

## A Commonplace Calendar

*The history of 1838 ended, as it began, in political, economic, and spiritual pioneering; but the daily lives of ordinary folks were filled with commonplace tasks and events of personal importance.*

*Saturday, December 1.* Education, declared the editor of the *Burlington Gazette*, is essential if "those high and important duties which devolve necessarily, on the inhabitants of a *free* country" are to be performed with "talent, taste and moral worth". § The weather turned cold. Large cakes of ice filled the river at Dubuque. At Burlington T. S. Parvin commenced to keep his daily "Journal of the weather". § Wells were so scarce in Dubuque that drinking water was being sold. § The Burlington public land sale ended, and speculating strangers departed. § Bayless & Cooper offered fifty lots for sale in the "flourishing town of Bloomington" and a fine claim at "Tameytown Prairie" five and a half miles up the river from Burlington. § Dubuque merchants were "never so destitute of goods", but E. Mattox had got his supply early and remodelled his new store "in a plain and neat style". § The Iowa Thespians opened the season at the Shakespeare House with "Intrigue" and "'Tis all a Farce".



*Sunday, December 2.* The Reverend Mr. McMurtry preached in the Burlington Methodist Church at eleven o'clock, and Mr. Scott of Mount Pleasant immediately after him. § Patrick O'Mara and Mary Nagle were married in Dubuque.

*Monday, December 3.* The council had not met for so long that the citizens of Burlington had almost forgotten they had a mayor and aldermen. § The Burlington land office issued a notice that it would be open for private entry of land at nine o'clock on January 2, 1839.

*Tuesday, December 4.* A man convicted of larceny "broke jail and made his escape". § The House of Representatives adopted a memorial to Congress asking that preëmption rights be extended to mineral lots of ten acres to protect miners' claims. § John S. David hired Robert Burns to superintend his stable just west of the printing office in Burlington. He had the best arrangement of stalls and the "most accommodating and industrious ostlers" in the Territory.

*Wednesday, December 5.* John Chapman and Elizabeth Hetherington were married in Dubuque. § A House committee on expenditures estimated that the expenses of the legislature would exceed \$32,000. § Representative Swan proposed that the engrossing clerk be "employed



in punctuating the different bills of this House."

§ T. S. Parvin was busy reading the first volume of De Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*.

*Thursday, December 6.* The river at Burlington was covered with ice. § Governor Lucas informed Secretary Conway that certificates by the presiding officers of the legislature were not sufficient vouchers for the disbursement of Territorial funds. § W. S. Edgar, proprietor of the new Burlington Drug Store, invited physicians and others to examine his stock of fresh medicines.

*Friday, December 7.* The investigating committee of the legislature discovered nothing that "could in the least detract from the credit" of the Miners' Bank. The cashier announced that "Post Notes of this Bank" would be redeemed on demand regardless of the date of maturity. § Another committee reported that the commissioners had no authority to reject eighteen votes for Rockingham which gave Davenport a majority of three in the county seat election last August. § John E. Miller, one mile north of Dubuque, took up a stray red ox with short horns. § R. W. Patterson offered the "highest price" for green or dry hides.

*Saturday, December 8.* The Legislative Assembly in joint session censured the Governor for opposing their authorization of expenditures,



which convinced Editor Logan that "prodigality, rather than economy is the characteristic of a majority of the members." § T. S. Parvin began to read Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*. § Sheriff Martin Godard warned citizens of Scott and Clinton counties to pay their taxes to him before December 25th. § James McIntosh served notice that he would prosecute trespassers who cut wood on his land near Davenport. § Justice of the Peace W. H. Morrison married Thomas Moore and Rebecca Brady at Dubuque.

*Sunday, December 9.* A minister of the Dutch Reformed Church preached at S. Barkley's hotel in Davenport.

*Monday, December 10.* A "Rail Road Engineer" wrote a letter to the editors of the *Iowa News* reciting the benefits of a railroad between Lake Michigan and Dubuque. He thought Congress should grant "a few townships of wild land" to pay for it. § Sheriff B. W. Gillock declared that he would offer for sale from day to day at the courthouse door in Fort Madison all lands in Lee County on which taxes were delinquent. § Several valuable lead deposits were discovered near Dubuque in crevices running east and west. § John McGary bought a mineral claim "known as the O'Connor and Kief lot".

*Tuesday, December 11.* The weather was fine



at Davenport, "air dry and bracing, the atmosphere unclouded and serene", but the river was finally closed with ice. § In response to a request from a farmer on the Little Maquoketa, who was concerned with the disparity between the prices of agricultural products and the cost of merchandise in the stores, the *Iowa News* published current retail prices in Dubuque. Salt was listed at \$5 a bushel, fresh pork at \$9 a hundred, beef at \$6 a hundred, country flour at \$12 a barrel (for which local millers got only \$4), corn 75 cents a bushel, oats 75 cents a bushel, potatoes 72 cents a bushel, butter 50 cents a pound, wood \$3.50 a cord, sugar 20 cents a pound, and coffee 25 cents a pound.

*Wednesday, December 12.* David Hender-shott bought from a farmer in Van Buren County forty bushels of Baden corn which he offered to sell for seed at \$3 a bushel. § T. S. Parvin began reading Niebuhr's history of Rome.

*Thursday, December 13.* James G. Edwards issued a "specimen number" of his Burlington *Patriot* to ascertain "whether such a paper will be sustained in this community." He thought a Whig journal deserved support, but his Fort Madison *Patriot* had failed "purely for the want of patronage and the obscurity of its location." § Old members met to reorganize the Dubuque Ly-



ceum. § The death of Mrs. Mary Delashmutt was mourned by "a large circle of friends".

