here printed exactly as written, except that editorial explanations in brackets have occasionally been inserted to make the meaning clearer.

The map is no longer with the Memoir in the files of the Adjutant General's office, and appears to have been lost. It was, however, probably identical with the one published in the *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*.