The Palimpsest

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THE PIONEERS

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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

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The Iowa Pioneers

The Iowa pioneers belong to the third generation of settlers who, during the century that followed the American Revolution, took possession of the vast area which, extending from the Alleghanies to the Rockies and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, constitutes the great Valley of the Mississippi.

It was the dramatic migration known as the westward movement that carried these pioneers across the Father of Waters into the Iowa country. Indeed, it was in the Iowa country that the American pioneer made his last stand. Here between 1830 and 1870 pioneer character and culture reached its fullest expression. The year 1870 may be said to mark the close of the pioneer period in Iowa.

Who were these early settlers of Iowa, these Iowa pioneers? They were representative American pioneers, than whom Thomas H. Benton declared

"there was not a better population on the face of the earth". They were of the best blood and ranked as the best sons of the whole country. They were young, strong, and energetic — hardy, courageous, and adventurous. Caring little for the dangers of the frontier, they extended the white man's civilization, reclaimed for the industry of the world vast prairies and forests and deserts, and defended the settled country against the Indians.

The pioneers of Iowa lived in the open and looked upon the relations of man to nature with an open mind. To be sure their thoughts were more on "getting on" in this world than upon the "immortal crown of the Puritan." But from their recollections we learn that in the silent forest, in the broad prairie, in the deep blue sky, in the sentinels of the night, in the sunshine and in the storm, in the rosy dawn, in the golden sunset, and in the daily trials and battles of frontier life they saw and felt the Infinite.

Nor is it a matter of surprise that the pioneers of Iowa should have possessed these fundamental elements of character. In the first place only strong and independent souls ventured to the frontier. A weaker class could not have hoped to endure the toils, the labors, the pains, and the loneliness of pioneer life; for the hardest and at the same time most significant battles of the nineteenth century were fought with axes and plows. The frontier called for men with large capacity for adaptation — men with flexible, dynamic natures. Especially did it require

men who could break with the past, forget traditions, and easily discard inherited political and social ideas.

The Iowa pioneers were what they were, largely because the conditions of frontier life made them such. They were sincere because their environment called for an honest attitude. Having left the comforts of their old homes, travelled hundreds and thousands of miles, entered the wilderness, and endured the privations of the frontier, they were serious minded. They came for a purpose. Even to this day, their ideals of thrift and frugality pervade the Commonwealth which they founded.

The broad rich prairies of Iowa and Illinois somehow seem to have widened men's views and fertilized their ideas. Said Stephen A. Douglas: "I have found my mind liberalized and my opinions enlarged when I got out on these broad prairies, with only the heavens to bound my vision, instead of having them circumscribed by the narrow ridges that surrounded the valley [in Vermont] where I was born."

Nowhere did the frontier environment exert a more marked influence than in the domain of politics. It freed men from traditions. It gave them a new and more progressive view of political life. It endowed them with liberal ideas and democratic ideals. "Claim Rights" were more important to the Iowa pioneer than "State Rights". The Nation was endeared to him; and he freely gave his first allegiance to the government that sold him land for

$1.25 an acre. In after years it was recorded of the Commonwealth which he founded: "Her affections, like the rivers of her borders, flow to an inseparable Union."

Above all the frontier was a great leveler. The conditions of life there were such as to make men plain, common, unpretentious, genuine. The pioneers were too close to nature and too possessed of the enthusiasm which belongs to men and women who have conquered in a hand to hand battle with nature to bother with social distinctions. The frontier made men really democratic. It fostered the threefold ideal of equality, which constitutes the essence of American democracy in the nineteenth century, namely, Equality before the Law, Equality in the Law, Equality in making the Law.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

By Boat and Covered Wagon

On the first of June, 1833, the Black Hawk Purchase was opened to settlement and the ever growing stream of pioneers began to cross the Upper Mississippi. The first census of Wisconsin Territory in 1836 found more than ten thousand people living in the two Iowa counties. Two years later the total had more than doubled, while by 1840 forty-three thousand people had settled in the Territory of Iowa. During the following decade the population increased to nearly two hundred thousand and the fifties saw such a tide of immigrants sweep into the State and out on the prairies that the inhabitants of the Commonwealth more than trebled.

What allurements drew this flood of people from their far-off homes in Ohio, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and New York, or the nearer regions of Indiana, Missouri, and Illinois? At a much earlier date the abundance of furs had lured the hardy frontiersman and trapper to the Iowa land. Then her veins of lead, with the promise of quick wealth in the hills and bluffs about Dubuque, drew rugged adventurers. But the fame of rich Iowa soil constituted the principal attraction for the pioneer.

Those who sought the "unsighted rim of the western world" by the river route found the journey an ever-changing panorama as the homely but efficient

stern wheelers slapped their way "along the wide Ohio between rough, uncultivated banks toward the wider Mississippi." At the start a confusion of sights and sounds attracted the attention of the immigrants. Drays rattled over the wharf, discordant cries of workmen loading a late consignment of freight mingled with the river songs of the negro boatmen, and the hoarse puffing and panting of the high-pressure engine added to the general din. Finally a throaty blast from the whistle obscured the twin smoke-stacks in a cloud of steam, the paddle wheel turned slowly, and the boat slipped away on the long journey through the heart of the continent.

Stops were made at towns along the way to load and unload freight and to replenish the wood supply for the fire-box. Such halts allowed the cabin passengers time for a stroll and gave the immigrants an opportunity to renew their supply of food. As the boat plowed on, leaving a foam-tipped wake astern, passengers sat for hours on deck watching the rush of steam from the pipe above their heads and the smoke trails floating over the passing panorama of bluffs and hills, of groves and prairies. Sometimes on hot nights they remained on deck "until the stars were pale under the coming light of morning."

As returning steamers passed, the bells of both boats rang out in salutation. Leaving the glassy waters of the Ohio, the boat turned its prow upstream on the turbid bosom of the Mississippi. Up the long, irregular sweeps of this river to Cape

Girardeau, Chester, and St. Genevieve the journey continued. Herculaneum with its high shot tower and Jefferson Barracks on its limestone bluff were reached and passed. St. Louis came into view.

There the Iowa-bound travellers took passage on a smaller boat for the north. After more than a month of river voyaging the immigrants reached their destination. They disembarked at the river cities — farmer families and townsmen eager to push on to a new home, mechanics with their tools and personal effects hoping to find employment, speculators with an eye for profits, merchants with goods for the frontier trade, and visitors who came to see what inducements the new country had to offer.

Although many used the water routes to Iowa, travel by wagon predominated. Of this migration John B. Newhall, early Iowa press agent, has left a clear picture. During the years 1836 and 1837, he says, "the roads were literally lined with the long blue wagons of the emigrants slowly wending their way over the broad prairies — the cattle and hogs, men and dogs, and frequently women and children, forming the rear of the van — often ten, twenty, and thirty wagons in company. Ask them, when and where you would, their destination was the "Black Hawk Purchase".

At sunset halts for the night were made by the road-weary travellers. In the glowing embers of the camp fire the housewife cooked a simple evening

meal for the hungry family. They went to bed as soon as it grew dark. Early in the morning they were up and on their way again. Slowly they crawled westward day by day, week by week. They joined others bound the same way. At times heavy rains made the road bottomless, and mired wheels and broken traces halted the caravan. Wagons were unloaded and all helped in extricating them. Sometimes halts were made over night at taverns along the way. When the Mississippi was reached the movers gathered into encampments to await their turn to be ferried across the river.

Thus they came, the pioneers, to the land of their vision. Where they crossed the Mississippi, cities grew up on the Iowa shore — Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, Fort Madison, and Keokuk. The man-propelled flatboat gave way to the horse ferry, and it, in turn, to the ferry propelled by steam, and each was taxed to capacity by the oncoming settlers. The way to Iowa was open.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

Claim and Cabin

For many days the ox-drawn prairie schooner moved slowly, slowly westward. Progress, always slow and tedious, was impeded now and again by swollen streams or wide expanses of almost impassable prairie slews. At last, as the shadows of evening lengthened behind the travellers, the weary oxen ceased to strain at the yoke, and the great canvas-covered wagon came to a final halt. The pioneer had arrived. Yet his adventures, hardships, and privations were not at an end. Staking out a claim, building a home, and the conquest of the prairie still lay before him.

First of all he had to determine the boundaries of his homestead. This was done not by the surveyor's chain, but by "stepping off" certain distances from a given point. Approximately fifteen hundred paces each way was considered to include three hundred and twenty acres "more or less"—the amount designated as a legal claim. The boundaries were marked by driving stakes in the prairie or by blazing trees if the claim was located in the timber. Many of the boundary lines were crooked and not infrequently they encroached upon other claims. But it was understood among the settlers that when the lands were surveyed and entered all inequalities would be adjusted.

Paradoxical as it may seem, in a land without courts or judges, justice prevailed. By honorable adherence to the rights of others, claims staked out in good faith were as secure as property held by law. The Golden Rule governed the rights of the squatters. Local extralegal protection became so general and the claim associations of the settlers were so powerful that it was extremely hazardous for a speculator or a stranger to bid upon a claim which was protected by a "preëmption right".

To break five acres of ground was recognized in many communities as sufficient evidence of ownership to hold a claim for a period of six months. To build a cabin "eight logs high with a roof" was considered as the equivalent of plowing an additional five acres and was sufficient to hold the claim for another six months. If a newcomer arrived and complied with these "by-laws" of the neighborhood, his rights were almost as much respected as if he had occupied the land by virtue of a government patent.

In June, 1838, Congress established land offices at Dubuque and Burlington and offered to sell the public domain in Iowa for $1.25 an acre. Settlers who had preëmpted claims hastened to purchase the homesteads they had already established, and woe to the outsider who bid on the claim of a squatter.

The first homes in a new settlement were necessarily very simple. In the prairie country where wood was scarce and sod was plentiful, the earliest houses were mere sod huts. The materials were ob-

tained by taking a breaking plow into the low land where the sod was heavy and plowing a furrow sixteen to eighteen inches in width. The sod thus obtained was cut into sections about two feet long, which were then laid like brick. The roof was made of large rafters covered with prairie hay or grass, and this in turn was covered with long strips of sod.

If the pioneer selected a claim of timber land, as the earliest settlers invariably did, he forthwith began the construction of a log cabin. Most of the work he did himself, though perhaps the neighbors were called over for a "house raising" when the logs had been cut and dragged to the site. The walls were of selected logs, formed straight and true by nature, cut to a length measured off not with a carpenter's rule but by a notch cut in the handle of the ax. Having been hewn on two sides, the logs were then "saddled", "notched", and fitted at each end, with the ax in skilful hands. The walls, when built sufficiently high, were surmounted with a roof made of clapboards "rived off" from the butt-end of a tree that had been selected because of its straight grain that permitted broad, thin pieces of boards to be thus obtained. These clapboards, laid to overlap, were held in place by poles laid across at proper intervals. The logs of which the walls were constructed were so skilfully fitted that only small spaces were left between and these were filled or "daubed" with clay, often mixed with straw or rushes to hold it together.

Doors were formed of large clapboards riven in the same manner as those for the roof and spiked with wooden pins to a dove-tailed frame, and then the whole was hung to the jambs by thongs of deer hide or by wooden hinges. The door was fastened shut by a wooden latch which could be raised from the outside by pulling a leather string. For security at night the latch string was drawn in, but for friends and neighbors and even strangers, the "latch string was always hanging out" as a token of friendship and hospitality.

The large open fireplace occupied one end of the cabin. This fireplace and chimney was constructed with smaller logs framed together in the same manner as the walls were made and lined inside for a fire-box with large flat stones set upright, while the chimney was plastered inside and out with clay.

Thus shelter and warmth was provided, with fire for cooking as well. As soon as possible the floor of earth was covered with puncheons, hewn flat and smooth on one side, then set into the earth floor, and skilfully joined with the ax. A puncheon table was pinned to the logs on one side near the fireplace. In a corner of the cabin a large one-legged bed was built. The chairs, or rather stools, were home made and had but three legs. A fourth leg was unnecessary, for only three could touch the uneven surface of the puncheon floor at one time.

An improvised three-sided barn or shed was erected for the protection of live stock. This was con-

structed by driving two rows of posts into the ground, stuffing hay between them, and likewise covering the roof with hay. At first cattle, horses, and swine ran at large so that fences had to be built to keep the stock out instead of in. These early rail fences were not straight but zig-zag, constructed of rails ten or twelve feet long and laid with ends overlapping. At every intersection stakes were driven obliquely into the ground, the upper ends crossing near the top of the fence. In the forks formed by the supporting stakes, the top rails or "riders" were laid. These stake and rider fences were said to be "hog tight, horse high, and bull strong."

In the yard surrounding the pioneer cabin a few rude implements — perhaps a plow, a heavy wagon, a grain cradle, an ox yoke, and a grindstone — might have been seen. Yonder picturesque well sweep and watering trough might indicate also the presence of an old oaken bucket.

J. A. Swisher

Earning a Living

Some of the first venturesome white men who came to Iowa were seeking fortunes of fame or more substantial riches — the explorers, the missionaries, and the fur traders. They were trail-makers. But the men and women who came to make their homes in the new land were the true pioneers. Though they dared to risk their lives and all they had, they were not adventurers at heart looking for easy wealth. All they wanted was a living, hard earned withal; and their fondest hopes were to own a home, be free from debt, and rear their children in industry and thrift.

Most of the Iowa pioneers were farmers by necessity: they came of agricultural stock, born and bred to the soil, and the broad acres of Iowa afforded the most available means of earning a living. Artisans, merchants, lawyers, and doctors followed the settlement of the country. But whether a man worked at his trade, practised his profession, or delved into the earth the primary object of all was a living, and very few succeeded much beyond the necessities of food, shelter, and clothing.

To the pioneers themselves life was full of toil and hardship, alleviated somewhat by religious zeal and the open-hearted social democracy of the frontier. Thankful for the rude essentials, these hardy,

practical men and women spent precious little time in dreaming of romance or of empire. Probably only a few had eyes to see the beauty of nature about them. Hard work was their common experience and expectation. Early Iowans brought with them and established here a tradition of universal employment. Leisure was almost unknown and idleness was a sin. Ill health might temporarily excuse a person from work, but only the confirmed invalid, the idiot, and the old folks who had done their full share were exempt from labor. The children toiled like the others, helping with the multitudinous duties of housekeeping, caring for the younger children, working in the garden, doing the chores, herding the cattle, or performing a man's work in the field. The rigorous times required that every one should support himself. There was no charity for the lazy or incompetent. A neighbor who did not "change work" on even terms at house raisings, in the field, or at threshing time was likely to find it necessary to move on. Pioneer society was intolerant of any man who did not earn a living.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground in the spring the men were in the field, breaking the tough prairie sod for corn or sowing oats and wheat on the land that had previously succumbed to ax and plow. A low murmur of protest seemed to rise from the prairie as the sharp blade of the heavy plow ripped through its fibrous roots, while behind the plodding oxen rolled a long, smooth, black, yard-wide ribbon

of turf. The wedding of the virgin sod and the breaking plow was full of promise and pathos. Then back and forth across the black loam paced the sower of small grain with a two-bushel bag slung from his shoulder and his right arm swinging out and back in perfect rhythm with his stride as the seed was scattered evenly. Corn was laboriously planted in gashes cut with an ax in the newly broken sod. By June the prairie grass was ready for mowing. After that came the harvest of small grain with scythe and cradle. In the absence of threshing machines strong men wielded the flail and the winds of heaven winnowed the grain from the chaff even as in Bible times. During the calm days of Indian summer the corn was husked and grain was hauled to the distant grist-mill to be ground into meal and flour, while early in December when cold weather began in earnest the pigs were butchered and hams and bacon were salted down or smoked for future use. The winter months were occupied with splitting rails, chopping wood, making furniture and implements, mending harness, shelling seed corn, tending to the live stock, and keeping warm.

Be it observed that in the business of earning a living the Iowa pioneer had to construct his own roads, build his own house, manufacture his own furniture, make his own tools, produce his own food, prepare his own meat, obtain his own fuel, and raise his own flax and wool for clothing — all without money or credit or government aid. He was essen-

tially self-sustaining. What the farmer did not raise or make himself he obtained by barter. Wheat was traded for flour at the grist-mill and the miller took his pay in grain. By-products like hides bought shoes and clothing. Butter and eggs were exchanged at the general store for tea and calico. The doctor, lawyer, and editor accepted cord wood for their services. Rent was a share of the produce. Only the government demanded cash — and land was cheap and taxes low.

Measured in terms of money the pioneer had no need to worry about the cost of living. His house was humble, he worked hard for what he ate and wore, and perchance at the end of his life he had little money in the bank, but he did establish a home and earn a hearty living. Considering his resourcefulness, his industry, and his achievements, the pioneer was poorly paid. But a society in which every one worked though few became wealthy, where all were poor yet none were paupers could not fail to create an economic surplus. The children and grandchildren of the early settlers reap the rewards of pioneer labor. Although they came only to find a home and earn a meager living, the Iowa pioneers also founded a Commonwealth rich in the traditions and institutions they established.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

Around the Fireplace

"Here they built their cabin" sounds like the climax of the story, but the pioneer housewife knew that building the cabin was only the beginning of the home-making: there were three meals to be prepared every day, clothing to make, tiny babies to care for, sick people to be nursed.

These pioneer homes, of course, were not all alike. In the towns living conditions very soon became much the same as in the East, but the wife of the settler on an isolated farm had a more difficult problem. Even these homes show two general types — the log cabin of the timbered region and the frame or sod shanty of the prairie.

If the cabin had a fireplace, bread was baked in a Dutch oven or "bake pan" by heaping coals around and on top of the utensil. Corn bread or "dodger", made of coarse corn meal often without soda, might be baked in a covered skillet over the coals or laid upon a "johnny-cake board" tilted toward the fire. Meat and "flapjacks" were sometimes fried in a long-handled skillet held over the fire, though a turkey, quarter of venison, or a large piece of pork could be cooked by hanging it before the fire on a twisted string. As the string unwound the meat turned slowly and browned evenly while the fat fell into a pan placed on the hearth below — the "drip-

ping pan'' of the modern housewife. Upsetting this pan meant getting the ''fat in the fire''.

In the prairie homes of a later period stoves were used instead of fireplaces, for wood and coal were luxuries. Often the prairie housewife had to burn hay, twisted into a long roll, for cooking or heating. Even ears of corn were thrown into the stove if a roaring hot fire was needed.

''What shall we have for dinner?'' was sometimes no rhetorical question for the pioneer mother. Usually there were corn dodgers, fried pork, and coffee. Wild turkey, venison, and fish offered variety and in the summer there were corn, potatoes, and other vegetables from the garden as well as wild plums, crab-apples, and grapes from the thickets. The lack of cellars, however, made it difficult to keep these things over winter on account of the sub-zero weather. Vegetables were sometimes buried in pits outside or under the floor of the cabin. Fruits might be dried and thus kept. Wild honey or sorghum molasses took the place of candy and sugar. Corn was shelled, subjected to a bath in wood ash lye, hulled, washed, and thus converted into hominy. Mustard greens, horse radish, and other edible herbs could be found in season.

Keeping the house clean was a task for Hercules. The floor was sometimes of packed dirt, sometimes of puncheon slabs laid flat side up, sometimes of rough boards. Dry hay might be used to cover the dirt floors, but there were no carpets. Fortunately,

perhaps, there was not much furniture to dust. A packing-box table or one of boards, a bed or two, a few home-made or splint-bottomed chairs, a cupboard made of rough lumber, and a flour barrel made up the chief articles of the household.

The difficulties of the housekeeper were, of course, immensely increased by the number of activities which had to be carried on in the house. It must have been a steamy, odorous atmosphere. Cooking, eating, sleeping, washing, nursing the sick, and laying out the dead — every task had to be performed in the one room, at least in cold weather. Wet clothing of the men folks was hung before the fire, jostling the coffee pot or the "bake oven". Game was frequently brought indoors to be dressed.

When a pioneer woman wanted soap she had to make it. This process involved three separate tasks — leaching ashes to secure lye, collecting the tallow or grease from the meat, and boiling the two substances together in such a proportion as to produce a substance called soft soap. There were no bath tubs and the streams were a cold substitute during the winter. Possibly the small boys of the family found this no hardship. Morning ablutions were performed by washing face and hands in the family wash basin or in a large gourd. A tooth brush would have been looked upon with derision. Small children, especially those with curly hair, must have suffered from the "reddin" or fine tooth comb. This, it may be said, was not used chiefly for looks.

Other sources of irritation to the housewife of early Iowa were the flies, mice, rats, and bedbugs. There were no screens and the flies migrated at will from the stable to the house. If shooed away from the victuals, they settled on the strings of dried apples or pumpkin or the smoked meat hanging from the rafters. Mice and rats persistently invaded the flour barrel and the "meal chist", feasted on the candles, and committed suicide in the milk pans.

Ready made dresses, shirts, and overalls were unknown to the early Iowa pioneers. Indeed, many women on the frontier had to hackle flax and card wool, spin yarn, weave the woolen, linen, or linsey-woolsey cloth, and then sew the garments by hand, for sewing machines, too, were unknown. The spinning wheel occupied the place of honor in many a cabin. In the evenings there were stockings to knit, or perhaps hats were plaited from straw gathered from the fields. Mittens might be made of skins or knit from homespun yarn. Cotton goods might be purchased by the bolt and dyed at home for gowns, bonnets for the women, and shirts for the men. In the summer women wore slat sunbonnets and in the winter knitted hoods. The fashions even then were not always sensible or appropriate. Surely the hoop skirt was a handicap in such activities as soap-making or cooking over an open fire.

If any of these tasks were performed after sunset the housewife had to work by the light of a tallow dip, made by dipping a wick in cooling tallow again

and again until it was large enough for a candle, or perhaps a molded tallow candle was used.

And when at the close of the day the family prepared for bed, it was very likely a home made, one-legged pole bed on which the adults slept. The log walls furnished support for the three other corners. Across these rails slats or a weaving of heavy cord was used to support the tick stuffed with hay or straw, and in the winter surmounted by a feather bed. A smaller and movable trundle bed for the children could be pushed under this stationary bed in the day time. A half log, hollowed out in the center, made a cradle for the baby, and it was seldom empty.

The pioneers were a hardy lot and their active life, fresh air, and coarse food saved them from many ailments. They were not, however, immune from disease, and accidents were common. Doctors were scarce, frequently untrained, and many times could not reach a patient because of bad roads. A neighbor woman usually attended the advent of an infant but the mother herself treated most of the ailments of her family. Many of their remedies, consisting of bitters or tea made from herbs such as burdock, plantain, pennyroyal, sassafras, boneset, camomile, or gentian roots, were probably harmless if not efficacious. It would not be surprising if at times a patient received the wrong dose, but the hot tea or poultice often gave relief.

Ague and itch were common and persistent mala-

dies on the frontier. For the latter affliction the mother applied a lotion from the roots of the skunk-cabbage and firmly administered the honored remedy — sulphur and molasses. This remedy was also used in the spring as a tonic, receiving the credit which probably belonged to the spring sunshine and the more varied diet of vegetables, milk, and eggs which came with the warm weather.

Other remedies were mere superstitions handed down from primitive times. A "fetta bag" — a piece of asafetida tied up in a cloth — was sometimes tied around a child's neck to prevent its "ketchin" disease. Blood stones, snake stones, and mad stones served as a cure for nosebleed, snake bite, or the bite of a mad dog. Whisky, however, was the chief reliance for snake bite — and for many other things.

The various census reports classify these pioneer women as "not gainfully employed", and legal fiction represented them as "supported" by their husbands, but their economic and social contribution to the community life indicate that they earned if they were not paid. Cooking, spinning, weaving, sewing, milking, churning, making cheese, raising chickens, collecting herbs, nursing the sick, and rearing many children well — surely the pioneer mother earned her living and left the country richer for her work.

Ruth A. Gallaher

On the Highway

To-day the California Limited whisks Iowans west for the winter, and flap-curtained Fords or luxurious limousines speed comfortably along the straight Iowa roads. But a trip in pioneer days often meant dislocated bones, wind-broke horses, frozen ears and fingers, stolen money, and the terrible heart-sick feeling of lost trails.

With all the hardships, however, which now seem unbearable, our "Ioway" grandparents and great grandparents travelled, and travelled often. Knowing nothing of macadamized roads, they did not stay at home and wait for them. There were friends to be visited, sermons to be preached, courts to be held, grist to be ground, fever cases to be bled, and land to be bought and sold or squatted upon.

The first Iowa travellers, the hunters and the homeseekers, had for roads only the trails of the padding Indian or the hoof-marked tracks of the buffalo, which threaded in and out through dense woods and underbrush or wound snake-like through the interminable whispering seas of prairie grass. They went not as the crow flies but as the wind bloweth, and it was an intrepid, adventurous traveller who pushed on a little farther than his tired companions and found a field more fertile, a grove more kind, and a land more nearly Utopian.

But twelve-inch Indian paths were not wide enough for a yoke of oxen, so the backwoods pioneer widened the trails. Nor did he long delay before besieging the Territorial legislature with petitions for roads. The legislature responded. By 1846 when Iowa had become a State, two hundred road acts were on the statute books. Even Congress took a hand and authorized, in 1839, the well known "Military Road", stretching from Dubuque through Iowa City to the northern boundary of Missouri. So year by year, as the surveyors blazed trees and drove stakes into the prairie, as the ox teams slowly cut the matted sod, Iowa became crossed and criss-crossed with a network of highways.

But the roads were built of Iowa soil which, combined with water, invariably forms mud, deep and sticky. Transportation in the early spring or during the fall rains was next to impossible. Those who had to travel often exhausted their horses by long pulls through heavy gumbo, often had to plank themselves onto higher ground with rails carried for the purpose or pad the deep ruts with willow twigs and grass, and usually arrived at their destination after supper was over and the best half of the bed had been preëmpted by another guest. The first hard-surface highways, of corduroy or plank, were the wonder of those who saw and the torment of those who used them.

Another cause of delay was swollen streams. There were of course few bridges, and fording was

hazardous. At times it was accomplished by calking the wagon boxes so that they would float better when pulled by the swimming horses. How like boats the prairie schooners must have looked with their puffing canvas tops! At the larger towns, ferries transported the traffic across the deeper rivers. In the dead of winter when the streams were frozen, crossing was made easy by the ice. Then the rivers became highways in themselves, forming wide unobstructed paths from town to town.

The means of transportation in itself was peculiar to the times. Groups of white-topped prairie schooners, drawn by slow horses or slower oxen, plowed up the thick dust of the road. Springless wagons jolted along with corn to be ground or cord wood to be traded for a bolt of cloth. Horseback riders wound in and out among the slower traffic, often with the mail in saddle bags. And if at any time there was the loud sound of a horn around the bend, the whole company would spread out along the edge of the road, deferentially and for the safety of their lives. The women looked out from the front of the wagons, the men chewed a little harder and spat with a grandiose air. A stage was passing! Drawn by four spanking horses, the oval black body swinging on its thorough braces and glistening in the sun, a burly, whip-cracking driver sitting aloft on the high seat, and the luggage jolting inside the little railing behind him or securely fastened in the triangular, leather-covered "boot" at the rear, the

stagecoach made a spectacular appearance. The passengers waved as they went rolling by. And after the stage had passed from sight and the dust had settled again in the road, the ox teams resumed their plodding gait while the women in the heavy wagons exclaimed over the bright scenes painted on the stagecoach doors and the richness of the upholstery, and the men discussed the mail routes which the stages were steadily taking away from the postriders and the network of Western Stage Company lines that were spreading over Iowa.

When a traveller came to the larger towns he probably put up at a tavern such as fat Bob Kinney's house at Muscatine, built two stories high, of split logs, and with sawed lumber doors and window casings. The typical tavern, however, was smaller and more rude. There were several beds in a room, and they were not considered full unless occupied by two or three people. The near-by creek often served as the lavatory and the open air as the towel.

And so it seems that pioneer travel was a procession of hardships. But there were long, pleasant days on the road, good company in the motley crowd who travelled it, and sound slumber at the end of the day in somebody's close-walled, beef-smelling tavern. And mayhap the hearts of those pioneers were lightened by some dim sense of the history they were living, of the homes and fortunes and future satisfaction toward which they were travelling.

PAULINE PATTON GRAHAME

Religion and Morality

The Iowa pioneers were, in a sense, materialists. They had need of food, clothing, and shelter and none of these could be secured without hard, grinding labor. The settlers endured these hardships because they had visions of future farms, new houses, and herds of cattle, but there were many who had ideals above economic necessities and who knew that "man shall not live by bread alone."

The frontier along the Mississippi, like the frontier everywhere, attracted a lawless and turbulent element. Charles A. Murray, an English visitor at Dubuque in 1835, wrote that the barroom "was crowded with a parcel of blackguard noisy miners", but he added, "theft is almost unknown; and though dirks are frequently drawn and pistols fired in savage and drunken brawls, I do not believe that an instance of larceny or house-breaking has occurred."

The majority of settlers in Iowa were industrious and law abiding. They made their own tools and furniture, and if necessary formulated their own laws and provided their own religious services. As early as 1834 a little group of Methodists erected at Dubuque the first church building in Iowa. This little log church was "raised", we are told, "with few hands and without spirits of any kind" — a procedure apparently not according to the prevailing

custom. If there were no church buildings, religious services were held in a cabin, in a store, or outdoors.

