

The **P**ALIMPSEST

APRIL 1939

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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

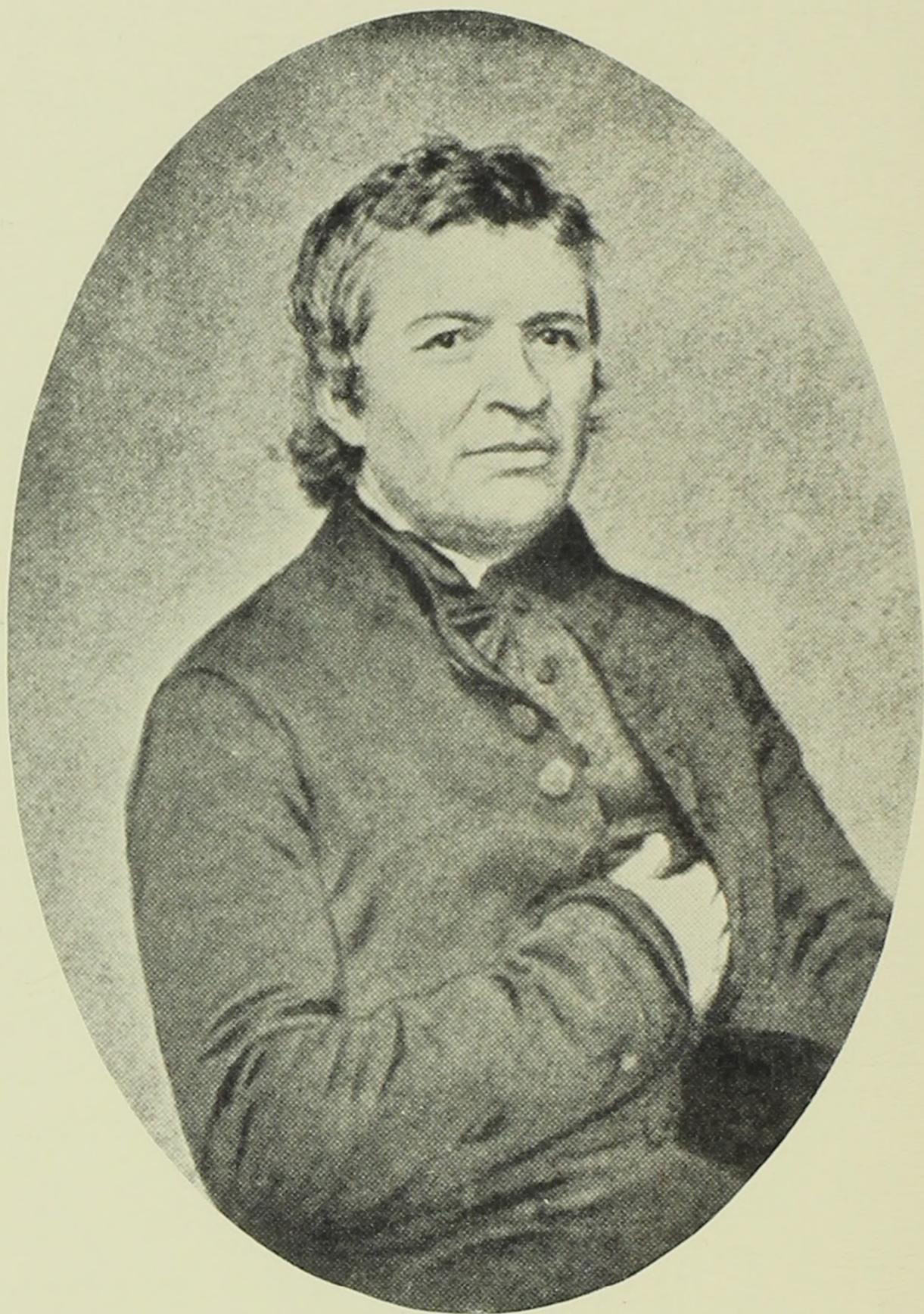
THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

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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JEAN ANTOINE MARIE PELAMOURGUES

THE PALIMPSEST

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The Abbe Pelamourgues

It was a bright afternoon in the middle of April, 1839. One of the early steamboats of the season had bravely chugged up the Mississippi to the growing little town of Davenport. Looking from the steamer deck to the hubbub on the shore was a quiet but deeply interested traveler on his way to Dubuque — a foreigner he was, a Frenchman, a Catholic priest. The interest he showed sprang from the fact that this new American country west of the Father of Waters was the field he had chosen for his life's endeavors. His keen glance swept the green-tinged hills and the muddy water front. "The site of this new city is magnificent, one of the most beautiful I have yet seen on the Mississippi," wrote a fellow French missionary on another steamboat the very next day. Only one discordant note was indicated in that lovely view. "We saw again today a tribe of savages who remained more than two hours near our boat . . . immoral and drunken wretches."

Dubuque, the tiny see-city of this great new Catholic diocese carved out of the Northwest, was the French missionary's destination. But as he stood there on the steamboat at the Davenport landing, a rather lonely dark figure amid the loud and boisterous crowd of frontiersmen and immigrants, he may have had a presentiment that it was this town of Davenport and all the territory about it that was to be the real stage for his Christian zeal during the coming three decades.

The Abbé Jean Antoine Marie Pelamourgues, this thirty-two-year-old divine who stood on the threshold of his Iowa career, had been in America almost six months. During the previous fall a Philadelphia newspaper had stated: "The Rt. Rev. Dr. Loras, the Bishop of the newly formed Diocese of Dubuque, Wisconsin Territory, has arrived from France with a few Ecclesiastics, who have volunteered to devote themselves to the new missions." Born at Genevieve, France, and educated at the seminary of Rodez, the young abbé had, after his priestly ordination, been content to lead the halcyon life of a *curé* in Aveyron, near his native Genevieve. He had not met and probably he had not heard of Mathias Loras, when this bishop was searching in every nook of France for young missionaries for his new and far-flung diocese of Dubuque which stretched from the

northern State line of Missouri to the Canadian border. Another one of those who accompanied the bishop to the Iowa wilderness, Augustin Ravoux, who became a celebrated missionary among the Sioux Indians of Minnesota and Dakota, wrote later that he had been so deeply moved "by the discourse and tears" of the American bishop that he rushed forward to offer himself for the missions.

Not so, however, the Abbé Pelamourgues. He had simply made up his mind one day at Aveyron that he would be happier winning souls in far-off America than in France. The superior at the Rodez seminary wrote to Loras that he had "an excellent priest" for the foreign missions, and packed the young abbé off for Havre. There he met Bishop Loras and sailed with him immediately on the *Lion*.

Father Pelamourgues was left with an American pastor at Baltimore for a few months to study the English language and American customs, and then came west to St. Louis to join his bishop who was compelled to wait until warm weather would break the ice in the Mississippi and open the waterway to Dubuque. Of special interest to the priest were the negro slaves. As a youthful idealist he was puzzled by the contradiction between the American theories of popular liberty and the

institution of slavery; and the sight of negroes in the Catholic churches set apart by themselves as inferior beings, even when freed from servitude, contributed to his bewilderment.

From Davenport the abbé continued on his way to Dubuque a full day ahead of the bishop and two other clergymen, and was thus the first of the new group of priests from France to see the diocesan headquarters. There, while acting as secretary to Bishop Loras and missionary to several little mining settlements about Dubuque, he quietly continued his studies of the English language as well as of the strange *mores* of the frontier.

Toward the end of June he was delighted when the bishop chose him as his companion on a long steamboat voyage up the Mississippi to Fort Snelling, the most northern military outpost in the Mississippi Valley. The settlement near the fort, called St. Pierre or St. Peter, was composed of white, red, and half-breed families. The bishop and his abbé were astonished at the large number of Catholics there. On five occasions from June 28 to July 9, 1839, they administered the sacraments to the accompaniment of the musical rumble of Minnehaha Falls: fifty-six persons were baptized, thirty-three adults received communion, four couples were given the nuptial benediction.

On these occasions Father Pelamourgues saw

trappers from the far-away West and *bois brules* from the Red River, traders from Prairie du Chien, and soldiers from the army post. Farther back under the trees were Sioux and Chippewa braves, and on the last occasion the Sioux warriors alone, displaying the bleeding scalps of the Chippewas with whom in the interval they had fought. Major Taliaferro, the Indian Agent, wrote: "*Bishop Loras, & his Preest, leave on tomorrow for Dubuccque. I gave my Reports of the Chippewa and Sioux difficulties to him for Governor Lucas.*"

As there was no steamboat at the fort, the two travelers daringly decided to return by canoe. To Loras who had rowed and paddled on the Alabama streams, the experience was not entirely new; but to young Abbé Pelamourgues the expedition was one of thrilling adventure. A voyage of two and a half days brought them with blistered hands to Prairie du Chien. Again ensued a number of days of fervent spiritual ministrations, and then Abbé Pelamourgues was left alone for several weeks with his numerous French-Canadian charges at Prairie du Chien.

No sooner had the young missionary returned to Dubuque in late August than he was appointed to the parish which he held continuously thenceforth — Davenport. Thither at the end of the

same month he repaired. The gifted Italian Dominican, Father Samuel Mazzuchelli, had for several years ministered in Davenport where he organized the Catholic congregation, and in the spring of 1838 had commenced building the brick St. Anthony's Church which Father Pelamourgues had doubtless seen from the deck of the steamboat in the previous April.

This was a two-story structure. On the lower floor the abbé found schoolrooms as well as quarters for the resident priest. The school was soon filled with children and the priest at first took up the duties of the schoolmaster with enthusiasm. This work, however, was presently entrusted to lay teachers and in later years to the nuns who developed the Immaculate Conception Academy.

But Davenport was not the only recipient of the abbé's ministrations; it was merely his headquarters. The paucity of missionaries often compelled him to make arduous trips to Muscatine, Burlington, DeWitt, Lyons, and other places. In the early forties he cared for the infant Iowa City parish, driving his horse and buggy every fortnight over the fifty-two-mile road to the capital.

Antoine Pelamourgues (for, of his Christian names, it was by Antoine alone that he was known) could do almost nothing with the few Indians that remained in the general vicinity. At

Agency, near the present Ottumwa, he once prepared an old Fox Indian for death, and as he had hastily crossed the agency line without permission to reach the dying man, he was arrested and held under guard for two days until the return of Indian Agent Joseph Street.

From the time of his arrival in Davenport in 1839, the success of Father Pelamourgues's spiritual and material ventures was assured because of his faculty of making warm friendships. He immediately attracted the cordial affection of Antoine Le Claire, Colonel George Davenport, and Judge G. C. R. Mitchell. Generous to all churches in the rapidly growing town, Le Claire and his wife, Marguerite, were extremely liberal to the Catholic cause. Antoine Le Claire and Antoine Pelamourgues found mutual interest in the welfare of *l'église de St. Antoine*. And when, sixteen years later, St. Marguerite's church was erected, it was only natural that Marguerite Le Claire, whose kindly munificence toward the project had been almost queenly, should be complimented by having the structure dedicated to her patron saint. As for the others, it may be mentioned that Judge Mitchell was the parish's legal adviser, and he and George L. Davenport, the colonel's son, donated the land needed for the erection of the academy.

The choir which the Abbé Pelamourgues organized at St. Anthony's from the very first weeks of his arrival became for a number of years the most celebrated musical group in Davenport. There was no organ, but flute, clarinet, cello, and violin sustained their voices. The choir boasted of one especially trained and captivating voice, that of Colonel Davenport's niece, Rose, and when the abbé's baton led the combination of instruments and song, "the best music in the State was made" — so wrote a contemporary musical critic.

In 1852 Father Pelamourgues returned for a visit to his native France. The son of Louis Napoleon was then in the ascendancy, and his democratic slogans so appealed to the abbé's own idealism that for a while he was tempted to remain in this new and free France; but a speedy disillusionment and his aged father's death brought him back to Iowa.

When Joseph Cretin, the Bishop of St. Paul, who had come to America in 1838 with Father Pelamourgues, died in 1857, who was designated as his successor but the doughty abbé of Davenport. The modest Father Pelamourgues was shocked. Deeming himself utterly unworthy of the honor, he jokingly remarked: "If the Holy Father could but see me with my big head of un-

kempt hair, he would take back his bulls." Finally he decided to go to Rome and offer his declination to the Pope in person. Contrary to all expectations, the refusal was accepted by Pope Pius IX, and the abbé returned joyfully to St. Anthony's with the papal blessing for every one in Davenport.

For almost thirty years, the warm-hearted missionary labored selflessly in Iowa. One of his last public functions was the laying of the cornerstone of St. Mary's church in Iowa City late in 1867, and on this occasion John P. Irish paid a splendid tribute in his newspaper columns to "The Very Rev. J. A. M. Pelamourgues, Vicar General of the Church of Iowa."

During the following year he again visited France. His letters from Aveyron indicated his plans for a speedy return to America when he was struck down by disease. The illness proved obstinate and he "died an exile, strange to say, in his native country," finally passing away at Genevieve in 1875.

Not strange at all is it that his name is still known to the descendants of many of the old families of the State. The work begun in Davenport and Iowa in 1839 by this cultured son of France still bears fruit in 1939.

M. M. HOFFMANN

Napoleon on the Frontier

On the second day of the special session of the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature, June 12, 1838, John Foley of Dubuque County arose in the Council and "presented the petition of citizens of Johnson county, asking to be organized as a separate county, and to establish the seat of justice for said county at or in the town of Napoleon." Immediately the proposal was sent to "a select committee consisting of the whole delegation from the original county of Dubuque"—John Foley and Thomas McCraney. Johnson County had been created by law on December 21, 1837, but no authority to elect officers had been granted and so local government had not been established.

Late in the afternoon of June 14th Mr. Foley from "the select committee" reported "A bill for an act organizing the county of Johnson, and establishing the seat of justice of said county." Four days later the Council approved the measure and sent it to the House of Representatives where it was promptly passed on June 20th. This statute, approved by Governor Henry Dodge, provided that Johnson County should be organized "from and after the fourth day of July", 1838.

The county was to remain a part of the second judicial district and court was to be held "at the town of Napoleon the seat of justice, at the court house, or such other place as may be provided."

What lay behind this legislative action? What was the history of this settlement on the Iowa frontier? How did the place come into being? Why was it made the seat of justice?

On the banks of the Iowa River, not far from the site that was to become Iowa City, was the Indian village of chiefs Poweshiek and Wapashashiek. After the Black Hawk War, Poweshiek had moved his Fox band from the Mississippi to the east side of the Iowa River just beyond Keokuk's Reserve. There John Gilbert of the American Fur Company went to trade.

John Gilbert was a man "above the average of men in scholarly acquirements and business capacity." Born in New York he was early interested in the building of canals, but when he lost heavily in this venture he resolved to go west and forget. Changing his name from John W. Prentice to John Gilbert, he entered the employ of the American Fur Company. Sent to establish Indian outposts, he found his way into the Iowa country about 1826.

Thus, John Gilbert was the first white man to settle in Johnson County. Charles Negus, an

early Iowa historian, located the trading house of the American Fur Company as being "established in the southeast part of the county, on the Iowa river, in Keokuk's reserve, near the western line of the first purchase." Thus, it seems that this first trader's cabin was adjacent to the Indian village close to the Iowa River near the mouth of Gilbert (Synder) Creek and about five miles below the present location of Iowa City.

In 1836, Gilbert went to Fort Armstrong to attend the drafting of the Indian Treaty surrendering the lands in Keokuk's Reserve. While there the fur trader met two young men — Philip Clark and Eli Myers — and persuaded them to return with him to the newly acquired territory. The two pioneers were pleased with the Iowa Valley and staked out claims for future homes. Presently other settlers began to arrive. By May, 1838, Johnson County had a population of 237.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1837, John Gilbert decided to leave the employ of the American Fur Company and to go into business for himself. "Accordingly, about the first of July, he gathered up all the young men that had come in, and were without employment, to help him build a house." The building was of the double cabin type with one of the rooms for store purposes which was constructed "by chinking and daubing the cracks,

laying down a very strong floor of slabs, and making a very strong door, and a rough but strong counter, store-fashion." Each cabin was said to be about twenty feet square.

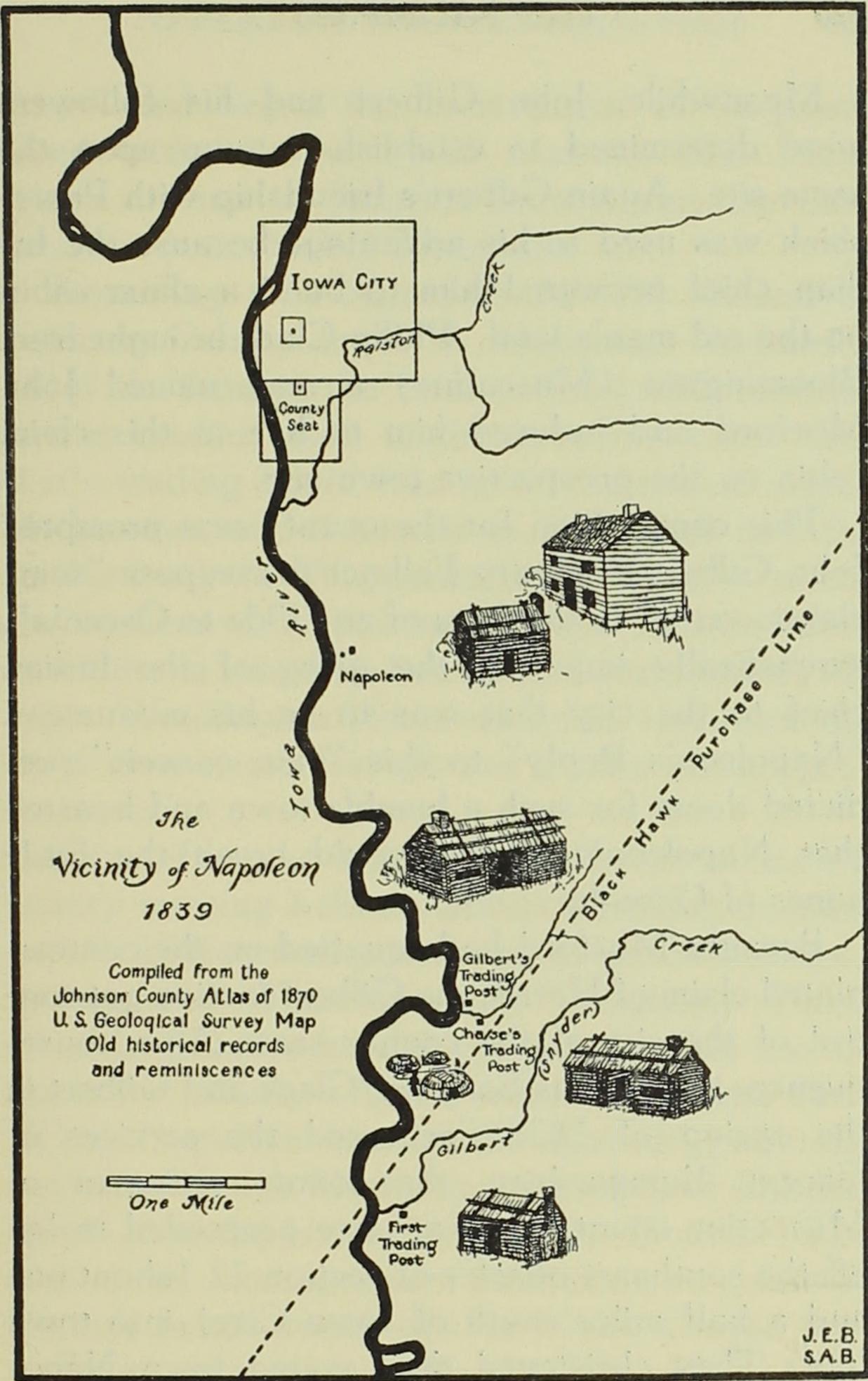
Having won Poweshiek's friendship, John Gilbert was permitted for two barrels of whisky to build his new cabin on Indian land. This trading post was approximately a mile and a quarter north of the original cabin. Cyrus Sanders said the "house was built nearly on the south line of Lucas township". He further explained that "at that time the land was owned by the Indians (the boundary line running in a southwest direction, and passing a short distance south of the house)." It appears that this cabin was near the river a short distance north of the mouth of a small creek and in the present East Lucas Township.

