

Immigrants From Near and Far

The westward trek of emigration across the Mississippi, which reached torrential proportions in Iowa between 1854 and 1856, was still flowing into the Hawkeye State in 1858. Early that spring Horace Greeley observed through the columns of his New York *Tribune* that "at this time no State nor Territory can hold out inducements to settlers equal to Iowa; and it is the opinion of discerning men that the year 1858 will witness a larger immigration to this State, than any preceding one."

It was this same Greeley who is reputed to have said to Josiah B. Grinnell in 1854 — "Go West, young man, go West, and grow up with the country." Four years later, Greeley could still find much in favor of Iowa.

Iowa is probably not quite so fertile as Illinois, but its prairies are smaller, its timber better distributed, if not more abundant, and its plains more frequently cut by the ravines of swiftly running streams. We consider it more healthful in the average than Illinois, while its population, mainly emigrants from New England and New York, are decidedly intelligent, moral and thrifty. We have traveled far less in Iowa than in other Western States, but have seen none, on the whole, to be preferred to this for a home.

Most Iowans would have been pleased by these

highly complimentary remarks but not the editor of the Davenport *Weekly Gazette*. Illinois, that editor pointed out on April 15, 1858, was not in as good a "financial condition" as Iowa with the result that taxes were higher. Furthermore, comparable Iowa land sold for half the price of similarly located land in Illinois.

Speculation has run wild in that and many other new Western States, and fixed an over-evaluation on lands not justified by the circumstances. In Iowa, the large portion of the land has been purchased by actual settlers, and are now occupied by them, and the increased value of these lands has only been in proportion to improvements and to the steady progress of the State. When emigrants can purchase lands in Iowa at less than half what they have to pay in Illinois, for instance, similarly located as to centrality, markets, &c., they must certainly give this State the preference.

The Eastern emigration of this spring will scarcely stop East of the Mississippi. West of it, what other State or what territory, offers greater inducements of cheapness of land, fertility of soil, rich abundance of mineral wealth, healthiness of climate, greater freedom from financial burdens and heavy taxes, a more moral tone of society, better schools, more churches, greater freedom of opinion and action, than our own glorious State of Iowa? We ask Mr. Greely while he is examining the *physical* advantages of Western States, in connection with Eastern emigration, to extend his researches to things which in this article we merely just touched.

Mindful of the values accruing from an ever-expanding population, a number of Iowans went east to encourage immigration to the Hawkeye

State. Such a promoter was General George B. Sargent, of the firm of Cook and Sargent of Davenport, whose "masterly" speech in Boston on the "wealth and resources of the West" was recorded in the *Boston Traveler*. The *Davenport Weekly Gazette* of March 4, 1858, was delighted with Sargent's effort:

We are glad that a voice from Iowa, and so hearty and manly a voice, has been raised in Boston, to tell them what we are doing here. We hope the same voice will be raised in New York and other Eastern cities. An old citizen who had received a copy of this abstract from Gen. Sargent, says that after reading it, he considered himself worth one thousand dollars more than before! The lecturer was paid the compliment of a tremendous audience. The hall at which he was to have lectured, was found utterly inadequate to accommodate the multitude, and they were compelled to adjourn to a larger hall. We are glad to see our fellow-citizen appreciated abroad as well as at home, and more especially to notice so much interest in the West being manifested at the "Athens of America."

In addition to speeches such as Sargent's, prospective emigrants were lured westward to Iowa by such guides as *Northern Iowa / / By a Pioneer / / Containing Valuable Information for Emigrants*. Published by the Dubuque Emigrant Association, this forty-page pamphlet went into at least two editions and was widely heralded throughout Iowa and the nation. While some northern editors felt the title "Northern Iowa" was gratuitous and that the book actually was pin-

pointed on Dubuque, there was plenty of information on other sections of Iowa. The opening paragraph must have caused many a prospective emigrant to prick up his ears.

NORTHERN IOWA.

BY A PIONEER.

CONTAINING

VALUABLE INFORMATION

FOR EMIGRANTS.

DUBUQUE:
NONPAREIL JOB PRINTING AND PUBLISHING HOUSE, 66 MAIN STREET.
1858.

The United States Government will dispose of large quantities of lands lying in the Fort Dodge and Sioux City Districts, early in the spring. Most of these lands can be pre-empted at one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre, by actual settlers. Payment can be made at any time within a year of the settlement. The sections alternate to the sections granted to the Dubuque and Pacific Railroad Company, may also be pre-empted. . . .

The booklet described the abundant supply of wood, coal, lumber, lime, brick, building stone, water, and the value of gypsum in the Fort Dodge area. It described the homestead law

and Iowa's prowess in the livestock industry. It pointed out that Iowa's farmers already produced more corn than New York and the six New England states combined. The healthful climate of the Hawkeye State as well as its freedom from criminals and paupers was emphasized.

The Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* was impressed with *Northern Iowa* and urged its citizens to prepare a similar booklet on Council Bluffs and southwestern Iowa. Omaha, the editor pointed out, had already published such a pamphlet setting forth the advantages of that town, and the results were "plainly traceable in the progress of that city." He hoped Council Bluffs citizens would act upon his suggestion.

The editor of the *Chicago Press* could not refrain from calling attention to the "vigorous measures" employed by the Dubuque Emigrant Association in engaging the services of a German Agent to obtain subscriptions of a sufficient amount to publish an edition of 10,000 copies of *Northern Iowa* in the German language setting forth the advantages offered immigrants. This edition was for gratuitous distribution in the Eastern States, and in Europe. When work began on the German edition the *Independence Guardian* declared:

We received last week a call from Mr. C. J. Wittenberg, agent for the Dubuque Emigrant Association, who is traveling through Northern Iowa, collecting information for the purpose of setting forth the superior advantage which this part of the State offers to settlers, which will be published and distributed to those coming West. Mr. M. is a correspondent of German papers published both in this country and the "fatherland," so that a double object and a double good is attained. We hope our brother editors give him all the information in their

power, recollecting that by so doing they will not only benefit Mr. W. but themselves, and those whose interests they, in a great degree hold in their hands as well.

The various economic, social, religious and political forces at work caused an ever increasing number of emigrants to seek out Iowa. According to the *Davenport Weekly Gazette* of April 22:

The tide of travel is westward. In our homeward trip from New York we took the indirect route via Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Fort Wayne, and yet in the whole course, so thronged were the cars, that only once and then but for a few miles, did we have an entire car seat. At the same time we observed that those cars going eastward were comparatively empty. — But not until reaching Chicago did the real jam commence, and then extra cars had to be added to the train, showing that the emigration is towards our own favored State. It is yet early in the season, so that we anticipate a heavy addition to our population this spring.

While thousands came by steamboat, both to the Upper Mississippi and the Missouri, the covered wagon as well as the railroad brought countless numbers. The *Weekly Gazette* observed:

All the emigration is not to be found along the Missouri river towards Kansas, nor up the Mississippi towards St. Paul. Some of it comes this way. A few days ago we saw a team drawn by eight, perhaps ten cattle, and heading for the West. The wagon was full of household and farming implements, as well as a goodly quantity of human bipeds. A man was walking along side with a rifle in the hollow of his arm, and a stripling was directing the animals. The father will become a sturdy farmer, the boy may go

to Congress *after a while*, and Iowa will be benefitted. Come along, all such, for there is a plenty of land left . . .

Halfway across the state the Webster City *Hamilton Freeman* of July 8 chronicled immigration under the caption "Westward, Ho!"

A large number of teams are daily passing through this place, carrying merchandise, emigrants and their families, implements of husbandry, &c. Since the roads became passable there has been a perfect rush. This is a wise movement, for there is not a better region of country under the sun than north-western Iowa.

The Sioux City *Eagle* of June 8, 1858, was delighted by the movement of immigrants westward to the Missouri slope.

Daily are we reminded that emigration westward has fairly commenced. Teams drawn by three, four or five yokes of cattle, wagons full of farming implements and household goods, with chicken coops behind, and generally a sprinkling of little human bipeds inside, the head of the family with his trusty gun across his shoulder close by, a little in advance of all trotting a faithful canine, which now and then turns his head to see that all is right, is not an uncommon sight now-a-days. Notwithstanding the Missouri river steamers are crowded with passengers, "bleeding Kansas" does not get all the new comers. Early as it is, little parties and individuals are making their entrance into this and adjoining counties, and a little later in the season we shall see them coming by the hundred.

DUBUQUE, WISCONSIN & MINNESOTA
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DUBUQUE, IOWA.

There is every indication that there will be a large emigration this season — the country will fill up with sturdy, well-to-do farmers, who come to stay — not mere speculators who come for a few months and not realizing what they expected in a day, returned disgusted with the West. To the first named class, we say come on, for there is plenty of as good land as the sun shines upon, which can be had on most advantageous terms.

What of the general character of the pioneers of 1858? Most of these new-comers were interested in land and the vast majority took up farming. A goodly number, however, were professional men — lawyers, doctors, dentists, druggists, ministers. The following from the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* of January 9 is illustrative:

We learn that, late as the season is, some new and valuable additions have been made to our farming population. R. D. Jones, Esq., of Rochester, N. Y., where, for the last six years he filled the post of Superintendent of the Public Schools, has purchased a fine tract of land on Keg Creek, twelve miles east of town, and is now engaged in preparing it for his permanent home. In 1855, Mr. Jones delivered the opening address before the N. Y. State Teacher's Association at Utica, and we have no doubt that our citizens would be very glad to hear a lecture from him in regard to the system of Public Schools as now established in New York.

The high quality of immigration that crossed the Mississippi into Iowa during the 1850's was an important factor in laying the foundations for the future greatness of the Hawkeye State.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN