

The
PALIMPSEST
SEPTEMBER 1931
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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

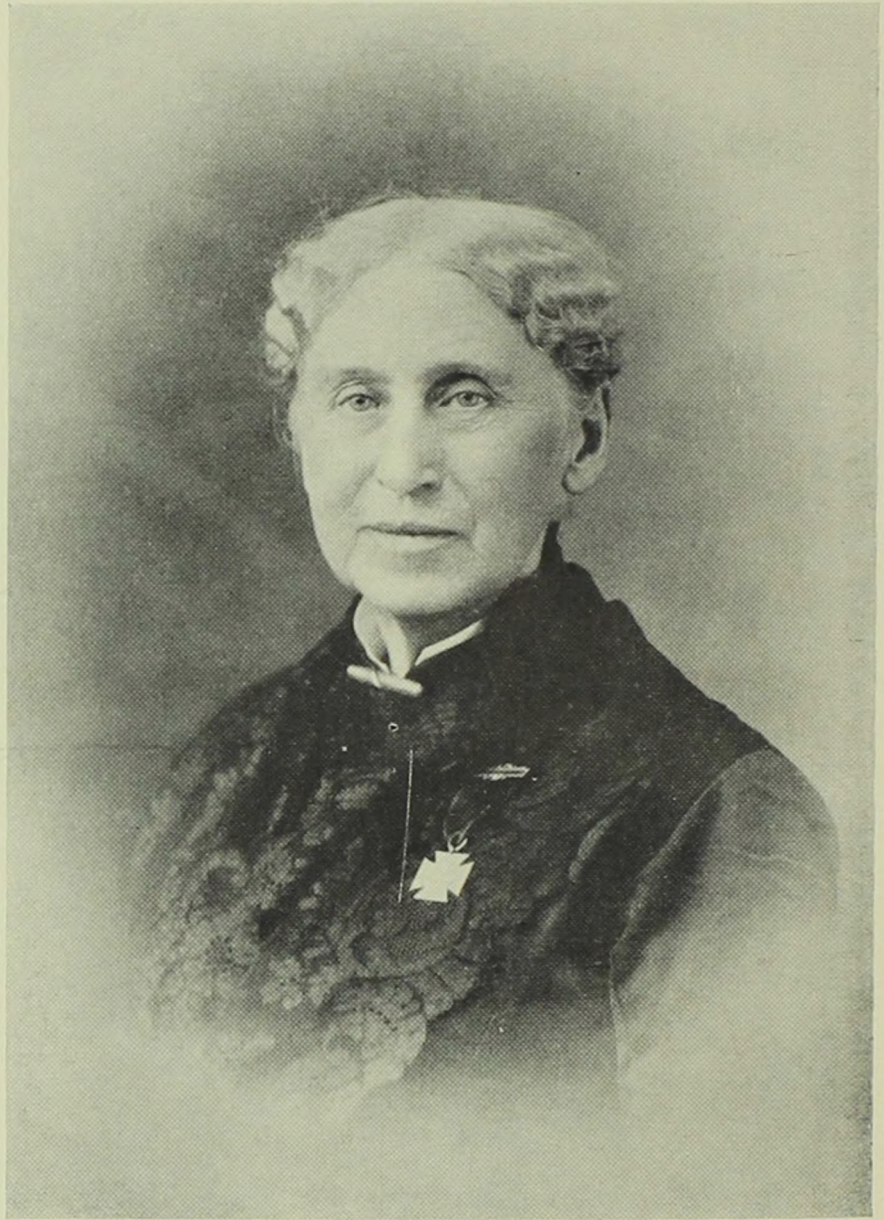
THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

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



COURTESY OF MISS MAYMIE TURNER
MRS. ANNIE WITTENMYER

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. X11 ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER 1931 NO. 9

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The Wittenmyer Diet Kitchens

One morning in January, 1862, a woman walked into a military hospital at Sedalia, Missouri, and glanced keenly about the large room filled with cots, each one holding a sick or wounded soldier. It was breakfast time and the attendants were moving about with trays. As the men looked up in surprise at seeing a woman visitor at that hour of the morning, some of them may have recognized her, for many of the patients were Iowa men and the woman was Mrs. Annie Turner Wittenmyer of Keokuk, already experienced as a relief worker among the soldiers.

As she stood there surveying the crowded room, Mrs. Wittenmyer was surprised to see on one of the cots her youngest brother, David Turner, a lad of sixteen. He had just waved away the attendant carrying his breakfast tray.

"If you can't eat this you'll have to do without, there is nothing else", was the response of the waiter.

The sister stepped to the side of the cot and glanced at the rejected tray. "On a dingy-looking wooden tray", she wrote later, "was a tin cup full of black, strong coffee; beside it was a leaden looking tin platter, on which was a piece of fried fat bacon, swimming in its own grease, and a slice of bread." No wonder the young soldier, sick with typhoid fever and acute dysentery, looked upon such food with distaste. The meeting was indeed fortunate for the sick boy, who was nursed back to health by his efficient elder sister.

The incident, however, had a more far-reaching effect, for it made Mrs. Wittenmyer realize in a concrete way the need of special diets for hospital patients. At this time Mrs. Wittenmyer was a woman in her middle thirties — born on August 26, 1827. Her hair was already snow white, but her keen blue eyes and fair complexion denied the suggestion of age. For almost a year she had been going about the camps and hospitals along the Mississippi River where Iowa regiments were to be found, bringing good cheer, food delicacies, and supplies for the men in the hospitals. She had helped to organize the Keokuk Soldiers' Aid Society and partly through her efforts the women of Iowa were mobilized to furnish money, jellies, potatoes, fruit, sheets, hospital garments, and whatever else was needed to make the men a little more comfortable.

As she went about her work distributing these goods, doing errands for the wounded, helping in all sorts of emergencies, Mrs. Wittenmyer was more and more impressed by the wretched provision made by the government hospitals for feeding the patients who were very sick or desperately wounded. The fare served to these men was almost exactly the same as the rations issued to the men in the field.

The food would be condemned to-day as unsatisfactory for well soldiers and, indeed, attacks of scurvy were all too common. But for men sick with typhoid fever or running a high temperature as a result of infected wounds — and most wounds were infected in those days — bacon, beans, hard tack, and coffee were evidently unsuitable food. Moreover, most of the cooking in the hospitals as well as in the camps was done by soldiers detailed for that work, most of whom did not care for the job. Many of the patients needed a satisfactory diet more than they needed medicine. But military red tape could not be expected to distinguish between a well soldier and a sick one: certain rations were provided for each soldier — if no dishonest contractor or surgeon intervened.

The aid societies, the United States Sanitary Commission, and the United States Christian Commission, had attempted to supply delicacies for the critically ill patients, but distribution was difficult. Women like Mrs. Wittenmyer could not be present in every

hospital all the time, and spasmodic gifts of lemonade or broth were unsatisfactory.

Moreover, the surgeons were frequently unwilling to have visitors distribute food promiscuously in the wards, although it is difficult to see how anything — except poison — could have been more harmful to most sick men than the food regularly served. If, on the other hand, the delicacies provided by the women at home were turned over to the commissary for distribution, they often failed to reach the men for whom they were intended.

Mrs. Wittenmyer pondered the problem of suitable food for sick and wounded men, and in December, 1863, an idea came to her, as she says, "like a divine inspiration". She proposed that special diet kitchens be established in the larger military hospitals, with two experienced women as supervisors or dietary nurses. The diet for each patient needing special food was to be prescribed by the attending surgeon, prepared in the special diet kitchen, and served to the patient according to the name or number on the diet slip.

Although her suggestion was at first opposed by the hospital surgeons, some experiments with these special diet kitchens convinced the commanding officers and surgeons of their worth. The United States Christian Commission took up the work and in May, 1864, Mrs. Annie Wittenmyer resigned her position as

State Sanitary Agent of Iowa to devote all her time to the organization, management, and supervision of special diet kitchens in the army hospitals. By the close of the war more than a hundred of these kitchens had been installed, where such delicacies as toast, chicken, soup, milk, tomatoes, jellies, tea, gruel, and vegetables took the place of army fare or supplemented it.

The government furnished most of the supplies and the attendants required in these diet kitchens, but additional delicacies, including such things as jellies and preserves, were donated by private relief agencies. The two women supervisors in each kitchen were chosen by Mrs. Wittenmyer, who was the agent of the United States Christian Commission, and their expenses and maintenance were also provided by the Christian Commission. In October, 1864, the War Department issued a special order permitting Mrs. Wittenmyer and "such ladies as she may deem proper to employ" to visit United States general hospitals "for the purpose of superintending the preparation of food in the Special Diet Kitchens", upon the request of the surgeons. The quartermaster's department was ordered to furnish transportation.

It was not always easy to secure, as supervisors in these diet kitchens, women who were sympathetic, efficient, and tactful; and the work required these qualities in a high degree. The following directions

sent out by Mrs. Wittenmyer in July, 1864, indicate the standards she set for the women workers in the diet kitchens:

INSTRUCTIONS TO MANAGERS OF SPECIAL
DIET KITCHENS

In accepting your present position of responsibility, you place yourself in the service and under the general care and direction of the U. S. Christian Commission; and in my absence you will be under the general direction of the Field Agent of the Department, and will look to the nearest Station Agent of the Commission for assistance and supplies.

The following statements and requirements must receive careful attention, and be scrupulously observed:

1st. Your work in the Kitchen is to assist the Surgeons in giving comfort and restoration to languishing men, who are in need of carefully prepared nutritious food.

2d. The order of the Surgeon in charge, is the law of the Kitchens, as it is of all other hospital arrangements.

3d. Under the direction of the Surgeon in charge, it will be your duty to prepare such articles of diet, and only such, as are ordered or approved by the Surgeons in charge of the sick.

4th. You will keep open to the inspection of the Surgeon in charge, an account of all the stores received from any source outside of the hospital, and at the end of each month, send to me at Louisville, Ky., a statement of the expenditures from such sources, and an invoice of the stock on hand, accompanied by a requisition for the supplies needed for the coming month.

5th. In addition to the monthly report, you will communicate with me at Louisville, Ky., at the end of each week,

noting any incident of interest you may choose, and giving a general statement of the condition and working of the Kitchen.

6th. Great good may be daily accomplished by bringing kind words and Christian sympathy and solicitude, with articles of comfort and necessity, to the cots of the sick and wounded; but all such visits to the wards must be by the Surgeon's permission, and in strict conformity with hospital regulations.

7th. A spirit of censoriousness and evil speaking and intermeddling, unchristian anywhere, is doubly mischievous here, and dangerous to all concerned. First impressions of what can and ought to be done in a large hospital, are very likely to need the correction which extended experience and candid observation are sure to give.

8th. Neatness and simplicity of dress, are intimately connected with your success.

9th. A uniform Christian deportment, above the shadow of reproach, and the avoiding of the very appearance of evil, is absolutely necessary.

10th. Your work has its foundation in Christian self-sacrifice. The only possible sufficient motive for you, is a desire to do good to the suffering. For this you will be willing to forego, in a large degree, home comforts, and especially that of social intercourse, in order to give yourself, with a single aim, and with all your might, to the work you have undertaken.

But even these special diet kitchens had to fight against graft. A woman helper in charge of the special kitchen in the hospital at Madison, Indiana, complained to Mrs. Wittenmyer of the food, especially the coffee. Mrs. Wittenmyer sent Miss Lou E.

Vance, one of her shrewdest women assistants, to the hospital with instructions to find out what was going on and report. Miss Vance got her first clue when she observed that the attendants had been ordered to deposit all the coffee grounds in a barrel beside the kitchen door. When she asked them why they kept the grounds, they replied laconically, "It's the surgeon's orders."

She learned from further questioning that the surgeon had given orders that the coffee grounds so collected be dried on the commissary floor. When she inquired what was done with them after that, she received the non-committal reply, "I don't know", and a general laugh. Sure enough, when she visited the commissary room, she found piles of coffee grounds, but the only reply she could get from the men was that they "guessed" the surgeon was going to sell the dried grounds.

Miss Vance, however, was no mean detective. She poured some of the coffee served at the hospital on some white pine boards and decided that it had been adulterated with logwood — an extract used for dyeing. She was quite sure then that she knew what was being done with the coffee grounds. To prove her theory she picked out one of the attendants who looked rather meek and asked him point blank why the men in the commissary room put logwood in the coffee for the sick and wounded men to drink. The

boy turned pale and stammered, "We have to do it; it's the surgeon's orders."

Miss Vance immediately sent the news to Mrs. Wittenmyer, who advised her to secure affidavits from the men without letting the surgeon know about it. She herself started at once for Louisville, Kentucky, where General Robert C. Wood, the Assistant Surgeon General, had his headquarters. With the proofs in her hand, Mrs. Wittenmyer asked to have a private interview with the General. Immediately she stated her charges against the doctor at the Madison hospital.

The officer was astonished and exclaimed, "Why, he is one of my best surgeons."

"But my opinion of him is that *he ought to be hung higher than Haman*", Mrs. Wittenmyer replied.

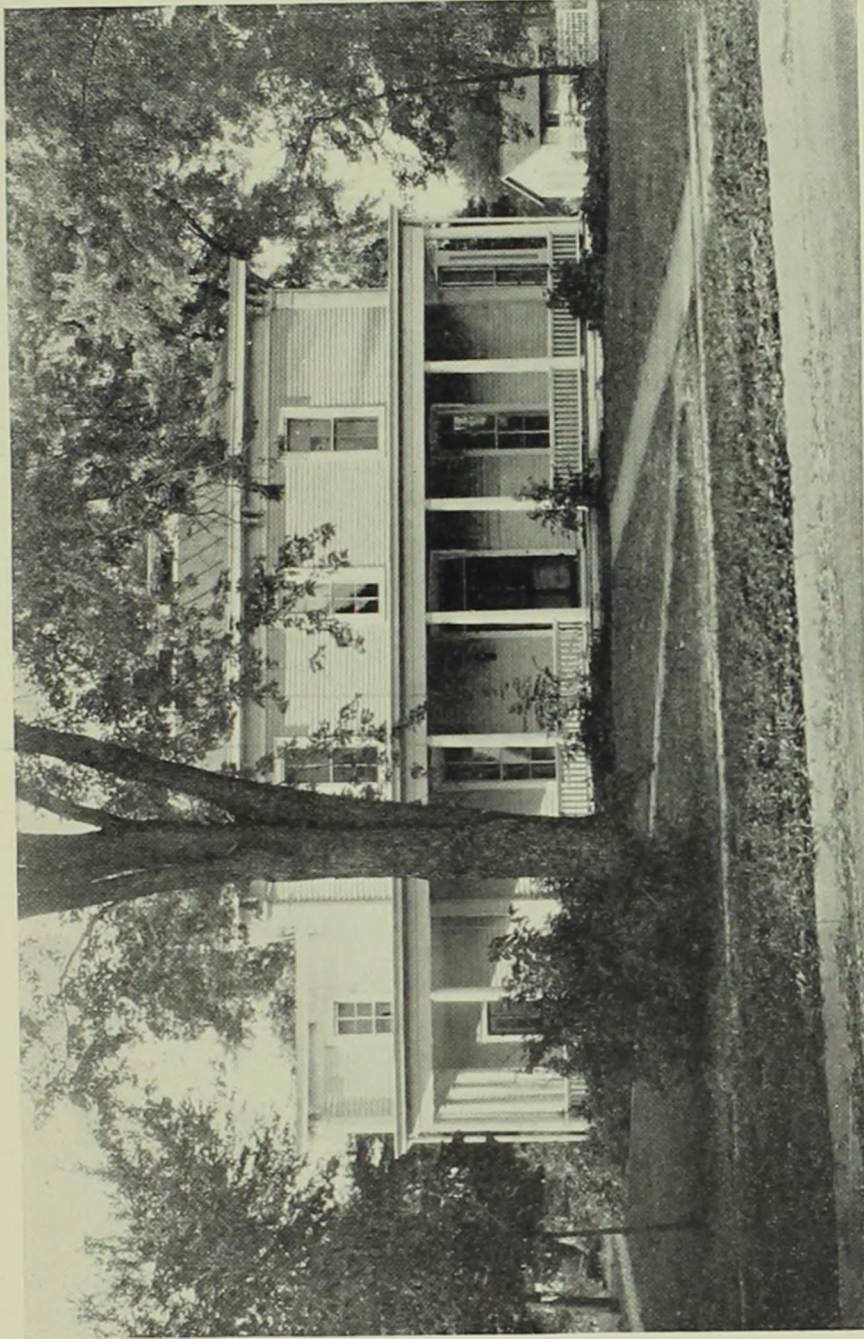
And then she presented the proofs, so positive that the Assistant Surgeon General was convinced. "I will punish that man to the full extent of the law", he declared. Mrs. Wittenmyer urged that the case be turned over to the Governor of Indiana, but General Wood insisted that this would be a reflection on his own honesty and injure his standing in the service. Finally Mrs. Wittenmyer consented to have charges preferred by a military commission and the General agreed that she should select the commission. But as soon as the commission appeared at the hospital at Madison, the guilty surgeon telegraphed his resignation to Washington and he himself was soon far away —

unpunished. The hospital, however, benefitted by his absence.

On the whole, the diet kitchens seem to have answered a very real need and to have been fairly successful. Some of them furnished rations to as many as a thousand or fifteen hundred of the very sick patients at one time. During the last eighteen months of the war more than two million rations were issued monthly from the diet kitchens, some of which were established almost under fire. Even if they did not furnish "mother's cooking", the appetizing foods sent out from these special diet kitchens must have greatly increased the chances of recovery for many patients.

Mrs. Wittenmyer remained in charge of this work until the war was over. The hospitals were gradually emptied and the sick and wounded men went home to eat once more the food prepared by wives or mothers. Of her General U. S. Grant said: "No soldier on the firing line gave more heroic service than she rendered."

RUTH A. GALLAHER



FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN E. BRIGGS

THE HARLAN HOME

The Harlan Home

At the end of the vista on North Main Street in Mount Pleasant, Iowa, stands an imposing old house with wide verandas and white columns. It is the Harlan Home. Built by Senator James Harlan, it was occupied by him for many years, and during the latter decades of his life it was also the home of the son and grandchildren of Abraham Lincoln.

After the death of Senator Harlan in 1899, the big house became the property of his daughter, who gave it to Iowa Wesleyan College in 1907. Situated just across the street from the campus, it was thought that the home of one of the founders of the college might be appropriately used as the residence of the president. But the plan was not successful. For several years the house stood lonely and forsaken, until the spring of 1931 when the college remodeled the place and made it habitable again.

As the carpenters proceeded with the work of removing several rooms that had been added at the back of the house, they came upon a plain, narrow door. Beneath the layer of accumulated dust could be discerned three oval spots upon the middle board. Why had the door been decorated in this peculiar manner? The ovals were not precisely drawn and they were

placed at irregular intervals. Upon closer scrutiny, penciled writing was revealed in each small panel. Dimly a name, a date, and a measurement could be deciphered. The old brown door was a memorial of days when the Lincoln grandchildren lived in the house and left a record of their height upon the woodwork. A later painter had carefully painted around the writing and thus the intimate chronicle of the Harlan-Lincoln family was preserved.

The discovery of this simple memorial written in pencil on the panel of a door in an obscure corner nearly fifty years ago revives memories and leads to reminiscences. Who built the house and when? What about the people who once lived there?

James Harlan came to Mount Pleasant in 1853 to take charge of the Collegiate Institute. In the summer of the following year he witnessed the laying of the cornerstone of Old Main, the three-story brick building that marked the real beginning of the institution as a permanent college. But Harlan's career as a college president was brief. During his first year of service, he helped organize the Republican party and was selected as United States Senator in 1855.

The first home built by Senator Harlan in Mount Pleasant was erected in 1857 when he was home from Washington during a recess of Congress. This brick house is now part of the Harlan Hotel — the part with the mansard roof. It was later that the frame

building at the end of North Main Street was built and the family residence established there. Servants' cottages were built on the back of the lot. During the years that James Harlan was in the Senate he returned each summer to his Mount Pleasant home.

In the dark days of the Civil War, Harlan was valiantly loyal to the Union. He became one of Lincoln's principal advisors, and proved to be a bulwark of strength to the care-burdened President. Harlan was among those who stood by the bedside of the stricken President in his dying hour, and remained the friend and comforter of the sorrowing family.

The names of Harlan and Lincoln were even more closely united by the marriage of Harlan's only daughter, Mary, with Lincoln's only surviving son, Robert. At the time of this marriage in 1868, Robert T. Lincoln had been admitted to the bar of Illinois. The young couple made their home in Chicago, where Robert was legal counsel for the Pullman Company; but her father's house in Mount Pleasant was always home to Mary Harlan Lincoln, and she spent much time there, especially after her mother's death in 1884. After Senator Harlan's death, she inherited the home.

Robert Lincoln was Secretary of War during the administrations of President Garfield and President Arthur. It was at this time, during a sojourn at the Harlan home in Mount Pleasant, that the memorial of the grandchildren of Abraham Lincoln and James

Harlan was written on the brown wooden panel of the old door. Whose hand held the pencil is not known. Was it father, mother, grandfather, or grandmother? Forty-eight years ago some one brought pencil and ruler and, as the children, one by one, stood straight against the door, their heights were proudly recorded.

In the upper space is written:

1883

Mamie Lincoln Sept. 4

5 ft 4 inches

Mamie, christened Mary, was the oldest daughter of Robert Lincoln and Mary Harlan.

The middle space contains the legend:

Jack Lincoln Sept 4

4 ft 5 inches.

One can almost see little Jack, as he was called, though he was named Abraham for his illustrious grandfather. That was much too formidable a name for such a dear little fellow as Jack. How straight he stood, pressed against that old door, the top of his head just measuring up to the proud height of four feet and five inches! People in Mount Pleasant still remember Jack and his pony cart, and how he loved chocolate cake.

Next came the youngest of them all.

Jessie Lincoln Sept 4

3 ft 10 inches

Just a few words penciled on a door nearly half a century ago. What a train of memories they recall and what speculation as to the present whereabouts of the children who pressed against the door to measure how tall they were!

The first break in the family came the next year when their grandmother, the wife of Senator Harlan, died in Virginia and was laid to rest in Forest Home Cemetery at Mount Pleasant beside her three departed children — two sons and one daughter.

In 1889 Robert T. Lincoln was appointed United States Minister to Great Britain, so with his family he went to live in London. The two daughters, Mary and Jessie, owing to the diplomatic position of their father, were presented at court, to the wonder and admiration of their Mount Pleasant friends. Jack was placed in a school in Paris. While there he was taken ill and died. A chocolate cake, sent to him by a neighbor in Mount Pleasant, arrived too late.

With the death of Robert T. Lincoln in July, 1926, the direct male line of the Lincoln family was ended. The only person now bearing that honored name is Mary Harlan Lincoln, Jack's mother, who lives in a beautiful old red-brick mansion of revolutionary days in Georgetown. From her window, she looks down the valley of the Potomac toward the Lincoln Memorial, the "far-shining monument of remembrance erected in enduring marble to the memory of the

deathless martyr, the consecrated statesman, the ideal American", for whom her son was named. "If Jack had lived," she says, "he would have had too much to live up to."

Mary Lincoln's two other children, Mamie and Jessie are still living. Mamie is Mrs. Charles Isham, the wife of a Chicago lawyer who now lives in New York. She has one son, Lincoln Isham, who is married and also lives in New York.

Jessie, who measured on the old door in 1883 just three feet and ten inches, is now Mrs. Robert J. Randolph, and lives near her mother in Georgetown. She is known in Mount Pleasant as Jessie Lincoln Beckwith, as it was there, against the wishes of her father and grandfather that she married Warren Beckwith, the son of a prominent family in Mount Pleasant. This marriage occurred about the time of the Spanish American War, and the young bridegroom left immediately for the Philippines. Jessie remained with her mother until her husband returned. Their two children were born there, Peggy or Mary, and Buddy, who was christened Robert Todd Lincoln Beckwith. When Peggy was a baby, so the story goes, the young father went galloping through town calling out to clear the way for he was taking a bottle of milk to Abraham Lincoln's great granddaughter.

That was long ago, and Peggy Beckwith is now a full-fledged aviator, flying her own airplanes, a Gypsy

Moth and a 300 horse-power Travelair. She learned to fly in Washington, and has her own landing field at the Lincoln summer home at Manchester, Vermont.

Robert Beckwith is married and lives in Washington.

Looking up the vista on North Main Street, the Harlan-Lincoln home looks much as it did forty-eight years ago, when the Lincoln children stood against the panels of the door. Yet time has wrought changes. The green shutters have been removed from the windows; the white picket fence in front and the high paling fence which screened the garden and orchard are gone. Much of the back part of the house has been removed, but the original front part, freshly painted, appears as in former days. The interior has been changed. The enormous rooms have been divided by partitions, yet some of the old features are preserved. Two broad arches connecting the Senator's library with adjoining rooms are not entirely obscured, and some of the old fireplaces still provide good cheer and supplementary heat on cold, stormy days.

MARTHA THOMAS DYALL

A Famous War Horse

In the spring of 1864 the Fourteenth Iowa Infantry participated in the Red River campaign. The Second Brigade, of which the Fourteenth Iowa was a unit, was commanded by Colonel William T. Shaw of the Fourteenth, while Lieutenant Colonel J. H. Newbold of Hillsboro, Iowa, was in command of the regiment. When General N. P. Banks organized his expedition to ascend the Red River and capture large stores of cotton which the Confederates had assembled at various ports along the river, Colonel Shaw's brigade was ordered to join the other forces in Louisiana.

On the tenth of March, Colonel Shaw's brigade left Vicksburg as a part of the First Division of the Sixteenth Army Corps, and proceeded to Alexandria, Louisiana, encountering some resistance on the way. After a brief rest, the detachment broke camp at Alexandria and marched to Cotile Landing up the Red River, where it embarked on transports and was conveyed to Grand Ecore. On April 9th the brigade reported to General Banks at Pleasant Hill.

During this campaign, the horse that Colonel Newbold was riding got infected eyes and it was feared that he was going blind. On the twenty-mile march from Alexandria to Cotile Landing, a squad of soldiers

of the Fourteenth from Hillsboro, Iowa, neighbors of Colonel Newbold, were out on a foraging expedition. In the course of their search for supplies, they arrived at a very aristocratic plantation and decided at once to see what they could find. In the barn they discovered a beautiful white horse. Here was a real prize, just such a horse as the colonel needed to take the place of the one he was riding.

Just as they were leading the horse from the barn, however, the lady of the house came rushing out greatly excited. She told the soldiers that she was Mrs. Taylor, the wife of General Richard Taylor, who was the son of Zachary Taylor, former President of the United States. The white horse they were taking was the one that General Taylor had captured from a Mexican officer and had ridden during most of his campaigns in the Mexican War. She did not tell them, however, that her husband was even then preparing to attack the Union forces at Sabine Crossroads and Pleasant Hill.

When the Iowa soldiers persisted in seizing the General's horse, Mrs. Taylor pleaded with them to take anything else on the plantation but to leave "Old Whitey". The horse was old, she said, and could do them but little good, while he was highly prized by the Taylor family because of his military record.

Mrs. Taylor was a woman of prepossessing appearance and made a strong appeal, but not quite strong

enough to convince the Hillsboro boys that they did not need the famous war horse more than the Taylor family did. Consequently they marched away with their prize and presented him to Colonel Newbold who accepted the gift. The horse was henceforth reckoned as his property.

When Colonel Shaw reported to General Banks at Pleasant Hill he was ordered to march his brigade to the front and relieve General J. W. McMillan's brigade which had been engaged in covering the retreat of the Union forces after their decisive repulse on the previous day at Sabine Crossroads. The position occupied by the Fourteenth Iowa was in the front line where skirmishing was hottest all day. About five o'clock in the afternoon the Confederates attacked in force, hoping to rout General Banks's army completely.

Within half an hour the brigades on both sides were forced back by the determined charges of the enemy, until Colonel Shaw's regiments were exposed on three sides. At one time the Thirty-second Iowa, on the extreme left of the brigade, was completely surrounded, but succeeded in fighting through the encircling gray lines.

Meanwhile Colonel Newbold, mounted upon the old white war horse that belonged to the commanding general of the enemy, rode through the thick brush urging his men to hold their ground. Presently a

swift cavalry charge sent a protecting battery hurrying pell-mell to the rear and left the Fourteenth Iowa to receive the full force of the attack. The cavalry was repulsed, but immediately two lines of infantry advanced. The first contingent was checked in front but the second line shifted to the right and opened a terrific cross-fire. Just when the fighting was hottest, Colonel Newbold was shot and fell from his horse mortally wounded.

Thereupon Captain Warren C. Jones of Mount Pleasant assumed command of the Fourteenth Iowa and rode the white horse through the rest of the battle. Eventually Colonel Shaw received orders to fall back. Other troops were brought into the fight and after two hours of constant battle, the Confederates were forced to retreat in considerable disorder. Instead of following up the victory, however, the Union commander continued to withdraw down the river.

Soon after the battle at Pleasant Hill, General Taylor's white horse was sent by boat to Keokuk and thence to Mount Pleasant where the wife of Colonel Newbold then resided. A few days later he was taken to the Newbold farm in Van Buren County about two miles from Hillsboro. There the horse was kept by Cyrus M. Newbold, a brother of Colonel Newbold and of Governor J. G. Newbold. Cyrus Newbold taught the old war horse how to work on

the farm, a service which it had never before performed.

After a period of two years on the Newbold farm, the horse was sold to John Moxley, a horseman of considerable note living four miles west of Salem. Moxley, however, kept the horse but a short time when he sold him to Captain Warren C. Jones, who had ridden him at the battle of Pleasant Hill. Captain Jones tenderly cared for "Old Whitey" as long as the thoroughbred lived, and at the end buried him with military honors a mile and a half north of Mount Pleasant.

O. A. GARRETSON

The Sheldall School

The Sheldall School in Scott Township was the first public institution of learning in southern Hamilton County. Pupils came from adjacent townships and from the northern part of Story County as well. Being the only public building in the vicinity, it was frequently used for church services, elections, and other meetings of public character.

The schoolhouse took its name from Lars Sheldall who owned the site where it was built in 1860. The building was erected by Lars Henryson. Most of the material used in its construction consisted of native timber brought from the Skunk River woods. The sills and joists were hewn from oak logs, and the framework, also of oak, was fashioned in the required dimensions in Dan McCarthy's sawmill near Story City.

The great majority of the pioneer patrons were Norwegian immigrants who had come across the sea in sailing ships and thence over the plains in prairie schooners. Some came as early as 1855. There were also a few Danes and a sprinkling of English-speaking families most of whom had emigrated from the eastern States.

All the immigrants were inured to hardships and

plain living. They took hold energetically to establish themselves, but did not always find it easy to pay the school tax or to supply the children with the necessary books and clothing. By practicing thrift, however, they saved enough to rig out the children comfortably and fill their dinner baskets sufficiently to satisfy healthy appetites.

Kentucky-jean coats and pants, hickory shirts, and heavy top boots for the boys were much in vogue. Calico dresses for girls had not gone out of fashion; and many pretty faces peeped out from beneath sunbonnets. The suits and dresses were made to order at home by hand. Woolen stockings and mittens were knit by mother.

The dinner basket bulged with layers of bread bountifully interspersed with butter and molasses. Sometimes there would be egg, meat, or cheese sandwiches. Pie and cake belonged mostly to the Sunday dinner menu, but cookies, doughnuts, and kringla were not uncommon.

Usually the pupils were required to eat their dinners quietly in the school room, but occasionally there would be a rush-and-grab for a slice of bread, then a huge mouthful taken, enough to choke a dog, and out they would charge with bat or ball in one hand and a fistful of crumpled bread in the other, entirely too busy to eat. Though they were forgetful at times, the children had all been taught never to waste any

food. Hence, when a teacher threw the remnants of his dinner into the fire, the pupils looked on with horror.

The pioneer teachers were serious minded men and women, and left as a heritage to their pupils a stamp of character which has helped make them a useful, upright body of citizens. They were also good disciplinarians, and where order and system prevail half the battle is won. To impart as well as receive instruction then becomes a pleasure.

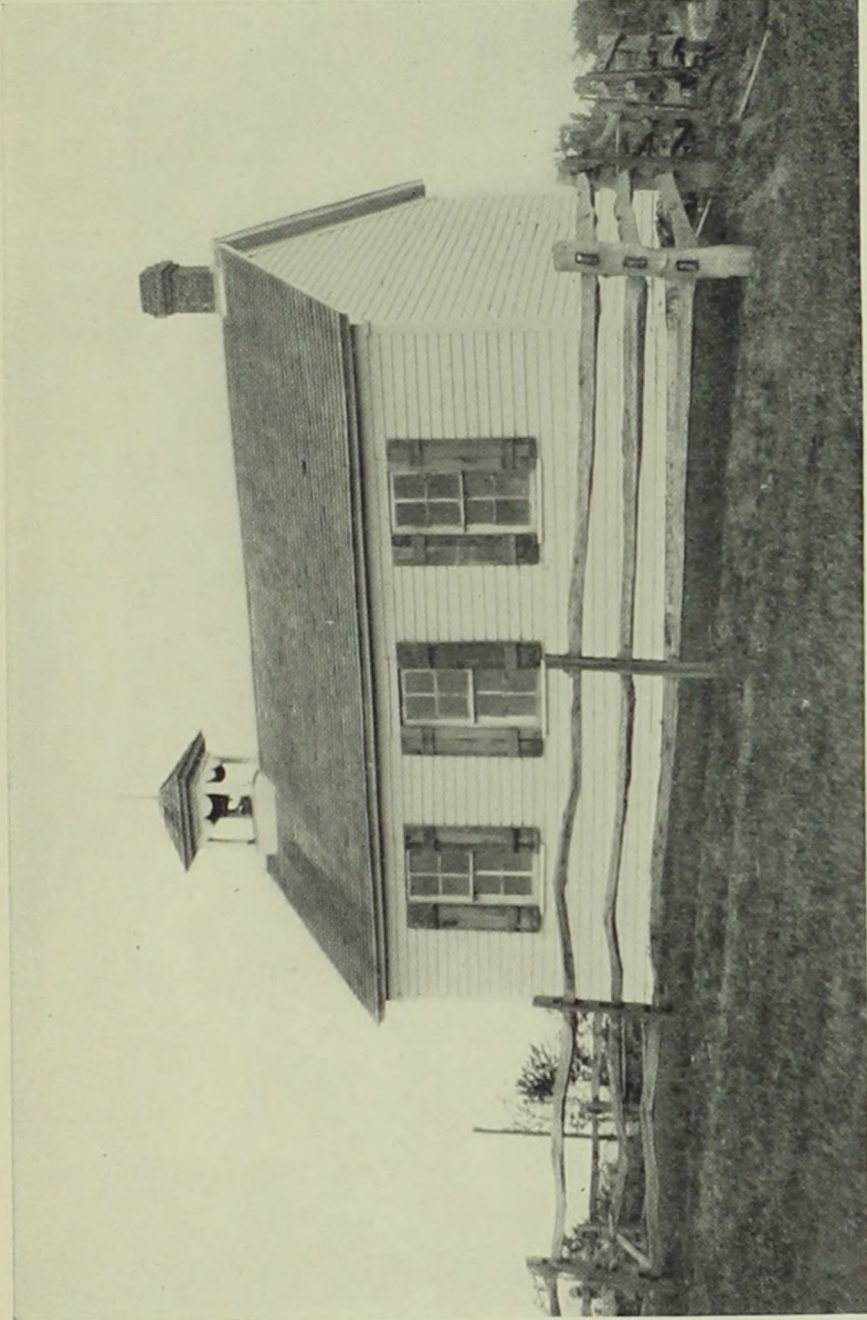
To willing workers there was opportunity for advancement then as now. The courses of study were, perhaps, not so full or as well planned as they came to be later, but with diligent application under intelligent guidance there was nothing to hinder the pupils from making good progress.

Seldom have I noticed a more contrasting play of emotions than were expressed in the sobs and tears, the yells of glee, the howls of pain, the hard fought games, the funny antics, the sallies of wit, and in the laughter and very joyousness of living displayed in and about the old Sheldall School. Sometimes Old Adam would bob up in spite of all vigilance, whence the application of the switch. On occasion the offender would be required to go forth, cut down, trim, and prepare his own rod of punishment. This in itself was enough to humble almost anybody. Sometimes a mischief-making future bishop or bank pres-

ident would be escorted over to the girls' seats and made to sit between two of these pretties, much to his distress and mortification. At other times wrongdoers were confined at recess and the miserable culprits would sit prisoners, sad in soul and spirit, listening to the jubilee outside where all was freedom and happiness. Often the truant would be stood in front of the whole school till his legs ached, an abject example of the wages of iniquity.

We used to play Anti-over, Blackman, Drop-the-handkerchief, Needle's eye, Norwegian ball, yes, even Sock-ball. In Blackman, Needle's eye, and Drop-the-handkerchief the girls joined, but Sock-ball, which simply consisted in throwing the ball as hard as possible where it might hurt the most, was sport only for the bigger boys. It was a foolish, cruel sport. A few of the boys happened to be hit hard blows in the abdomen, and each had much ado in regaining his breath, let alone recovering from the pain which would linger for days. Fortunately for the school, the teacher found us out and peremptorily put a stop to the rough sport.

Once there came an orgy of coughing and spitting among us, which kept the whole school in an uproar while it lasted. Every one seemed to have taken cold very suddenly and all vied to do it now and be rid of it. This was during school hours, and the teacher, being very wise, decided that such an epidemic needed



COURTESY OF N. TJERNAGEL

THE SHELDALL SCHOOLHOUSE

drastic treatment and kept us at our books during recess. This cured us.

A pinching mania assailed us later, spread through the whole school, and persisted for a considerable length of time. One would steal behind another and pinch his or her arm with might and main. Though the pain was maddening, few would let on, but craftily watched their chance to get even. Our arms were black and blue for weeks and weeks afterward. It was all done so cleverly that the teacher was only able to note the result, not the cause.

Sometimes we would walk on stilts, but only a few proved to be expert at it. One of the older boys was long, lanky, and athletic to a degree, and when, with his enormous stilts, he swung alongside the schoolhouse, shook hands with the chimney, and sat himself down beside the belfry to eat his lunch, we thought he was the greatest acrobat ever. He would rise and crow gleefully like a self-confident rooster when through with his meal, then stride majestically forward. But on one occasion he was too cocksure in his movements, causing him to break one of his stilts. The mishap flung him forward thrice the length of his body before he was properly flattened out on the ground.

The glorious old game of Norwegian ball remained ever the chief amusement among us boys. None of us will forget the master hits of a muscular new pupil,

when with his hickory bat he sent the ball soaring to meet the sun, thus enabling him to make a home run with time to spare before the tantalizing ball would reach the hands itching to catch it and put him out. One of the boys wielded his batting-stick so that the ball would hop over his head rearward, where nobody thought it necessary to be on guard to meet it. He, too, made his base. Another batter's terrific drives sent the ball hurtling, cannon-like, straight ahead, and woe to him who got in its way. The skillful hitter loped along for home in leisurely fashion, smiling all the while as the out-fielders hunted frantically for the ball last seen bobbing up and down far beyond the school yard in the Sheldall meadow. To see one's side lose a game just because some awkward performer failed to ply his legs in properly measured tempo when about to touch the base, and then to hear his despairing yell as the ball unmercifully bored into his flesh and put him out, was trying, to say the least. Sometimes the teachers would join in the games, and often they acted as umpires. The better the games, the better the spirit throughout, and as long as such amusements were not overstressed they were beneficial to the school work in general.

There was much sociability among the people in the early days, and this spirit communicated itself to the children at school. They loved to go a-visiting. Sometimes the school would tramp in a body to a neighbor-

ing school just for a friendly call, or to be present at some program. The pupils would have a royal time getting acquainted, and in combining in one grand aggregation during a game. Some of the boys, rather new to each other, reminded us of strange dogs accidentally thrown together that sniff and smell around, hair bristling and all that, but finally make up and nearly run their legs off in their eager show of friendliness. When such visits were made during winter we would pile into bob-sleighs and scud through startled neighborhoods to the accompaniment of bells and a general vocal hullabaloo.

Though there were difficulties to overcome then as now, the new country with its promise for the future gave zest to the active and ambitious. Children and all were imbued with buoyant hopes for the days to come, which enabled them to enjoy all the more the little pleasures and advantages within reach. Thus, when the whole family turned out to the school exhibitions, the air was so saturated with happy joyousness that it was a little difficult to breathe, especially just before the curtain went up. And I doubt if the Roman gladiators held their honors in happier esteem than did the hero of the debate or spelling match. It was worth while exercise for it brought the qualities of concentration and studiousness into play, and served as a means for social getting together.

The oratorical outbursts at the debates were at

times both lofty and ludicrous, all according to the occasion or degree of ability. There was, all in all, however, much common sense expressed, and even considerable display of skill in discussion. The patrons, teachers, and pupils all took part.

In going to spelling matches in the evenings we would generally fill up Henry L. Henderson's big sleigh drawn by his powerful mules, and off we went with a flourish, the champion speller and owner of the outfit at the reins and his henchmen huddled in a heap behind. The exhilaration of the ride and the excitement of the contest helped rouse us to action and initiative. Rarely, if ever, did these spelling matches or debates deteriorate into anything objectionable. The teachers as well as many of the patrons attended; and the great majority of the pupils themselves had no desire to utilize the occasion for any other purpose than good instruction coupled with opportunities for wholesome recreation.

On one occasion our school had a visitor who had been our teacher's former companion on mutual trips of adventure in the wilds of the Dakotas. They spent the afternoon in reminiscent talk, and the children were allowed their freedom to listen or play as they chose. Being thus fired with stories of frontier life, of Indian encounters, and other adventure, the boys had to make a feint of imitating the narrator's deeds. Forthwith followed a fever for making war-like weap-

ons, especially bows and arrows. The bows were of a varying pattern and make, but had sufficient elasticity to speed the arrows so that they were dangerous enough, especially for the eyes and ears. An arrow sent at random past a corner of the schoolhouse hit an oncoming "red-skin" in the temple just as he was rounding the very corner and was congratulating himself upon having escaped a missile in the rear. He promptly fell to the ground stunned out of his wits, but got up after awhile with a fistlike swelling northeast of his left eye. It may have been the same fellow who, later, with a wide grin was challenging his opponents in a snowball match and received as reward for his bravado a perfect hit between extended jaws, gagging him, thus halting further expression on the subject.

Though there were no bullies or "rough-necks" in our school, human nature expressed itself there as elsewhere, and "boys be boys". When a passing spark happened to touch tinder, there would be a sudden rumpus, unexpected as a bolt from heaven, subsiding, however, almost as quickly as it had come. The teacher, as a rule, kept an eye out for such performances and, of course, forbade them. Nevertheless the belligerents would forget and get into trouble again and again. And then how the buttons would fly. The girls were all regular ladies, of course, but they certainly knew how to scratch.

Occasionally the teachers would delight the children by taking them to the woods for a holiday. The schoolhouse being so near the timber gave a fine opportunity for hikes along the "Chicauqua", the Indian name for our beloved stream, which, having been translated into English, resolved itself into plain "Skunk". Once we took a half holiday to visit an Indian camp near its banks. There must have been fully a hundred Indians, men, women, and children in the band. We watched them make camp, watched them as they roasted their skunk sirloin over the fire, saw them feed their little ones and put them to sleep papoose fashion, heard the song of the cry-baby and wondered why he chose the same refrain as our babies do. We looked till we were tired. The Indians did not mind us, but went quietly on with their business of doing little or nothing. They really preferred to remain unnoticed, nor did they appear to be the least bit curious about us. Nevertheless they saw everything that was going on without seeming to see anything.

Thus did our teachers instill in us an added interest in our fellow-beings, in nature, and in the various things surrounding us that would be apt to broaden our minds. Then as now it was of great benefit to the children to learn that the art of useful, noble living is of the highest importance and that our studies, exercises, and games should be directed toward that end.

Quite a large number of the old pupils have taken courses at higher institutions of learning; some have entered the learned professions, others have gone into business, but the majority have remained on farms in the vicinity or taken up farming elsewhere. An overwhelming majority of the girls have chosen the best of all professions, namely, that of becoming good housewives and mothers.

N. TJERNAGEL

Comment by the Editor

OLD SCHOOLHOUSES

Everybody remembers the old school. In some respects it is more vivid than home. Home is a haven that a person returns to; but school is the wide world full of adventure. At home are only one's own folks who never do anything different; while at school there are strangers with peculiar ways and surprising traits. Home is restful: school is thrilling.

It is not astonishing that the memories of school should remain through the years. School is the most exciting part of childhood. There is the source of varied experience. At school we lost diffidence and gained confidence, recited our unforgettable lessons without comprehension, solved problems of conduct as well as arithmetic, played games, quarreled and made peace, traded our property for more desirable possessions, and all the while sharpened our wits.

Perhaps the spirit of the mechanical age has changed all that. People are so fascinated by size and speed and efficiency that there is no time to be human. Education is a big business. Schools have to be made bigger and better by consolidation. Pupils are so busy finding their places on a skewed curve by means of self-testing drills and standardized examinations that

fun is banished and relaxation is as bad as idleness. They learn everything in half the time. But what becomes of childhood, that halcyon period of pleasure and unconcern?

Somewhere in the memory of folks who learned to read and write before education became a matter of physical plant and scientific method, there is a vision of an old schoolhouse. It was not a pretentious edifice. Probably it had only one room. The floor was made of boards that creaked; and the desks were double, with built-in inkwells. Selecting a seat-mate was an adventure in itself.

But above all there was a distinctive smell about the old schoolhouse. It was a pleasant odor that signified all kinds of children, old books, slates, chalk, sweeping compound, and wet mops. The modern schoolhouse, with its odor of lumber and pie and gingham, smells more like a factory than an educational institution. It is unnatural.

The old schoolhouses, so intimately associated with the life of the neighborhood, are being abandoned, torn down, or transformed into granaries. Yet many of those that remain have not outlived their community usefulness. Like the Sheldall School, these could be converted into local museums and preserved as memorials of old times. The Sheldall schoolhouse has been restored to its original location. A rail fence encloses the school yard. Pictures of the early patrons

and teachers adorn the walls, and pioneer relics are being collected for preservation there.

I wonder if the museum smells like a schoolhouse.

J. E. B.

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