

THE PALIMPSEST

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Of Time and the Weather

PIONEERS

*They rise to mastery of wind and snow;
They go like soldiers grimly into strife
To colonize the plain. They plow and sow,
And fertilize the sod with their own life,
As did the Indian and the buffalo.*

—HAMLIN GARLAND

Few authors have written more graphically of the hardships of the pioneers than Hamlin Garland. Born in West Salem, Wisconsin, in 1860, Garland moved with his parents to Iowa where he graduated from a literature course at the Cedar Valley Seminary at Osage in 1881. Garland's early life in Wisconsin and Iowa is unforgettably portrayed in his *Main Travelled Roads*, a book that records with stark realism the impact of Midwestern farm life on Garland after he had gained perspective by residence in Boston. Some of the best Iowa stories in *Main Travelled Roads*, according to John T. Frederick, are: "Under the Lion's Paw," "A Day's Pleasure," and "Mrs. Ripley's Trip."

The necessity of observing the seasons of the year, as forecast in the various almanacs, was not lost sight of by the Iowa farmer. Thousands of these almanacs were brought westward across the Mississippi by the pioneers. They served a useful purpose, first of all, because they provided a ready calendar, probably the only one the household could boast. Secondly, they were invaluable to the farmer in determining the best season of the year to sow his seeds, cultivate his fields, and harvest his crops. In other words, an almanac was a calendar containing weather forecasting, some of which turned out to be surprisingly accurate, more especially since statistical records by the United States Weather Bureau did not begin in Iowa until 1873.

The pioneer period in the Hawkeye State lasted over half a century of time from the beginnings of white settlement in southeastern Iowa on the Frontier of 1830 to the movement into northwestern Iowa and its Sod House Frontier of 1870. The blood, sweat, and tears that accompanied the conquest of the Iowa prairies left an indelible impression on the memories of those sturdy pioneers who carved out their homes in the vast wilderness expanse between the Mississippi and the Missouri.

The present number of *The Palimpsest* contains several features reminiscent of the old almanacs of yesteryear. The fine drawings of cartoonist Frank Miller of the *Des Moines Register* provide

readers with a calendar for the year 1969. On one page, following each monthly calendar, excerpts have been added from four newspapers that were printed in Iowa in 1838—the *Iowa News* at Dubuque, the *Iowa Sun* and *Davenport & Rock Island News*, the *Iowa Territorial Gazette and Burlington Advertiser*, and the *Fort Madison Patriot*. On the opposite page there appears a chronological list of events in Iowa over the three centuries of time from the advent of Joliet and Marquette in 1673 to well into the 20th Century.

The recording of weather—rain, snow, heat, cold, storms, floods, earthquakes, meteors, and similar phenomena—is a routine feature of all almanacs. To these has been added a variety of historic events that in the main illustrates the growth of the Hawkeye State. In addition, poems descriptive of the seasons by famous American poets and writers, have been interspersed as space permitted.

The final page of each monthly calendar section contains either one or two Frank Miller cartoons, a poem, or a combination of the two, depending on the suitability and availability of the material.

To interlock the current 1969 calendar with the Iowa weather story, the inside back cover contains the average temperature and rainfall, as well as the highest and lowest temperature recorded in the state for each year from 1873 through 1968. The snowfall records begin with 1892. Tempera-

ture, rainfall, and snowfall for a period of forty-one years—from 1928 to 1968 inclusive—are included on a three-page spread which is introduced by a map showing the nine regional weather districts into which Iowa is divided. The map and weather statistics were furnished by Paul Waite of the Weather Bureau Office in Des Moines.

A special feature is the Perpetual Calendar which covers the period from 1776 to 2028. This calendar makes it possible to determine instantly on what day a certain birth, death, or historical event occurred between 1776 and 2028—thus having in mind the historic past as well as the nebulous and always unpredictable future. The calendars for the years 1970, 1971, 1972, and 1973 appearing on the outside back cover are gleaned from the Perpetual Calendar. Actually, it would be possible to forecast the days on any year from 1969 to the year 2028, although for the most part a ten or twenty-year glimpse into the future would suffice for most people. This unique Perpetual Calendar was graciously loaned the writer by S. Durward Hoag, able historian in his own right, and proprietor of the Motor Hotel Lafayette in Marietta, Ohio.

The inclusion of so much historical and statistical data in this number of *The Palimpsest* will make it a must reference source long after the year 1969 dims into the obscure past.

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