

## 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.

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