

The
PALIMPSEST

NOVEMBER 1943

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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

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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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First Iowa Husking Meets

Into the office of Henry A. Wallace, then editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, strolled one day in 1922 an old friend of his, Frank Faltonson, a retired farmer. Frank was "good and mad", he told the editor: he was tired of reading about big corn-husking records made each fall. "Even if they are true," he told Wallace, "who knows how much corn they left behind in the field or how many husks they left on the ears? There ought to be some way to give credit for the best husking job, not just the bushels."

And thus began a series of discussions which eventually led to the birth of cornhusking contests in the Tall Corn State. Faltonson "wanted to debunk the hot stove league records." Wallace desired to give farmers the impetus to husk corn faster and enjoy their work. Because both of the men knew farming, they realized that cornhusking was the most time-consuming task performed by the farmer throughout the corn belt.

In the October 27, 1922, issue of *Wallaces' Farmer*, Editor Wallace announced the first corn-husking contest. "We are convinced that the average farmer in the corn belt might just as well husk ten or fifteen bushels of corn more a day than he is likely to do this year", he wrote in his editorial. "If the spirit of athletic contests could be applied to corn husking, it is probable that we should soon become much more efficient. Athletes tell us that as soon as a man breaks a record in an athletic contest, that all other men show prompt improvement. Part of the improvement is from watching just how he does it, and part comes from a new realization of what is possible for a human being to do.

"We want to see the farmers of Iowa take a great step forward in corn husking efficiency. They spend more time in husking corn than any other work on the farm, with the possible exception of corn cultivation. In spite of this fact, improvements in corn husking have come rather slowly. There is still a doubt in the minds of many men as to whether a peg or a hook is better."

And so *Wallaces' Farmer* offered a prize of \$50 to the Iowa man or boy who husked the most corn in a day. In order to engage in the contest the husker had to declare the number of bushels of corn husked during a day, the number of hours

spent in the field, and submit an affidavit from an official of a county farmers' organization vouching for the reliability of the contestant.

On the frosty morning of November 21, 1922, Louis Curley, a tenant farmer in Lee County, went into his field with his team of horses and husked corn for nine and one-half hours. That evening he casually announced to his nephew that he had husked 205 bushels. His nephew, who was visiting the Curley family and had heard of the husking contest, urged him to send in the record to *Wallaces' Farmer*. Mainly to please his nephew, Curley sent in a sworn statement of his feat and entirely forgot about the contest.

By getting up earlier in the morning than Curley, John E. Pederson, of Iowa County, went into the fields one November day and husked 225 bushels in ten hours and forty-five minutes. Though Pederson, who was not a farmer but a baseball umpire, husked more bushels in one day than Curley, he had husked at a slower rate per hour. The umpire's record was 20.9 bushels per hour; Curley's was 21.6 bushels. Another good record was set by nineteen-year-old Ben Grimmus of Grundy County. He submitted an entry of having husked 176 bushels in eight hours and forty-five minutes.

After examining the records of many entrants

who had participated in the first cornhusking contest, the magazine officials announced that Louis Curley was the winner of the first all-day corn husking contest.

Faltonson, after hearing that the Lee County farmer had been declared to be the prize-winning cornhusker of Iowa, expressed disapproval of the indecisive features of the contest. He said he wanted to know how clean a job of husking the men were doing and how much corn was left in the field. He therefore proposed that the huskers meet in the same field and husk corn under inspection for a certain period of time. In order to please Faltonson and partially to satisfy his own curiosity, Henry A. Wallace summoned the three top men — Curley, Pederson, and Grimmius — to come to Des Moines and husk in competition under the same conditions.

On December 8, 1922, with the mercury hovering at 16° above zero, the first truly competitive cornhusking contest in Iowa was held. The three huskers, numbed by cold, snow, and wind, husked for an hour in a selected field not far from the capital city. Plodding along behind young Grimmius was none other than Wallace, himself, who was the official "gleaner" for this husker. At the end of the hour, the three huskers' loads were taken to the scales and deductions were made for

missed corn and too large a percentage of husks left on the ears. After careful checking, the judges announced that Curley was undoubtedly the first cornhusking champion of Iowa! He had husked fifteen bushels (after deductions were made) in an hour under extremely unfavorable conditions. All used hooks instead of pegs. Curley left only forty-nine pounds of corn, but Grimmius was much the cleanest husker.

It was in the following year, however, that plans were drawn up by *Wallaces' Farmer* to launch a cornhusking contest with preliminary winners from each county or township competing at Des Moines for the State championship. The 1923 contest differed from the previous one in that huskers were to gather for a Farm Bureau picnic in each local area and husk corn for an hour and twenty minutes under the supervision of referees. The winners of each of these matches was acknowledged to be the township or county champion and became eligible to send applications to *Wallaces' Farmer* to compete in the State cornhusking contest. From these entries the contest officials were to select winners with unusually good records from the various cornhusking meets held at the Farm Bureau picnics.

Another way to become eligible for the magazine's State contest was devised for huskers who

did not belong to county organizations and for those who did not compete in local meets. Under this plan farmers were to work nine hours in the field, husk their corn, and drive their own wagons to unload the corn. In filing this type of entry, the contestant was obliged to declare how many wagon loads he husked, the number of bushels in each load, and the total number of bushels. The six men submitting the best records were to become eligible for the State meet, scheduled for late November on a farm near Des Moines.

Throughout the Hawkeye State that autumn, cornhuskers tried to improve their skill. Many farmers unconsciously speeded up their work in the fields in an attempt to "get in shape" for the local meets which had been planned by their county Farm Bureaus. Many country boys, upon their return from a day at school, headed not for their football, but rather for their husking hooks. They went to the cornfields to join their fathers and practice husking, perhaps with the hope that some day they, too, could compete in the corn-husking contests.

The primary purpose of *Wallaces' Farmer* in promoting the State contest was, as Editor Henry A. Wallace said in the September 21, 1923, issue, "to inspire more rapid husking, with the result that the average corn husker in Iowa this year should

average ten bushels more per day than heretofore. And, best of all, more corn huskers will get more real joy out of corn husking than heretofore." Undoubtedly this aim was accomplished.

At the picnics the main event on the program was the cornhusking contest with an action-crammed one hour and twenty minutes of husking by the contestants. In some communities the banks and merchants offered cash prizes, merchandise, and occasionally turkeys to the winners and runners-up.

The long-awaited day of the State contest finally arrived. An autumn tang was in the air that day — Saturday, November 24, 1923. Eleven champion huskers from nine counties had come to Des Moines to participate in this new type of field meet, and approximately a thousand persons from many parts of the State arrived to back their candidates. The contest was held on the J. J. Newlin farm at Johnston Station, nine miles northwest of Des Moines. A prize of \$100 was offered for the champion husker. For second place, the award was \$50; third place, \$25; fourth place, \$10; and for fifth, sixth, and seventh places, \$5 each.

Judges from Iowa State College were appointed to supervise the weighing of the corn, deducting husks left on the ears, and seeing that there were

no infractions of the rules. Besides the judges there were two gleaners for each husker. It was their duty to gather all the ears missed by the huskers. For each pound of corn left in the field by a contestant, two pounds were to be deducted from the weight of the corn thrown into the wagon box.

As the time for the contest approached, the wagons were lined up at the end of the husking field. The horses, sensing the spirit of competition, pranced and pawed, eager to begin. The men were scarcely less nervous. Exactly at 1:30, on that bright Saturday afternoon, the first gun went off! Immediately the first husker started throwing ear after ear into the wagon beside him. Ten minutes passed and the gun was fired again, sending the second husker into the field. At the end of another interval, the two huskers were far into the field and only the regular thump, thump of ears hitting the bangboard could be heard. The third husker was sent on his way at 1:50, and so on — each husker started at ten minute intervals and husked for one hour and twenty minutes. By the time all the contestants were in the field the thud of the ears against the high sideboards of the wagons sounded like a bombardment. A gallery of spectators followed each husker to cheer him on. Champion Louis Curley had a crowd of a

hundred enthusiasts on his heels throughout the gruelling period, a circumstance which intensified his nervous tension and made him over-anxious.

At the start Curley was throwing forty-two ears per minute, but he was closely pressed by John Rickelman, a twenty-eight-year-old bachelor who lived across the road from the champion down in Lee County. Rickelman was "clocked" at the rate of forty ears a minute. Ben Grimmius, Jr., one of the three contestants in the 1922 event and the youngest man entered, had commenced slowly but increased his pace as the time passed.

Never had veteran farmers of Iowa, present at the meet, seen such "goings-on". Eleven "husky" men were exerting all their energy to husk the greatest amount of corn in a given time. Taking one row at a time, the huskers picked the ears from the stalk and hurried to the next one without "batting an eye" or making a false motion. They kept their eyes on the stalks, with never a glance at the wagon or the other contestants. Each had a rhythm peculiar to his style of husking.

Giving the three leaders an exciting race were John Thorson of Story County and Charles Fries of Greene County. Tension mounted as the huskers neared the "final stretch" and started throwing at an even faster pace than previously. It seemed to the crowd that Champion Curley had husked

the most ears, but, then, there were Rickelman and Grimmius to reckon with. Finally, at 2:50, the gun sounded, signifying the finish of the first wagon which started the contest. Every ten minutes thereafter, the report of the gun announced the end of the one-hour-and-twenty-minute time limit. Slowly the wagons with driver and husker on top of the corn came to the scales.

It was an anxious moment, indeed, as each wagon was weighed with its precious load of corn. At the scales, Curley's load tipped the beam at 2410 pounds, Rickelman's 2300, and Grimmius's 2302. For a moment the gallery thought that Curley had retained his crown for another year, but the judges declared that deductions had not yet been made.

The minutes passed slowly as the officials deducted weights of corn missed by the huskers and brought in by the gleaners. They also penalized some of the huskers for too many husks left on the ears. Rickelman was the cleanest picker. He left only fourteen pounds of corn in the field and had only 105 husks per hundred ears. Grimmius was almost as good, but Curley left 157.5 pounds of corn in the field and threw in 224 husks per hundred ears. Deductions hurt him more than the others.

At last the judges arrived at a decision. John

Rickelman had won the \$100 and the title of "Iowa Champion Cornhusker"! His final record was 31.49 bushels of corn husked during the hour-and-twenty-minute period, or 23.62 bushels per hour after penalties were subtracted. Curley, who husked more corn than any other contestant, was seventh in the event.

Second place prize was awarded to Grimmius, and Charles Fries captured third. John Sharkey of Calhoun County took fourth and John A. Thorson of Story County ranked fifth. Another Calhoun County husker, Bob Ihrke, had the sixth best record. The remaining huskers, who won no prizes, were: A. R. Swift, Marshall County, eighth; Carl Hoover, Mahaska County, ninth; John L. Johnson, Poweshiek County, tenth; and Walter J. Graham, Lee County, eleventh.

All the men expressed dissatisfaction with their records. They were partially handicapped because of the great amount of "down" corn which had been bent by a strong wind earlier in the week. But the huskers left the field late that afternoon with a knowledge that they had participated in the first decisive State cornhusking contest in Iowa. The crowd, too, realized that the event had been a success and looked forward to the 1924 contest.

After winning the State meet, Rickelman was

asked by the *Wallaces' Farmer* editors to meet Dallas Paul of Ipava, Illinois, champion corn husker of Illinois, in the first interstate husking contest to be held in the United States. He gladly accepted the challenge to defend his laurels in the November 27th contest.

The day arrived, and the two champions met at the Newlin farm which three days before had been the scene of the State meet. A cold, raw wind swept up the rows of corn as Rickelman and Paul, only twenty-two years of age, went into the field to begin husking the corn.

They were to husk an hour and twenty minutes in the morning and an hour in the afternoon. It was a nip and tuck race in the forenoon with Rickelman setting the pace, but with the Illinois man piling up what appeared to be the bigger load. Returning to the waving cornstalks after lunch, the contestants increased their speed. The tempo of the tattoo of ears pounding against the sideboards increased as the contest continued. Iowa's champion was throwing forty-five ears a minute, and the Illinois youth was right behind him. Toward the end, however, Rickelman ran into some poor, down corn, and Paul forged ahead.

Though both men used thumb hooks, their style of husking was totally different. Paul had a

free, rhythmical swing which lent speed to the standard hook method he used. Rickelman, however, took advantage of his strong wrists to seize the ear firmly at the butt with his left hand and brush the husks aside, grasp the ear, and twist it off with his right hand. This pinch-and-twist style was particularly effective in good corn, but it required great strength.

At the end of the allotted time, the wagons were drawn to the scales. According to gross weight, Rickelman picked 28.16 bushels in the morning and 22.29 bushels in the afternoon, while Paul picked 25.03 bushels in the morning and 22.60 bushels in the afternoon. Both men left about the same amount of corn in the field in the morning, but Paul missed sixty-two pounds in the afternoon while Rickelman left only twenty-two pounds. The increase of speed in the afternoon resulted in both men leaving more husks on the ears. After Umpire L. D. Burnett of Iowa State College had deducted for the various penalties, he found that Rickelman had husked 44.59 bushels and Paul, 40.53 bushels. Rickelman was declared "Champion of Iowa and Illinois".

In the years since 1924, when the first national meet was held at Des Moines, Iowa has produced three champion huskers who have won the national cornhusking contest six times. Fred Stanek

won the title in 1924, 1926, 1927, and 1930. Elmer Carlson husked his way to the national title in 1935, and in doing so he set a new world's record of 41.52 bushels in eighty minutes. The following year his brother, Carl Carlson, walked off with the honors.

The national champions have not always won their State meets, as in the case of Fred Stanek in 1924 and 1930. Only three men have won the Iowa husking championship more than once — Fred Stanek in 1926 and 1927, Clyde Tague in 1929 and 1930, and Lee Stodgell in 1934 and 1937. The complete list follows:

1922	Louis Curley	Lee County
1923	John Rickelman	Lee County
1924	Ben Grimmius, Jr.	Grundy County
1925	Leo Rettler	Keokuk County
1926	Fred Stanek	Webster County
1927	Fred Stanek	Webster County
1928	Reul Harmon	Mills County
1929	Clyde Tague	Guthrie County
1930	Clyde Tague	Guthrie County
1931	Lee Carey	Marshall County
1932	Orville Wicks	Wright County
1933	Clarence Bockes	Grundy County
1934	Lee Stodgell	Louisa County
1935	Elmer Carlson	Audubon County
1936	Carl Carlson	Audubon County

1937	Lee Stodgell	Louisa County
1938	Henry Peterson	Webster County
1939	Alvin Roberts	Muscatine County
1940	Marion Link	Story County
1941	Ivyl Carlson	Polk County

From the humble beginning on that bleak December day in 1922, cornhusking contests developed, from the standpoint of attendance, into the major sports event in the United States. The number of spectators grew by leaps and bounds. In 1940, a hundred thousand Iowans witnessed the county and district cornhusking meets. Twenty-five thousand fans attended the State meet that year, while attendance at the national cornhusking contests have reached a peak of 125,000. Since the United States entered the war, however, the State and national meets have been discontinued for the duration.

REEVES HALL

An Incident of the Civil War

On April 6, 1862, the first great battle of the Civil War in the West was fought at Pittsburg Landing, Tennessee, afterward known as the battle of Shiloh. The Federal armies after disembarking at Pittsburg Landing formed their lines of battle in a semi-circle facing south and southwest, as the only foe they were likely to encounter was the Confederate troops at Corinth more than twenty-five miles away. General Benjamin M. Prentiss's division was placed at the extreme left end of the line and faced nearly south. The brigade in which the Fourteenth Iowa Infantry was a unit, afterward known as the Hornets Nest brigade, occupied a central position in the division line. Company I, of the Fourteenth Iowa, largely recruited from Mount Pleasant, Salem, Hillsboro, and adjacent communities, was posted in a thick clump of timber through which ran a wagon road. Travel and erosion had worn the soil down so that the bottom of the road was much lower than the surrounding land. The Iowans were armed with old-fashioned, muzzle-loading muskets with steel ramrods.

Albert S. Johnston, who commanded the Con-

federate Army at Corinth, learning of the intention of the Federal Army to cross the Tennessee River at Pittsburg Landing and march upon Corinth, decided not to await the arrival of the Federals at Corinth, but made a hurried march toward Pittsburg Landing with the intent of surprising the Union forces and overwhelming them before they could be well organized. Early on the morning of the sixth of April, the Confederates opened their attack upon the Federal forces in two lines several hundred feet apart. General Prentiss's division was the first to feel the shock of battle.

The Fourteenth Iowa, lying in the sunken road, was ordered not to fire until the enemy was within thirty paces. When, at last, the Iowans opened fire, the volley entirely destroyed the first line of the Confederates. But the enemy was not halted. Hurriedly the men began reloading to meet the shock of the second advancing line. In his excitement, Private Joshua Campbell of Glasgow in Company I forgot to remove the ramrod from his musket and, leveling his gun at the enemy, fired ramrod and all. As the rod shot out, small end first, instead of going straight at the enemy, it took a slant upward and the little end was driven several inches into an oak tree about twenty feet from the ground. The heavy end swung around,

bending the ramrod almost double. John E. Mitchell of Keokuk and Corporal Milton Rhodes lay beside Campbell in the sunken road and saw him fire his ramrod into the oak tree. The Hornets Nest brigade and the Fourteenth Iowa held this position throughout the day, but lost contact with the rest of the division. Toward evening, it was found that both wings of the Federal Army had been driven back and that the Confederates were in strong force between the Iowans and the river and the rest of the army. It seemed useless to make any further sacrifice of human life and so the troops surrendered as prisoners of war.

Fifty years after the battle, John E. Mitchell and Milton Rhodes, while attending a soldiers' reunion on the battlefield of Shiloh, went to the location of Company I in the sunken road and, looking up into the trees, saw the ramrod that Joshua Campbell had fired fifty years before, still sticking in the tree. Perhaps no one had discovered it, but, if so, had refrained from removing it.

In July, 1929, when I visited the battlefield of Shiloh, our guide pointed out the location of the Hornets Nest and the sunken road. I asked the guide if anything was known of a ramrod that had been fired into an oak tree in that locality. He replied that the ramrod had been found. The tree had died, but a section of the trunk containing

the ramrod had been cut out and kept by the curator of the battlefield. I visited the museum and there saw the ramrod just as the tree had preserved it for sixty-seven years.

Joshua Campbell has long since passed away. His body lies buried in the lonely Leambert cemetery northwest of Salem and he has been forgotten by the community, but the ramrod which, in his haste, he fired at the enemy, remains as a fitting memorial of his military service.

O. A. GARRETSON

Come to the Turkey Valley

Glowing accounts of the future prospects of the Territory of Iowa appeared in the Territorial press a century ago. Some of these reports were in the form of editorials; others appeared as contributions of leading citizens. Copies of the Iowa papers found their way to the Atlantic seaboard where editors reproduced descriptions of the western country for their land-hungry readers. Indeed, such letters frequently gained a far wider audience than did most guide books and gazetteers.

In 1843 all of northeastern Iowa was dependent upon Dubuque newspapers for publicity, for no other towns above Davenport and Iowa City contained a press. Hopeful of attracting more settlers to the idyllic Turkey Valley in Clayton County, a resident of this region wrote a series of letters entitled "The North of Iowa" to the Dubuque *Iowa Transcript*. Through these letters he hoped to redress the "unproportional share of commendation bestowed upon the southern and more central parts of the Territory of Iowa" and gain more settlers for the Turkey Valley.

Although the author of "The North of Iowa"

did not reveal his identity, it is possible to venture a guess based on certain internal evidence contained in the half-dozen sketches dealing with the Turkey Valley. In the course of his reminiscences we learn that he was a native of the "State of New Jersey", that he himself rescued the skull of the wife of Julien Dubuque from the "jaws of a prairie wolf" in 1833 and deposited it in the "laboratory" of Doctor Timothy Mason in Dubuque. We are also informed that during the "early settlement" of Clayton County the author set out with some companions on a "kind of hunting, sauntering, or exploring expedition," up the Turkey River.

These circumstances were all applicable to Eliphalet Price, a prominent resident of Clayton County. Born in Jersey City, New Jersey, in 1811, Price worked for a brief period at Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati before arriving at Galena in the fall of 1832. He was among the pioneers who crossed the Mississippi to the Dubuque mines before June 1, 1833, only to be driven out by troops from Fort Crawford. He was present at the execution of Patrick O'Connor on June 20, 1834. In the fall of that year he accompanied a party of hunters that explored the Turkey Valley and was so enraptured by its prospects that he returned to the region in the fall

of 1835 to become a permanent resident. He spent the winter of 1835-1836 on the present site of Osterdock. In the following fall Eliphalet Price and Robert Hetfield bought a mill and claim near Millville. Price soon disposed of his interest in this venture and selected a fertile tract about five miles from Millville on the north side of the Turkey River where he built a log cabin.

In 1839 Price married Mary D. Cottle. Eight children blessed this union. Price had a flare for writing and was especially interested in the history and archeology of northeastern Iowa. In 1845 he wrote a "thrilling and melancholy" story entitled "Mysterious Grave", and a little later his "Drummer Boy" won acclaim when it appeared in the *Chicago Tribune*. He also contributed several articles to the *Annals of Iowa* in 1866 and 1867 under the title, "The Origin and Interpretation of the Names of the Rivers and Streams of Clayton County". In treatment, scope, and content this material is remarkably similar to the articles penned anonymously for the *Dubuque Iowa Transcript* in 1843.

Whoever he was, the contributor of "The North of Iowa" resented the fact that "numerous effusions" were printed about the soil, climate, and health of the southern part of the Territory while "little or nothing" had been said in praise of

the beautiful valleys of Clayton County. "No bard has sung its eulogy", he wrote, "no historian has recorded its ancient battle grounds; no antiquarian has contemplated the ruins of its towns and villages, once evidently the busy marts of a nation long since extinct."

Although admitting a steady immigration to northeastern Iowa since 1840, he advised westward bound emigrants to study the advantages afforded by the country where the Turkey River,

'with majestic sway,
Through hills disparted, ploughs her watery way.'

To enlighten anyone who might be interested, the self-appointed promoter set out in imagination up the Turkey Valley, painting word pictures of this scenic wonderland.

"The County of Clayton is the most northern organized county in the Territory of Iowa," he began, "and is bounded on the North by the lands of the Winnebago nation, on the East by the Mississippi River, South by the counties of Dubuque and Delaware and West by the county of Fayette and the Winnebago lands. . . . Just within the Southern Boundary of the County, from West to East, sweep the waters of the Turkey River — which is navigable for flat boats, at an ordinary stage of water, as high up as the Winnebago In-

dian Agency, being about sixty miles from its mouth. Where the river unites with the Mississippi, at this place, the land is low, heavy timbered, and subject to inundation; but, as you ascend the river, it gradually rises, and at the distance of three miles from its mouth, the prairie bottoms begin to present themselves to view. These bottoms afford beautiful farms, many of which are in a high state of cultivation."

As the emigrant proceeds up the Turkey Valley across these fertile bottomlands the scene changes. "Directly in their rear, the bluffs rise high and abrupt, covered with a heavy growth of superior timber, extending back from three to six miles in depth. At this point upon the main river, Little Turkey river empties itself. This stream affords a number of excellent mill privileges. Two mills have already been erected upon it. Near its mouth is situated the village of *Millville*." There, during the winter of 1839, the "Northern Army of Hunters of Turkey River" rendezvoused, prior to marching southward to repel the invading forces of Missouri.

Mindful of the emigrants' interest in history and tradition, the anonymous writer observed that the Turkey Valley was long the hunting ground and battlefield of powerful Indian tribes. At Park Prairie, a mile above the confluence of the little

Turkey with the Turkey, stood the ruins of the village of the powerful Fox chief, Kokishmo, a warrior whom Jonathan Carver mentioned in his *Travels in the Interior of North America*. There, according to tradition, Julien Dubuque came to woo the dusky daughter of the chief. In the "craggy, mountainous hills" of this "blood-bought" hunting ground, the bear, panther, lynx, wildcat, wolf, deer, and elk still roamed in 1843.

"Near the summit of a high hill, that rises from the prairie, directly in the rear of these ruins, is the entrance to a stupendous cavern, whose subterranean passages have been explored for some distance. It was here that Kokishmo placed his women, children and old men, when going to battle. A beautiful spring bubbles up from the centre of the great cavern, or hall, as it is sometimes called, and almost immediately disappears, running only a few feet. This room is supposed to be about sixty feet square, with an arch of solid rock extending over the whole, about seventy feet in height. From the arch or roof, clear white columns of spar descend, of various lengths, which, together with the particles of isinglass and lead ore, that stud the sides and roof, gives this stupendous cavern an appearance that no pen can describe, when lit up by the streaming light of the adventurer's torch."

The traveler could not help but register delight as he ascended the Turkey River above Kokishmo's village. "Innumerable springs gush out from the base of the high bluffs, and creep stealthily away among the tall waving grass of the prairie, until they mingle with the waters of the river; the groves of lofty timber — the abundance of spontaneous fruit — the clear transparent waters of the stream, meandering over a white pebbly bottom, and abounding with all the varieties of fish peculiar to the waters of the Mississippi, cannot but impart a pleasing recreation to the mind, fatigued with the business cares of life."

Continuing upstream past a number of "highly cultivated farms", the traveler reached Peck's Branch, named for Dudley Peck, a native of western New York, who located near the mouth of the river in 1835. A superb huntsman who persistently refused to trade his old-fashioned flint-lock rifle for a gun with a percussion lock, Peck found this region a hunter's paradise. "Near the mouth of this Branch, upon the main River, was formerly the great focus of resort for the wild Turkey. This bird usually descends upon the river bottoms late in the fall, to feed upon the horseweed and hackberry, and remains all winter. A few years ago they might be seen in great numbers along the river, for many miles, affording excellent sport for

the novitiate hunter, who had not yet learned to crawl upon the listening Deer or to drive the unwieldy Bear into his cave. But, of late years, as the emigrant has come in, unlike any other kind of game, they have diminished in numbers."

There were other reasons why Peck's Branch might prove attractive to the prospective emigrant. Rising in the "Colony", an extensive settlement in Delaware County, Peck's Branch meandered through "a heavy timbered country, well watered, and presenting a vast number of excellent farming locations. About three miles from its mouth, is an extensive mine or quarry of soft brown *Shale*, which, by many is thought to be the precursor of Stone Coal. When placed upon the fire it burns freely, producing a smell in nowise different from the Pittsburgh Coal. The land is subject to entry, and well calculated for farming purposes."

Equally attractive to the homeseeker was Cedar Creek, which emptied into the Turkey River about three miles above Peck's Branch. It rose on Highland Prairie in the center of the county and afforded an abundance of water power and many excellent water privileges. "It passes through a number of Prairie Bottoms, many of which are sufficiently large for farming purposes. The bluffs on each side rise high, with huge rocky sides, shaded with the tall Cedar, from which the

stream takes its name. The summit of the bluffs are crowned with large heavy timber, and a dense undergrowth of brush, which makes it a favorite resort for the black Bear. This animal abounds in this neighborhood, and not unfrequently weighs 500 or 600 pounds. Excepting the polar Bear, the black Bear of Iowa is perhaps the most formidable animal in North America. The Creek for a mile from its mouth, is wide, deep and sluggish, and is lined with tall elms, whose branches meeting, almost entirely exclude the rays of the sun. Here the wild Duck rears her tender brood, regardless of the marauding character of the night-prowling Wolf."

Ever on the alert for wild game of all kinds, our observing guide called attention to an otter slide on the side of a high bluff at the very mouth of Cedar Creek. "The warm water flowing from the Creek in winter," he explained, "prevents the river from freezing in the neighborhood of its mouth, and the Otter resort there at such times in great numbers to breathe the open air. They may frequently be seen of a still moonlight evening, in winter, sporting their gambols on the ice in this vicinity. They are very numerous in the waters of Turkey River, but are rarely hunted in consequence of their shy character."

Some four miles distant from the mouth of

Cedar Creek, the emigrant guide arrived at the mouth of Wayman's Branch, which joins the Turkey from the south. This stream was named for Colonel William W. Wayman, a native of New Hampshire and the first white man to settle in Clayton County. "Col. Wayman has a beautiful prairie farm at this place, with an extensive timbered bottom adjoining — the undergrowth of which is almost entirely composed of the wild Plumb tree, whose branches at this season of the year are bending with delicious fruit. The Black Currant grows here spontaneously in great quantities; while the Grapevine, reaching its tendrils arms from branch to branch, almost canopies the whole with a vineous arbor."

A short distance above, and emptying into the same horseshoe bend of the Turkey below present-day Elkport, our Baedeker of 1843 called attention to Elk Creek. "Near its mouth is a saw mill in full operation, owned by Messrs. Andrys. This stream rises in the county of Delaware, and passes through a dense forest of timber, composed almost entirely of the Sugar tree. There is, perhaps, no part of the Territory, where the manufacture of sugar from the saccharine juice of the hard Maple could be conducted more extensively and to better advantage than in the neighborhood of this stream."

A modern map of Clayton County shows the little town of Elkport between Elk Creek and the Volga River with the Turkey toward the east. "The junction of the Volga and Turkey rivers takes place about one mile from Elk Creek. The Volga rises away to the West, about 45 miles from its mouth. It is a narrow, winding, rapid stream, well timbered, with many beautiful prairie bottoms skirting its shores. About a year ago a German Settlement was commenced upon this stream, about eight miles from its mouth; but, in consequence of the late massacre of the Tegarden family, by the Winnebago Indians, they have abandoned their improvements." In 1841 the writer of this emigrant's guide was shown a small specimen of copper ore which was found by an Indian on a small tributary of the Volga.

Continuing up the Turkey, the traveler soon reached Panther Creek, so-named because a panther had carried away the child of an Indian squaw who was accompanying some Menominee Indians who had been granted permission by Kokishmo to hunt on the headwaters of the Turkey. Leaving this wild country, the emigrant of 1843 would shortly hear the lowing of herds and the bark of the dog, evidence of a farming community just ahead. Soon he would arrive at the "thriving and populous" Boardman Settlement

[Elkader] where Elisha Boardman settled in 1836 with his business partner, Horace D. Bronson. "Many of our most enterprising farmers are to be found here, with extensive farms, in a high state of cultivation. Mr. [Baldwin] Olmstead has established at this place a large dairy farm, from which he has realized a handsome profit during the past year, by finding a ready market for his butter and cheese at Fort Atkinson and the Indian Agency."

Then as now the Elkader area provided one of the most attractive farming regions in the entire Turkey Valley. Elisha Boardman had a fine farm located on a high bank overlooking the Turkey. "But what adds most to the value of the improvements, as well as to the future prosperity of the settlement, is one of the most grand and extensive mill-privileges, that, perhaps, is to be found on the northern waters of the Mississippi. The river, at this place, is two hundred feet in width; the rocks upon the opposite shore rise to the perpendicular height of fourteen feet, while the bed of the river is one smooth solid rock, extending from shore to shore, and reaching up and down the river for the distance of sixty yards each way. The whole body of Turkey river is crowded through this narrow gap, with surprising velocity. The capitalist who may be desirous of investing in

the erection of mills, would do well to have a little chat with Mr. Boardman. This place is only thirty miles from Fort Atkinson and the Indian Agency, which places are annually supplied by the General Government with about eighteen thousand dollars worth of Flour" hitherto furnished by St. Louis and Cincinnati.

The journal as presented in the *Iowa Transcript* closed five or six miles above modern Elkader where the emigrant would cross the southern boundary of the Neutral Ground occupied by the Winnebago Indians. A sufficient glimpse of this "Garden of Iowa" had nevertheless been provided to lure many a land-hungry settler to the area before the Winnebago ceded the region in 1846 and were removed to Minnesota. Since the letters were reprinted in other newspapers, they must have attracted many settlers to the Turkey Valley. In 1840, for example, Clayton and Delaware counties had 1269 inhabitants whereas in 1844 it was estimated that these counties contained a population of three thousand.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

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