The Palimpsest

MARCH 1935

CONTENTS

A Century Ago

Albert Miller Lea 65
RUTH A. GALLAHER

The Naming of Iowa 81
BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Iowa in 1835 87
WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Comment 103
THE EDITOR

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. XVI ISSUED IN MARCH 1935 NO. 3

Albert Miller Lea

On Tuesday morning, August 11, 1835, three men pushed a canoe into the current of the Raccoon River and shortly afterward floated out on the waters of the Des Moines. One of the men was a private soldier, one a Sauk Indian. The third, obviously in command, was Lieutenant Albert Miller Lea, to whom had been assigned the task of exploring the Des Moines River from the Raccoon Fork to its mouth.

Three days earlier, the cottonwood tree from which the canoe was made had been growing by the river. No human voice disturbed the silence of the surrounding prairie. Then had come the tramp of horses' feet, the sound of axes, the smoke of fires, quick commands, as three companies (about 160 men) of the First United States Dragoons camped on the north bank of the Raccoon. Now the weary horses were plodding southward and the prairies were quiet again. To the east, the sun was rising over the hill on which the State

Capitol of Iowa now stands. Drops of water sparkled in its rays as the paddles rose and fell; then the canoe disappeared in the distance.

Two months earlier (June 7th) the men had mounted their horses at Fort Des Moines (on the west bank of the Mississippi River a few miles north of the mouth of the Des Moines), and started on the journey which was to take them over eleven hundred miles, chiefly in the area now included in the State of Iowa.

Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny was in command. Captain Nathaniel Boone (a son of Daniel Boone) commanded Company H, Lieutenant Henry S. Turner Company B, and Lieutenant Lea was in charge of Company I, Captain Jesse B. Browne having been compelled to return on account of illness. Five four-horse wagons with supplies and a drove of beef cattle — provisions transported by their own power — added variety to the cavalcade as it wound over the prairie.

The line of march lay northwestward to the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines where a site for a new military post was to be chosen. The Indian guides missed that destination, however, and the expedition reached the Des Moines at Prospect Hill, about fifty miles above the Raccoon junction. Lieutenant Colonel Kearny decided to postpone the selection of a site for the post on the Des

Moines until the return trip and led his men northeastward to the foot of Lake Pepin and then south to Wabasha's village on the Mississippi where, in accordance with orders, a conference was held with the Sioux.

Late in July the detachment moved across the lake region in what is now southern Minnesota, then turned south to strike the main course of the Des Moines. Captain Browne had rejoined his company and Lieutenant Lea, who had taken upon himself the duties of topographer, was busy with his notes and maps. To one of the lakes in this region, which he named Fox Lake, J. N. Nicollet later gave the name of Albert Lea. Under the drowsy August sun, the dragoons moved south along the west side of the Des Moines to the Raccoon, and there, on Sunday, August 9th, Lieutenant Lea received orders to descend the Des Moines for the purpose of studying the character of the river and the possibilities of its navigation. He was also to pick out locations suitable for military posts.

In spite of gnats, mosquitoes, and sand-bars, the journey was accomplished safely and Lieutenant Lea with his two assistants was back at Fort Des Moines several days before the main division reached there on August 19th, also without mishap. The dragoons — the marines of the prairie

and the plains — had completed one more "job", but as we shall see, the pen in this case was mightier than the sword.

Lieutenant Lea made a report to Lieutenant Colonel Kearny (dated September 8, 1835). The distance covered in the canoe he estimated at 266 miles. Navigation, he believed, would be difficult because of rapids, sand-bars, snags, low water in summer, freshets in the spring and fall, and ice in the winter. He suggested three possible sites for a fort near the Raccoon Fork and declared that the mouth of Cedar River (Cedar Creek, a branch of the Des Moines) was the best location of all. Lea was evidently much impressed by the Des Moines and its valley for he added at the close of his report: "Allow me to remark in conclusion, that the Des Moines is the most beautiful stream that I have ever traversed: and that it is destined soon to become the outlet of great mineral and agricultural wealth."

Lieutenant Colonel Kearny included this report in the one he made to the War Department, adding at the close, "I have delayed this Report, that I might accompany it with a map made by Lieut Lea which was taken with much care, & is as correct, as circumstances would admit". This map and a journal of some kind kept by Lieutenant Lea as topographical officer were sent to Washington

early in November, 1835, but can not now be located. There was evidently some disagreement between Lieutenant Lea and his commanding officer concerning this map, for Lea wrote later, "he [Kearny] took it from me, disallowing a copy, although all my work on the march and in quarters was wholly voluntary, not trenching upon duties, and the product was as much my private property as my hand."

Who was this Lieutenant Lea? He signed his report "A. M. Lea, of Tenn." He was a native of that State. Born on a farm near Knoxville on July 23, 1808, Albert Miller Lea was next to the youngest child of a family of seven sons and a daughter. His father, named Major Lea, was the son of a Baptist preacher who had come to Tennessee during the Revolution. Major Lea married Lavinia Jarnagin, daughter of Thomas Jarnagin who, though unlettered, was a shrewd business man and served as register of the land office of the State of Franklin. By purchasing soldiers' certificates and locating them in the valley of Richland Creek, Jarnagin acquired a large estate which was divided among his numerous family. To Lavinia fell a tract in the lower valley which became Richland, the birthplace of Albert Miller Lea.

To the springs in this vicinity came aristocratic visitors from the South reminding the Lea boys of

the world outside the valley, the gateway to which was education. Albert Miller Lea was sent to a school in Knoxville taught by a graduate of Yale, but at seventeen financial difficulties and poor health compelled him to withdraw and for a time he worked on the farm, clerked in a store, and taught Latin on the side. In 1827 he secured an appointment to West Point (through Hugh L. White), graduating in 1831, fifth in his class of thirty-three, with the rank of brevet second lieutenant. He was reported to be one of the five graduates excelling in mathematics, natural philosophy, chemistry, engineering, French, rhetoric, moral philosophy, artillery and tactics.

Lieutenant Lea was assigned to the First Artillery, but, being gallant enough to wish to please a lady, the betrothed of his friend John B. Magruder, who had graduated in 1830, he (it is said) exchanged duty at Old Point Comfort for service with the Seventh Infantry at Fort Gibson (at the junction of the Arkansas and Neosho rivers in what is now eastern Oklahoma). Lea at that time planned to study law and thought a remote post would be a good place to pursue his reading.

The army, however, was no respecter of plans and Lieutenant Lea was sent hither and yon on topographical service. In the summer of 1832, he worked on the survey of the Tennessee River and

spent the following winter in Philadelphia preparing maps and reports. Of his activities during this winter Lea wrote long afterward: "I made for Col. Long the plans for the first locomotive ever made by the Baldwins, besides studying French and music and drawing, attending the theatre, and flirting not a little."

In the spring of 1834 Lieutenant Lea was ordered to return to Fort Gibson, but at Washington he was delayed by a transfer (rather against his will) to the United States Dragoon regiment recently organized. His time was not, however, entirely wasted, for he took advantage of the opportunity to visit Baltimore where lived Miss Ellen Shoemaker, to whom he proposed marriage, but almost immediately received orders to join his regiment.

Upon reaching St. Louis, Lea volunteered to make a trip to New Orleans (then so full of yellow fever that officers were sent there only with their consent) to get $96,000 in silver for Indian annuities, and it was not until October, 1834, that he reported at Fort Leavenworth. There he was ordered to join Kearny's detachment of dragoons at Fort Des Moines. During the summer of 1835 he participated in the expedition up and down the Des Moines Valley and across the southeast corner of present-day Minnesota.

Lieutenant Lea spent the early part of the following winter at Fort Des Moines, but secured leave of absence on February 1, 1836, and soon went east. His experience on the trip and his conversations with settlers, soldiers, and traders convinced him that the Iowa country had a bright future and he planned to have some part in it. He made a trip up the Mississippi River, stopping at various locations to consider investments in land. At Burlington he bought four lots for $100, selling them later for $400. He declined an offer of a claim at what is now Muscatine for fifty dollars, and chose some land at the mouth of Pine Creek (about ten miles above Muscatine), where he and William Gordon, another Tennessean, laid out a town site.

Lieutenant Lea was, however, interested in the whole area and publicity being not unknown a hundred years ago he decided that a book advertising the Black Hawk Purchase would be useful to prospective settlers and profitable to him. He wrote the text, secured permission to make a copy of his map which Kearny had sent to the War Department, and in the summer of 1836, his *Notes on Wisconsin Territory, Particularly with Reference to the Iowa District,* was printed by H. S. Tanner of Philadelphia.

Lea's book was a small paper-bound volume

approximately three by five inches, containing 53 pages and a folded map of the Iowa District about 18½ by 22 inches. The edition was a thousand copies which were to sell at a dollar a volume, but, unfortunately, half the books were lost in shipment down the Ohio on a steamboat and only a few reached the West. The undertaking was, therefore, a financial loss and not especially satisfactory as an advertising venture. The little book was not, however, entirely without effect. It contained an accurate and enthusiastic description of the region he had seen in 1835, and the name Iowa which he applied to the Black Hawk Purchase was adopted for the Territory and the State that contained that district.

In spite of his many interests, Lieutenant Lea did not forget his Baltimore romance and on May 5, 1836, he married Miss Ellen Shoemaker, whom he had wooed in the summer of 1834. Apparently he did not believe that army life would agree with his bride who was not robust for he resigned his commission in the army to take effect on the thirty-first of May. In July the Leas made the trip to Iowa, by the lakes to Chicago, by wagon to Galena, and then south by steamboat to the site on Pine Creek which he had named Iowa. Later he called it Ellenborough for his wife.

Of this dream town Lea wrote in his book:

"Should the seat of government of the future State of Iowa be located on the Mississippi, it would probably be fixed at Iowa, owing to the central position and commercial advantages of that place; and if it be located in the interior, it must be near the Iowa river, as the weight of population will be there; and then the town of Iowa will be the nearest port in the Mississippi to the Capital of the State." But this rose-hued dream of the capital and the port faded as did many others on the frontier and the only evidences of Lieutenant Lea's industry in laying out this town of Iowa were the stakes which for several years served as tombstones of buried hopes.

Early in 1837, Lea became chief engineer of the State of Tennessee, but the panic ended the work there and in August, 1838, he came back to Iowa as the United States commissioner to locate the Iowa-Missouri boundary. Missouri failed to appoint a commissioner and Lea declared that the Iowa representative (Doctor James Davis) was "no use but to consume rations, and soon left." Lea's report was made on January 19, 1839. In it he pointed out the inconsistencies of the various boundaries and asserted that the Sullivan line, later approved by the United States Supreme Court, was the equitable though not the legal boundary.

For most of 1839 and 1840, Lea worked as

assistant engineer of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. During these months his wife was ill, apparently with tuberculosis. She died in February, 1840, leaving one son, Edward. That summer he attempted to interest a syndicate in his Iowa lands, and made a trip to Burlington to get a charter, but the plan did not materialize. It was possibly on this visit to Iowa that Lea received the commission as brigadier general of the Iowa militia which appears on the list of his achievements in the record of West Point graduates.

Lea might have continued his railroad work, for it was the beginning of the building era, but he accepted a position as chief clerk of the War Department, serving for a time as Acting Secretary of War, only to find that, in the transition from Harrison to Tyler, political preferment was another mirage. He returned to Tennessee and from 1843 to 1851 taught mathematics and natural philosophy at the University of East Tennessee at Knoxville, at the same time assisting his widowed mother in the management of her farm and slaves. For several years he also served as city engineer of Knoxville. Apparently the military opportunities of the Mexican War had no attractions for him.

In the summer of 1845, Lea returned to Baltimore, married Miss Catherine Heath, and brought

his wife and his son by the former marriage back to Tennessee. To this wife were born three sons and a daughter.

In 1851 Lea undertook to operate a glass works at Knoxville, but there was no market for the ware and he lost not only his own savings but those of several investors. Again he went back to his surveying, this time as chief engineer of two railroad companies in Texas and Mexico — the Aransas Railroad Company in Texas and the Rio Grande, Mexico, and Pacific Railroad Company of Mexico. This work was getting under way when the Civil War began.

The story of Albert Miller Lea in the Civil War was unusually tragic. Like many other Southern men who held or had held commissions in the United States Army, Lea was compelled to decide between conflicting loyalties — nation and State. As he had signed his report in 1835 "A. M. Lea, of Tenn." so also in 1861 he emphasized his State, and joined the South. At first, it appears, he was engaged in enlisting a cavalry regiment for the Confederate Army, for on August 20, 1861, Lea wrote to the War Department at Richmond, protesting that certain discriminations were discouraging enlistments by former unionists of whom there were many in east Tennessee.

Albert M. Lea did not become prominent in the

Civil War although he served the Confederacy faithfully and well. Lea himself claimed that his failure to receive recognition was due to the enmity of Jefferson Davis. In August, 1861, President Davis did, however, nominate Lea (who had been serving as brigade commissary) as major in the Commissary Department. This list of commissions was not confirmed, but in September, 1862, Lea's nomination as captain in the Quartermaster's Department was approved by the Confederate Congress. No commission above that of captain is included in the nominations made by President Davis, but by direct appointment of commanding officers Lea usually served as major, and sometimes as lieutenant colonel or colonel.

In the summer of 1862, Major Lea did some engineering work on the fortifications around Cumberland Gap, but was soon afterward transferred to the Texas front and there one of the poignant tragedies peculiar to civil wars was enacted. On his way to join his command, Lea stopped at Galveston, just as the Confederates began to move for the recapture of the city and harbor. He reported to the commander in charge — the same John B. Magruder with whom Lea is said to have traded locations thirty years before — and was assigned to duty.

Major Lea knew that his oldest son, Lieutenant

Commander Edward Lea, was on one of the Union vessels in the harbor. This son had been with the United States navy in Chinese waters when the war began and Lea had written to him that he could not dictate to one so long "obligated to act on his own judgment" and that, decide as the son might, he would continue to regard him "with the respect of a gentleman and the affection of a father".

And so it happened on the first of January, 1863, that Major Lea, as a member of the staff of General Magruder, went on board the captured Union sloop of war, the *Harriet Lane,* to find his son terribly wounded and the captain dead. While the father was trying frantically to get an ambulance, the son died, saying to those who asked him what he wished, "My father is here". Lieutenant Lea and his superior officer, Captain Wainwright, were buried the following day with military and masonic honors, Major Lea reading part of the funeral service.

Three weeks later General Magruder wrote to his commanding officer at Richmond saying he had sent a detachment to the Rio Grande and that Major Lea was in command of the engineers. After commenting on Lea's service at Galveston, Magruder wrote: "He is a graduate of West Point, of great merit, and well known to His Ex-

cellency the President, to whom I beg leave to recommend him for the appointment of colonel in the C. S. Army for engineer duty with me."

For the remainder of the Civil War Lea was assigned to duty at various places in Texas. On December 7, 1863, he was mentioned as having charge of slaves working on the fortifications at Gonzales and in March, 1864, he was in charge of the cotton bureau at Eagle Pass. One son, Alexander McKim Lea, though very young, was also in the Confederate army.

At the close of the Civil War, Lea settled in Galveston where he opened a book store, but he soon returned to his engineering work and became city surveyor and engineer of Galveston. A long illness, due partly to war service, compelled his retirement and in 1874 he moved to Corsicana, Texas, where his two sons were in business. There he spent the remainder of his life, and there he died on January 16, 1891.

