

The
PALIMPSEST

AUGUST 1939

CONTENTS

Beginnings of Davenport

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Queen City of the West 241

Personalities and Progress 248

A Town Incorporated 264

Then and Now 273

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

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT IOWA CITY IOWA
UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912

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.

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

VOL. XX

ISSUED IN AUGUST 1939

No. 8

COPYRIGHT 1939 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA



Queen City of the West

Andrew Logan was a man of vision. Crossing the Mississippi on July 7, 1838, this hardworking, enthusiastic Pennsylvania printer established the first newspaper in the straggling village of Davenport. In the initial issue of his six-column, four-page paper, Logan demonstrated his ability as a booster. "Iowa is a great Territory," declared the *Iowa Sun* on August 4, 1838. "The agricultural advantages of this country are immense; and lying as it does, for hundreds of miles along the western margin of the majestic Mississippi, its commercial conveniences are certainly surpassed by no interior state in the union. No country is capable of supporting a larger amount of population."

Although Logan was enthusiastic regarding the future of Fort Madison, Burlington, and Dubuque, he believed that Davenport held out the greatest prospects. "The country around Rock Island, is, in our opinion, the most charming that ever the eye beheld. Here nature has clearly in-

tended that the *Queen City of the Far West* should be built. Rock Island is of itself, one of the greatest natural beauties on the Mississippi. The 'old Fort', not to speak of its military associations, is, in truth, an object on which the eye delights to dwell. The large enterprising, and flourishing town of Stephenson [Rock Island], on the opposite shore, adds greatly to the attractions of the scene, and Davenport with its extended plains and sloping bluffs, completes one of the most splendid pictures that ever delighted the eye of man. The interior of the territory is all rich, beautiful and productive, from end to end. Sober and industrious farmers may flock in from all quarters, and find a rich reward for pleasant and moderate toil. The interior of the territory is healthy, and every section of land admits of easy cultivation."

From the earliest recorded times travelers have been impressed with the rich abundance of the vicinity about Rock Island. Although Joliet and Marquette did not specifically describe the present site of Davenport they observed that, in contrast to the Dubuque area, the hills were smaller, the islands were more beautiful, and the trees were of better quality. Wild game was abundant. Flocks of turkeys and herds of "pisikious" or buffalo were noticed particularly.

The earliest description of the present site of Davenport is probably that of Penicaut, one of Pierre Le Sueur's companions on his journey up the Mississippi in 1700. As the voyageurs were about to navigate the shallow, treacherous waters of the Upper or Rock Rapids, Penicaut recorded in his journal: "To the left of these rapids is an open prairie country extending inland for more than ten leagues from the bank of the Mississippi. The grass of these prairies is like sainfoin and does not quite reach up to the knee. There are all kinds of animals upon these prairies."

Later travelers left detailed accounts. On August 27, 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike encamped on the west bank of the Mississippi directly opposite Rock Island. In his journal the observant young army officer described the place as "beautiful prairies" of "very rich land" interspersed with black walnut and hickory.

Fort Armstrong had stood at the foot of Rock Island seven years when the steamboat *Virginia* arrived in 1823. G. C. Beltrami, an Italian passenger aboard the first steamboat to churn the waters of the upper Mississippi, described what is now Davenport as "a semicircular hill, clothed with trees and underwood", which enclosed a fertile spot carefully cultivated into fields and kitchen gardens.

In 1829 Caleb Atwater and the other passengers aboard the *Red Rover* were "enraptured at the numerous and beautiful situations" to be seen from the pulsing deck of the steamboat as it passed what is now the eastern border of Scott County. "Setting down a pair of compasses large enough to extend thirty-five miles around the lower end of Rock Island and taking a sweep around it," declared Atwater, "you would have within the circle the handsomest and most delightful spot on the whole globe". His opinion was prophetic. A century later, in 1930, two counties in this area — Scott and Rock Island — contained a population of 175,523, or more than in the whole State of Illinois in 1830!

It was not merely a fertile soil and a salubrious climate that augured well for the future of Davenport. The strategic location of the future "Queen City" had long been demonstrated by converging events of military history. Lying directly west of the southern tip of Lake Michigan, just above the mouth of the Rock River, and at the foot of Rock Rapids, Davenport was at the very crossroads of empire. Four powerful nations and many Indian tribes were involved in the pulsing drama that forms the prelude of Davenport's early history. The erection of Fort Armstrong in 1816 and the subsequent establishment

of the United States arsenal on Rock Island indicate the strategic prominence of the location. No other Iowa town can match the parade of military events that streams across the pages of Davenport history.

The opening scene in this colorful pageant probably occurred before the French and Indian War. It was then that the Sauk and Fox tribes migrated southward from the Wisconsin River Valley. Near the mouth of the Rock River the Sauks established their principal village of Saukenuk. On the opposite side of the Mississippi, probably on the site of Davenport, the Foxes located a village. For many years this vicinity was the center of Indian opposition to white settlement. At Saukenuk Black Hawk was born in 1767 and Keokuk in 1780. Against Saukenuk the intrepid George Rogers Clark sent an expedition in 1780 which burned the wickiups and destroyed the crops. From Saukenuk sallied the hostile warriors who laid siege to historic Fort Madison. In the vicinity of Saukenuk were fought two of the sharpest encounters of the War of 1812. In the first, a third of Lieutenant John Campbell's men were killed or wounded on July 19, 1814, when they were surprised at breakfast on an island above Rock Island. A month later Major Zachary Taylor, sent to punish the Indians, was lucky to

escape an ambush on Credit Island with eleven "badly wounded" men.

Despite the misfortunes of war in the West the United States retained possession of the Mississippi Valley. In 1816 four military posts were erected — one of them, Fort Armstrong, being located on a "rocky cliff" at the foot of Rock Island opposite the present site of Davenport. Meanwhile, settlers began to straggle into the region and the Indians were gradually removed to the west bank of the Mississippi, Black Hawk himself sullenly agreeing to leave the sacred bones of his ancestors behind him at Saukenuk.

In the spring of 1832 the embittered Black Hawk, heedless of warnings, recrossed the Mississippi with a band of loyal followers. The first spark in the tragedy known as the Black Hawk War was struck at Stillman's Run, a glorious victory for the old Sauk chief. After a masterful retreat up the Rock River, a sharp encounter at Lake Koshkonong, and a dramatic crossing of the Wisconsin River, the flame of revolt flickered out at Bad Axe.

At the close of the struggle the entire confederation of Sauks and Foxes gathered on the west bank of the Mississippi opposite Fort Armstrong. Since the consent of the nation was necessary for any cession of land, a large open tent or "mar-

queer" was erected on the present site of Davenport in which to hold the preliminary negotiations. Brigadier General Winfield Scott and Governor John Reynolds of Illinois were selected by the government to serve as commissioners in negotiating the treaty. When the Sauks and Foxes had assented to the terms of peace, thirty-two chiefs, headmen, and warriors crossed the Mississippi with Keokuk and signed their marks to the treaty which was "concluded at Fort Armstrong, Rock Island, Illinois" on September 21, 1832. Henry Dodge, George Davenport, and Antoine Le Claire were the principal American witnesses.

The Black Hawk Purchase was the first cession of Indian land in Iowa. The Sauks and Foxes agreed to move west by June 1, 1833, and never "reside, plant, fish, or hunt" on any portion of it again. Upon the special request of the Indians the government gave Antoine Le Claire by patent in fee simple one section of land on the present site of Davenport and another "at the head of the first rapids" above Rock Island where the town of Le Claire is now located. In honor of the leading American negotiator of the treaty, the legislators of the Territory of Wisconsin named Scott County in honor of Winfield Scott.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Personalities and Progress

Antoine Le Claire was thirty-six years old when he built his home on the site where Winfield Scott negotiated the Black Hawk Purchase. Born at St. Joseph, Michigan, on December 15, 1797, he was the son of a French-Canadian. His mother was the granddaughter of a Potawatomi chief. In 1808 the elder Le Claire established a trading post at what is now Milwaukee, Wisconsin. A year later he formed connections with John H. Kinzie at Fort Dearborn. During his frontier wanderings, Antoine Le Claire apparently caught the ever-watchful eye of Governor William Clark of Missouri, who urged the young half-breed to enter the government service. Delighted with the opportunity, Antoine studied English and also mastered a dozen Indian dialects.

In 1818 Le Claire acted for a year as interpreter at Fort Armstrong. After a nine-year sojourn in Arkansas Territory, he returned to Fort Armstrong in 1827, serving as interpreter for the treaties made at Prairie du Chien in 1829, at Vandalia in 1832 and 1836, at Washington, D. C. in 1837, and at the treaty of 1842 whereby the Sauks and Foxes relinquished their last claim to

land in Iowa. No man was more intimately associated with the Indians of Iowa than Antoine Le Claire; no man was more confidently trusted by them than he.

For almost three years Le Claire's cabin stood alone on the western bank of the Mississippi. Two settlers had staked out claims just west of Le Claire's grant early in 1833, but they quarrelled and Le Claire finally settled the dispute by paying them \$150 for their squatter's rights in a quarter section of land in what is now downtown Davenport.

Antoine Le Claire lost no time in fencing his new land and cultivating part of it. In spite of the favorable location, however, settlement was slow. On February 23, 1836, several pioneers in the community met at the home of Colonel George Davenport on Rock Island to draw up a contract for laying out a town on a portion of Le Claire's land. They were wise in enlisting the support of the public-spirited Colonel Davenport.

George Davenport was born in England in 1783. As a lad he went to sea. While his vessel lay in New York harbor in 1804, young Davenport broke his leg in attempting to save a drowning sailor. He was left behind and, when he had recovered, enlisted in the United States army, serving as a regular soldier for approximately

twelve years. He was with General James Wilkinson at New Orleans, participated with distinction in Indian campaigns, and fought in the War of 1812. Following his discharge from the army he was employed by Colonel William Morrison of Kentucky as agent to supply troops with provisions.

Davenport arrived at Rock Island in the spring of 1816 with the troops that erected Fort Armstrong. For ten years he found lucrative private employment in the Indian trade. Joining the American Fur Company in 1826, Davenport held sway over an area ranging up and down the Mississippi from the mouth of the Iowa to the mouth of the Turkey River. He served as a quartermaster general during the Black Hawk War with the rank of colonel. In 1833 he built the residence on Rock Island which still stands, preserved as one of the historic spots of the upper Mississippi Valley. It was there that the projectors of the future town of Davenport met on that memorable winter day in 1836. Besides Davenport and Le Claire, four others were present: Levi S. Colton, Major William Gordon, Philip Hambaugh, and Alexander W. McGregor. Antoine Le Claire signed for Major Thomas Smith, who was absent. Captain James May was in Pittsburgh on business.

After considerable discussion it was finally de-

cided to purchase all of Le Claire's land lying along the Mississippi as far back as the bluff between what is now Harrison and Warren streets, an area approximately six blocks square. A price of \$2000 for this tract was agreed upon, each man taking a one-eighth interest. It is alleged that Colonel Davenport urged that the town be named Le Claire, but the generous Antoine insisted it should be called Davenport in honor of the leading citizen in the vicinity.

In the spring of 1836 the town of Davenport was surveyed by Major William Gordon. According to legend the Major's vision was "much obscured" by firewater while performing this work, but a copy of the survey seems to indicate that his mind was quite clear and his hand steady. The original townsite included thirty-six blocks and six half blocks. It was bounded by Harrison on the east, Warren on the west, Seventh Street on the north, and the river on the south.

Lots were offered for sale in May, soon after the completion of the survey. A steamboat load of speculators (chiefly from St. Louis) put in at the Davenport levee and remained there throughout the sale to afford "the conveniences of lodging, edibles, and the not less essential item of drinkables." Although the auction continued two days, only fifty or sixty lots were sold, because the pur-

chasers feared the titles would be no better than a squatter's claim since this land was not a part of Le Claire's original grant from the government. The lots (84 feet by 150 feet) brought less than the townsite proprietors had expected.

While Burlington could boast sixteen stores, a half dozen groceries, six doctors, and five lawyers in the summer of 1836, Davenport consisted of only a few pioneer families. While Dubuque could rejoice over the establishment of the first newspaper in Iowa, Davenport had to be content with a few brief laudatory remarks by Lieutenant Albert M. Lea in his little book about the Iowa District. Those comments, however, must have lent courage and faith, both to the townsite owners and the first settlers.

Situated "nearly opposite" the lower end of Rock Island, wrote Lieutenant Lea, the new town was laid out on "high ground" with a "beautiful range of sloping hills" to the rear. Saint Louis lay "about 350 miles" downstream while the populous Galena-Dubuque lead mines were only a day's journey upstream by steamboat. The steamboat landing would have to be improved before the town would profit fully from its strategic location as a place of trans-shipment over the Upper Rapids. "Water-power, building stone, and bituminous coal are convenient," Lea concluded,

“and abundance of excellent timber is to be found on the hills and creeks of the vicinity.”

By the close of 1836 pioneers had arrived who were destined to carve their names deep in the history of Iowa as well as Davenport. Ansel Briggs was destined to become the first Governor of the State of Iowa. G. C. R. Mitchell was not only elected mayor of Davenport, but also served in the Territorial legislature and as judge of the district court. The name of Ebenezer Cook, land agent, financier, and railroad builder, must forever be associated with the banking house of Cook & Sargent and with construction of the Rock Island railroad. Captain LeRoy Dodge was a successful steamboatman and farmer. Alexander W. McGregor, James M. Bowling, D. C. Eldridge, Jonathan W. Parker, and Roswell H. Spencer all contributed to the early development of Davenport.

Although no newspaper recorded the commonplace events of 1836, enough is known to indicate that the normal frontier activities occurred in the little community. On January 8, 1836, a pioneer ball was held at the home of Antoine Le Claire. The first “blessed event” was the birth of a male heir to Levi S. Colton. The first grog shop was opened by John Litch of Newburyport, New Hampshire. Antoine Le Claire established a ferry and became the first postmaster. G. C. R. Mitchell

and A. W. McGregor opened the first law offices. The first sermon was preached by E. M. Gavitt, a Methodist minister, in the home of D. C. Eldridge. Antoine Le Claire and George Davenport together built the first hotel at the corner of Front and Ripley streets.

In addition to such ordinary events the citizens of Davenport witnessed two colorful episodes in 1836 — the evacuation of Fort Armstrong and the purchase of the Keokuk Reserve from the Sauk and Fox Indians. In the presence of settlers from both sides of the river the troops embarked on May 4th for Fort Snelling. It must have been a memorable occasion. One lady present recorded her feelings in an "elegant poetical effusion" entitled "Farewell to Fort Armstrong" in the *Army and Navy Register* of May 19, 1836.

Will the banner that waved ever deck thee again
Or the drum's deep toned note waken echo around;
Will the few here enroll'd for their country and fame,
E'er meet on this spot at the war-trump's shrill sound?

The cession of the Keokuk Reserve on September 28, 1836, was undoubtedly a colorful episode. The treaty council brought together on the present soil of Davenport many notable figures in Iowa and upper Mississippi Valley history. Henry Dodge, Governor of the Territory of Wisconsin, negotiated the treaty whereby the Sauks

and Foxes gave up the four hundred square miles of land along the Iowa River that had been awarded to Keokuk at the close of the Black Hawk War. The treaty was signed by such mighty warriors as Keokuk, Appanoose, and Pashepaho for the Sauks and Wapello and Poweshiek for the Foxes. Black Hawk himself was present, a silent, sorrowful spectator, standing immobile on the outskirts of the throng while his former rival negotiated the treaty. James W. Grimes served as secretary of the commission, and Antoine Le Claire acted as interpreter. Among the witnesses were George Davenport, Joseph M. Street, George Catlin, the American artist, George W. Atchison, James Craig, and Jeremiah Smith — all well-known in the Iowa District.

During the next four years the growth of population was slow. Possessing no rich lead mines like Dubuque, nor the prestige of being the Territorial capital like Burlington, the struggling community was also hampered by the proximity of the aspiring rival town of Stephenson. A number of Stephenson merchants advertised their wares in the *Iowa Sun*, thus competing with Davenport business men and discouraging others from investing their capital. The withering blight of the Panic of 1837 meant that there was "no money,

no credit, nor any produce to bring supplies to the infant colony."

Nevertheless, new industries were founded. In 1837 D. C. Eldridge established the first flour mill — a Getty's Patent Metallic Mill said to be scarcely larger than a coffee mill and propelled by a horse. Harvey Leonard, an Indianian, opened the first brickyard on Sixth Street between Main and Harrison, and presently D. C. Eldridge began building the first brick house. By 1840 this industry was important enough to be recorded in the Federal census. Seventeen brick houses were erected during the year 1843.

The growth and economic progress of the town continued during 1838 and 1839. D. C. Eldridge opened a carriage and blacksmith shop near his home. He made or repaired steel springs in good style and constructed all kinds of sleighs. His business was in such a flourishing condition that he employed a number of first-rate journeymen, and hoped to merit the patronage of a generous public. The appearance of the *Iowa Sun and Davenport and Rock Island News* on August 4, 1838, introduced an economic as well as a cultural factor in Davenport's development. In the following spring, after the opening of navigation, the newly incorporated town was thronged with travelers and emigrants." According to the hyperbol-

ical *Iowa Sun* in April, 1839, the demand for houses was so great that a new one would have to be completed daily to accommodate the settlers. Forty or fifty lots had been sold during the previous week.

Colonel Davenport and Antoine Le Claire were still the leading merchants and land owners. These two entrepreneurs advertised extensively in the *Iowa Sun*. Thus, Davenport had a "commodious Store House" for rent on Front Street; Le Claire warned settlers not to cut timber or cordwood off any of his land. Together they advertised lumber, shingles and sash, salt, nails, glass, and white lead, ready-made clothing, saddlery, hardware, drugs, groceries, provisions, and liquor for sale at their store. At the same time these two energetic empire builders were also devoting their "particular attention" to the forwarding and commission business for the "Upper or Back Country".

By 1840 the population of Davenport was about six hundred, or far behind that of Burlington or Dubuque. There were eight mercantile establishments, four groceries, a brewery, and two hotels, including the \$35,000 Le Claire House. Despite the slow growth of the town, however, Davenport and Scott County led the twenty other counties in the Territory of Iowa in the amount of money in-

vested in industry and manufacturing — \$49,350 of the total of \$199,645 in the whole Territory. Three-fourths of this capital, or \$39,050, was invested in two flour mills, three grist mills, and nine sawmills. The brick and lime works employed twenty-five men and manufactured products valued at \$10,000 annually on an investment of \$8000. The distillery employed two men and manufactured products valued at \$2310 on a \$1000 capitalization. A glass and earthenware establishment employed only two men and had a total capitalization of \$300.

According to a local historian, Antoine Le Claire received a commission as the first postmaster at Davenport on April 19, 1836. The mail came to Stephenson, and the postmaster brought letters to Davenport in his coattails. On February 15, 1838, D. C. Eldridge was appointed postmaster at Davenport. At the end of September that year Postmaster Eldridge listed the names of forty-two individuals who had letters awaiting them in the postoffice. According to the *Iowa Sun* in December the mail arrived and departed bi-weekly to the east via Stephenson, north via Dubuque, west via Sanbornton, and south via Burlington.

By 1837 the steamboat traffic along the eastern border of Iowa had increased to such proportions

the United States government sent Lieutenant Robert E. Lee to make a survey of the Des Moines and Rock rapids. Lee estimated that these two impediments to navigation could be improved at a cost of \$344,280, and work was begun on the lower rapids in the following year. During 1838 twenty-eight different steamboats plied the upper Mississippi, many discharging their tribute of freight and passengers at Davenport.

The ferry operated between Stephenson and Davenport by John Wilson in 1838 was a boon to business. This energetic pioneer advertised "two good Ferry Flats, besides several small Boats" which he promised to hold in "readiness to accommodate the public" at all times. Wilson hoped by "industry and perseverance to merit and receive the patronage of travellers and emigrants." He also had a steam ferry under construction which would make the Davenport crossing unsurpassed. An unhappy aftermath of the establishment of Wilson's ferry was the suspicion that Alexander W. McGregor, a member of the Territorial legislature, had been paid to obtain the license. He was charged with "receiving a bribe" and was branded as "unworthy and undeserving" of the confidence of the House of Representatives.

While concerned with the things of this life, the Davenport pioneers did not forget the more stately

mansions of another world. As early as 1836 emissaries of the Methodist, the Episcopal, and the Roman Catholic churches had conducted services in private homes. Michael Hummer organized the Presbyterian Church early in 1839. Ground was broken for St. Anthony's Catholic Church on April 27th. A Congregational Sunday School was formed in May, 1839, and a church organization of twelve members was consummated on July 30th. Five days earlier, sixteen Disciples of Christ formed the Christian Church at the home of D. C. Eldridge. Calvary Baptist Church was organized in September with nine members. In December a preacher of the Dutch Reformed Church delivered a sermon in Samuel Barkley's hotel.

Education was not forgotten. The aged father of Alexander W. McGregor is said to have taught the first school at Davenport, although C. H. Eldridge, a schoolboy of the thirties, assigned this honor to Miss Marianna Hall. Miss Hall taught school during the summer of 1838 in a little twelve-by-fourteen log cabin that had originally been built for a blacksmith shop. The cabin had an earth floor, two windows, and a slab door with a wooden latch. The Reverend Michael Hummer opened a school during the summer of 1839 and Father Pelamourgues taught a dozen children in the old brick church.

Meanwhile, higher education was not neglected. On January 19, 1838, the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Wisconsin established the Davenport Manual Labor College for "the promotion of the general interests of education, and to qualify young men to engage in the several employments and professions of society, and to discharge honorably and usefully the various duties of life."

A Lyceum was organized in Davenport late in 1839. In December, however, the *Iowa Sun* asserted that the original high purpose of the Lyceum had so degenerated that only subjects were discussed which would "tickle the fancy" of the "weak females" present. "If courtship is a science", editor Andrew Logan remarked, "then indeed is our Lyceum a most excellent school."

The resourceful Davenport pioneers utilized every element of their social life as a vehicle for fun. Log raisings and housewarmings, quilting bees and paring bees, spelling bees and temperance lectures, lyceums and militia meets, births, marriages, and deaths afforded occasions for social intercourse. Hunting and fishing supplied food for the family larder as well as sport for local Nimrods. In 1838 two Davenport duck hunters were drowned in a small pond in the neighborhood of the Wapsipinicon River. On December

25, 1839, the *Iowa Sun* invited sportsmen to assemble at the home of Alexander W. McGregor on New Year's morning to join in a wolf hunt. Participants were requested to provide their own guns, horses, and dogs.

On August 31, 1838, the American Arena Company performed to an enthusiastic Davenport audience. Equipped to accommodate a thousand spectators, the proprietors modestly admitted their "world wonder" was "not excelled" by any circus. A military band, beautiful and "sagacious" horses, distinguished riders, and a "humorous and facetious" clown were attractions that could be enjoyed for the small sum of fifty cents. On November 5, 1840, a town trustee moved that theatrical performances should no longer be exempt from taxation as before.

In 1840, after five years of steady growth, the population of Davenport was only about six hundred. During the forties the growth of the town continued to be slow, only 1848 being recorded in 1850 compared with 4082 for Burlington. During the fifties the white tide broke in surging waves so that the census of 1860 revealed 11,267 inhabitants in the Queen City of the West compared with 6706 in Burlington. By 1880 Davenport could count 21,831 souls and had almost overtaken Dubuque. In 1930 the census showed Dav-

enport with 60,751, or almost equal the combined population of Dubuque and Burlington, her principal rivals of pioneer days. It was the wisdom and faith of the founding fathers, their boundless energy and unwavering courage, that had nourished this young giant. The same sterling qualities were exhibited by those who followed. Small wonder that Davenport should now be the largest city on the Mississippi between Saint Louis and Saint Paul.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

A Town Incorporated

Jonathan W. Parker was in a dilemma.

Only eleven days previously, on the morning of January 10, 1839, he had successfully moved that "no new business of any description" should be introduced into the Council of the Territory of Iowa after January 20th. His resolution was quite in order for there was grave danger of clogging the legislative wheels. Now, however, Mr. Parker found that he himself had forgotten to introduce what was probably the most important measure to many of his constituents — a bill to incorporate his home town of Davenport.

Late in the afternoon of January 21, 1839, Parker rose in the Council Chamber and asked his colleagues to suspend the resolution prohibiting the introduction of any new business in order to propose his bill. His request was granted, whereupon he introduced "A Bill, No. 57, Council file, to incorporate the town of Davenport." The bill was read, but before further action could be taken the Council adjourned. Only four more days of the session remained.

Jonathan W. Parker was twenty-eight years old when he introduced his bill to incorporate

Davenport. Born in Clarendon, Vermont, on August 10, 1810, he studied law in Pennsylvania. With his father he came to Davenport in 1836 and was admitted to the bar at the first term of court. When the Territory of Iowa was established in 1838, he was elected to represent Scott and Clinton counties in the First Legislative Assembly. He was reëlected to the next three Assemblies, serving as President of the Council during the session of 1841-1842. He was a trustee of Davenport in 1839 and 1840, and in 1841 his fellow townsmen named him mayor. Nine years later he died of cholera while on a visit to Cincinnati.

In January, 1839, when Parker introduced the bill of incorporation, Davenport was only an unkempt river town of scattered cabins. Victorious over Rockingham in two fraudulent elections to locate the county seat, Davenport was still uncertain of becoming the political capital of Scott County. Perhaps incorporation was designed to facilitate that object. At any rate Parker's bill was "read and considered" in the committee of the whole Council on the morning of January 22, 1839. Chairman Stephen Hempstead reported the bill back "without amendment", in which the Council concurred. Hempstead then moved that the rule requiring bills to be engrossed be suspended; the bill was read a third time, and passed.

In the afternoon of the same day Peter B. Loop, Assistant Secretary to the Council, informed the House that the Council had passed a bill "to incorporate the town of Davenport." That evening the House, Andrew Bankson presiding, approved the bill to incorporate Davenport without amendment, ordered it read a third time, and reported its passage to the Council. Governor Robert Lucas signed the measure on January 25, 1839.

The act to incorporate Davenport was approved just two days after Bloomington (Muscatine) was incorporated. While the two acts were alike in some respects they differed considerably in others. Davenport's charter was shorter, containing one less section than Bloomington's. It could be amended or repealed by any future legislative act. Indeed, this charter remained in effect only three years.

The first section incorporated the "original town plat" and the additions made thereto by Antoine Le Claire, together with all additions that might be approved by two thirds of the qualified voters, provided the town did not "exceed two miles square". Clearly the incorporators did not dream of the modern metropolis!

Elections were simple and inexpensive in 1839. The act provided that the qualified voters should meet on the first Saturday in April at some "con-

venient place" and elect by ballot "a Mayor, Recorder, and five Trustees" for a one year term. Two judges and a clerk, chosen by the electors *viva voce*, were to preside at the first election. In subsequent elections the mayor (or any two trustees) were to sit as judges. Polls were to be open "between the hours of one and two in the afternoon, and close by the hour of four the same afternoon". Thereupon the votes were to be counted and the results "proclaimed at the door of the house" in which the election was held.

The rights and duties of the town officials were clearly defined. The mayor, recorder, and trustees, constituting the council, were declared to be a political and corporate body legally capable of acquiring and conveying real and personal property. The town could have a common seal and could sue or be sued in any Territorial court. The officers were empowered "to make, ordain, and publish all by-laws and ordinances" necessary for the promotion of morality as well as for the "good regulation, interest, safety, health, cleanliness, and conveniences" of the town and its citizens. Vacancies could be filled and a treasurer, marshal, or other subordinate officers appointed and removed at will. The recorder was required to keep a true record of the by-laws and ordinances, and of the proceedings of the council.

Four sections were devoted to the problem of taxation. The council could levy taxes on property, for Territorial and county purposes, not to exceed one per centum of its assessed value in any one year. The town marshal was to collect any taxes assessed and provision was made for the sale of property on which taxes were delinquent. Such property could be redeemed within two years by paying the purchase money, with interest, and an additional twelve per cent penalty. Twenty days before each annual election the town council was required to post in a conspicuous place an accurate account of the money received and expended by the corporation since the last election.

The trustees had the power to "establish and organize a fire department, to procure an engine, hose, hooks, ladders, and other implements of use in the arrest and extinguishment of fire." Moreover, the trustees were authorized to "regulate and improve all streets, alleys, sidewalks, drains, or sewers, to sink and keep in repair public wells, remove nuisances, and regulate markets, to grant licenses for retailing ardent spirits within the limits of said corporation, and to appropriate the proceeds of such licenses for the benefit of the town". Finally, the act described the entire system of streets and alleys as a "road district", including

the several roads leading from the town for a distance of one mile.

The first election was held on April 6, 1839. Rodolphus Bennett was elected mayor; Frazer Wilson, recorder; and Dr. A. C. Donaldson and D. C. Eldridge, trustees. Apparently some of the men originally elected failed to take office, for on May 1st John Forrest, John Litch, and Jonathan W. Parker were appointed to fill the "vacancies". Then, on May 4th, A. C. Donaldson resigned and was immediately succeeded by Andrew F. Russell. Soon afterward it was discovered that Russell lived outside the corporate limits and John Owens was named in his stead. At the first meeting of the town council on April 20th James M. Bowling was appointed treasurer; William Nichols, street commissioner; and W. H. Patten, marshal.

Though the government seems to have been organized with considerable difficulty, there was no lack of activity once the offices were filled. Three meetings were held in rapid succession. But on May 4th the trustees decided to meet thereafter at 3 P. M. on the last Saturday of each month. Despite this resolution they apparently did not meet between July 27th and November 23rd. During 1839 they met wherever it was convenient: in the schoolroom opposite the Davenport Hotel,

at the postoffice, and in the house of D. C. Eldridge. Finally, on December 18, 1839, John Owens was appointed a committee to procure a room for the council. Sometimes the trustees failed to act because no quorum was present; at other times they adopted only one or two resolutions. The record of the first year's work fills only eight pages: the "Proceedings" from 1839 to 1850 constitute a single volume only a half inch thick.

At one of the earliest sessions the council adopted the American Eagle on a twenty-five cent piece as the temporary seal. Either times were hard, the officers poor, or the quarter a rare coin on the frontier, for within six months the council changed its temporary seal to the American Eagle on a ten-cent piece.

The highway problem was apparently the most acute issue before the trustees. As early as May 1, 1839, Street Commissioner Nichols was instructed to "open the streets and allys in said Borough". A. F. Russell was named "borough surveyor" on June 29th. At the same time the council resolved that a day's work should consist of "ten hours" and ordered Commissioner Nichols to call on citizens to work out their road tax in order to open the "streets and allys". On December 30th the commissioner was instructed to "com-

plete the ditch" designed to "convey the water from the Upper part of town into the river" as soon as the weather would permit. When Nichols failed to perform this work Strong Burnell was appointed street commissioner but he refused to accept the appointment when he found that the ditch and a bridge to cross it was involved in his work. By June, 1840, this project was still an unsolved problem.

Another matter that required considerable attention was that of fire protection. On June 29, 1839, the ordinance committee was requested to report on apparatus for the fire department. T. K. Mills was appointed fire warden in November. Some difficulty was encountered in formulating the fire ordinance, because some citizens believed that the "owner" and not the "occupant" of a house should be responsible for providing the number of fire buckets specified in the ordinance. On January 29, 1840, certain Davenport residents presented a petition requesting that a hook and ladder company be organized. The council promptly appropriated twenty-five dollars out of the treasury to form such an organization.

In order to secure funds for the use of the town in 1839, the council levied a tax of one-fourth of one per cent on personal property and real estate. A. F. Russell was appointed assessor and allowed

six dollars for his work. He was ably assisted by S. F. Whiting who received two dollars.

On April 4, 1840, an election was held at the Davenport Hotel at which the following were duly proclaimed elected "by the voice" of the Recorder: John H. Thorington, Mayor; Frazer Wilson, Recorder; and William Nichols, Seth F. Whiting, George L. Davenport, Jonathan W. Parker, and John Forrest, trustees. New committees were appointed and such problems as "streets and allys", the regulation of the sale of spirituous and vinus liquors, the preservation of the health of the town, shade trees and sidewalks, and breaches of the peace commanded the attention of the council.

The trustees of Davenport did not take their work too seriously, however. On July 25, 1840, Mayor John H. Thorington found that he alone was present in his office for the regular meeting called for four o'clock that afternoon. According to James Thorington, his son who transcribed the minutes, "all the Trustees together with the Records being absent and there not being a quorum to Transact business The Council of the town of Davenport is Therefore adjourned for the want of such quorum."

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Then and Now

Antoine Le Claire once defined the word Iowa as meaning "This is the place". Some sixty thousand Davenport citizens undoubtedly would like to apply that definition to their own home town. For, despite the fact that it is the third largest city in the State, it retains a comfortable hominess that is recognized by the most casual visitor.

That the force of destiny was hovering over the modern Tri-City area is revealed by the story of transportation. As early as 1829 William C. Redfield declared Rock Island to be the natural terminus of the "geographical trunk-line route" between the Atlantic and the Mississippi. In consummation of Redfield's dream, the first railroad to unite the Atlantic with the Mississippi reached Rock Island on February 22, 1854.

In 1842 A. C. Fulton, a Davenport citizen, urged the construction of a railroad from the Atlantic to the Pacific by way of Davenport. As if in answer to this plea Antoine Le Claire broke ground for a railroad in Iowa at Davenport in 1853; the first bridge to span the Mississippi River joined Rock Island with Davenport in 1856; and the driving of the golden spike at Promontory

Point in 1869 brought to fulfillment Fulton's vision of a coast-to-coast railroad through Davenport. Truly, the dreams of the first generation of pioneers were made a reality by the second generation.

The telegraph reached Davenport in 1853 to place the news of the nation within easy reach of her citizens. The laying of the trans-Atlantic cable in 1858 gave Davenport access to the news from Europe within twenty-four hours after it happened. To-day the radio carries the news of the world into Davenport the instant it occurs.

Davenport was blessed with other products of the age of invention. On August 23, 1855, an amazing discovery known as gas was turned on in Davenport: in 1939 almost 16,000 meters measured the consumption of gas in that city. In 1878 the telephone was first used in Davenport: in 1939 there were over 19,000 phones in use. The first electric light company was established at Davenport in 1882: in 1939 the city could count over 19,000 electric meters in Davenport homes and buildings.

Ancient in years but modern in appearance is the Father of Waters. In 1838 Robert E. Lee reported that the Upper Rapids could be eliminated for a small sum of money. In 1939 the huge roller dam and locks, representing an investment of al-

most six million dollars, has eliminated the rapids as a problem in navigation. In 1838 twenty-eight diminutive steamboats plied the upper Mississippi past Davenport. A century later a single Federal Barge Line tow could transport more freight than all the boats docking at Davenport in 1838. On July 19, 20, 1939, 31,756 tons of freight passed through the Davenport locks in forty-eight hours. This tonnage approximated the average yearly freight handled by the Diamond Jo Line steamers during the decade ending in 1910.

The development of the railroad has been equally phenomenal: in 1854 the *Rocket*, the first engine to reach the Mississippi from Chicago, slaked its thirst opposite Davenport; in 1939 the city was served by four railroad lines. It was a far cry in transportation development from the *Rocket* of 1854 to the streamlined *Rockets* of 1939. Streamlined buses and trucks (approximately thirty lines) and streamlined airplanes have speeded up commerce and industry in the "Queen City" of Iowa. Streamlined automobiles (26,292 in Scott County in 1938) put citizens of Davenport within a few driving hours of Chicago, Saint Louis, Kansas City, or Omaha.

In 1839 the streets and "allys" of Davenport had only been surveyed and poorly graded: trees and stumps, mud puddles, deep holes, and ruts,

all served to impede transportation. The changes of a century have been marvelous. On April 1, 1938, the Superintendent of Public Construction in Davenport reported 194.48 miles of paving. During a period of fifty years (since 1889) the city had spent \$9,255,474.53 on its paving and repaving program. The Scott County roads — important arteries in the development of the county seat — presented an equally impressive development. In 1839 the county spent \$166.75 on its roads: by 1939 over ten million dollars had been expended on its 764.56 miles of road.

Davenport has made great strides in education since Marianna Hall's one-room school. In 1935 over 10,000 students were taught by some 300 teachers, principals, and supervisors in the twenty-seven buildings that constituted the Davenport public school system. The value of the land, buildings, and equipment was set at over four million dollars; the annual cost of operation amounted to almost a million dollars. In addition, forty-six teachers taught 1500 students in the parochial schools. Is it any wonder that only six-tenths of one per cent of Davenport's population was classed as illiterate in the census of 1930?

Higher education is also available in Davenport. In 1838 the Davenport Manual Labor College was established by law but apparently never

came into existence. Iowa College, however, opened its doors at Davenport in 1848, though eleven years later it merged with another institution and was moved to Grinnell. In 1882 St. Ambrose College was founded: during 1939 this institution graduated ninety-three students. The Palmer School of Chiropractic has enrolled 14,976 students since it was founded in 1895.

The cultural development of Davenport is reflected in its Public Library, its Public Museum, and its Municipal Art Gallery. On April 6, 1839, the principal citizens of Davenport met at the Davenport Hotel and subscribed \$115 for the purpose of organizing a Library Association. Apparently it never came into being. With the founding of the Young Men's Library Association in 1854 the real history of the Davenport Public Library began. On April 1, 1938, Librarian Edna Giesler reported that 5802 borrowers had access to 123,966 books.

The Davenport Public Museum is an outgrowth of the Davenport Academy of Natural Sciences founded in 1867. Few, if any, cities in the United States under 100,000 population possess such a distinguished institution. It contains rare and valuable scientific works, archeological materials, and pioneer relics, all donated by some two thousand members and friends. The Muni-

cipal Art Gallery was opened in 1925 and contains a collection valued at \$500,000.

In 1839 a half dozen churches had been organized in Davenport. A century later more than a score of denominations were represented by almost sixty churches running the gamut of the alphabet from the African Methodist Episcopal to the Unity Church. The firm foundation laid by Mazzuchelli and Pelamourgues is attested by eight Catholic churches. The presence of large numbers of Germans, Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians is reflected in the seven Lutheran churches. The Presbyterians worship in five churches. Besides the more common denominations, there are many others such as the Nazarene, Pentecostal, Apostolic Faith, and Company of Jehovah's Witnesses.

At the time of Davenport's incorporation the various professions were represented by only a few practitioners. In comparison with the ten lawyers in 1838 there are now 107 practicing attorneys. There were only a few doctors to minister to the health of the people in 1838; a century later the city contained eighty-three physicians, thirty-five chiropractors, and eleven osteopaths. No expert in oral surgery was available to ease the toothache of Davenport residents a century ago. Now some fifty dentists are practicing in the

"Queen City" of Iowa. The first settlers, until 1839, had to cross the Mississippi to Stephenson to purchase their drugs; whereas the modern city affords almost fifty drug stores selling an amazing variety of drugs and merchandise.

The Census of 1840 revealed that the United States manufactured products worth \$483,000,000. In 1929 the value of Iowa manufactured products totalled \$898,213,272. Although third among Iowa cities in population, Davenport is fifth in manufacturing, being far surpassed by Cedar Rapids and Waterloo. One factor in this difference, perhaps, is the 1500 Davenport residents who find employment in the United States arsenal on Rock Island.

There were more Davenporters over ten years of age gainfully employed in industry in 1930 than there were people in the Territory of Iowa in 1838. To-day a single concern — the Western Flour Mills — can daily convert 15,000 bushels of wheat into flour. The company's daily capacity of 3000 barrels would probably have been enough to satisfy the needs of the entire upper Mississippi Valley a century ago. The Gordon-Van Tine Company can manufacture enough homes in a single year to have comfortably housed the population of the Territory of Iowa in 1838. In 1840 Davenport's lone newspaper had a capitalization

of \$1000 and employed three men; in 1939 the Davenport *Democrat* and the Davenport *Times* represent a capitalization of \$1,400,000 and employ 300 persons. The combined circulation of the two papers in 1939 is 45,000, or more than enough to supply every inhabitant of the Territory of Iowa in 1840 with a daily paper.

The same amazing comparisons can be made in Scott County agriculture. In 1840 the twenty-one counties comprising the Territory of Iowa produced 1,788,051 bushels of grain. In 1937 Scott County produced 5,101,573 bushels of corn, and ten times as many bushels of oats as the entire Territory of Iowa a century ago. Despite the inroads of tractors and other farm machinery, there were 7176 horses on Scott County farms in 1938 compared with 10,794 horses and mules in the Territory of Iowa a century ago. In cattle Scott County now surpasses the whole Territory in 1840.

Thus, Davenport and the surrounding farms of Scott County far exceed, in population, in wealth, and in cultural attainment, the entire Territory of Iowa a century ago. In their most extravagant optimism the incorporators of the "Town of Davenport" in 1839 could not have imagined such changes.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857
Located at Iowa City Iowa

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Quarterly Journal of History
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine
The Public Archives Series
The Iowa Biographical Series
The Iowa Economic History Series
The Iowa Social History Series
The Iowa Applied History Series
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
The Miscellaneous Publications
The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$50.00.

Address all Communications to

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Iowa City Iowa