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# The **P**ALIMPSEST

SEPTEMBER, 1921

## CONTENTS

<b>The Cardiff Giant</b>	<b>269</b>
RUTH A. GALLAHER	
<b>Pike's Hill</b>	<b>282</b>
BRUCE E. MAHAN	
<b>Magnolia</b>	<b>290</b>
BLANCHE C. SLY	
<b>Comment</b>	<b>298</b>
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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## The Cardiff Giant

One Saturday morning in October, 1869, two men were digging a well on the farm of William Newell, some three-quarters of a mile from the little village of Cardiff, New York. The spot selected for this purpose was at the rear of the barn, near a swale or marsh, through which meandered a small creek. When the excavation had reached a depth of about three feet one of the workmen struck his shovel against some hard substance embedded in the loose gravel soil. Attempts to pry out the object were unavailing and the curiosity of the men was aroused. Perhaps they had visions of a buried treasure chest — that subconscious memory of the time when the pirate is the hero of the child's imagination. It took only a short time, however, for the shovels to reveal the form of a human foot, and further digging, under the personal direction of Mr. Newell, soon uncovered the whole of a gigantic human figure, composed apparently of stone.

The mud-covered diggers and the farmer, leaning on their shovels, stared curiously at the figure which lay at the bottom of what had now become a trench instead of a well. They were soon joined by members of the family and by neighbors. What was this stone giant? Some of the spectators recalled the finding of a razor in a hollow tree on the same farm some years before; perhaps, they whispered, here was the body of a man who had been murdered.

Though rural telephones and the now ubiquitous Ford cars were unknown at that time, the news of the finding of the colossus spread rapidly and people from miles around jostled each other on the slippery sides of the muddy trench to get a view of the stone giant. The figure which lay below in the mud and water was that of a man measuring some ten feet two and one-half inches in height, with shoulders three feet in breadth, and other measurements in proportion. The right arm and hand lay across the body, while the left was pressed against the back directly opposite. The lower limbs were slightly contracted as if by pain, the left foot resting partially upon the right.

There was much speculation as to the origin of the giant and some of the visitors were not slow to recognize its value as an exhibit. Offers of trade and cash were soon made, but the farmer preferred to wait until the real value of his prize could be determined.

That he was not slow to realize a good business

proposition is evident from the system of handling the crowds of sight-seers. A tent was erected over the trench where the colossus still lay on his bed of clay, and a charge of fifty cents was made for admission. This apparently did not diminish the number of visitors, for in spite of the fact that the crops were not yet harvested and an election was pending, the farmer found himself possessed of a veritable Aladdin's lamp which showered half dollars upon him. It was not long before George Hull, a relative of William Newell, appeared to claim a share in the profits and this aroused some gossip since there was no apparent reason for his participation. A sum of money amounting to twenty thousand dollars was said to have been received from the admission fees to the tent on the Newell farm. Later J. W. Wood, a professional showman, was secured to manage the exhibition.

Andrew D. White, President of Cornell University, who at the time was in Syracuse, wrote the following description of his visit to the farm:

The roads were crowded with buggies, carriages, and even omnibuses from the city, and with lumber-wagons from the farms — all laden with passengers. In about two hours we arrived at the Newell farm, and found a gathering which at first sight seemed like a county fair. In the midst was a tent, and a crowd was pressing for admission. Entering, we saw a large pit or grave, and, at the bottom of it, perhaps five feet below the surface, an enormous figure, apparently of Onondaga gray limestone. It was a

stone giant, with massive features, the whole body nude, the limbs contracted as if in agony. It had a color as if it had lain long in the earth, and over its surface were minute punctures, like pores. An especial appearance of great age was given it by deep grooves and channels in its under side, apparently worn by the water which flowed in streams through the earth and along the rock on which the figure rested. Lying in its grave, with the subdued light from the roof of the tent falling upon it, and with the limbs contorted as if in a death struggle, it produced a most weird effect. An air of great solemnity pervaded the place. Visitors hardly spoke above a whisper.

Newspaper men also visited the farm and wrote thrilling descriptions of the "Cardiff Giant" or "Onondaga Giant", as the mysterious figure came to be called. Scientists studied it and wrote learned reports of its origin and antiquity. Most of these men rejected the theory of petrification but they differed widely in their explanations of the presence of the piece of sculpture in the swamp.

John F. Boynton, a graduate of a St. Louis medical school and a lecturer on geology and mineralogy, at first believed that it was the work of the Jesuit fathers two or three hundred years before. The material he decided was Onondaga gypsum. Later he decided that the statue had probably not been buried more than three years. Another of the scientific examiners was convinced that this was a petrified body. Experienced quarrymen of the region, he declared, did not believe that a block of

gypsum of this size could be found in the vicinity. Furthermore, the position of the body was not one an artist would choose; it was rather a natural manifestation of physical pain. Dr. Amos Wescott of Syracuse, in a letter to the *Scientific American*, supported this view. There were no chisel marks upon the figure, he asserted. Besides, its evident antiquity was proof that it was not an attempt to impose upon "a gullible public".

Among those who examined the giant was James Hall, State Geologist of New York, who some years before had made the first geological survey of Iowa. He was positive that the figure was a statue carved from crystalline gypsum. In a letter written to Dr. Wescott, Mr. Hall emphasized the antiquity of the statue and called attention to the corroding or attrition of part of the under surface of the body by the action of the water. "Such a process of solution and removal of the gypsum — a mineral of slow solubility in the waters of that region — must", he declared, "have required a long period of years." In another written statement he expressed the opinion that "to all appearances, this statue lay upon the gravel when the deposition of the fine silt or soil began, upon the surface of which the forests have grown for succeeding generations."

In the meantime imagination had, as usual, outstripped science, and a number of myths and legends were developed to explain the mystery. According to one of these, an Indian squaw, who visited the

statue, declared that it was the petrified body of an Indian prophet who many centuries before had foretold the coming of the palefaces and before his death promised his followers that their descendants should see him again.

The ordinary visitors, knowing nothing of art or archeology, were usually content with the belief that this was a petrified human being. "Nothing in the world can ever make me believe that he was not once a living being", declared a woman as she looked down upon the colossus. "Why, you can see the veins in his legs."

After some time the "Cardiff Giant" was raised from his muddy tomb and transported to Albany, much to the dissatisfaction of the Syracuse business men who had profited largely by the influx of tourists. It is reported that fifty thousand sight-seers visited the Newell farm while the giant remained there.

P. T. Barnum tried to purchase the figure but a local syndicate had already secured control and his offer was refused. The new company, one of whom is said to have been the original from which the character of David Harum was drawn, paid \$30,000 for a three-fourths interest, Newell retaining one-fourth. A pamphlet, "The American Goliath", was issued to advertise the wonder, but a great deal of publicity was furnished by newspaper discussions concerning the various theories as to the origin and antiquity of the image.

The success of the exhibition led P. T. Barnum to have carved a similar figure which was likewise exhibited as the "Cardiff Giant". The owners of the original attempted to secure an injunction to prevent the display of Barnum's giant, but it was refused. The rival did not, however, at once diminish the popularity of the real giant which was taken about the country and exhibited to large crowds.

There were some, however, who were skeptical concerning the accidental discovery of the stone giant. The appearance of George Hull on the scene and his share in the profits were not sufficiently explained by his relationship to William Newell. Residents of Onondaga County began to recall that about a year before a mysterious four-horse team drawing a wagon upon the running gear of which rested a huge iron-bound box had been seen in the vicinity of Cardiff and some claimed that they recognized George Hull as the man who had been in charge.

Those interested in the stone giant explained that the box contained machinery for manufacturing tobacco products and possibly some contraband tobacco — a fact which accounted for the secrecy surrounding its movements. Dr. Amos Wescott, who was one of the owners of the giant, declared in a letter to the *Scientific American* that it was absurd to suggest that the statue which weighed slightly less than 3000 pounds had been transported on a wagon to the Newell farm, unloaded by the two

or three men in charge, and lowered to the place from which it required fifteen men to remove it even with the aid of machinery.

Andrew D. White was shown a piece of the giant and he at once saw that the material was not Onondaga limestone as he had at first supposed but some kind of gypsum. This explained the point which had puzzled him — the attrition on the under surface of the figure. Professor Marsh of Yale, a paleontologist, examined the figure and asserted that it was clearly of recent origin and “a most decided humbug”.

Thus was the reputation of the “Cardiff Giant” endangered by gossip and the opinions of scientists. Its fame, however, continued and still the curious thronged to view it. Among those from afar who visited the exhibit was Galusha Parsons, a lawyer from Fort Dodge, Iowa, who stopped over at Syracuse to see the “Petrified Giant”. He immediately wrote back to a Fort Dodge paper, “I believe it is made out of the great block of gypsum those fellows got at Fort Dodge a year ago and sent off east.”

A number of Fort Dodge citizens at once began some amateur detective work. Skeptics in New York added their testimony and gradually the tangled threads were unravelled and the story of the “Cardiff Giant” was revealed. In the summer of 1868 two men, registering at the hotel as George Hull of Binghamton, New York, and H. B. Martin of Boston, Massachusetts, arrived at Fort Dodge.

The latter, however, was a resident of Marshalltown, Iowa. They were so secretive concerning their business as to be regarded as suspicious characters, but they showed special interest in the gypsum deposits.

Finally they attempted to make a bargain with C. B. Cummins for a large block of gypsum, at least 12 x 4 x 2 feet, explaining that they wished to exhibit it in New York. They also told one of the men at the mines that they intended to take the block to Washington, D. C., as Iowa's contribution to the Lincoln monument.

Mr. Cummins refused the order, but the two men leased some land and employed a quarryman named Michael Foley to get out a block of the prescribed dimensions. This feat was finally accomplished; Foley receiving fifteen dollars for his labor. The next problem was the transportation of the mammoth block, weighing about five tons, to the railroad station. The difficulties were found to be so great that the block was reduced in size so that it weighed less than seven thousand pounds.

Its owners announced that it was to be shipped to New York, but the records of the freight office at Boone — formerly Montana — showed that it was billed to Chicago. Here a German stone-cutter carved the gigantic figure from the block, Hull himself serving as the model. Pin pricks by a leaden mallet faced with steel needles were made to serve as pores; and the whole figure was carefully treated to give it a semblance of age.

From Chicago the statue, boxed and labeled "finished marble", was shipped by an indirect route to Union, New York, addressed to George Olds. Here the mysterious four-horse team appeared and the giant, encased in an iron-bound box, began his wanderings in search of his temporary tomb. Reports from various places indicate that the route was circuitous and the answers of his guardians to questions evasive and inconsistent. Machinery, iron castings, a soldier's monument, and "Jeff Davis" were among the replies to inquisitive persons. At one place, it was said, a small boy secured an auger and attempted to do some prospecting on his own account, but the owners of the box foiled his project.

Having arrived in the vicinity of the Newell farm, the box disappeared. The story of the midnight burial of the giant must be left to the imagination. It is not difficult to picture the scene: the shadowy light of the lanterns revealing the figures of the men busy about the inert figure, the rasp of iron and the splitting of wood as the box was opened, the creak of machinery as slowly and carefully the stone figure was lowered into its waiting grave, and the water seeped up around it. The earth was filled in and the top smoothed off. Probably there was no one to repeat the burial formula but the future developments indicate that the spectators were not without a belief in the resurrection of the body they had so carefully buried.

And so the mystery of the "Cardiff Giant" was

solved. The owners made frantic efforts to refute the evidence but in vain, for in the midst of their protestations, Hull, who apparently enjoyed the joke and who had realized financially on the scheme before the gossip about the planting of the giant had been verified, made public the whole story of the swindle.

In addition to confirming the main points of the story of the wanderings of the gypsum block and the stone giant, Hull explained where he received the suggestion of the plan. While on a visit to relatives at Ackley, Iowa, he had entered upon a discussion with a Methodist revivalist and in the argument concerning the belief in Biblical stories, Hull who was himself an atheist received the inspiration of the burying and resurrection of the giant.

These revelations would seem to be sufficient to destroy all belief and curiosity in the stone giant, but in spite of them a graduate student of Yale, named Alexander McWhorter, made a study of the "Cardiff Giant". He discovered on the figure an inscription in ancient Phenician letters and evolved the theory that here was a Phenician idol. No one else was ever able to see this inscription, but McWhorter wrote an article elaborating his theory and had it published in a prominent magazine. Dr. White of the Yale Medical School also examined the figure and of the discussion between these two men, Andrew D. White says: "Dickens in his most expansive moods never conceived anything more funny

than the long, solemn discussion between the erratic Hebrew scholar and the eminent medical professor at New Haven over the 'pores' of the statue, which one of them thought 'the work of minute animals,' which the other thought 'elaborate Phenician workmanship,' which both thought exquisite, and which the maker of the statue had already confessed that he had made by rudely striking the statue with a mallet faced with needles."

But no theories could restore the popularity of the "Cardiff Giant". Some of the enterprising citizens of Fort Dodge—W. H. Wright, Dr. McNulty, and the editor of *The Iowa North West*—collected the evidence and published it in a pamphlet entitled *The Cardiff Giant Humbug*, concluding with a modest advertisement of Fort Dodge. These pamphlets were sent to New York and sold in the town in which the "Cardiff Giant" was being exhibited. The promoters made frantic efforts to stop their sale, but enough were distributed to expose the claims of the giant. Although it continued to be exhibited for some time in spite of the appearance of a rival and the story of its real origin, the returns soon diminished and the colossus was finally stranded at Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where it was held for storage charges. It was put on exhibition at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo in 1901, but at the close of the Exposition it was returned to Fitchburg, where it was stored in an old barn.

It was felt, however, that the old giant should be

returned to its home at Fort Dodge, and it was purchased by Joseph R. Mulroney from the heirs of the estate to which it belonged and brought back to Fort Dodge, where it has been exhibited from time to time. It is now owned by Hugo Schultz of Huron, South Dakota, but it remains in charge of the Brady Transfer and Storage Company at Fort Dodge. Although in retirement, the "Cardiff Giant" was the chief guest at a "wake" given in Fort Dodge to visiting advertising men in convention there in the spring of 1921—an honor, indeed, which the old giant well deserved.

RUTH A. GALLAHER

## Pike's Hill

Opposite the place where the Wisconsin River empties into the Mississippi rises a bold promontory known as Pike's Hill. It is a part of the range of steep, almost perpendicular bluffs cleft here and there by deep ravines, which form the Iowa shore of the Mississippi River above Dubuque. Visited by Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike on his journey up the river in the fall of 1805, and selected by him as a site suitable for the erection of a military post, it has since been known by the various names of Pike's Peak, Pike's Mountain, and Pike's Hill.

Writing of this spot in his report to General James Wilkinson, Pike said:

I therefore pitched on a spot on the top of the hill on the W. side of the Mississippi which is [ ] feet high, level on the top, and completely commands both rivers, the Mississippi being only one-half mile wide and the Ouisconsin about 900 yards when full. There is plenty of timber in the rear, and a spring at no great distance on the hill. If this position is to have in view the annoyance of any European power who might be induced to attack it with cannon, it has infinitely the preference to a position called the Petit Gris on the Ouisconsin, which I visited and marked the next day.

Twenty-two years after Pike recommended this

site for a military post, another officer of the United States Army, Major General Edmund R. Gaines, then in command of the Western Department, proposed that a fort should be erected on Pike's Hill to replace the fast decaying Fort Crawford. Fort Crawford had been erected at Prairie du Chien during the summer of 1816, and was occupied continuously by a garrison from that date till October, 1826, when its troops were withdrawn and sent to Fort Snelling. In August, 1827, it was reoccupied due to the threatening attitude of the Winnebago Indians and the uneasiness of the inhabitants of the village and the nearby settlers. In the fall of 1827, General Gaines after inspecting the posts in his department made a report which includes the following statements in regard to Fort Crawford:

Fort Crawford, consisting of block-houses and huts, all of wood, is, as heretofore reported, so much decayed as to be uninhabitable without extensive repairs, and even with repairs the barracks cannot be rendered sufficiently comfortable to secure the health of the troops. The floors and lower timbers are decayed in part by frequent overflowing of the river, which has left the wood soaked and filled with damp sediment. Orders have been given to Major Fowle, the commanding officer, to repair the barracks in the best manner the means under his control will permit. Ten thousand feet of plank was brought from Fort Snelling, and an additional supply ordered to be furnished for the purpose, with the requisite tools. With these supplies it is believed that the mechanics of Major Fowle's command will

be able to render the troops tolerably comfortable until the next spring, when it is apprehended that the usual freshets in the river will again overflow the place. These freshets have often brought the high water into the barracks to the depth of four feet for several days in succession. This has sometimes occurred in the months of June and July. When this is the case bilious diseases are sure to follow.

At the time of his visit, Gaines found one officer and forty-four enlisted men sick out of a total force of one hundred and seventy-seven officers and men—more than one-fourth of the garrison. In addition to this several women and children in the families of the officers were ill.

The general embodied in his report a statement from R. M. Coleman, the assistant surgeon of the garrison, to the effect that the location of Fort Crawford was decidedly unhealthy and that a site across the river would be better suited to the health of the men. Major John Fowle, commandant at Fort Crawford, confirmed the report of Doctor Coleman in respect to the sickliness of the place. He, too, felt that the health of the garrison would be improved by its removal to the opposite shore and recommended Pike's Hill as the best site for the post.

Accordingly, General Gaines, fully convinced of the necessity of a new location for Fort Crawford, not only because of the unhealthfulness of the place but also because of its nearness to "tippling shops" in the adjoining village, recommended the erection of a new fort upon Pike's Hill "on the right bank

of the Mississippi, nearly opposite to the mouth of the Wisconsin, about four miles from Fort Crawford, and in full view of the fort and the neighboring village."

Against his proposal he foresaw the objection that Pike's Hill did not afford immediate protection to the village of Prairie du Chien and that the expense of transporting supplies to the top of the hill would be greater than that incurred at Fort Crawford. However, he argued that this expense would be more than offset by the advantages of the new site from the standpoint of health and by its nearness to a supply of timber for building and fuel. He believed that a road could be built by ten men in the course of a week, which, avoiding the precipitous face of the bluff, would extend in a series of grades from the top of the hill to the landing below at a distance of about a mile. A spring in the hollow of the hill about one hundred and fifty yards from the top would furnish an ample supply of excellent water.

The top of the site consisted of about five acres of almost level tableland which, Gaines asserted, would afford sufficient space for the fort with room for company and battalion exercise. Back of the hill-top for half a mile stretched a field sufficiently level and "well adapted to all purposes of cultivation as should occupy the attention of the troops, viz: for gardening, grass lots and pasturage".

Convinced of the feasibility of his proposal, Gaines drew up and incorporated in his report a

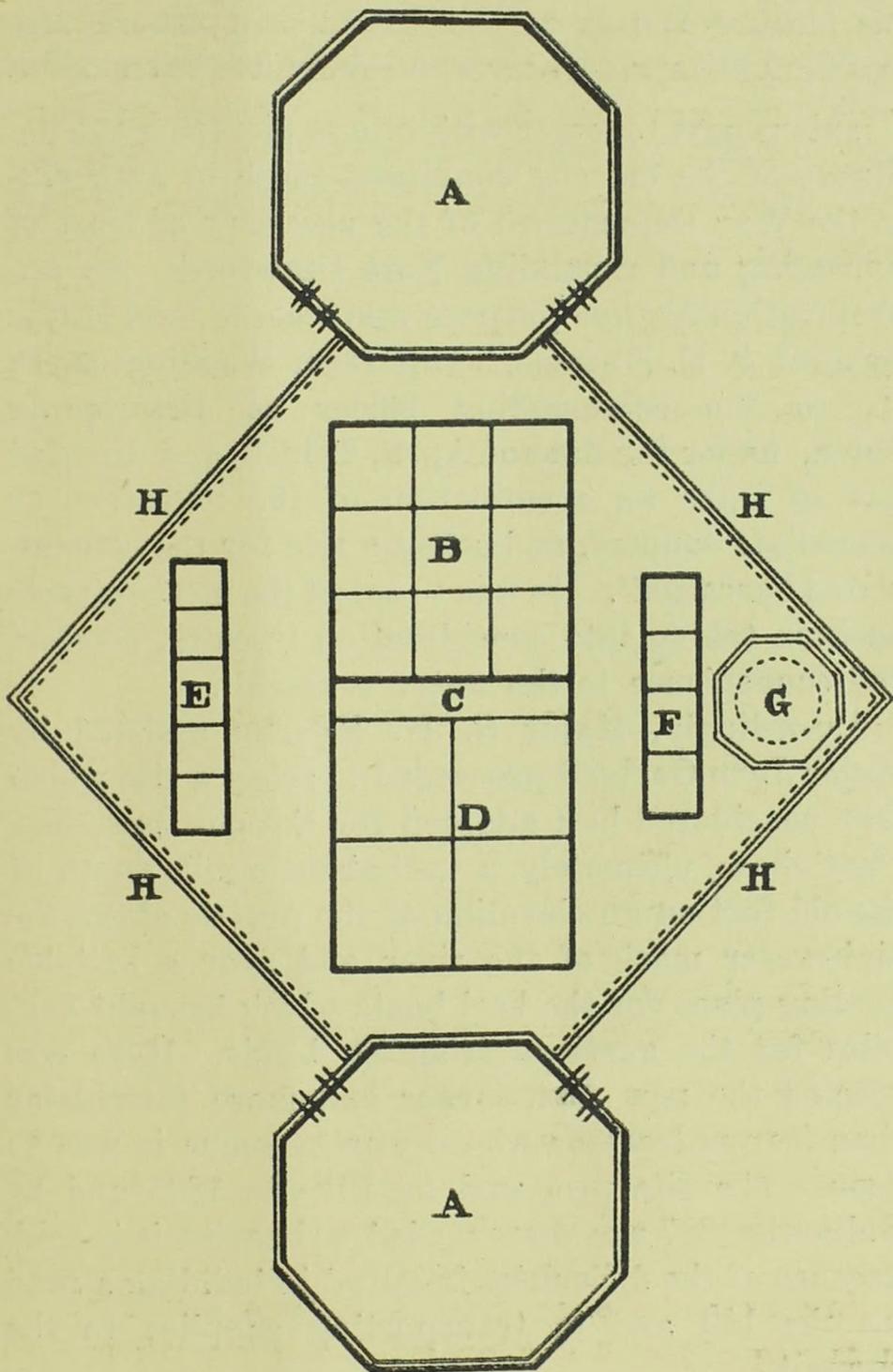
plan for a fort on Pike's Hill. On the opposite page this plan, slightly reduced, is reprinted from a cut which appears with the report in *American State papers: Military Affairs*, Vol. IV, p. 125. The following descriptive and explanatory matter is reprinted from the same source:

Ground plan of a fort for one hundred and twenty-five officers and men, recommended to be erected on Pike's Hill, near Prairie du Chien. To be considered with a view to defense against small arms only.

- A.— Stone towers, 30 or 40 feet in diameter, two stories high.
- B.— Barracks, two stories high.
- C.— A passage 12 feet wide.
- D.— Officers' quarters, two stories high.
- E.— Kitchens.
- F.— Storehouses.
- G.— Magazine.
- H.— Stone wall and ditch.

NOTE.— The stone wall need not be more than 2 feet thick. The ditch 4 feet deep, and 8 feet wide; 2 six-pounders, and 2 five-inch howitzers to be put into each tower.

The work to be constructed should consist of two small stone towers or castles placed 120 feet apart, with the intermediate space filled up with a block of stone barracks. These to be enclosed by a wall with a ditch, terminating at each castle, and so constructed as to receive the support of a flank fire from each castle. This work should not be larger than to accommodate a garrison of five officers, with



one hundred and twenty non-commissioned officers, artificers and privates, together with storage for their supplies.

This report together with others picturing the unfitness of the old site convinced those in authority in the War Department of the necessity at least of relocating and rebuilding Fort Crawford. An appropriation for this purpose was secured, and Major General A. E. Macomb, wrote from Washington, D. C., to the commanding officer at Prairie du Chien, under the date of April, 2, 1829, and directed him to make an examination of the "Prairie, or immediate country, and select a site for the contemplated barracks". He was to select the most suitable position taking into consideration "health, comfort and convenience to the water courses".

Accordingly, Major S. W. Kearny assisted by Major John Garland proceeded to select a site which they considered best adapted for the new barracks. They chose, ultimately, a spot about a mile south of the old fort on an elevation of the prairie above the high-water mark of the river and near a suitable landing place for the keel boats which brought supplies for the garrison from St. Louis. Here was erected the new fort, larger and more formidable than its predecessor whose worthy name it was to bear. The site proposed by Pike in 1805 and by Gaines in 1827 was disregarded, primarily, it is said, because of the difficulties involved in building a road up the hill and in transporting supplies to the summit.

Pike's Hill was never fortified, but even to-day the visitor who has climbed to its top and has looked at the river below dotted with wooded islands and at the sweep of prairie on the opposite shore is struck with the advantages of this spot as a military site.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

## Magnolia

Before me is an old law. Its musty legality is softened by the blunt phrases of pioneer days. Its title announces its purpose as "An Act organizing certain Counties therein named"; and its content provides for the fulfillment of the titular promise. From the pedantic diction of modern legislation it is refreshing to turn to the simple instructions that "Abram Fletcher, of the county of Fremont, Charles Wolcott, of the county of Mills, and A. D. Jones, of the county of Pottawattamie, be, and they are hereby appointed Commissioners to locate the seat of Justice of the county of Harrison"; that they are further instructed to meet "at the house of A. D. Jones, in the county of Pottawattamie" and proceed to locate the proposed county seat of Justice "as near the geographical centre . . . . as a suitable site may be found." What unembarrassed discretion was granted by the Fourth General Assembly! How delightfully simple were the directions for the creation of a new government! But if one turns the page, he will read there a brief restriction—"the county seat of Harrison shall be called Magnolia".

In response to these unquestionable instructions, the three commissioners met on the first Monday in March, 1853, to discharge the duty which had been laid upon them. 1853! Less than seventy years

ago! But there were no railroad tracks, or telephone or telegraph lines within the State at that time, and Iowa land was selling for \$1.25 an acre. The tiny hamlet of Kanessville, which grew out of an encampment of Mormons making their difficult exodus to the West, had just received the name of Council Bluffs. Omaha was a village on the outskirts of civilization; Sioux City, scarcely more than a name used to designate an Indian trading-post; Des Moines, a cluster of small cabins known as Fort Des Moines, and boasting among its homes the civilizing influence of a brick courthouse. This was western Iowa, when Magnolia, "the little city on the hill", had its birth.

As a commercial and civic center Magnolia was full of promise. It was in the very heart of Harrison County; it was the authorized seat of justice and government; and it soon became a lively, energetic, frontier town. At Magnolia the first district schoolhouse in the county, a structure of hewed logs, was built. The first mill to do actual business was located on the Willow River, not far from the county seat, and as early as 1858 Magnolia possessed a Masonic Lodge, the first in the county.

The first post office of the county was established at Magnolia. Until 1855 the nearest post office was located at Council Bluffs, and the only way to obtain letters was to call for them. Great was the excitement when some fellow-citizen journeyed thence and brought home the village mail in the crown of his

hat. Then a stage route was established running from Council Bluffs to Sioux City, and Magnolia became one of the important stops. The town was highly indignant, however, when after barely a dozen trips, the Western Stage Company was subsidized by citizens of the rival village, Calhoun, so that Magnolia was "star-routed" and supplied by a side mail. But this incident did not have the effect which Calhoun had expected, for Magnolia, instead of being disheartened, bent every effort toward improving itself — an exertion which left its rival in the dim background of inferiority. Other stage routes came to the town and thus many times a week brief snatches of the world's news, somewhat belated but of unimpaired interest, were brought to the village.

Within a few years it numbered some three hundred inhabitants who enjoyed the privileges and endured the hardships which western Iowa offered to her sturdy, self-reliant children during the middle period of the West. Three dry-goods stores provided a part of their food and the bulk of their clothing. A tailor, a shoe dealer, two jewellers, ten carpenters, and one plasterer added a touch of development to the community. Its bodily ailments were healed by two physicians, one of whom was famous for his efficacious remedies — a potion with speedy results known as "Thunder and Lightning", and a mixture of herbs called "Bog Hay", which was prescribed — it is easy to imagine, with varying formula and effect — for fever and ague. Two

ministers cared for the spiritual welfare of the community, and six attorneys supported themselves by tangling and untangling legal snarls. An earnest teacher generously distributed instruction and discipline among the children in a room which measured twelve by fourteen feet, described as being constructed of "cottonwood boards set on end", and possessing "one window-opening with a 'greased paper' for light".

For the sum of two dollars a year, the early settler might read of the world's events as published in the "Magnolia Weekly Republican", "a very newsy, neatly printed journal", founded in 1859, by George R. Brainard. The itinerant, as well as the permanent resident, was well cared for in Magnolia. If he were travelling "a horseback", he might have his horse shod at any one of the four blacksmith shops, while he indulged himself with one of the famous meals served by the kind old landlady at Peter Barnett's boarding-house hotel—a meal such as Magnolia alone remembers how to serve to-day. If he were obliged to "stay the night", the traveller was sure of a merry evening and "right good cheer" within the log walls of the Bates House. He might even visit the village artist and have his daguerreotype taken as a surprise for the folks at home.

In 1858, a unique gathering assembled in Magnolia, for in the autumn of that year the Harrison County Agricultural Society held its first county fair. It was not the kind of an exhibition which goes

by the name of county fair to-day. There were no gambling games or soap-box enthusiasts in evidence. The objects of attraction were "the products of soil and barnyard, with a sprinkling of homemade wares and domestic articles". It was a wholesome gathering amusing itself with the ever-popular sports of horse and foot racing.

In pathetic but inspiring contrast to this merry-making was the county celebration held in Magnolia on July 4, 1862, during the agonizing period of civil war. Men, women, and children — many with sad faces and sadder hearts — assembled from all the adjoining counties and even from Nebraska, bringing with them wagon-loads of food. Harrison County has never again seen such a dinner! The air was filled with music and patriotism, and a huge homemade flag flaunted its cambric stars and stripes to the admiration of the throng, in the midst of which might be found the skillful-fingered women who had bought the material at the general store, and who had cut and fashioned the bright banner which symbolized to all, their stricken and contentious home land.

Who will deny that Magnolia was the hub of activity and that Magnolia directed the affairs of the county? The shrewd godfathers of the little village had made no mistake when they selected this centrally located, thickly wooded, and well-drained tract for the seat of justice of Harrison County, but events conspired in such a manner as to check its logical growth and to cause it to evolve not into the

promised civic center, but into a tiny inland town. When Magnolia was platted, not a railroad had yet been constructed a hundred miles west of Chicago, and it could not be foreseen that within a few years, indeed by 1866, the Chicago and Northwestern line would have laid its tracks across the State in such a way as to miss Magnolia altogether. This was a death-blow to commercial expansion and activity—the little city was cut off from the throbbing artery of trade, as a consequence of which came the ultimate transfer of the courthouse to the neighboring village of Logan. All of this did not take place at once, nor did it come about without a struggle. Many contests had raged between Magnolia and Calhoun, Missouri Valley, and Logan at various times with regard to moving the county seat. Magnolia had retained control, however, until 1875, when Logan, seizing the psychological moment, again proposed a transfer to her own city and won by a doubtful majority of two votes. The county records were moved to that place where a courthouse was built in 1876.

Magnolia had reached her prime, the apex of her growth. One would expect the city to die and slowly disappear. Contrary to all expectations, such has not been the case. To be sure, its population has remained practically constant for many years—the census of 1920 showed 299 inhabitants—but the town itself has undergone many changes. Scarcely any of the old landmarks remain; in fact, Magnolia has been practically rebuilt during the past fifteen

years. Many of the store-buildings are made of brick, and cement sidewalks line the most important streets. The city is lighted by electricity, and at night, its cluster of street lights may be seen for miles around. Since the persistent intrusion of the automobile, the seven miles between Magnolia and the nearest railroad have become a negligible distance. A motor-bus makes two trips daily to Logan and back, carrying passengers and mail.

The pride of the town is a large consolidated school-building, modernly equipped in every way, where all the children in a district of twenty-five square miles, from the tiniest primary pupil to the young men and women preparing themselves for college, receive training on an equality with that offered in our city institutions. There are seven busses, dubbed "kid-wagons" by the juvenile passengers, which transport the youngsters to and from the great schoolhouse, many times the size of the next largest building in the village.

Magnolia's spirit is one of loyalty and allegiance. Company C, 29th Iowa Infantry, was organized there in 1862 and gave splendid service during the Civil War. A few of the veterans who still live in the community assemble on Memorial Day to show reverence for their comrades who have gone ahead. During the recent war, Magnolia provided her quota of men for the army, and offered her services in other ways, as did the thousands of small towns and villages throughout the United States. Her war-record is one to be proud of.

Once a year, in August or September, Magnolia dons festive attire, and assumes a gala-day appearance. This day is known as "Old Settlers Day", and is the time when the pioneers, their children, and their children's children assemble to listen to roll-call, to hear speeches, to exchange reminiscences and to feast upon the fat of the land. This is the day when Magnolia indulges in maternal pride of her sons and daughters. Like other towns, she has her favorite son. Newell Dwight Hillis, pastor of the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York, was born and reared here. His tribute to his early home provides a fitting conclusion to an article on this small pioneer town which went through a rapid growth, a more or less rapid decline, but which seems to have settled, at last, into a state of immortality:

"Since those far off days in the old Magnolia high school I have seen many cities and countries, and studied and lingered in many libraries, colleges and universities. I owe an immeasurable debt to certain great books, to noble authors and educators. But my chief intellectual debt is to my father and mother and sisters and to the old friends and students in the old Magnolia high school. For neither time nor events have ever lessened my conviction that the scholar is the favorite child of heaven and earth and that the old book, and the old scenes, and the old friends are the richest gifts that God has vouchsafed to me in my earthly career."

BLANCHE C. SLY

## Comment by the Editor

### TEETH AND CIVILIZATION

A few days ago we were looking over some Indian skulls which had been dug up from the mounds in the neighborhood of Lake Okoboji, and we were greatly impressed with the condition of the teeth. They were sound and white and regular. No dentist would have been needed, for there were no holes to fill. True, the teeth were not all there, and it may be that there were holes in the ones which had dropped out in the course of a few hundred years; but we are inclined to think that in general the primitive Indian had much better teeth than has the modern white man, and that the difference is due to a civilization that has had for its aim the making of life — and eating — an easy and pleasant affair.

The dog who forages for his own food seems to have good teeth, and we believe the cat who is a mouser is likely to have better teeth than the lap-cat of an effete household. We hear often nowadays of the tigers and crocodiles which have become domesticated and pampered in the big zoos, needing to have their teeth attended to by dentists, but we have heard of no dentist going to Africa to fill cavities for tigers and crocodiles in the wild state. Without doubt this is because animals who forage for their

own food and do not have it prepared for them, need no dentists.

We believe that the pioneers who had less finely-ground flour than we have to-day, and more foods that required dental exercise, had also better teeth. Theodore S. Parvin tells us that during the session of the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Iowa in 1840, a traveling dentist from one of the New England States first crossed the river and interviewed members of the legislature. He found so little need for his services that he gave up the profession and settled down to the occupation of a fruit-grower. This is only circumstantial argument for the presence of good teeth in 1840, but we give it for what it is worth.

In like manner we call attention to the fact that the United States Census for 1860 credits Iowa with a population of nearly 675,000, but there were only 76 dentists to serve this multitude. Incidentally there were over 1400 physicians, all of whom probably took undue pride in the fact that the Census showed only four undertakers in the State.

#### TWO MILES A DAY

We have found out how to annihilate time and space, and offset the law of gravity when we travel; we have learned to eat without an effort and have evolved a thousand contrivances to minister to our bodily comfort. But we are losing our teeth and our hair and our contentment at one end and our powers

of locomotion at the other, while we develop too largely in between. The early fur trader and the explorer could go into the wilds with a gun and ax and a few pounds of provisions and face primitive conditions with equanimity. How many could do it to-day? The pioneer settler, with few implements, broke the wilderness and established a home. He made little ado about a walk of ten or fifteen miles; but to-day a Kansas City man strives to better mankind by organizing a walking club of men who will exert themselves to the extent of walking two miles daily.

We sometimes wonder if civilization does not bring physical degeneration, and if man's historic struggle to make life easy has not simply made him less of a man.

J. C. P.

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