Although the Lea family was of the Baptist faith, Albert Miller Lea became a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church, to which both his wives belonged. He was for years senior warden of St. John's Episcopal Church at Corsicana, which he had helped to found. A window of this church bears his name and that of his wife.

Writing took up part of his time and several

articles in the *Iowa Historical Record* and in Minnesota newspapers recall the story of Lea's relation to Iowa and Minnesota and his service in the Civil War. In June, 1879, Lea went back to southern Minnesota to deliver an address at Albert Lea on the banks of the lake named for him, but for the most part he was satisfied with his books, his garden, his memories, and his family ties. Catherine Lea, his second wife, died in 1884, but his daughter, Miss Lida L. Lea (still living in 1935 at Corsicana), a son, and several grandchildren survived him.

By some ironic fate the name of Albert M. Lea does not appear on the map of Iowa, although there is some evidence that Lee County was really named for him and that the name was misspelled. But the pages of his little book, printed almost one hundred years ago, are mute witnesses to the part Albert Miller Lea, the chronicler of Iowa as it was in 1835, played in naming this Commonwealth.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

The Naming of Iowa

The name "Iowa" as applied to the State which was admitted into the Union on December 28, 1846, was derived from or suggested by the use of the name in the expression, "Territory of Iowa" — the Territory of Iowa being the direct and immediate precursor of the "State of Iowa".

As the name "Iowa" in the expression "State of Iowa" was derived from or suggested by its use in the earlier expression "Territory of Iowa", so the name "Iowa" in the expression "Territory of Iowa" was derived from or suggested by its use in the still earlier unofficial expression "Iowa District" — the "Iowa District" being the direct and immediate precursor of the "Territory of Iowa".

It is generally conceded that the expression "Iowa District", as applicable to the country that was eventually included in the Territory and then the State of Iowa, came into general and recognized use through the publication, in 1836, of a small book entitled, *Notes on Wisconsin Territory, With a Map,* by Lieutenant Albert M. Lea. It can not be said with absolute certainty that the name "Iowa District" was used for the first time in this little book: on the contrary, it is probable that

the name was applied to the Iowa country before Lea's book was published. Since, however, the name "Iowa" was fixed upon this country and popularized through the publication of Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory*, it may be said that this was the book that gave to Iowa its name.

Thus the problem of the origin of the name "Iowa" as applied to the Iowa country is resolved into the question, How came Lieutenant Lea to use the name "Iowa District" in his book?

In the year 1834 the country that was to be called Iowa was, by act of Congress, attached to and made a part of the Territory of Michigan. Thereupon the Legislative Council of the Territory of Michigan, assembled in extra session in September of the same year, passed an act relative to the establishment of local government in the recently attached country. By this act the region west of the Mississippi was divided into two parts by a line drawn due west from the lower end of Rock Island to the Missouri River. All the territory north of this line, to which the Indian title had been extinguished, was to constitute the county of Dubuque; and all south of the line was to constitute the county of Demoine. Furthermore, it was provided by the same act that all laws in force in the "County of Iowa" (Michigan Territory) should extend to and be in force in the counties of

Dubuque and Demoine, and that process civil and criminal and writs of error should lie from the Circuit Court of the United States for the County of Iowa to the county courts of Dubuque and Demoine. The "County of Iowa", with which the original counties of Dubuque and Demoine were thus associated, had been established by the Legislative Council of Michigan in 1829, within that part of the Territory which afterwards became the State of Wisconsin.

Some writers on Iowa history have said (in answer to the question, How came Lieutenant Lea by the name "Iowa" as used in the expression "Iowa District") that the name was derived from or suggested by its use in the expression "County of Iowa". This explanation of the origin of the name "Iowa" may be called the "Iowa County Explanation". And it must be admitted that this explanation was plausible, since the original counties of Dubuque and Demoine were directly associated with the County of Iowa through the Michigan statute of 1834.

More recent investigations, however, have led to the rejection of the "Iowa County Explanation", and to the general acceptance of what may be called the "Iowa River Explanation". This explanation asserts that the name "Iowa" in the expression "Iowa District" as used in Lea's book

was derived from or suggested by the use of the name as applied to a river that flowed through the country in question. The evidence upon which this explanation of the origin of the name "Iowa" is based appears to be adequate and convincing.

In the first place there is the direct testimony of Lieutenant Lea, who says in Chapter I of his *Notes on Wisconsin Territory* that "the District under review has been often called *'Scott's Purchase,'* and it is sometimes called the 'Black-Hawk Purchase;' but from the extent and beauty of the Iowa river which runs centrally through the District, and gives character to most of it, the name of that stream being both euphoneous and appropriate, has been given to the District itself."

A year after Lea had described the Black Hawk Purchase as the "Iowa District", the citizens living in that country started a movement for the creation of a new Territory west of the Mississippi River. Meetings were held in each county and delegates were chosen to meet at Burlington in October, 1837. Several names were proposed, the most prominent being Washington, Jefferson, and Iowa. After considerable debating and log-rolling, however, the convention petitioned Congress to form the Territory of Iowa. Apparently the name which Albert Lea had applied to this region was in general use in 1837. At least the

people adopted that indigenous name in preference to honoring the memory of the Author of the Declaration of Independence or the Father of His Country.

That the evidence from Lieutenant Lea's book was influential in the naming of Iowa is supported by the testimony of Joseph N. Nicollet. About the time that Lea's book and map were published in the summer of 1836, Nicollet was engaged in making a thorough exploration of the sources of the Mississippi River. In 1838 and 1839 he conducted two extensive expeditions in the northern portion of the Territory of Iowa. As a result of his work, Nicollet constructed a geographical and topographical map of the upper Mississippi basin. This map, together with a "report intended to illustrate" the same, was published by the government of the United States in 1843.

It is in this report that Nicollet refers to the naming of Iowa. In speaking of the lands acquired from the Indians by the treaty of 1832, he says: "It was often called 'Scott's Purchase;' as also the 'Black Hawk Purchase,' after the name of the Indian leader during the outbreak alluded to. But, in 1836, my friend Albert M. Lea, Esq., then a lieutenant of dragoons, published a map and description of the country, which he called the 'Iowa District' — a name both euphonious and appropri-

ate, being derived from the Iowa river, the extent, beauty, and importance of which were then first made known to the public."

As to the use of the name "Iowa" or "Ioway" as applied to the river, it need only be observed in this connection that maps of the western country show that for at least a century before Lieutenant Lea published his map, a river that "runs centrally" through the country between the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers was generally indicated by the name "Ioway" or "Iowa".

It seems, however, that Lea pronounced Iowa with a long *a*. Many years later he spoke with pride of "the State *which I* named, Iow*a*". When the organization of the Territory was proposed, he wrote to George W. Jones, then Delegate to Congress, urging that the spelling be "put back" to "Iow*ay*", as "it ought to have been". The use of "Iowa" in his *Notes on Wisconsin Territory,* however, had apparently settled that question. And so, he declared in 1890, Congress "stuck to my error."

Ioway or *Iowa* River; the *Iowa* District; Territory of *Iowa*; State of *Iowa* — these are the chapters in the story of the naming of Iowa.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Iowa in 1835

A hundred years ago the area that now constitutes the State of Iowa was a prairie wilderness. Indeed, the name Iowa had not yet been applied to this territory or any part of it. The country between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers was known only by the Indians and fur traders. The inhabitants of the scattered settlements along the Mississippi may have been looking west, but their vision extended only a few miles. No accurate information about the geography of the interior was available. To be sure the eastern and western borders had been explored years before and the general course of the principal rivers was known; but the land had not been carefully mapped. Sometimes even Indian guides lost their way.

During the summer of 1835 Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny was ordered to conduct a military expedition through this region for the purpose of learning more about it. Fifteen years earlier, Kearny had marched from the vicinity of Council Bluffs to Fort St. Anthony near the present city of Minneapolis. The northwestern section of the present State was therefore somewhat familiar to him. Now he was instructed to proceed

up the Des Moines Valley with three companies of dragoons from his newly established quarters called Fort Des Moines on the site of the present town of Montrose. It was expected that the expedition would prove disciplinary and instructive to soldiers weary of barracks life as well as productive of valuable information about the country.

Turning northeast just below the junction of the Boone with the Des Moines River, Kearny marched to Wabasha's village on the Mississippi where he conferred with the Sioux, and thence proceeded westward to the Des Moines, returning to his post along the banks of that stream. The dragoons departed on June 7, 1835, and returned to Fort Des Moines on August 19th, after an arduous but successful tour of eleven hundred miles over the unexplored prairies of the interior.

Accompanying Kearny on this expedition was Albert Miller Lea, a young dragoon lieutenant. Lea kept complete notes on the journey, upon the basis of which he drafted a map of the country traversed by the expedition of 1835. An Iowan of 1935 would scarcely recognize Iowa as it appeared on Lea's map a century ago. Nearly all the political lines were the boundaries of tracts described in Indian treaties. The forty-mile wide Neutral Ground extended from the Mississippi to the Des Moines River across the northern part of

the present State. South of that lay the Black Hawk Purchase. Instead of drawing the boundary line between Dubuque and Demoine counties due west from the foot of Rock Island, as prescribed by law, Lea drew it to the "nearest point on the Red Cedar of the Ioway, forty miles from the Mississippi" (near Cedar Bluff in Cedar County). The Keokuk Reserve divided Demoine County almost in two. The southern boundary of the Iowa District, as Lea labelled the Black Hawk Purchase, was formed by the northern boundary of Missouri and the Half-breed Tract. To the west were the unappropriated hunting grounds of the Indians.

The Half-breed Tract, located in what is now the southern tip of Lee County, had been set aside in 1824 "for the use of the half-breeds belonging to the Sock and Fox nations". The land was to continue as a part of the public domain, but this provision was removed in 1834 and all rights were vested in the half-breed residents. The Half-breed Tract had attracted a considerable number of white settlers, however, before the Black Hawk Purchase. These had not been disturbed by the government as long as their presence was not obnoxious to the half-breeds. Since this land had been offered for sale by 1835, the Half-breed Tract may be considered part of the Iowa District.

The exodus of the Indians from the Black Hawk Purchase was the signal for hundreds of settlers to stake out claims west of the Mississippi in 1833. The mineral region around present-day Dubuque attracted the heaviest initial influx: but settlements were made at other favorable places along the river. By 1835, however, the entire Black Hawk Purchase (comprising about 7500 square miles of land or over one-eighth of the present area of Iowa) contained less than ten thousand inhabitants. To-day a half dozen important cities — Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, and Fort Madison — are found within the original Black Hawk Purchase. Fort Madison, the smallest of these, had a population of 13,779 in 1930, compared with 10,531 living within the Black Hawk Purchase in 1836.

The first settlers found the land without a government of any kind. It took a murder, followed by an extralegal trial and execution, to cause the Federal government to attach the newly settled country to the Territory of Michigan on June 28, 1834, "for purposes of temporary government". On September 6, 1834, the legislature of the Territory of Michigan created two counties (Dubuque and Demoine) in the district west of the Mississippi, and at the same time constituted each county a township also (Julien and Flint Hill). All the

laws in force in Iowa County, Michigan Territory, were extended across the river.

By the summer of 1835 the squatter settlements along the Mississippi were becoming places of some importance. Lea mentioned Keokuk and Fort Des Moines in the Half-breed Tract. The strategic importance of Keokuk at the foot of the Lower Rapids was readily recognized while the good steamboat landing at Fort Des Moines, together with the rich farm lands of the interior, made that point a "fine site" for a town. In Des Moines County the straggling villages of Burlington, Fort Madison, and Davenport gave little promise of their future growth. Such names as Gibson's Ferry, Richland, Iowa, Throckmorton's Landing, and Clark's Ferry can not be found on a modern map of Iowa. With the exception of Dubuque and Peru in the mineral region, Dubuque County was even more sparsely settled — Bellevue and Parkhurst being the only towns recorded by Lea on his map.

Births, marriages, deaths; log raisings, camp meetings, wolf hunts, all these brought sparkle to the otherwise humdrum existence in the unkempt villages between Peru and Keokuk. Churches and Sunday schools were being organized. The Methodists had built the first church in Iowa at Dubuque in 1834. On August 15, 1835, Father

Samuel Mazzuchelli and his Catholic flock were laying the cornerstone of their church in Dubuque. The foundation of Congregationalism and Presbyterianism was being laid in Des Moines County by Asa Turner, and the Baptists were entrenching at what later became Danville. Typical of the hardy, self-reliant preacher on the frontier was Barton Cartwright, who plowed his fields during six days and preached on the seventh. "Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" might well be said of such men as Cartwright and the circuit rider on the Iowa frontier.

Enterprising pioneers were harnessing the streams of the Iowa District: sawmills buzzed merrily at Sageville near Dubuque and on Flint Creek in Des Moines County. Levi Moffet and William Smith erected a dam and sawmill at Augusta on the Skunk River in 1835. John H. Knapp established a horse-mill for grinding corn and buckwheat at Fort Madison. A few frame buildings were in the process of construction, but the log cabin was still the symbol of the pioneer. Some of these cabins served as schools and churches; stores of merchandise were displayed in others. The first court held in southern Iowa convened in the cabin of William R. Ross in the spring of 1835. Truly the warp and woof of existence centered in the rude pioneer homes.

A polyglot population occupied the land west of the Mississippi. According to Lucius H. Langworthy, who had come to Dubuque as early as 1832, "every considerable nation of Europe and all the States of our Union, were duly represented. The German liberalism, the New England puritanism, and the Celtic nationalism mixed and mingled in all the elements of society." Other pioneers testified to substantially the same facts concerning the first settlers.

It was an English traveler, Charles Augustus Murray, who left one of the most graphic descriptions of the Iowa pioneers. Arriving at the foot of the Lower Rapids in 1835, Murray related: "This village of Keokuk is the lowest and most blackguard place that I have yet visited: its population is composed chiefly of the watermen who assist in loading and unloading the keel-boats, and in towing them up when the rapids are too strong for the steam-engines. They are a coarse and ferocious caricature of the London bargemen, and their chief occupation seems to consist in drinking, fighting, and gambling."

Passing on upstream, Murray was amazed at the "singularly bad judgment" in erecting Fort Des Moines on such a "low, unhealthy, and quite unimportant" site. He made little comment on Fort Armstrong.

Upon his arrival at Dubuque, Murray put up at the only tavern in town. He found the barroom "crowded with a parcel of blackguard noisy miners, from whom the most experienced and notorious blasphemers in Portsmouth or Wapping might have taken a lesson". Although exasperated by the lack of privacy afforded by the rough pioneer community, Murray must have enjoyed sitting "by the fireside watching the strange and rough-looking characters who successively entered to drink a glass of the nauseous dilution of alcohol, variously colored, according as they asked for brandy, whisky, or rum". When he retired to the barrack-like bedroom he congratulated himself on securing a bed to himself instead of sharing it with two or three drunkards.

Having visited the various mining towns about Dubuque, Murray was forced to conclude: "It certainly appears at first sight to be a strange anomaly in human nature, that at Dubuque, Galena, and other rising towns on the Mississippi, containing in proportion to their size as profligate, turbulent, and abandoned a population as any in the world, theft is almost unknown; and though dirks are frequently drawn, and pistols fired in savage and drunken brawls, by ruffians who regard neither the laws of God nor man, I do not believe that an instance of larceny or housebreak-

ing has occurred. So easily are money and food here obtained by labour, that it seems scarcely worth a man's while to steal."

