

The  
**PALIMPSEST**  
APRIL 1921  
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**THE EDITOR**

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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

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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## Icaria and the Icarians

On the morning of the fifteenth of March, 1849, the steamboat *American Eagle*, on its way up the Mississippi River, arrived at Nauvoo, Illinois, with some 260 representatives of a French socialist party of which Etienne Cabet was the founder and leader. As the little group of emigrants disembarked from the crowded boat they saw before them the almost deserted city from which the Mormons had departed three years before on their long trail to Salt Lake. Empty houses, dismantled shops, and the blackened walls of the temple were all that remained of the former glory of the Mormon center which in 1844 with a population estimated at 14,000 had been the largest city in Illinois.

If the French had been of a religious turn of mind they would no doubt have believed that this empty city on the bank of the Mississippi was the work of divine providence. It was, indeed, a welcome refuge, for they were weary, sick, and discouraged. They

had left France the year before in several detachments to found in northeastern Texas an ideal community which, long before an actual site had been selected, had been named Icaria — a title derived from a romance, *Voyage en Icarie*, published by Cabet. The site of this Utopia, however, had been badly chosen. The long journey west from the Red River exhausted even the hardy advance guard. Breaking the sod and building houses under the scorching July sun were hardships enough to discourage the strongest men; and to these difficulties was soon added the scourge of malaria.

A few months before as the ship left the harbor at Havre these men had sung of the Icarian fatherland they hoped to found. Now, realizing the impossibility of providing for the larger delegation soon to arrive, they sadly and painfully made the long march back to New Orleans. Here their leader joined them in January of 1849 with more Icarians.

The hardships narrated by the advance guard and the revolution in France led many to return, but the loyal followers of Cabet, 280 in number, determined to go to Nauvoo where homes, at least, were ready to shelter them. Again misfortune dogged their footsteps: cholera claimed twenty of their number on the trip up the river; and it was with sad hearts that the exiles disembarked at Nauvoo, where, for the present, they hoped to establish Icaria, which they fondly hoped and fervently believed was to become the new world order.

Let us visit Nauvoo again six years later and ob-

serve the work of the communists. In the vicinity of the temple ruins some 500 of the Icarians are living and working, discussing their principles and their daily tasks in the French tongue. On the square surrounding the ruins of the temple, even the walls of which have now been blown down, are the community buildings of the Icarians. A large two story building provides a combined dining hall and assembly room, the upper floor being used as apartments. A school building in which the boys and girls are taught separately has been constructed from the stones of the temple, and a workshop, remodeled from the old Mormon arsenal, is also in use. Two infirmaries, a pharmacy, a community kitchen, a bakery, a laundry, and a library provide for the welfare of the community. Several hundred acres of land on the outskirts of Nauvoo are farmed by the communists, while the men who are not occupied in farming work in the flour mill, distillery, and saw mill, or are busy in the workshops at tailoring, shoemaking, or other trades, each group choosing its own overseer. The women, with a few exceptions, work in the kitchen, laundry, or sewing rooms.

Each family has its own apartment, for marriage and the family relation are recognized and fostered. Suppose we observe the life of a family for a day. There is no kitchen in these homes, and the mother does not get the breakfast for the family: instead all go to the community dining room where the meal for all has been prepared by the women assigned to this work. After breakfast the father goes to the

farm, to the mill, or to the workshop. The mother perhaps washes the dishes or prepares the vegetables for dinner. The boys and girls are sent to school where they are taught the usual branches and, in addition, the principles of Icaria — all, of course, in French. At noon they again assemble in the dining hall where a dinner of meat, vegetables, and fruit is served; then after a rest they return to the farm or the shop until the signal calls them to supper. In the evening there may be a meeting to discuss and decide the policies of the community, or the young people may dance. Possibly they may visit together until they are ready to return to their separate homes. On Sundays all unnecessary work is suspended, but there are no religious services.

If you are of a legal turn of mind and wish to know the political and legal status of these French settlers, you find that the society has a constitution — largely the plan of Cabet — which regulates their domestic affairs. The decisions within the community are settled in the general assembly in which all are expected to be present although only men over twenty years of age may vote. The relation of the community to the State of Illinois is determined by the act of February 1, 1851, incorporating the "Icarian Community". Among the names of the incorporators you may observe one well known in Iowa and Illinois, A. Piquenard, the architect of the capitol buildings at Des Moines and Springfield. Although jealously maintaining their French language and customs, the men of the community are

for the most part naturalized citizens of the United States and their relations with their American neighbors are usually friendly.

To the visitor who understands French and listens to the discussions among the men in the workshops and the women in the kitchen, it is evident that somehow the serpent of dissension has entered this garden of communism. One faction represented by some fifty-four voters supports Cabet in his attempt to revise the constitution and resume his former position of dictator; the other, with eighty-one votes in the assembly, but without much power among the administrative staff, opposes this revision as illegal. This party is known as the "reds". Supporters of Cabet are "whites", "cabétistes", or "furets".

Friction is increased by the social groups which have developed among the women and by the class feeling which has appeared among the various groups of workers. The men who work at a distance complain that those who work near the dining hall are served first and receive the best food. All these currents of discontent swell the tide which seems about to engulf the community. Families are divided and men and women on opposite sides no longer speak except when work demands it. In the dining room are tables of the "reds" and tables of "cabétistes". On one occasion five of the party opposed to Cabet enter the dining hall chanting in an undertone from the Marseillaise:

Contre nous de la tyrannie  
L'étendard sanglant est levé.

Cabet, now an old man of 68, who had left his family in France to found this community on the soil of a strange land, is indignant at this charge of tyranny and at what he considers the ingratitude of his followers.

Finally the majority party obtain control of the "gerance" or governing board as well as of the assembly. Thereupon the "cabétistes" quit work. Their opponents, taking as their authority the words of Saint Paul — which appeared in French, by Cabet's orders, on the walls of the dining hall — "If any will not work, neither let him eat", notify the insurgents that unless they return to work, food, clothing, and lodgings will be refused them. Then, says a French writer, began Homeric battles around the tables as the "cabétistes" attempted to force their way into the dining hall, to the great damage of the Icarian table ware. Cabet, watching from his room on the second floor, encourages his adherents; but they are finally ousted. A fist fight occurs when the new officials attempt to secure the records and keys from the old administration, while Cabet looks on with a smile, a situation which reminds an Icarian woman — in the opposition of course — of Charles IX at Saint Bartholomew. The climax of absurdity is reached when the new authorities attempt to remove two women "cabétistes" who teach in the school for girls. One of the teachers resists and is dragged out "by the hair" crying for help, while the terrified little girls scream and weep and some

neutral American neighbors watch the scene from the vantage point of the temple ruins.

Again and again the sheriff is summoned to restore order. The mayor of Nauvoo urges a complete separation; and the followers of Cabet withdraw to lodgings outside Icarian jurisdiction and soon after depart for St. Louis, leaving the "reds" in possession of Icaria.

Cabet, disillusioned and broken hearted, died on November 8, 1856, a few days after his arrival at St. Louis. His followers began a new Icaria at Cheltenham, near the city, where they maintained the struggle for eight years. Then with a membership reduced from nearly two hundred to less than thirty, oppressed by debt and sickness, the community turned over the keys of the buildings to the mortgagee and the last of this group of Icarians returned to the world of individualism and competition.

What of the group left behind at Nauvoo? Suppose we visit them some twenty years later. To do this we must travel to a spot some four miles east of Corning, Iowa. Here is Icaria, a little hamlet built on a hill sloping down to the Nodaway River. In the center of a square is the dining hall which serves also as the assembly room. On the sides of this square are rows of small white cottages and the shops, laundry, bakery, and similar establishments. Beyond are some log cabins, still used by those for

whom frame cottages have not yet been provided. On the outskirts are the barns, gardens, and orchards, while a magnificent wood forms an effective background for the whole. One feature of the usual Iowa village, however, is lacking: no church spire breaks the sky line above Icaria.

Perhaps you ask of the years following the departure of Cabet from Nauvoo. What have been the fortunes of the group left behind in the dying city? At first confusion reigned: industry was disorganized and the titles to the property held in Cabet's name could be transferred only by action of the courts. Crops were poor. The panic of 1857 was already in the air. The feud had alienated their supporters in France who were friends of Cabet, so no assistance could be expected from the mother land.

The community had for several years owned about 3000 acres of land in Adams County, Iowa, where they hoped at some future time to establish the permanent Icaria. To this remote and unsettled property the Icarians decided to migrate. The sale of their property at Nauvoo and other legal tangles, however, delayed the final exodus until 1860.

At Nauvoo the French had found plenty of houses, cultivated fields, and neighbors who were friendly as soon as the suspicion resulting from the struggle with the Mormons was allayed. In Iowa log houses, some without floors or windows, were their only shelter against the biting cold of winter. Most of

their land was unfenced and unbroken prairie, and there was not a settler along the trail for forty miles before they reached Icaria. Supplies had to be hauled some hundred miles by team.

At first they endured real hardships. Only the sick had white bread, sugar, and coffee. Milk, butter, corn bread, and bacon formed the menu of the others. Little by little conditions improved. With the outbreak of the Civil War, the price of wool soared. The Icarians had a large number of sheep and wool was easy to transport to a distant market. Troops passing from the Missouri to the Des Moines River and emigrants westward bound paid generously for supplies. The war, however, was not entirely an advantage, for it is said that every Icarian man qualified to enlist was enrolled in the Union army.

For most of the time, however, the members of the community were engaged in a constant struggle against debt and the wilderness. So many became discouraged and left the community that at one time they numbered only thirty-five persons. Despairing of paying for the entire tract or working it with their depleted forces, they had sold some 2000 acres of land, reserving about 1100 acres for themselves. Thus the years passed. A birth or a death, more rarely a wedding, now and then broke the monotony of their existence; and occasionally an old Icarian family returned to the fold.

By 1876 neighbors have moved in around Icaria

and the railroad has brought the community to the doors of the eastern markets; but their manner of living has changed very little. Each morning they assemble in the common dining room for breakfast of porridge, bread and butter, and coffee. For dinner and supper, meat, vegetables, marmalade, cheese, and fruit may be served. The tables are without cloths and the members drink from tin cups. Wine is produced only in sufficient quantities for solemn occasions. Water is the usual drink; and even this indispensable commodity has to be hauled from a distance. Many of the men smoke, but tobacco is not furnished by the community — each smoker must raise and cure his own supply in his leisure hours.

If you knock at one of the family apartments you will be received with the courtesy which a French man or woman seldom loses no matter how rough the surroundings. Below are two rooms — a living room and a bedroom. Upstairs close under the roof are two small rooms for the children.

In the evening when the community assembles in the dining hall for discussion or to enjoy music, a program, or a play, some idea of the personnel at this time may be obtained. Gathered in this rather bare room are some sixty-seven persons, twenty-four of whom are voters. Their dress is plain, but neither peculiar nor standardized. They converse in French, for almost all are French. Some of the newcomers are relating stories of the barricades in Paris during the Commune, or discussing ways and means of en-

larging the communistic society. The men and women who have faced the hardships of establishing their homes in the wilderness look at their hands, calloused and work-roughened, and debate the advisability of admitting others to share in the fruits of their toil. Again Icaria is split into factions. On one side are the conservatives, chiefly older people who prefer things as they are and have little enthusiasm for converting the world; on the other side are the radicals, many of them young people. In this party are some restless agitators, born revolutionists, who demand many changes. They want a program of industrial expansion, the establishment of workshops in nearby towns, and greater freedom in the admission of new members. They demand also that women be permitted to vote in the assembly, partly perhaps because this will increase the vote of their party.

In these discussions there is constant reference to "the little gardens" which are violently condemned by the radical party and, in fact, find few supporters. Earlier in the life of the community each family had been permitted to cultivate a little garden around its log house, where flowers might be raised. Some had planted vines and even fruit trees, and now that these were bearing fruit the radical members could not tolerate this violation of their rules against private property. The possessors of the gardens, however, clung to their little plots of ground. It was not much but it was theirs, they would have said with

Touchstone. The authorities tried to settle the quarrel by a compromise. As each family moved from their log house to a new frame house, the little garden was to be given up. At last only three households maintained their gardens in which the vines hung loaded with grapes. A member of the young Icarian party proposed that these grapes be sold by the community, but his motion was defeated.

This was the signal for open hostilities. The radicals claimed that the community had violated its constitution and announced their intention of withdrawing. Over the division of the community property, however, amounting to some \$60,000, a deadlock developed. The young Icarians had a majority of the total membership but they were outvoted by the conservatives nineteen to thirteen. They could not secure what they considered their share of the property but neither could the old Icarians expel the malcontents since this required a two-thirds vote.

At last the insurgents, some of them participants in the Paris Commune and all advocating more aggressive communism, appealed to the Circuit Court to revoke the charter granted to the community in 1860 on the ground that Icaria was really a communistic establishment instead of an agricultural society as the articles of incorporation provided. The American jury, convinced that the two factions could not live together in harmony and perhaps suspicious of the communistic idea, decided that the charter had been violated; and in accordance with

this verdict the Icarian community was dissolved by a court decree on August 17, 1878.

The property having been divided on the basis of the number of members and the contribution of each in goods and work, the two factions prepared to set up housekeeping anew. The radicals, more aggressive than their opponents, took out a charter under the title, "La Communauté Icarienne", taking care to secure all the rights which had been held illegal under the old charter, such as establishing schools and manufacturing establishments. They offered the older group a bonus of \$1500 for possession of the Icarian village and this was accepted. Thereupon they adopted a program which might have been expressed by the modern slogan, "Watch us grow", framed a new constitution, increased their agricultural and industrial activities, gave women a vote in the assembly, and provided for the admission of new members. Apparently they were not very discriminating for one member wrote in disgust that they had freelovers, Shakers, nihilists, anarchists, socialists, and cranks of all kinds — the word "crank" being one of the American words adopted by the French Icarians.

The result was membership indigestion, and it soon became evident that the community was losing members faster than it gained them. Why was this? the leaders asked in dismay. Some said the withdrawals were due to an instinct similar to that which makes rats leave a sinking ship. This diagnosis was

not far wrong. The community was receiving many improvised Icarians who expected to live at ease far from the degrading "wage slavery" of the cities; and they were both unable and unwilling to cut down trees, build houses, or plough the soil which was exasperatingly full of rocks. Moreover, their families also had to be supported; and the arrival of two skilled mechanics added to the ration list nine additional persons who, a French writer says, had lost none of their Alsatian appetites in the severe climate of Iowa.

Face to face with failure in Iowa, where work was hard, the new Icarians dreamed of a center in Florida, Kentucky, Texas, or California where the trees would produce fruit while the communists planned the further extension of their ideals. It happened that some ex-Icarians were already in California which they reported as a second Eden. The temptation proved too great for the young Icarians. They decided to join their brethren at the community called *Espérance* in Sonoma County, California, the land of leisure, flowers, and fruit. The united community was christened *Icaria-Speranza*. Another constitution was adopted which was a compromise between communism and individualism. Before their migration, however, dissensions among the Iowa Icarians brought them once more into the courts, and in 1886 their society was dissolved.

In the meantime on the bank of the Nodaway the

old Icarians, who had lost both the Icarian name and the village of Icaria, after some hesitation, had incorporated as "La Nouvelle Communauté Icarienne". Thus the old Icarians became the new Icarians. They selected a spot about a mile southeast of their old home and created a second Icaria. Here they lived in peace for another twenty years. Debt was the constant spectre which haunted the community. The monotony of the life and a desire for more individual freedom drove many of the younger people out into the world where the struggle seemed no harder and the possible rewards greater.

About ten years after the schism six of the nine men in the "Nouvelle Communauté Icarienne" were over sixty-one years of age. One of these, A. A. Marchand, had been with the first advance guard in 1848. Another was Jules Maillon who, after thirty years in the community, had returned to France hoping to die in his native land. But everything had changed in France and his relatives looked coldly upon the old man who had returned with empty hands. Disillusioned he had returned to spend his last days at the peaceful hamlet on the Iowa prairie.

As the years passed, the maintenance of the community grew more and more difficult for these old people, and it became evident to even its most devoted adherents that its days were numbered. The final act of the Icarian community as a whole was

the vote on the dissolution of the society in February, 1895. The hearts of those who had toiled and suffered in Texas, at Nauvoo, and on the prairies of Iowa must have been heavy, but the vote was unanimous. The execution of the sentence devolved upon the court which appointed E. F. Bettannier, one of the members, receiver. The assets were distributed among the members according to their years of service in the community reckoning from the age of twenty-one in the case of men and eighteen for the women. Each orphan minor was given \$850. Three years later, on the 22nd of October, Judge H. M. Towner accepted the report of the receiver and declared "La Nouvelle Communauté Icarienne" legally at an end. Some of the members remained as honored citizens in the vicinity but the last branch of the Icarian tree, which was to have flourished and scattered its seeds into the world of individualism, was dead.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

## The Ripple

In June, 1841, the roofless stone walls of the new Territorial capitol rose bare and open to the sun on the crest of a hill overlooking the Iowa River. Facing the unfinished building was a mushroom growth of houses, stores, and inns which had sprung up within two years' time, ready for the coming of legislators and office holders and the attendant population that was expected in the newly created seat of government.

Iowa City was resonant with building activities in those days; but on the twentieth of June there was probably no tapping of hammers or rasping of saws, for it was Sunday. Down at the foot of the hill back of the new capitol was a ferry landing where a boat served the needs of travellers on the Old Military Road; and here was staged on this June Sunday an incident that is best left to the descriptive powers of the editor of *The Iowa City Standard*, in a news item entitled "Arrival Extraordinary!!!".

"We this week announce an event which in our judgment, is of more importance than any that has happened since our city has had an existence.

"On the 20th instant our citizens were surprised by hearing the puffing of an approaching Steamer. We need not speak of the astonishment caused, by such unusual sounds;— sounds which were for the

first time heard on our peaceful river — nor of the many conjectures which were started as to the course from whence they proceeded. Our doubts were soon dispelled by the glorious reality, as the STEAMER RIPPLE for the first time came dashing up the Iowa and landed at the ferry, which henceforth is only to be known by the more appropriate name of *the Steam Boat Landing*.

“The hearty cheers which hailed the arrival, and the warm welcome which the Captain, crew and passengers received from our citizens, showed that they appreciated the enterprise and determination which had originated and successfully carried out such an undertaking. Among the passengers on board we noticed Messrs. Wesley Jones, Moses Cramer, Jas. W. Neally, D. W. C. Barron, Jno. Taylor, of Burlington, Maj. Jno. B. Newhall, the talented author of ‘The Sketches of Iowa,’ and our fellow townsman James Herron.

“The Ripple arrived at the conjunction of the Iowa and Cedar river on Friday evening. On Saturday morning she started and ran up within four miles of this city before she stopped for the night. There were no impediments found to an easy and safe navigation of the river, if we may except a few snags and projecting trees, a few miles below the city, which will be removed by our citizens during the present week. The experiment on the whole was a most satisfactory one. The present comparatively low stage of water will effectually silence any

sneers that may be thrown out concerning high water navigation, &c., and we now have the fact proved, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that the Iowa river is navigable beyond this place for seven months at least during every year.

“This arrival has effectually changed the relation in which we formerly stood to the other towns in this Territory. We are now no longer dependent on the towns on the Mississippi for our imports — nor are we subjected to the labor and expense of drawing across the country all articles brought from abroad. We have now a situation in many respects superior to any in the Territory.

“The advantage of being the furthest point in the interior, which has a safe and easy communication by water with all the great commercial cities in the west, is too manifest to need remark. Indeed some of our neighboring towns on the Mississippi have laid claims to being places of great importance, on this ground alone. We trust we have settled all disputes on this point and that they will now at once yield the palm to us, and surrender all claims that they may have on this score. But when we add to these advantages our acknowledged superiority in beauty of location and fertility of soil and call to mind our almost total exemption from those diseases, which are and have ever been the scourges of the west, we can confidently demand the attention of emigrants and others to a situation which combines every advantage that can attract the merchant and

the farmer, 'the man of business or the man of pleasure.' "

It was a day and an occasion worth celebrating. The citizens calmed themselves sufficiently to retire for the night, but on Monday morning they held a mass meeting at the City Hotel and among other things appointed a committee to invite the captain of the *Ripple* and the crew and passengers to a public dinner in their honor to be given by the people of Iowa City. Another committee was named to interview the innkeepers of the town with this celebration in view. And it was resolved "that a suitable person be selected to accompany the STEAM BOAT RIPPLE down the Iowa River so far as may be necessary to ascertain the principal obstructions, and the best mode and the probable expense of removing said obstructions." Captain Frederick M. Irish, a prominent settler in the town, who had run away to sea in his youth, shipped on a three years' whaling voyage to the northern Pacific and elsewhere, and later became a New York harbor pilot, was deemed a suitable person and was so deputized.

By two o'clock in the afternoon arrangements had been made, the invitation delivered and accepted, and the citizens and their visiting friends sat down to a sumptuous dinner at the National Hotel. *The Iowa City Standard* prints at length the speeches and toasts that enlivened the occasion.

The most notable of the passengers who came up

with the *Ripple* was John B. Newhall, a Burlington resident, who bore the title Major, and acted as Iowa's first real press agent. In the early months of 1841 he had already published a volume entitled *Sketches of Iowa, or the Emigrant's Guide*. Two years later he was lecturing in England on the resources and possibilities of "Western America"; and in 1844 he published in London an *Emigrant's Handbook* for these western States, and followed it by *A Glimpse of Iowa in 1846*.

His was the principal address at the dinner in honor of the *Ripple* and we give it here in part:

"GENTLEMEN:—It is with feelings of heartfelt gratification that we return our thanks for the cordial reception with which we have been honored by our friends of Iowa City. This, is indeed, a triumph; an achievement well deserving all the encomiums so justly bestowed upon my worthy friend Capt. Jones.

"What are the circumstances under which we are assembled? Gentlemen, we are here this day to commemorate the fact that on the 20th of June, 1841, the *first* Steam Boat moored alongside the bluff of your City?

"From this day forward the practicability of navigating the Iowa river remains no longer the subject of conjecture.—From this day henceforth, a new era will commence in the destinies of your City. The most skeptical must now believe; for here is the evidence before you — yes, gentlemen, ere another

month shall elapse the performance of the gallant little 'Ripple' shall be emblazoned to the world in letters of living light.

"I know the farmers of Johnson county will hail this as an auspicious omen. Well do I know too, that every settler upon the verdant banks of the Iowa looks upon it as an era pregnant with the happiest results of the future. Would you know how the people of every village and cabin from the mouth of the Iowa, hailed our arrival with the spirit of gladness? Ask the passengers of the 'Ripple.' They will tell you of the cheering voice of welcome, not only the loud huzzas, but in the sharp crack of the 'rifle' which the sturdy pioneer loaded in the morning for the fleetest deer — little dreaming that ere the sun should sink behind the western prairie — his charge was to salute the FIRST steamer that had ever dared penetrate the serpentine windings of the 'Iowa Fork'. . . .

"A few short years ago 'Fulton and Rumsey' were thought to be *insane* for agitating the subject of propelling vessels by *steam* across the ocean. This too — in the intelligent circles of enlightened Paris. Now gentlemen 28 days will bring you from the Grey Towers of Windsor Castle to the rude Wigwam of my friend Poweshiek.

"Thirty months ago and what was the condition of your country? The shrill 'puff' of the steamer might have startled the wolf from his lair; or perchance the Indian hunter returning to his Wigwam.

The impress of civilization had not even marked its outline. But a change has come over the face of the wilderness. But yesterday morning — and 250 intelligent and accomplished citizens of both sexes, were embarking on a pleasure excursion from your landing, *up* the Iowa by 'steam.' Johnson County — from nothing two years and half ago, now contains a population of about 2300 freemen! — And who compose this population on the frontier of the 'far west.' — Is it that renown class of *outlaws* ye leped the 'Squatters?' Let us analyze, for a moment the character of our population, — gentlemen they never asked me 'down east' if you were actually cannibals. But some of the *knowing ones* thought you were 'mighty' near it. I only wish those respectable personages, who view the world from 'Vauxhall Garden' to the 'Battery' could suddenly be transported to your firesides. Could 'drop' into your rude court houses; they forget that the unshackled and mighty mind of man, soars beyond brick walls and pavements. That the conceptions of the pioneer are tinged with sublimity. Look at him as he grapples with the surrounding elements; look at his self reliance. His sole trust in his own energies that subdues the forest and makes the wilderness blossom like the rose. The man who lives and dies within the confines of his native country east of the Alleghanies, knows not the character of the western man. But to these traits of heroism, of unshrinking energies, do I attribute the mighty power that *we* are destined to wield.

“Such, gentlemen, are the wonders of the 19th century; such the onward march of the freemen of Iowa. The page of our history will be resplendent with brightness, so long as intelligence and virtue are the basis of our actions.

“In conclusion allow me to propose the following sentiment to which I believe your response will be amen.

“The gallant little ‘Ripple’ first to decide the practicability of navigating the Iowa. May her enterprising commander be *first* in the esteem of our citizens, and *first* to reap the rewards of his triumphant achievement.”

Captain D. Jones, whom Newhall so warmly toasted, was a Mormon and a resident of Nauvoo, according to Captain F. M. Irish. He went out with the great migration to Utah some years later and died in the West. For information on his earlier life the reader is referred to this modest response to the toast of Major Newhall:

“GENTLEMEN:—I am neither an orator, nor the son of an orator; but merely a son of Neptune, a son of the Five Oceans.

“From such a one you will not expect a fluent speech, lest you be disappointed. Permit me, however, to make one or two plain and unvarnished remarks on the present occasion. Exploring has been my study and delight from a boy. To accomplish this object, I have sacrificed the comforts of the social hearth. To this end I have endured the rage of

the five elements. I have endured the smiles and frowns of heathen Monarchs. I have grappled with the Lion and Tiger. I have contended with the cannibals, warclub and tomahawk, when my comrades were cut down by my side. I have also been an almost only survivor in shipwrecks. But gentlemen, I have the gratification to say that the reverse has been my fortune in exploring the Iowa river. Providence smiled on this enterprise.

“Instead of the red man’s war club; I have been saluted by the hunters rifle, echoing from bluff to glen. Instead of the roaring Lion, the loud hurrahs of my well wishers welcoming me up your river.

“Encouraged by the generous and spirited feelings of my passengers and officers, with confidence in the suitability of my boat,— I have surmounted every obstacle, and have come here to prove beyond contradiction, that the Iowa river is navigable.

“It’s true gentlemen; that I have been somewhat presumptuous in thus risking my all to the accomplishing of this object without a guarantee that I could clear my expenses, or that I should be able to return with my boat out of your river. But gentlemen, I am here and congratulate you on this occasion, in this beautiful little queen of Iowa, hoping that the rising generation, who so beckoned me up your river, may enjoy the benefits of this enterprise, and make it a bright page in the annals of the history of Iowa City. And now, gentlemen; your river is navigable. The boat is ready; your obedient servant, is at your service, whenever the public spirit,

and generous enthusiasm of your growing City is ready. Permit me to acknowledge the honor you have done me, and with gratitude, believe me to be ever your obedient servant."

Following this effort, various citizens toasted the *Ripple* and its Captain; and wishing them both many happy returns, the company broke up.

On Thursday morning of the same week, citizens of a small town over on the Cedar River were thrilled by the cry "She comes, she comes!". The *Ripple* had reached Rochester in Cedar County. And straightway, the enthusiastic citizens, headed by Dr. S. B. Grubbs, welcomed and toasted Captain Jones at a public dinner, and indulged in visions of a great future for the town.

But alas for human hopes. Neither Iowa City nor Rochester owes much to steamboat commerce. Occasionally in later years a boat nosed its way up to Iowa City and in the sixties a steamer was built and launched there. But the river commerce failed to develop.

As for the *Ripple*, it never returned. No one seems to know what became of the little craft that first roused the community hope. And though hope was rekindled at each later arrival of a steamer, it is doubtful if the people of Iowa City were ever again stirred as deeply as when Captain D. Jones, the lion hunter, moored the *Ripple* at the ferry landing back of the rising capitol.

JOHN C. PARISH

## A Reminiscence

The *Blizzard* and the *Early Cabins*, in the PALIMPSEST of January, convey to the reader of this generation a vivid impression of the courage, initiative, and self-dependence of the Iowa pioneers.

My father built 82 years ago the log house in which one of my brothers, my sister, and I were born and reared. It was a two story structure, the bed rooms above were reached by a common rung ladder. The roof was of clapboards, kept in place by poles secured at the ends by wooden pins. This roof shed the summer rains but the winter snow was sifted in by the keen winds, and many a morning I stepped out of bed into several inches of snow on the floor. Later on my father had the cabin weather-boarded and lathed and plastered inside. But the original logs are there yet, sound as ivory. Mr. Boarts, the present owner, a few years ago had occasion to cut an opening through the side and gave the pieces of the logs to my brother. They were white oak and hickory, and he sent me canes made of each kind. The cooking was done by the fireplace by my mother until finally a stove was found in Muscatine, and when it was put in operation the neighbors came to see it as a curiosity and a reminder of their old Eastern homes.

In those frontier days all were of equal fortune, all worked and saved. The clothing fabrics were

substantial. My father wore a suit of Indian tanned buckskin, and later on we had the homemade blue jeans made into garments by my mother. I would like a suit of it now.

There was a story told of one of those pioneer women and her granddaughter, who asked, "Grandma, you were here in the early days?" "Yes, I was a pioneer." "Well, were you poor?" "Yes, we were all poor." "Couldn't you have what you wanted?" "No, I could not." "Did you have no meat?" "No, nothing but venison, wild turkeys, prairie chickens and quails." "Did you have no sugar?" "Nothing but maple sugar." "What did you want that you couldn't get?" "It was New Orleans molasses and salt mackerel."

The blizzard of 1856 swept over Johnson County and one settler in Pleasant Valley froze to death and one in Liberty township had both hands frozen off. Those were years of adventure, stress, strain, and trial, yet the pioneers were happy and I do not recall a single expression of discontent, envy, or repining. It is a pity that the frontiers are all gone.

JOHN P. IRISH

## Comment by the Editor

### AN IOWAN IN CALIFORNIA

The fragment of reminiscence which we have printed in the foregoing pages came to us in a recent letter from Mr. John P. Irish, now living in Oakland, California. Other items from his letter will be of interest. "I built on my ranch in the mountains here a log cabin", he writes, "and dedicated it to the memory of the Iowa pioneers, and it was the summer home of my family for 20 years". He speaks of "the time when we slaughtered our pork in December, took it on bob-sleds and sold it at Ogilvie's packing house in Muscatine for \$1.00 per hundred and brought back the money to pay taxes and letter postage, which was then 25 cents". And he adds: "I am in my 79th year and hope to visit my birthplace again before I go to join the hardy souls of the frontier".

We join him in the hope. For many years John P. Irish was a prominent figure in the political history of Iowa. He was a son of Captain Frederick M. Irish who is mentioned in the article in this number on the steamboat *Ripple*. In 1864, when he was but twenty-one years of age, he became editor of the *State Press* at Iowa City (the successor of the *Iowa Capitol-Reporter*), and for nearly twenty years his paper was a power in Iowa politics. From 1869 to

1875 he was a member of the General Assembly of Iowa; he was largely influential in the establishment of the College of Law and the College of Medicine at the State University of Iowa, and next to John A. Kasson was probably the greatest influence in the movement to construct the present State House at Des Moines — a project which was fought bitterly in the General Assembly and throughout the State by men who drew pathetic word-pictures of the “barefooted women and children” who would be still further crushed to earth if the extravagant new capitol were built. He was nominated for Congress in 1868 and for Governor of the State in 1877, but the Democratic party was unsuccessful in both campaigns.

In 1882 he removed to California where he has edited several newspapers, held civil office, farmed, and been nominated for Congress. He has acted as counsel before several arbitration courts in cases involving international law, and has maintained an unusual interest and influence in political affairs. At the present time he is engaged in an active controversy in opposition to the anti-Japanese attitude of United States Senator Phelan and other prominent Californians.

#### BUILDERS OF THE FAR WEST

Iowa began early to contribute men to the up-building of the West. In 1849 Serranus C. Hastings — who had served a number of years in the Iowa

Territorial legislature, had been one of Iowa's first Congressmen and had held the position of Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the State — went out with the gold hunters to California. He served as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of California, was elected Attorney-General of the State, and for many years carried on a very successful law practice.

William W. Chapman, the first Delegate to Congress from the Territory of Iowa, and delegate to the Constitutional Convention of 1844, travelled across the plains by ox team in 1847 to Oregon. In 1848 he worked in the gold mines in California, but returned to Oregon where he was elected to the legislature, edited the first newspaper in the State, and served as Surveyor-General.

#### IOWA IN THE EAST

Nor has the East lacked inspiration from Iowa. Witness those two remarkable jurists, John F. Dillon and Samuel Freeman Miller. Both of them studied and practiced medicine — Miller for ten years — before they began the study of law. Dillon, after serving as Judge of the Supreme Court of Iowa and Judge of the United States Circuit Court, removed to New York City to become a member of the faculty of the Columbia University Law School and general counsel for the Union Pacific Railroad. For a third of a century he was one of the leading members of the New York bar, and one of the most eminent of American law authors. Samuel Freeman

Miller after ten years of medical practice in Kentucky and twelve years of law practice in Iowa spent the rest of his life — twenty-eight years — on the Supreme Bench of the United States.

#### IOWANS AND IOWA COLONIES

Iowans have gone east, west, north, and south. Herbert Hoover, born in Iowa, goes to California and from there becomes an international figure. George E. Roberts becomes an influence in financial affairs in Chicago, Washington, and New York. Frank O. Lowden reaches high position in Illinois. Horace Boies, the only Democratic Governor of Iowa in two generations, is living, at the age of ninety-three, in California.

There are Iowa colonies everywhere — from Seattle to Florida, in London, in China, and in the Philippines. Thousands of Iowans gather in a picnic celebration at Los Angeles each year to talk of the land between the rivers, and at the other end of the continent the Iowa Club of New York City has frequent dinners. We send greetings to the members of all colonies for they are Iowans still; and whenever they can come home for a visit to the prairies of their youth, the State will welcome them.

J. C. P.

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