

The
PALIMPSEST
SEPTEMBER 1935
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THE EDITOR

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

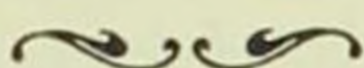
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A Plan That Failed

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
Gang aft a-gley,
An' lea'e us naught but grief an' pain
For promised joy.

Robert Burns was right. The best laid plans of mice and men sometimes go awry. This is true not alone in fallowed fields, where tiny mice may run and play, but in the halls of Congress and in courts of justice, too. While Iowa was still a Territory, Congress sought to improve the navigation of the Des Moines River "from its mouth to the Raccoon Fork" — the present site of Des Moines. To this end, laws were passed, money was expended, and dams were built; but alas, the plans went "a-gley". Elections ensued, committees met, officers reasoned, lawyers argued, and judges disagreed. Meanwhile, Iowa "spent ten years and a million dollars" on an experiment that failed, and the Des Moines River was still unimproved.

Between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers

lies a rolling plain 300 miles wide, extending from central Missouri to the Minnesota River. Centrally through this prairie paradise flows the Des Moines River, the principal stream in the Iowa country. Some of the earliest explorers marked it on their maps, and the fur traders used it as the most direct water route to the interior, as no doubt the Indians had done for centuries. To the pioneers the chief utility of such a large stream so favorably located was as a means of transportation. It is not surprising, therefore, that they were much concerned about its navigability.

When Albert Lea explored the Des Moines River in 1835, he concluded that it was navigable below the Raccoon Fork, though rocky ledges, numerous bars of loose white sand, many snags, and sharp bends would make traffic difficult. Steamboats could usually get up, he thought, during the high-water season in April, May, and June. A channel could be cleared as far as the mouth of Cedar Creek (near the western boundary of Mahaska County) for \$500.

Six years later John C. Fremont, after a careful survey, reported the Des Moines River to be navigable, particularly below Cedar Creek during the spring. At the shallowest place above the Cedar he found a foot of water when the river was very low. Mr. Phelps, who had lived nearly twenty

years on the Des Moines, said that boats could go as far up as the Raccoon Fork. He ran a steamboat to his trading post 87 miles from the mouth. "From these observations", declared Fremont, "it will be seen that this river is highly susceptible of improvement, presenting nowhere any obstacles that would not yield readily, and at slight expense. The removal of loose stone at some points, and the construction of artificial banks at some others, to destroy the abrupt bends, would be all that is required. The variable nature of the bed and the velocity of the current would keep the channel constantly clear."

Meanwhile, steamboat navigation on the Des Moines River had begun. In 1837 the *S. B. Science* took a load of flour, meal, pork, groceries, and whisky up to Keosauqua, which was then the farthest settlement on the river. Probably the rapids at the Great Bend would have obstructed the passage of such a boat, if there had been any purpose in going farther. There is some evidence, however, that a steamboat went up as far as Keokuk's village during a period of high water in the fall of 1837. Several keelboats carried merchandise and produce up and down the river. In 1843 the *Agatha* steamed all the way up to the Raccoon Fork with a cargo of supplies and a detachment of soldiers for Fort Des Moines.

With the opening of central Iowa to settlement in 1843, the need of transportation facilities became more imperative. Railroads were in their infancy and highways hard surfaced with plank cost more than they were worth. The conversion of the Des Moines River into a commercial water route seemed to be the most feasible project. Agitation for improvement by means of dams and locks increased as steamboating developed. Finally, on January 14, 1846, Augustus C. Dodge, the Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Iowa, introduced a bill whereby the United States appropriated alternate sections in a strip of land five miles wide on each side of the Des Moines River to aid in improving the navigation of that stream. This bill became a law on August 8, 1846.

It was clearly understood by all that the proposed improvement should extend from the mouth of the river "to the Raccoon Fork". But the extent of the land grant was not so definite. To be sure, the act specified alternate square miles within five miles of the river. But, just what did that mean? No one seemed to know whether the grant extended only to the mouth of the Raccoon River, to the northern boundary of the State, or all the way to the headwaters of the Des Moines.

At the time the grant was made, the people of Iowa supposed that it embraced only the land be-

low the Raccoon Fork. Governor James Clarke estimated that it would cover "upwards of three hundred thousand acres of the most fertile and valuable land in Iowa". Soon after Iowa was admitted to the Union on December 28, 1846, a legislative committee suggested that the act of Congress granting an equal moiety "on each side of said river" should be interpreted as meaning not only the area below the Raccoon Fork, but the land along the river for the entire distance traversed by the river within the limits of the State.

In accordance with this interpretation of the act, the committee estimated that the lands granted below the mouth of the Raccoon Fork included at least 400,000 acres, and that those above the mouth of the Raccoon constituted an additional area of 560,000 acres. This entire grant, if sold at the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre, would yield approximately \$1,200,000, which would more than pay the expense of the whole improvement program. This glowing report was regarded by some as visionary. A matter of such importance, however, was not to be passed over lightly, and men in public affairs at once began to speculate upon the true meaning of the law, and to estimate the real extent of the grant given by Congress.

Then it was that the question of improving the Des Moines River became a political issue. In

April, 1847, the Democratic State Central Committee gave notice of a convention to be held at Bloomington (now Muscatine) for the purpose of nominating candidates for members of the Board of Public Works. Attention was called to the fact that these officers would be entrusted with the disposal of more than a million acres of valuable Iowa land, and with the expenditure of vast sums of money for internal improvements. It was also suggested that these offices "should be filled by honest and competent men, of correct principles", and emphasis was placed upon the desirability of unity of action among members of the Democratic party in order to secure such men.

The appeal sounded plausible, but it was subject to attack by the opposition party. The editor of the *Iowa Standard*, a leading Whig advocate, endorsed the idea that "honest and competent" men should be selected, but thought they should not be taken "exclusively from the loco foco ranks". Members of the Democratic committee, he said, "know that there are just as many honest and competent men, and of correct principles too, in the Whig ranks as there are in their own. But this is not what they are after. Their object is to prevent, by a union of party strength, the possible election of any honest or competent Whig. That's the English of it." The editor further expressed

the view that the selection of such officers should not be a partisan matter, but that men of experience and common sense should be selected regardless of party affiliation. He thought that the Board should consist of a group of civil engineers rather than a number of "brawling politicians".

A few weeks later the same editor again called attention to the importance of the impending election. "We had no wish", he said, "to see a party contest for the Board of Public Works. But the loco focus would have it so, and they must take the consequences. If they are badly whipped with their own weapons, they must not blame us, we did our duty, and admonished them not to hold a grand State caucus to dictate to 'the democracy'."

The Democrats did not heed the advice of the opposition, and the choice of members on the Board of Public Works was determined chiefly by political affiliation. It soon appeared, however, that the Whig warning that the Democrats might be "whipped with their own weapons" was not well founded, for the Democratic candidates were elected by a substantial majority.

Soon after the election, the Board of Public works selected Samuel R. Curtis of Ohio as chief engineer. A survey completed in 1850 disclosed the fact that the total distance from Fort Des Moines to the mouth of the Des Moines River was

a little more than 204 miles. Between those points the river fell 309 feet.

The plan of improvement proposed the construction of twenty-eight dams and nine locks. From the first dam, at St. Francisville, Missouri, at the head of Nassau Slough, navigable water was to be locked to the Mississippi. Beginning with St. Francisville, each dam was to be of such height as to raise the water to the next dam above. Dam number two was located at Cowpen's Mill near the line between ranges seven and eight, and number three was at Thome's Mill at Athens, Missouri. Number four was a half mile above the site of Farmington, number five at Bonaparte, number six at Bentonsport, and number seven at Keosauqua. Number eight was at Powell's near Kilbourne, number nine at Portland, and number ten at Jordan, one mile above Iowaville. The first seven dams with locks were completed and put into operation, and considerable work was done on dams eight, nine, and ten. Little or no work was done in connection with the other dams, but their locations were designated.

Dam number eleven was to be located at Kalesback near Eldon, number twelve at Rowlands near Cliffland, and number thirteen at the mouth of Sugar Creek, two miles below Ottumwa. Number fourteen was just above Ottumwa where a

canal was planned to shorten the channel. Number fifteen was three miles below Chillicothe, number sixteen also near Chillicothe, number seventeen three miles below Eddyville, number eighteen two miles above Eddyville, and number nineteen at Rocky Ripple west of Givin. Number twenty was at Talley's Ford, where a canal was to lead across a large bend thus shortening the channel. Number twenty-one was to be half a mile above the mouth of English Creek, number twenty-two at Amsterdam, southwest of Pella, number twenty-three at the mouth of Whitebreast Creek where another canal was planned to shorten the route. Number twenty-four was just below Red Rock (near the present town of Cordova), number twenty-five at Bennington near Swan. Number twenty-six was at Lafayette and number twenty-seven was at Dudley southwest of Adelphi. Number twenty-eight near Levey raised the water to the Raccoon Fork.

Mr. Curtis took a very optimistic view of the project, declaring that the valley drained by the Des Moines River was "exceedingly fertile and very extensive" — that no other country could produce more agricultural wealth. Taking all things into consideration he said it was "mathematically certain" that the Des Moines River could be made a great thoroughfare for the transportation of mid-western produce.

The glowing reports of the country and the advantages to be gained by improving the river stimulated a greater interest in the project. The General Land Office, asked to interpret the extent of the grant, declared that it went as far as the northern boundary of Iowa. Notwithstanding that opinion, however, the Federal Government placed on the market some of the Des Moines River improvement land above the Raccoon Fork, and about 25,000 acres were sold. Meanwhile work continued on the improvement project. By December 1, 1848, land sales to the extent of \$50,151 had been made. The sum of \$34,996 had been paid for river improvement and salaries and there was a balance of \$15,155 in the treasury.

It soon became apparent that land could not be sold fast enough to meet the expenses of the work that had been undertaken. To meet this situation the Board of Public Works recommended to the General Assembly that bonds be issued pledging, as a guarantee of payment, the proceeds of the lands and the tolls to be received from the improvements. This was opposed as being "anti-democratic" and "unpolitic". A controversy ensued and the Board was reorganized. This was followed by another ruling by the Federal Government that the grant extended from the mouth of the Des Moines River to its source in Minne-

sota. But before this opinion could be confirmed another decision came to the effect that the grant in fact extended only to the Raccoon Fork.

Meanwhile floods damaged the work already under way. In 1849 several dams were washed out. Some of the contractors asked that they be permitted to relinquish their contracts, others asked for damages. It was clearly apparent that any relinquishment and re-letting would be expensive in view of the constantly rising prices. It was also clear that increased funds would be needed very soon or the whole project would fail. Members of the Board of Public Works thought of borrowing money on the unsold lands, but a sufficient amount could not be obtained in that way. They also wanted to issue certificates payable out of future earnings. To this plan members of the legislature objected and as a result the Board was again dissolved and reorganized on a new basis in 1849.

Casting about for a way out, it was learned that the States of Indiana and Illinois, in undertaking similar improvements, had assigned the whole business to private companies. Accordingly, a few months after the reorganization of the Board, the Des Moines River Improvement Project was taken over by the Bangs Brothers and Company of New York, under an agreement to complete

the work in four years. This gave new hope. But it was soon discovered that the contract contained a stipulation that the land below the Raccoon Fork should not be sold for less than two dollars an acre, and lands above the Fork should not to be sold for less than five dollars per acre. This gave rise to dissatisfaction because much of the land was occupied by settlers who had expected to obtain title to land for \$1.25 an acre. When popular excitement was at its height, news came that the Bangs Brothers had failed and their contract was of no effect.

With conditions thus in turmoil and confusion, efforts were made to interest eastern capitalists in financing a completion of the project. To this end a contract was negotiated with Henry O'Reilly, a New York contractor, whereby for a consideration of unsold lands belonging to the improvement, and for the tolls, water rents and other profits arising from the work for a term of forty years, he agreed to complete the project in four years. After signing this contract, O'Reilly returned to the East and, in accordance with the laws of Iowa, organized a company known as the Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company, to which the contract was assigned.

Under this contract it was reasonable for the people to expect that the work of river improve-

ment would be rapidly carried forward to a successful conclusion. These hopes, however, were of brief duration, for misunderstandings and disagreements soon developed among members of the company, and numerous accusations of mismanagement and graft were made. At a called session of the General Assembly in 1856, Donald Mann, a stockholder of the company, memorialized the legislature to correct the " manifold abuses " of which he declared the directors of the company had been guilty.

This memorial alleged that the company had issued " about \$1,470,000 or 14,700 shares of stock, on which the sum of \$20 on each share was ' acknowledged to have been paid ' — amounting in all to \$314,000 — when in truth no such amount had been or was expected to be received, there having been only 5 per cent paid for the stock instead of 20 per cent, and but \$78,500 received instead of \$314,000, as represented to ' the public and to individuals ' . Even the ' 5 per cent ' *said to have been paid in* when the Charter or Certificate of Incorporation was filed and published at the organization of the Company, was not *actually paid in by some of the managing Directors and members of the Executive Committee for many months* after that period." It was further alleged that the books of the company were

not properly kept as required by law, and that by collusion with some of the managers of the company, the treasurer had loaned large sums of money to members of the executive committee.

Henry O'Reilly, the organizer of the company, likewise petitioned the legislature to investigate the proceedings of the corporation. He expressed the opinion that a thorough investigation "will exhibit a remarkable degree of recklessness in violating *codes, laws, charters and contracts*". Indeed, he declared, "there is scarcely an important provision of the *Code of Iowa* (applicable to corporations); scarcely an important point in the *Des Moines Improvement Laws*; scarcely an important provision in the contracts which the Company agreed to fulfill; scarcely an essential provision in its own By-Laws, or even in the *Charter which gave it legal existence*; which has not been violated, and violated with recklessness that will form a memorable feature in the history of Iowa."

In January, 1857, Edwin Manning, the Commissioner of the Des Moines River Improvement, presented to the legislature an extensive report in which he showed that prior to the organization of the Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company, the State through its Board of Public Works had carried on the improvement program for nearly six years and had expended about \$475,-

000. In addition to this, the Navigation Company had spent a substantial sum. Indeed, he declared "an aggregate outlay of the State and the Company, of nearly Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars" had been made, and comparatively little had been accomplished.

In 1858 the General Assembly, feeling that the whole project had failed, authorized a committee to make a "full and final" settlement in the matter. It was then agreed that the company should execute to the State "full releases and discharges of all contracts, agreements and claims with or against the State", including rights to water rents and the lands connected with the improvement except such as were by the State secured to the company. It was also agreed that the State should certify and convey to the company, all lands granted by Congress in 1846 except the lands sold prior to December 23, 1853. The company agreed to release all material and to pay the State the sum of \$20,000 with which to liquidate existing liabilities. When these transactions were completed, the company was to be released from further obligations.

On May 3, 1858, Ralph P. Lowe, Governor of Iowa, executed fourteen deeds conveying to the company the lands in question. In January, 1860, the Governor reported that all transfers had been

executed and all payments made by the company. Meanwhile, settlers claimed title to their farms either from the State or the Navigation Company. A little later railroads came, also claiming title through this area. As a result, land titles were in the courts for many years.

With the dissolution of the O'Reilly contract and the attempt at settlement, however, the Des Moines River Improvement project, as such, came to an end. Commenting upon this situation years later, Cyrenus Cole said: "The State had spent ten years and a million dollars to learn that politicians are not transformed into business men by being elected to offices with big names." Iowa historians will long remember this project as a plan that failed.

J. A. SWISHER

The Switzerland of Iowa

It is a widely prevalent belief among those who have never been in Iowa that our State is a monotonous plain entirely devoid of scenic beauty and worth-while interest.

It is true that its general surface is a great plain — a part of the prairie area which included nearly seven-eighths of Iowa and large parts of surrounding States — and it is a pity that somewhere within our limits there is not yet preserved a larger tract which would give even to the present as well as to coming generations some concept of the beauty and the splendor of the floral panorama which spread from border to border, displaying its maze of color and charm in never-ending variations in tint and shade from early spring until late autumn.

But this plain is broken here and there to give further attractive variety to the picture. True, we have no great mountain chains, the difference between the highest and lowest points in the State being scarcely 1200 feet; and we have no great water areas, though we have inviting lakes and streams whose attractiveness will fully return when, and if, the plans now being made for the

restoration of their natural purity are finally consummated.

But we have miniatures quite suggestive of these greater features, or possessing qualities of their own. Thus the hills and bluffs extending along the Missouri River from Hamburg to Sioux City, and culminating in the Joy Creek region near the Big Sioux, present combinations of prairie and forest in deep canyons and on towering domes and massive ridges — a picture both impressive and unique.

The valleys of the Des Moines, the Iowa, the Cedar, the Upper Iowa, and other tributaries of the Mississippi contain many beauty spots in which cliff and valley and forest and water combine to offer beauty and comfort to the visitor. This type culminates in the northeastern part, in what is known as the "Switzerland of Iowa", and within this rugged area there is no part which compares in varied interest with the vicinity of McGregor. Here we have an unusual combination of interests — scenic, historic, and scientific — and it has for years been the seat of the Wild Life School at McGregor, which has done so much to stimulate and develop interest in conservation, and particularly in the preservation of examples of our natural areas.

The area is a veritable treasury of historic

events. Here Marquette, coming down the Wisconsin River, first saw the land now called Iowa — an event which the neighboring town of Marquette commemorated by adopting his name; here Basil Giard received a land grant from the Spanish government of Louisiana, and later, when Louisiana was ceded to the United States, the title to this land was confirmed, one of the two oldest in Iowa; there, on the Wisconsin side of the great river is located Prairie du Chien, with its historic connections with Indian wars, for many years the great distributing point for all the Northwest, reminders of which still exist in the ancient warehouse, the old hotel, and the traces of Fort Crawford; here Lieutenant Pike stopped on his journey to the upper stretches of the Mississippi Valley, and the great bluff opposite the mouth of the Wisconsin still bears his name, now Pike's Hill, but for many years known as Pike's Peak; portions of this general area were included in the "Neutral Ground", established to separate the Sioux and eastern Iowa Indian tribes and check the ancient warfare between them; and here are the old military trails which remind us of the period when our government attempted to pacify the warring Indians. It is also rich in reminiscences of the experiences of the early pioneers and rivermen who first faced the uncertainties and the

dangers of a new and not always friendly region.

Nor is all the historic interest centered in the white man alone. There are here important records of the aboriginal race, not inscribed on clay tablets or parchment rolls, but written in the remarkable groups of mounds, many of them of the effigy type, the knowledge of which has been splendidly clarified through the researches of Dr. Charles R. Keyes of Cornell College.

Intimately connected with these human interests are those related to the natural history of the region which are generally included under the heads of geology and biology. A person interested in nature study or in scientific research can find abundant opportunities for the gratification of his needs in any of these fields.

Older geological history is well revealed in various sections, that at Pike's Hill showing four geological stages, beginning with the Cambrian St. Croix sandstone as the lowest member, while not far away the Pleistocene deposits may be studied in sections showing two drift sheets and loess. In addition to this there are exceptional opportunities for the study of physiographic problems.

In the biological field, specimens of our native fauna are present. Birds and insects are especially frequent, and land and freshwater mollusks

are quite abundant. All other groups of inland forms are also represented, though perhaps in lesser numbers.

The region is especially rich in plants, the varied topographic features offering a great variety of habitats. The swamps and lagoons and the sand-flats of the great valley; the wooded slopes and sheltered canyons; the varied cliffs and ledges; and the prairie openings which here and there break the continuity of the upland forests — all offer their quota of characteristic plants, imparting especial richness and fullness to the flora of the region.

This is, moreover, the meeting ground of the floras of the northeast, the southeast, and the west. Here the southerly swamp white oak and the lotus-lily barely invade the area, while the northerly white pine, white birch, and common juniper prosper, together with the pasque flower and other representatives of the westerly prairie flora.

Here are still preserved some of the plants which are now very rare in Iowa, such as the cardinal flower, the lady's slippers, the ostrich fern and others, and everywhere flowering plants, ferns, mosses, fungi, and lichens are especially abundant. This is, indeed, the botanist's paradise!

Nor are these the only outstanding advantages which the region offers. By no means the least of

them is its scenic wealth. Everywhere there are local gems to which verdant woods, brilliant flowers, rugged cliffs, rippling streams, and cooling springs contribute.

But there are also larger scenes which rival the finest in all the Mississippi Valley. There is no more magnificent view in Iowa than that which may be obtained from Pike's Hill. Here the majestic river has assisted in carving out a great valley, bordered by broken lines of hills and bluffs extending as far as the eye can reach. To the east lie the bluffs of the Wisconsin side, carpeted on their exposed sides with prairie, but below is the broad tributary valley of the Wisconsin, in the Wisconsin State Park, somber with the dark green of a heavy forest; on the Iowa side the almost continuous hills and bluffs have the dark green of their forest covering only rarely broken by clefts in the bluffs, or by small prairie openings; while the broad valley between shows the great river, closely crowding toward the Iowa side, with its wooded islands, its bayous and lagoons, and bordered on the east by the joint Mississippi and Wisconsin River sandy plain, on which in the distance may be seen the city of Prairie du Chien. The scene is marvelous and inspiring if viewed in the summer when the vegetation is fresh and green, but when the early autumn frosts have pro-

duced their color miracle, the bluffs are gorgeous in their raiment of autumn foliage! Nor does the region lose its inspirational power and value when the mantle of snow has reduced its color scheme to a uniform white. It is worth many miles of travel to view this scene at any season of the year!

The recreational possibilities of the region are also noteworthy. There are innumerable attractive spots for picnicking; many winding paths and delightful prospects lure the lovers of outdoors upon long hikes; the great river invites boating and water sports; and good roads lead in all directions.

Much of this region does not encourage economic development, but its natural beauties are a wonderful asset and should be preserved. This has been appreciated by local residents for many years. It gave inspiration to the establishment of the Wild Life School; it has resulted in the dedication of the local part of the Munn estate, including Pike's Hill, to the public as a wild life preserve; and it induced the Chapins to donate a smaller tract at McGregor for a similar purpose.

The Munn tract is now under the direct control of the government as a national preserve, but its supervision has been found difficult and inadequate. Some have proposed that the United States government should turn this over to the

State and that the preserve should be increased by the addition of more of the bluff area, thus making it one of the finest State parks and preserves in the Mississippi Valley. If this opportunity is offered, it should by all means be accepted and the tract placed under the control of the State Conservation Commission.

The greater area to be included offers little promise of economic development and it forms the very heart of the great scenic region of which it is a part. In any event it should not be at the mercy of the greed or self-interest of individuals, but should be consecrated to the service of the people of the State as a whole, serving as a great inspirational, educational, and recreational center, now and in the future.

If we can accomplish this and then, before it is too late, secure somewhere in the northwestern part of the State an adequate tract for the restoration and preservation of a bit of true prairie, we will have erected a monument in memory of our pioneer settlers which will ever keep before us an example of the natural conditions which attracted them and led them to lay the foundations for a great Commonwealth. These preserves should be dedicated to them.

Nor is the value of such tracts wholly sentimental. Their immediate value lies in two types of

service. First, they may serve as recreational centers to bring rest and wholesome pleasure, especially to those who can not travel great distances in search of these advantages. Secondly, they should become informational centers, not only to the scientist but to every citizen, where a better understanding of the world in which we live would be secured. For let us not forget that we grow our crops and carry on various activities under the very condition illustrated in such preserved tracts. Their study and understanding will lead us far toward a better use of our opportunities and the avoidance of the repetition or perpetuation of some of our costly past errors.

I have known the McGregor region for nearly half a century, and as the passing years slip into eternity its charm does not diminish — nay, it increases with the destruction of the many smaller areas of like interest, standing out all the more prominently because of their disappearance. Its chances for preservation are increased by the fact that so much of it promises little economically. Let us learn to know it, let us develop a full understanding of its many values — and then let us preserve it and insure its blessings for the people of the State before some reckless experimenter destroys much of its value under the pretext of “developing” its possibilities.

Northeastern Iowa contains many other points of interest which can only be mentioned here. Most of them can be reached by good roads. Clayton, Allamakee, and Winneshiek counties, with portions of the neighboring counties, are especially rich. The entire Mississippi River front offers majestic bluff scenery; the valley of the Upper Iowa presents a number of striking and beautiful scenic pictures, such as the balsam cliffs at Bluffton, the city park and Dunning Spring at Decorah, and the lower part of the deeply cut valley near New Albin; the view of Paradise Valley in Bixby State Park; the drive on Highway No. 9 along the high ridge east of Waukon and down the valley of Village Creek to Lansing; various points along Yellow River, notably at the Stone House and near its mouth; portions of the valleys of the Volga and of Turkey River, particularly in their lower courses; and many others. The ice caves of this region are worthy of special attention, particularly those in the Bixby State Park and at Decorah. At the outer fringe of this area, and within easy reach, is the Backbone State Park in Delaware County.

The Switzerland of Iowa is worthy not only of the attention of the people of Iowa but of outside visitors as well.

B. SHIMEK

A Winnebago Encampment

Although the Winnebago Indians were removed from the Neutral Ground in 1848, wandering bands often returned to their former hunting grounds. In the spring of 1858 the editor of the Republican Intelligencer visited an encampment near St. Charles, now Charles City, and reported the incident in his paper. — The Editor

A ride of fifteen minutes, the other day, brought us to an encampment of the Winnebago Indians. It occupies a retired and protected spot in the timber on the Cedar River, about one mile north of town. The band, numbering thirty-two, all told, are a part of the once powerful tribe of Winnebagoes, and are on a visit to their hunting grounds. As we neared their encampment, and saw the smoke curling from their wigwams, we thought of the time when beautiful Iowa was one vast wilderness — unadorned by art and unadmired by eye of white man — when the Indian hunter's shout only awoke the solitude. We saw him return to his lodge loaded with the spoils of the chase, to lie down to rest. We saw him awake from sleep and gird about his loins the cruel tomahawk and scalping-knife, while piercing war-whoops rang from

dell to dell. We heard the red man's cry of death — the white man's shout of victory.

Again we looked, and the colossal wheel was set in motion whose accelerated revolutions were to keep time with the pulsations of a new State's ambitious heart and hurry forward the multitudinous throng that were to people Iowa's vast domains, develop her resources, and build up her cities — landmarks of her liberation from the darkness of barbarism.

