

# The PALIMPSEST

APRIL 1927

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THE EDITOR

PUBLISHED MONTHLY AT IOWA CITY BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



## 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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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society      Iowa City Iowa



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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VOL. VIII

ISSUED IN APRIL 1927

NO. 4

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## Rafting on the Mississippi

Lured westward by the same adventurous spirit that had enticed the earlier *coureurs des bois* and *voyageurs* into the region that had been the outpost of the great French empire of America, the hardy, steel-sinewed, agile, pioneer woodsmen of a more thrifty type hewed their way into the forests of Wisconsin and Minnesota during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Before many pioneers had ventured far beyond the high bluffs bordering the Mississippi, before the wagon trains of the Mormons had left the imprint of their wheels upon the grass-grown prairies as they wended westward, while bee hunters and fur traders in frail canoes were yet pushing up the smaller streams, and while the Indian still claimed Iowa as his rightful home, the first log rafts—harbingers of a great industry—came floating down the Mississippi. Although the lumber for the first frame houses in the river towns



of Iowa may have been imported from Ohio or Indiana sawmills, it is a fact that "in 1839 the pineries of Wisconsin were beginning to send their products southward by rafts."

How the logs were brought from the northern forests to the sawmills of Iowa towns forms one of the most colorful chapters in the story of the Mississippi. Before the era of steamboats the huge, slow-moving rafts were swung around the bends by means of long sweeps fore and aft, manipulated according to the orders of the pilot. The crews of strong, resourceful, unshaven ex-keelboatmen, upon whom depended the safe delivery of the raft, were generally rough characters. On duty night and day, and seldom ashore from the beginning to the end of the trip, they nevertheless found plenty of time for smoking, drinking, card playing, boasting, gambling, and fighting between watches and crossings. It was a typical raft and crew that Huck Finn visited on his runaway trip down the river.

With the rapid settlement of the Upper Mississippi Valley and the subsequent growth of towns, the demand for lumber attracted many native Americans and, later, Scandinavians to the northern lumber camps. All through the piercing cold of winter these men worked tirelessly, and early spring saw great log drives on the streams tributary to the Mississippi. During the first years of the lumber trade, rafts were simply allowed to drift to their destination at Winona, La Crosse, Lyons, Le Claire,



or Hannibal. The advent of the steamboat only served to alter the method of navigation and increase the commerce in logs. Nowhere else in the United States did the steamboat play such an important part in the lumbering industry or stimulate so much the practice of rafting. Peculiar to the Upper Mississippi alone, this industry reached gigantic proportions and attracted men who were skilled alike as lumber-jacks and boatmen.

The first experiments with the steamboat in the rafting trade were not encouraging, but finally successful trips were completed and a new field of activity was open to the river-man. The lower river might boast of its palatial packets and its stern-wheelers piled high with bales of cotton, but the upper river had its rafters.

Since the raft-boat was destined for a life of usefulness, she lacked much of the showy ornamentation of the packet. Designed to tow long rafts downstream, she was, of course, always a stern-wheeler. The "rafter" carried no swinging gang plank and boasted no "Texas", but nevertheless her lines were trim and clear-cut, suggesting utility, speed, and safety. Long after the use of electricity on packets, the rafter still clung to kerosene lanterns on deck and lamps in the cabins, and for many years the headlight alone was electric.

In navigating the rapids of the river, smaller, light-draught steamers were used to take the rafts over in sections. It was this practice that suggested



to Captain George Winans the possibility of using them to replace the clumsy sweeps which were still used in guiding the bow of the raft. The *Rambo*, *Pilot*, *Irene D*, *Joe Long*, and *Wild Boy*, originally used on the rapids between Le Claire and Davenport, were among the first "bow-boats". Thus it was that the terms "raft-boat" and "bow-boat" came into use to distinguish the steamers that handled the great rafts.

Outstanding among the many raft-boats that have appeared upon the river in a period of more than sixty years were the *Kit Carson*, *Saturn*, *Thistle*, *Rutledge*, *Van Sant*, *Neptune*, *Artemus Lamb*, *Silver Wave*, *Nina*, *Everett*, *Luella*, *Molly Whitmore*, *Hiram Price*, *Lily Turner*, *Dexter*, *Stillwater*, *Last Chance*, *Robert Ross*, *Brother Jonathan*, *Hershey*, *Bella Mac*, *Iowa*, *Tennebroeck*, *Silver Crescent*, *Weyerhauser*, *Gazelle*, and *Eclipse*. Going downstream these boats and their rafts presented a pleasing picture from the shore. Only the low throb of the engines, the slow motion of the wheel as it churned the water, the faint jingle of the boat's bells, and the long line of smoke trailing lazily behind or drifting across the bluffs marked the progress of this water caravan.

To name all the rafters and their bow-boats that have appeared from time to time on the river would require many pages; to tell the experiences of the boats and their crews would fill a book. It is enough to know that the nautical careers of many of them



were filled with adventure and often disaster. Boiler explosions, fires, hurricanes, ice jams, snags, and rocks exacted heavy toll. Some of the old rafters were dismantled and their hulls left to crumble along the shore, while others were taken to the lower river where they may be still in use, for the life of a boat is not measured by a year and a day.

Around the arrival and departure of these boats and rafts of lumber and logs the lives of many people along the Iowa shore were centered—captains, pilots, deck-hands, merchants, or traders. And with the passing of these efficient stern-wheelers from the river rafting became only another historical epoch in the industrial life of the Upper Mississippi.

But what of the rafts themselves? What of those “great masses of white, sweet-smelling lumber which floated along with the current of the river?”

The logs were left at the “rafting works” by the lumber-jacks and it was there the rafter picked them up for the trip to the mills. Since all logs were notched by the woodsman’s ax, and each lumber company had a distinguishing mark, there was no delay or confusion over logs. Every rafter carried her own kit of lines and her crew was adept in handling them. Guy-lines, A-lines, cross, fore, and aft lines, all tightened with a Spanish windlass and fastened with several varieties of sailor’s hitches, made the unwieldy mass of logs all snug and tight. When finished, the raft was strong enough to bear the weight of the huge cribs of lumber piled upon it.



These rafts were hundreds of feet in length—some of the longest exceeding twelve hundred feet in length and two hundred and fifty feet in width and drawing as much as twenty-eight inches of water. One of the longest log rafts ever brought down the river was piloted by Captain George Trombley of Le Claire. It was one thousand four hundred feet long. The *J. W. Van Sant* was the pilot boat and the *Lydia Van Sant* the bow-boat. About 1896 Captain Otis McGinley is said to have delivered a raft at Rock Island which measured fifteen hundred and fifty feet in length and two hundred and seventy in width.

At almost every town along the river from St. Paul to St. Louis there was at least one sawmill. Lansing, Dubuque, Bellevue, Lyons, Clinton, Le Claire, Davenport, Muscatine, Burlington, Fort Madison, and Keokuk were Iowa towns that turned out thousands of feet of lumber every year. Pilots and captains reckoned a round trip under good conditions from Beef Slough, Wisconsin, to Muscatine as requiring ten days, while to the Davenport mills the trip might be made in eight days. One captain, making five trips in fifty-five days from Prescott, Minnesota, to Keokuk, established a notable record. As the rafting industry increased many of the larger lumber companies owned and operated their own boats, but smaller mills depended upon the regular steamboat companies and the free-lance captains.

Under the best conditions, rafts were cumbersome,



and passing bridges, avoiding sand-bars, and the navigation of the bends and rapids along the Iowa shore required skill, good judgment, and keen eyesight. Accidents and delays were familiar occurrences in the lives of the captain and crew. Fortunate, indeed, was the pilot who came through an entire season without being snagged or hung up on a submerged rock. Storms, too, played havoc with rafts, often breaking them up so that for days the crew was busy catching drifting logs and rebuilding the raft. To negotiate the rapids, it was sometimes necessary to divide the raft and "double-trip", especially if the water was low. No pilot took his raft over such a place after dark: the risk of piling it up on a reef was too great. For the boys of near-by towns, the rafts that tied up along the shore at night or while "double tripping", offered fascinating playgrounds. Diving from the logs, swimming underneath, or playing "follow the leader" across the loose logs was a thrilling pastime.

One of the best tests of the skill of the pilot was the manner in which he could "split" his raft on the bridge piers; that is, divide or split the raft down the center, so as to allow one section to float through on one side of the pier while the "rafter" and bow-boat towed the remaining section through on the opposite side, and then unite the two sections when the bridge was cleared. River-men say that the bridge opposite Sabula was one of the "prettiest" for "splitting". And one of the most treacherous



bridges was the drawbridge at Clinton. Since the draw-span was not wide enough to permit passage, the raft had to be taken over to the outside span on the Illinois side. After the raft was started through the bridge the raft-boat cast off her lines and made for the draw, which afforded the only passage through which she could clear the bridge. To pass the bridge and catch the loose raft again before the logs were piled up on the shore required considerable speed and masterly piloting. More than one boat met disaster at that bridge, as when the *Julia* swung her bow-boat, the *Satellite*, into one of the piers. The on-coming raft forced the *Satellite* up on the pier while the logs and cribs of lumber piled about blocking navigation both north and south.

A full crew on a rafter numbered about twenty or twenty-five men including the officers. They were usually men who had followed the river from boyhood. A job on a raft-boat offered variety and fair pay. The work was not too strenuous and many of the captains, pilots, and engineers on both packets and raft-boats began their careers on the decks of a rafter. All of the deck-hands were white on the raft-boats, while the packets, for the most part, employed negroes from the South. There was no driving mate on the raft-boat, such as might be found on the packet, and captain and crew shared alike in the toil and leisure.

"We did nothing unless there was something to do, and that might be to hang on a line, coal up,



stand watch, go out on the raft and tighten the lines, pull up 'dead-heads' (water-soaked logs), or cut wood for the cook", said a river-man in describing life on a raft-boat. "That last was the worst job of all! Some of those cooks were so blamed particular that they wouldn't burn anything but oak in their stoves.

"And they were some cooks, too! On the rafters we got the best of everything: the captain didn't have any better food on his table than the crew had on theirs. The milkman and the iceman made regular trips to shore in those days, and fresh fruit, meat, and vegetables always appeared on the tables. Some cooks were famous for their corn bread, jamboli, steaks, and desserts. But the cooks were apt to be temperamental. Why, I remember one we didn't dare speak to in the morning until he had filled and lighted his pipe! Once in a while there was a company or a captain who wanted to save money by cutting down the kitchen expenses, but the men all were wise to that and wouldn't go out on those boats if they could keep from it. We called one boat the 'Dr. Tanner' boat because we fasted most of the time on it. And there was the 'dried apples' boat and the 'boom-plug' boat—prunes were called 'boom-plugs'. On a rafter all hands ate upstairs in the cabin—no eating left-overs below deck off a tin plate like the deck-hands on the packets.

"Going down-stream we never took off our clothes. Though we had bunks in the deck room, we



'roosted' any place. We had to be ready to go out on the raft at any hour of the day or night, whether it was raining or not—and those logs sure were slippery sometimes, even for our 'corked' shoes. There was no telling when some unexpected thing might happen, such as a storm blowing up or the pilot landing you on a bar or a rock.

"We played cards a lot and then, when we tied up at night, there was always something to do in those old river towns. Our 'corked' shoes were hard on floors—especially in saloons—but one bartender told me they could well afford to put in a new floor every week!

"You could always tell when your neighbor came off the river: all his clothes would be decorating the back fences. Why were his clothes on the fence? Well, sometimes those bunks were inhabited by other creatures than us and the women folks just naturally wouldn't let a fellow in the house until he had left all his clothes in the wood-shed. About the first thing a man did in the way of refitting his wardrobe was to buy a Stetson hat and a pair of box-toed shoes. Whatever else he got, those two things were absolutely necessary.

"Deck-hands earned about twenty-five dollars a month and the captain two hundred dollars. Of course, we all had money in the fall. Maybe we wouldn't have it in the spring, but we had it in the fall. We loafed around in the winter—slept late, danced, played cards, and called on the girls. Maybe



a few were ambitious and went up north to the woods or worked in the boatyards.

“Oh, yes, there were boatyards in Iowa. Why, they built lots of boats at Eagle Point, Lyons, and Le Claire—built them as well as repaired them. Dozens of boats were pulled up in those yards in the fall. Their hulls and machinery were thoroughly overhauled and they got a new coat of paint. The ‘steam-box’ for bending the wood and the ‘pitch-can’ were familiar sights around those yards. And all the old butter in the country was used to grease the cradles and rollers when a boat was to be launched!

“But when the steamboats went out of business most of the men drifted away—some went South, others went to the Pacific Coast, and a good many struck out for the Yukon. The rest of us go out on the governments boats. But it’s all changed now.”

With the disappearance of the forests and the raft-boat, most of the sawmills along the river have disappeared too. Many of the buildings have been torn down, the machinery taken out, and the site occupied by some new industry. But along the river bank an inquisitive stroller may still uncover part of a heavy timber, a rusted spike, the link of an old log chain, or the trace of sluice-ways—all that remain as evidence of the great traffic in logs and the time when the buzz of the saw and the fresh, clean smell of newly sawed lumber filled the air.

MARIE E. MEYER



## In This Neglected Spot

If a motorist, driving along Primary Road No. 17, were to turn off the pavement about half way between Mallard and Emmetsburg, and go eastward over the highway that winds, often in defiance of section lines, along the river bottom toward the town of Rodman, he would pass through one of the oldest cemeteries in Palo Alto County—and never know it. This pioneer burying-ground lies on a knoll, just west of the Des Moines River, unfenced and unmarked. The prairie grass above some of the graves surrendered to the plow a score of years ago. In the road itself and in the fields on each side sleep the pioneer dead, unnamed, many unknown and forgotten save for vague memories in the hearts of a few of the oldest families.

Late in the fifties several Irish families settled along the Des Moines River, among them being the Mulroneys — Patrick, Kieran, and Joe — Thomas Dawson, and Thomas Tobin. They were later joined by other families—Irish, German, and American—and thus the settlement grew. There they erected rude log cabins and provided shelter for their stock; there they planted their fields, hunted, fished, visited back and forth, talked politics, welcomed newcomers, and reared their families; and there also they buried their dead.



The graves were dug at the top of the knoll, as high as possible above the sloughs that covered the lower places. Close at hand was the trail they called a road, it, too, clinging to the high places because the going was easier. It must have been a peaceful and beautiful place, with its long prairie grass that turned from green to russet as the season advanced, and the abundance of wild flowers—anemones, buttercups, and violets in spring, roses and prairie lilies in summer, and asters, sunflowers, and goldenrod in autumn. To this hill they carried them—children and the aged, Catholic and Protestant alike—and laid them away without even the comfort of religious service, for there was neither priest nor preacher in this new land.

But the entire community mourned as one family. Neighbors laid out the dead and dug the grave. Bob Shea would bring his carpenter tools and fashion the coffin out of rough pine boards. He would plane the splintery planks to a satiny smoothness and gather the fine shavings together and pat them into a pillow at one end. Then he would line the box with whatever suitable material was at hand. When the time arrived, neighbors would bear the remains to the cemetery.

At the head of the grave they would put a wooden marker. But the frost and snow of winter and the heat and rains of summer soon rotted these crude monuments. People moved away, discouraged by the hardships of this settlement and fascinated by



the fancied advantages of others. So the graves became neglected and forgotten.

Probably the first person to be buried there was Thomas Tobin, known as "Papa Tom", the father of the Thomas H. Tobin whose generosity made possible the erection of Saint Thomas's Church and Saint Ellen's School at Emmetsburg. On August 4, 1859, he died. Others who followed to this cemetery were two small children of Thomas Dawson, several Mulroney children, Mrs. Lynch, Mrs. Snyder, Maggie Hefley, Adam Rund and his first wife, and many more whose names are no longer known.

One tragedy is associated with this place of sorrow. When Thomas Dawson, a member of the famous Northern Border Brigade, first came to Iowa, he brought his wife and two small children. He had no money, but he did have a wagon and two good teams with which he earned a living. He hauled brick for the courthouse which John M. Stockdale contracted to erect at the proposed town of Paoli and for the foundation of the old courthouse at Rolfe, in Pocahontas County. Through his friendship with Captain William H. Ingham, he secured a great deal of work and made many long hauls for him to Spirit Lake, Estherville, and Cherokee.

During his absence his family was not left unprotected, as Thomas Brophy, Mrs. Dawson's father, made his home with them. It was his task to care for the stock and to keep wood chopped for the fires. Though a very religious man who "put



his trust in God", he nevertheless kept "two old muskets loaded and a double-barrelled shotgun ready for action, as they were all in terror of the yellow-faced Sioux."

On the eighteenth of March, 1863, he took his ax to the home of Thomas Tobin, about a mile away, to sharpen it on Mr. Tobin's grindstone. Before he left he put on a stout, "old-country jacket", and as one of the buttons was off, his daughter sewed on another, remarking as she did so that it didn't match but that it was the right size and would do very nicely. A storm came up before the ax was sharpened, and Mr. Brophy unwillingly allowed himself to be persuaded to stay the night. The next morning there was a lull in the storm and, against the advice and entreaties of the Tobins, he started home about noon, carrying his ax in his hand. They watched him go with many misgivings. Scarcely had he left before the storm began again with redoubled fury, and he was never seen again.

It was useless to try to find him when the blizzard was over. The grass on the wide prairies was as high as a man's head in some places. Then, too, there was the possibility that he had fallen into the river and drowned. But in the summer of 1865, his ax was found about three miles east of the present town of Mallard. In 1866, John Anderson, lately mustered out of the Union army, came to Iowa seeking land. He took up a homestead on section fifteen in Powhattan Township, Pocahontas County, just



east of where Plover is now located. As he was walking over it to get the lay of the land, he stumbled on a heap of human bones. Numerous prairie fires had passed over the spot, but the remains were easily identified by some non-combustible articles that the old man had carried in his pocket and, pressed down into the matted grass, was the very button his daughter had sewed on the morning he went away. A small shred of the cloth still clung to it. He had wandered about thirteen miles before being overcome by cold and exhaustion.

The relatives had his bones interred by the side of the Dawson children, but the grave was left unmarked and by and by the exact location of his final resting place became almost as uncertain as the first. Several families planned to remove their dead to other cemeteries as Mr. Tobin had done with his father's body in 1876, but the transfer was attended with so much difficulty the project was abandoned. The proposal to have suitable markers erected was also discussed, but a question arose concerning the ownership of the land. When the township was surveyed and the road straightened as far as feasible, the section line cut off part of the plot and left many of the German graves in the roadway. Something might have been done about the road at the time, but the persons most interested had gone away and, to quote an old adage, what was anybody's business became nobody's business, so nothing was changed.



In 1925, the highway was graded and gravelled. A son of one of the members of the early Irish colony reminded the county engineer of the existence of the graves in the road, but in the absence of a formal protest little or no attention was paid to the problem. Perhaps it was thought that the bodies were so deeply interred they would not be disturbed but the scrapers did uncover some of them, and road work ceased until a new grave could be made inside the fence for all of the bones unearthed.

Nothing remains there now to indicate that half a century ago people had a most human interest in the spot. Only two or three old posts with fence-rail holes bored through them, standing at rakish angles, mark the last resting place of those pioneers. Their lives, it is true, were but a watch in the night of Iowa's history, but they had their struggles of daily existence, their problems of obtaining food and shelter, of winning a home, and of rearing their children. They persisted because of their integrity, and in their lives of honest effort they set high standards of citizenship. There they lie, still steadfast and serene, as the busy modern world goes by unnoticed.

EVANGELINE S. COWMAN



## The Battle of Athens

While the southern boundary of Iowa was the nominal dividing line between the forces of unionism and secession west of the Mississippi River, the people on either side of this line were far from being in full accord. Many residents of Iowa openly expressed their sympathy with the secession movement, while on the Missouri side many citizens stoutly adhered to the Union and stated their views in vigorous terms. It is hardly possible for the people of this generation to realize the heat of the conflict as it raged along the border during the summer of 1861. Ties of friendship were rent asunder. Family was arrayed against family, brother against brother, and father against son. Even the school children took up the quarrel of their seniors and waged fierce battle in defense of their respective views.

In a school near Athens, Missouri, the pupils were about equally divided on the subject of secession. Their enmity became so great that finally each faction lined up on the opposite sides of a ditch and fought to a finish, using fists and feet and stones and sticks against their antagonists. After several had been severely hurt, the Union forces won, but this juvenile battle effectually closed the school until after the Civil War. The teacher, who had been instruct-



ing the pupils to honor the Southern Confederacy, was visited by a committee of loyal citizens. Upon the approach of the incensed Unionists, he is said to have appreciated his plight and fled, never to return.

The feeling on the border was extremely tense. Neighbor suspected neighbor and no one knew whom to trust. Iowa was suspicious of Missouri, fearing that bands of guerrillas would cross the line to plunder and destroy. To meet this anticipated danger, men in almost every community organized into companies of Home Guards for the purpose of defending their respective communities and acting in concert with other companies should occasion demand.

Salem, in Henry County, Iowa, had been a prominent station on the underground railroad and consequently was hated by all the slave-holding interests of northern Missouri. Even in ante-bellum days the Missourians had threatened to burn the town because of its anti-slavery sentiment. This community in particular had just reason to fear violence if the secession element should cross the border in force.

Such were the conditions of apprehension when, early in August, 1861, word was received that Colonel Martin E. Green with a large force of heavily armed Secessionists was marching northward with the intention of invading Iowa. News of the threatening raid spread rapidly through the southeastern



counties. The wildest rumors were afloat. Couriers rode in every direction warning the people and gathering such arms as the country possessed.

At Salem the rumor ran that Green had crossed the Des Moines River and was advancing on the town. Salem was excited. The citizens hastily organized for self-protection. Horsemen were stationed a mile apart along the road to the south so that the latest news could be relayed rapidly. To be sure, Green had not yet crossed the river, but there was no doubt of his approach in Missouri. It was only a matter of time until every loyal citizen would be called upon to take up arms in defense of his home.

Isaac Garretson was hastily dispatched to Fairfield to procure a six-pound brass cannon. A little one-pound cannon, made by a local blacksmith firm, was brought into service and sent forward to meet the enemy. Meanwhile, A. J. Withrow, of Salem, carried the word of the invasion to Mount Pleasant and reported to Captain Samuel McFarland. It took three hours for Captain C. F. Spearman's company of Home Guards from the Liberty neighborhood east of the town and Captain W. F. Leeheew's company from Marion Township to mobilize and start for the field. Following the Home Guards were over fifty wagonloads of unorganized men, armed with squirrel rifles, shotguns, and pistols.

Word came to the excited populace of Salem and vicinity that the troops were going to try to hold the



enemy at the river, but failing in that they would fall back and make their final stand at Salem. Men and boys were sent in every direction to gather such arms as the country afforded. All kinds of guns—long rifles, short rifles, double-barrelled shotguns, squirrel guns, revolvers, and horse pistols—were called into requisition. Four hundred men thus armed went from Henry County to the defense of Iowa. Home Guards and citizens of Lee and Van Buren counties were marshalled in a similar manner and hastened forward to meet the enemy.

Meanwhile Colonel Green's army of Missouri guerrillas had reached Athens, a small town on the Missouri side of the Des Moines River, defended by a regiment of loyal men from northeastern Missouri, under the command of Colonel David Moore, a veteran of the Mexican War. Athens was strategically located. Though on Missouri soil, the town was just opposite Croton, Iowa, a station on the Des Moines Valley Railroad where supplies could be readily obtained. Moreover, reinforcements from the Federal recruiting stations at Keokuk and Burlington were within easy reach if needed. Green's natural objective was the capture of this vantage point, together with considerable military equipment, valuable commissary supplies, and large stores of flour in the flouring mills at Croton.

At about sunrise on August 5, 1861, the Secessionists attacked the Union outposts and advanced upon the town. Colonel Green had divided his force of



five or six hundred men (currently reported as numbering fifteen hundred) into three parties. The right wing, sheltered by a cornfield, moved northwest along the river; Colonel Green himself commanded the center which faced north; while the third section swung around to the left and closed in toward the river, thus practically surrounding the town. The engagement began with some rapid artillery fire from two or three small cannons directed down the main street at the Union position about three hundred yards away. The aim of the Secessionists was very bad, however, and most of the solid shot hurtled high overhead and fell harmlessly into the river or lodged in the hillsides beyond. A few balls passed through houses in Croton, but no one was injured by them.

The Confederates, though mounted, had left their horses in the timber at the rear and were deployed as infantry. Presently the fighting became general, and for some time the rattle of small arms mingled with the crash and roar of the cannon.

At the first rush of the enemy some of the Home Guards faltered, but most of them stood their ground, firing steadily. The Secessionists, being also unseasoned in battle, were rather disconcerted at this rough reception. Blood began to flow. Men fell, seriously wounded. Dazed, the advancing line stopped and stood irresolute. Quick to take advantage of the momentary hesitation of the enemy, Colonel Moore, in a voice that could be heard by both



sides above the noise of battle, gave the order to charge with fixed bayonets. That was the turning point of the fight. With a shout the Unionists sprang forward and the Secessionists fled in confusion. Some did not even stop to get their horses, while others mounted the first they came to and galloped away.

Finding himself in possession of the field, Colonel Moore dispatched a company to pursue the enemy and gather up the fruits of victory. A number of horses were brought in and no end of guns, revolvers, and abandoned equipment, but Colonel Green's army had vanished. That was the end of the fighting in northeastern Missouri, though for several weeks thereafter general apprehension of renewed hostilities prevailed along the border.

Two young men, John E. Mitchell and Edward Millspaugh, were returning to Salem from Missouri when they met several of Green's would-be raiders hastening southward and were informed that a great battle had been fought at Athens. Changing their course they drove rapidly to Farmington, crossed the river, and went down the north side to report to Colonel Moore for duty. They were assigned the task of guarding a ford several miles up the river. In the shelter of a pit formed by the uprooting of a large tree, they kept their eager vigil. About the middle of the night they heard the sound of splashing water at the ford. Sure that the time for action had arrived, they looked to the priming of their guns



and breathlessly awaited the nearer approach of the enemy. But the raiders were only some harmless cattle that had come down to the river to drink.

There was great excitement in Keokuk when news of the fighting reached that city. Among the men of the fifth and sixth regiments of Iowa volunteers, who had just been mustered into Federal service and were stationed at Keokuk awaiting orders to move south, the proximity of war was something of a shock. Detachments from these regiments were hastily entrained and sent to Croton to reinforce Colonel Moore, but the fight was practically over before they arrived.

The battle of Athens was the military climax of the divided opinion in northeastern Missouri and southeastern Iowa on the question of secession. All spring and summer the opposing factions had been organizing as their hostility grew. So the day came when men found themselves arrayed in battle against former friends. A citizen of Dover, who was wounded in the affray, declared that an Iowa neighbor had fired the shot that hit him. Even families were divided. Dr. William Moore, a son of the leader of the Union Home Guards, commanded a company of the Secessionists. Later in the war, it is said, father and son met again on the battlefield. The elder Moore ordered his men to charge upon some Confederates who were holding a patch of timber. Hearing his father's command, the son turned to his comrades in gray and said, "Boys, it's time



to go. When dad says charge he means business''. Perhaps that lesson was learned at Athens.

Most of the Home Guards exhibited remarkable courage in the skirmish at Athens, but when the Confederates emerged from the cornfield in apparently overwhelming numbers, a certain Captain Callahan and several men of his command fled precipitantly, forded the shallow river below the mill dam, and kept on running northward into Iowa, spreading consternation in their path. They reported that all was lost, that Colonel Moore's army was all cut to pieces, and that the rebels were crossing the river in great force. When they reached Montrose, the gallant Captain Purcell seized his rifle and, summoning about forty of his neighbors, boarded the evening train for Keokuk to procure arms and assist in repelling the invasion. Not until he reached Keokuk did he learn of the successful battle and the defeat of the invaders.

The flight of Callahan and his reports of disaster and danger sent another thrill of excitement through the country, and another hasty search for arms was begun. Home Guards and unorganized patriots, with their non-de-script armaments, began to pour into Croton, all eager for the fray, but pleased to know that the invasion had already been repelled. It was estimated that eight thousand men, composed of Home Guards and other volunteer citizens, gathered to assist Colonel Moore.

Many of the men and boys from the rural villages



and homes of Iowa, that helped to make up the motley throng at Croton had never seen an army officer in uniform. Colonel Moore, wearing the uniform of a Mexican War colonel, appeared to them the grandest figure they had ever beheld. Not many months passed, however, until many of these young men were themselves wearing the uniform and insignia of officers in the Union army.

After the battle of Athens, the lines of loyalty were more closely drawn than ever. So far as military control was concerned the engagement was a decisive victory for the northern cause, but the success of arms by no means settled the issue in that section or reconciled the opposing factions. Knights of the Golden Circle endeavored to aid the South, while Union leagues were organized in every community to keep a systematic watch over every one suspected of harboring secession convictions. Most of those who favored the southern cause sought a more congenial residence or learned to keep their own counsel and give no open manifestation of their true sentiment. It became a common occurrence for Secessionists in both Missouri and Iowa to be arrested and forced to take an oath of allegiance to the Union.

Many amusing anecdotes have been told about the attitude of the non-resisting Quakers in this time of turmoil and danger. Many of these people about Salem were excellent hunters and owners of good firearms. During the search for military equipment



Captain Milton Rhodes went one night to a good Friend, named Hammer, told him of the rebel invasion, and asked for the use of his rifle in the defense of Iowa. Mr. Hammer replied, "My gun is on the rack above the kitchen door but I would advise thee not to go down there. Thee might get hurt."

Captain Rhodes told him it was his duty, that he and many others were making every preparation to go at the earliest moment.

"Now Milton, thee had better not go. Thee might kill somebody, and then thee would regret it."

Mr. Rhodes went into the kitchen, nevertheless, and found the rifle. He called to Mr. Hammer, who had not arisen from his bed, told him he had the gun, and was going to take it.

"Did thee get the powder and bullets?" Hammer asked.

Rhodes replied in the negative, whereupon the good Quaker said, "Thee can't do any good without the powder and bullets. Thee will find them hanging on the wall below where thee found the gun, but I think thee had better not go."

At another point about five miles northeast of Salem, a group of excited citizens had gathered at the home of Thomas Pickard to discuss means of defense and plans to collect every available gun in the community. A faithful Quaker, Absalom Grey, was known to be the owner of a good gun. Elwood Pickard, a fourteen year old boy, was sent in haste to get the rifle. When he arrived and told the nature



of his mission—that the rebels had invaded Iowa and that he had been sent by the council of citizens gathered at his father's house to get Mr. Grey's gun—the Quaker replied, "My gun is in the kitchen shed but I won't lend my gun to kill people with."

The boy returned to report his failure in procuring the gun and received instructions to go back and get the gun. When he came again asking for the firearm, Grey said, "I told thee I wouldn't lend my gun to kill people with, but if thee must have it, thee knows where it is and thee will find the powder and balls hanging beside the gun. But I tell thee I won't lend my gun to kill people with."

Joel C. Garretson was a man not easily excited. Although he had loaned several guns to be used in repelling the invasion, he had reserved for himself a small seventeen-gauge single-barrelled shotgun which was used for killing birds and other small game. When Callahan made his inglorious flight from the field of battle and told his tale of dire disaster, another hasty search was made for additional firearms. Jehu Lewelling, an able and talented man, reared under the tenets of the Society of Friends but later converted to the Baptist faith, came in eager haste to the home of Mr. Garretson and called for the remaining gun. Mr. Garretson, not sharing the fear of his neighbors, saw an opportunity for a little levity and said to the excited minister, "What do you want to do with the gun? You are not going to kill anybody are you Jehu?"



Mr. Lewelling, who had a peculiar way of introducing a "d" sound in some words, replied, "It don't make a bit of difference, Mr. Garretson, I want you gudn." Needless to say he got the weapon, and so the little old bird gun went to the defense of Iowa, carried by a Baptist preacher who had been reared a Quaker.

No event in American history ever produced such antagonism between the people of different sections as the secession of the South from the Union of States. Men have differed in religious thought and quarreled over religious principles; they have been divided into political parties and differed widely on policies of government. Each group has, nevertheless, usually recognized the patriotism of the other. But when the blow was struck that would sever the Union and destroy the government of the Fathers, anger knew no bounds. Trust and confidence gave way to uncurbed hatred and revenge, and the different forces rushed to the conflict. Even now, after the lapse of more than sixty years, these fires still burn in the hearts of those who took part in the conflict.

O. A. GARRETSON



## Comment by the Editor

### WHENCE CAME THE RAFTS

Not all of the covered wagons of the Fathers of the West jolted on across the plains to golden California or halted near a pleasant stream or on a fertile prairie homestead. Some of the immigrants who came to the Middle Border in search of broad and level acres found their anticipated destination too remote and the constantly receding bounds of unclaimed domain always just beyond the pale of civil living. To satisfy their dauntless energy and hasten the day of owning a farm, they sought employment wherever they could find it. Many spent the winter months in the logging camps of the Wisconsin pineries.

Such was the experience of Richard Graham, chief of Hamlin Garland's "Trail-makers of the Middle Border". The promised land proved none too hospitable toward the hope-laden boy and his transplanted parents. First stricken with the scourge of smallpox, he later hardened his muscles in the harvest field, and when winter approached he responded to the lure of the great, dark forests to the north on the upper waters of the Wisconsin River. Besides an opportunity to explore the country, logging offered good pay.



Life in a logging camp was rough and the work was hard; but the air was pure, the climate invigorating, and the food wholesome. "The click-clock of the axes, the ringing chant of the cross-cut saw, the crash of falling trees, the jingle of sleigh-bells, the shouts of teamsters, and the snap of long whips, united to form a cheerful, day-long chorus, while on all sides, and diminishing these sounds till they seemed the voices of insects, the roar of the forest was like the sound of ocean's majestic anthem. Sometimes at night, the stillness of the snowy outside world was a stern menace to which the hearty comradeship around the fire presented a joyous contrast."

"Healthy as bears," Mr. Garland describes the wood choppers. "What skill, what endurance, what courage the smallest of them displayed! Up at break of day, eating their buckwheat cakes by candlelight, they were at work at dawn. Wallowing mid-leg deep in snow, they attacked towering trees with confident air, whistling, singing, and shouting. Their action was titanic, their cheer superb. A day's labor reached from dawn to dusk, and no man thought of shirking his duty, or if he did he was shamed into action by his fellows who took a savage pride in long hours and fatigue."

With the spring freshets came the opportunity, and the dangerous job, of floating the logs to mill and market. So the wood choppers became log drivers for the nonce. To leap upon a floating log and



tread it required amazing strength, agility, and courage — quite in keeping with a lumber-jack's accomplishments. The logs, by drifting into boiling eddies or forming jams at the bends of the stream, were forever presenting sportive occasions for rivalry in skilful driving.

But "log driving" was mere play compared with the work of rafting logs or piloting cribs of lumber through rapids and over falls to the quiet waters of the lower rivers. That demanded precise knowledge, instant decision, and "the hardihood of a Viking". Tossed about by the swirling waters like bugs on a chip, dragged under as they clung to the "sucker rope" while the raft plunged over falls, the reckless raftsmen thus risked their lives a hundred times a day, yet few were drowned. No sooner had they moored a raft in safety than back they ran over the rough trail to the head of the rapids for another trip, wet to the skin and exposed to a March wind. Was there ever a more savage test of manhood? Not until the rafts and cribs of lumber floated out upon the broad Mississippi was the desperate voyage at an end.

J. E. B.



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