George C. Duffield, in describing an open air meeting on the west side of the Des Moines River in August, 1837, relates that the preacher, a Baptist, "strode down toward the water's edge, and, turning toward the rising bank, took off his hat and laid it at his feet." The congregation gathered on the bank, and the women, "who sat bonneted beneath the tree, bared their heads." Perhaps a hundred persons, including Indians, listened to the sermon, of which Mr. Duffield said: "I seldom pass that elm tree to this day but that I unconsciously look at its roots as I did that day at Mr. Hill's direction when he screamed: 'Oh sinner, look! *Look* (bending with hands nearly to the ground) while I take off the hatch of *Hell*!' and with his long bony fingers and writhing body he pictured the tortures of the damned."

Simplicity and fervor were, indeed, the most marked characteristics of many of these early church services. One of the western preachers once visited a church in Massachusetts and his comment on its services throws sidelights on the church of the frontier. "There's your old wooden god, the organ," he said, "bellowing up in the gallery, and a few dandified singers lead in singing and really do it all. The congregation won't sing, and when you pray, they sit down instead of kneeling." The method of seating the congregation also fell under his condemna-

tion, for he said, "The evils that result from mixed sittings of male and female, which are always attendant on the pew system, are neither few nor small."

The religious hysteria which had swept over the West at the beginning of the nineteenth century had largely disappeared by the time Iowa was settled, but camp meetings, where whole families came and stayed for several days, were not uncommon. Exhortations, prayers, tears, and shouts of praise mingled at these meetings, the repressed existence of the lonely and hard-working men and women finding relief in the expression of religious emotion.

Probably no class of men on the frontier suffered more privations and hardships than the pioneer preachers and priests. They made long circuits to reach their appointments, driving or riding horseback through the heat and rains of summer, shoveling their way through snow-drifts in the winter, or dragging wearily through the mud of the early spring. The best paid received only a pittance and many of them helped support themselves and their families by other work.

Education was not deemed a necessity for this work, although some of these missionaries were well educated for their time. Noteworthy in the religious history of Iowa, was the coming of the "Iowa Band", graduates of the Andover Theological Seminary, who came to Iowa in 1843. Their expressed determination was that each should found a church

and all a college. From their efforts arose many Congregational and Presbyterian churches and Grinnell College. Father Mazzuchelli, educated and talented, was one of the best-known Catholic priests in early Iowa.

But there were other and less orthodox influences in the religious life of pioneer Iowans. From Nauvoo, Illinois, came Mormon missionaries; Quakers settled in southern Iowa, bringing with them implacable hostility to slavery; and Abner Kneeland attempted to found an atheistic colony near Farmington, naming it Salubria.

Along with this confusion of religious readjustment the problems of moral standards developed. To Iowa came the outlaw and the missionary, the Puritan from New England and the former slaveholder from the South, the white man and the negro. The Indian was already here. In combining these groups Iowa had one advantage: their ideas and moral standards had to some extent been filtered by sojourns in Ohio, Kentucky, or Illinois, and frontier hardships helped to establish mutual helpfulness and tolerance.

Perhaps some idea of the moral standards of the majority of early Iowans may be derived from a glance at some early laws. In 1839 the legislature provided a fine of fifty dollars or less for any person who should "by menace, profane swearing, vulgar language, or any disorderly or immoral conduct" interrupt any religious assembly.

Governor Robert Lucas, in his message to the First Legislative Assembly of Iowa began the fight against two evils by announcing that he would not appoint to office "any individual of *bad moral character,* or, that may be addicted to *intemperance* or *gambling.*" Lotteries, which in many sections of the country were not only permitted by the government but often conducted by it, were forbidden by all three of the constitutions framed for Iowa. Lottery tickets, however, contrary to this constitutional provision, were sometimes advertised in Iowa papers and were doubtless as alluring as present day advertisements of fortunes to be made in Florida real estate or Oklahoma oil wells. In 1842 gambling debts were declared to be void. Hunting, fishing, and working on Sunday were likewise forbidden by law.

Divorces might be granted for such causes as bigamy, adultery, desertion, cruelty, or drunkenness and were the same for husbands and wives. Until 1846 divorces were also granted by the legislature, one act in 1842 divorcing eighteen couples. In spite of this, divorce in pioneer Iowa was looked upon with disfavor: wives were expected to be patient and obedient, according to Saint Paul's advice, the courts usually considered the father's right to the children paramount, and there were not many opportunities for a woman to support herself.

The settlement of Iowa occurred about the time of the rise of the temperance movement and prohibition sentiment developed early here although there

were many influences against it. The first temperance society in Iowa was organized a few weeks before the establishment of the Territory and the early laws show many restrictions on the sale of liquor. In 1855 a prohibitory law was ratified by a popular vote of 25,555 to 22,645.

Hospitality was a striking characteristic of the frontier. No cabin was too small to hold the wayfarers who stopped for shelter. The latch string usually hung outside and if the owner were away any traveller was welcome to lodging and food. Theft was unusual except for horse stealing, an offense considered so serious as to be punished under "lynch law" by hanging. Murders due to quarrels were not unusual and occasionally persons of criminal tendencies maintained lodging houses at strategic points where the unsuspecting guest was deprived of his "roll" if not of his life.

Both the religion and morality of pioneer Iowa were characterized by the independent, self-reliant spirit of the frontier combined with coöperation and toleration of the opinions of others. Partly these qualities were the result of environment, partly they were inherited from earlier pioneers who had written in the Ordinance of 1787 the words, "Religion, morality and knowledge, being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

Ruth A. Gallaher

The Means of Education

The fancy for the picturesque which gave to *The Hoosier Schoolmaster* a popularity that has not diminished after a period of fifty-five years may in part explain our current notions of pioneer Iowa education. Certainly the Flat Creek school has become a type to which our minds revert. Not without reason, either, for it was in a similar little log hut in the wilderness along the Mississippi that Iowa's first teacher, Berryman Jennings, taught a handful of children in the autumn of 1830. To be sure more spacious frame structures eventually supplanted the primitive one-room log-cabin schoolhouses and buildings of stone or brick were not uncommon, but as late as 1862 there were eight hundred and ninety-three log schoolhouses in Iowa, about one-fourth of the total number.

The aims of education were few in those days. All that a child should know, except pure book learning, was taught at home. The regular elementary curriculum consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, and geography. Discipline was strict and moral precepts were emphasized.

Toward the end of the pioneer period the schools were fairly well equipped and the teachers were predominantly women. In 1867 the superintendent of schools in Winneshiek County reported an exception

to the general rule. Mr. Lenthal Eells was teaching forty-three pupils in a new log building. The seats were long forms, with four writing desks, each eight feet long — a very inconvenient arrangement. In the absence of a blackboard the door served in that capacity. The teacher was a versatile man who was fluent with illustrations, "asked many questions not in the book, and required his pupils to think." Sad to say, however, the floor needed sweeping.

But the pioneers were not alone concerned with elementary schools. Their ambitions soared far higher. In January, 1838, the Wisconsin legislature meeting in Burlington reflected something of the spirit of the times by establishing seminaries for instruction in science and literature in Davenport, Dubuque, Mount Pleasant, Farmington, Augusta, Union, West Point, and Fort Madison. By 1850 fifty colleges had been created by law in a state only four years old and having a population of one hundred ninety-two thousand! It is of secondary interest to learn that most of these colleges existed only in imagination, that only two of those founded in the forties now live — Iowa Wesleyan and Grinnell. Of primary significance, however, is the zeal for education manifested by the pioneers. Though the lamp may actually have burned low for a time, those who held it did not doubt the future. In being thus bold they exposed themselves to the criticism of extreme folly, for a pioneer population is not made up of young people of college age. Elementary schools,

not colleges, were most needed in the new land. But there can be no understanding of early Iowa which does not comprehend the boom spirit which prevailed from the beginning even into the late sixties. Though the material boundaries of the State had been measured by the surveyor's chain and compass, its spiritual possibilities seemed as boundless as the prairie landscape. Where few things had yet been tried, all things seemed possible. It was Adolescence in a Promised Land.

Nor were the first college ventures all bubbles, though, like the infant Harvard, they were for a while only high schools glorified by pompous titles. In due time some of them grew up to their names. If the decade of the forties was an era of paper colleges, the fifties brought more substantial structures of brick and stone. To the credit of self-sacrificing divines, who equalled the Puritans in religious ardor and surpassed them in tolerance, denominational schools sprang up in every part of the State. Cornell College had its origin in the fifties, as did Coe, Central, Upper Iowa, Dubuque University, Lenox, and Tabor. In the late fifties the State College at Ames took legal form, while the State University, established with two branches by a youthful and enthusiastic legislature in 1847, actually opened its doors in 1855. Formal higher education in Iowa had swung into a steady gait before the Civil War.

The means of education in pioneer Iowa were not limited to the schools. The New England conscience,

though broadened by frontier conditions, could not rest in the new home until the lyceum had been transplanted. Consequently the voice of the lecturer mingled with the sound of the ringing ax. In the new soil the lyceum waxed luxuriant. It fostered a transcendentalism which welcomed an Emerson rejected at home and lionized an Alcott who in the East was a stranger in his own land.

With the lyceum came an endless number of young men's associations, the founders of most of our present public libraries. Books and magazines were not so plentiful as to-day, but they were not rare. Newspapers, with apparently the greatest nonchalance, pirated poetry and fiction, so that the writings of Longfellow, Emerson, Lowell, and Whittier, published in the East one day, were read in the newspapers of the West the next.

The drama, too, ventured into the booming river cities. Concerts were frequent winter diversions, and balls for which military bands played impressive quadrilles provided the social contact which is after all one of the final ends of education. Little sympathy, in truth, does the pioneer Iowan ask of his descendants. Rather does he look toward us with compassion, for his was the day of great hope, when marvelous events were upon the eve of happening. He did not know the ennui of realization. Our actualities were but the beginnings of his dreams.

HUBERT H. HOELTJE

Frontier Fun

Although the social life of the pioneers was meager, nevertheless, some play varied the monotony of steady toil on the Iowa frontier. After an early settler had cut logs for his cabin and had dragged them to the site of his new home neighbors for miles around were invited to the "raising". While the men were engaged in laying up the walls of the cabin women prepared as bounteous a dinner as the family larder would permit. When the task was finished the men engaged in friendly bouts — wrestling, foot racing, and feats of strength.

Soon after the cabin was finished the neighbors assembled again to dedicate the new domicile with a "house warming". Some one in nearly every neighborhood could "scrape the fiddle", and the new cabin reëchoed to the strains of "Money Musk", "Old Dan Tucker", "The Arkansas Traveller", "Old Zip Coon", and "Pop Goes the Weasel". The Virginia reel, the stately minuet, and the old-fashioned cotillion were favorite dances. If the settler who owned the cabin had scruples against dancing some other sort of frolic, such as the "play party" with "Miller Boy", "Skip to My Lou", "Old Sister Phoebe", and "London Bridge" as popular games, furnished fun more vigorous than graceful.

For those pioneers who made their homes in the wooded areas "log rollings" provided another useful mode of recreation. When the settler had laboriously felled the timber on a considerable space of ground his neighbors joined him in rolling the logs into piles for burning. The task finished, a supper for all and an evening of jollification celebrated the successful destruction of the logs.

Hunting was a sport much enjoyed by men and boys on the Iowa frontier, for game was abundant and the old muzzle loader was a deadly weapon in the hands of pioneer marksmen. The "circular wolf hunt" furnished both fun and excitement. On an appointed day all the men and boys of a neighborhood would form a sort of a circle around many square miles of territory. Dogs were held in leash by their masters until a signal was given to turn them loose, when away they would go barking and yelping after the quarry. The hunters gradually closed up toward the center of their field of operations, gathering not only wolves but other game as well. No guns were used on such occasions, but every hunter carried a sturdy club.

On Saturday afternoons in the fall of the year shooting matches frequently brought the marksmen of a neighborhood together in a test of skill. A beef, divided into five parts, might be offered as prizes, the best shot taking first choice while the hide and tallow went to the man in the fifth place. At other times a haunch of venison, wild turkeys,

a pony, a gun, or a watch was the prize sought. Each contestant brought along his own target, a charred board with a bit of white paper in the center. At a distance of fifty paces for offhand shooting, or seventy-five if a rest was used, the pioneer marksman took steady aim and fired his old muzzle loader. Judges called the result of each shot, and the glad news, "Broke center" or "Drove center", for a perfect bull's-eye was welcomed with shouts of acclaim.

Horse racing, too, was thoroughly enjoyed by the early settlers. In certain communities nearly every Saturday afternoon during the summer and fall and often on Sundays a crowd of men assembled to witness running races. Trotting and pacing had not yet become the vogue. There was much betting, and pocket knives, watches, guns, and sundry articles as well as money changed hands.

Quilting bees and paring bees afforded a means of social recreation for women and girls alone; but the husking bee brought both sexes together for a good time. These affairs were usually held in a barn where the host had placed two piles of corn as nearly equal in size as possible. As soon as each gentleman had selected a lady partner and sides had been chosen for the contest, the husking began, each group striving to finish its pile of corn first. Finding a red ear meant kisses all around, and sometimes young men would take an underhand advantage by secretly passing a red ear from one to the other. This feature of the program was par-

ticularly agreeable, and a source of unlimited fun and frolic. After the corn was all husked the floor was cleared, the "fiddle" was brought out, and the merrymakers danced until the eastern sky began to show signs of the coming dawn, when each boy on horseback with his girl behind set out for home.

Dancing was probably the most popular form of social intercourse among the young people. The portable bedstead, loom, spinning wheel, table, and provision barrels were moved outside the cabin and chunks of wood with slabs resting on top were arranged along the wall for seats. Couples arrived at "early candle lighting". The fiddler tuned his instrument, and shouted, "Git your pardners fer a cuttillyun". Then, keeping time with his feet, head, and body, he called the figures of the dance, the more complicated the better. "First four forward, and side four divide; change partners in center, and swing to the side; and keep on around", started the rhythmic shuffle. "Ladies to the center, and gents walk around; pass by your partners, and swing 'em around; and all promenade", brought a prompt and not ungraceful response. "On to the next one, salute and sashay; and double shuffle, the old-fashioned way; and grand right and left." And so the fun continued till morning.

Fourth of July celebrations brought the pioneers together for a day of relaxation, visiting, and feasting. A convenient grove usually served as the place of meeting, to which the settlers came afoot, on

horseback, or by wagon from miles around. A bountiful picnic dinner spread on the ground was served at mid-day; while in the afternoon some well-known lawyer made the welkin ring with his impassioned eloquence. Perhaps a ball in the evening concluded a day of enjoyment for the entire community.

Thanksgiving day with its wild turkey roasted golden brown over the coals of the fireplace, wild plum preserves, corn pone, mince pie, and bowls of cracked hickory nuts, butternuts, and walnuts afforded simple pleasure for the pioneers. On Christmas, gifts of a practical sort such as knitted mittens, stockings, mufflers, caps, and hoods were given to the children. Sometimes a little girl found some colored beads in the toe of her stocking and a boy was made joyous with a brand new jack knife. Meager as such gifts were the spirit of Christmas prevailed and happiness reigned.

Pioneer fun was often rough and not very refined, but it was not vicious. It reflected the simple tastes of the early settlers and afforded some relief from the dull routine of securing a hard-earned living on the frontier.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

The News

When a war breaks out or a bank is robbed, when fire, flood, or earthquake devastate the land, the newsboys everywhere cry, "Extra! Extra!" But no such challenge greeted the ear of the pioneer. Out on the lonely prairie the silence was broken only by the howling of the wolves. News, in a modern sense, was unknown.

The first bits of news received by the pioneer claim holders were brought, not by the printed page, but by other pioneers in their movement westward, by a distant neighbor who chanced to call at the cabin, or perchance by the shoemaker who, in his regular autumnal perambulating visits, always came well-laden with gossip. Steamboats plying the Mississippi between St. Louis and St. Paul likewise came to be a fruitful source of news.

The pioneer was not long content, however, without newspapers. Indeed, the press followed closely after the plow. The Dubuque *Visitor* was the first newspaper in what is now Iowa. On May 11, 1836, the first issue appeared, a four-page Democratic journal printed by John King on a press brought from Ohio. In 1837 the name of this paper was changed to the *Iowa News.* Later it was succeeded by the *Miners' Express,* whose lineal descendant is the Dubuque *Telegraph-Herald.*

In 1837 *The Western Adventurer and Herald* was printed at Montrose. After a struggling existence of two years it was removed to Fort Madison, where it became a Whig publication called *The Patriot.* It was finally moved to Burlington where it is now known as the Burlington *Hawk-Eye.* Meanwhile the Burlington *Gazette* had been established and still flourishes. The first newspaper in Davenport was *The Iowa Sun and Davenport and Rock Island News.* It is said that "the Sun shone for four years".

In the early forties Iowa City was the capital of the Territory and the home of two newspapers — the *Iowa Capitol Reporter* and the *Iowa Standard.* The former, a Democratic "organ", was frequently referred to by the *Standard* as the "Locofoco Rag", while the latter, a Whig journal, was in turn called the "Whiggery Humbug." The old files of the "Rag" and the "Humbug", which are still in use, present an interesting contrast with a modern daily. They are innocent of glaring head-lines, cartoons, half-tones, blatant theater attractions, or the adventures of Mr. Jiggs, yet they fairly bristle with information concerning the life and activities of those early days.

Personal items were given less attention in the pioneer newspapers than in the present journals. Editorial comment, however, was likely to be far more extensive, vehement, and bombastic. Incidents of national interest were prominent, while witticisms, short stories, and poems filled many columns.

But politics provided the life and color for the early press.

Announcements, notices, and advertisements in the early newspapers were displayed in small type, yet they were replete with interest and give a vivid portrayal of pioneer life. In August, 1837, a Burlington paper announced that the regular annual license fee of ten dollars was due from "all persons engaged in retailing spirituous liquors and groceries" in Des Moines County. A little later the same paper announced a lecture on the subject of "Temperance and Reform" to be delivered "on Monday evening next, at early candle-light." Bargains in merchandise were explained in detail and the merits of patent medicines were boldly proclaimed. To attract particular attention or on account of the exigencies of space, advertisements were sometimes set lengthwise of a column.

Pioneer newspaper editing was not one of the main-travelled highways to quick riches. In spite of the times being "so hard that you can catch pike on the naked hook", one publisher announced that his paper was to be "enlarged at several dollars extra expense" but the low subscription price would remain the same. Another editor, in urging delinquent patrons to pay their subscriptions, said, "We don't want money desperately bad, but our creditors do. And no doubt they owe you. If you pay us, we'll pay them, and they'll pay you."

Difficulties were encountered not only in the selec-

tion and publication of news, but in its distribution as well. In 1839 Governor Robert Lucas vetoed a legislative measure which authorized the postmaster of Davenport to have mail from that place to Dubuque "conveyed in two horse post coaches, twice a week" during the session of the Legislative Assembly. At that time no mail route had been established to Iowa City. Letters and papers for residents in the new capital of the Territory were brought from Muscatine by any one having business there. One pioneer wrote that he had "often brought out the Iowa City mail in the crown of his hat, and when that receptacle was not large enough to contain the mail, it was securely tied in a pocket handkerchief."

Mail routes moved westward with the progress of civilization, though it was not until 1855 that "the first stage and first mail arrived at Sioux City." This, it is said, was "hailed by the denizens as a bright omen of prosperity, which seemed to infuse into them new life and spirit". As late as 1861 the people of Hampton had no mail for nearly seven weeks because the "snow was deep, and the mail agent would not venture out." An early settler in Mason City once walked fifty miles on snow shoes, carrying the mail on his back from Iowa Falls. Thus came the news to the pioneers of Iowa.

J. A. Swisher

Pioneer Politics

Politics constituted one of the most exciting phases of the commonplace life of the Iowa pioneer. The leading men in the community attended the party conventions. The newspapers supported their favorite political parties with amazing zeal and commented upon governmental activities in the minutest detail. Candidates went on extensive stumping tours, and the people looked upon the occasion of a political speech as something of a social event.

When Iowa was young, a man was either a Democrat or a Whig. Nobody voted for "the man" in preference to "the party". In fact, criticism of their party was regarded by some as a personal insult. The newspaper editors claimed an affiliation with one party and wrote in derision of the other. Often their editorials became mere personal denunciations. For instance, the Iowa City *Standard,* a Whig paper edited by William Crum, spoke of the dignified Ver Planck Van Antwerp, graduate of West Point and relative of President Van Buren, as "the thing which says it edits that filthy and demagogical sluice of Loco-focoism, the *Reporter.*" Whereupon the editor of the *Reporter* addressed a sharp rejoinder to the stylish Mr. Crum as "Silly Billy — the last crum of creation".

The issues of the campaigns were argued in the

papers in a most caustic, personal, and partisan manner. In long, tedious articles editors would discuss the tariff, the national bank, the subtreasury bill, the preëmption law, the adoption of a State constitution, or whatever was before them. Each paper would denounce the candidates of the other party for their stand upon some issue and very likely retort to a similar accusation of the opposing editor. In reply to a charge of the Davenport *Gazette* that the Whigs had refused to pass a preëmption law the *Standard* declared, "Now we appeal to every man — Whig and Locofoco alike — to answer if the above is not in all its parts a lie? We should like to know what editors of a public newspaper, claiming to be respectable, mean by lying after that fashion. The Whigs passed the only truly honest preëmption law that was ever enacted. And that very feature of *honesty* is, probably, what renders it obnoxious to such lying scamps as the editors of the *Gazette.*" Not only did the newspapers lampoon each other in regard to the principles and policies of their respective parties but they attacked the conduct and character of the candidates as well.

But in spite of the strict adhesion to party lines, the pioneer respected a strong personality. It is said that the generous nature, public spirit, cordial manners, and upright administration of the Land Office won Augustus C. Dodge many supporters. "I know", said a voter, "that Mr. Dodge is a Democrat,

and the candidate of the Democratic party, but you cannot draw party lines on him. His opponent says there is no use in electioneering against him, that you had as well sing psalms to a dead horse as preach Whiggery or Henry Clay where Guss Dodge is."

Some time before the election the candidates often stumped the State, making speeches and holding joint debates. Such gatherings were usually held in the open air and were attended by the whole neighborhood. The speakers, unrestrained by the reporter, the cartoonist, or the cold print of a morning daily, would give unbridled rein to story, illustration, invective, quotation, gesture, and passionate appeal.

Often such meetings ended with a barbecue. Hard cider was a common campaign stimulant, and the voters came to eat and drink as well as to think. In October, 1848, the Democrats held a barbecue in Jefferson County for the purpose of considering the qualifications of the presidential candidates. Cass and Butler banners floated everywhere. A band playing patriotic airs led a procession two miles long, composed of seventy carriages and many men and women on horseback. After a bounteous dinner occupying tables which totaled a quarter of a mile in length, Lincoln Clark and General Dodge addressed the cheering throng and presented the issues of the campaign.

But there was more to a stumping tour of the State than the fun and frolic of a barbecue. When

rival candidates held joint debates they often travelled together, sharing common hardships and hospitalities. They rode across the prairie on horseback, forded or swam streams that were swollen by rain, ate at the same table, and usually slept in the same bed. Stinging sarcasm and sharp rejoinders characterized their discussions, but off the stump party differences were ignored and they were friends. Sometimes they rode all day without food, and on one occasion at least dined ravenously on such meager supplies as tea and onions.

There is scarcely a party platform in the history of Iowa that does not pledge the honesty of public officials. Yet pioneer politics was not without discreditable transactions. Party advantage was sometimes placed before public welfare. Elections were occasionally tumultuous, ballots were miscounted, and voting was anything but secret. Each party printed its own ticket which could be easily recognized by the party emblem or the color of the paper.

Democratic government was still regarded as an experiment. There was a general, subconscious feeling among the people that republican institutions were on trial. All seemed to accept a common responsibility for the success of self-government so that critics would have no opportunity to point to a serious failure. Certainly there was little apathy toward politics among the pioneers.

Roy V. Sherman

Rough Justice

Justice in early Iowa reflected the rough but essentially honest character of the settlers themselves. In the settlement of disputes they were prone to proceed by the most direct methods: technicalities were viewed with distrust and impatience. The innate belief of the people in fair dealing and their desire to do justice to the parties concerned tended to promote a rather summary procedure. This was particularly true of the protection of property rights, which was one of their chief concerns.

Of the early institutions of government in Iowa, the claim associations were among the first to be established. The settlers came before preëmption privileges were extended over the region and some extralegal method had to be devised to prevent claim jumping.

Occasionally a newcomer would take possession of a claim in the absence of the squatter. Such a case arose in Scott County and was settled with customary dispatch. A sheriff having been sent for and a posse assembled, the occupant was ordered to leave the cabin and to vacate the premises. This he refused to do. The posse than proceeded to hitch a yoke of oxen to the corner of the cabin "and as the timbers began to show signs of parting" the claim jumper expressed a willingness to leave immedi-

ately. He was then shown "the most feasible, as well as the quickest route" across the river.

These claim associations protected the squatters until the land was offered for sale and even then prevented outsiders from overbidding them. The first public land sale in Iowa was thus an event of importance and thousands of settlers attended it in the fall of 1838. Speculators, too, came in considerable numbers — some wishing to buy land and others desiring to loan money to prospective purchasers at the rate of fifty per cent a year. Only one or two townships could be sold in a day "and when the land in any one township was offered, the settlers of that township constituted the army on duty for that day, and surrounded the office for their own protection, with all the other settlers as a reserve force, if needed." Prospective buyers took care to respect the claim rights of the settlers.

Frontier people are active and impulsive. They judge quickly and act promptly. While the pioneers of Iowa had profound respect for the law, they were impatient with tedious judicial processes. Technical rules of evidence and the slow, formal procedure of grand jury indictments were irksome. They wanted to settle a case while it was fresh and upon such evidence as appeared to them to be good. With them a confession was better than the testimony of an eyewitness.

Offenses against persons as well as property occurred in the early days of Iowa. The first murder

trial in the Iowa country was in 1834. Patrick O'Connor was accused of killing George O'Keaf. Some were of the opinion that O'Connor should be hanged at once, and a rope was brought for that purpose but the sober-minded element insisted that the matter should be more fully investigated. Accordingly, O'Connor was taken to Dubuque, only a short distance away, where an impromptu trial was held. Both the people and the defendant selected counsel who in turn summoned from those present twenty-four men. The accused was then directed to choose from this panel twelve persons to act as jurors. O'Connor admitted that he had shot O'Keaf and, after a few witnesses were examined, the jury retired. At the end of an hour's deliberation, they brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree and recommended hanging — a sentence which was later executed.

Another case of summary and rather unique justice occurred in connection with the Bellevue war. A group of alleged horse thieves having been judged guilty, the committee of citizens in charge of the trial determined their punishment by voting "white beans for hanging, colored beans for whipping". As a result the outlaws were whipped and by order of the committee placed in a boat, given three days' rations, and sent down the Mississippi.

Civil cases in early Iowa were also sometimes settled by unique methods. The earliest civil suit in Davis County is said to have been brought before a

justice of the peace. On the day set for the hearing the whole neighborhood turned out to see the trial, swap horses, and drink whisky according to the custom. As the time for the trial approached, the parties to the dispute became alarmed, not knowing what turn events might take once the case was in "the hands of the law". So a compromise was reached by which it was agreed to leave the matter to three of the settlers who were empowered to decide how much, if anything, the defendant must pay. The decision having been reached the settlers witnessed the actual transfer of property, both parties "treated" the crowd, and "all returned to their homes well pleased with the turn the suit had taken."

In due time, however, courts of a more formal nature were established. These early tribunals were rather imperfect in organization and their procedure was often faulty. The pioneers themselves were not much more concerned with intricacies of the law than with niceties of social etiquette. As a matter of fact, institutions of government are seldom other than a reflection of their makers.

Since those pioneer days many changes have come about, particularly in the methods and machinery for securing justice. The more diversified system of courts, the highly developed rules of procedure, the commodious courthouses, and the better trained judges exist in marked contrast to the meager facilities and summary methods of the early days.

GEO. F. ROBESON

Comment by the Editor

THE SPIRIT OF PIONEERING

Observing the westward course of the sun in the heavens, the pioneers, like their racial ancestors, turned their footsteps toward the same destination. The future seemed to lie in that direction. And as the glowing tints of sunrise inspired daily hope of bright achievement, so the flaming skies of sunset beckoned ever onward with the promise of possessions and ultimate repose. Feeling the irresistible urge of progress, they moved in harmony with the universe.

Without envy or reluctance, the pioneers bade farewell to settled contentment in the East and set their faces valiantly toward the frontier. Endowed with hope, endurance, fortitude, versatility, confidence, high ideals, and wholesome discontent with inertia, they moved forward in the van. They encountered adversity with a courageous smile and endured privation with grim determination. Able-bodied and capable they were — men and women who knew the equity of requited toil and kept their faith in final success.

Pioneering consists of surmounting obstacles for the first time and smoothing the way for others. The people who settled Iowa counted it worth while to

hew and build, to sow and reap and sow again, to rear their children in simplicity and reverence, and to establish institutions for the promotion of civil order. Winning a continent was the splendid enterprise that fired their imagination. Allured by the boundless acres and hustling commerce they willingly risked their lives and treasure in the glorious work of making homes and developing the country.

Satisfaction with things as they are is the test of static society, but the essence of pioneering is dynamic ambition. Something ventured, something gained. And always buoyantly westward, ho! with the star of empire. Leadership in place of imitation; progress rather than stagnation; vision and not drowsy myopia; hope of the future more than satisfaction with the past; self-reliance instead of dependence — all these, and more, are the spirit of pioneering.

J. E. B.

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