*Friday, December 14.* Burlington merchants were hauling goods in wagons from the crowded warehouses below the rapids. § The Governor approved an act of the legislature authorizing Joseph Williams and Charles A. Warfield to operate a ferry at Bloomington for twenty years.

*Saturday, December 15.* With "friendship for their motto, amusement their aim", the Iowa Thespians beguiled "the tedious moments of a dull Saturday evening" with their performance of "England's Iron Days" in a "style not often surpassed". The boy who danced the hornpipe was twice encored. § A two-days Methodist meeting was begun in Burlington at candle-lighting. § A three-room house on Main Street was advertised for sale; Charles W. Pierce and James Prine moved their cabinet shop and chair factory to Second Street above the land office; William J. A. Bradford opened a law office in the "Executive Buildings adjoining Burlington House"; but not a store in the capital advertised any Christmas toys.

*Sunday, December 16.* The Reverend Mr. Arrington preached a "sound and practical" sermon. § After being delayed a week at the Iowa River and spending another week on the road, Editor Russell arrived at Dubuque from Burlington.



*Monday, December 17.* Mary Walling of Muscatine County transferred her dowry of personal property to her husband. § Miss Mary Ann Barkley, "an amiable and accomplished young lady", died at her father's hotel in Davenport of "abscess of the lungs". § Township plats were received at the Dubuque land office and settlers were invited to make their preëmption claims. § Members of the Dubuque Lyceum enjoyed "a rational, an interesting, and useful hour" discussing the question: "Should any law of imprisonment for debt exist?"

*Tuesday, December 18.* Lamson, Bridgman & Co. had on hand, perhaps for Christmas trade, 20,000 cigars, four boxes of "smoking pipes", ten boxes of "lump tobacco", a big supply of coffee, tea, and sugar, and 300 yards of "elegant Lowell carpeting".

*Wednesday, December 19.* The thermometer registered zero at Burlington. § A sale of property by Richard Barrett of Springfield, Illinois, to William Yokin was recorded at Bloomington. § Twenty or more citizens of any county were authorized by law to form an agricultural society to encourage better methods of farming and stock-raising.

*Thursday, December 20.* Friends who attended the wedding of Amos Matthews and



Amanda Brandon hoped their "love and happiness may increase with age according to the rules of compound multiplication." § Nine-year-old Catharine Jane Sleeth died near Burlington.

*Friday, December 21.* To collect payment of a note for \$952.50 given by Timothy Fanning and Arthur Conway, Patrick Quigley gave notice that he would sell at auction the lot on which the Jefferson Hotel in Dubuque was located. § School committees and trustees were notified by the Dubuque land office to select "good land, as required by law" in certain townships. § Augustus W. Scott, of the Dubuque firm of Scott & Taylor, died at his home, leaving a wife and baby. § The Legislative Assembly adjourned for "an opportunity of enjoying the Christmas holidays."

*Saturday, December 22.* A post office was established at Salem with Aaron Street as postmaster. § Daniel Grandbeck advertised that his wife has left his bed and board "without cause", and warned everybody to give her no credit in his name. § C. F. Rowell, who cleaned teeth without acid and filled cavities "with little or no pain", began to practice his profession at Mrs. Parrott's hotel in Burlington. § David Hendershott announced himself as candidate for mayor of Burlington at the next election.

*Sunday, December 23.* Five degrees below



zero. § T. S. Parvin read a sermon on "Gospel doctrine and Christian duty".

*Monday, December 24.* On Christmas eve, soon after midnight, the new frame house on Fourth Street occupied by Augustus C. Dodge was discovered to be in flames. It burned so rapidly that only a little furniture was saved. Amos Ladd, the owner, estimated his loss at \$1500.

*Tuesday, December 25.* Christmas Day. Governor Lucas signed a law to prevent gambling. § T. S. Parvin loaned Secretary Conway a sermon by Beecher on "Intemperance".

*Wednesday, December 26.* John Carnes and Charles Davis, commissioners of Van Buren County, asked their constituents not to be dissatisfied with their work in locating the county seat. § T. S. Parvin received a copy of *The Last of the Mohicans*.

*Thursday, December 27.* The Legislative Assembly convened. § According to a backwoods lawyer, the penknife quarrel between Conway and the Council was "squashed". § A bill to locate the Territorial capital in Johnson County was reported in the House of Representatives. § Henry Janes and E. O. Janes (administratrix), for the William Janes estate, requested that all debts be paid and claims filed within nine months.

*Friday, December 28.* The R. S. Adams & Co.



shoe store on Water Street in Burlington was open for business.

*Saturday, December 29.* A bright day, five degrees below zero. § Governor Lucas signed laws regulating divorce, legalizing interest rates up to twenty per cent by contract, and establishing a seminary of learning at Wapello. § The Iowa Thespians performed "Pizarro", with the "petite comedy", "Gretna Green", as an afterpiece. § Charles A. Warfield invited orders for 200,000 brick to be burned in his Bloomington kiln before June 1st. § Citizens in Township 70 met at the home of Jonathan Morgan to adopt claim rules.

*Sunday, December 30.* William Vail sold to John Steven his house and farm on the "Little Maquoquita", including "300 rails, 2 pigs, one horse saddle and Bridle, and 2 Cows".

*Monday, December 31.* T. S. Parvin started for Saint Louis with team and wagon to get the stationery he had bought in Cincinnati. Secretary Conway refused to pay for this material or the expenses of Parvin's trip until the goods were delivered. § No marriage licenses were issued in Muscatine County during December.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS