

Allamakee County

[Allamakee County had only about half the population of Clayton County in 1859. As a result, the information on persons and places recorded by Jesse Clement was only about half as detailed as that on Clayton County to the south. THE EDITOR.]

Lansing

April 18, 1859

We came hither from Clayton, in the Pembina, (pronounced *Pembinaw*,) Capt. Thomas H. Griffith, commander. She is new, having run but one season, and is second to no boat in the Northern Line, in beauty or speed. Everything about her is clean, wholesome and comfortable. Her officers are more courteous than, latterly, we find the officers of any other line. The St. Louis boats are very popular at all the ports at which we have halted. The directors of the Northern Line of Steamers, running between St. Louis and St. Paul have, we understand, given directions to their agents at Dubuque, Guttenberg, Clayton and other points in that neighborhood, to take passengers, on the opening of the lake, to St. Paul for two dollars, the same as we paid on a Dubuque Packet three days ago, to get to Clayton.

Lansing, the largest village in Allamakee county, is pleasantly located near the mouth of Clear (formerly called Coon) Creek. It has a fine outlet to the country at the west, through a ravine

on either side of which tower ambitious bluffs. Those to the northward rise, at one point, called Mount Hosmer, to the height of 412 feet. From the apex of that mount, which was named for the sculpturess who climbed it at an early day—one gets a grand view of the country, better even than at Bellevue, of which we recently had occasion to speak. Points to the northward, said to be more than fifty miles distant, are seen with the naked eye.

The original proprietors of the site of Lansing, were H. H. Houghton, Esq., and John Haney. Mr. Houghton is the present editor and proprietor of the *Galena Daily Advertiser*; and the earliest settlers were Willard Ballou, John Haney, and W. L. Garrison. They came here in the early part of 1848, immediately after the Winnebagoes, by treaty stipulations had vacated the country—then known as “neutral ground.” The place made but little progress for four or five years, it having but seven or eight houses in 1852. It began to grow somewhat briskly in 1853, and has had a steady growth ever since. We believe the town has never been inflated.—Property is now selling at higher figures for cash, we are told, than ever before. The population of the village, as we learn from Mr. Wm. H. Burford, the Assessor, is 984. The number of voters in the township of Lansing is 243.

The village has seven general variety stores, and most of them are well filled. Their proprietors

are George Kemble, Geo. W. Hays, J. J. & D. L. Shaw, Henry Nielander, Herman Schierholz & Co., Gustav Kerndt & Brothers, I. B. Place, and Wm. C. Macbay.

The forwarding and commission merchants are G. W. Gray & Co., W. D. Morgan, Henry Nielander, Herman Schierholz & Co., and George W. Hays; the druggists, J. W. Merrill and Amos W. Purdy; the bookseller and stationer, Amos W. Purdy, who is also the Postmaster; the hardware dealer, R. P. Spencer; the hollow-ware dealers and tin smiths, R. P. Spencer, and Gustav Kerndt & Brothers; the furniture dealers, Woodmansee & Davis, and G. W. Hays; banker, G. W. Gray; boot and shoe dealers, Charles E. Woodbury, and Riley & Pottitt; clothier, G. Miles; watchmaker and jeweler, L. M. Elmendorf; plow makers, Loh & Irle; machinist, John Reith; bedstead and furniture makers by steam, H. M. Travers & Co.; grain cradle manufacturers, and dealers in agricultural tools, H. H. Hemenway & Co.; broom manufacturers, Gustav Kerndt & Brothers. There is a good supply of wagon makers and all the more common kinds of mechanics.

The lumber trade is quite an item in the business of this place. The dealers in the article are Shaw, Johnson, Wood & Co., and James I. Gilbert. S. J. W. & Co. have a superior steam saw mill. Haney, Houghton & Co. have a grist mill on Clear Creek a mile and a half west of the village,

where there is excellent water power. The creek is only four miles long and is formed by eleven springs. Other water power in the vicinity of the grist mill, is unimproved.

Good brick is manufactured here, and stone for building purposes towers to mountainous heights and overlooks the village.

Lansing has four churches; Methodist, H. W. Houghton, pastor; Congregational, G. Bent, pastor; Episcopal, James Bentley, rector; and Catholic, who have preaching once a month. All have houses of worship but the Episcopalians.

The physicians of the place are John J. Taylor, W. M. Perkins and A. H. Houghton; the lawyers, George W. Camp, Samuel H. Kinne and L. H. Howe.

The Lansing House, American, Mississippi and Farmers' House, are the public houses; the first two being American, and the last two German. Messrs. J. W. Bates & Brother, of the excellent Lansing House, are also dealers in stock. They own the famous trotting stallion "Emperor," which is nearly sixteen hands high, and weighs eleven hundred pounds.—He is of a golden chestnut color, and of good pedigree. They also own Young Black Hawk "Vermont," a son of old Black Hawk, and a splendid jet black animal, recently from Vermont, whence a great deal of fine blooded stock finds its way into the West. Bates & Brother have a full-blooded Morgan gelding, a solid

piece of horse flesh, worth at least a thousand dollars. He has repeatedly made his mile in the "thirties." We understand he is for sale. These gentlemen are doing their part to improve the breed of horses in Allamakee county. They have also some fine specimens of Suffolk hogs and of Brahma fowls. We are pleased to note these efforts to introduce the best of stock of various kinds into Northern Iowa.

Messrs. Bates & Brother are anxious to sell their tavern stand and to give their whole attention to farming. They would sell either for cash or land and stock—a rare opportunity for somebody who wishes for a good location as hotel-keeper.

Mr. John Haney has a small orchard of apple trees, which are doing finely. They bore well last year, and bid fair to do better this. The orchard is within ten rods of the Mississippi.

The *Mirror*, the Republican organ of Allamakee county, is published here, by H. R. Chatterton, Esq., an enthusiastic worker for his party.

From Lansing northward, for a long distance, the channel of the river is on the East side, affording no place for a town on the West side of the stream for more than thirty miles. This circumstance gives Lansing no inconsiderable amount of trade from Southern Minnesota, and hence the importance in part, of the place.

Waukon

April 19, 1859

Our last evening at Lansing was spent at a Temperance meeting, where we heard a well written lecture on the Causes of Intemperance and its Remedies, by L. H. Howe, Esq., a young lawyer of that place. Six or eight months ago, a promising young member of the Lansing bar, a man beloved by the whole community, died of delirium tremens. His premature death from the too free use of intoxicating liquors, produced a great sensation. A temperance society was formed immediately. Weekly meetings were held during the winter, and monthly are now held. At each of these meetings some citizen of Lansing usually reads a short lecture, which is followed by other miscellaneous exercises. The result of this movement is that drunkards have been reclaimed, and most of the whisky venders, for want of patronage, have been obliged to abandon their avocation. One of them recently broke into the Post Office there and rifled the mail bags. He was taken to jail at Decorah, Winneshiek county, and with four other "birds," has since taken wing, and is still at large. His name is William Faulkner.

Waukon is a prairie village, though in the vicinity of timber. It is at the head of Paint Creek, thirteen miles west and six south of Lansing. It is young, and glitters like a gem. Almost every house and store is new, or *looks* new, and is painted white. The large school house and the only

church erected, (Cumberland Presbyterian) are of the same color. A large number of the houses have picket fences around them painted white, with gardens in front. In short, Waukon looks like a New England village, which the tasteful people had forgotten to build until recently, and were just finishing off the first year's growth. A glance at the town will convince the stranger that he is in the midst of an enterprising and refined people.

The first settler in Waukon was George C. Shattuck, who came hither from Dubuque county in the summer of 1850. He is a native of Ontario county, N. Y., and is a very worthy man.

The county seat was located here in the fall of 1853, and still remains here—though two attempts have been made to have it removed. Waukon is fifteen miles from the Mississippi river and six and a half miles from the line of Winneshiek county. In a north and southward direction, it is near the geographical center of the county. There is so much strife to get county seats removed in Northern Iowa, that we take the liberty of suggesting that, hereafter, all county buildings be constructed on wheels and thus made portable.

Waukon has one banker, Walter Delafield; one grocer, Moses Hancock; three general mercantile dealers, W. Beale, W. R. Pottle, and W. S. Cooke; one druggist and bookseller, R. C. Armstrong; one boot and shoe firm, Howard & Hersey;

one house dealing in stoves and tin-ware; Low & Bean; two jewelers; two tailors; two blacksmiths; two wagon makers, two cabinet makers, and one harness maker.

Mr. William C. Earle has a steam saw mill, with a planing machine attached. He does a variety of excellent work.

The hotels of Waukon are the Nicholas House, kept by Sylvester Nichols, and the City Hotel, V. Dunlap, proprietor.

The Allamakee *Herald* is published at the county seat. It is Democratic in politics. Its editor and proprietor is Frank Pease, Esq. who has kindly made us acquainted with many citizens of this place.

Waukon has five churches, Baptist, L. M. Newell, pastor; Presbyterian, J. C. Armstrong, pastor; Methodist Episcopal, W. E. McCormick, pastor; and Wesleyan Methodist and Universalist, the last two having no pastor.

We find here five lawyers, John T. Clark, L. O. Hatch, Richard Wilber, M. M. Webster, and Frederick M. Clark; and two physicians, J. W. Flint and I. H. Hedge.

The School Directors of the township are Moses Hancock, President; C. J. White, Vice President; A. G. Howard, Secretary, and William K. McFarland, Treasurer.

Among other improvements here, fifty rods of sidewalk are being put down; A. J. Hersey is

erecting a block of three stores; Shattuck & Woodcock are putting up a large store, with a stone basement and heavy columns in front, and Mr. R. C. Armstrong, the Postmaster, is putting up a two-story brick house. A few smaller houses are being built. The Methodist Episcopal people have just voted to erect a house of worship this year.—In short, Waukon is progressing faster, we believe, than any other *small* village in Northern Iowa. Its population is a little less than six hundred. Most of its growth has been during the last two years. It bids fair to become a smart, though never a great inland city. The country around it is very fertile.

The people of Waukon are sanguine that the Prairie du Chien and Mankato Railroad, which has been surveyed to Otranto, in Mitchell county, a distance of ninety-two miles, will be built in a short time. The right of way has been secured most of the way, and the contracts, we are told, are to be let next fall. This road will leave the Mississippi at Johnson's Landing, in Allamakee county, and run through Waukon and Decorah. At Otranto it is to intersect the road through the Cedar Valley.

Allamakee is probably as well watered as any county in this part of the State—though not by so many *large* streams as some other counties. The Upper Iowa, the largest river which flows through it, waters with its numerous little tributaries, the two northern tiers of townships, and empties into

the Mississippi ten miles north of Lansing. Coon Creek, formed by eleven springs, runs four miles, and empties into the Mississippi at Lansing. Village Creek rises in the western part of the county, near Waukon, and empties into the Mississippi at Capoli (formerly Columbus,) one mile south of Lansing.

Wexford Creek runs through the township of Lafayette and empties into the Mississippi a few miles south of Capoli, in Paint Rock Slough. Paint Creek has its head waters in Springs at Waukon, and running through Jefferson, Paint Creek, a corner of Taylor and Fairview townships, empties into the Mississippi at Allamakee, or Johnson's Landing. Yellow River runs through the four southern townships, and with its little affluents, waters them abundantly.

The Upper Iowa and most of its branches are well timbered, largely with oak. The Yellow river is noted for its excellent walnut, linn and elm. There is timber on all the creeks.

Aside from Lansing and Waukon, the principal villages are Rossville, Milton, Dorchester, New Galena, Hardin, (partly in Clayton county,) Ion, Postville, Waterville, and Capoli. The last four or five places mentioned are very small. Rossville has two or three hundred people, a steam flouring mill, a steam saw mill, two stores, and two hotels.

Milton, which place we may visit on our re-

turn, has three water flouring mills on Village creek; several saw mills; two stores; two hotels; a large school house, used for church purposes on the Sabbath; and between two or three hundred inhabitants.—It is four miles from Lansing.

The loveliest site for a town in Allamakee county, is conceded to be Winfield, (Wexford Post office,) in Taylor township, on the Mississippi, fourteen miles south of Lansing by land, and about the same distance, we believe, north of McGregor. The levee is natural, with a pretty grade, and the village plat—thirty feet, perhaps, above the river—is as level as a house floor, with a sprinkling of trees to decorate it. The bluffs at that point retreat a considerable distance from the river. Half a mile from the landing is a spring stream, of sufficient bulk for hydraulic purposes, and a fall of twenty-two feet in a distance of forty rods. The proprietors of the town are David Harper, who resides in the place, and E. W. Pelton, of Prairie du Chien. Mr. Harper is Postmaster and one of two merchants of the village—if village it can now be called. There are not more than half a dozen dwelling houses on the site of the town.

A plow and wagon shop is about to be erected, and other improvements are under contemplation. On so beautiful a site for a village, we should rejoice to see one rise.

Milton

April 28, 1859

We are once more progressing towards home.

Thus far in our travels on the Mississippi, we have chosen boats connected with the Northern of St. Louis line. The officers are courteous and obliging and are doing much to make the line popular.

In our notes on Allamakee county, last week, we hinted that, on our return, we might visit Milton [Village Creek]. This we have done, and find it a quiet little village, in a lovely little valley, reminding us of the happy spot so charmingly described by Johnson in the story of "*Rasselas*." The village contains about one hundred and seventy inhabitants, and is located on Village Creek, three miles from its mouth, and four miles from Lansing. The first settler was Jesse M. Rose, who came hither in the autumn of 1851, and built the first grist mill—excepting corn crackers—in the county. He is the father, so to speak, of the mills in Allamakee, he having built five in the county. Among the other early settlers were O. S. Conkey and Peter Valentine, both, like Mr. Rose, influential men of the place.

We find here three grist mills, the proprietors being Jesse M. Rose, Peter Valentine, and A. Deremore. These mills are all on Village Creek, which is a remarkable stream. It rises near Waukon; has its origin entirely in springs, and though but fourteen miles long, has sixteen or seventeen good water powers. We have seen but few springs more copious and none more lovely in the State. The water is as clear as crystal, and in several

places the sand on the bottom of the stream is almost as white as chalk. The most inveterate toper must love water—if he should sojourn in this valley during the dog days.

Milton was formerly known as Village Creek, and the latter is still the name of the Post office. James Erickson, Esq., is the Postmaster. David Sidey and Thomas Engleby are the merchants. Mr. Erickson has the only shoe shop in the place. There is a harness maker, a gunsmith, a shingle maker, two blacksmiths, a wagon maker, and a cabinet maker—all the mechanics we find here. A tinsmith would probably do well. The Valley Temperance House is the only hotel now open.

One public school is kept here eight or nine months in the year. The church organizations are Methodist, Episcopal, and Independent Methodist. Eldridge Howard and S. H. Greenup supply the desk of the former society, and Peter Valentine the latter. All three are local preachers. One is a farmer, one a miller, and one a hotel keeper, and all are hard workers manually. Mr. Howard was on the circuit for several years, and left it on account of ill health. He is a hospitable man and a highly esteemed citizen.—There is neither a lawyer nor physician in Milton. One medical man, we should think, would do well.

Where wigwams and Indian corn fields stood ten years ago, Milton, hidden from the world by high bluffs on two sides, obscure and unknown is

slowly rising. It may one day be a large village for some of its best water power is unimproved. Other mills, a cloth factory, &c., will no doubt, be built here at no very remote period.

Capoli

Three miles below this village, at the mouth of Village Creek, and one mile south of Lansing, is Capoli, known to all Mississippi boatmen and tourists, as Columbus. It was settled ten years ago, but has not progressed much, having less than a dozen families. Mr. W. C. Thompson, the first permanent settler, still remains. His brother, John C. Thompson, is a cabinet maker and a daguerreotypist, a mechanical genius, and almost alone in the manufacturing business. Peter Valentine, of Milton, has a steam saw mill there; Wolcott & Conkey, a storage, forwarding and commission house, and Mr. Wolcott, a hotel.

When Allamakee county was organized, the seat of justice was located at Columbus. It was removed to Waukon in 1853. The name of Capoli was substituted for Columbus in 1857. It has a good landing, and the citizens are sanguine that a town will yet rise there. The people of Waukon, have some interest there, and in connection with the forwarding merchants of Capoli, are about to erect a warehouse. It is thought that a ferry will soon be established between Capoli and the mouth of Rush Creek, on the other side of the river, and a mail route through Capoli to Waukon.