Soon after John Gilbert left the employ of the American Fur Company, Wheaton Chase came from a trading post on the Cedar River to handle the company's business in Johnson County. Interested in watching the activities of the independent fur trader, Chase abandoned the original cabin and located near Gilbert's trading post. On the south side and a little farther up the creek, probably within a quarter of a mile of Gilbert's house, Chase built his trading post, probably in the summer of 1837. This double cabin stood for

many years on the Byington farm, just over the line in Pleasant Valley Township. These two cabins became the focus of pioneer politics in Johnson County.

Early in 1838 the settlers of Johnson County began to be interested in organizing the local government and locating the seat of justice. On January 8th a group of pioneers (Pleasant Harris, I. N. Lesh, Eli Myers, John Gilbert, Henry Felkner, an Indian squaw named Jenny, and a negro called Mogawk) met at Gilbert's trading post and drafted resolutions asking the Territorial Legislature for roads, bridges, and mail facilities. John Gilbert and Pleasant Harris walked to Burlington through snow two feet deep to present the petition, but the lawmakers ignored their request.

Tradition adds that both Pleasant Harris and John Gilbert desired to promote the town which was to become the county seat of justice. Judge Harris had brought from Indiana a city plat. This paper town, which he called Osceola, was to be located on the Iowa River near Gilbert's new trading house. As soon as the Indian title to the land beyond Keokuk's Reserve was extinguished the Harris family planned to move into the fertile section and establish a town, probably on the level prairie near the river about three miles north of Gilbert (Snyder) Creek.



The
Vicinity of Napoleon
1839

Compiled from the
Johnson County Atlas of 1870
U.S. Geological Survey Map
Old historical records
and reminiscences

One Mile

J.E.B.
S.A.B.

Meanwhile, John Gilbert and his followers were determined to establish a town upon the same site. Again Gilbert's friendship with Poweshiek was used to his advantage because the Indian chief permitted him to build a claim cabin on the red man's land. Philip Clark brought from Bloomington (Muscatine) a man named John Morford and induced him to live in this claim cabin on the prospective town site.

This competition for the county seat prompted John Gilbert or Henry Felkner to compose "some classic verse" in the form of an "Ode to Osceola", sarcastically imputing the glory of the Indian chief to the city that was to be his monument. "Napoleon's Reply" to this "vain conceit" predicted doom for such a humble town and boasted that Napoleonic power would crush the futile hopes of Osceola.

Because Morford had squatted on the contemplated claim of Harris, the Gilbert faction got control of the site of the county seat. As a consequence, said Cyrus Sanders, Clark and Gilbert in the spring of 1838 "procured the services of George Bumgardner, the county surveyor of Muscatine county, and at once proceeded to lay off the southeast quarter of section 22 (about one and a half miles south of Iowa City) into town lots. They christened their young town Napo-

leon," and began the construction of "a good-sized frame house, which was the first frame house erected in Johnson county, and the only house ever erected in Napoleon."

According to a report of the Old Settlers of Johnson County in 1909, Napoleon "embraced all of the land in the farm of James McCollister and extended south to the township line. Gilbert's trading house was in the southeast corner of the town and the town of Poweshiek and the fortified city of Wapashashiek were both within the borders of Napoleon. Its streets were wide and miles in length; it had its parks and boat landings. Washington street extended east from the Iowa river two miles. It was a town of vast proportions."

Soon after the town was laid out a second county meeting held at Gilbert's trading post on June 1, 1838, asked permission to establish county government. This time the Wisconsin Territorial Legislature heeded the petition, and the request for county officers was written into law. When Napoleon became the seat of justice the dreams of Judge Harris and the town of Osceola faded from the history of Johnson County. The remnant of his hopes was an attempt to establish Osceola at the mouth of Old Man's Creek.

Events moved rapidly. In July, 1838, Con-

gress established a mail route between Bloomington and Napoleon. The first legislature of the Territory of Iowa in an act approved on January 25, 1839, authorized a Territorial road "commencing at the ferry landing opposite Oquawka, Illinois, thence on the nearest and best route, via Florence and Wapello, in Louisa county, to Napoleon, in Johnson county." A post office was established at the seat of justice on March 2, 1839. John Gilbert was appointed the first postmaster, but, according to local tradition, his commission reached Napoleon when he was fatally ill. Two days later the first white settler in Johnson County died. William M. Harris was appointed to fill the vacancy. On October 10, 1839, Thomas B. Johnson was granted a mail contract "for once-a-week" service (each way) between Bloomington and Napoleon. This service was to extend from November 7, 1839, to June 30, 1842.

