

## Jesse Clement—Gleaner

[One of the most prolific letter writers was Jesse Clement, co-founder and editor of the daily and weekly *Dubuque Times* in 1857. Jesse Clement was born in Dracut, Massachusetts, on June 12, 1815, the eighth in line from Robert Clements, the first American ancestor. He worked hard on his father's farm but early showed an interest in books and literature. He studied English in the "Academical and Theological Institution" at New Hampton, New Hampshire, gaining a good education while teaching in various New England one-room schools. He was married in 1841, moved to Buffalo, New York, in 1842, and arrived at Dubuque, Iowa, in 1857.

Jesse Clement became a popular lecturer in many Iowa communities. He traveled widely throughout the northern half of Iowa, visiting scores of communities and writing in great detail about them. His articles appeared in successive issues of the *Dubuque Weekly Times*, chiefly during 1859, under the caption "Gleanings From The Note-Book of the Itinerant Editor." The following excerpts from his articles on Iowa Falls, Fort Dodge, and Decorah appeared in the *Weekly Times* for January 20, 27, and March 10, 1859. THE EDITOR.]

Iowa Falls, Sunday, January 9th, 1859

Iowa Falls has two religious societies, Methodist and Presbyterian, but there being no meeting here this forenoon we went to Georgetown, a miniature village, a mile and a half west, where the

Methodists are holding their Quarterly Meeting. The Presiding Elder of the Iowa Falls District, Rev. D. N. Holmes, who resides here, preached an excellent sermon from the text "Quench not the Spirit." The meeting was held in a log school house, about twenty feet square, and there were something like eighty persons in it, one tenth babies! These little creatures, by sitting in their parent's laps, did not take up much room; nevertheless the house was decidedly crowded. With two or three exceptions, all found a seat of some kind. One man took off his overcoat, folded it up and sat down upon it near the huge stove. Still further to exhibit his inventive genius, he took a small round stick of wood, put one end of it under the stove, and letting it rest upon a very large stick, as a fulcrum, he hung his hat on the other end. He seemed to be as careful of his hat as every man *should* be of his heart; he would not soil it. His overcoat was of less consequence. His inner raiment — the clothing of the soul — he may be more careful of. From the fact that he took notes of the discourse in phonographic style, we conclude he is a man of education — very likely the schoolmaster of Georgetown. He acted as though he was at home in *that* school house.

In the early part of the meeting, we began to think that some of the mothers of the ten babies, were idolaters, and were about to make an offering of their tender ones to Moloch, as they held them

very near the red-hot stove! Finally we concluded that those affectionate mothers had come a long way to church and were roasting the little folk for dinner! They had probably been reading Dean Smith, who, with unbounded sincerity and true clerical gravity, speaks of roasted or fricassed babies as very choice living. Perhaps he is correct, but at present *we* shall stick to fat prairie chickens instead of an oleaginous infant.

In spite of the contortions and agonizing groans of the half roasted infants, the meeting was really impressive. We left the house with an exalted opinion of Mr. Holmes, who is laboring hard in his Father's vineyard — a portion of that vineyard over which the waves of Saxon civilization have but recently flowed.

Rev. Dr. Williams, of the Amity Street Baptist Church, New York, calls the Methodists "the Janizaries of the Protestant Church." They are found in all new settlements, scouting for souls as well as prospecting for farms. The bold, rough, hardy soldiers, scarcely excelled in endurance and self-denying devotion to their Divine Captain's service by the members of the Society of Jesus.

Although but one church edifice has yet been erected in Iowa Falls, the people are a temperate and moral class, and other houses of worship, will, no doubt, be erected another season. As we stated last June, there are no liquor shops in this place, and every man seems to be industrious as well as

sober. The refinements of older, more eastern places are seen here. The first sound we heard last evening, as the coach halted in front of the Western house to let us out, was the thrilling strains of a piano. The proprietor of the house, Mr. H. P. Jones, came from the "City of Elms," and he has brought with him his accomplished sons and daughters, and all the refined agencies of his New England home — the musical instruments, the library and the pictures which graced the "best room" in the old homestead. He has also brought with him the piety which sweetened his eastern home, and its fragrance is witnessed in his wilderness lodge — for Iowa Falls is literally in the woods. A Congregationalist minister, Mr. Bartell, of Chicago, is to settle here in the spring, and four members of Mr. Jones' family will unite with his church by letter. More kind and obliging people we have never met in a public house west of the Mississippi. Mr. J. kept a hotel nineteen years in New Haven.

Fort Dodge, January 12th, 1859

Have ridden fifty miles by stage to-day, from Alden, Hardin county, over gophers' nests and through prairie fires; have been excited, and are decidedly dizzy to-night, and may not write very luminously.

The road from Alden to Webster City leads all the way through an open and sightly prairie, and for twenty-five miles we passed but one house. At

that one we changed horses and took dinner. It is a one story building, about twelve by eighteen feet, with two rooms in it. The "best room" has a small stove in it, where we first saw coal burning in the interior of the State. The room has also two or three chairs in it, the "Pilgrim's Progress," and an imperfect pack of cards!

The other room, the kitchen and dining room, contained a table that was new once; four or five chairs that were whole, no doubt when new, and a piano, which had emigrated from the Atlantic coast. It was of the latest style — twenty years ago or more.

We asked the good lady of the house if she were not lonesome? She answered that she was not, because she had neighbors. We asked her where they were, expecting she would mention a family at Skunk Grove, five miles distant, but she replied that "her neighbors were at Webster City, only eleven miles off!" She is a contented, neat and tidy woman; makes good corn bread, and we hope she may live many years to feed pilgrims on their way through Prairie Land.

We passed Webster City, a new and thriving town on the Boone river, about two o'clock this afternoon, halting only long enough to shake hands with a few warm friends, and to take a glance at the new Town Hall. We shall have our say of that place on our return.

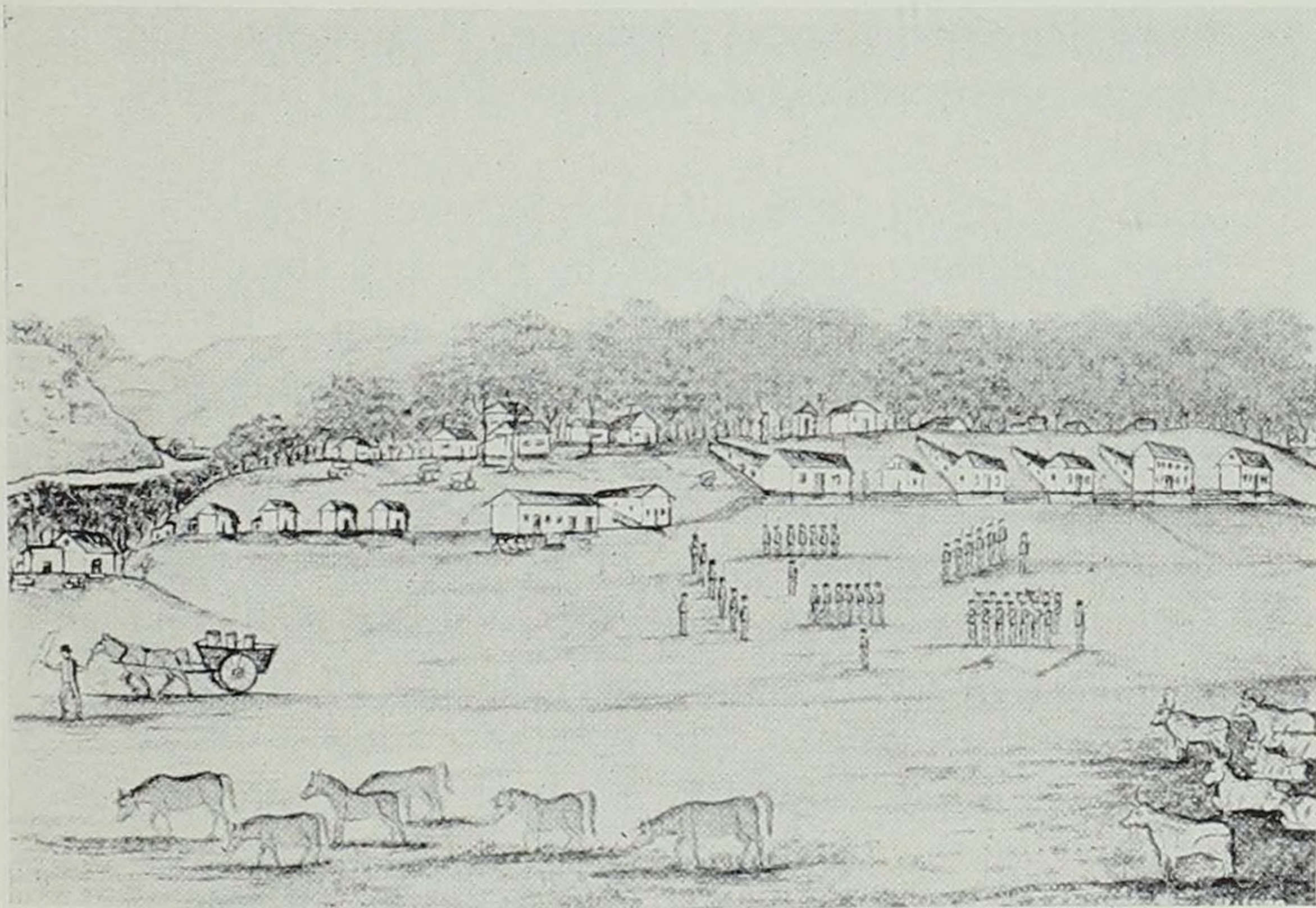
This evening we passed near two prairie fires

and through another. There was no breeze, and the fires spread at a moderate pace; yet as they approached us we could not help feeling a sense of *danger*, which Burke maintains is the mother of the sublime. It is certainly a grand sight to see one of these fires, stretching along for two or three miles, crackling and roaring, and lapping up the tall grass with its forked tongue.

The last ten miles of our ride this evening, was by the light of prairie fires, there being all the time at least two or three of them within a mile or two of us, making the heavens red with their light. We alighted here at the St. Charles Hotel, C. W. White, proprietor, between seven and eight o'clock, and found a good fire in a large chamber ready for our use.

We found plenty of snow one week ago, between Dubuque and Coffin's Grove, fifteen miles west of Nottingham; poor sleighing from the Grove to Cedar Falls; still poorer through Grundy and Hardin counties; and no snow at all this side of Webster City. The stage runs all the way from Fort Dodge to Nottingham on wheels. We have had good, comfortable, two-horse hacks, this side of Cedar Falls, and have had a pleasant ride — thanks to the enterprising Western Stage Company. Frank Dale, the stage agent at Nottingham, and every man this side of there, authorized to receipt fare, are disposed to be accommodating and human.

The valley of the Des Moines river, first seen by the light of prairie fires, aided by the moon, looks very attractive at this point, so far, at least, as natural scenery is concerned, but we shall speak of this feature after a survey of the town by day light.



Fort Dodge — established in 1850.

The village lies upon the east bank of the river. Its site was selected for a military post by Colonel [Richard B.] Mason nine years ago, when all this part of the country was a wilderness. He was then colonel of the 6th Infantry. His design, in fixing a post here, was to keep in check the Sioux

Indians, this being regarded as the neutral ground between them and the Sacs and Foxes. Major [Samuel] Woods came here in the spring of 1850, and established the post. At first he gave it the name of Fort Clarke, but there being a post of that name in New Mexico, it was changed to Fort Dodge, by order of the Secretary of War, in honor of Senator [Henry] Dodge of Wisconsin. The troops were removed to Fort Ridgely in July, 1853.

In the fall of 1856, a land office was established here, and the county took the name of the "Fort Dodge Land District." From a pamphlet before us, we learn that the present town site was purchased, on being vacated by the government troops, by the "Fort Dodge Company," consisting of Hon. Bernhart Henn, Hon. George Gillaspay, Col. Jesse Williams, and Maj. William Williams.

The government barracks, eleven in number, have been converted into dwelling houses, shops, &c. The first building, aside from them, was erected in the spring of 1855, or less than four years ago, yet the town now contains about one thousand inhabitants. We shall have more to say of it to-morrow.

Decorah, February 24, 1859

A very lovely village is Decorah, the shire town of Winneshiek county. Situated on the Upper Iowa river, with high bluffs surrounding it on every side, and the stream itself pursuing its tor-



tuous course through the town, the traveler may search a long time before he finds a village surrounded by finer scenery than is here presented to the eye. The first thing we did this morning, after breakfast, was to ascend to the top of the Court House, and take a view of the country. The prospect is not very extended, but the scenery is highly diversified and replete with beauty. When clothed in her garment of green, Nature, at this point, must be fascinating.

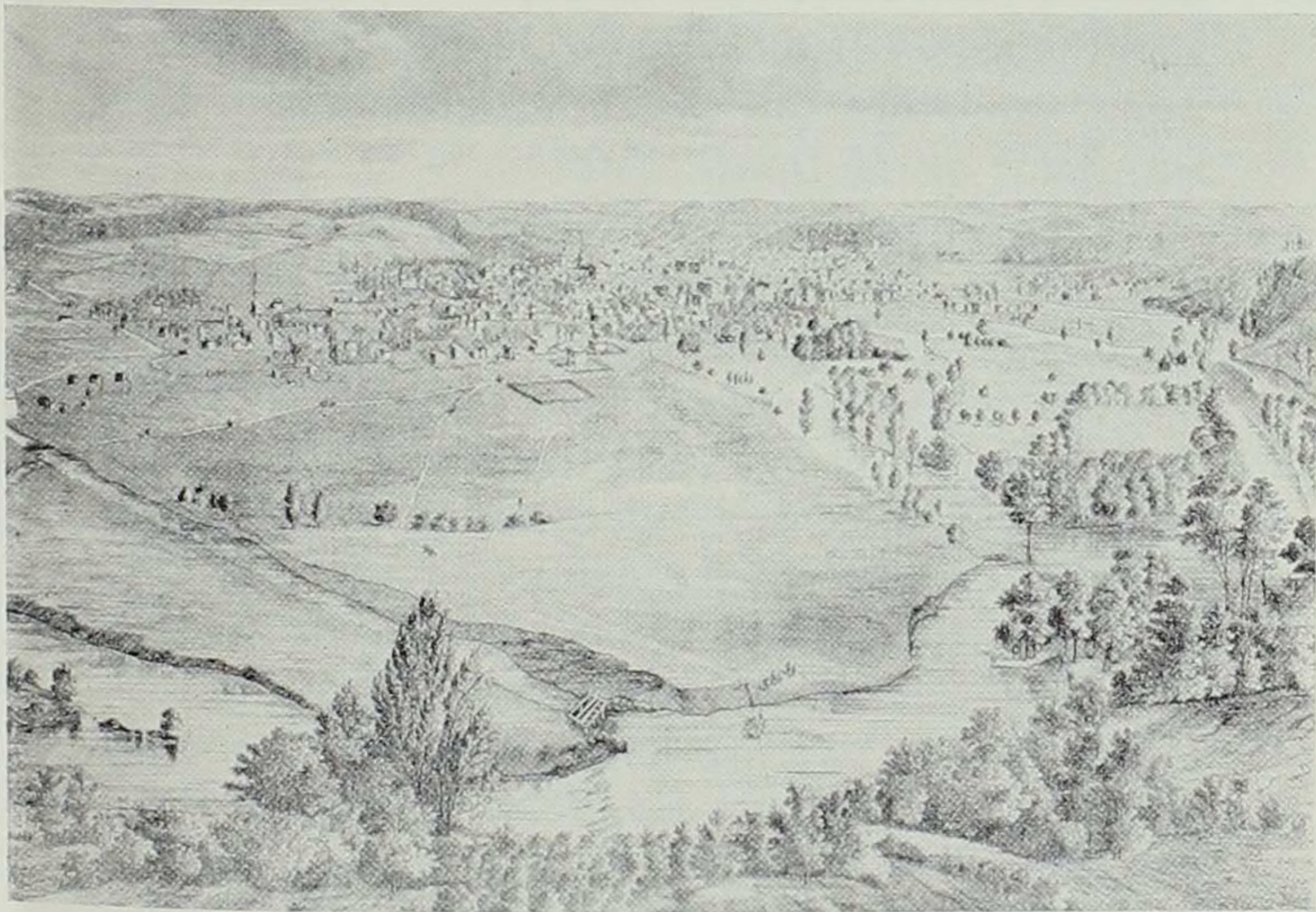
There are several natural curiosities in this neighborhood, some of which we have this day visited, in company with Mr. Belfoy, of the *Decorah Gazette*, and E. E. Cooley and Chas. C. Tupper of the Decorah Bar. We first went to the noted Cave, half a mile north of the town on the opposite side of the river. — The stream being open, we were obliged to go nearly two miles round, and along its steep bank to get to the point. This Cave is in the shelving and rent limestone, seventy or eighty feet above the bed of the river. For sixty rods or more, up and down the stream, huge masses of rock have been separated from the mountainous bed, and tumbled part of the way down to the water's edge, yet still pressing against the solid masonry. Between these loosened rocks and the main ledge, immense fissures are found. One of these is the Cave into which we went, in a slightly descending direction, a distance of ninety or a hundred feet, most of the way in nearly an

erect position. Mr. Cooley led the way with a truncated candle and Mr. Belfoy brought up the rear with a lamp. Having remained in the Cave long enough to write our several names on the smooth limestone, and thus secure immortality, and having whistled in vain to call the rattle snakes from their winter's sleep, we sought the open sky and day light once more. There is more or less ice in this Cave throughout most of the year. Large quantities of it are taken out in the summer, and used for manufacturing ice cream, and for other purposes. We met one man to-day, who took out five barrels of the ice at one time in the summer of 1857. It is said that the ice forms more rapidly in May and in the early part of June than in the coldest winter weather — though we cannot vouch for the accuracy of this statement.

Ascending, with great difficulty, to the top of the bluffs, between two hundred and three hundred feet above the bed of the river, and taking a survey of the town at our feet and of the surrounding country, we sought an Indian trail, and passing westward, through prairie grass higher than our heads, we soon came to the Spring Mill of Mr. A. McCalley — a great curiosity. The water gushes out of the fissures in the rocks, seventy or eighty feet above the surface of the Upper Iowa, in a volume at least fifteen inches in diameter; passes along a flume eight or ten rods, and enters the flouring mill on its top fifty feet from the ground,

where it falls upon the huge water wheel and thus performs its duty. The spring is never dry, and in some parts of the year, when the water is low, it is very clear. Just now surface water from remote sink holes, rushes in, and makes it turbid.

A short distance west of West Decorah, is another Spring Mill, owned by Mr. J. E. B. Morgan. It is almost as much of a curiosity as Mr. McCalley's.



Decorah — from bluff over the ice cave.

Trout Run, two miles southeast of Decorah, is another curiosity, the stream running only about half a mile before it leaps into the arms of the Up-

per Iowa, yet being of sufficient volume to form excellent water power.

Decorah was named for a chief of the Winnebago tribe. He was buried near the public square, partially in one of the streets. Teams have passed over his grave to-day, and the spot is marked simply by a slight depression of the ground. Seven or eight years ago, the surroundings of the grave were in a good state of preservation, and later than that date members of the tribe came here to visit the grave of their brave chief, who went, but a few years ago, to the hunting grounds and serried fields of the Spirit Land.

When Saxon settlers first came here to make their homes, they found Decorah's grave enclosed, with stones over it to keep the wolves from rifling it. Crotched stakes were stuck down at each end of it; a pole was put upon them, and against the pole puncheons of wood were put up, thus forming a roof. The aggressive hand of civilization has scattered these relics of savage custom, and the rude swain drives his team over the bones of the old chieftain! We are happy to learn that some measures are soon to be taken to protect these remains.

In our letter dated at Elkader, the name of that place was carefully spelled eight or ten times, with an E in the last syllable, but the compositor has it Elkador every time. The correct spelling is Elkader as we were informed by Hon. Henry B. Carter.