Evidence is not lacking to prove the presence of many "hard-boiled" frontiersmen in the Iowa of 1835. The hanging of Patrick O'Connor at Dubuque in 1834 did not terminate lawlessness — the executioner himself fleeing from the lead mines to escape the wrath of O'Connor's friends. The tragic shooting of Woodbury Massey in a claim dispute, the murder of John O'Mara by Patrick Brennan while "sky-larking", the tar and feathering and subsequent deportation of a wife-beater, are classic illustrations of Dubuque one hundred years ago. It was in 1835, too, that the Dubuque sheriff administered thirty-nine lashes on the bare back of a common thief.

But such incidents were the exception, rather than the rule. The large majority of the squatters were sober, earnest, and hard working — intent on carving out a better niche in the Iowa District than had been afforded them back east. If we accept the word of Edward Langworthy, the Dubuque lead miners must have been paragons of "honesty, integrity, and high toned generosity".

Albert Miller Lea considered the population such as is "rarely to be found in our newly acquired territories". Since Lea visited a larger por-

tion of the Iowa District in 1835 than any other contemporary chronicler, and since in addition he had traveled extensively on the western frontier, his opinion can not be treated lightly. "With very few exceptions," Lea declared, "there is not a more orderly, industrious, active, pains-taking population west of the Alleghenies, than is this of the Iowa District. Those who have been accustomed to associate the name *Squatter* with the idea of idleness and recklessness, would be quite surprised to see the systematic manner in which every thing is here conducted. For intelligence, I boldly assert that they are not surpassed, as a body, by an equal number of citizens of any country in the world."

But seven-eighths of what is now Iowa lay beyond the Iowa District and was inhabited by the Indians. The villages of Keokuk and Wapello were in the Keokuk Reserve, while Poweshiek's followers were still encamped on the banks of the Cedar River in the original Black Hawk Purchase. The combined population of the confederated tribesmen numbered about five thousand.

North of the Iowa District lay the Neutral Ground. This zone was expected to serve as a barrier between those implacable foes — the Sioux to the north and the Sauks and Foxes to the south. By the treaty of 1832 the Winnebago had agreed

to leave their homes in southwestern Wisconsin but it was not until September of 1835, that Chief White Ox and his band established a temporary village on the Red Cedar River. Three months later two hundred Winnebago were reported hunting in the same region. During the previous spring David Lowry, a Presbyterian missionary, opened a school on Yellow River but only six Winnebago children attended.

West of the Iowa District lay the lands of the Sauks and Foxes, extending westward to the watershed which divided the waters flowing into the Des Moines from those emptying into the Missouri. Most of this territory Lea marked unexplored, the dragoons having marched along the divide between the "Chacagua" (Skunk) and the Des Moines River almost to the Neutral Ground before turning to the northeast. Keokuk had established a village on the north bank of the Des Moines near an old trading post on what is the present site of Iowaville. Farther up the Des Moines near what is now Ottumwa stood the tattered village of Chief Appanoose and his Sauk followers. Both villages were visited by the dragoons on their summer tour of the prairies.

On the east bank of the Missouri in what is now southwestern Iowa, Lea placed the home of the Pottawattamies, Ottawas, and Chippeways. Al-

though their number was set at six thousand on Lea's map, only a handful arrived by the fall of 1835. Despite the migratory habits of the Indians, it is altogether likely that the red population of what is now Iowa equalled that of the white population in 1835.

The climate of Iowaland did not vary more widely than in similar latitudes east of the Appalachian Mountains. Lieutenant Lea considered the breeze from the "broad prairies almost as refreshing as that from the ocean." Although exempt from the raw easterly winds along the Atlantic seaboard, the traveler found the cold prairie blasts "sufficiently annoying" when the mercury stood at zero. Lea had known the prevailing southwest wind to remain constant for three successive weeks at Rock Island and had heard that it remained so during six weeks at Prairie du Chien.

Although the "salubriousness" of the climate varied according to locality, Lea pointed out that such common American diseases as "pulmonary consumption" were unknown in the Iowa District. He believed the marshy grounds along the Mississippi from the Des Moines to the Rock Island rapids would be conducive of "much bilious disease" although little compared with that in Missouri. Above Rock Island the country was as healthy as in the region of the Allegheny Mountains. "But

whether above or below the Upper Rapids," Lea asserted, "the country at a distance from the swamps of the Mississippi, is elevated, and is as healthy as any can be, where there is a free circulation of air, good water and rolling grounds; but where there is also much vegetable matter to decay. This evil is incident to all new countries; and the richer the country in point of soil, the greater is the evil; but it is one that is continually diminishing with the progress of cultivation."

Winter — a "dry, cold, and bracing" season, usually set in about the first of December and ended early in March. According to Lea the rivers were "bridged with ice; the snow is frequently deep enough to afford good sleighing, and it is considered the best season for travelling, by those who are able to bear exposure to a cold atmosphere." Pleasant weather was often enjoyed in southern Iowaland in mid-winter, and there was never enough snow, even as far north as Prairie du Chien, to interrupt travel.

