

THE PALIMPSEST

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VOL. XXI

ISSUED IN APRIL 1940

NO. 4

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The Glorious Day

"Victory! Victory! Lee has surrendered! Grand celebration to-day! Victory!"

Just seventy-five years ago, at ten o'clock on Monday morning, April 10, 1865, this shout of "Victory" issued from the office of the Cedar Falls *Gazette*. As the street door swung open, boys with limp bundles of one-page, handbill "extras", smelling pungently of printer's ink, burst into Main Street. Their shrill voices carried the cry north to the Millrace Bridge and south along the four business blocks to the schoolhouse on Fifth Street. Empty handed they returned for the second printing of the "glorious news". With this fresh supply some of the boys ran across the Millrace and Cedar River bridges to "Dane Town"; and others went south and west to the residential districts. By this time men on horseback waited restively outside the *Gazette* office to grasp the third batch of broadsheets as they came from the press and to gallop north toward Janes-

ville, west toward New Hartford, and south toward Hudson.

From ten o'clock, on that warm April morning, merchants and clerks crowded the wooden sidewalks of the trading center. The children broke loose from school. Washday forgotten, women carrying babies and leading toddlers joined the noisy crowds. The excitement grew contagious. Men shouted themselves hoarse. A heavy rope bearing two immense American flags was hurriedly stretched across the street from the roof of the three-story Overman Block to the chimney of the Carter House. Merchants displayed flags in their store windows. Horses, caparisoned with flags, pranced up and down the main thoroughfare. The old cannon which four years before had welcomed "the iron horse and the iron rails" was dragged to the corner of Second and Main streets. Its "deep booming basso" urged farmers living within sound of it to saddle their riding horses or to load their families into surreys and hurry to town.

Earlier that morning the railroad agent at the depot, answering the signal of the telegraph receiver, listened intently as it clicked out the official news of Lee's surrender. At nine o'clock the night before, Secretary Stanton had sent the following message from the War Department to Major

General John A. Dix at New York. Thence it was relayed to Dubuque and from there to J. B. Cavanaugh, the telegraph operator at Cedar Falls.

Washington, D. C., April 9, 1865 — 9 p. m.

Major-General Dix,
New York:

This Department has just received official report of the surrender, this day, of General Lee and his army to Lieutenant-General Grant, on the terms proposed by General Grant. Details will be given speedily as possible.

Edwin M. Stanton,
Secretary of War.

In Dubuque, where the news was received late Sunday evening, the citizens demonstrated their joy in a midnight celebration. Bells were rung, cannons were fired, and revelers marched. The jubilee continued all day Monday with singing, cheering, salute firing, speeches, and fireworks. "Never before was such a time known in Dubuque". At Waterloo the report of Lee's surrender made the people "about as drunk with joy" as it did in Cedar Falls. A pious deacon seized a friend on the street and shouted, "If you ever dance, dance now!" and around they went in a lively jig. With such expressions of exultation the end of the war was heralded throughout Iowa.

The receipt of the victory message had sent the office force of the *Gazette* into hectic activity. The

editors welcomed the end of the Civil War with hilarity and with a sense of release from strain. They and Cedar Falls would celebrate. George D. Perkins shouted, "Hank, you collect the money. I'll write the extra." Telegram in hand, H. A. Perkins hurried out of the office. All along Main Street his announcement of victory for the North brought an immediate response. Within a half hour he was able to telegraph to Dubuque: "Send by to-day's express fifty dollars' worth of fireworks to Cedar Falls." In addition his pocket bulged with more than twenty-five dollars as a reserve for other expenditures.

In the short interval of his brother's absence, George D. Perkins had dashed off a one-page broadside to serve as the "extra" for the *Gazette*. Excitedly he wrote one headline after another as each flashed through his mind. With a prodigal use of black-face type, exclamation points, and capital letters, Hank composed the eight by fourteen inch handbill and helped his apprentice with the press.

Hour by hour citizens discovered new means for expressing their relief from strain after years of anxiety and deprivation. A group of older boys climbed up to the schoolhouse tower and managed to lower the one-hundred-and-fifty-pound bell to the ground. Commandeering a

VICTORY

Lee and His Whole Army Captured!

OFFICIAL NEWS!

FLING OUT YOUR BANNERS

**"Bad Luck to the Man who is Sober
To-night!"**

**Grand Celebration this Afternoon and
Evening!**

**A Large Quantity of Fire Works Tele-
graphed for to be here to night.**

**No Business To-day,---Shout and be
Glad,---Glory to God,---Read the News**

To J. B. Cavanaugh:

DUBUQUE, April 10th

To Maj. Gen. Dix:

WAR DEPARTMENT, April 9th.

The official report of the surrender
of Gen. Lee and his Army to Gen. Grant on
the terms proposed by Grant is received.

Details will be given as soon as possible.

Signed,

E. M. STANTON.

Glory, Hallelujah! Turn out! Eevrybody and everything
must turn out and celebrate! Speaking, singing, glorifying this after
noon, evening and forever more! Rally at OVERMAN'S HALL!
Eberhart will be there. Guns will be fired and Bells will be rung
Hurrah, Everybody! The year of Jubilee has come!

By Order of Committee.

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COURTESY OF GRACE NEFF, DAYTON-CARNEGIE LIBRARY

THE BROADSIDE EXTRA OF THE CEDAR FALLS GAZETTE

wagon, they mounted the bell upon it and drove about town with the bell's clapper sounding a constant ding-dong. This was "accompanied by the sharper clang of a good-sized dinner bell," and it may well be imagined that little boys took their cue, scooted for home, and presently reappeared to augment the din with sleigh and cow bells.

Laughter and shouts greeted the appearance of an impromptu float displaying Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee in effigy. For this float several young men had appropriated a very heavy and ungainly cart used for hauling logs from the timber on the bluffs north of town to the sawmills. Its huge wheels stood eight feet high. This clumsy vehicle was drawn by a sturdy yoke of oxen. On the tongue sat Old Bunk, the good-natured negro servant of the Overmans, carefully labeled "Contraband". Over the axletree perched a very ragged, dirty-faced urchin who represented the "poor white trash of the South". Behind the cart at the end of a rope dangled in effigy the dapper figure of the President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis. Robert E. Lee "also had the hemp about his throat," but was given a place of comparative honor: the figure of the Confederate General hung suspended just out of the mud.

While excitement prevailed along the board walks, Lieutenant Peter Melendy had summoned

the Governor's Guards to the Armory. Along both sides of the muddy Main Street tremendous cheers arose as the guards, accompanied by the bandboys playing a patriotic air, stepped briskly into the street. Hundreds of citizens fell into line as the militia paraded up Main Street to the Commons at Ninth Street. These were joined by others as the Guards faced about to march northward to Overman Hall.

In this hall, the largest auditorium in the city, Zimri Streeter, known in the Iowa General Assembly as "Old Black Hawk", and recently familiarized as Jeremiah Martin in Bess Streeter Aldrich's *Song of Years*, presided over the first victory meeting of the day. Renowned for his dry wit, he humorously called for impromptu speeches commemorating the soldiers of the North, extolling Abraham Lincoln, and praising the local support given to the nation. Some one from the audience called upon A. G. Eberhart, the popular Baptist preacher, to sing "A Thousand Years". Then with the assistance of a male quartet, Eberhart led the community singing of gospel tunes and patriotic airs. Before adjourning for the evening's program of music and speeches, Eberhart requested the audience to rise; then he led them rousinglly in the singing of Old Hundred: "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow".

All through the afternoon, by constant augmentations from the rural districts, the crowds along Main Street thickened. Farmers poured into town upon horseback, in dashing buckboards, or arrived with their families in mud-bespattered farm wagons. By nightfall Cedar Falls, then numbering close to three thousand, beheld the largest crowd it had ever witnessed. At the railroad station just across the Cedar River, a large group awaited the arrival of the evening train in order to escort the fireworks to a crude and hastily erected platform at the corner of Second and Main streets in the vicinity of the booming cannon.

The liberal donations of the morning permitted a display of pin wheels, Roman candles, and sky rockets, previously unsurpassed in the city. As the last rocket zoomed into the air and its colored lights melted against the April sky, the crowd milled one block to the south, awaiting the first flare of the blaze as a huge bonfire was ignited. To the more thoughtful in the group, as the flames of this conflagration illumined the faces of the celebrants, the flames symbolized the purging of the war guilt and the purification of the nation.

The bonfire, however, did not end the Day of Jubilee. A second program of speeches and patriotic music in Overman Hall followed the fireworks and bonfire. Again an enthusiastic audi-

ence applauded the victory speeches of the city pastors, and listened gravely to the plans for reconstruction offered by such Iowa legislators as A. F. Brown and J. B. Powers and Zimri Streeter. Until a late hour, Eberhart on the red carpeted dais led in the singing of such wartime songs as "We Are Tenting To-night on the Old Camp Ground", "O My Darling, Nelly Gray", "Yes, We'll Rally 'Round the Flag, Boys", and "The Star Spangled Banner".

Even before the singing began, couples had been slipping down the two narrow flights of stairs from Overman Hall and had crossed the street to participate in the dance which Host Wilcox of the Carter House was offering free of charge. Old settlers in reminiscent mood used to say that this jubilee dance lasted until dawn on Tuesday. The following Friday, perhaps to allay current rumors, George D. Perkins, in the regular issue of the *Gazette*, made the statement that Wilcox's dance though "free to all" was free from "rowdyish proceedings and improprieties of any character" and had been a thoroughly enjoyable affair.

To mothers with boys at the front, for parents faced with the increasing cost of living, for troubled economists, this day of jubilee was the most joyful the little city had ever known. Four days later George D. Perkins in subdued mood, headed

his leading editorial "The Glorious News", and ended it with these words:

"The Union is not only saved, but regenerated, too. Surely now we may sing,

The land of the free
And the home of the brave!

'Redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled!' the Proud Republic stands to-day before God and Man".

LUELLA M. WRIGHT