

## 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.

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