Lea found spring anything but delightful. "It is a succession of rains, blows, and chills: and if the sun happen to shine, it does so gloomily, as if boding a coming storm. The whole country becomes saturated with water, the low lands are overflowed; the streams are swollen; and locomotion is rendered difficult except by water." Since

spring was a boon to waterways, the inhabitants of Iowaland had to take advantage of "the six weeks of rain, and fog, and wind that changes the freezing winter into the warm and genial summer." Lea believed the farmer would have to adapt himself to the variable weather in order to assure himself of crops worthy of the soil he cultivated.

The summer was sufficiently warm to produce a rapid growth of crops and yet was seldom "oppressively hot". When the expedition started, the grass was short and green. The air was fragrant with the smell of flowers, and the juice of wild strawberries reddened the hooves of the horses. During July the dragoons rode through grass six feet high, but seldom experienced excessive heat. Throughout the summer the appearance of the country was "gay and beautiful being clothed in grass, foliage, and flowers."

Lea considered autumn the most pleasant season of the year. "The heat of the summer is over by the middle of August", he declared, "and from that time till December, we have almost one continuous succession of bright clear delightful sunny days. Nothing can exceed the beauty of Summer and Autumn in this country, where, on one hand, we have the expansive prairie strewed with flowers still growing; and on the other, the forests

which skirt it, presenting all the varieties of colour incident to the fading foliage of a thousand different trees."

Wild game was abundant in 1835. Herds of buffalo roamed the prairies bordering the headwaters of the Des Moines, the Skunk, the Iowa, the Cedar, and their tributaries. Deer and elk stalked the prairie and bear shuffled through the woodlands. Smaller game — fox, beaver, muskrat, otter, badger, wolf, mink — were to be found everywhere. Prairie chickens and turkey strutted in the thickets while geese and ducks flew in myriads of long windrows across the sky. Pigeons and pelicans, sand cranes and grouse, songbirds of every hue and description, all lent color and gaiety to the Iowaland of a century ago.

The dragoons encountered several small herds of buffalo on their march to Wabasha's village in 1835. Two years previously Keokuk and his Sauk and Fox Indians had killed eighty on the headwaters of the Iowa. The shaggy monsters formed an important element of the red man's food supply and the unbroken prairies still furnished the buffalo with luscious grazing.

Seven black bears were seen by members of the Yellowstone expedition of 1825 near the mouth of the Big Sioux River. Ten years later Charles Augustus Murray joined a hunting party of

twenty men from Fort Crawford to hunt bear and other big game on the headwaters of the Turkey River. Unfortunately the hunters ran afoul of a party of Winnebago Indians who resented this unwelcome incursion into their domain in the Neutral Ground. By continually firing their guns and setting fire to the grass on the prairies, the Winnebago succeeded in driving the game away so that the white hunters got no bear.

The streams abounded with fish — pickerel, eel, catfish, pike, trout, and many other varieties. Reptiles glided quietly through the grass: the warning of the deadly rattlesnake was often heard. One night after pitching his tent, Lea found and killed four rattlesnakes within it. The next day he had a bath in a pool, occupied by mosquitoes so large that he pressed one in his journal, and kept it as "a specimen of the luxuriant growth of the plains".

But the beauties of this wild hinterland were as a closed book to the pioneers of 1835. They were more concerned with the arrival of such steamboats as the *Adventure,* the *Chian,* the *Dubuque,* the *Galenian,* the *Heroine,* the *Olive Branch,* and the *Warrior.* The great highway of commerce and communication that flowed by their door, not a trackless wilderness inhabited by roving bands of Indians, was the object of their regard.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Comment by the Editor

WITH A MAP

The most significant event of a hundred years ago in the territory that is now Iowa was the exploring expedition of the United States Dragoons. They had a delightful trip during the summer months of 1835. But their valuable knowledge of the country might have been buried in the files of the War Department if Lieutenant Albert M. Lea had not published a little book describing what he had seen. And in the back of the volume was a map, drawn with all the care and precision of a topographical engineer.

Lea's *Notes on Wisconsin Territory* pertained almost entirely to the Black Hawk Purchase, which he christened the Iowa District. The scope of his map, however, like the march of the dragoons, included far more than this narrow strip. Lieutenant Lea based his draft not only on personal observation but upon information obtained from government surveys, Indian treaties, and other explorers. He was careful to label the region now occupied by Tama and the adjoining counties as "unexplored".

One of the most significant features of this re-

markable map is the prominence of the river which "runs centrally" through the country between the Mississippi and the Des Moines rivers. Of this stream, Lea said, "there are two principal branches". Below the junction, the river was "universally called *Iowa,*" but there was some confusion as to which branch should bear that name. Because the east, or what was "usually called 'Red-Cedar Fork'," was "by far the largest of the two", he labelled it on his map as the "Iowa or Red Cedar". The smaller, west fork, "*usually called Iowa River*", he designated as Bison River. It was sometimes referred to, he reported, as the Buffalo River and also as the Horse River.

This uncertainty of nomenclature concerning the beautiful river which gave character to the Iowa District makes Lea's statement ambiguous. Did he mean the Cedar River which he preferred to call Iowa, or his Bison fork which was commonly known as the Iowa River? Perhaps he referred to both streams, as branches of the Iowa River. Certainly he was partial to the euphonious name of Iowa.

J. E. B.

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