

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

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 C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

VOL. I

ISSUED IN AUGUST 1920

No. 2

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Newspaper History

What is the value of yesterday's newspaper? In a bygone day it served the thrifty housewife as a cover for the kitchen table, or in company with its fellows of the days before as a lining for the ingrain carpet; and if the good husband was handy, it might on a winter evening be cut into strips and deftly rolled into the long slender tapers that stood in the tumbler on the shelf beside the Seth Thomas clock to be used in carrying the necessary flame from the briskly burning hickory wood fire in the air-tight stove to the wick of the kerosene oil lamp.

But in these ultra-modern days of steam heat, electric light and power, enamel topped tables, and hardwood floors, the newspaper, like the grass, "to-day is in the field and tomorrow is cast into the oven"; or it may find its way to the baler in the basement and presently it is returned to the paper mills from whence it came in the endless round of pulp and paper and print.

The average subscriber to that "largest circulation", which is the daily boast of every newspaper of any standing, would probably scoff at the suggestion that there is anything of real value from the standpoint of scientific history in the newspaper; and yet we know that the leading historical institutions of the country are piling up literally tons and tons of newspapers. Although their rapid accumulation presents a very real problem, if not a genuine embarrassment to every great historical library, thousands of dollars are spent annually in binding and properly shelving the newspapers of the day — for the use of the historian of the future.

That there is trouble ahead for the historian we will admit. In his endeavors to retrace the footprints of this present age of black-face type, what is to be the criterion of the relative importance of news? Does the 120 point headline set forth public information that is twice as consequential as the 60 point, and four times the public concern of that of the 30 point? Is he to believe as he turns the yellowing pages of the Iowa newspapers that the news "Ames Defeats Iowa" was, in the public mind of the period, of twice the importance of the news that "Wartime Coal Regime Begins", while the news that "2¾ Beer Gets Hearing" and "Mary Pickford Divorced" was of twice the importance of the Ames-Iowa game and of six times the public concern of the war time coal regime?

How will the historian winnow out the pregnant

facts that lie buried "under bushel-heaps of worthless assertion" in an age of censored dispatches, "doctored stuff", "prepared dope", private propaganda, camouflaged news, and extravagant advertising? How will he distinguish the work of the competent, independent, investigating reporter in the record of current topics and passing events from the manipulated news of the clever press agent attorney? How will he treat the deliberately scraped and sponged and overlaid palimpsests of this newspaper epoch that they may tell the true story that is there recorded?

With due allowance for the extravagant use of 120 point type, for the insidious press agent and the organized manipulation of public opinion and for all the "fecundity and fallibility which are peculiar to journalism", what is there in these great library files of daily newspapers that justifies their preservation and proper classification? Almost everything that the student of history wants. For in spite of "slang-whanging" and editorial vituperation, and the sometimes startling results of "the carelessness of the compositors and the absent mindedness of the readers of proof", in spite of its double rôle of "universal advertiser and universal purveyor of knowledge", the daily newspaper is the best reflector of the times that the student of history can find.

In our own day it has become something of a vogue to speak contemptuously of the "lurid press",

the "scandalous gossip" of the "brazen-faced reporter", the "incurable lying habit of the newspapers", "the millionaire-owned press", and of the "A. P." as "the damndest, meanest, monopoly on the face of the earth". Nevertheless, the daily newspaper holds the mirror up to modern society and reflects with unflattering faithfulness the life and psychology of the times. Old records, official reports of events, and the more carefully written and leisurely revised monographic and book literature give us the "cabinet picture" of the times, with head clamped in place "a little more to the right, please, and chin up", with the "pleasant expression" patiently held while the photographer counts off the requisite number of seconds, and with perhaps a final smoothing out of wrinkles in the retouching.

The newspaper, on the other hand, gives us all unconsciously the natural record of the every-day life of a community, and the snapshots of the times in working clothes — which are always the best pictures. These pictures with all their incongruities, vulgarities, and blemishes may not always be pleasing; but they are, for the most part, "speaking likenesses" of the community, with all of its "roughness, pimples, and warts".

It is the every-day newspaper snapshot that gives us the local color in the description of passing events, the dominant passions and prejudices in the discussion of current topics, the sudden disclosure of popular temper and sentiment in the acceptance or

rejection of political issues, and that "preserves imperishably the fashion prevailing for posterity to look upon with reverence or a smile". The testimony of gossipy letters and memoirs no longer goes unchallenged and the critical reviewer of historical monographs now scrutinizes the footnotes to see whether the writer has made use of the newspapers of the period.

For a concrete illustration, let us take the newspapers not of the present day nor of the remote past, but of eighty years ago in our own Commonwealth. The Iowa newspaper of 1840 was a very modest affair — innocent of the glaring headlines of the "extras", innocent of cartoons, half-tones, the wondrous depiction of "Wilson's Boiled Ham" and "Sunshine Biscuits", or the adventures of Mr. Jiggs; but we find abundant material in every four-page issue concerning the three chief phases of the life of the people which constitute their history — the social life, the political life, and the industrial life.

Eighty years ago Iowa City was the capital of the Territory of Iowa, and the two leading newspapers of the early forties were the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, the Democratic "organ", and the *Iowa Standard*, the Whig journal — the *Reporter* being referred to, by the *Standard*, as the "Locofoco Rag", and the *Standard* being referred to, by the *Reporter*, as the "Whiggery Humbug". These old files of the "Rag" and the "Humbug" fairly bristle with information

concerning the life of the period — the beginnings of church life, the character of the schools, the amusements, the reading matter, the follies, hopes, ambitions, and ideals of the people of the community.

We read, for example, that on two Sundays, in January, 1841, the Methodists held services with frontier camp meeting fervor in the open air near the post-office on some lumber belonging to John Horner. The Baptists with equal fervor “buried in baptism” two candidates for membership beneath the “limpid waters of the Iowa River”.

The opening of a private school is noted: “Tuition per Quarter of 12 weeks \$3.50. House rent, fuel, etc. 1.00 additional.” There is mention of a school for Young Ladies with special emphasis on instruction in “Reading, Writing, and Mental Arithmetic. History — Sacred, Profane, Ecclesiastical and Natural. Natural, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy.”

We note the laying of the corner stone of Mechanics’ Academy, which afterwards became the first home of the State University. Both Democratic and Whig papers urge special training for agricultural and mechanical employment. “Agriculture”, says the editor of the *Reporter*, “is the noblest pursuit of man and we deplore the fact that so large a part of our new country has given itself up to visionary projects of speculation.”

“A course of lessons in Music” is announced “according to the Pestalozzian system of instruction.” A Glee Club, it is said, “will bring out a new set of

glees for the approaching election." A lecture in the Legislative Council Chamber on "Astronomy" is reported. "The lecturer's remarks", we are told, "were within the comprehension of the humblest intellect." There are notices of camp meetings, and lyceum and literary association meetings which the ladies of Iowa City and its vicinity are especially requested to attend.

The citizens are requested "to turn out and attend a meeting of the Temperance Society in the school house at early candle light". The cause of temperance was popular in the pioneer days of the forties, and there are many notices of meetings of the Washingtonians and the Total Abstinence Society.

Public dinners were given to honor public men, and Fourth of July celebrations held with the ladies four abreast taking their place behind the officer of the day. Cotillion figures are described and balls recorded. One comes upon many newspaper apostrophes "To the Ladies" (who were scarce on the frontier); and there was much writing of poetry.

There are records of marriages and deaths, elopements and house-raising, and a list of river accidents and steamboat disasters. A citizen announces he will no longer be responsible for his wife Hulda's debts. There are notices of claim sales, of petitions for bankruptcy, and of the foreclosures of mortgages. In short, bits of the sunshine and shadows of the every day life of the period are recorded with an unconsciousness that gives them special value.

The political life of eighty years ago is reflected far more than it is to-day on the editorial page. This page has, as it no doubt will ever have, its problems for the student of history. In these early newspapers of the first capital he finds the Whig editor variously referred to by his esteemed contemporary as "that miserable caricature of his species", "the contemptible slang-whanger of the *Standard*", and "that biped of the neuter gender whose name stands at the mast head of that servile truckling organ of Whig skullduggery". He finds numerous references in the *Standard* to the "Bombastes Furioso" and to the "red hair and spectacles of the Loco-foco scribbler", to the "hybrid politician who furnishes the wind for the *Reporter*", and to "the thing which says it edits that filthy and demagogical sluice of Loco-focoism, the *Reporter*". He finds national as well as local issues treated with uncompromising thoroughness and partisanship. He finds scorching editorials on "The Tottering Fabric of Federalism" on the one hand, and bitter denunciation of "Loco-foco Black-guardism" on the other. "Iowa" is referred to by the *Reporter* as "the apex of the Noble Pyramid of Democracy"; and the *Standard* replies, "Whew dont we blow a shrill horn". The *Standard* declares that Democracy leads logically to a dissolution of the Union, to which the *Reporter* replies:

Bow wow wow
Whose dog are thou?
I'm Henry Clay's Dog
Bow wow wow.

The Legislative Assembly meets, and the *Standard* calls attention to the fact that the "Committee on Public Printing is composed of only four members and every one of them most bitter and uncompromising Locos". "Nothing good", it adds, "was anticipated from them and the result has precisely answered the expectations." To which the *Reporter* replies that "the people of Iowa have had enough of the yelps and whines of the *Standard* puppy on the subject of Extravagance in Public Printing".

A Whig leader in the Council makes a speech and the *Reporter* remarks that "it is the poorest wheel of a wagon that always creaks the loudest."

There are editorials and communications on Abolition, Tariff and Free Trade, The Right of Petition, The Preëmption Law, State Banks, Retrenchment and Reform, Bribery and Corruption, Resumption of Specie Payment, Cider Barrels and Coon Skins. One correspondent thinks too much pressure is being brought upon him to vote. "I do not like to be drove", he explains with genuine Iowa independence, "I can be led but can not be drove."

What is there here for the student of political history? A mine of information. No miner expects to find his gold ready for the jeweler's hands. Much labor is required to free it from base metal. And so the student of political history will clear away vituperation and partisanship, personalities, and "the shorter and uglier words", and find nuggets of valuable material in this collection.

In like manner advertisements reflect something of the industrial life of the period. The rise, and yea the fall, of infant industries in the Territory, the occupations of the early settlers, the degree of specialization in the trades, labor organizations, wages — all these and more one is able to portray from the paid advertisements. Either space was more valuable in those days or there was less money to pay for it, for with very few exceptions these advertisements consist of from five to eight line notices to the public signed by the merchant or mechanic himself.

The public is informed that “a ferry across the Mississippi River at Bloomington, Iowa Territory, has been established and as soon as the river is free from ice next spring a boat will be in operation.” There are proposals for carrying the “mail of the United States from Bloomington to Iowa City thirty miles and back once a week.” Territorial scrip is taken in payment (at par) for all articles at a certain store. Elsewhere Dubuque money will be accepted at five per cent discount. “Just received per Steamer Rapids the following Groceries”, reads one advertisement, “6 Boxes Tobacco. 40 bbls. New Orleans Molasses. 30 Sacks Rio & Havana Coffee 13 bbls. Rum, Gin & Whiskey. 25 Sacks Ground Alum Salt & 16 Kegs Pittsburg White Lead.” A variety of “spring goods” is advertised as received by the “Steam Boats Mermaid, Agnes & Illinois”, including “2 Bales of Buffalo Robes, Jeans & Linseys, Merinoes & Bombazines, Fancy and Mourning

Calicoes, Boots & Brogans, Salaratus, Tobacco, Loaf & Brown Sugar. Fashionable Hats & Crockery." "A Raft of Hewed Oak Timber" is offered for sale. A remedy for fever and ague is recommended. A hotel with the "best of table and stables" offers its services. So does a "Portrait & Miniature Painter". A bricklayer announces that he has arrived in the Territory. A partnership is formed in the plastering business. Eight lawyers and nine doctors respectfully call the attention of a community of six hundred souls to their existence; and we note the beginnings of the "Doctors' Trust" in the following published rate of charges as adopted at a meeting of the physicians held in Bloomington on the fifth of February, 1841:

First visit in town in the daytime	1.00
Every succeeding visit	.50
Visit in the night time	1.50
Bleeding	1.00
Tooth extracting	1.00
Attention on a patient all day or night by request	5.00

In addition to the "Doctors' Trust" there were those who practiced the "healing art"; and one Botanic Physician advertises that "the remedial agents employed for the removal of disease will be innocuous vegetables."

The arrival of the "Steamboat Ripple", the first boat to reach Iowa City, is announced; and in an editorial it is learned that its arrival was witnessed

by a delighted throng of four hundred. The event was celebrated by "as good a dinner as has ever been gotten up in the Territory." This convincing proof of the navigability of the Iowa River was prophesied as the "turning point in the commercial life of the first Capital."

An enterprising farmer makes eighty gallons of molasses ready to sugar from corn stalks, and this is regarded as the beginning of an important industry in this new country. A "load of lead" fourteen feet below the surface is discovered on the banks of the Iowa River, and in the excitement and local enthusiasm which followed, the editor of the *Standard* declares that "Nothing better could have happened to make this section of the country and especially Iowa City, a perfect Eldorado, than the discovery which has been made in Johnson County. It has, ever since the settlement of this county, been believed, that it abounded with immense mineral of various kinds. Several townships of land west of Iowa City, we are told, were returned to the General Land Office as mineral lands. This must form a new era in the history and existence of Iowa City."

Incidentally from a survey of news items, editorials, and advertisements, one gathers something of the early history of the press itself and something of the trials and vexations of the early editor. That ye editor of eighty years ago was more than the "slang-whanger" and the "biped of the neuter gender" his contemporary would lead us to believe, we learn

from the versatility of his weekly contributions. In addition to pointing out the "skullduggery" and the "venom and impotent malignity" of the opposite party, and his weekly combat on Abolitionism, Federalism, Our Legislature, The Public Printing, and Banking, he writes of Flowers, Sympathy, The Wedding, The American Girl, Winter Evenings, Setting Out in Life, The Progress of a Hundred Years, The Bunker Hill Monument, Christmas, and New Year's Musings. He observes that "true politeness is not a matter of mere form of manner but of sentiment and heart." He maintains that "virtue and honesty are better recommendations for a husband than dollars." He deplures "the senseless rage for gentility", "the silly ambition of figuring in a higher station than that to which we belong", "the folly of sacrificing substance to show", and of "mistaking crowd for society".

The editor threatens to publish the list of delinquent subscribers; and he denounces the borrowing of a neighbor's paper as unworthy of a citizen of this promising country. The scarcity of money is reflected in the editor's offers to take produce of any and every kind in exchange for subscriptions to his paper; and he demands the delivery of the wood that "a certain gentleman not a thousand miles from a neighboring town promised him last month". "It is the height of folly", he adds, "to tell an editor to keep cool when he has to burn exchange papers to keep warm." Finally, the editor takes a bold stand

and declares that "candidates for office who wish their names announced for office will hereafter accompany such notices with two dollars cash for trouble, wear of type, etc."

In spite of times being "so hard that you can catch pike on the naked hook", the paper is "enlarged at several dollars extra expense but will be afforded at the same low price as the small one has been."

A Democratic postmaster is warned that "the packages of Whig papers (which we ourselves deliver at the post office every Friday evening at 6 o'clock) are not so minute as to be imperceptible, and are not hereafter to be delayed by party malice. If they are, just wait till the 4th of March — that's all!"

The *Iowa Farmers and Miners Journal* is announced; and *Godey's Magazine* is noted by the press of Iowa as "the only magazine intended for the perusal of females that is edited by their own sex."

Such are some of the glimpses we get of the life, of the politics, and of the industries of eighty years ago — of the hopes and ambitions, the prejudices and animosities, the plans and activities, the successes and disappointments of the early Iowan — gleaned from a file of old newspapers. And so we make our acknowledgments to the newspapers of to-day and lay them carefully away in fire-proof quarters for the student of another generation.

BERTHA M. H. SHAMBAUGH

An Old-Time Editorial Dialogue

PROLOGUE

Pied long ago was the type that first carried this exchange of civilities. And many years have passed since the two principals in the wordy duel were laid away to rest, each with his vocabulary at his side. But the ghost of the duel still flutters in the old sheets of the newspaper files. Let the ghost tell its tale.

SCENE

The frontier town of Iowa City, capital of the Territory of Iowa.

TIME

The early forties, when men wore their politics like chips upon their shoulders and established arsenals beneath their coat tails — with reference to the printing office, the good old days when the militant editor got out a weekly four page sheet, with the assistance of an industrious but soiled and unwashable printer's devil, a ditto towel, a dog-eared and now vanished dictionary of classical vituperation, and a "hell box" where the used-up type, exhausted by being made the vehicle of ultra vigorous language, fell into an early grave.

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM CRUM — a young editor of twenty-two years — possessed of a hair-trigger pen and an inkwell full of expletives, a vast admiration for the pil-

lars of the Whig party, and no respect at all for the Democratic editors of the Territory of Iowa. Under his supervision the *Iowa City Standard* upholds the views of William Henry Harrison and Henry Clay and hurls peppery paragraphs at the awful record of the Democrats who happen to hold the whip hand in the Territory.

VER PLANCK VAN ANTWERP — educated at West Point and by courtesy called General — dignified and serious, arrayed in boiled shirt and starched collar and gold spectacles — an old school Democrat of “an age now verging upon the meridian of life.” He, too, is an editor and has in his time pealed out sonorous messages through long columns of the Democratic press.

*Enter MR. CRUM followed some time later by
the GENERAL*

Using the words of one of his exchanges, Mr. Crum soliloquizes:

“There is, somewhere in the Territory of Iowa, one ‘General’ V. P. Van Antwerp, who . . . is much in the habit of making long-winded speeches, as frothy as small beer and as empty as his head.”

Soon he becomes aware that the said General Van Antwerp has arrived at Iowa City and become the editor of the *Iowa Capitol Reporter*, and the soliloquy becomes a dialogue. In somewhat over two columns the General makes his announcement and closes with this glowing peroration:

“*To every tenet in the Democratic faith as promulgated by Jefferson, Jackson, Van Buren, and Benton, the four most shining lights among the multitudes of its distinguished advocates, I heartily subscribe; and stand ready now, as I have ever done, to devote my best energies to their support.*

“In those tenets I have been taught from early childhood, with it instilled and impressed upon my mind, to consider their effects upon the destinies of mankind as second in importance to naught else save the Christian religion itself; and, resting firmly under this belief, regardless of the consequences, or of the course of others, and come what may, adversity or prosperity, gloom or glory, weal or woe, I shall continue, while God spares my life, to do battle in the good and glorious cause!”

Mr. Crum falls upon this bit of oratory with great glee and satire: “an inaugural, and signed by *My Lord Pomposity, Ver Planck himself*”; and with alternate quotations and jeers he pokes fun at his new rival, “this West Point dandy in gold spectacles!”

The General is aroused, and in his second issue proclaims that “any charge in the slightest degree implicating our character, will not be suffered to pass by unheeded.

“But in regard to the wretched demagogical slang, which is the sole aliment upon which a certain class of men subsist, we laugh to scorn both it and its authors, confident that they can no more affect us,

with those whose respect we value, than would the Billingsgate of the fisherwomen, in whose school they were bred, and whose style they copy."

Crum is happy. He heads his columns with the quotation from Van Antwerp in regard to "any charge in the slightest degree implicating our character", and then proceeds to make charges which would seem to come within the category indicated. He arraigns his record as a printer of the legislative records and says, when it stirs the General to wrath:

"That little 'Thumdomadal' [a term Van Antwerp had applied to Crum] might point its finger of condemnation to his false Democracy, and hold up to public gaze his rotten and corrupt political form, which shone through the veil of *assumed* dignity like rotten dog-wood in pitch-darkness; but let it touch his pocket, although replenished from the People's money, and hyena-like growls will issue in rabid fury, and in maniac-like distraction, from his troubled spirit. The jackall, an indigenous animal of Africa, noted for his want of sagacity and his innate predatory disposition, it is said will yell most furiously to his fraternal flock at a distance, whilst he is in the poultry coop of the farmer committing his usual havocs, and thereby rouse to his own great danger the farmer and the neighborhood, who repair to the coop and relieve the poultry of their fell destroyer. So it is with this West Point jackall, in relation to the public printing." He ends by saying that the military gentleman has not learned any

branch of the merchanic arts "and has therefore taken to the trade of LYING".

But Van Antwerp is inclined to stand upon his dignity. He answers one outburst of the *Standard* by saying, "of course our sheet shall not be polluted by replying to it." And again the doughty General remarks:

"We would be the last to reproach the memory of the mother who bore him in an unlucky hour, with the frailties of her worthless son. Here we take leave of him before the public forever."

"It would be ungenerous, after the heavy battery has been silenced, the guns spiked and the carriages broken, to transfix the trembling, blackened form of the inoffensive powder-monkey. When the *larger hound* bays still deeper in the forest the *feeble cur* will receive very little attention."

Meanwhile other editors have interjected a word or two into the dialogue and been editorially cuffed by Crum or the General. The *Burlington Gazette*, hurrying to the rescue of Democracy, observes:

"The public are generally ignorant of the fact, that, under the title of the 'Iowa City Standard,' a sickly, little blue sheet, of the thumbpaper size, by courtesy called newspaper is weekly issued at the seat of government; yet it is even so."

Then after commenting on the insignificance of the *Standard*, the editor falls back upon the popular canine metaphor:

"It will do well enough on proper occasions to

notice the federal mastiffs; but the curs, whose vocation it is to do the barking, should be passed by with neglect akin to that usually extended to their canine prototype."

The "cur" turns aside only long enough to utter this philosophic bark: "The mere shadow of a man who clandestinely presides over the editorial department of the Burlington Gazette, *attempts* to be very severe upon us for our notices of that Bombastes Furioso of the Reporter. Now, we consider the humid vaporings of this, or any other, individual, who so far descends from the dignity of a man as to follow, puppy like, at the heels of Ver Planck Van Antwerp, as too contemptible to notice".

Upon the editor of the *Bloomington Herald* he wastes even less attention.

"The editor of the above print is greatly troubled about the editorials of the Standard. Get out of the way, man! You are not worth the ammunition that would kill you off."

A little later, however, he gives voice to his contempt for the whole array of Democrats.

"Why in the name of all that is sensible, don't the Loco-foco papers here and hereabouts, shut up shop — retire — back out — or float down the Mississippi on a shingle?— Such another unmitigated set of vegetables we imagine could not be raked up in any other quarter of the land. Here is the 'Iowa Capitol Reporter'—bless your soul,—with a title that rolls over ones tongue like the tones

of a big bass drum; a bloated, empty, echoing thing, that hasn't been guilty of propagating an original idea for the last three months And then there is the 'Bloomington Herald,' a little fiddling fice-dog affair, to which the 'Reporter' tosses parched peas and pebble stones, to be flung back at us. That establishment never had an idea at all Next we have the 'Territorial Gazette,' with seven editors and two ideas—both unavailable. But the Hawkeye must attend to that concern.—Then there is the 'Sun'—a little poverty stricken affair, 'no bigger as mine thumb'—at Davenport. It was for a long time published on a half sheet, and now it is a size less than that Again we repeat, what do they live for? Is it because their friends won't be at the cost of a coffin? Die, bankrupts—die. You are 'stale, flat and unprofitable'—worse than cold corn dodger without salt."

The duel of words at Iowa City becomes constantly more spirited. The proud aloofness of the General gradually gives way before the constant and wasp-like attacks of William Crum. Especially does he become wrought up by a charge that he rolled about in a coach that should go to pay his debts. The reference to the debts makes comparatively little impression; but the coach, that is a different matter. With great vigor the exponent of Democracy denies that he ever rolled in a coach except perhaps at the invitation of some friend or in a common stage coach. Likewise the charge that he is in the habit of wear-

ing silk gloves disturbs him. He never wears silk gloves, he maintains, except at public balls or parties; and even these are knit by a member of his family, out of common saddlers silk.

One can imagine him writhing uncomfortably, and nervously adjusting his cravat and his gold spectacles as he reads these terrible charges. Piqued by William Crum's constant use of the term "My Lord Pomposity" and other such nicknames, he retorts by characterizing the editor of the *Standard* as "Silly Billy" and "the last crum of creation".

Both men in the heat of the controversy lose sight of the rules of grammar.

"We were not aware," says Van Antwerp, "until the last *Standard* appeared, that it looked suspicious for any one to visit the capitol as often as they seen fit."

And Crum bursts forth in answer to an item in the *Reporter*:

"The black hearted villain who composed it knew that it was a lie when he done so."

Finally the stings of his twenty-two year old opponent so enrage Ver Planck Van Antwerp that he throws dignity to the winds. The "slang-whanging and blackguard articles of 'The Standard'" have made a demand "of *anybody* who may at this time answer for the editorship" of the *Reporter*. And in elephantine fury he replies:

"Now we tell the puppy who wrote that article that he knows, as every body else knows here, who

are the Editors of this paper; and that they are ready at all times to answer any 'demand' (?) that he or his fellows may think proper to make of them But how is it with regard to the vagabond concern that thus alludes to them? Who is the author of the mass of putridity, and villainous scurrility, that is weekly thrown before the public through the columns of that blackguard sheet?

"That it is not its nominal proprietor, the *gawkey* boy Crum, who is a pitiful tool in the hands of others, and incapable of framing together correctly three consecutive sentences, is of course notorious to every body here; as is the additional fact that it does not proceed from the other milk-and-water creature *recently imported into the concern*"

And he charges wildly along, in his wrath stumbling into language that is not here printable.

But it is the General's swan song. About a month later his name disappears from the head of the sheet. Now and again in the history of early Iowa we see his form stalking through other rôles, but his duel with "Silly Billy" Crum is over.

That young man remains, triumphant, but perhaps, too, a little disconcerted at the removal of his friend the enemy, for not again will he find a foe who will make so admirable a target for his jests, his epithets, and his satire. Pen in hand he moves off stage to the right seeking whom he may attack.

CURTAIN

JOHN C. PARISH

Three Men and a Press

On the west bank of the Mississippi where Julien Dubuque, lead miner of the "Mines of Spain", had lived and died there grew up about 1830 a settlement known as the Dubuque Lead Mines. In the midst of miners' cabins and saloons appeared stores and churches, and finally one enterprising citizen decided that the town needed a newspaper.

So this man, John King, went back to Ohio, whence he had come, and bought a printing press. And he hired two assistants. One was William Cary Jones, a Whig, who was to help him edit the paper. The other was Andrew Keesecker, a typesetter and a Democrat.

The three men and the press mobilized in a two-story log-house, and on May 11, 1836, they issued the first newspaper in what is now Iowa. It bore the name of *The Dubuque Visitor* and carried the heading "Dubuque Lead Mines, Wisconsin Territory", — which announcement was more progressive than truthful for Wisconsin Territory had not yet been born. The little settlement was still a part of the Territory of Michigan, although a bill to create the Territory of Wisconsin was before Congress when the sheet appeared.

History, however, soon vindicated their prophecy and the heading stood. Being the only paper in the

region it served all factions. King himself was a Democrat, while both parties were represented by his assistants. In the columns of the *Visitor* appeared the announcements of rival candidates for office, long-winded and labored. "A Voter" and "A Candidate" took opposite stands on the question of holding a nominating convention. "Incognito" and "Curtius" and "Hawk-Eye" and other less modest contributors ran the gamut of newspaper eulogy and denunciation. Altogether this four page sheet was a unique and interesting organ and a worthy pioneer in the field of newspaperdom. In 1837 the name was changed to the *Iowa News* and it became a Democratic journal. Later it was succeeded by the *Miners' Express*, whose lineal descendant is the *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald*.

But let us follow a little further the fortunes of the three men and their faithful servant, the press. John King remained in Dubuque, a newspaper man, a judge, and later a retired and prosperous burger.

William Cary Jones, who had been hired by King at three hundred and fifty dollars, "with suitable board and lodging during one year", passed on to other fields. He edited and published a paper in New Orleans, and later practiced law in San Francisco. He served in the Civil War as a captain in the Union Army and was captured and held in prison for some time at Selma, Alabama. He and his fellow prisoners, not content with the *Selma Reporter*, which was smuggled in to them nearly every

day by a friendly cook's assistant, decided to edit a paper of their own, which they printed by hand upon the walls of one of the rooms. Jones was the editor and he was assisted by talented artists among his fellow officers. The paper had an elaborate vignette, composed of a Southerner, a slave, King Cotton, and numerous reptiles. Each number had an illustration, articles, and advertisements, all of which furnished much amusement to men who were punished more by ennui than by their captors.

Andrew Keesecker, like his patron John King, remained in Dubuque. He served on various newspapers, setting type for over a third of a century. He was one of those rare individuals who could compose an editorial as he set it up in type, without reducing it to manuscript; and he acquired a great reputation as a rapid typesetter. Once he engaged in a typesetting contest with A. P. Wood, another Dubuque printer and publisher.

With a printer's devil as umpire they began at a signal to set up the words of the Lord's Prayer. Keesecker finished first and according to arrangements, started to announce his success by calling out the last word. Unfortunately he had a curious habit of stuttering which seemed to increase under excitement. So while he was vainly endeavoring to bring out the triumphant word, Wood also finished and cut into his stumbling efforts with an incisive "Amen"; whereupon Keesecker, recovering his voice, insisted that he had been trying to say that

word for half an hour. The perplexed referee finally gave the award to Keesecker.

There remains the story of the press itself. It was a Washington hand press, made in Cincinnati by Charles Mallet. For about six years it did yeoman service in Dubuque. Then it was removed to Lancaster in western Wisconsin where H. A. Wiltse used it in printing the *Grant County Herald*. A few years later, J. N. Goodhue determined to print the first newspaper in Minnesota, and he bought the press, carried it by ox team up the Mississippi on the ice to St. Paul and used it to print the *Minnesota Pioneer*.

From this point on, the press seems to have had a dual personality. In two different States its remains are reverently guarded, and two State Historical Societies cling firmly, each to its own story of the later career of the old iron pioneer.

In accordance with one story the press had in its varied life acquired a wanderlust and leaving the haunts of comparative civilization it went westward in 1858, by ox team again, across the prairies and through the woods to the settlement at Sioux Falls on the Big Sioux River where it printed the *Dakota Democrat*, the first newspaper in Dakota. But its end came in 1862. In that year the Sioux Indians were on the war path. They raided and burned the town, and the deserted old press, warped and twisted by the fire, found its career of a quarter of a century ended in a typically pioneer fashion. And to-day in the Masonic Museum at Sioux Falls can be seen the

remnants of an old hand press that Dakotans point to with pride as the one which printed the first newspaper in three different Commonwealths.

But the Minnesota Historical Society maintains that the press which migrated to South Dakota was an altogether different press from the one which printed the *Dubuque Visitor* and the *Minnesota Pioneer*, and that John King's old iron servant remained to the end of its days in Minnesota. According to this version, when the *Pioneer* became a daily, the hand press was supplanted by a power press; and it moved, in 1855, from St. Paul to Sauk Rapids, Minnesota, where it produced the *Sauk Rapids Frontiersman*, and later the *New Era*. In after years it printed the *St. Cloud Union*, the *Sauk Center Herald*, and various other papers of central Minnesota. From 1897 to 1899 it served the publishers of a Swedish paper at Lindstrom, Minnesota. Finally, in 1905 the old press was purchased by the Pioneer Press Company and presented to the Minnesota Historical Society, where it can be seen by those who love historic antiques.

Whichever may be the correct version of the later years of this veteran press, its career is a notable one; and the fact remains undisputed that the journalism of at least two different States, Iowa and Minnesota, began with the movement of the lever of the old hand press that John King brought out from Ohio in 1836 to the lead mines on the west bank of the Mississippi.

JOHN C. PARISH.

Comment by the Editor

UNCONSCIOUS HISTORIANS

Blessed is the man who writes history unconsciously — who has other occupations and other purposes in life, yet leaves without realizing it a record often more illuminating, because more direct, than that of the formal historian.

To a large extent the newspaper man falls in this class. His mind is preoccupied with the present. Day before yesterday is out of his realm — so is the day after tomorrow. It is for his evening subscribers that he writes his editorials, recounts his news, and sets forth his advertisements; but the historian a half century later rejoices as he reads in the old sheets the political spirit of the time, the fresh account of current events, and the intimate presentation of the food and clothing and accessories of life of his grandfather.

Most pamphleteers and many propagandists and some diarists are unconscious historians. In letters preserved in attics, in old photographs and views of buildings and towns, in railroad time-tables and in maps and advertising literature we find history unconsciously and invaluablely recorded.

AN OLD ATLAS

The other day we came across an old atlas of Iowa, published in 1875. We remember the book

from our boyhood days when we used to pore over it by the hour. Dog-eared was the leaf where spread the map of the old home county, with every creek and patch of wood and swamp, and every jog in the road clearly shown. All the farm houses were indicated by tiny rectangles with the name of the farmer alongside. Here and there were microscopic drawings of schoolhouses and churches; and mills and blacksmith shops and cemeteries each had their symbols until the whole page was luminous with landmarks. These maps were meant for contemporary use, not for the historian of years to come. Yet how graphic is this record of the countryside in 1875.

And how we fed our eyes upon the pictures with which these pages of maps were interlarded. Here the artist and lithographer had nobly portrayed Iowa. We found the residences of the leading citizens of our town — and of other towns. There were pictures without end of farm residences in every county in the State. Everywhere trim wooden fences enclosed those gabled houses of half a century ago, and almost everywhere the lightning-rod salesman had made his visit.

Then there were the pages that showed forth the State institutions. The three modest buildings of the State University of Iowa were far outshone by the magnificent facades of the insane asylums. Happily in the intervening years the State has come to realize that it pays to put better stuff in the making of a citizen and so save on repair work.

The book was listed as an historical atlas because of the pages of formal history in the back. But this material is easily found in other places. The historical data of prime importance was that which the atlas makers presented with no idea of recording history — the detailed maps of the counties in 1875, and the pictures of the homes and business houses and public institutions of a day that is gone.

IDEALS OF 1875

To be sure, one must make allowance for certain distortions due to State and community pride. For example, in the pictures of Iowa farms there were pigs, large and round, who did not wallow or lie asleep in the mud, but stalked about in stately and dignified fashion or gazed reflectively at the gigantic cows, who, disdaining the grass, stood at attention in the foreground. The horses were of the prancing variety with upraised hoof and everflowing mane and tail. They drew brand new wagons up the road, or buggies in which rode be-parasolled and curiously dressed ladies.

I used to wonder why cattle and horses and hogs were always drawn with their fat profiles toward the front of the picture — as if a strong wind had blown straight across the page lining them up like weather vanes. Now I know that the glorified live stock was an expression of Iowa ideals in 1875 — and that fact in itself is of historic importance.

J. C. P.

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