

The **P**ALIMPSEST

SEPTEMBER 1940

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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.

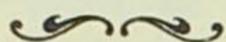
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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Indian Affairs

Though the Territory of Iowa extended north to the Canadian boundary, including most of Minnesota and the eastern half of the Dakotas, only a small portion in the southeast corner had been purchased from the Indians. For four years after the Territory was established, white settlement was limited to this strip of land containing seven and a half million acres — about a fifth of the present area of the State. All the rest belonged to the Indians. The prairies of central and western Iowa, the high plateaus of the Dakotas, and the lake-strewn forests of Minnesota were still hunting grounds. Over this vast region and the tribes that occupied it, the Governor of Iowa Territory had general supervision.

In the southern part of the Territory, which became the State of Iowa, the Indian country was apportioned by treaty among several tribes. Extending twenty miles on each side of a line from the mouth of the Upper Iowa River to the junction

of the east and west forks of the Des Moines was the Neutral Ground to which the Winnebago Indians had agreed to move in 1832. Except for a few hunting excursions, however, they had remained in Wisconsin. During the summer of 1840, United States soldiers began the construction of Fort Atkinson on the Turkey River and escorted several bands of the Winnebago to the Neutral Ground. The Indians came to Iowa reluctantly and, setting up their lodges along the west bank of the Mississippi, refused to go to the agency near the fort on Turkey River.

North and west of the Neutral Ground ranged the hunting parties of the Sioux. The Sisseton and Wahpeton branches of that populous nation had their principal villages in what is now southern Minnesota, and the Yankton tribe lived in the valley of the Big Sioux River. Warlike and nomadic, they were feared and hated by their Indian neighbors, particularly the Sauks and Foxes. Indeed, the Neutral Ground was designed to keep these implacable foes apart.

The Missouri slope, once occupied by the Ioway, Omaha, Oto, and Missouri Indians, was ceded by them to the United States in 1830. Though for the most part they moved across the Missouri River, these related Siouan tribes held undisputed possession of their relinquished hunt-

ing grounds until 1837 when some Potawatomi were transplanted from Illinois to the vicinity of Council Bluffs.

South of the Neutral Ground and west of the white settlements to the Missouri divide was the Sauk and Fox country. In 1840 these confederated tribes, including between three and four thousand persons, were living in six villages, each ruled by a principal chief. Keokuk, recognized by the government as the head of the tribes, had moved his village from the mouth of the Iowa River to the Des Moines about where Ottumwa is now located. On a bend in the river about a mile upstream Wapello had located his Fox band, and a mile beyond that lived Appanoose with his Sauk followers. Hardfish, the leader of the Black Hawk faction, had a big village about where Edyville is now located. Two Fox bands were more widely separated: Kishkekosh on the Skunk River probably somewhere in Mahaska County, and Poweshiek on the Iowa River close to the Indian boundary line a few miles south of the new Territorial capital.

In 1838 Joseph M. Street, government agent for the Sauk and Fox Indians, selected the site for his headquarters near the Des Moines River, about five miles east of Keokuk's village, where the town of Agency is now located. When Street

died in May, 1840, his son-in-law, John Beach, was appointed agent. Besides the government employees, the only white men permitted to live in the Indian reservation were licensed traders. J. P. Eddy had a trading house near Hardfish's village. The Chouteau post was a quarter of a mile down the river. At the mouth of Sugar Creek, W. G. and G. W. Ewing were situated advantageously to trade with the braves in Keokuk's, Wapello's, and Appanoose's villages. The American Fur Company maintained traders among the Indians on the Des Moines River and near Poweshiek's village on the Iowa. There were seven licensed traders at the Council Bluffs agency.

According to a treaty with the Sauks and Foxes in 1837, the United States government agreed to build and operate two gristmills, to break and fence farm land, and to maintain two blacksmiths and a gunsmith at the agency. During 1838, Joseph M. Street supervised the erection of a council house, residences, shops, and other buildings at the agency. Under the direction of Richard Kerr a farm was started for the instruction and sustenance of the Indians. One mill was built on Soap Creek across the Des Moines River about seven miles from the agency. The other, at the request of Appanoose, was located on Sugar Creek. Both were badly damaged by floods in the spring or summer of 1840.

After a visit to the agency, Governor Lucas decided that the Appanoose mill should not be rebuilt but, upon the advice of "a gentleman of experience," he recommended that \$1500 should be spent to repair the Soap Creek mill and add a bolt to manufacture flour. His advice was followed and the flour bolt was ready for the 1841 wheat crop. In 1842 Agent Beach declared that the "saw and grist-mills belonging to the Indians on Soap creek are not surpassed by any, possessing the same water-power, in the country". Inasmuch as there was little demand for lumber in that region, the sawmill, capable of producing 2000 feet per day, was usually idle. The gristmill, however, when there was sufficient water power, was kept busy. "It can grind about eight bushels per hour," wrote Beach. "It will now be of much service to the Indians in manufacturing their flour; and having a good bolt attached, it makes a good flour, and as much from the grain, as is made at any mill upon the Des Moines. A race, with suitable gates, has been lately added, at an expense of \$200, which places the mill out of danger, except in extraordinary cases; whereas, before it was opened, the dam was in danger of being swept away at every freshet." Scarcely had the agent written his report when the mill was burned in August, 1842. Beach strongly suspected that it had been

set on fire by angry settlers who had been driven off the Indian reservation.

It was the policy of the government to teach the Indians agriculture by precept and example, but none of the Iowa tribes appreciated the instruction. Stephen Cooper, the sub-agent at Council Bluffs, reported in 1840 that the Potawatomi did not want a farmer. The Indians themselves had "raised a fine crop of corn and ground-provisions." Some, declared the agent, "have large fields, well fenced in, with good log-cabins, and are settled in villages from two to five, ten, and fifteen miles from the Council Bluffs sub-agency — except Big-foot's band, who live upon the waters of the Nishnebottona, about fifty miles east of this agency, which band constitutes about one-third of the nation. They have horses, cattle, hogs, and poultry, with farming utensils, such as ploughs, hoes, &c."

David Lowry, the Winnebago agent, was anxious to have his wards moved farther into the Neutral Ground away from the evil influences of the Prairie du Chien traders. "About one thousand acres of prairie will be broken up *this fall* [1840], and fenced during the winter", he wrote, "so that every thing will be ready *next spring* for the Indians to commence cultivating." Land in the vicinity of Fort Atkinson, "is of unsurpassed fertility, and timber sufficiently abundant to answer all

the purposes of farming." A gristmill was being erected near the new agency for the "comfort and convenience" of the Indians who, he insisted, would need these facilities to sustain themselves when their annuities expired.

The plan for the Sauks and Foxes was to provide a farm for each village. Agent Street proposed to cultivate about 1440 acres, but the results in 1840 were discouraging. Governor Lucas, who visited the agency in September, reported in detail to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

The pattern farm, containing thirty acres or upwards, as well as the farm at the agency, containing upwards of one hundred acres, appeared to be in good repair, and had the appearance of having been well cultivated.

In Appenoose's field, there had been about eleven acres of wheat, which had been hauled and stacked in the field. Nothing further had ever been done with this field since it had been ploughed and fenced. The fences were down in places, and the fields grown over with grass and weeds; and I should apprehend danger of the fences being burnt this fall, should the prairie get on fire.

Wappello's field has never been cultivated in anything since it was ploughed and fenced. The fences are down, and he told me in conversation with him at his village, that it had never been of any benefit to him.

A part of Keokuck's field was sown last year with wheat, which has been harvested and stacked. Nothing further has been done with this field. As I could not get across the river to the village, I can only speak from in-

formation. I was told that the fences were down, and that there was some danger of the wheat being destroyed by the Indian horses. It is the opinion of Major Smith, the miller, that there is wheat enough now stacked in the Indian fields, could it be properly saved and manufactured, to make them over a barrel of flour.

Agent Beach was more optimistic. Though the destruction of the mills was disappointing, the Indians had offered to tread out the wheat with their horses. He thought only a small quantity of produce could be expected the first year and estimated that the thirty-five acres of corn would yield 700 bushels, the two acres of buckwheat would produce thirty bushels, and the acre and a half of oats would yield thirty bushels. Eleven and a half acres were devoted to vegetables. The turnips looked unpromising in August, but Beach predicted a crop of 1000 bushels. Probably 400 bushels of potatoes would be dug. In addition, there would be "a good supply of beets, cabbage, onions, beans, and pumpkins, for the use of the farm hands."

Not enough wheat was harvested in 1840 to pay for the labor and money expended. "The quantity of ground sowed last year in wheat for the Indians was 72 acres," reported Agent Beach, "of which was destroyed, by their opening their fence, and letting in their horses, 16 acres. The balance, 56 acres, was harvested in due time and in good or-

der; and, I think, had it not been wasted, would have yielded $12\frac{1}{2}$ bushels to the acre, giving an aggregate of 700 bushels. But the crop having been much wasted while standing in the fields to cure, preparatory to stacking, by the Indians opening the fence and turning in numbers of their horses, will fall far short of the foregoing estimate."

On the whole, the Sauks and Foxes had exhibited no inclination "to undergo a practical instruction in agriculture or any of the mechanical arts," except what they could acquire "by a mere casual observation." Yet they often proved skillful in helping the blacksmith, and the agent was confident he could "engage much of their assistance in working the next and succeeding crops."

