

The  
**PALIMPSEST**  
NOVEMBER 1921  
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THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

### 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.

PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa

# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. II

ISSUED IN NOVEMBER 1921

NO. 11

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## Old Fort Atkinson

On a high bluff overlooking the beautiful valley of the Turkey River in northeastern Iowa, the remains of historic old Fort Atkinson stand as a monument to the days when the Winnebago Indians lived on the Neutral Ground. Below, as far as the eye can see, stretch the fields and meadows of modern farms, near by winds the lazily flowing water of the Turkey River, while to the south the little town of Fort Atkinson perpetuates the name of the frontier post.

For almost a decade, from 1840-1848, Fort Atkinson protected the Winnebago from the incursions of their hostile neighbors — the Sioux on the north, the Sac and Fox on the south. At the same time the soldiers prevented the Winnebago from trespassing and from wandering beyond the limits of their reservation, while they also stopped the whites, eager for land, from settling upon the Indian domain. With the removal of the Winnebago to Minnesota in 1848, the need of Fort Atkinson as a military post

ceased and, abandoned by the government, it passed into the limbo of obsolete frontier institutions. Eighty years after its erection, the friends of the old fort succeeded in bringing it out of its period of obscurity by purchasing the site and the dilapidated buildings from private owners and turning the property over to the State for a park.

Fort Atkinson was built to meet an emergency. As early as 1832 the Winnebago Indians had surrendered their rights to their land south and east of the Wisconsin River and had agreed to take in exchange certain annuities plus the Neutral Ground in the Iowa country. However, they showed little inclination to move west of the Mississippi and with the exception of a few who had crossed the river, they continued to reside in Wisconsin, causing the white settlers considerable annoyance and dissatisfaction. In 1837 a delegation of Winnebago chiefs in a conference at Washington agreed to remove to a site on Turkey River within two years, but a combination of causes led them to neglect their promises. Their love for their home in Wisconsin, a passionate attraction for the shores of the Father of Waters, and a reluctance to leave the whiskey venders of their old haunts retarded their migration. Moreover, a genuine fear of attacks from the Sac and Fox and the Sioux held them back. By the autumn of 1839 part of the Winnebago had crossed to the Iowa side but the majority still clung to their homes east of the Mississippi.

Finally, in March, 1840, the Senate of the United States, impatient at the delay, passed resolutions asking the Secretary of War to explain why the Winnebago had not been removed to the home in Iowa Territory. He replied that the delay had been caused in part by an unsuccessful attempt to induce the Indians to move to the country southwest of the Missouri River, but added that Brigadier General Henry Atkinson had already received orders to remove the Winnebago to the Neutral Ground and was engaged in that task. General Atkinson, in spite of the opposition of the Indians, succeeded in accomplishing the removal peaceably during the spring of the year 1840.

To reassure the Winnebago who were apprehensive and restless in the new land between their ancient enemies, and to prevent their straggling back to their old haunts, Captain Isaac Lynde with Company F of the Fifth Infantry, a detachment of eighty-two officers and enlisted men, was sent from Fort Crawford into the Neutral Ground. They marched to a point on the Turkey River in what is now Winneshiek County, Iowa, a few miles north of the site selected for the agency house and mission school. Here they went into camp May 31, 1840, naming the place "Camp Atkinson" in honor of the department commander.

Two days later, mechanics about fifty in number, who had come from Prairie du Chien under the escort of Company F, began the erection of barracks

and quarters under the direction of James Tapper, foreman. Government teamsters hauled part of the material used in the construction of the buildings from the vicinity of Fort Crawford over the route later known as the old military trail. Throughout the summer and autumn of 1840, horses, oxen, and mules stamped their way over the fifty miles of prairie drawing heavy loads of pine lumber, nails and other supplies. A sawmill near the site selected for the mission turned out walnut lumber for interior use while blocks of limestone were quarried in the immediate vicinity of the fort.

Carpenters and masons completed quarters for the accommodation of Captain Lynde's company during the summer. At the same time other workmen erected a storehouse near the landing on the west bank of the Mississippi opposite Fort Crawford for the storage of supplies destined for the post on Turkey River.

Autumn arrived with its wondrous foliage and work on the buildings continued. Late that season a teamster, Howard by name, set out with a load of supplies from the Mississippi landing and stopped for the night at Joel Post's tavern, now the site of Postville, half-way on his journey. A heavy snowfall the next day delayed the trip. When Howard departed on the last lap of the journey on the following morning the temperature had dropped and the air became bitterly cold. A party, following the trail a day later, came upon the loaded wagon in the

road, but the team and driver were gone. Following the tracks in the snow they came upon the body of the unfortunate teamster frozen stiff.

Month by month the stone walls took shape, and skilled workmen fitted joists and rafters and laid the floors. During the next spring when the buildings began to assume the appearance of a fortification the post received the more dignified name of Fort Atkinson.

In the meantime, rumors of a warlike attitude on the part of the Sac and Fox Indians led Governor Henry Dodge of Wisconsin Territory to urge the sending of a mounted force to the Neutral Ground to protect the Winnebago and to prevent their return to Wisconsin. To meet the situation General Atkinson ordered troops to march from Fort Crawford into the region of the Red Cedar and Turkey rivers until it was expedient to send mounted troops. He felt that it would be unwise to send the dragoons before the middle of May as there would be no barracks nor stables for their accommodation nor forage for their horses.

At once the mechanics at Fort Atkinson began to erect additional barracks and to build stables. On June 24, 1841, Captain Edwin V. Sumner arrived with Company B of the First United States Dragoons and joined the garrison, making the force about one hundred and sixty strong, and for six years Fort Atkinson continued to be a two company post. In the fall Company K of the First Infantry

with Captain J. J. Abercrombie in command replaced Captain Lynde's company.

When work on the fort was completed during the next year, 1842, four long rectangular barracks, two of stone and two of logs hewn flat, enclosed a square parade and drill ground of more than an acre. These buildings were two stories high and twenty feet from the ground to the eaves, each having an upper porch along its entire length, with the one on the officers' quarters screened in with movable wooden blinds. Commissioned officers and their families occupied one of the stone barracks; non-coms and their families lived in one of hewn logs; while the private soldiers used the other two. In one of the latter, the stone building, the lower part was used as a hospital while in the other, the upstairs section was fitted up with bunks, the lower portion divided into several living rooms and one large room which was equipped with benches, a platform, and pulpit to be used as a chapel and school.

At one end of the parade ground a tall flag-staff towered above the works. A gunhouse with thick stone walls and peaked roof occupied the southwest corner of the works, which with its counterpart in the northeast corner guarded the approaches to the four sides of the stockade. In the southeast corner stood the stone magazine or powder-house while in the opposite corner was located the quartermaster's store-house adjoined by the sutler's store, with the guardhouse nearby. A picket fence of squared logs



twelve feet high with loop holes at intervals of four feet enclosed the buildings and with the two block-houses made a rectangular fort of formidable appearance.

North of the fort and across a street were located the bakery, the blacksmith shop, and carpenter shops. The stables were some 40 feet wide and 300 feet long running in a north and south direction. Beginning near the powder-house and extending nearly the entire length of one side of the stockade was the sentinel's beat with its platform about three feet below the sharpened tips of the logs. At one end of the beat a small shelter protected the guard during inclement weather.

To complete the buildings and to build the road from the Mississippi required a total appropriation of about \$90,000, a sum much greater than the circumstances warranted in the opinion of the Quarter Master General of the Army who felt that the pressure of the white population would soon drive the Indians north or south, thus making the fort useless.

While the clink of carpenters' hammers rang out and masons plied their trowels in erecting the buildings, military duty was not neglected. Regularly in the morning the flag was drawn to the top of the tall flag-staff there to flutter until sunset when with solemn ceremony it was lowered and furled for the night. In the gray light of early dawn the trumpeters took their stations and the sharp tones of reveille called the sleepy garrison to the duties of the day.

Roll was called in front of the barracks, quarters were put in order, and the horses fed and watered. Sick call furnished patients for the hospital and gave the post surgeon a chance to prove his skill.

Breakfasts of fried salt pork, bread, and hot black coffee being finished, there followed the tasks of the day. Squads of dragoons in brilliant uniforms sent out to patrol the reservation blocked the way of wily Winnebago braves who stealthily sought to return to the old hunting grounds; details of infantrymen despatched to the agency coöperated with the agent sometimes doing the work on the farm which the Indians neglected at every opportunity. Others assigned to garrison duty walked their beats as sentinels, cleaned and polished arms and accouterments or performed the detested tasks of indoor work. Frequent drills, maneuvers and inspections at which the young lieutenants fresh from West Point perfected their commands in marchings, manual of arms, and target practice, made up a part of the daily program. In the early evening, arms were stacked in the arm-racks, horses were fed and bedded for the night, and sentinels posted. Then the garrisons settled down to rest, to smoke, to play cards, to sing, to swap yarns or argue till tattoo sounded, when with the candles' feeble glow snuffed out, the quiet darkness of the prairie night enveloped the sleeping soldiers and their families.

Patrol duty often took the mounted company on long tours. Twice during 1842 requisitions from

Governor Chambers of Iowa Territory caused Captain Sumner and his dragoons to spend several weeks in the saddle driving out squatters and other intruders from the lands of the Sac and Fox to the south. Although heavy rains often pelted the marching column, streams had to be forded, and sodden blankets and equipment produced many a cheerless night, nevertheless the troopers welcomed the chance to get away from garrison life. The luckless adventurer, too, who had settled unlawfully upon the Indian domain could testify to the energy of the dragoons as he looked back upon his blazing cabin, his fences destroyed, and his crops trampled under hoof.

Their return to Fort Atkinson after such a trip afforded a chance for them to enliven the monotony of garrison life by recounting to an interested circle of infantrymen lurid tales of their trips by day and their camps at night. Great was the excitement, too, at the fort when in August, 1842, Captain James Allen with forty-four dragoons arrived after a long trip overland from Fort Leavenworth. During their short visit at the post friendships were formed which lasted for years for the paths of the two companies later crossed and recrossed. Soon Captain Allen and his men were on their way to the Sac and Fox Agency on the River Des Moines where they established the temporary post called Fort Sanford.

Again in the fall of 1844 considerable interest was aroused at the fort over the arrival of Reverend

J. L. Elliot who came to fill the double rôle of chaplain and schoolmaster. In the same room he exhorted the men on Sundays to resist the temptations of their isolated position, and during the week instructed the sons and daughters of officers and men — twenty to twenty-five pupils — in reading, writing, and arithmetic. Occasionally he exchanged pulpits with Reverend David Lowry who supervised the Winnebago mission and school to the south.

Although Captain Sumner with his dragoons prevented effectually the smuggling of liquor into the reservation he was unable to stop the Indians from visiting the whiskey shops set up just outside the boundary. Two of these known as "Sodom" and "Gomorrah" did a thriving business. In spite of the fact that hundreds of Indians joined the sub-agent's temperance society, they soon forgot their pledge and were drinking as heavily as before. After the Indians received their annuities at the agency, drunken frolics which sometimes resulted in bloodshed and murders doubled the work of the soldiers until the period of dissipation ended. Officers, too, found it difficult after a pay day at the post to prevent the soldiers from yielding to the allurements of "Whiskey Grove", a popular resort a few miles away.

To the dragoons, perhaps, the summer trip in 1845 to the northern part of the Territory of Iowa into what is now Minnesota was the outstanding event of their stay at Fort Atkinson. Filing out from the

gate of the fort on June 3, they headed northwest and ten days later came in contact with Captain Allen's company which had travelled from Fort Des Moines to take part in the trip. June rains and floods delayed the march so that the cavalcade did not reach Traverse des Sioux, the objective of the trip, till June 22. About the glowing embers of the campfire in the evenings troopers recounted their adventures and exchanged experiences of the three years that had elapsed since the companies had met at Fort Atkinson.

At the camp — a double row of tents for the men with the horses picketed in the space between, the tents of the officers forming a cross street at one end — Sumner and Allen held conferences with the Indians. They arrested certain offenders and warned a band of half-breeds from Canada that they were trespassing on the territory of the United States. Separating at Traverse des Sioux, on August 11, the two companies set out on the return march. By steady riding Captain Sumner's company accomplished the journey in eight days, but the dragoons rode back into Fort Atkinson with uniforms badly worn, horses jaded, and the men weary from the long hard trip.

When war with Mexico became inevitable, it was apparent to government authorities that the regiments of the regular army should be assembled and the posts occupied by their separate companies should either be abandoned or reoccupied by volun-

teer organizations. Accordingly the regulars were retained at Fort Snelling and at Fort Leavenworth, Fort Des Moines was promptly abandoned, and the troops were withdrawn from Fort Crawford and Fort Atkinson for service in Mexico. Both the governor of Wisconsin and the governor of Iowa were called upon to raise volunteers to man these forts.

To James M. Morgan with a commission as captain, from Governor Clarke, fell the task of enlisting a company for service at Fort Atkinson. He had been editor and part owner of the *Burlington Gazette* and he experienced little difficulty in securing recruits. On July 8, 1846, fifty-four men had enrolled at Burlington, twenty-two of whom had come from down the river and from the country thereabouts. Six volunteers arrived from Iowa City on July 9, and two days later eight came from Dubuque and Galena. Morgan, a man of slight stature, with hair and beard of so bright an auburn hue that he acquired the sobriquet "Little Red", soon won the respect and affection of his men.

He and his command left Burlington on the steamboat "Belmont", which conveyed them to McGregor's Landing, thence they marched over the military trail to Fort Atkinson. One unfortunate member of the company, William Topp, had fallen overboard on the up-trip and was drowned. At the fort three more men enrolled and on July 15, 1846, the entire company was mustered into the service of the United States for twelve months. In Indian Agent Jona-

than R. Fletcher of Muscatine, Morgan found a former associate of his in the old Territorial militia.

For the assistance of Captain Morgan's Independent Company of Iowa Volunteers it was decided to enlist a mounted company, and to John Parker of Dubuque who was commissioned captain was assigned the duty of enrolling the cavalrymen. His task proved easy in spite of the fact that the members had to furnish their own horses, saddles, and equipment.

The company was mustered into service at Fort Atkinson on September 9, 1846, by Brevet Major Alexander S. Hooe to serve for twelve months unless sooner discharged. At once it became a part of the garrison, furnishing troops for scouting purposes, watching the wanderings of the Winnebago, keeping them within the limits of the reservation, and trying to prevent the smuggling of liquor. Handicapped by want of arms — a few spare muskets from Captain Morgan's company being all the guns they had — they performed their duties with credit. By placing troops on the trail to Sodom, Morgan and Parker captured many a barrel of whiskey.

However, much to the indignation of the officers and men of Parker's Iowa Dragoon Volunteers and against the vigorous protests of Governor Clarke and Augustus C. Dodge, the War Department decided that the service of the troopers could be dispensed with, and accordingly the company was mustered out by Major Hooe on November 5, 1846,

after only sixty-nine days of service. Thus the mounted volunteers, their military zeal dampened by resentment, turned the heads of their war horses homeward, and guided them sullenly back to log cabins or towns there to resume the labors of farm and shop.

The discharge of the company was due, doubtless, largely to the report to the War Department made by Brigadier General George M. Brooke, commander of the Western Division who inspected Fort Atkinson in September, 1846. The nondescript appearance of the raw troops apparently offended his military taste, and seeing no necessity for the maintenance of two companies, he recommended the discharge of the mounted unit since it was the most expensive to maintain. The story is told, however, that a squad of Parker's company was stationed on the military road at a point near the present station of Ridley with orders to prevent the smuggling of liquor. When General Brooke reached this point on his way to Fort Atkinson, the sergeant in charge of the squad insisted on searching his baggage, and confiscated the brandy which he found therein. This so incensed the general that he recommended the dismissal of the company. However, verification of this story is lacking and therefore it must be taken with a grain of salt.

When Morgan's company had served twelve months it was mustered out at Fort Atkinson, and on the same date, July 15, 1847, a new company



formed which came to be known as "Morgan's Company of Iowa Mounted Volunteers. Of the former company all the commissioned and non-commissioned officers and twenty-eight of the privates re-enlisted. As an inducement to join, each private was offered twenty dollars per month, forty-two dollars in advance for clothing, and the promise of 160 acres of land at the end of the year. It was felt that the difficulty of keeping order among the Indians was too great a task for infantry alone, hence the new company was mounted. Furthermore, the plan to remove the Winnebago to a new home in Minnesota was already under way and a cavalry force to act as escort was needed.

When the time came for the removal of the Winnebago, adjustments of the military forces were made to meet the situation. Captain Morgan's mounted company became the escort while a detachment of twenty-five men of Captain Wiram Knowlton's Wisconsin company moved over from Fort Crawford to garrison Fort Atkinson during Morgan's absence.

In June, 1848, the cavalcade set out headed straight north to reach the Mississippi River at Wabasha's Prairie. Between two and three thousand Indians with sixteen hundred ponies, one hundred and sixty-six army wagons loaded down with supplies and belongings of the Red Men, squalling papooses hung in sacks over the backs of ponies, the lumbering cannon and caissons, the Indian Agent and his helpers, the cavalrymen heavily armed with

carbine, sword, and revolver made up a slow moving and picturesque caravan. When Wabasha's Prairie was reached a conspiracy on the part of the Indians to resist further progress was frustrated by an overwhelming display of force, for here Morgan who had learned of the plot received reinforcements by the arrival of Captain Seth Eastman with a company of regulars from Fort Snelling and of Captain Knowlton with his company from Fort Crawford.

From this point the Indians were loaded on barges and towed by steamboat to the Falls of St. Anthony where the land journey was resumed. On July 30, 1848, the caravan reached its destination at the mouth of the Watab River, after a journey of 310 miles. Morgan's company stayed to maintain order during the erection of the agency buildings on Long Prairie, then set out on the return trip to Fort Atkinson in September. They rode back to Fort Snelling, took steamboat to McGregor's Landing and thence followed the old trail to Fort Atkinson where they were mustered out of service September 11, 1848.

From September 25, 1848, to February 24, 1849, the fort was garrisoned by Company C, Sixth Infantry, with Captain F. L. Alexander in command. The need for Fort Atkinson having ended with the removal of the Winnebago, the War Department ordered its abandonment on the latter date. The teamsters harnessed the mules for the last time while privates of Company C loaded their supplies on the

army wagons; and, lowering the flag, the company marched out the heavy gate of Fort Atkinson leaving it in charge of a single caretaker, Alexander Faulkner. In the sleeping quarters of the soldiers, tacked to one of the massive black walnut bunks, one of the departing warriors had left a card with the inscription "Farewell to bedbugs".

The property was never again occupied as a fort although for a time it was looked after by Josiah Goddard and then by George Cooney, who were appointed to act as caretakers by the government. When the General Assembly of Iowa learned that Fort Atkinson was to be abandoned, a memorial was presented to Congress asking that the buildings and two sections of land be donated as a site for an agricultural school which would be a branch of the State University. This appeal went unanswered. A similar request in 1851 met the same fate, and again in 1853, when the General Assembly asked Congress to donate the grounds and buildings of the fort for a "normal manual labor and military institute" to be maintained at the expense of the State, the appeal fell on deaf ears. In July, 1853, the government sold the buildings of the fort at public auction for \$3,521.

To convert this historic spot into a State park and to preserve the remains of the post as a reminder of frontier days in the Hawkeye State was urged for twenty years before definite steps were taken to accomplish this worthy project. Finally the proposal to create the park and to preserve and improve

the Old Military Trail from McGregor to Fort Atkinson came to a head during the past two years and both projects are under way.

To a visitor with imagination who makes a trip at this time of the year to the site of Fort Atkinson, and who knows the early history of the spot a vision of the past takes form and substance. The shocks of corn in the fields below the bluff become the tepees of the proud Winnebago while the haze of late Indian summer suggests the smoke of many council fires. Down the last stretch of the old military trail rumbles an army transport heavily laden with barrels of flour and pork, boxes of soap and candles and bags of beans. The teamster guides his four mule team through the gate of the fort and replies to the rude quips of the soldiers with a rare assortment of racy oaths. The thin clear notes of a distant bugle announce the approach of a dragoon patrol, returning from a successful raid upon "Sodom". The belching flame and re-echoing boom of the sunset gun remind the Indian wards of the power of the great White Father at Washington.

The picture fades out as the realities of the present intrude and the dilapidated buildings reproach the visitor with the neglect of years. At last the people of Iowa have awakened to the justice of making this place an historic shrine and a mecca for those who feel that Iowa's landmarks should be preserved.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## The Beginnings of Burlington

When the Black Hawk Purchase was opened to settlers in 1833, there grew up at Flint Hills a settlement which took the name Burlington and became a thriving village and an important ferry crossing. In 1837 the legislature of the Territory of Wisconsin met there and a year later the town became the seat of government for the newly created Territory of Iowa. In 1839 a site was chosen for a new capital to be known as Iowa City, but the legislature continued to meet at Burlington until 1841. The story of the first decade, told at the time by the participants in the events, is available to us because there were newspapers in the early days, and a few men far-sighted enough to preserve the yellowing files.

### THE EARLY THIRTIES

In the issues of *The Iowa Patriot* for June 6 and June 13, 1839, "A Citizen of Burlington"—undoubtedly William R. Ross—wrote the two following historical sketches:

"MR. EDWARDS<sup>1</sup>—At your request and believing that a brief sketch of the first settlement of our

<sup>1</sup> James G. Edwards commenced the publication of the *Burlington Patriot* in the year 1838. In 1839 he took the name *The Iowa Patriot*, which title was later changed to the *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, then to the *Hawk-Eye*. The newspaper is at present issued under the title *The Burlington Hawk-Eye*.

country would be interesting to the readers of your paper, I communicate the following:— I arrived at what was formerly called the upper end of Flint Hills, now the City of Burlington, in August, A. D. 1833, at which time every thing was in a rude state of nature; the Indian title of these lands being only extinguished the first of June previous. The only white persons that I found residing on or near the place on which Burlington has since been laid out, were Messrs. M. M. McCarver and S. S. White, who had ventured here, previous to the extinguishment of the Indian title, with their families, suffering all the privations and difficulties attending the settlement of a wilderness country, which were very great and not a few of them. Frequently without bread or meat, only such as the God of Nature supplied the country bountifully with, wild honey, venison, fish and vegetables, in addition to which they were driven from their newly finished cabin, which was fired and burnt down by the soldiers from Rock Island, as ordered by the Government to remove the settlers from lands yet owned by the Indians. Much credit is due these citizens for their enterprize, having made the first claim, and established the first ferry that enabled emigrants to cross the great Mississippi to this newly favored land, and in endeavoring to make them as comfortable as circumstances would admit. A short period after they had made their claim they sold one third of their interest to Mr. A. Doolittle, who went on to improve, but did

not become a citizen until the early part of the year 1834. In the fall of A. D. 1833, Wm R. Ross brought a valuable stock of goods here, with his household furniture at great hazard and much expense, accompanied by his aged Father, who had fought throughout the Revolutionary war, and who was one of the first settlers of Lexington, Ky. Worn down with toil and age, and being exposed to the inclemencies of a new home, the old gentleman was carried off the same fall with chills and fever, and now lies beneath the clod on the topmost pinnacle of our City; the first white person buried in this section of the 'New Purchase.'

“Late in the same fall Major Jeremiah Smith landed with a fine stock of Goods, having sometime previously settled and improved the farm on which he at present resides, about one and a half miles from Burlington. Having given a history of all the permanent settlers of what is now called Burlington, in 1833, I will now relate a few circumstances concerning the natives. Burlington had long been a great point of trade for the Indians, as would appear from the numerous old trading houses, root house, and number of graves that were all along the bank of the river, together with several that were deposited in canoes with their trinkets, and suspended in the trees; the canoes being made fast to the limbs by strips of bark. Among the rest was the noted French or half breed, M. Blondeau, who was interred immediately in front of the old store-

house of S. S. Ross, with paling around his grave, and the cross with his name cut thereon, he being a Roman Catholic. We had his remains removed and re-interred in the present burying ground for Burlington. Their trade was somewhat valuable to the merchants in 1833, but Government having purchased all their lands within our present surveyed boundary, and their natures and habits of life being so different from that of a civilized community they have entirely removed beyond our western boundary, still pursuing the wild game for a livelihood.

“The original town of Burlington (which should have been called Shok-ko-kon, the English of the Indian title Flint Hill) was draughted and surveyed by Benjamin Tucker and Wm. R. Ross in the months of November and December, 1833. As I have been more lengthy than I expected in the outset, I will endeavor, in as concise a manner as the nature of the case will admit, to detail a few particulars in regard to the settlement of the country by that worthy class of our community — the Farmers, who deserve the greatest applause for their unexampled industry and perseverance.

“In October, A. D. 1832, there were some twelve or fifteen individuals who crossed the river in canoes, at the head of the Big Island, and landed at the claim of the Messrs Smith, two miles below Burlington, and made an excursion a few miles around the edge of the timber in the town prairie; laying claims for future settlement. But little was done by them



until February, 1833; when they brought over their stock, and commenced building and cultivating the soil; but to their great detriment and suffering, they were driven by the Government Soldiers from Rock Island, across the river to the Big Island, taking with them their implements of husbandry and their stock. Their cabins and fencing were set on fire and entirely consumed. Notwithstanding all this and still resolved to hold on to their new homes, they held a council and it was pretty unanimously agreed by vote, to strike their tents and build a flat boat to enable them to cross over the river as opportunity served, to pursue the culture and improvement of their claims. Many of these worthy individuals, after making a small improvement, have sold out at a trifling advance, to such as were more able and preferred buying, to going back and taking up wild lands and improving them. There yet remain a few families of those that first settled here, who have deeds for their lands from Government; their farms being now under a high state of cultivation.

“Being already too lengthy I defer giving you the extent of improvement made by some of the settlers in 1833, but will say it was from ten to fifty acres in corn, and as the by-laws were enacted in the fall of 1833, for regulating the manner of improving and holding claims, I will refer you to them for names and particulars.”

“MR. EDITOR,— I am in hopes, Sir, that number

two will be somewhat more interesting to your readers than the former number, as attention to the Black-Hawk country became more generally excited in 1834. After a close, hard winter the river remaining blocked over until late in the spring, when Steam Boats began to ascend, prospects began to brighten. We however enjoyed ourselves through the winter very comfortably with our native friends in smoking the pipe, and talking over old war skirmishes, and having a chase almost every day with our dogs after the wolves that would appear opposite our village on the river. I recollect well on one morning there appeared five or six wolves on the river; we gave chase, and with fair running one of our dogs overhauled and killed three wolves before we reached him, and then put in pursuit of a fourth, but was so exhausted when we overtook him, about two miles above here among the Islands, that he could not keep his hold, and the wolf disappeared after the loss of much blood; the dog belonged to Mr Isaac Crenshaw, our worthy friend, who had previously settled the Barrett farm, and was one of those sufferers by the soldiers from Rock Island. Notwithstanding we were, as supposed and expressed by some individuals, beyond the Government of the United States, without Law or Gospel, we were governed by that principle which reigns in the breast of every American Citizen, to do unto others as we would wish they should do unto us; and among other particulars I would notice in passing, that

there were a few of the fair sex who attracted the notice of the boys, but the query was, how could the nuptials be performed? As for my own part, I was willing to be governed by the custom that prevailed, but not being satisfactory to all parties, we crowded the flat boat and paddled over the river to the opposite shore, and there saw the ceremony performed by Judge —— of Monmouth, Ill., which was on the third December, A. D. 1833. The parties were Wm. R. Ross and Matilda Morgan, I presume the first couple that were united in wedlock in the Black Hawk Purchase. In the Spring of 1834, we petitioned the Post Master General for a special office to be established at Burlington, recommending Wm. R. Ross for P. M.; our wishes were gratified, but the P. M. at Shok-ko-kon P. O. refused giving up the law, books, lock, key, &c.; his excuse was that he had no right to send the mail out of the United States; it would be malfeasance in office; but by hard persuasion he established a branch of his office at Burlington, receiving the profits of the same, and appointing Wm. R. Ross, Deputy, at whose expense the mail was carried once a week for six months; until he was ordered by the proper department to give up the packages or he would be removed from office.

“In the spring of 1834, the Black Hawk Purchase was attached to the Territory of Michigan for Judicial purposes, and divided into two Counties, Dubuque and Des Moines; Dubuque included all the country north of a line due west from the lower end

of Rock Island; Des Moines, the remainder of the country south of said line, to the Missouri line. The same Spring public documents were sent Wm. R. Ross from the Legislature of Michigan at Detroit, containing instructions to notify the citizens throughout the county to hold elections for their officers; elections took place accordingly in the fall, but it was sometime in the winter before we could have a return of our commissioners, at which time there being no sworn officer in the Government, Wm. R. Ross being instructed as Clerk, swore the Supreme Judge into office; and he in turn swore him and the other officers to faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of their offices. In this way the wheels of Government were put in motion in Black Hawk purchase; however, there was no court held or any business done of consequence until the Spring of 1835.

“In the fall of 1833 there was a school house built by Wm. R. Ross, on his claim immediately back and adjoining the town claim, as originally laid out; and a school went into operation in the Spring of 1834, of about sixteen or eighteen scholars, taught by Zadok C. Inghram. . . . We were likewise supplied in 1834 with a minister from Illinois; specially licensed by Elder Peter Cartright; his name was Barton Cartright, a young man of promise; we were also visited in the summer by Elder P. Cartright, W. D. R. Trotter, and Asa McMurtry, who held a two days meeting and preached under a shady

Grove, where there was a stand erected and seats prepared by the friends; all classes uniting in the worship of Almighty God.

“In regard to improvements in 1834, we had some accessions to our village of very good citizens, and several frame and log buildings were erected, but our farmers went far ahead in improvement of any people I ever saw who were laboring under the same disadvantages; every one was trying to excel, who should make the largest improvement and plant the most grain. I scarcely know of one but what broke thirty acres of Prairie, many of them fifty or sixty, and Wm. R. Ross broke eighty acres and planted the whole of it in Corn and Pumpkins, he commenced in April, and finished planting the twentieth of June; the last planting made the best corn. Those who had the largest improvements and who had to stand the brunt of hardships in the first settlement were Wm. Stewart, Richard Land, Wm. Morgan, Lewis Walters, Isaac Canterbury, E. Smith, Paris Smith, P. D. Smith, Isaac Crenshaw, B. B. Tucker, E. Wade and Father, and some few others, who have sold out and gone farther west, or left the country; and a few that have died; these were John Harris and William Wright, and no doubt some few that have slipped my memory.”

#### A DESTRUCTIVE FIRE

During the night of December 12, 1837, fire broke out in the building which Jeremiah Smith had built

for the accommodation of the legislature of the Territory of Wisconsin. It spread to other buildings and proved disastrous, as the account given by the *Wisconsin Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser* for December 16, 1837, clearly shows:

“Wednesday last was a sad day for Burlington, and long will it be rememered in sorrow. Its matin light opened upon the ruins of the fairest portion of our village; and now the Capitol, and five of our best store houses, and two groceries, are piles of smouldering ruins. The whole of the block of buildings on Front street, from the corner of Lamson & Girvan up to the Post Office, is totally destroyed, embracing the store houses of Lamson & Girvan, Chase & Kimball, J. Newhall & Co., George W. Kelley, Jeremiah Smith, and the State House. Little merchandise, comparatively speaking, was destroyed by the fire, owing to the active exertions of our citizens, members of the Legislature and strangers; but, nevertheless, much of it was greatly injured by the hasty removal. The immediate loss of property is estimated at \$20,000, but it must, eventually prove to be far beyond that sum. The store houses destroyed were among the best buildings in the town; and the Capitol, recently finished, cost Major Smith \$7,000. It was a spacious building, and very well adapted to its uses. Thus, in a few short hours, has our thriving town met with a disaster which months and months cannot repair, and which, for the present and time to come, will press heavily upon some of our

enterprising and worthy citizens. There is, however, a buoyancy and elastic spirit, and an active enterprise among our people, which will, we feel confident, sustain them in this emergency, and which in the end will bring them triumphantly out of all difficulties. The fire originated in the second story of the Capitol; from, it is believed, a defectiveness in the hearth, by means of which it was communicated to the beams and timber. It was first discovered about 2 o'clock in the morning by the engineer of the steamboat Smelter, which was then lying at the wharf nearly opposite the scene of devastation. The progress the fire had made before our citizens got the alarm, the difficulty of getting at the fire, and our total destitution of engines or fire apparatus, gave the flames an easy triumph over every exertion that was made to arrest their progress; and it was, therefore, soon found to be idle to attempt it. Every exertion was then made to save the furniture of the capitol, and the goods and merchandise of those stores which were in danger, and which were finally destroyed. These efforts, as we have said, were very successful, but still many articles were destroyed, which, from their weight and situation, could not well be removed at the time. Some of the merchants who suffered by this fire have already made arrangements to pursue their business in other houses; others, we fear, will not be able to do so, and will have to store away their goods as well as they can, till they get proper rooms, or till they shall be en-

abled to rebuild next spring. At this season of the year, nothing in that way can be done; and from the fact that every house is bespoken almost as soon as it is begun, and filled before it is finished, it is greatly to be apprehended that suitable rooms cannot now possibly be obtained.

“The Council, for want of a better place, now holds its sessions in the west room of the upper story of the house occupied by the editors of this paper; and the House of Representatives is comfortably quartered in the upper story of Webber & Remey’s new building.”

#### IN THE EARLY FORTIES

An unknown writer, who signed his name “Veritas”, contributed to the *Hawk-Eye* for September 7, 1843, an interesting account of conditions in Burlington at the close of its first decade:

“In No. 7, I promised to give the statistics of Burlington in the present number. A stranger would not fail to be much surprised at the appearance of this place, when he would reflect that only a few years ago the Iowa country was owned and possessed by savage tribes of Indians, with the great Black Hawk as their head chief. The Territory was only organized under a territorial form of government by Congress in the year 1838. The temporary seat of Government for the Territory was placed at Burlington, but has since been removed to Iowa City.— Burlington is the largest town in the Terri-



tory, and is situated upon the west bank of the Mississippi River, in Fractional Townships 69 and 70 N. R. 2 West, and extends one mile along the River and one half mile back. The town — now city — was laid off in 1834. The first sale of lots was in 1841. The present population is about 2000. The City is incorporated, and is under good regulation of city police. One Mayor and eight Aldermen compose the city council. The city is also the county seat of Des Moines county, which contains a population of 8,500. The buildings are generally good. Good building rock of a superior quality is very abundant here, some of the houses are built of rock. The city contains thirty dry goods stores, twelve groceries, twenty ware houses, three iron stores, one iron foundry, four drug stores, nine doctors, twenty-eight lawyers, four black smith shops, two saddleries, three bake shops; three brick yards, which give employment to forty hands, twenty bricklayers, twelve stone cutters, tailors, carpenters and house Joiners, ad infinitum, two printing offices, three livery stables, one post office, six stage routes coming into the city. Times are said to be hard here, and money scarce. The currency is made up of Missouri, Wisconsin, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio bank notes, and a very fair proportion of specie, and some times the yellow Benton boys, alias mint drops, are seen flowing up the river, and shining through the interstices of the silken purses; but these sights are somewhat rare, and like Angel's visits, few and far between. In fact

there is not one half of the money in circulation here, that ought to be, for this city is the great point of attraction, for the whole western world, and will shortly be the younger sister of St. Louis, and, if Congress would grant an appropriation to clear out the rapids below this place, which is hoped will be done, she will one day be the rival of the Missouri Mistress. There is one of the best landings for Steam Boats here of any place on the Upper Mississippi. Notwithstanding the hardness of the times, the city is improving rapidly and presents a fine, thriving appearance. Last season about eighty buildings were erected within her corporation, and about as many more have been erected this season. The bluffs here are very high, and the city is in no danger of ever being overflowed by the river.— The conveniences and facilities for slaughtering and packing pork, are as great here as any other place in the west. The Steam Ferry Boat at this place, called the Shockoquon, owned by Thurston and Webb, is safe and good for movers and others going to Iowa to cross upon. Her age is about four years. Her keel is one hundred feet, her beam twenty-five feet, her guards ten feet. She has two engines of thirty horse power each, she is well manned, and is safe and speedy in crossing. The rates of Ferriage are fixed by law and never exceeded in any case. In fact, though the rates of ferriage are raised by law, when the river is out of its bank, and the ferrying is then about five miles down to a little village on the east

bank of the river, yet such is the generosity of the owners of this boat, that they do not charge any higher rates at one time than another. The rates are as follows:

|  |        |
|--|--------|
| For two horses and a wagon, and their load,          | \$1.00 |
| For each additional pair of horses or oxen,          | 25     |
| For a carriage and one horse,                        | 75     |
| “ man and horse,                                     | 25     |
| “ foot passenger,                                    | 13     |
| “ each head of loose cattle                          | 13     |
| “ “ head of sheep and hogs, (sucklings<br>excepted,) | 6      |

“Where there is a large lot of stock, wagons, &c. ferried over at one time, a liberal deduction is made from those rates.

“The route from the central parts of Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio, to the Des Moines, Skunk and Big Cedar settlements in Iowa, is direct by the way of Burlington. The country east and west of this place is well settled; and accommodations for travelers are good for western fare. The crossing at the Prophet's town is too low down the river, and throws the travel to Iowa too far south, and in the half breed tract of country, where the roads are broken and rough. Those going to the north part of Missouri, would have a tolerably direct route by crossing at Nauvoo. I will give the routes and distances from the principal starting points to Iowa via Burlington in my next number as my sheet is filled.”

## Comment by the Editor

### DIARISTS

“He who runs may read” perhaps, but he seldom has time to write. The journals of exuberant youth generally cease with the advent of business and professional struggles. The man of public affairs lives through interesting events, but his midnight oil usually lights up the conference table, rather than the desk where the faithful pen scratches off a record of the day’s doings. The soldier sees stirring times, but he is apt to be so tired when he drops his sword and reaches for his pen that he soon finds himself asleep.

And yet whence comes the material of the commentator and autobiographer — the detailed incident, the fleeting impressions, the vivid associations with the background of the moment — if the writer trusts only to his memory? We wonder if Caesar kept a diary. He says at one point, “All these things had to be done by Caesar at one time”, and thereupon enumerates an incredibly long list of duties. Did he when the day was over, pull forth an archaic form of pocket diary and record his deeds as data for the later production of his *Commentaries*?

George Washington kept an intermittent diary, the matter-of-fact but persistent James K. Polk succeeded in writing a daily journal throughout most of his presidential term, and John Quincy Adams illuminates the events of half a century with his very human record. More often diaries have been kept by men of less arduous and exacting duties, by men of a contemplative nature, and if these writers are observant and sincere and not solely interested in weather and personal ailments, their writings are unparalleled sources of historical knowledge. The daily task is a burden, however, and the real and genuine diarist is a comparatively rare individual. Like the "purple cow", too many men would rather see than be one.

#### DIARIES OF THE FRONTIER

Yet it is a happy fact that the adventuring westerners often kept journals of their migration and their new experiences. Overland wagon trips, steamboat voyaging, and the marchings of pioneer dragoons and volunteers usually had their faithful recorders, who recounted, day by day, in language picturesque but graphic, the story of the new lands. What matter if they write "korn and foreg" incorrectly, overindulge in capital letters, and forget punctuation marks, so long as they give us the facts. Stout little notebooks scrawled all the way through with the daily experiences of a forty-niner or a Pike's Peak traveller, with the comments of a pio-

neer settler upon his day-by-day life in the period of log cabins and Indian alarms, or with the jottings of a soldier patrolling the Northwest Border in 1865, have survived many a housecleaning only to be destroyed at last by an unthinking worshipper of the things of to-day. Diaries do not die of old age. They last as long as they are cared for and their value improves with their antiquity. We earnestly plead for their preservation, and we also hope that the gentle art of keeping a diary will not pass away in the hurly burly of modern life.

J. C. P.

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