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The **P**ALIMPSEST

FEBRUARY 1921

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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

Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials 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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The Old Military Road

Trailing diagonally across the State from Dubuque to Iowa City is an old ridge road. It was laid out more than eighty years ago to connect the little mining town on the river with the new Territorial capital. The United States government was then fostering the construction of military roads on the western frontier, and in March, 1839, Congress appropriated twenty thousand dollars for such a road to begin at Dubuque and run "to such point on the northern boundary of the State of Missouri as may be best suited for its future extension by that State to the cities of Jefferson and St. Louis".

The road was ultimately extended beyond Iowa City, but to the people of the Territory of Iowa in 1839 the opportunity offered by the government meant simply access to the site of the new capital. The road from Dubuque as far as Iowa City was immediately surveyed, a United States army engineer named Tilghman directing the work. James, Lucius, and Edward Langworthy, the first two of

whom had crossed the Mississippi to the deserted diggings of Julien Dubuque in 1830, were given contracts for the construction of the road from Dubuque as far as the Cedar River. Edward Langworthy states that after the surveys were made Tilghman engaged Lyman Dillon to plow a furrow along the route, under his direction, for the guidance of the contractors.

Meanwhile at Iowa City the town had been platted and the capitol building begun. A temporary tavern known as "Lean-back Hall" welcomed the travellers and tried to rival the hospitality which they had enjoyed at Tim Fanning's famous log tavern at the other end of the road. In the course of years Tim Fanning's tavern and "Lean-back Hall" have disappeared; nevertheless incentive was not lacking for two historically minded vacationists to retrace the old road on foot in September, 1920. The writers of the articles that follow — Marcus L. Hansen and John E. Briggs — set out one autumn morning from Iowa City equipped with stout shoes and hearts, a tiny tent, an ancient map, and all the information they could gather about the old highway. Four days they walked on the way to Dubuque, their feet treading the modern thoroughfare while their minds were busy with the traces of deserted villages and the ancient secrets of living towns, with the signs of departed traffic and the many reminders of the vanished spirits of the Old Military Road.

THE EDITOR

Phantoms on the Old Road

The Old Military Road! How foreign the expression to the peaceful, early autumn calm that lay over the valleys dropping away to the right and left of the ridge along which the road wound. My comrade and I had shouldered our packs at Iowa City and, setting our faces toward the northeast, had begun with ambitious strides to walk the old thoroughfare from Iowa City to Dubuque — our only motive being that furnished by the old books which told us that so the pioneers of Iowa had done. We could well believe that the road was old but why should it be called military? If in yonder groves where now one sees the red barn gables shining between the trees there arose the battlements of European fortresses, or if the deeply furrowed crossroads that mark the county lines were international boundaries where armed sentinels scanned the passports ere we proceeded, then we might declare the name appropriate. But harvest fields, many-tinted woodlands, and farmers who nod cheerily as they pass are not military, and the name is only the heritage of other years.

How fain we would escape from the past! Last season's automobile is discarded for the newer model and this year's clothes will be the derision of next year's fashions. But geography binds us with

bands that only under the most unusual circumstances are broken. Long after the mapmaker is gone the names that he sprinkled over the sheet are still written and bear mute testimony to the nature of the world in which he lived. Wall Street has no wall; Back Bay has no bay; and the Military Road is no longer military.

Yet military it once was. Soldiers planned it, surveyed it, and used it. Eastern Iowa in 1839 was the frontier; the site of the territorial capital had just been chosen on the wild bluff that rises above the waters of the Iowa. The Mississippi River towns were full of men eager to venture forth into the wilderness, and the Indian trails on the prairies were followed by the ever-moving pioneers. That these irrepressible spirits would soon come into forcible contact with the Indians who only reluctantly had left their homes in the ceded "Forty Mile Strip" seemed inevitable, and in order that the iron hand of the government might be felt in the remotest valleys, roads were necessary whereby troops might be readily sent from the permanent posts to the scene of any disturbance. That one of these should lead from Dubuque, the commercial and military center of the Upper Mississippi, to Iowa City, the new capital, was logical; and by Act of Congress in 1839 an appropriation was made to pay for the surveying, grading, and bridging of such a thoroughfare. Yet even from the first, the number of soldiers who passed over it was surpassed by the incoming

swarm of settlers, and the military men did little more than leave their name upon their work.

And as such it is known to this day by all who dwell by its winding course. The college student who was painting the Ivanhoe Bridge laid down his brush — he was working for the county — and explained to us who pretended ignorance, that the real designation of the trail we followed was the Military Road. The gray-headed sage at Monticello who gossiped with us as we stopped to rest our weary feet at the Depot Park declaimed on the sacrilege of rerouting a few miles of the Military Road as some moderns favored; and at the Trappist Abbey, kind-hearted Brother Timothy, he of the twinkling eyes, led us down to the pasture gate and with his walking stick pointed out a cross-cut by which we might regain the Military Road. All knew of the glory that once was the portion of the old highway.

All but the reporter of that village paper into whose town we hobbled at noon. Jauntily he came out to interview these pedestrians — perhaps they were transcontinental hikers about to favor the town with a visit and the paper with a front page story. Disappointment for all. To him the Military Road meant nothing and when he heard of Iowa City — that was too common. Away he darted to the nearby poolroom where he was sure he could unearth important news.

How discouraging it was thus at the very door of publicity to have it slammed in the face! What

permanent record would now be left of this so historic a jaunt? In the dust of the road we left no trail over which investigators could puzzle and students write theses. And when the voices of the two travellers were stilled, who then would take up the tale of the intrepid historians who not only essayed to write of the pioneers but to live like them as well? This thought added to the torments of legs already weary, and the brightness of our spirits faded as the September afternoon darkened over the landscape.

Misery loves company and to console ourselves as the darkness gathered from the already gloomy valleys, we conjured up, one by one, the shades of departed wanderers to accompany us — a procession of phantoms of the Old Military Road. They were travellers whose journeyings have already been forgotten: Leather Stockings who had no Cooper; black-robed priests without their Parkman; frontier Ichabods whose singing school escapades no Irving has recorded; horse-thieves who were hanged before the first dime novel was penned; all that motley band of men and women whose yellowed letters are still unread, about the foundation stones of whose cabins the roots of lofty trees are now entwined, and many indeed who never wrote a letter, who never built a cabin but who, living, created that great romance that hovers about the wooded watercourses of Eastern Iowa, felt by everyone yet related by almost none.

Among the throng are Edmund Booth and his two

companions who tell of how they passed this way long before the rivers were bridged, and when few features marked the passage across the seas of waving prairie grass. Leaving Dubuque to make a residence in the West, they bid adieu to the sordid associations of "Dirty Hollow" and to the rippling waters of Catfish Creek with its busy mill, follow the dim trail that leads to the falls of the Maquoketa where already a few cabins cluster about the charming Cascade. Here and there are wagon ruts to guide their horses' feet along the winding ridge that like a huge serpent crawls on its way to the ford over the South Fork of the Maquoketa. And now the lights streaming out between the logs of the cabin of Daniel Varvel — first resident of Monticello — betoken a supper of ham and eggs, corn dodgers and coffee, and a bed in the fragrant hay piled high in the rude barn.

Early the next morning they are off again for there are streams to be crossed, Kitty's Creek and Fawn Creek, before the site of Anamosa is reached on the banks of the Wapsipinicon River. Booth goes no further but his two companions, bound for Iowa City, continue their way over the rolling prairie that stretches on to the waters of the Cedar where the lounging inhabitants of Ivanhoe point out the route to the new town. By hard riding they reach it before the evening of the second day and are soon, no doubt, at the tavern recounting their experiences by the way and listening perhaps to the complaints of

those, less fortunate than they, who wandering from the ridge had found themselves lost in the prairie swamps or whose horses tripped over the protruding roots. Glad are they all that the road builders are already at work.

Yonder in our procession of phantoms is one driving five yoke of oxen attached to a plow. Lyman Dillon is his name, and if the story of Dillon and his furrow had not been somewhat discredited by the historical critics his would have been the most honored position in the group. For the old tradition relates that it was he who first rescued travellers from the dangers of waywardness. Employed by citizens of Iowa City, with his oxen and plow he threw a furrow almost a hundred miles long extending from the capital to Dubuque, and the wagons and riders that followed this guide beat a road by its side which was the predecessor of the Military Road. However, though the records have made mythical parts of this tradition, he claims a rôle among these characters.

Now the shade of the real maker of the road, a United States army engineer by the name of Tilghman, joins us. Under his direction the surveys were made and contracts let for the construction of bridges, the grading through the swamps, and the ditching beside the road which cut a clean swath forty feet wide when forests or bushes were encountered.

At top speed one of Ansell Briggs' postriders

dashes by; but the commerce on the road increases and saddle bags can no longer contain the correspondence of prolific scribes. The Western Stage Company puts on four-horse coaches one of which now travels along silently beside us. A Concord Coach! How little the expression means to us who can describe vehicles only in terms of cylinders. They were things of beauty in which any man would be proud to ride, and pride our fathers did not lack. "How they looked around them with a self-satisfied air as they took a seat and waited for the stage to start" declared an old observer. "How they nodded their heads and waved their hands at envious friends as the driver gathered up the reins, cracked his whip and dashed away."

It was not always ease and splendor. There came mudholes in the road in which the polish of boots was lost as passengers dismounted and struggled through with as much difficulty as the lumbering coach. Here was a river swollen by spring rains and no longer fordable, so passengers crossed the rushing waters in skiffs and under the dripping trees awaited the coming of the other stage which would discharge its load and turn back. And in winter there was the cold that pierced the buffalo robes and the blinding snow storms when all the drifted road was obliterated and the driver, lantern in hand, stumbled before in search of uncovered landmarks, his shouted words carried away by the swirling gale.

What a brave race these "knights of the lash" were! — not, it is true, in the eyes of all their contemporaries. Pious Sunday School teachers warned the fidgety boys to stay away from the "barns" where there was nothing but loafers, rum and stories of the road; and one mother lamented the waywardness of her prodigal son, saying, "I'd jest as soon let that boy staid in that old printin' office as to had him gone to runnin' with them stage drivers." Beneath the corduroy suit, however, was usually as generous a soul as ever crossed the western plains. Stories, indeed, he had, and whoever climbed up on the box beside him and first judiciously praised the teams, was sure to be a sharer in them; and many a half-frozen traveller got the last drop from the whiskey bottle even though the nearest tavern were ten miles away. The valley stretches of the road that once reëchoed his song now return no music but the strident notes of the klaxon, and a whirring mechanism covers the ground once trod by the flying feet of the gallant four.

But look at the passengers who gaze from the windows of this spectre carriage. That young lady, with fair face almost hidden by bonnet, ribbons and curls, who seems so calmly unconscious that her hoops-skirts are filling a much larger proportion of the seat than the single fare entitles her to, is probably the daughter of some frontier politician coming from school in the East to be the reigning belle of the county town and break the hearts of half a score

of backwoods lawyers before she discovers which one has the speediest prospect of being sent to Congress. Those two high-hatted heads borne on broad shoulders over which capes are carelessly flung are filled with balanced sentences and classic perorations, for they are members of the Territorial legislature proceeding to the assembly at Iowa City where they hope to deliver their sentiments on the wickedness of banks and the lethargy of the Indian agents with more gusto and gesticulations than the cramped quarters of the coach allow. That solemn-visaged person whose eyes rest so dreamily upon the passing scenery would be the victim of one of the "river gangs" west of the Mississippi if they knew the riches hidden in his carpet bag, riches not his but funds which he has begged in the counting houses and parlors of the eastern cities. With them he will build a college for the sons and daughters of the pioneers — an institution from which, he hopes, will radiate an influence that will make of these prairies a Utopia. Already he sees the brick walls of the "Academy" with its trim cupola rising above the tops of the waving trees, the paths that entwine on its campus and the white cottages that line the village streets. The college was built and is now gone. Cattle graze along the old lanes where once the daughters and sons of deacons strolled; and the surrounding acres are as far from Utopia as the rest of Iowa. Still it is fondly remembered by some gray-headed men who remain, recalling not the lessons in

moral philosophy imparted within its chilly walls, but the nights in the literary society hall, the pranks played during prayers and solemn promises whispered where the campus shadows were darkest.

Other builders are there among the spirits from the phantom world. They are the home makers. On foot and on horseback they come, sturdy backwoodsmen who have already hewed the forests in Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee, and wiry Yankees from the States of granite and fish. Some bring nothing but rifle, ax and stout heart; others guide beside them the oxen-drawn wagon with tow-headed boys, "hoopless" girls, and panting dogs trailing behind. Not only for Iowa are they bound; the lure of California draws many. Eight hundred teams passed over the road in the years 1851-1852 destined for the Golden State, proceeding as solitary individuals or in large parties of men and women organized and captained by old campaigners who could draw up the ranks to deliver two hundred shots in ten minutes or in close quarters fall upon the lurking redskins and with revolvers and "Bowie" give them a "Tennessee fight". A later generation of gold hunters follows, those who seek the hidden treasures of Pike's Peak. Like the "Forty-niners", the "Fifty-niners" pass clad in all varieties of picturesque costumes as if on a gay pleasure jaunt accompanied by bands of music to shorten the dreary stretches of the westward way. Here also come the shades of those three small boys of Cascade who,

inspired by the sight of the passing throngs and fired by the stories of the "Peakers" who stopped to ask for a drink, set out on foot for the Eldorado provided only with high hopes and a dozen and a half of eggs, and were overtaken by anxious friends only when the steeples of Anamosa were within sight.

More gorgeous cavalcades than these are the troops of United States dragoons who pass and re-pass, now hot on the trail of renegade Indians who have broken across the treaty line and are terrifying the new settlers, now returning leisurely, the manacled offenders in their midst. Here are other avengers of the law that travel quickly forward, the energetic county sheriff with his posse of farmers called from the plow and flail, scanning the muddy bottoms for traces of those thieves who with the frightened led-horses dragging behind, passed this way at midnight.

Who is this proceeding so cheerfully along with a smile for everyone and a helping hand for the emigrant who is repairing his broken wheel or axle? He is the frontier minister who christens the cabin children, rewards the patience of the bachelor homesteader with a bride, terrifies the souls of chronic sinners with warnings of impending doom and prays over the first grave dug in the green of the new cemetery. Perhaps it is the shade of Brother Taylor, Methodist circuit rider, who shed so many tears in the pulpit, that his hearers knew him only as "Weep-

ing Jeremiah''; or it may be the spirit of the Rev. Mr. Swerengen who never missed his fortnightly appointments in summer's heat or winter's cold, though he often ascended the platform so chilled by his struggle through the wintry road that the overcoat was discarded only after the discourse had waxed hot.

Far before us village windows begin to twinkle and as our minds turn more to supper and bed our ghostly companions become dimmer: lawyer and land agent hand in hand; pioneer doctor, dispenser of pills, expert "bleeder" and healer of man and beast; friendly neighbors on their way to a "raising"; their sons and daughters returning from a spelling bee; and all that host of plain men and women, good and bad, who compose the foundation upon which the great figures of any generation stand. This passing pageant has revealed to us a secret of the history of Iowa.

What manner of men were they who first cut the forests and broke the sod of the Commonwealth? One person looking into the past sees in the dark ravine the evening rendezvous where about the flaring flames are gathered the ruffian gang who stole the horses and passed the bogus money, and he says the original Iowans were cut-throats and ruffians. Another sees spire after spire of school and church rising upon country lanes and village streets and he declares that the foundation stone of the State was the idealism of God-fearing men. A third

sees the curling smoke that comes from the hearths of a thousand cabins and he says the State was built about the home.

Still we must look not in the valley or on the plain or in the clearing to find the touchstone of the life of the State. Look upon the road — that great artery that poured in all the elements of weakness or strength, of lawlessness or order, of blasphemy or godliness that struggled for the mastery and whose conflict constitutes much of Iowa's story. Such a vision anyone may see who after studying the way his fathers lived will venture out upon the road to read the records that they have left.

But for us it has faded, and stretching out on the road before is a yellow shaft of light growing brighter and brighter. There is a warning signal sounded behind and we gingerly step aside as an automobile rushes by, its gay occupants shouting and laughing and singing. How like the present generation, we muse as the dark road is retaken. How devoid of gratitude they unthinkingly pass over the highways whose roughness has been worn smooth by the painful steps of predecessors — the highways of law, of learning, of religion as well as the Old Military Road.

Again there is the piercing warning in the rear. Again we jump to right and left, but too late to escape the stifling cloud of dust that fills the air so lately peopled by the shades of the wanderers of yesterday. Gone now are the bits of our homely

philosophy. The law against unlighted motor vehicles should be enforced, we angrily declare, and having wiped the dust from our faces we shake our fists at the departing tumult and with husky throats consign these travellers to a darker oblivion than has ever befallen any of their fore-runners on the Old Military Road.

MARCUS L. HANSEN

Along the Old Military Road

During the four days that Marc and I walked over the Old Military Road from Iowa City to Dubuque probably no less than twenty sympathetic people invited us to ride in their motor cars. Hundreds went by in a cloud of dust with never a sidelong glance. Of those who deigned to stop, some rode in magnificent touring cars and some in one-seated Fords; some were kind-hearted farmers on an errand to town, some were professional tourists, and once near the end of a thirty mile stretch three jolly girls insisted that our company would be ever so pleasant. Not once did we condescend to accept, and never did the good Samaritans fail to wonder at our stupidity.

So as we trudged along we were many a time compelled to explain to ourselves such a ridiculous method of traveling. In the first place, we reasoned, it would be fun to discover if the Representatives who walked to the Territorial capital earned their three dollars for every twenty miles traveled. We decided they did. Another excuse that we tried to accept was that walking afforded the very best physical exercise — and we were on a vacation.

But the principal justification was our desire to compare the old road as we found it with the one that used to exist. To be sure the route is almost

identical, but the landscape has changed and so has the traffic. In order to visualize pioneer scenes one needs to go slowly, while halts and repose are essential if one is to sense the romance of primitive travel and of the picturesque people who have passed that way, of legends that may have been true, and of villages long since forgotten.

At one end of the trail stands the Old Stone Capitol: it was in the process of erection when the road was first built. Of the many who enter the old building there are only a few who are reminded by the well-worn steps, that they tread a pathway of the founders of this Commonwealth. Governors, congressmen, judges, presidents, far-sighted lawmakers, rough-shod pioneers, and travelers from the ends of the earth have climbed those steps and worn away the solid rock. Those hollowed stones, mute evidence of that pageant of the past, are what make the place a shrine. To mount those steps, forgetting the lapse of time, and to walk in imagination with the notable personages of long ago in the presence of the things they saw is to be thrilled by the reality of the lives they lived.

On the road to Dubuque it is a little more than a four hour walk from the Old Stone Capitol to the Cedar River where only a small summer shack marks the site of the once flourishing village of Ivanhoe, Iowa. Before the road was surveyed a venturesome trader named William H. Merritt, who pitched his tent on the bank of the river was so deeply impressed

by the "beautiful scenery" and the stillness that "seemed to pervade the whole atmosphere", that all through his life the village that later developed was held in tender remembrance.

Anson Cowles laid out the town at the intersection of river and highway. It is said that keel boats were built at this point for the shipment of grain down stream in the spring, but Cowles' visions were not of a commercial metropolis. He planned to establish a great university to be governed by rules of his own devising. One-half of the plat, when the land became valuable, he proposed to donate as a permanent foundation. Not far from the campus was to be a large park where he would assemble all kinds of birds and beasts that inhabited Iowa, and teach them to dwell in harmony. His large and magnificent residence was to be by the side of the road where he could entertain strangers and point out the places of interest. In the garb of an Indian chieftain he was to ride in a curious equipage — a chariot built on a marvelous plan, drawn by six elk in trappings of beaded buckskin, each elk to be ridden by an Indian in full native costume. But all of this mental frost-work was dissolved by an untimely death, and nothing is left but tradition to tell of the foibles and virtues of the chivalrous Cowles.

Not all of the Ivanhoe residents were imbued with such lofty ambitions but some of them won recognition in other ways. One of the earliest physicians in Linn County was Dr. Sam Grafton who hung out

his shingle in Ivanhoe. George Greene was both lawyer and school master there before he was sent to the legislature and nearly a decade before he became judge of the State Supreme Court.

Wherever the famous old thoroughfare of earlier years intersected a river there a village was founded. Every one of those pioneer settlements is now a prosperous city — with the single exception of Ivanhoe. For some unaccountable reason this crossing was never a popular place. The principal settlers either died or moved to Mount Vernon, Cedar Rapids, or Marion. The timber along the Red Cedar River, as the stream was then called, was a refuge for horse thieves and dealers in counterfeit money. To this day the grandsons of pioneer settlers speak in awed tones of the Ivanhoe ruffians' rendezvous. But now every vestige of the village is gone. Not one among thousands who traverse the old road ever heard of the village of Ivanhoe and if inquiry were made perhaps few could explain why the Ivanhoe Bridge was so named.

The three other river towns have survived — Anamosa, Monticello, Cascade. There were only four or five settlers at the Buffalo Fork of the Wapsipinicon River when the Old Military Road was surveyed. The following year Thomas Cox was engaged to lay out a town to be named Dartmouth. The place was later called Lexington, but when the county seat was transferred from the village of Newport the name Anamosa was adopted.

A story is told of three Indians — a Winnebago chief, his squaw, and their beautiful daughter — who came one day to the village of Dartmouth. They attracted attention on account of their cheerful demeanor, easy dignity, and look of intelligence. The name of the chief was Nasinus and his daughter was called Anamosa. They made such a pleasant impression and the name of the girl seemed so proper that the town was named in her honor. It is said that she afterward fell in love with a young engineer and rather than marry the Indian her father had chosen she ended her life by jumping from a ledge at High Bluff.

There is an air of romance and beauty in the Wapsipinicon Valley and the earliest settlers wrote to their friends of the charm of the hills. It was raining the day that we entered the valley but in spite of the inclement weather the glimpses we caught of turreted walls of clean gleaming limestone, the primeval forest that seemed to close in on the highway, and the vistas that opened down enchanting ravines, all contributed to a feeling of complete fascination.

The surroundings lend credence to the old legend concerning the name of the river. Long ago when the red men roamed over Iowa a beautiful Indian maiden named Wapsie lived with her father on the bank of the river. In another tribe two days away toward the setting sun there dwelt a Sioux warrior named Pinicon. Now it came to pass that Pinicon

fell in love with the beautiful Wapsie and Fleet Foot, his rival, determined to kill him. One day when the two lovers were canoeing the jealous Fleet Foot watched from the shore. Talking, laughing, and entirely unconscious of danger, Wapsie at some word from Pinicon put her hand to his lips. Like a flash an arrow flew from a thicket and pierced the heart of the unfortunate Pinicon. Wapsie sprang to his side and in doing so overturned the canoe. Together, the water closed over them — Wapsie-Pinicon. Their voices can still be heard in the rippling stream that bears their names.

On an autumn day three years before the Old Military Road was established, Daniel Varvel, a valiant native of Kentucky, came to the mouth of Kitty Creek on the South Fork of the Maquoketa River. The view that greeted his eyes was surpassingly beautiful: then and there he decided to build his new home. Jack Frost had already painted the well-wooded hill sides with gorgeous splashes of crimson and yellow and brown. Over the hills the fertile prairie extended beyond the horizon. No home-seeker had appeared there before, no axe had disturbed the wild solitude, no plow share had ripped through the sod.

For years the Varvel log cabin was a landmark in Jones County. The wayfaring traveler stopped there for the night, it served as headquarters for the men who laid out the old road, the mail that came once a week was thrown off there. One by one other

cabins were built in the neighborhood. A two-story hotel about twenty feet square was erected. The settlement grew and came to be called Monticello.

The traveler who now visits the flourishing city can scarcely imagine such humble beginnings. Gone long ago are the trails of the Indian and the smoke of his wigwam; gone too are the primitive methods of travel and with them, perhaps, the spirit of fine hospitality. Instead there are well arranged boulevards and industrious factories, the sight of an airplane is a common occurrence, and neighbors are no longer acquainted.

A little cascade in the north branch of the Maquoketa River was a natural allurement for millers. As early as 1844 two pairs of burrs made of limestone were busily grinding "very superior flour". Within a few years Cascade was a prosperous village. While the stage coach stopped for an hour at Steel's Tavern the enterprising young real estate dealers boomed corner lots to the agents of eastern investors. What a glorious future for a town, they said, where the power from a waterfall nine feet in height was available! To this day at least one lot is owned by the heirs of those early speculators. But alas, more than water is needed to make a great city. No railroad came to Cascade and when the stages stopped running the bright prospects were ended.

Transportation is the magic that produces great cities. In the days of prairie schooners and stage coaches the road from the port of Dubuque to the

capital of Iowa was a main traveled highway of commerce. When the weather was fair in the fall of the year huge wagons were loaded with grain and hauled to the market. Slowly, ever so slowly, the big horses or oxen pulled their creaking and cumbersome load along the old road. Returning they brought household supplies for the winter. The passenger traffic was carried in fine Concord coaches or in "jerkies". Gracefully poised on the strong leather trusses the stage coach dashed by the slow freighter and, enveloped in dust with the team at full gallop, drew up at the tavern with much grinding of hickory shod brakes. The doctors and preachers rode horseback.

As towns are established in the wake of a newly built railway, so the pioneer settlers took claims adjoining the Old Military Road. The most desirable places were squatted on first, so that instead of homesteads at regular intervals along the whole distance, several families lived in one neighborhood miles away from another such settlement. Through the efforts of George Wallace Jones or Augustus C. Dodge mail routes were established and the cabin of some prominent settler was selected for a post office. Then someone would begin selling dry goods and groceries, a blacksmith would come to shoe horses, a school would be opened, and a church organized.

The village of Pamaho affords a typical instance. Four miles to the south from the Wapsipinicon River on the crest of a hill, a site for a town was selected.

For a number of years the people who lived in the three or four cabins called the place of their residence Pamaho. On account of the pleasant location the name was afterward changed to Fairview. In the fifties the town began growing and though handicapped by possessing no water power the rich agricultural region promised steady development.

But the builders of railroads neglected Fairview and the promise was never fulfilled. Without transportation the village has died. Many houses that border the road are deserted and almost all are in sad need of repair. The lawns have been seeded to rag weeds and dandelions. Cornfields overrun the old gardens. Here and there an old house has been left to decay: with the window panes broken, the clapboards awry, and the roof fallen in, its appearance is well nigh sepulchral.

The silence that broods over the village seems to indicate plainly that the people have all gone away. Throughout the whole settlement not a person is stirring. No busy housewife is hanging out clothes or sweeping the porch, no gardener looks up from his hoeing, no loafer is sauntering storeward, no children scamper hither and thither, and even the pigs and the chickens keep out of sight. Long years have elapsed since the side streets resounded with clattering hoofs and the rattle of buggy wheels. Those wheels are now mounted on posts at the street intersections where they serve the convenience of the rural mail carrier. The post office that was main-

tained for sixty-four years has been discontinued for nearly two decades.

No one would imagine that the church is in use: the tall grass in the yard is untrampled and the windows have a vacant expression. The school house, which at one time was no doubt a model, now seems to be outgrown and deserted. The bustle of business in the "Fairview Store" is a thing of the past. The board awning that once shaded the windows is falling away and its function is performed by numerous cobwebs. Not even a garage is maintained in the village. As the curious traveler now seeks the lost site of Bowen's Prairie and Ivanhoe, so before long Fairview will be gone.

It was noon on the fourth day of our pilgrimage. For eighty-five miles we had followed the path of the famous old furrow. Only the route is the same, we were thinking. The landscape, the methods of travel, the habits of living — all are changed and little remains of the past. Then away to the left far over the hill tops we caught a glimpse of the gleaming slate roof of New Melleray Abbey. All is changed, were we saying? Ah, no! Within yonder walls men are living to-day by the old sixth century rule of Saint Benedict.

Ten miles from Dubuque over a macadamized stretch of the Old Military Road and two miles through a beautiful forest that has been set apart for a State game preserve, these pious monks live in seclusion. Afar from the turmoil and strife of mod-

ern life they quietly read the *Lives of the Saints* and follow the customs that have prevailed in all Trappist Abbeys.

In summer and winter, fair weather or foul, they arise from their straw ticks at two o'clock in the morning and spend two hours in prayer. Then an hour and a half is devoted to mass before breakfast. They work in their fields until nearly noon, then they sleep until two. An hour is allotted for dinner. The rest of the day is consumed in deep meditation and reading. At seven o'clock they retire.

By an ancient rule of Saint Benedict the brothers are forbidden to speak. Only by special permission are any allowed to converse. Their clothing consists of a long gown of brown wool: rough serge is worn next to the skin. Bread, rice, and potatoes are their principal diet: they never eat meat. The farm land, the buildings, and the thoroughbred live stock are all owned in common.

It was after two when we bade adieu to the old monastery, and the sun was just disappearing when we entered Dubuque. Behind us the curtain of darkness was falling over a hundred miles of the famous old highway replete with the memories of former times, and before us the lights of Hotel Julien Dubuque awakened no thought of Tim Fanning's tavern. We had arrived at the end of the trail.

JOHN E. BRIGGS

Comment by the Editor

THE OPEN ROAD

Personally conducted excursions into the past are both pleasant and profitable, but we should also like to recommend to adventurous souls that now and then they leave the easy chair and the book beside the fire and take to the open road on pilgrimages of their own to the scenes of yesterday. The trail may lead across country on a four days' walking tour or it may lead around the corner to some historic spot in the immediate neighborhood. East, west, north and south — everywhere there are shrines of the past.

The articles in this number present a kaleidoscopic view of the Old Military Road from Dubuque to Iowa City. But there were other military roads in Iowa, and there were roads, unsurveyed, where the wheels of emigrant wagons followed the deep-worn paths of Indian travel. There were many trails of adventure and a few thoroughfares of suffering migration. From river to river across the southern part of the State runs the old Mormon Trail, beaten in winter and summer by the feet and the wagons of thousands of fugitive followers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, fleeing from the wrath of Illinois neighbors in long processions over the rolling prairies and hills toward the West. Children were born

on the way, and along the trail hundreds of graves were dug.

Another trail went east across the State. It left no beaten path. Its traffic was a hidden traffic, for the travelers passed by night, slipping furtively from station to station of the underground railroad or convoyed in covered wagons or under loads of produce by men who hated the institution of slavery. Tabor was the first station of the main road, and Lewis and Des Moines and Grinnell and Iowa City and Clinton lay upon this hidden highway toward freedom.

TOWNS — ALIVE AND DEAD

Pilgrimaging along the road one passes inevitably in and out of towns — large towns and small, live towns and dying towns, and spots where the ghosts of departed towns hover, visible only to those who have known the past. Sometimes the old towns have almost lost themselves in the heart of modern cities. But in the present Davenport it is not difficult to find the old cabin of Antoine Le Claire, nor is it impossible to search out in Council Bluffs reminders of the old town of Kaneshville — wild outpost of pioneer days.

Often, however, the early settlements did not grow into cities but remain to this day quiet and secluded villages. Once perhaps they were possessed of the county courthouse and a high sense of hope. But untoward events happened. A rival town sprang up

on a more favorable site. The magic railroad line diverted settlement and then came a struggle over supremacy in the county. These contests, so frequent in the counties of Iowa, are full of both humor and tragedy. Sometimes the battle was decided at the polls or in the courts, sometimes justice was aided by the power of might, which carried the courthouse off bodily to its new surroundings. The disappointed towns frequently accepted the fate in dignified grace; sometimes they lost heart and shriveled to cross roads proportions; and sometimes they utterly passed away. You will find Magnolia in Harrison County placidly enjoying its seclusion, seven miles from a railroad. You will be able to locate Butler Center in Butler County and Marietta in Marshall County, though neither one has a post office. But you will hunt long to find Napoleon, the first county seat of Johnson County, or either Edinburg or Newport, each of which held in turn the technical honor of being the county seat of Jones County.

And many another little village that has had an historic past, though never a courthouse, is well worth a pilgrimage because of the quiet, quaint flavor of old days and undisturbed ways. There is the village of Bradford in Chickasaw County with its two heirlooms, the old Bradford Academy building and the "Little Brown Church in the Vale" where more than three score years ago the song was first sung that has been heard the world over. And in

Cedar County there is Springdale, quiet town of Friends where John Brown made his headquarters in the winter of 1857-1858, and where his men perfected themselves in the unfriendly art of warfare.

SHRINES AND RELICS

Aside from roads and towns there are many other shrines of old-time men and events. Up around the lakes of Dickinson County are the scenes of the famous Spirit Lake Massacre. Here and there over the State are the remains of old forts and stockades. On the banks of one river is the grave of Julien Dubuque who came to Iowa before Washington was President, and on the bluffs of the other river near Sioux City a monument rises above the bones of Sergeant Floyd who lost his life with the Lewis and Clark Expedition more than a hundred years ago.

In Wapello County the Indian agent, Joseph Street, is buried on the site of the old agency grounds, and with him lies Chief Wapello, buried at his own request by the side of his white friend. There are Indian mounds in at least thirty-five counties in the State and the refuse heaps of factories of arrowheads and axes; there are sites of vanished Indian towns and fields where Sioux and Winnebago and Sac and Fox Indians waged desperate battle.

WATER TRAILS

So too there are water trails to tempt the pilgrim. Take your canoe and ascend the Missouri River with

the journals of Lewis and Clark as a guide, stopping and camping and resting where they did along the western shore of Iowa. In 1673 Marquette reached the mouth of the Wisconsin River and entered the Mississippi at what is now McGregor "with a joy I can not express". Slip your canoe into the Wisconsin and follow. Perhaps even after two hundred and fifty years you will still catch the infection of his spirit. Or float down the Iowa River from Iowa City to the Mississippi, remembering as you drag your canoe around the dams that once the steamboat Ripple came up the river to Iowa City and set that young town in a ferment of excitement over the commercial prospects of the town now that it was in direct water communication with St. Louis and the Gulf.

Wherever you may choose to go on your journeying and whether you ride or walk or paddle, you will come back to the fireside and the easy chair with a keener taste for the stories of others who have made pilgrimages and explorations into the land of yesterday.

J. C. P.

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