Measures taken to "effect a change upon the rude habits of these people," Agent Beach conceived to be eminently desirable. "Prove to them the material change that the improvements of civilization which are now attempted, and the result of industry, must exert in favor of their comfort and security," he advised, "and much of the difficulty is accomplished that now offers so great a barrier to the progress of the best-directed efforts to convince them of the value of those higher refinements of mind, of habits, and of character, to which the philanthropist should aim. Then will

the indifference now manifested towards education, and their aversion to the introduction of schools and teachers among them, be removed, and a taste for knowledge and instruction assume its place. Then, and not till then, can they be taught to feel a sincere interest in the sublime truths of religion, and yield a preference to the charitable inducements offered by the zealous Christian over the mercenary allurements of sordid avarice."

Everybody agreed that whisky was the principal menace to Indian welfare. Sub-agent Cooper said the Potawatomi could not be restrained from "trading with the whites for spirits," though he thought the traffic was less than it had been. Among the Sioux, however, the evil was growing rapidly in 1840. "The Indians will barter any thing for whiskey", wrote Agent Amos J. Bruce. "Unmindful of future wants, they sell corn, or clothing, or even their guns." Beach reported that the Sauk and Fox braves bought expensive goods, such as calf-skin boots, side saddles, and forty-five-dollar dress coats, which they never intended to use but traded, at a fraction of their value, for whisky. "I am credibly informed," he said, "there is a store, a few miles from this place, wherein whiskey was the only original article, that has become stocked, by exchange with the returning

Indians, with a large, though badly assorted quantity of goods, useless to them."

Control of the traders was, indeed, a serious problem. Some of them were unscrupulous and all assumed that the season was always open to plunder the Indians. Knowing that the various tribes received certain annuities, the traders extended credit so freely that the money paid to the Indians went immediately into the pockets of the traders. Presently, the annual allotments were insufficient to pay the debts, which caused dissatisfaction among both the creditors and the Indians. Independent traders claimed that the American Fur Company was favored, and the braves complained that they did not get their share of the money.

To remedy some of these conditions Agent John Beach thought that "the law should allow but one trader to one tribe, as the rivalry of interest that must of necessity exist among several can be productive of no good, and much evil". Furthermore, he suggested that the agent "should be vested with authority to direct the kind and quality of the merchandise that shall be offered for sale to the Indians." There was so much discord among the different bands that the efforts of the agent to improve conditions were practically hopeless. His endeavors to fulfill treaty obligations were "urged

as evidence of his improper personal friendship" toward one faction and enmity toward the other. The fomenters of dissension had inculcated this belief so successfully that the antagonistic element had "discontinued almost all use of him as a medium for the transaction of their business with the Government."

The tribal dissension culminated in a quarrel over the distribution of the annuities. In July, 1840, the Iowa Legislative Assembly advised President Van Buren to cause the Sauk and Fox allotments to be paid to the heads of families, or as the majority of the braves might request. Meanwhile, however, the Indian Office ordered the annuity to be given to the chiefs as before. The payment was already overdue when Governor Lucas met the Indians at the agency late in September, 1840. Agent John Beach, Major Joshua Pilcher who was Superintendent of Indian Affairs at Saint Louis, interpreters, agency employees, and traders were present. Governor Lucas described the occasion fully in his message to the Legislative Assembly on November 4th.

On the 28th of September the Indians were assembled at the Agency for payment. They arrayed themselves into two parties. One party wanted the money distributed on principles of justice and equity among the different bands and to the heads of families. The other party contended for its payment to a few of the chiefs, to be

distributed by them alone. I was present on the occasion, and addressed both parties. I advised them to compromise the difference among themselves—read and explained to them the treaties, as well as the intercourse law of the United States, and the regulations of the Indian Department. I also explained to them the order of the Indian Department of the 18th of August, and informed them that, according to my understanding of the order, the money must be paid to the same chiefs and braves that received it last year. I had the names of the chiefs and braves read to them, and advised them to meet in friendly council by themselves without the interference of any white men, and to decide among themselves as to the receipt and distribution of the money—and told them that when they had agreed among themselves the money would be paid them. The council adjourned in the evening, and the chiefs and braves who received the money last year were expected to have met in friendly council next morning to arrange their difficulties and receive their money. But some arrangements appear to have been made at the agency during the night, unknown to me, that frustrated the council to be held on the morning of the 29th, and Keokuck through the Agent, had advised Maj. Pilcher to leave the Indian country with the money, which he did that morning. This removal of the money from the Indian country caused great excitement and dissatisfaction among the Indians. When Maj. Pilcher left the agency he informed me that the funds being in paper, could be changed for specie, and might be returned for payment in about three weeks thereafter. I informed the Indians of what Maj. Pilcher had told me, which appeared for the time present to reconcile them. But I have learned, since my return from the Indian country, that some mischievous

individuals have been impressing upon the minds of the Indians the belief that the annuity will not be paid until spring. This was calculated to dissatisfy them with the government, lead to difficulties among themselves, and endanger the peace of our borders. I therefore, with a view to check these evils, issued a peremptory order to the Agent of the 15th of October, directing him to obtain the funds that had been set apart for the payment of the annuity of 1840, and to pay it to the same chiefs and braves whose names were found to the receipt roll of last year. This I conceived to be in strict accordance with the order of the Department. Those chiefs and braves number about 30, and are distributed about equally among the different parties; and should the money be paid to them in accordance with my order to the Agent, and they be left to dispose of it among themselves, without the interference of any of the traders, I have little doubt but that it will be distributed among the different bands justly, and be paid, as far as it will go, towards the liquidation of their just debt. But should the payment, from any consideration, be much longer delayed, there is danger that the excitement produced by its postponement will burst beyond the bounds of restraint and the Indians commence fighting among themselves and thereby endanger the peace of our frontier.

The Governor's anxiety about Indian hostilities was well founded. Ancient feuds between the tribes were perpetuated by occasional depredations. Early in September, 1840, four Sioux warriors killed and scalped a Potawatomi near Billy Caldwell's village, whereupon offended Indians

went on the warpath, pursued the Sioux, killed one, and wounded another. A Potawatomi brave was killed and a Sauk wounded.

The Sauks and Foxes hated the Winnebago for betraying them in the Black Hawk War. Since then they had murdered about forty Winnebago women and children. In 1839 a war party fell upon an encampment of Winnebago and killed several braves. This outrage was amicably adjusted through the intervention of the government whereby the Sauks and Foxes agreed to pay \$5000 to the aggrieved tribe. Soon after the truce was concluded, according to Governor Lucas, some Winnebago Indians visited the Sauk and Fox country as friends and treacherously killed two Foxes. This murder suspended the fulfillment of the former settlement. Relatives of the murdered braves, who according to tribal custom decided such matters, were consulted. The punishment of the guilty ones, argued the Foxes, would do the mourners no good. Furthermore, "they were poor; and if the arrangement could be made to pay them \$1,000 of the money that was to be paid by their nation to the Winnebagoes, that they would be satisfied; but observed, at the same time, that if the money was paid to cover their dead relatives, they wanted it paid to themselves".

If the relations between the Winnebago and the

Sauks and Foxes were generally hostile, a state of chronic belligerency existed between the Sioux and the Sauks and Foxes. Their implacable enmity seemed unabated in 1840. "Within a few months," reported John Beach, "parties from each nation have made incursions upon each other, several upon both sides having been killed. These actions are not reported to me by the Indians, as it seems to be their wish that the Government should interpose no restraint upon their relations with the Sioux, but suffer each to gratify their revengeful propensities, as their own wishes may dictate."

This continual warfare among the Indians, the pressure of settlement along the frontier, and the knavery of the traders were intolerable. The plight of the Winnebago was particularly bad. Situated on a narrow strip of land between two unfriendly tribes and accessible to unscrupulous white men, they were exposed to constant danger and therefore were a menace to the peace of the frontier. In the opinion of Governor Lucas nothing but the removal of the Sauks and Foxes could "wrest them from the avaricious control of the traders, and the blighting effects of intemperance, which, combined" were rapidly "hastening them to the lowest degree of degradation." He, therefore, advocated the negotiation of a treaty where-

by the Sauks and Foxes would cede all their land in Iowa "upon terms advantageous both to the Government and these Indians." This was accomplished in 1842.

Meanwhile, the dissatisfaction of the Indians with the payment of annuities and the encroachments of settlers on the reservation were provocative of trouble. Only the presence of soldiers prevented serious conflict. This situation "should admonish us," explained the Governor to the legislature, "to be on our guard, and to depend upon ourselves for defence in case hostilities should be commenced." He recommended "the expediency of authorizing by law, the organization of a number of mounted volunteer riflemen, say one company at least to every regiment of militia within the Territory, with authority for the commandant of any brigade to increase the number to a battalion within his brigade, and to provide for calling them into service in case of Indian depredations or threatened invasion. This precautionary measure can do no harm, and may ultimately secure our frontier from an Indian war." Though the legislature did not follow the Governor's advice, some such volunteer companies were formed. The dragoons stationed at Fort Atkinson were able to maintain peace on the frontier until the Indians were removed.

JOHN ELY BRIGGS

Iowa in the World

Twenty-eight hours from Pittsburgh to Muscatine in the dirty day coaches of the year 1860! It was a relief when the Chicago and Rock Island train finally jerked to a stop, and the Iowa correspondent for the New York *World* swung off to begin a temporary residence in the Hawkeye State. His job was to supply "early, regular and authentic" information to one of the metropolitan newspapers. For over a year this anonymous reporter roamed Iowa, seeking news of interest to the East. He sent his stories to New York weekly, and each one usually found its way into the columns of the *World* after about five days. All in all, during his Iowa sojourn, he filed almost twenty-four thousand words.

Iowans welcomed representatives of the press and were gratified when their State appeared in a favorable light in the news. Frequently, self-appointed correspondents sent stories to Eastern newspapers. On August 24, 1858, for example, "Getheo" blew the horn of publicity from Burlington when he wrote to the editor of *Porter's Spirit of the Times*. "By reading your paper," said he morosely, "I see you have no correspondent from

Iowa: or, if any, but very seldom. Why is it? Iowa is the 'land of game', and the resort of many of our best huntsmen: our broad prairies are abounding with all kinds of game this season, particularly when the overflow of the rivers have not driven the mothers from their nests. I am surprised to see that there is no one versed in hunting to give you something for your paper from these parts."

About the same time, volunteer newsmen, hiding under such *nom de plumes* as "Hawkeye" and "Pioneer", were lavishly describing regattas at Keokuk and racing in Davenport. "Don't imagine," said "Pioneer" pointedly, "because Davenport is what you would consider in the neighborhood of the setting sun, because it is not as big as 'York', and because we don't possess a first-class sporting-paper of our own, like Porter's Spirit, that we are behind the times. Not a bit of it."

Then, after narrating the organization of the Scott County Park Association and bowing to the County Agricultural Society and doffing his hat to the State Fair, "Pioneer" made his bid for space in one of the nation's better journals devoted to sports. "We are flourishing here in every possible way; have some good roads, and are making more; enjoy convenient rail-road privileges, and the magnificent Mississippi runs past our very

doors; can boast of unrivaled hotel accommodation, and, in short, are spreading all round, and feeling expansive, individually and collectively, every one for himself, and all for our tip-top little city. We've no end of game outside. More quail in a day's run than would have kept the chosen people in the wilderness for a year."

The *World* correspondent, time after time, confirmed Iowa's agricultural abundance, and by so doing undoubtedly piqued the interest of many an Easterner who already was looking toward this fertile back-of-beyond. A cautious note was also sounded. "Let us hope", wrote the newspaperman solemnly, "that we may continue to practise the economy we have learned, and be satisfied with the slow, yet sure gains of patient and untiring industry." Even after such an admonition, he could not describe the Iowa grain crop of 1860 without enthusiasm. On July 7th, he wrote from Iowa City that, "Never, according to the unanimous admission even of farmers, have all kinds of grain given such rich promise in Iowa of a full harvest, as the wheat, rye, corn, oats, and the whole cereal tribe now present." Wheat heads, he continued, "are filled to the top with sound, plump kernels with each cell containing three, and, very often, four grains." Ten days later, so great was his enthusiasm, that he italicized a sentence in his

copy. "It is considered a poor crop that does not, this season, yield twenty bushels to an acre."

Such optimism was confirmed early in August when the Tipton *Democrat* gleefully stated that the average yield in Cedar County was between twenty-five and thirty bushels an acre, and the Iowa City *Republican* placed the estimated average of Johnson County at about twenty bushels. At seventy-five cents a bushel, said the *World* writer, this was "far better than the wild goose chase to Pike's Peak, in which too many of our farmers have embarked during the last three years of gloom and discouragement, and whence so many are now returning, with empty purses and blasted hopes, to gaze with deep regret at the fruitful yields and well-filled garner upon which a short time since they turned their backs in childish petulance."

The longer this anonymous roving reporter lived in the Hawkeye State, the more laudatory became his descriptions of the land, the people, and even the lowly hog. There is money in the hog, he wrote. "Though neither the hog *couchant*, the hog *saliant*, the hog *rampant*, nor the hog in any of his postures defensive, or postures offensive, has hitherto been emblazoned upon the escutcheons of our States (I think I am not mistaken as to Ohio), or adopted as the coat of arms

of any of our first families, yet everywhere throughout the northwest the hog is regarded with peculiar interest."

Apparently, the man of the *World* made his headquarters in Muscatine. From there he wandered into the back country and along the tier of counties adjacent to the Mississippi River. Thriving villages and cities, such as Oskaloosa, Dubuque, Keokuk, Des Moines, and Iowa City, attracted him, and he found leisure to chat with storekeepers, farmers, liverymen, and cattle drivers during his crisscross tours of the State.

Iowa City, in particular, attracted his interest. When he visited there in July, 1860, he found a population of some 5000 persons living upon the eastern bank of the Iowa River, "a navigable stream, when there is water enough in it." Early in October, he again came to the university town to attend the seventh annual exhibitions of the Iowa State Agricultural Society. Hotels, he found, were full and landlords happy. Streets were lined with vehicles and sidewalks crowded. Great swirls of dust drifted lazily in the air. By the time the reporter reached the fairgrounds he was weary of the "raw, uneven" prairie.

Once inside the gate, however, he noted about five hundred stalls for cattle and horses and a like number of pens for hogs and sheep. A trotting

track, which he said was neither well-constructed nor in good condition, elicited comment. Yet he saw racing which equalled, if it did not excel, that of the East.

As he wandered along the rows of orderly stock pens, he counted thirty-three entries of Devon cattle, and over seventy head of Durhams, then coming into favor as cattle which fattened well. The Devons, he noted with interest, were valued by Iowa farmers for their superhardiness and milking qualities. Later he witnessed a plowing contest in which fourteen competitors raced to see which could turn the straightest furrow in the shortest time. It was this observer's belief that the fair would cause the people of Iowa to go home to do better things in 1861.

Land, of course, was the subject of principal interest in the eyes of the *World's* representative. He believed that the federal government should not have sold an acre of land in Iowa, but should have given to every actual settler a piece of ground large enough for a moderate farm. Had this been done, "Iowa could be rich and prosperous with treble her present population." He noticed the great inflow of pioneers sinking their roots into the State's rich prairie, and he urged these immigrants to settle in the back country and not crowd the already well populated river com-

munities. To Easterners he sent the urgent message: "Move West, lands are cheaper now than they ever can be again."

In the same breath, he cursed the fever of speculation which up to 1857 had sent land values as high as five to ten dollars an acre, but he looked forward to a new type of immigration rolling into Iowa and spreading over its green prairies and purchasing land at from two dollars and a half an acre to five or seven dollars an acre. He made known to all who read the *World* the impending sale of one quarter of a million acres in the vicinity of Fort Dodge, Sioux City, and on the headwaters of the Des Moines River. Here, he wrote glowingly, is an opportunity to secure cheap homes for the millions.

Less significant observations than land, crops, and markets also drew the attention of this observant roving reporter. His eye caught the flight of the "blithe and noisy" swallow, observed the fine stands of trees, and carefully searched for the silent creatures of the prairie. His pen anticipated a popular song of to-day when he described the songs of the birds and said that "to their sweet music the woodpecker beats time, and the joyous leaves wave their silent but unmistakable applause."

Easterners, as they unfolded the pages of their

World, could read of open-air preaching in Iowa on the campus of the State University, follow the development of the secession controversy, read that Iowans had "tenfold more confidence in God than in Congress", and even catch a glimpse of the Galena lead mines.

It would have been pleasant, indeed, had these regular news letters from Iowa continued during the decade of the sixties, but they suddenly ceased after December 27, 1860. Perhaps the gathering clouds of the Civil War forced interesting commonplaces from the columns of the *World*, perhaps the correspondent was recalled to devote himself to political affairs, perhaps he eventually found his way into the army. But of one thing we are certain. His pen portrait of the Hawkeye State, although not picturesque, nevertheless revealed ideas and social patterns in the language of the day, and, as such, contributed to an understanding of the State. In their day these stories of the *World's* now nameless correspondent must have made Iowa the cynosure of many an Easterner's eyes and emphasized the fact that Iowa was, indeed, in the world!

PHILIP D. JORDAN

The Great Comet of 1882

Like the shepherds of yore, the early pioneer had time to know and appreciate the wonders of the heavens. To him they had a practical value, for by the stars at night he often found his way across the trackless prairies, and by the sun he told the hours of the day. The traditional lore concerning the "signs of the zodiac" was once common knowledge, and it was regarded as a mark of erudition to be able to govern household affairs, from planting to butchering, by the "phases of the moon". Whether the motive was religious inspiration, belief in the soothsayings of astrologers, or devotion to the science of astronomy, people stood in wonderment as they beheld the glories of the midnight sky.

Of the many awe-inspiring spectacles in the heavens, none was more likely to arouse sinister forebodings among people than the appearance of a comet. The strange psychological behavior and anxiety created by the occurrence of such a phenomenon, especially among the more ignorant classes, has been noted throughout all ages. It is often more inexplicable than the mystery of the comet itself.

Almost every year witnesses the coming of one or more of the minor comets, whose appearance is usually so ordinary that few persons except astronomers are sufficiently impressed to give them a second look. This is not true, however, on those rarer occasions, perhaps only a few times in a century, when comets of such great magnitude appear in the sky that they are immediately recognized by every one as objects of extraordinary interest.

An awakening of interest in astronomy occurred during the nineteenth century in Iowa as elsewhere. The subject was included in the curricula of the numerous academies, seminaries, and colleges of the State. Moreover, the unprecedented number of major astronomical events aroused much popular curiosity. For the people of Iowa the pageant began with the Great Comet of 1843, which was followed closely by the Marion Meteorite Fall of 1847, the notable Donati's Comet of 1858, the Leonid Shower of 1867, the Total Eclipse of the Sun of 1869, the brilliant Amana Meteorite Shower of 1875, and the extraordinary Estherville Meteorite Shower of 1879. From this list of celestial activities it would seem that Iowa was well situated for astronomical observations.

When the "Great Comet of 1882" appeared, the people of Iowa were well prepared to contemplate it with an attitude of scholarly sophistication.

While some superstition was probably evidenced by a few religious fanatics and uninformed persons, most people understood, appreciated, and enjoyed the grand spectacle.

Comets have been called the rovers of the solar system. The number is undetermined, probably running well into the thousands. Of uncertain origin, they travel through space in elongated orbits, approaching the sun at intervals of many years. It is thought that some comets have parabolical orbits, in which case they visit the sun but once and then only by accident. After circling the solar center, they pass on out into the vast reaches of outer space, never to return.

Comets can be readily distinguished from other astronomical objects by their characteristic long, tail-like appendage. This tail is called the coma, or hair, from which designation comets derived their name. It is composed chiefly of atomic gaseous matter, so rare that it actually rides at incredible speed on the light waves proceeding outward from the sun. When entering the solar system and approaching the sun, the comet's luminous tail trails along behind, as all good tails are supposed to behave. Then, as the comet swings around the sun and begins its outward journey, the tail reverses its position and precedes the head of the comet out into space. It is as though the celestial

stranger rushes into the solar system and, recognizing its mistake, bows adieu and politely backs out again.

The Great Comet of 1882 became visible to the naked eye on September 3rd in New Zealand, only two weeks before reaching its perihelion (nearest approach to the sun) on September 17th. It was observed in the northern hemisphere somewhat later. On September 28th the *Oskaloosa Herald* announced that the "new comet which has suddenly sprung into the eastern sky, travels at the rate of 370 miles per second. It is a stranger and is rapidly getting into the atmosphere and influence of the sun, and mayhaps give it a whack. It can be seen early in the morning, about four o'clock, but soon will be visible all day."

As a matter of fact, at that time it was already receding or passing out of the sun's influence. W. L. Elkin at the Cape of Good Hope watched it approach perihelion "like a dazzling white bird with outspread wings" and apparently disappear into the sun. It actually passed between the earth and the sun, yet no trace of it could be seen on the solar disc. Afterward, it was observed on the opposite side of the sun, clearly visible by daylight early in the morning, "brandishing a portentous, swordshaped tail, which, if it had been in the evening sky, would have excited the wonder of hun-

dreds of millions, but situated where it was, comparatively few saw it." The editor of the Des Moines *Iowa State Register* complained that this 1882 comet was "not compatible with that spirit in society which causes gate hinges to wear away prematurely", for it was not visible in the moonlight. Nevertheless, many persons got up at daybreak to see the brilliant spectacle.

"Don't fail to see it!" admonished the editor of the Vinton *Eagle* on October 10th. "If you can't get up early enough in the morning, stay up all night, and watch for its appearance. But you will not need to watch very carefully, for it is the most brilliant object in the heavens, from about 4:30 to 5:30 in the morning, at which time it is near the horizon, a little south of east. The nucleus is very bright and the tail is simply a magnificent train of light, almost white in the center, shading off to paleness toward the edges and the end. The tail is about 20 degrees in length, as seen by the naked eye, and spreads out like a fan. It is very near the sun but has passed its nearest point and is now traveling from it at a rate of 2,000,000 miles a day. Yesterday morning was the first time there has been a good opportunity to see the celestial visitor, on account of fogs and clouds. The sky was very clear and bright yesterday morning, and it could be dimly seen as late as six o'clock."

On the previous day the editor of the *Oskaloosa Herald* had joined "the early rising brigade" and was "blessed with a magnificent view of the comet". It appeared to him "like some great electric light, with a tail attached covering some twelve to sixteen degrees of an arc. It is beautiful beyond description, and eclipses all other comets that have ever been exhibited in this section. In size it is about two hundred miles wide and sixteen thousand miles long, and astronomers tell us that this particular comet has a through ticket to fall into the sun in the summer of 1883, when some sort of trouble may be expected".

The editor, however, was not alarmed at this erroneous prediction. "Persons with a good glass," he declared, "claim to have read, in letters of burnished gold a foot long — extended antique — 'Take the *Oskaloosa Herald*,' and 'Vote the Straight Ticket.' Carrying such an announcement as that it is plain to tell all the authorities on that comet are sound Republicans, and therefore not bound for the grand jump into the internal affairs of the sun. It will continue steadily on its way, ornamenting the heavens, and doing its appointed duty."

According to scientific observers the Great Comet of 1882 went through the corona of the sun where the temperature was estimated to be 3000°.

When first seen the nucleus was circular but in passing so close to the sun it broke into several parts and appeared as a "luminous streak some 50,000 miles in extent, upon which there were six or eight star-like knots of condensation". This "string of pearls" continued "to lengthen as long as the comet was visible, until at last the length exceeded 100,000 miles." By calculating the orbits of four separate nuclei, a mathematician predicted that one would return in 664 years (2546 A. D.), another in 769 years (2651), the third in 875 years (2757), and the last in 959 years (2841), instead of appearing in one great body as in 1882.

The editor of the *Washington Democrat*, who was not at all scientific, saw the comet on October 20th, and apparently noticed the division of the nucleus. "It looked to us", he wrote, "like a great burning light about the size of a bushel basket dancing around in all directions with several long tails about sixty feet long, which flapped back and forth like the streamers on a liberty pole, and there were millions and millions of stars or meteors shooting in all directions". Editor George G. Rodman may have exercised vivid imagination in his description, but there can be no doubt that he was greatly impressed by what he saw.

Not all the Iowa observations were of such a frivolous or facetious nature. Professor Nathan

R. Leonard at the State University made excellent notes considering the limitations of his equipment. "During these nights of the comet's glory", reported the *Iowa City Republican* on October 19th, "the University Observatory has been the centre of attraction, and Prof. Leonard has been unceasing in his attentions to the beautiful stranger. On such occasions our regrets are peculiarly intense when we think of our telescope, good as it is for all ordinary purposes, yet too small for the more notable purposes of discovery."

"The antics of the comet are exciting the astronomers", announced the *Oskaloosa Herald* on October 19th. At the end of September "a separation was seen of the nucleus. On October 2nd, the parts had nearly closed up. On October 5th, there was a second separation. Again the parts closed together partially. On the 8th a pear-shaped nucleus was seen, and on the 9th a separation. These separations, occurring at periods of four days, bear out the theory that the fragments revolve around a common center of gravity. It is still on exhibition in the early morning, and it pays to look out and see it."

Two days later the *Iowa City Republican* declared that the "present comet in the Eastern sky, which can be distinctly seen by everyone at early morning, is certainly the most remarkable of all the

modern comets. Prof. Lewis Swift, director of the Warner Observatory, Rochester, N. Y., states that the comet grazed the sun so closely as to cause great disturbance, so much so that it divided into no less than eight separate parts, all of which can be distinctly seen with a good telescope. There is only one other instance on record where a comet has divided, that one being Biela's comet of 1846, which separated into two parts."

The Des Moines *Iowa State Register* printed an unusually complete series of articles, commenting upon almost every phase of the comet's career. On October 12th a Scotch scientist was quoted as believing that the comet would return in 1883 and fall into the sun with disastrous results. A Harvard professor, however, thought this was unlikely, and thus fears were allayed. The paper proclaimed on October 14th that the "comet now in the constellation Hydra is proving to be one of the most magnificent apparitions that have so far appeared in the present century." It seemed much larger and more beautiful than the comet of 1843. To a lady it appeared like a fan, and to a hen-pecked husband like a "broom handle, with a grid-iron on the end of it."

On October 17th the *Iowa State Register* printed a poem by A. R. Fulton, former immigration commissioner for Iowa.

TO OUR CELESTIAL VISITANT

Mysterious wanderer of the sky,
In heaven's bright caravan,
In thy celestial journey, why
Seek'st thou the abode of man?

From what far realm dost thou hail,
With thy mission here to men,
Of unknown wonders that prevail
Far beyond our mortal ken?

From far-off regions infinite,
Where suns of other systems shine,
Dost thou before our vision flit
To impart some truth divine?

Art thou some reckless planet, hurled
From thine ancient orb for crime,
Doomed to wander — an Ishmael world —
Down the endless years of time?

Need mankind regard thee with awe,
As the herald of some curse!
Mov'st thou not by some fixed law
Through the boundless universe?

Flashing through the realms of space,
What other beings gaze on thee,
And in thy wondrous grandeur trace
The matchless hand of Deity?

Whence thou comest, or wither bound —
What thy mission — good or ill —
All — all, are mysteries profound,
Unrevealed by human will.

Soon thou'lt pass from mortal eye,
On thy journey mid the spheres,
And light perchance again our sky
When have sped a thousand years.

Like the famous eclipse of 1869, the Great Comet of 1882 attracted the attention of scientists all over the world. There was considerable debate as to its true identity. Some at first thought it was closely related to the comets of 1843 and 1880, but not identical. Spectroscopic analysis indicated that it contained hydrogen, sodium, carbon, and possibly iron. Like its great predecessor of 1843, it was remarkable for having been visible in broad daylight. That it left an indelible impression upon the consciousness and memories of all who witnessed it cannot be denied.

BEN HUR WILSON

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