

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. XX

ISSUED IN MAY 1939

No. 5

COPYRIGHT 1939 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



This Town

Located by the Territory of Iowa on the wilderness frontier in Johnson County, Iowa City became a center of pioneer interest in 1839. As part of the empire founded by the pioneers, the capital city for more than a decade reflected the character of western civilization.

To this town on the banks of the Iowa River came pioneers, promoters, and politicians. Following the first sale of lots in 1839, Asaph Allen and George Andrews operated a tavern-hotel; Henry Buck conducted a grocery; and Charles Foster opened a general store. Dr. Henry Murray located in Iowa City; and he was soon followed by other professional men whose careers contributed much to the future Commonwealth.

During the eighteen forties, Walter Terrell built a dam and a grist mill: the Iowa City Manufacturing Company came to be the town's leading enterprise. Newspapers gave color to current events. While Iowa City lacked the foibles of a

complex society, lyceums and discussions provided social sustenance through simple and intimate contacts. Nor was there a lack of activity in the realm of the spirit and of the mind. Religious societies (Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Universalist) organized and founded churches. And at the same time, education evolved from private schools and seminaries to colleges and a State University.

In 1841 the steamboat *Ripple* ascended the Iowa River, and the citizens of the capital dreamed of a center of inland commerce. Meanwhile on Territorial roads stagecoaches carried passengers and the mail. And in 1856 Iowa City became the terminus of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad.

From 1842 (when the Fourth Territorial Legislature met in Butler's Capitol) until the State officials departed for Des Moines in 1857, Iowa City was a focal point of politics. Here the codification of law, the selection of United States Senators, and the meeting of constitutional conventions occupied the stage of political affairs.

The following précis of the author's book, *The Old Stone Capitol Remembers*, was arranged by Dr. Jack T. Johnson for THE PALIMPSEST in commemoration of the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of Iowa City in May, 1839.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH