

The Blackhawk Courier

Carefully filed away in the State Historical Society of Iowa newspaper collection is a bound volume of *The Blackhawk Courier* from its inception at Waterloo on January 18, 1859, through No. 47 of Vol. 2 dated December 11, 1860. Although this priceless volume is one hundred years old it will, with the same care and protection, continue to serve scholars a century hence. The ink has not faded and the name of the addressee — Historical Society — is still clearly legible on the top of page one of many issues.

This volume of *The Blackhawk Courier* is the most valuable single source of Waterloo and Black Hawk County history before the Civil War. An examination of the first issue clearly demonstrates that the proprietors, W. H. Hartman and G. D. Ingersoll, believed wholeheartedly in their slogan which appeared on the masthead — “Devoted to General News, Agriculture, Science and the Diffusion of Republican Principles.”

In his “Salutatory” editor W. H. Hartman outlined his motives and objectives:

Like other men, we possess a restless ambition — but we hope, a laudable one. . . . We know too well the obstacles which oppose a young man as he enters upon his

profession in one of the old settled States, to believe that we cannot be able to ultimately accomplish, in this infant State, more for ourselves and for the community in which we may live. . . .

We desire to benefit every occupation, and to render all assistance in our power, to the developing of the unlimited resources of wealth in this County and State. We wish also to help build up, here upon the banks of this crystal Cedar, a populous, wealthy and influential city, the fame of which shall be known as well for its virtues and learning as for its greatness. Hence, we shall endeavor to communicate articles upon Education, Agriculture, the liberal and mechanical Arts, as well as upon the various professions practiced in our midst. In addition to this we shall lend our aid to the dissemination of true religious and political principles — such principles as we in our youth were taught to reverence and admire. As we are devotedly attached to the maxims and principles of the Republican party, we shall zealously labor to make the *Courier* a faithful organ of that party; and while we claim the right to speak our own sentiments freely, we shall not deny the same right to others of different opinions, but invite fair, honest and impassionate discussion. Let it be remembered, then, that we ourselves are not only members of that great party, but that whatever shall emanate, as political matter, from our mind shall be *republican* in spirit. We shall also take much delight in recording all important events as they transpire in our community, in order to keep our Eastern friends well informed of our progress and prosperity. We shall watch with anxiety the changes that are continually taking place in the older States, and for the benefit of our producers, shall give the market prices of Chicago, Dubuque and Waterloo.

In conclusion let us say, that we hope our industry and enterprise will justly merit an extensive patronage; that all

we ask is, if we prove to be of some substantial advantage to this society and to the world, we may be encouraged and supported in our laudable endeavors.

Like so many pioneer newspapers, the *Blackhawk Courier* devoted most of its front page to poetry, essays, and literature. Much of this was pirated from contemporary newspapers and periodicals. Under "Poetical" there was an anonymous poem entitled "The Old Woman to her Daughter," whose moral was good albeit the verse bad. Under "Miscellaneous" there appeared a two-column story on "The Two Homes" which showed the need of love and affection on the part of wife and children if a husband were to succeed.

The content of "The Penalties of Slave Trading" is obvious; at least a half dozen related items appeared on this subject in the first issue.

The decision of the Connecticut Supreme Court that a public schoolhouse could not be used for any other purpose appeared under the caption "Important Decisions."

The fifth column entitled "All Sorts of Paragraphs" contained twenty-two items including the population of Iowa, the value of Minnesota taxable property, the loss of steamboats on Western Waters, the value of California gold reaching New York City, the importation of Africans to Georgia, and the sale of 210 slaves for \$147,000 in South Carolina.

The last two columns featured "House and

Farm" and contained articles on "Don't Use a Check-Rein," "The Gross and Net Weight of Swine," "Profits of Bees," "Liquid Glue," and "Preserving Leather." These were gleaned from the *Ohio Farmer*, *New England Farmer*, *Country Gentleman*, and *Genesee Farmer*. An original discussion of "Sorghum in Iowa" must have elicited the attention of rural readers.

The second page of the *Courier* contained, in addition to the "Salutatory," articles on the "Revival of the Slave Trade" and "Pike's Peak — Another Golden Humbug!" Shorter news items told of a battle of Americans with natives of the "Feegee" Islands and the arrival of the Overland Mail at St. Louis carrying mail from San Francisco dated as late as December 17th.

"Goings-On In Iowa" was a column prepared "solely for the *Courier*." It contained nine articles on such varied subjects as banking, robbery, and murder. Statistics from the *Dubuque Express & Herald* indicated 114 individuals had been committed to the Dubuque County Jail during 1858. Of this number seven were charged with murder and four with assault, with intent to kill. According to the *Express & Herald* — "The nativity of the persons committed is reported as follows: Germans, 12; Americans, 11; Negroes, 1; English, 5; Irish, 80; unknown, 15; two persons were sentenced to death, but neither have been executed."

Since the General Assembly was in session in

January, 1859, it is not surprising that several columns should be devoted to the "Laws of Iowa." The first issue of the *Courier* contained "An Act To provide a System of Common Schools." Fully one-fourth of the initial *Courier* was devoted to laws relating to education.

Measured in terms of local news the column on "Town and County" on page three of the *Blackhawk Courier* was perhaps the most revealing. The following are illustrative:

☞ The weather for a few days past has been very mild and a little inclined to be stormy.

☞ The Eastern Stage broke through the ice, yesterday afternoon, while attempting to cross the Cedar River at this place, a short distance above the dam. Not much damage was done. The horses, driver, coach, and "all hands," were soon ashore.

☞ Mr. A. H. Marsh, Dentist, at Cedar Falls, whose advertisement will be found in another column, informs us that he will come to Waterloo in a few weeks. He is a good Dentist.

☞ Jesse Clement, Esq., will deliver a lecture before the Young Men's Literary Society, at Cedar Falls, on to-morrow (Wednesday) evening. We have been unable to learn his topic.

☞ Let every one attend the meeting of the Young Men's Literary Society on Thursday evening next. The subject for discussion will be: — "*Resolved, That the Signs of the Times indicate a Dissolution of the Union.*"

☞ Those who send us marriages, deaths, notices of fairs, dedication of churches, religious notices of any kind, or proceedings of meetings, are informed that they will be inserted in the *Courier* free of charge. — Such favors are always thankfully received.

☞ The Independence *Eagle* says that a young man calling himself R. S. Kellogg, claiming to be an authorized travel Agent for magazines, succeeded in swindling some of the citizens of Independence. Look out for him.

In offering to print wedding announcements free the *Courier* departed from the practice of many Iowa editors, some of whom demanded a piece of the wedding cake, others as much as one dollar to print the notice. In the first *Courier* three marriages were recorded:

D. C. Cook to Caroline A. Courson, both of Waterloo.
Henry J. Thompson to Mary Hawkins, both of Union Township.

E. H. Dart to Mrs. Elizabeth Knapp, both of Blackhawk County.

Then as now, the *Blackhawk Courier* was an instrument for good. After summarizing the "Lecture to Young Men" by Reverend J. S. Whittlesey, the *Courier* concluded: "There will be another lecture on next Sabbath evening, and we know of no place where a young man can spend the Sabbath evening more pleasantly or profitably."

Five churches appeared in the *Courier's* Religious Directory.

<i>Church</i>	<i>Minister</i>	<i>Place</i>
Episcopal	B. R. Gifford	A.M. in Day's Hall; P.M. in Capwell's Hall
Congregational	J. S. Whittlesey	In basement of their church
Presbyterian	—————	In Baptist church
Methodist	H. Hood	A.M. in Benight's Hall; P.M. in Court House
Baptist	A. G. Eberhart	Baptist Church

The Young Men's Literary Association received equally warm support from the *Courier*.

Although the prominent literary institutions of our country are not located in our midst, yet we are daily associated with many of their most enterprising and brilliant graduates. . . . No better institution could be established to entertain and instruct any people than that created and supported by the young men of this town. By its debates we are strengthened in our reasoning powers and prepared to take an intelligent and humane position upon all of the questions which enter into the mixed policy of our government; and by its lectures our thoughts are expanded — our hearts improved, and we not only become conversant with the laws of Science, but learn who are the brightest literary lights in our midst, so that we may be induced to strive to improve and elevate our respective professions. For our part, we have been much delighted with the exercises of our Young Men's Literary Association which we have had the pleasure of attending.

The initial issue of the *Blackhawk Courier* contained nine columns of advertising. Lineage rates and cards of Waterloo and Cedar Falls businessmen appeared in the first column on page one. Six

legal firms — Warner H. Curtis, Bagg & Allen, and A. F. Brown of Waterloo, and McClure & Allen, Solomon Lombard, and Charles D. Gray of Cedar Falls — carried cards in the *Courier*. C. J. Plato advertised his banking house, John H. Leavitt was a General Land Agent, while J. H. Brown served as a Notary Public and General Agent.

Four hotels were prepared to comfort man and beast. M. Case, proprietor of the Cedar Valley House in West Waterloo, advertised that the Western Stage Company offices were located in his hotel from which stages arrived and departed "for different points, north, south, east and west." Joseph Henry was the proprietor of the Franklin House in West Waterloo, while J. Pulver owned the Western Hotel in Cedar Falls. George Secord's American Hotel on Main Street in Cedar Falls also served as headquarters for the Western Stage Company.

Doctors and dentists were just beginning to advertise. J. M. Harper, physician and surgeon, had his offices over H. Sherman's Store, and Dr. A. H. Marsh, dentist, was located with Dr. Bryant one door north of Mr. Carpenter's store. Dr. Marsh could insert artificial teeth, "from one to an entire set, on any principle practiced by the profession." He was also prepared to wait upon ladies at their residence, if desired.

Drugs and drugstores were doubtless a boon to the proverbial sturdy, albeit ailing Waterloo pio-

neers. Ayer's Cherry Pectoral was recommended "for the rapid cure of coughs, colds, hoarseness, bronchitis, whooping-cough, croup, asthma, and consumption." Ayer's Cathartic Pills claimed to cure "costiveness, bilious complaints, rheumatism, dropsy, heartburn, headaches arising from a foul stomach, nausea, indigestion, morbid inaction of the bowels and pain arising therefrom." Ayer's Cathartic Pills also promised to purify the blood so as to eliminate deafness, partial blindness, neuralgia and nervous irritability, derangement of the liver and kidneys, gout, and other kindred complaints.

Dr. Morse's Indian Root Pills claimed to have been discovered by "the first man to establish the fact that all diseases arise from impurity of the Blood — that our health, strength and life depended upon that vital fluid." Under the caption "What Are Good Medicines." readers were urged to use Graefenberg Family Remedies and thus avoid "using unknown and dangerous remedies."

In this idyllic age a century ago, the *Blackhawk Courier* carried the advertisement of Professor O. J. Wood's celebrated Hair Restorative which was "the only safe Preparation That does Not Dye, but will restore Gray Hair to Its original color, by Nature's own process."

A number of Waterloo merchants carried advertisements. Thus, W. W. Forry's Cedar Val-

ley Drug Store dealt in drugs, medicines, chemicals, oils, dye woods and dye stuffs, paints and varnishes, perfumery, painter's materials, window glass and putty, fine soaps, fine hair and tooth brushes, paint brushes, camphene, alcohol, burning fluid, turpentine, garden seeds, surgical and dental instruments, and pure wines and brandies for medicinal purposes. All goods were guaranteed pure, fresh, and genuine.

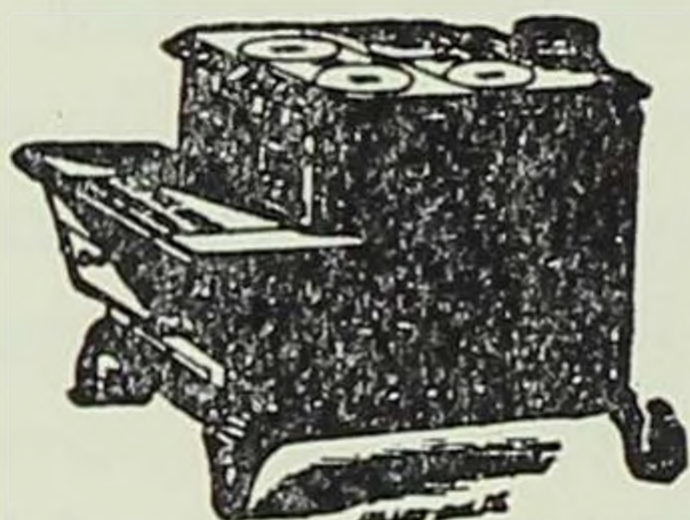
H. Sherman attracted readers to his \$12,000 stock of dry goods selling at cost by captioning his large advertisement — LATER FROM PIKE'S PEAK. Mr. Sherman had dry goods, groceries, crockery, hardware, ready-made clothing, boots and shoes, wooden ware, and a general assortment of all goods kept in a country store. He was prepared to sell these at cost for cash and to accept produce of all kinds in exchange for his goods.

In the weeks that followed, the *Courier* recorded the building of a bridge across the Cedar, the voyage of the *Blackhawk* from Cedar Rapids to Waterloo, the construction of the Dubuque & Pacific westward, and the unrest occasioned by the Pike's Peak gold rush. Such dramatic events as the execution of John Brown, the slave trade, Bleeding Kansas, and the Underground Railroad, caused the political cauldron in Iowa to seethe and boil. Meanwhile, education progressed and the westward moving religious revival permeated the

WATERLOO.

**HARDWARE, IRON,
STOVE
AND
TIN
STORE**

Commercial St., Waterloo, Iowa.



MAVERICK & SIBERLING

AT THE SIGN OF THE

Big Red Coffee Pot,

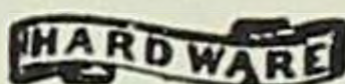
OFFER at reduced prices an extensive assortment of Hardware, unsurpassed in quality and variety, embracing the most

Improved Foreign and Domestic Manufactures,

Adapted for the use of

**HOUSE CARPENTERS,
CARRIAGE MAKERS,
MILLWRIGHTS,
BLACKSMITHS,
MACHINISTS,
FOUNDERS,
FARMERS, &c.**

Our stock of Builder's



is of the

BEST AND LATEST STYLES!

Having just received a fresh and complete stock from the manufacturers, we are prepared to furnish builders any amount desired.

Particular attention is called to our stock of

**Cooking, Office and Parlor
STOVES,**

Which we sell at a small advance above cost and transportation.

We also invite attention to our large assortment of

TINWARE.

As we do the work ourselves, we are enabled to offer Tin Ware as low as any place in the State. Particular attention is given to

**Tin Roofing, Eave Troughs,
Lightning Rods and
Chain Pumps.**

We are also Agents for Manny's Reaper, Mahle's Reaper and Mower, Green & Grava's Plows, manufactured at Cedar Rapids. We sell a Two Horse Surring Plow of Green & Grava's make for \$10, and warrant to give entire satisfaction.

We have on hand a large stock of Scythes, Smiths, Forks, Hoes, Rakes, Spades, Plows, Grain Cradles, &c., &c.

Call and look through our stock before purchasing elsewhere and satisfy yourselves.

Old Copper, Pewter and Castings taken in exchange for goods.

MAVERICK & SIBERLING.

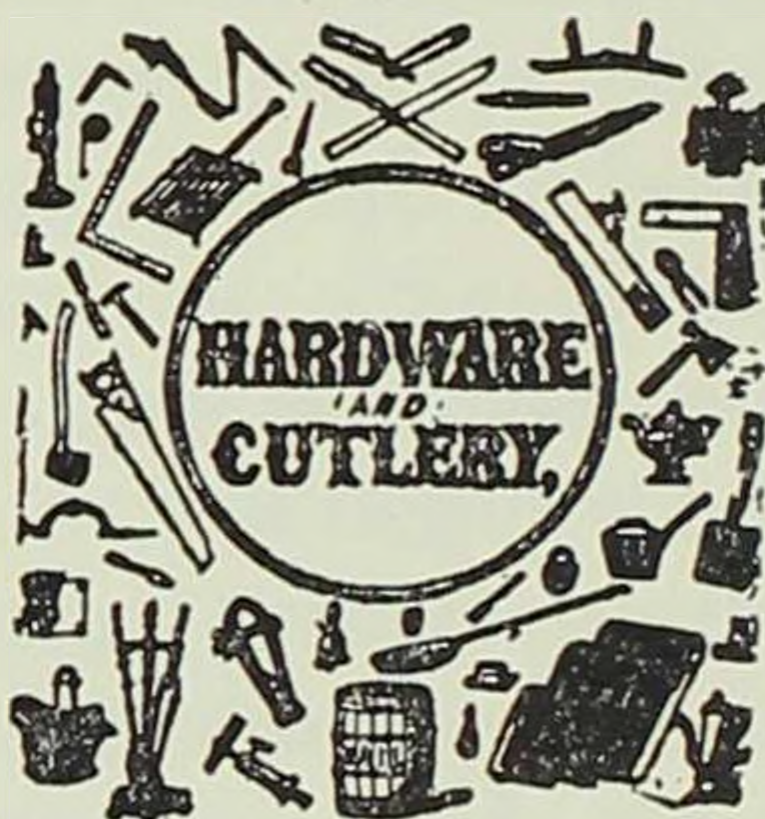
June 1850.

221 v.

WATERLOO.

Great Bargains!

—IN—



GROCERIES!

Boots and Shoes,

AND STAPLE!

DRY GOODS,

—AT—

COUCH & HUNGERFORD'S,

ON MILL SQUARE.

—I—

THE SUBSCRIBERS having connected themselves together for the purpose of doing a

General Merchandising,

Are now prepared to furnish all Goods in their line as

CHEAP OR CHEAPER,

THAN EVER BEFORE OFFERED in

WATERLOO.

—

N. B.—All kinds of

PRODUCE TAKEN

In Exchange for Goods,

AT CASH PRICES!

—

John Deere's Celebrated Plows

FOR SALE,

AT REDUCED PRICES!

—

Storage and Commission.

We will attend to all Goods consigned to our care, with promptness. Our charges shall be low, as we shall do the business for accommodation rather than profit.

COUCH & HUNGERFORD.

A. C. COUCH,

H. S. HUNGERFORD,

} April 1, '59.

town. It was with no little pride that the *Courier* recorded that sixty scholars in the Baptist Sabbath School had learned 7,044 verses of the Bible.

Getting out a newspaper in 1859 was no easy task. Times were hard and too many papers had been established in the previous four years, hence more papers were folding up than were being born. On September 27th the *Blackhawk Courier* apologized for its non-appearance the previous week and the meager variety of matter when it did appear: "The first is accounted for, by the fact that just as we were ready to go to press, we were so unfortunate as to 'pi' about a column of type, which as it was late before, rendered it utterly impossible to get out 'on time'; and the last was caused by the fact that all hands were very busy last week getting up the bar docket for this term of Court."

Possibly the skipping of an issue did not wear too heavily on the editor's soul, particularly with so many delinquent subscribers. On October 18th the *Blackhawk Courier* noted:

WOOD WANTED — Those of our subscribers who have agreed to pay us in wood for their paper, will confer a favor upon us by delivering the same *immediately*.

In a similar vein the editor seemed willing to barter for *Courier* subscriptions with non-subscribers.

TO FARMERS — We will pay on subscription, 50

cents per bushel for any amount of good, merchantable wheat delivered at this office. There is now no excuse for not taking your county paper, when three bushels of wheat will pay for it a whole year.

The editor was quick to note the effect of the rising tide of Republicanism on the Democratic press. On November 1, 1859, the *Blackhawk Courier* observed:

Four Democratic papers in Iowa have suspended publication since the 11th inst., viz; The Burlington *Gazette*, Maquoketa *Sentinel*, Benton County *Democrat*, and Marion *Herald*. Thus, one after another the Democratic papers are falling off before the advance of Republicanism in our State.

Lack of support for two Waterloo papers was noted in the *Courier* of October 11th:

The *Register* of last week announces its suspension, for want of a support sufficiently remunerative to make its continuance a paying business. The proprietor will now devote his time to canvassing for subscriptions to his proposed "Description of Blackhawk County." In this new undertaking, we hope that he will meet with abundant success. Such a work as he proposes is badly needed, and we hope that our readers will subscribe for a liberal number of copies.

Apparently the suspension of the *Register* brightened the prospects of the *Courier*, for plans were promptly made to enlarge the newspaper. On November 1, the *Courier* declared it would skip numbers 43 and 44 — November 8 and 15.

Two months later, on January 10, 1860, editor Hartman announced the close of the first year of the *Courier* with an appropriate editorial:

With this number closes the first volume of the COURIER. During the year which has so nearly passed away, we have labored hard and faithfully to get up a reliable and instructive paper, and one which should prove generally acceptable to its readers. . . . The publication of the COURIER was commenced under disadvantageous circumstances. The past two years have been unparalleled in the history of the West for scarcity of money and general stagnation of business, but thanks to the liberal encouragement of friends we have been enabled to furnish our subscribers regularly with their papers, and to look forward to the coming year with comparatively bright and flattering prospects. . . . Our paper is now one of the largest, and we shall spare no pains to make it, during the coming year, one of the best general newspapers in the interior of the State.

In the six years ending in 1859 fully 138 new newspapers were established in Iowa. In the quarter century between 1836 and 1860 a total of 222 papers had been established of which 118 were discontinued and only 104 remained when the Census of 1860 was taken. The perils encountered in establishing a pioneer press in Iowa is readily demonstrated by the losses incurred in the Waterloo-Cedar Falls area prior to 1860.

The value of the *Blackhawk Courier* can be illustrated by an excerpt from the Census of 1860:

Among the elements which determine the characteristics

of a people, no branch of social statistics occupies a more important place than that which exhibits the number, variety, and diffusion of newspapers and other periodicals. Composing, as they do, a part of the reading of all, they furnish nearly the whole of the reading which the greater number, whether from inclination or necessity, permit themselves to enjoy. . . . It was in this view that Lord John Russell . . . cited the multiplication and improvement in newspapers as gratifying evidences of the augmented wealth and expanding culture of the middle classes in Great Britain. And it was in this view, also, that a great Greek scholar was accustomed to say that a single newspaper published in the age of Pericles (had that age produced any such phenomenon) would, if handed down to us, be a better index of Athenian life and manners than can now be found in any existing memorials of the Grecian civilization.

Throughout its century of publication the *Courier* has faithfully served an ever-expanding community. It has been guided by men of high ideals who have done much to foster the cultural, educational, religious, and social growth as well as the industrial expansion of Waterloo. The State Historical Society of Iowa salutes the *Courier* as the chief recorder of history for Black Hawk County during the past century and wishes it well as it travels down the next one hundred years of pulsating, dramatic history. The Society, in its turn, pledges to preserve the daily record published by the *Courier* as it did when it first received the *Blackhawk Courier* a century ago.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN