

THE PALIMPSEST

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Called to Iowa

In 1673 Iowa was already designated as a field for missionary activities. When Joliet was employed by the French government to discover the course of the "river to the west", the opportunity was seized by the Jesuit Society to Christianize the inhabitants of the undiscovered country. Father Marquette was therefore commissioned to join the exploring party as an emissary of the church.

Protestant groups did not begin the extension of their faith into Iowa until white settlers had supplanted the red men. Little time was lost in the organization of churches in the growing communities. Methodists erected a log-cabin church in Dubuque in 1834 to provide a place of worship even before a legal code existed. David Lowry, government teacher at the Indian school on Yellow River, acting also as a missionary, organized a Presbyterian church for soldiers and employees

in 1835. Congregationalism crossed the Mississippi at Dubuque in 1836, and in 1842 a group of theological students of Andover, Massachusetts, came as the Iowa Band to teach the Congregational creed.

First to spread the gospel among the Indians, the Catholics were equally zealous in providing the early settlers with the benefit of clergy. Early in the summer of 1833 a priest said mass at the Dubuque mines. Father Lefevre made an extended missionary trip into Iowa in 1834, but his plan to erect a stone church at the head of the Des Moines Rapids failed. Meanwhile, however, over \$1000 had been subscribed for a Catholic church at Dubuque. The cornerstone was laid in 1835 and the edifice was occupied for services before the end of the following year.

The swift growth of settlements west of the Mississippi was for many preachers in the East a spur to missionary activities. Iowa was a desirable field. One of the Andover group had said, when a location for his Christian endeavor was being determined: "I am going to Iowa: whether any one else goes or not, I am going."

The salvation of Iowa was also a matter of concern among Baptists. In 1834, a history of the church records that a house of worship was built at Long Creek, now called the Danville Bap-

tist Church, for a congregation of eleven members. The services of an Illinois minister were borrowed, but in 1836 a resident minister was secured. Meeting not far from Burlington in August, 1839, ten delegates representing three churches and less than ninety members organized the Iowa Baptist Association.

In response to a call voted by the Association just formed, a convention of brethren from the Baptist churches in Iowa Territory was held in Iowa City on the third and fourth of June, 1842, "to consider the expediency of forming a Territorial Association for missionary purposes." Twenty-five delegates were present — eight ministers and seventeen laymen.

One of the delegates was the Reverend Charles E. Brown. He had arrived in the Territory of Iowa from Warren, Herkimer County, New York, scarcely more than a week previous. It was an inclination for pioneer missionary work, he wrote many years later in his autobiographical recollections, which had directed his thoughts toward the West. In October, 1840, he expressed his desire to the New York Missionary Convention. "The application said nothing about salary or any special location, excepting a preference expressed for Iowa. The request was favorably endorsed by the convention and an appointment

by the American Baptist Home Missionary Society recommended.

"This appointment came in due time, designating the forks of the Maquoketa River in Jackson County, Iowa, as the field of labor, with an allowance of one hundred dollars a year from the board and seventy-five dollars for travelling expenses to the field."

At that time Reverend Brown's family consisted of himself, wife, and the two little boys, Benjamin and Charles. As household goods could not be economically shipped so far, everything was sold "except clothing, bedding, a common table and stand which could be conveniently packed, and a rocking chair, taken for the comfort and convenience of the mother in caring for the little ones on the journey." A small cook stove was taken apart, packed in straw, and boxed for shipment. Altogether their household effects weighed about 1600 pounds.

Let Mr. and Mrs. Brown describe their trip to their new home beyond the Mississippi. With slight adaptations, the story follows as it was published in the *Personal Recollections of Rev. Charles E. Brown*.

"On Monday May 2, 1842, we left Utica on a passenger packet known as a Line boat on the Erie canal, bound for Buffalo en route to Iowa

Territory. These boats were provided with a comfortable cabin with berths for passengers in the bow, kitchen and dining cabin at the stern, and space amidships for freight and baggage. With good company, clean wholesome food, a sober and accommodating master and crew, the two hundred mile trip from Utica to Buffalo was comfortable and pleasant. The fare, two cents per mile, which included berth and board with no charge for young children, was very reasonable.

"Arriving at Tonawanda, twelve miles from Buffalo, at midnight Saturday, we lay by until the next midnight, as the boat did not run on the Sabbath. We reached Buffalo at daylight Monday, May 9th, and the family and goods were transferred to the Lake steamer, *Great Western*, Captain Walker commanding, which sailed for Chicago at seven o'clock Tuesday evening.

"The shades of night were falling when the great steamer with nearly four hundred passengers bound mostly for Illinois, Iowa and Wisconsin, put out into the lake for Chicago. Very few had ever been on the water, and ominous clouds were looming up in the west. The cabin passengers gathered on the promenade deck, some looking back on the lights of the city toward the homes and loved ones they were leaving; some at the dark waters of the lake, and some anxiously

at the threatening clouds, many with tearful eyes. It was one of the most solemn and intensely interesting scenes we ever witnessed and one we will never forget.

"We retired to our state room but could not sleep. The storm broke upon us with great fury in the night, but our noble steamer met and faced it bravely, and brought us safely into the harbor at Cleveland, which was the first landing place. The effect of the night's storm on the stomachs of the passengers was manifest at breakfast, many being absent from the table. We lay at Cleveland a few hours waiting for the storm to pass."

From Lake St. Clair, on Thursday, May 12th, Mrs. Brown wrote to her brother and sister describing their voyage. "In accordance with your request, I improve the first convenient season for writing you some of the incidents of our journey thus far. We are on board the *Great Western*, the most splendid vessel on the lakes. It is a lovely morning, the lake is still and we are sailing at the rate of twelve miles an hour. We are furnished with every comfort and convenience that could be obtained in the best hotel. Our journey has been pleasant, with the exception of some little sea-sickness for the first few hours on Lake Erie. Benny and myself have had a pretty thorough emetic. Mr. B. and Charley escaped with a

little nausea of the stomach, and no vomiting. We have been sailing up the Detroit River this morning with Victoria's dominions on our right hand, and borders of Michigan on the left; passed a British military station; saw a number of her Majesty's red-coated gentry.

"Our steamer stopped some time at Detroit. We went on shore. I priced articles in a number of dry-goods establishments, found a handsome assortment, and as low as can be purchased in New York. We find the tide of emigration to the far west has by no means subsided. There are between three and four hundred passengers on board, and quite a large proportion go round to Chicago. The children have been less trouble than I anticipated. We left Utica Monday morning in the *Little Western*; Captain Newcomb, a pleasant man and fine crew; heard no profane language; had a good cook and good fare, and with the exception of speed found ourselves comfortable."

The pioneer missionary and his family encountered stormy weather again on Lake Huron. For four hours the vessel lay by at Presque Isle until the worst of the squall was over. Thereafter they "had pleasant sailing to Chicago" where they arrived on Sunday afternoon, May 15th.

"We arrived in this city yesterday afternoon

safe and sound", wrote Mrs. Brown to her sister. "Our passage from Buffalo, together with freight, cost us forty-eight dollars; from Little Falls to Buffalo twenty-three." Except for the two bits of rough weather "we have had a pleasant journey. We are much pleased with the appearance of the western country so far. Milwaukee, Racine, and Southport on the Wisconsin shore are pleasant villages. We passed Mackinac in the night, regretted it very much, as it is said to be a very interesting spot.

"We are at the New York House in Chicago. There were eighty people at breakfast; very good accommodations; have plenty of radishes, onions, lettuce, etc.

"Mr. B. is making arrangements for prosecuting our journey to Iowa. The weather is fine and the roads good, and we hope to get along without any difficulty. We shall soon be on the road teaming off. I cannot realize the distance that separates us. It seems to be annihilated by the facilities for overcoming it. I think to come by railroad from Little Falls to Buffalo, and then by the lakes to Chicago, would make a delightful jaunt. Take an emetic before you leave."

From Chicago the journey was continued overland in a private conveyance. "On Monday", Mr. Brown recalled, "we found a man from Rock-

ford, Illinois, who came in with a lumber wagon and a load of produce, and engaged him to take us to Savanna on the Mississippi River. After loading our things, the rocking chair brought from New York was fastened on top of one of the boxes with a small chair secured alongside. Seated in the rocker with the youngest child in her lap, and the other in the little chair by her side, Mrs. Brown cheerily said, 'Now, this is fine,' and there was sunshine on the load all the way through. I took a seat on the box beside the driver with our feet on the whiffle-trees, and we started on our two hundred mile drive to our future home in the Territory of Iowa.

"We stopped for the first night about twelve miles out on the Elgin road, and the second at a small log cabin at Pigeon Woods, sixteen miles west of Elgin, where a hearty appetite for supper was demoralized by badly tainted ham; and the presence of two loads of stagecoach passengers to be cared for obliged us to sleep on the floor. But these incidents were minor matters in a journey like this.

"Early next morning, proceeding on our way we found a satisfactory breakfast at a small cabin located where the town of Marengo now stands. At noon we reached Belvidere, where we enjoyed a visit with Prof. P. S. Whitman who was one of

my teachers at Hamilton. Here on the public square we saw the stakes used to support a rude platform which had been the resting place of the body of an Indian chief. The body was gone but the poles and some fragments of his burial dress were there, a dismal and grewsome reminder of the past.

“That evening we arrived at the west side tavern at Rockford where, to our great disappointment, our teamster was summoned as a witness in a case on trial, delaying us until the following Monday. But while tarrying we found a good home and pleasant friends in the family of the Rev. Solomon Knapp, pastor of the Baptist Church at Rockford, for whom I preached on Sunday; my first sermon in the west.

“Monday morning, in good health and spirits, with fine weather and roads we continued our journey, taking the Galena stage road to Twelve Mile Grove, thence turning directly west for the Mississippi.

“About sun down we reached Crane’s Grove, and as the next stopping place was eighteen miles west, here we must put up for the night. Mrs. Crane from Kentucky, middle aged and stout, was just coming from the cow yard with a pail of milk. To our inquiry if we could stop for the night she replied, ‘Oh, I reckon, though I am mighty tired.

The old cow gives a right smart of milk, well on to half a bushel.'

"That night our teamster overfed his horses with grain and next morning found one of them dead. We arranged with Mr. Crane to take us eighteen miles to Cherry Grove, where we stopped with a Mr. Gardner, Mr. Crane's brother-in-law, who next day took us to Savanna on the Mississippi. We here had our first view of the mighty river, its volume then being much greater than in later years. That evening we were ferried across to Charleston, now Sabula, and put up for the night at the town tavern. In the morning we engaged a man and team to take us the remaining twenty-five to thirty miles to the end of our long journey.

"Owing to rain we were late in starting. About noon we stopped for dinner at a cabin on the west bank of Deep Creek, where we found nothing to eat but eggs. Of these they had eleven, which were boiled for us. But the children would not eat them. We did not see any other human habitation until night had fallen, when the little ones, tired and hungry, had long since cried themselves to sleep.

"In the darkness of midnight we reached a cabin occupied by Mr. C. W. Doolittle. At that spectral hour, in silence and solitude that could be

felt, we were at the end of our long journey, nearly a thousand miles from home and friends in the distant east. The Indian had recently left, and his pale-faced successors were few and far between. We had been twenty-four days on the road and had lost but little time, having diligently pursued our way from the start.

“With cordial frontier hospitality which we gratefully appreciated, Mr. and Mrs. Doolittle turned out and welcomed us, prepared supper and then gave us their bed, while they found lodging for themselves and family in the cabin loft. Tired and worn by the long and tedious last day’s drive we slept sweetly and soundly, four in the bed, myself, wife and two children.”

The next morning a dense fog obscured the country. Nevertheless Mr. Doolittle and the new minister went to visit some neighbors two miles away. Reverend Brown was surprised to learn that there was no organized Baptist society in that part of Iowa. The settlement was so new that the few Baptist families were widely scattered. “This and the fog and the fact that, aside from the \$100 per year from the home missionary board, our living was to come from our field of labor was rather discouraging and made me feel a little blue. But during our walk a breeze came up and carried away the fog. The clouds lifted and the sun came

out, revealing a most beautiful prairie country to the south, with a grand body of Maquoketa timber to the north for a background. My blues went with the fog; hope, courage, and cheer came with the sunshine and clear sky."

Desiring to attend the convention in Iowa City to organize a Baptist Territorial Mission Association, Reverend Brown borrowed a horse and light wagon and, accompanied by his wife, drove across country to the new capital. Early in the morning on June 1, 1842, they set out toward Bergoon's ford across the Wapsipinicon River. "We soon lost the dim uncertain trail", remembered Mr. Brown, "but having a good general idea of the direction did not miss our way. The weather was fine, the prairies carpeted with wild flowers, and the trip novel and wonderfully interesting. The broad expanse of rolling prairies extending in every direction as far as the eye could reach, with now and then a beautiful grove to relieve the monotony, was a great change from the hills, valleys, and heavy timber of our central New York home."

Having stayed over night at Tipton, they started early the next morning and after a hard drive reached Iowa City in the evening of the second day. The business of the convention was soon finished and three days were occupied with preaching and devotional services. Reverend

Brown was glad to "meet the brethren and sisters from different and distant parts of the Territory." On the return trip he preached at Tipton and at a settlement on the Wapsipinicon.

Temporal affairs next claimed the attention of the missionary and his family. Most of June was spent in building a log cabin at Wright's Corners about two and a half miles south of the present site of Maquoketa, just over the line in Clinton County. It was a crude habitation but it was home.

Meanwhile Reverend Brown did not neglect his missionary duties. Assigned to the vicinity of the forks of the Maquoketa, he visited the settlers, preached to them whenever possible, and on the last day of August organized a Baptist church in that community. During that first summer in Iowa, he also preached at Iowa City, Andrew, Tipton, Marion, and Davenport. In September he and Mrs. Brown drove to a meeting in Davenport on a cart made out of the rear wheels and axle of a lumber wagon and a pair of rails for shafts. There they participated in forming an association of the seven Baptist churches north of the Iowa River. "There was precious enjoyment in this pioneer missionary life and work and we loved it."

MARIE HAEFNER