Perhaps the most dramatic episode in the whole history of Napoleon was the meeting of the commissioners to locate the Territorial seat of government somewhere in Johnson County. The capital location act passed by the First Legislative Assembly of Iowa Territory on January 21, 1839, had provided that three named commissioners were to meet "on the first day of May, in the year eighteen hundred and thirty-nine . . . at the town

of Napoleon, and proceed to locate the seat of government". According to the *Journal* of the capital commissioners, Chauncey Swan and John Ronalds "met at the town of Napoleon" in strict compliance with the stipulations of the law. Precisely where they met, however, is uncertain. Perhaps, since Chauncey Swan was a stickler for observing the letter of the law, he and the settlers waited for John Ronalds at the little claim cabin on the site of Napoleon. More likely they met at Gilbert's trading house, because that was really the Napoleonic center of the community.

The arrival of Judge Joseph Williams to conduct the first district court of the county on May 13, 1839, caused widespread excitement among the settlers. Gilbert's trading house was anything but an adequate hotel. The selection of the seat of government for the Territory of Iowa had attracted speculators and pioneers. Thus, strangers from all parts of the Territory were coming to inspect the capital site. Said T. S. Parvin, the district prosecutor, when he came to the meeting of the court: "It was early evening when we reached the suburbs of the Capital to be. It was all suburbs, as the city of Napoleon only existed on paper."

According to the recollections of T. S. Parvin, the first court in Johnson County was held in

Gilbert's trading house, with the settlers using Chase's double cabin as a tavern-hotel. Cyrus Sanders and the writer of an early Johnson County history have pointed out that the store-room of Gilbert's cabin was utilized as a courtroom, which according to Parvin was "without a window" and had "only one door to admit the light and to permit the people to pass in and out". At least, the attorneys and jurors gathered at the trading posts instead of Napoleon proper.

The government of Johnson County was declared by law to be organized on July 4, 1838, but there were no officers until Henry Felkner, Abner Wolcott, and William Sturgis were elected county commissioners on September 10th. It appears that they met for the first time "at Napoleon" on March 29, 1839. Luke Douglass was appointed clerk and Wheaten Chase treasurer of the county. The eagle side of a ten-cent piece was adopted as the county seal. This meeting was probably at one of the trading houses down the river, rather than at the unfinished frame house on the site of Napoleon as some recollections seem to indicate. At the fall meeting of the county commissioners (Henry Felkner, Robert Wolcott, and Philip Clark) on October 7, 1839, perhaps in the still unfinished frame house at Napoleon, which was on Clark's farm, some routine

business was transacted and then the commissioners adjourned "to meet to-morrow morning at eight o'clock at the house of F. M. Irish in Iowa City."

In December of the same year the Legislative Assembly officially relocated the county seat at the capital city. The northwest quarter of section 15 in township 79, just south of the Territorial capital section 10, was selected for the seat of the county government on January 27, 1840. Meanwhile, Samuel H. McCrory, the postmaster of Napoleon, had moved the post office from Napoleon to Iowa City and on November 14, 1839, the name was officially changed.

The demise of the paper town was complete. Whereas on the Fourth of July in 1838 the pioneers had gathered at Napoleon, a year later they listened to the reading of the Declaration of Independence at Iowa City. The meeting of Capital Commissioners Chauncey Swan and John Ronalds at Napoleon on May 1, 1839, had sealed the fate of the vast paper town. The thudding hoofs of Philip Clark's horse, as the early settler made his midnight ride, had crushed the future prospects of the grandiose capital of imperial name. Said Cyrus Sanders: "Napoleon died a solitary and ignominious death, as did its great namesake on his lonely rock."

JACK T. JOHNSON

A Journey of a Journalist

After he "hustled on" his clothes, paid a quarter for his lodging, and "crammed" himself into a stage with eight other passengers, "Ezel", a *Missouri Republican* correspondent, was on his way from Keokuk to Fort Clark at the Lizard Fork of the Des Moines River, the present site of Fort Dodge. He had departed from St. Louis aboard the *Monongahela* on November 24, 1850, and arrived in Keokuk at eleven the next evening. Thereupon, he went directly to the Stage Tavern to secure lodging and book passage on Frink & Walker's morning stage to Fort Des Moines.

Ezel was in ill humor that Tuesday morning. He had hardly gone to sleep, for his bed was only "a little . . . softer than an oak plank," before his slumbers were disturbed by the announcement that the stage was waiting. It was three A. M. when they started and "dark as Erebus" along the Des Moines River Valley. Frequent bumps were sustained in the jolting coach as it was dragged "through a muddy lane."

Arriving for breakfast at eight A. M. at Whortleberry Tavern, twelve miles from Keokuk, Ezel was soon of better cheer. The first sight that met

his eyes as he alighted from the coach was a "sparkling goblet of red stained corn juice, of which a hungry and dry fellow might drink a barrel." This was balm for many a woe. After hastily washing and combing themselves the passengers were regaled with a hearty breakfast of fried meat, doughnuts, bread, biscuits, country pies, mashed potatoes, turnip sauce, pumpkin butter, coffee, sugar, and cream. The charge was twenty-five cents for "sufficient to feed a regiment of dragoons."

Their feasting was interrupted by the sound of the driver's horn and call for the passengers. Again seated, the whip cracked and the horses were off at a trot, but soon came to "a snail's gait" and the next twelve miles were negotiated in seven hours. They passed through Boston, a town where fifty families "huddled together" in small one-story buildings. A little groggery was doing the most thriving business in town.

The stage plodded onward to Charleston, a town of one or two hundred families, three miles beyond. Many of the small cabins in Charleston were connected, "forming a sort of barracks, with a little porch in front and railing to keep the children from falling in and going head and ears out of sight in the mud." Ezel counted eight dwellings connected by one common porch, which

would make "a fine bowling alley or ropewalk." The town had a post office, groceries, and mechanical shops, but was built on low ground and people waded in mud "up to their eyes, as though it was a great luxury."

Ezel observed that the Half-Breed Tract was well settled by industrious and enterprising farmers, whose well-cultivated corn and grain fields stretched beyond sight in every direction. He saw several thousand head of "the finest hogs" en route to Keokuk, a "pork-packing city of 3100 inhabitants." Two men were driving 1300 head of Irish Graziers and big Chinas, crossed with Berkshires, which weighed from 300 to 500 pounds each. Hogs were selling at \$3.25 per hundred and corn at fifteen cents a bushel.

Eventually the stage arrived in Farmington, which sprawled over an area large enough for a city of ten thousand people. There Ezel noted many large and fashionable residences, fine stores, several hotels, and doctor's and lawyer's offices. Dinner over, the passengers walked three miles along the Des Moines River, where they were met by the stage which had detoured five miles to avoid a bad slough.

Bonaparte, with a large five-story grist mill and slack-water dam and culverts to facilitate steamboat navigation on the Des Moines River, was

next on the itinerary. There Ezel was informed that \$250,000 had been spent on several such dams, while \$300,000 additional was believed to be necessary to complete slack-water navigation from Keokuk to Fort Des Moines. But Ezel found the thoughtful men of Iowa entertaining doubts as to the wisdom of the project. He believed, however, that if the river was made navigable its "fine and fertile" valley would be capable of sustaining a large population and would become "one of the richest countries west of the Mississippi." Thriving towns were already scattered throughout the valley which was being settled rapidly by people from Ohio and Indiana.

From Bonaparte the stage jolted onward through Bentonsport, Utica, and Winchester. The latter two were "very flourishing little towns" with good houses, stores, and industrious people who were "full of life and animation". Fairfield, a large country town with courthouse, land office, public square, spacious hotels, fine buildings and stores, was reached at one-thirty A. M., after a sixty-mile journey. There the passengers barely had time to devour "raw potatoes, slish-slosh coffee, and most miserable, sticky, half-cooked biscuits" before starting on another pre-day excursion. The stage arrived at Ashland in time for breakfast and thence continued

through Agency, to Ottumwa, where the passengers dined again.

The "flourishing, rising, and interesting village" of Eddyville was next on the itinerary. The Female Academy there impressed Ezel favorably. Moreover, Miss S. Brand, the teacher, was "an interesting, intelligent, and accomplished scholar" from western New York. Beyond Eddyville the stage route crossed hill and dale, through a flourishing farming region.

In Oskaloosa, Ezel got a little sleep, but at "cock-crowing" was moving eighteen miles for breakfast with Widow Post in "Pellatown". She operated "the best eating house" between Keokuk and Fort Des Moines. Pellatown also had "the handsomest place and situation on the road", yet Ezel believed the Hollanders were "certainly some fifty years behind the age." He noted that they "live in turf houses — hogs, dogs, cattle, horses, hens and chickens, men, women and children, all live under the same roof; and with their thin breeches, short waisted coats, the tails of which never reach lower than the middle of their backs, with their antique shape, and wee little bits of caps on the top of their craniums, makes them look ridiculous in the extreme." In justice to them Ezel added that they were "sober and industrious" people who minded their business and

cultivated their soil "to perfection". Their farms were the best on the route.

Leaving this community, Ezel saw "nothing worthy of notice", except prairies, hills, hollows and "rather poor lands" until reaching Fort Des Moines at nine A. M. on the third day. American troops had evacuated the place just prior to the Mexican War and Ezel found it settled by a large population of various nationalities. It had a large two-story brick courthouse, "plenty of lawyers, doctors of law, physic and divinity," as well as mills and machine shops "in full blast". People seemed healthy and happy and two printing presses heralded the news from "this glorious happy land of freedom, religion, law and liberty." The correspondent also noted "wandering tribes of pilgrim travelers" moving west.

After resting and reconnoitering at Fort Des Moines, Ezel secured a horse for the hundred-mile trip northward to Lizard Fork. At night he partook of frugal fare at a Swede cottage and slept in a "down bed". During the next day's travel he saw only an occasional cottage peering from some point of timber. In one of these he was served corn dodgers and coffee at noon. That evening he drowned all care in a soft bed in "Boonville", after feasting on black perch, venison, and coffee. He had breakfast at daybreak

and was on his way once more, arriving at Lizard Fork in the afternoon. There he was greeted by his friend, Major L. A. Armistead, and regaled with soup, cheese, and dainties. Ezel was "treated as a prince of price and money" and introduced to numerous people, each of whom related the mode of life on the frontier.

Fort Clark was located at the junction of Lizard Creek and the Des Moines River. The high bluffs on the southwest side of the river were timbered in 1850. To the north was a deep ravine with a growth of scrubby trees. To the east lay an open prairie without anything to obstruct the sight. The St. Louis journalist could see no reason for maintaining a fort at that point. The Indians appeared friendly and Ezel believed a company of riflemen or dragoons passing back and forth between Fort Snelling and Fort Kearny, after the old ranging manner, would give adequate protection and be more economical. These were also the sentiments of all persons with whom he conversed, "except, those few who intend to 'make their jack' . . . by means of furnishing supplies and hauling goods . . . by gouging and swindling." The fort was 300 miles from Keokuk, from which point goods were hauled at three cents a pound, though it was difficult to get it done at that rate. Corn brought seventy-five

cents a bushel at the fort instead of the customary fifteen.

The soil in the vicinity of the fort was "nothing to boast of, being only second-rate" in Ezel's estimation. He believed a few spots along the Skunk and Boone rivers would make good farms, but "the residue is scarcely susceptible of profit," he wrote. Yet the settlers could make a living, for there was sufficient coal for fuel and abundant deer, elk, grouse, turkeys, and small game.

Ezel enjoyed fair weather on his upward journey but a northwester brought sleet and snow on December 1st. Accordingly, he decided to make the return trip one of "romance and fun" and to that end engaged a driver with team and "carry-all". They traveled twenty miles the first day and at eight P. M. arrived at a little cabin, "cold, hungry and dry". But Ezel regaled his hospitable hosts and himself "with a little of the 'Oh, be joyful!'" Thereupon, rich venison steaks, hot cakes, and coffee were served to the travelers. In the meantime, the correspondent's new friends consumed his frontier elixer, "scarcely leaving the bottle". He had to travel the next eighty miles "through Greenland's icy frost and shivering blast, without one drop" to warm himself.

The next morning he and his driver were up at sunrise. After breakfast they wrapped their

blankets and robes about themselves "to keep body and soul together." That morning they traveled twenty miles over "cheerless, dreary prairies" without a house in sight. At one P. M. they reached "a miserable cabin," where they were served fried cakes, pumpkin sauce, and more "slish-slosh coffee". While the "old lady" fried her cakes, the "bare-foot urchins" took them out of the skillet as fast as she could put them in.

Resuming their journey the pilgrims traveled fifteen miles farther and came upon "another little six by nine cabin," with two beds, where nine men, three women and "a little squalling young one" presumably were to "roost, eat, sleep and be merry." Most of them slept on the floor using robes and coats for covers. To Ezel it was a "delightful situation — on a cold night, and the wind, snow and hail singing psalm tunes through the big cracks, and round the cabin corners." Meanwhile, the chickens, geese, hogs, cats, and dogs huddled together under the floor and "kept up a delightful concert" with a variety of discordant notes. "Such another pow-wow, grunting, cawwaling, cackling and squalling, is not often met with by a traveler," Ezel commented.

Next morning the travelers struck out early but had not gone far before the carryall upset and crumbled "into a perfect mash". Ezel found him-

self practicing "the art of ground and lofty tumbling, turning somersets, heels over head, two or three rods down the hill," finally landing in a hazel thicket. He regained his feet and went to the aid of the driver who was all scratched up and tangled in the reins. After relieving him, the two men improvised "a sort of go-cart" and rode on a plank the rest of the day.

Having procured transportation in another "two-horse fixing", the exploring journalist rode sixty miles in the next two days while "nearly frozen to death". Next he secured a ride in a four-horse wagon. Its box had no end boards, but Ezel crawled under the straw with which it was filled. Thus he traveled ten miles in four hours in comparative comfort. Suddenly this conveyance broke down. Thereupon, the harassed traveler was compelled to lay by at a cabin for a day. Three Irishmen, a native of Ohio, and Ezel bargained with a Hoosier to convey them sixty miles in a two-horse wagon. This outfit proved adequate, but was "remarkably slow". The party had dinner at "a California widow's". Five other women, whose "old men" had left their farms, "forsaking wives, children and friends . . . to take a year's jubilee", had congregated there. The travelers listened sympathetically to their lamentations and Ezel thought to himself

that the women were "better off without such husbands, and it would be a blessing if they never returned."

It was nine P. M. on December 7th when they reached Bentonsport. The tavern proprietor was a doctor who had forsaken pills to dispense more eagerly sought tonics of conviviality. "I thought the Sons of Temperance had not found this place," Ezel wrote. Bonaparte was reached in time for breakfast the next morning, whence the journalist secured passage to Keokuk in "a neat and comfortable carriage". Fellow passengers conversed with him about the Grahamites, a colony of vegetarians near Farmington. A gentleman, who had visited them, declared beets, coarse wheat bread, and water constituted their diet. In cases of ague or fever the Grahamites merely rolled up "in a blanket wet with cold water and became cured in a short time."

The Missouri journalist's Iowa travels terminated at Keokuk. Despite the inconveniences endured he felt amply rewarded for his fortnight of exploration in the Des Moines Valley. Both in going and returning he met many "well informed" and hospitable people. Moreover, "I obtained considerable . . . information relative to the country, people, habits, manners and customs," he concluded.

THOMAS E. TWEITO

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