THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLVIII ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1967 NO. 9

Copyright 1967 by the State Historical Society of Iowa

Queen City of the West

Andrew Logan was a man of vision. Crossing the Mississippi on July 7, 1838, this hardworking, enthusiastic Pennsylvania printer established the first newspaper in the straggling village of Davenport. In the initial issue of his six-column, four-page paper, Logan demonstrated his ability as a booster. "Iowa is a great Territory," declared the *Iowa Sun* on August 4, 1838. "The agricultural advantages of this country are immense; and lying as it does, for hundreds of miles along the western margin of the majestic Mississippi, its commercial conveniences are certainly surpassed by no interior state in the union. No country is capable of supporting a larger amount of population."

Although Logan was enthusiastic regarding the future of Fort Madison, Burlington, and Dubuque, he believed that Davenport held out the greatest prospects. "The country around Rock Island, is, in our opinion, the most charming that ever the eye beheld. Here nature has clearly in-

tended that the *Queen City of the Far West* should be built. Rock Island is of itself, one of the greatest natural beauties on the Mississippi. The 'old Fort', not to speak of its military associations, is, in truth, an object on which the eye delights to dwell. The large enterprising, and flourishing town of Stephenson [Rock Island], on the opposite shore, adds greatly to the attractions of the scene, and Davenport with its extended plains and sloping bluffs, completes one of the most splendid pictures that ever delighted the eye of man. The interior of the territory is all rich, beautiful and productive, from end to end. Sober and industrious farmers may flock in from all quarters, and find a rich reward for pleasant and moderate toil. The interior of the territory is healthy, and every section of land admits of easy cultivation."

From the earliest recorded times travelers have been impressed with the rich abundance of the vicinity about Rock Island. Although Joliet and Marquette did not specifically describe the present site of Davenport they observed that, in contrast to the Dubuque area, the hills were smaller, the islands were more beautiful, and the trees were of better quality. Wild game was abundant. Flocks of turkeys and herds of "pisikious" or buffalo were noticed particularly.

The earliest description of the present site of Davenport is probably that of Penicaut, one of Pierre Le Sueur's companions on his journey up the Mississippi in 1700. As the voyageurs were about to navigate the shallow, treacherous waters of the Upper or Rock Rapids, Penicaut recorded in his journal: "To the left of these rapids is an open prairie country extending inland for more than ten leagues from the bank of the Mississipy. The grass of these prairies is like sainfoin and does not quite reach up to the knee. There are all kinds of animals upon these prairies."

Later travelers left detailed accounts. On August 27, 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike encamped on the west bank of the Mississippi directly opposite Rock Island. In his journal the observant young army officer described the place as "beautiful prairies" of "very rich land" interspersed with black walnut and hickory.

Fort Armstrong had stood at the foot of Rock Island seven years when the steamboat *Virginia* arrived in 1823. G. C. Beltrami, an Italian passenger aboard the first steamboat to churn the waters of the upper Mississippi, described what is now Davenport as "a semicircular hill, clothed with trees and underwood", which enclosed a fertile spot carefully cultivated into fields and kitchen gardens.

In 1829 Caleb Atwater and the other passengers aboard the *Red Rover* were "enraptured at the numerous and beautiful situations" to be seen from the pulsing deck of the steamboat as it passed what is now the eastern border of Scott County. "Setting down a pair of compasses large enough to extend thirty-five miles around the lower end of Rock Island and taking a sweep around it," declared Atwater, "you would have within the circle the handsomest and most delightful spot on the whole globe". His opinion was prophetic. A century later, in 1930, two counties in this area — Scott and Rock Island — contained a population of 175,523, or more than in the whole State of Illinois in 1830!

It was not merely a fertile soil and a salubrious climate that augured well for the future of Davenport. The strategic location of the future "Queen City" had long been demonstrated by converging events of military history. Lying directly west of the southern tip of Lake Michigan, just above the mouth of the Rock River, and at the foot of Rock Rapids, Davenport was at the very crossroads of empire. Four powerful nations and many Indian tribes were involved in the pulsing drama that forms the prelude of Davenport's early history. The erection of Fort Armstrong in 1816 and the subsequent establishment

of the United States arsenal on Rock Island indicate the strategic prominence of the location. No other Iowa town can match the parade of military events that streams across the pages of Davenport history.

The opening scene in this colorful pageant probably occurred before the French and Indian War. It was then that the Sauk and Fox tribes migrated southward from the Wisconsin River Valley. Near the mouth of the Rock River the Sauks established their principal village of Saukenuk. On the opposite side of the Mississippi, probably on the site of Davenport, the Foxes located a village. For many years this vicinity was the center of Indian opposition to white settlement. At Saukenuk Black Hawk was born in 1767 and Keokuk in 1780. Against Saukenuk the intrepid George Rogers Clark sent an expedition in 1780 which burned the wickiups and destroyed the crops. From Saukenuk sallied the hostile warriors who laid siege to historic Fort Madison. In the vicinity of Saukenuk were fought two of the sharpest encounters of the War of 1812. In the first, a third of Lieutenant John Campbell's men were killed or wounded on July 19, 1814, when they were surprised at breakfast on an island above Rock Island. A month later Major Zachary Taylor, sent to punish the Indians, was lucky to



BLACK-HAWK.

LIFE

OF

MA-KA-TAI-ME-SHE-KIA-KIAK

OR

BLACK HAWK,

EMBRACING THE

TRADITION OF HIS NATION—INDIAN WARS IN WHICH HE HAS BEEN ENGAGED—CAUSE OF JOINING THE BRITISH IN THEIR LATE WAR WITH AMERICA, AND ITS HISTORY—DESCRIPTION OF THE ROCK-RIVER VILLAGE—MANNERS AND CUSTOMS—ENCROACHMENTS BY THE WHITES, CONTRARY TO TREATY—REMOVAL FROM HIS VILLAGE IN 1831.

WITH AN

ACCOUNT OF THE CAUSE AND GENERAL HISTORY

OF THE

LATE WAR,

HIS

SURRENDER AND CONFINEMENT AT JEFFERSON BARRACKS,

AND

TRAVELS THROUGH THE UNITED STATES.

DICTATED BY HIMSELF.

J. B. Patterson, of Rock Island, Ill. Editor and Proprietor.

BOSTON

1834

Black Hawk was a prisoner and did not sign the treaty that bears his name. It was negotiated on the site of Davenport and signed at Fort Armstrong. His Autobiography went into many editions, the first of which appeared in 1833.

escape an ambush on Credit Island with eleven "badly wounded" men.

Despite the misfortunes of war in the West the United States retained possession of the Mississippi Valley. In 1816 four military posts were erected — one of them, Fort Armstrong, being located on a "rocky cliff" at the foot of Rock Island opposite the present site of Davenport. Meanwhile, settlers began to straggle into the region and the Indians were gradually removed to the west bank of the Mississippi, Black Hawk himself sullenly agreeing to leave the sacred bones of his ancestors behind him at Saukenuk.

In the spring of 1832 the embittered Black Hawk, heedless of warnings, recrossed the Mississippi with a band of loyal followers. The first spark in the tragedy known as the Black Hawk War was struck at Stillman's Run, a glorious victory for the old Sauk chief. After a masterful retreat up the Rock River, a sharp encounter at Lake Koshkonong, and a dramatic crossing of the Wisconsin River, the flame of revolt flickered out at Bad Axe.

At the close of the struggle the entire confederation of Sauks and Foxes gathered on the west bank of the Mississippi opposite Fort Armstrong. Since the consent of the nation was necessary for any cession of land, a large open tent or "mar-

quee" was erected on the present site of Davenport in which to hold the preliminary negotiations. Brigadier General Winfield Scott and Governor John Reynolds of Illinois were selected by the government to serve as commissioners in negotiating the treaty. When the Sauks and Foxes had assented to the terms of peace, thirty-two chiefs, headmen, and warriors crossed the Mississippi with Keokuk and signed their marks to the treaty which was "concluded at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island, Illinois" on September 21, 1832. Henry Dodge, George Davenport, and Antoine Le Claire were the principal American witnesses.

The Black Hawk Purchase was the first cession of Indian land in Iowa. The Sauks and Foxes agreed to move west by June 1, 1833, and never "reside, plant, fish, or hunt" on any portion of it again. Upon the special request of the Indians the government gave Antoine Le Claire by patent in fee simple one section of land on the present site of Davenport and another "at the head of the first rapids" above Rock Island where the town of Le Claire is now located. In honor of the leading American negotiator of the treaty, the legislators of the Territory of Wisconsin named Scott County in honor of Winfield Scott.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN