

Iowans in the Consular Service

Daniel Smith Lee of Centerville, who was appointed consul to Basel, Switzerland, on May 24, 1853, was the first Iowan in the Foreign Service. Among his supporters were Senators George W. Jones and Augustus C. Dodge, Congressman Bernhart Henn, Governor Stephen Hempstead, and other Iowa Democrats.

Lee was also supported by many outside of Iowa, including forty merchants in Philadelphia and fourteen in Baltimore who were engaged in trade with California and who wanted him appointed to Panama. Lewis Cass of Michigan recommended Lee, as did Congressman John H. Savage of Tennessee, his commanding officer during the Mexican War. Still another well-known American, Nathaniel Hawthorne, asked the President to do something for Lee who "has scholarship and literary tastes."

Daniel Lee, a native of Virginia who had lived in Iowa a number of years, seemed especially well suited for a consular post. He was described as a gentleman, scholar, and soldier. In the last capacity he served as Adjutant in the 11th Infantry during the Mexican War, fighting at the Battles of Molino del Rey and Chapultepec among oth-

ers. Lee's sponsors claimed he was a "Democrat worthy of any trust that may be confided to his care." He was also known as a good business man and lawyer who spoke four languages fluently.

During the election of 1852 he wrote a campaign biography which, it was said, was suited "most admirably to our Western people." This pamphlet was credited with contributing much to refuting many of the slanderous statements circulated against Pierce during the campaign.

As a result of these recommendations Lee was appointed, entering upon his duties on September 20, 1853. His primary achievements were helping to extend trade between the United States and Switzerland and providing information to prospective emigrants. To aid him in this latter function he asked the Secretary of State for a map upon which those flocking to the United States could locate "their future homes." Among other things he reported on wages of Swiss laborers, often 28 cents a week after paying board and room:

The philanthropist may stop here and enquire how much better is this boasted freedom over the condition of the doomed, I had almost said happy, slave of our own country? And who can wonder then when viewing these facts that whole colonies are emigrating to the United States.

At the same time Lee was afraid that the criminals and felons would be cleaned out of the "Hells and prisons" of Europe and foisted upon the United States. To counteract this he suggested that ev-

ery emigrant should be issued a visa by the American consul, granted only if a certificate of "good moral character" were presented. However, Lee's recommendation was not adopted permanently until 1917.

In March, 1857, Lee left for America to settle an estate and never returned to his post. On August 1, 1857, he died of a pistol wound, received accidentally in a Washington shooting gallery.

The career of Robert Dowling, the second consul from Iowa, ended almost as suddenly as that of Lee, but for another reason. On January 13, 1859, Dowling, an Irish immigrant who came to Iowa by way of Mississippi, was appointed consul to Cork. He handled only routine matters such as noting the arrival and departure of American vessels and submitting reports on naval and commercial shipments through the port. On September 10, 1861, Dowling signed a despatch to Washington as the "late consul." A short time later the American consul at Dublin reported that Dowling had moved down the street a short distance and was acting as a Confederate agent.

The election of Lincoln led a number of his Republican supporters to seek office. One of these was Charles E. Moss of Keokuk, who hoped to get one of the "two or three good Consulates," likely to be given Iowans, preferably in Mexico. "I have the Republican cause too much at heart to desire a general fuss and scramble if we can

get along without it," he wrote. Moss was supported for the position by no less than eighty office holders and party leaders, including Dr. Charles Hay, father of President Lincoln's secretary, John Hay. He was appointed to Genoa on June 11, 1861, but the nomination was later withdrawn.

The outbreak of the Civil War brought new situations abroad to be appraised and new problems to be handled. In September, 1862, another Iowan, David H. Wheeler, consul at Genoa, reported that many Hungarians and Italians who had served under Garibaldi were seeking military service with the Northern forces. He estimated that he had received probably ten thousand applications during the past year from men who had acquired a taste for military life and glory during the Sicilian Campaign of 1860. At times there were so many applicants in his office that he could not perform his required duties. At last he resorted to placing a notice in the newspapers stating that he had no authority to assist persons who wished to emigrate for military service.

George W. Van Horn of Muscatine, who became consul at Marseilles in 1861, was faced with a similar situation. The Union, he wrote, had an: army of friends . . . larger and stronger than ever followed the eagles of a Caesar or Napoleon, that would gladly undertake to "plant the American Staff at the centre of the Earth" with a strength of purpose that would forbid the thought of any attack.

At Leghorn, Andrew J. Stevens of Des Moines thought the many Italians wanting to join the American army could replace Northern volunteers who had returned home. "Is it wise to stop to enquire from what source they come?" he asked. He suggested that the bounty being offered to volunteers in the North be used to pay up to \$30 of the Italians' passage. As an inducement to join the regular army instead of the volunteers, he thought that rights of citizenship, with an added gift of eighty acres of land, could be conferred on each foreigner serving five years. The government in Washington did not accept Stevens' suggestions.

Van Horn, Stevens, and the other Iowans who were abroad during the war reported the changes in public opinion. Local sentiment shifted with the tide of the war, now favoring the North, then the South, but as the war advanced, greater support for the Federal government was evident.

Sometimes the consul's quarters were in a sad state of repair. Upon his arrival at Leghorn, Stevens procured new consulate arms, declaring of the old ones that:

In size, color and appearance they closely resembled the shell of a moderately well developed Mud Turtle, such as may be seen any sunny afternoon along the banks of our creeks in the Western States, perched upon a stone or an old log, enjoying the sights and pleasant weather, until they are obliged to take a "plunge" to avoid the well directed projectile hurled at their barricaded backs by the rascally truants from the neighboring schools.

As might be expected, consuls from an agricultural state were interested in developing markets for its products. Wheeler thought there was every reason to believe that American cereals might replace Russian grains in Italy following the Civil War. With countless acres and numerous ships the United States should be able to meet demands at a lower price than anyone else. Stevens concluded that "every avenue for the sale of the produce of the great west and the manufactures of the Eastern States should be sought and opened up." In addition he reported that countries like Italy should present a "wide and fruitful field" for commerce. He suggested that each consular office be sent articles of American manufacture so it would be a "World's Fair" on a small scale.

At the end of the Civil War veterans of the Union Army were named to many posts. One of these, George Pomutz of Decatur County, was a veteran of the fight for freedom in Hungary in 1848. In 1850 he came to Iowa where he was naturalized and later served as a lieutenant colonel of the 15th Iowa Infantry during the war. Among Pomutz' sponsors, in addition to the usual political figures, were three generals of the Union forces, William W. Belknap, Andrew Hickenlooper, and John A. Logan. Pomutz served as consul at St. Petersburg from 1866 to 1882.

Another veteran of the Civil War was S. H. M. Byers of Oskaloosa, a lawyer by profession, who

had served in the Northern forces. As a result of having been sixteen months in a rebel prison, Byers' health had been impaired. Travel and a change of climate were recommended. In 1869 he was appointed consul at Zurich.

Byers made a number of suggestions that were given serious consideration and in several cases were adopted by the Department. For instance, he thought a register of Americans traveling in Europe would aid greatly in answering inquiries regarding their whereabouts. To improve the consular service he recommended that: the term of office should be based on good behavior; the number of consulates should be reduced; diplomatic representatives should have control over the appointment of consular agents in their countries; consuls should have fixed salaries; and no consul should be allowed to engage in private business in the area where he resided. Most of these have long since become standard practices.

American travelers have always meant increased burdens for the consuls. In 1867 Alfred D. Green of Burlington, acting consul at Naples, reported that he had been very busy because of "crowds of Americans" and five ships of war. "I have made many agreeable acquaintances, coming from all parts of the Union," he wrote, "Judges, governors, literati, officers of the army and navy, New York nabobs, fair ladies, rich widows, sprightly belles," and others.

S. C. McFarland of Marshalltown was also concerned about American travelers. While consul at Nottingham, England, in 1899 he asked the Department for two American flags to display during office hours as well as on holidays since Americans had been commenting on the absence of the flag. Daily sight of it would familiarize the public, especially policemen and cab drivers, with the location of the American consulate.

McFarland performed another task of particular interest to Iowans. He was instructed to have an expert test a set of ten bells being manufactured in England for Iowa State College. He secured the services of Arthur Page, organist and choirmaster at St. Mary's Cathedral in Nottingham. Page personally assured McFarland that the bells, which were manufactured by a company whose history went back to 1366, were superior in every way and were guaranteed in perfect tune.

Occasionally an Iowan found himself and his country in ill-repute. During the Spanish-American War, when Albert W. Swalm of Oskaloosa was at Montevideo, the papers were filled with drivel and abuse and "most disgraceful" caricatures in which, according to him, the hog was generally used as a symbolic representation of the United States. Swalm felt that the Spanish-speaking people of South America would be much more respectful after the United States won the war.

Joseph G. Willson of Fort Madison, for many

years a successful preacher, was forced to give up his profession because of throat trouble. Friends backed him for a consulship, and on June 20, 1877, he was appointed to Jerusalem. There the conflict between Jews and other peoples was as pressing as it is today.

The condition of the Jews, who were hated by the Turks, was "pitiable" according to Willson. The Hebrew population of Jerusalem was diminishing because of poverty, lack of lucrative labor, and partial lack of charitable assistance from Europe and America. Willson thought the only remedy was for the Jews to engage in agriculture.

Willson outlined the things that should be done to restore Jerusalem. The Jordan Valley could produce sugar, cotton, and indigo. The land of Ammon and Moab was fertile and capable of considerable development. Above all, the country needed harbors, roads, lighter taxation, and regular and fair administration of law.

In reply to a request from the Department, Willson gave his views on conditions in that section of the world. Russia, he replied, had advanced her frontiers toward Central Europe and had annexed countries four hundred miles in breadth in the direction of Constantinople, the goal of her ambitions. His report, which was considered interesting and instructive, summed up the situation in Russia and China:

The astute diplomacy of Russia has proved more than a

match for the counter-plotting of England and France and Germany and Austria. . . . Russia is half Asiatic in sympathy and character and civilization and wholly so in political administration. . . . China is inflamed with hatred against Europe and against England in particular, and is furnishing herself with European Arms and Ammunition. . . . Among the possibilities of the future is a Russian alliance with China . . . and a war between the East and the West — the Tartar and the European, a war not unlike that of the Goths and vandals against Rome; a vast magazine stored with inflammable materials, and if once the match be applied, no man can foretell where the flames will stop.

Phillip C. Hanna, a native of Livermore, was consul in Puerto Rico at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War. When he arrived in San Juan in 1897 he found the furniture in the office old, bug eaten, badly broken, and entirely unfit for use. Therefore, he asked Washington for some furniture to brighten up his office. "Down here in cob web tropics a man needs something to cheer his soul and remind him of sweet home."

Hanna's many despatches give an account of the various developments during this period. In February, 1898, he informed Washington that nearly all Americans in Puerto Rico expected trouble and perhaps war in the near future. He suggested that some of the United States fleet in West Indian waters make friendly calls to Puerto Rico to reassure the American citizens. By April things had reached such a state that Hanna left

for St. Thomas Island in the Virgin Islands to continue his consular operations.

In the weeks following he supplied information on the number of troops needed, advantages of landing in different ports, climate and health conditions in Puerto Rico, and other information of value to the United States Army and Navy. He believed that 10,000 American soldiers in Puerto Rico could hold the island indefinitely, but he later raised his estimate to 25,000. He was convinced that large numbers of Puerto Ricans would arise and "shake off the Spanish Yoke, just as soon as they are assured of help."

Hanna further informed the Department that "no move on the part of our government will cripple Spain so greatly as the taking of Puerto Rico from them. I believe it would end the war." According to him, the Puerto Ricans did not want to become a part of the Cuban republic or a "little-one-horse" republic by themselves. They were Americans at heart and "their highest hope is to become a part of the United States." In July, 1898, Hanna returned to Puerto Rico with the troops to assist in setting up a government.

The account of activities of Iowa consuls could be greatly expanded. Most major events, as well as many minor ones, occurred with some Iowan playing a part in them.

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