Applying for admission at the most conspicuous of the tents, we were given to understand that we were welcome. The Indians were variously engaged — making fishing tackle, dressing game, cleaning guns, and arranging their toilette. Wapinicon, or "Captain Jim", as he is familiarly called by the whites, whose acquaintance we made some two years ago, coming in and recognizing us, invited us to take a seat by his side and smoke with him the "pipe of peace". This served to make us socially inclined, so with Captain Jim's English and our knowledge of the Indian vernacular, we whiled away an hour in agreeable conversation.

From him we learned that the Winnebago tribe were now reduced to about 2000. The majority of them are on the Indian reservation in Minnesota. Two or three of their most noted braves are now at Washington. There are nineteen chiefs in the

tribe, each of whom is in the habit of visiting the white settlements on a trading and begging tour, three or four times a year. During these expeditions they seldom if ever commit depredations of any kind, which fact secures to them many favors from the whites.

Their tents are constructed by enclosing with poles set in the ground a room fifteen to twenty feet in diameter. The tops of the poles are tied together and then the sides covered with canvas, skins, or mats made of bark. A hole is left at the top for the smoke to escape. Their fires are on the ground in the center of the tent and are kept burning day and night. Over the fires are hung large wooden hooks on which they boil their samp, roast and smoke their venison, &c. They sleep on blankets spread on the ground, with but little other protection from the cold. In the winter they are rather filthy in their habits; in the summer they pay more regard to cleanliness.

Playing cards is a favorite pastime with the Indians, and it frequently affords them much profit. They are generally more skilled in the use of the "primmers" than the whites. The chief of the band was absent, hunting, much to our regret. He is called Bradford by the whites — his Indian name we did not learn. He speaks English quite fluently, and can read and write.

Noticing a very aged squaw, we made inquiries concerning her and learned that she was the medicine woman attached to the band. In her deportment she differed from the others, as she took no notice of what transpired around her.

Thanking Captain Jim for his attention, and shaking his hand we bade him good bye, and left; our mind being filled with reflections upon the mighty change a few years have wrought in the condition of the red man, and in the character and aspect of this country.

A. B. F. HILDRETH

Comment by the Editor

RIVER TRAFFIC

The navigation of inland rivers has always been characterized by contradictions. When the water is high enough for easy navigation, towns and fields are likely to be flooded; when agriculture and business flourish, the waterways are often too shoal to serve the waiting commerce. Though the vehicles of river transport have progressed in speed and capacity from rowboats and rafts to steamboats and barges, they have never kept pace with the demands of expanding trade. In regions no farther north than Iowa, ice inexorably seals the passageway when human needs of communication are often most imperative. Innumerable bridges provide conspicuous evidence that waterways, though the most universal medium of travel, are also obstacles to rival ways of intercourse.

The most remarkable paradox of all, however, is to be found in the history of river transportation. The period of heaviest traffic occurred before the navigation of inland streams had been "improved". Steamboating flourished in the upper Mississippi Valley during the three or four decades before the railroads superseded the water routes. In those days the rivers were full of snags,

reefs, and shifting sandbars. Channels were unmarked by buoys or lights. According to Mark Twain, river navigation demanded exact knowledge of every riffle, bend, island, sandbar, snag, hill, point, woodpile, and tall tree, in fog and sunshine, by day and night, in flood stage and low water, upstream and down for hundreds of miles. Steamboats sometimes ran aground; delays occurred; contact with remote communities depended upon the vicissitude of spring freshets: and yet this was the golden era of river transportation when natural hazards were unmitigated by political solicitude.

About the time that steamboating began to decline, the government started to improve the rivers. Even though the Des Moines River improvement project was undertaken in the heyday of river traffic, the need of navigability waned before the work could be accomplished. Millions of dollars have been spent to dredge sandbars, blast reefs, remove snags, build dams, construct levees, and mark channels. But the popularity of river shipping seems to have disappeared around the bend with the romance of the side-wheel packet.

Genius can not be created by legal fiat: neither can minor tributaries, half filled with soil from cultivated fields, be converted into commercial thoroughfares by Congressional appropriations.

J. E. B.

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