The Palimpsest

JULY 1925

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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Prospecting for a New Home

Steady, contented Easterners envisioned Iowa in the fifties — insofar as they gave the subject a transient thought — as a lonely sea of grass peopled with savage Indians swooping down upon the luckless settlers. The best means of escape, according to a prevalent idea, was to hide in a hollow log. It was always with misgiving, especially on the part of the women and children, that venturesome people left their homes and friendly neighborhoods back East and set out to win a new abode in the "Land of the Unhidden Sky" west of the Mississippi. Laura Cooper Treat, who came from Pennsylvania to Webster City when she was twelve years old, relates with what trepidation she and her mother embarked down the Ohio River in 1857. She had been told that the wind blew over the vast prairies of Iowa so hard that people had to lie down and clutch the tall grass to keep from being blown away. As for the

Indians, she made up her mind that three hollow logs should lie in their yard — one for each member of the family.

In view of the common misapprehension of conditions in Iowa — ideas which prevailed long after the fifties — it is interesting to learn the actual experiences and observations of those who visited the State during the decade before the Civil War. George Shipp, a resident of Rowsburg, Ohio, came to Iowa in the summer of 1856 and again the following winter. The first trip was made by way of the Great Lakes to Chicago and thence by rail to Davenport, but in the winter he came overland to Dubuque on "the cars" and by stage.

According to Mr. Shipp's little black wallet diary, he left Rowsburg at eight o'clock in the morning of July 10th and arrived in Chicago on the 22nd. He noticed a great change in that city since his last visit. The streets were being raised from three to four feet and building was "progressing rapidly". Though business appeared to be dull, the streets were "very much thronged". At nine o'clock he took the train for Rock Island and, although the track was "very rough", they made good time for about two hours. Then suddenly the engine ran off the track. Fortunately no one was injured, but the accident caused a delay of about six hours. The passengers were "very impatient" and did a good deal of "scolding, whining and complaining". The wreck occurred near a house to which many "re-

paired to obtain refreshments and with the assistance of a keen appetite" they "partook heavily of bread, butter, dutch cheese and honey" which Mr. Shipp "enjoyed very much indeed." The train ran off the track again near the Rock Island depot.

At Davenport he sold some wool from some sheep that he owned "near this city". Iowa wool, which did not have "that white soft appearance as in Ohio", was selling at from twenty-five to thirty-five cents a pound. After waiting a day for a boat he paid a dollar and a half fare one "dreary morning" and proceeded to Muscatine by rail. There he was especially interested in watching a machine make barrel staves from large logs. But he remained in Muscatine only a few days and the evening of August 1st found him in Iowa City, the capital of the State. He stopped at the Crummy hotel which had been "highly recommended", but was in his opinion "a miserable place — hard supper and harder bed."

The next morning he left Iowa City at three A. M. "jammed into a small coach with nine passengers", and rode fifteen miles "over a rough road through occasional groves of scrubby timber" before breakfasting upon a "passable nice fowl" at the home of Mr. Alers. Washington appeared to be a "rather pleasant place of twelve hundred inhabitants". There were thirteen stores, a steam flouring mill, and five churches there. Corn was selling for twenty cents a bushel, oats twenty cents, and wheat seventy

cents. Fairfield, where Mr. Shipp probably spent the night, was also described as "rather a pleasant village of 2000 inhabitants." The next day he arrived at Oskaloosa, "a beautiful village of 2500 inhabitants situated in a fine prairie."

It was a full day's ride by stage from Oskaloosa to Des Moines through a fine country with "beautiful rolling prairie farms well improved". On the divide between the Skunk and Des Moines rivers land was selling from five to thirty dollars an acre, at Pella eighteen, at Monroe twelve, at Keiths eighteen, and at Fort Des Moines fourteen.

Mr. Shipp spent a day in Des Moines. He visited the site of the new "State capitol Buildings" on "a beautiful elevation" east of the river where the temporary capitol was in the process of erection. A college was also being built on the west side about a hundred and twenty rods from the river upon "an eminence commanding a beautiful view of the city".

From Des Moines he turned north and arrived in Webster City "by team from Homer" on the evening of August 7th. Eventually he made Webster City his home, but there is only the slightest hint of that in his diary. The village of "some three hundred inhabitants" was "beautifully located upon a high rolling prairie on the western bank of the Boone river almost surrounded by a beautiful grove of timber". "I have seen no village so far west of the Mississippi that appears to be in so thriving a condition", he wrote. "The inhabitants are princi-

pally Eastern men of enterprise and intelligence.'' Having spent the greater part of a day walking about town and observing the improvements that were being made, he concluded that it was a poor place for a loafer, as everybody appeared to have employment and laboring men were in great demand. From ''occasional reports of the fowling pieces'' on Sunday he suspected that all in that vicinity were not church-going people.

After two days in Webster City, where he feasted at Mr. Moon's ''somewhat aristocratic'' backwoods hotel, Mr. Shipp drove over ''a fine rolling prairie skirted by timber'' to Eldora. Through Vinton, then to Marion, and thence to Delhi he travelled rapidly. Linn County impressed him as ''the best improved'' county he had seen and it certainly contained ''much the best timber''.

Although Delhi was ''a miserable place''—''the most unsitely place for a town'' he had seen in the State — Mr. Shipp tarried there Saturday and Sunday. The surrounding country was ''excellent and well improved'', a fine flouring mill was in the process of construction, and stores were ''abundant'', but he did not like the town. The sand was from four to eight inches deep in the streets.

From Delhi to Colesburg the road lay through a well watered district with plenty of timber, but from Colesburg the stage passed over the roughest country Mr. Shipp had seen in Iowa and all the way through timber, which was ''quite a curiosity''.

Land could be bought in Clayton County for ten to twenty-five dollars an acre depending on the improvements and the amount of timber. A mill at Elkader with three run of stone burrs was turning out a hundred and fifty barrels of flour per day.

On August 19th the traveller arrived in West Union and for several days thereafter he busied himself "prospecting in W. Union" and the surrounding country which he found "very bluffy". He noticed "quite a change" since his former visit and, judging by the rapid progress in improvements, he thought the town was "destined to be a point of some interest". It contained three churches, a schoolhouse, six or eight stores, and any number of groceries "minus the black warriour — a doggery that fizzled a few days since. The proprietor was arrested and fined one hundred dollars for selling liquor."

Two flouring mills at Auburn were paying seventy-five cents or thirty-three pounds of flour per bushel for wheat. Most of the buildings in Clermont, a thriving village of about three hundred inhabitants, were of brick. A fine brick mill four stories high contained three pair of burrs. McGregor was "a miserable, cooped up place in a ravine running up from the river, not wide enough for one row of buildings and a street". Nevertheless it was a town "of some trade". After a very brief sojourn in McGregor, Mr. Shipp took passage on the packet *Excelsior* for Dubuque where he changed to the

steamer *Royal Arch* bound for Clinton. On August 30th he left for home.

Another trip to Iowa was begun on January 8, 1857. In striking contrast to the jottings on his summer excursion, the diary of the winter journey is filled with comments about the weather. It was extremely cold much of the way to Dubuque where he arrived on January 19th. The temperature was still "freezing cold" on the twenty-second when he left for West Union. While in Dubuque he "called on Messrs Robinsons and Mr. Allison".

For three weeks Mr. Shipp remained in West Union. His diary affords no clue as to his activities, except that he watched the thermometer very closely, went to church regularly on Sunday, attended the funeral of a woman who "dropped dead instantly while conversing with a friend", took a few cutter rides into the country, got caught in a snow storm, and nursed a cold for nearly a week afterward. On Friday, February 13th, he started for Delhi in a sleigh and spent that night in Forestville, "the meanest dirtiest place" he had ever seen. Rain "commenced to fall in the knight" and continued all of the next forenoon with heavy thunder and lightning. Nevertheless he drove on through Burrington to Delhi, and from there to Dubuque on the fifteenth. The snow was melting rapidly and the bare ground could be seen for the first time since the previous November.

On February 17th Mr. Shipp set out on a trip

through Cascade, Anamosa, Marion, and Iowa City to Atalissa. At Marion he called to see an acquaintance who lived "comfortably in a good brick building" and whose wife he found "rather pleasant". He reached Iowa City "just in time to miss the cars" and so spent the night at the Trusdell House, "rather a nice place", fare a dollar and a half per day. A number of the members of the constitutional convention were boarding there. The streets in Iowa City were muddy and business was dull. After staying a few days with friends near Atalissa he returned to Ohio, apparently having found travel too difficult at that season of the year.

Again toward the end of May, 1857, he set out for the West by way of Columbus, Cincinnati, and the Ohio River. Perhaps it was then that he came to live permanently in Webster City, the prosperous town that had so taken his fancy the previous summer. For more than forty years he contributed his thrifty and wholesome influence to the community, first as a farmer and later as the owner of a general store. And now his great grand children are enjoying the fruits of his foresight and doing their share in the progress of a new day.

Bessie L. Lyon

A Journey Out West

Early in the morning of June 4, 1857, Edward L. Peckham, a botanist, boarded "the cars" at Providence, Rhode Island, for a "journey out West", having purchased "a through ticket to Iowa City for $30.55." The route was by way of Niagara Falls, through Canada to Detroit, and thence to "the world renowned Chicago". Apparently the most interesting and surprising event on the way was the sight of many young ladies on the train preparing themselves for a nap "by removing their bonnets, and leaning their heads on the breasts and necks or shoulders of their male companions, whose neighbor arms immediately wound around their waists in close embrace. At times these young girls would arouse and start up, with hair disarranged, gaze about, as if just awakened from sound slumber, and then, with a most endearing sigh," snuggle down again. Mr. Peckham was much puzzled to know the relations of these parties, but observed that the "singular display of affection was practised only by the young and pretty."

Chicago appeared to be "as mean a spot" as he "ever was in, yet." According to his own descrip-

[This account of the trip of E. L. Peckham across Iowa in June, 1857, is based entirely upon his diary as published by The National Historical Society in *The Journal of American History,* Vol. XVII, pp. 225–235, 341–353, Vol. XVIII, pp. 39–50.— THE EDITOR]

tion, the "streets are laid out in squares and are in miserable condition". In many places, the soft clay mud "shakes and trembles as it is passed over. The side walks are very uneven, up hill and down". How people could "navigate this dirty city in a dark night without a broken arm or neck" was a mystery to him. The Chicago River ran "through the center of the city, the south side occupied by the wealthy and enterprising, the north by Germans and Irish and other foreigners." Miserable hovels were "mixed up with the most beautiful and costly stores and edifices," such as he "never saw in any other place. Truly, there is but one Chicago", he wrote. "Michigan avenue is the only street where one can walk in safety".

He found prices high. "Nothing", he recorded, "costs less than 10 cents, called a dime, 5's and 3's used only to make change, and no cents to be seen." On Sunday he had a presentiment that he should avoid eating dinner, but a craving appetite forced him to the table. There he was seated "between two men, who ate with their elbows so extended that they resembled birds on the wing," and he expected "to see them start up and alight on the other side." Indeed, it "was not without some danger" that he managed to get food to his mouth, for he "had several narrow escapes from their huge beams which were playing" about his head.

About ten o'clock that evening, June 7th, he boarded the train for Iowa City and the following

morning found him "dashing rapidly over a level wooded prairie (for the first time seen) interspersed by small farm houses". The train reached the Mississippi River at about eight o'clock and crossed to Davenport "over the famous Rock Island bridge." "Davenport in the State of Iowa," wrote Mr. Peckham, "is a pretty place, and growing at a prodigious rate, far outstripping Rock Island in population and wealth." He did not tarry, however, but continued on his way, "over a rolling prairie, destitute of trees", where he "began to experience feelings of dislike and aversion. The whole prospect was lonely and deserted, and the odor of the flowers truly sickening." Afterward he discovered that the unpleasant smell came from the hound's tongue flowers that covered the prairie in profusion. Being very much interested in observing plant life, he was greatly disappointed in finding only two new species. Both yellow and white star of Bethlehem, the wild geranium, blue eyed grass, yellow lady's slipper, and hound's tongue were particularly common.

"I reached Iowa City, the westernmost point accessible by railroad, about 11 a. m.", he wrote on June 8th. "A little before, a person of very rascally appearance came through the cars, looking up passengers for the West, and I reluctantly gave up my checks and paid $10, my fare to Des Moines. Hand bills also, in favor of different hotels were scattered about. One of them vaunted itself for having colored waiters. In contrast was one exceed-

ingly modest, pledging satisfaction or no pay. Another, somewhat crusty and sarcastic, saying that if it did not have colored waiters, it could give as good a table as any, and warning the honest traveler against humbug. I patronized neither, but went directly to the stage office outside".

Stage accommodations were neither very comfortable or congenial. After riding two hours and "gaining only 8 miles" he began to consider his situation, "which was becoming more and more disagreeable." The coach was crowded. "On my right", he wrote, "was a stout, broad shouldered, sour looking German, who I afterwards learned was a Lager beer brewer and who was bound to Des Moines to start business. On my left was an equally large man, a farmer and speculator bound to Fort Dodge. On the middle seat, right side, was a slim young man from Boston. In the center, a stout man from some county in New York State, and on his left a tall slim chap from Philadelphia bound to Omaha (pronounced O-mer-hor, accent on first syllable). On the hind seat, left was a boy of about 15 years, son of the commander of Fort Riley, where he was bound, being in the care of the Philadelphia man; in the center was a German with a child 3 years old in his lap, and on the right the German's wife with a nursing babe. All but one on the middle front seat being thick set men, our legs were awfully crowded. One could not change position without the consent of the whole."

Just as Mr. Peckham was about to voice his discomfiture and express some decidedly derogatory opinions of all Iowa, the stage stopped to water the horses and as there was a steep hill ahead the driver suggested that the passengers get out and walk a little. "Oh, how welcome was that sound to me, and how eagerly I was to gratify his desire. The sun was very warm, but what of that, my legs were at liberty". He was to have as much walking as he desired before the end of the journey. That night at about ten o'clock the travellers had supper at Marengo.

The trip was resumed, however, immediately afterward. The night was cool and the moon shone brightly until near daybreak. No one but the children slept on account of the necessity of the passengers getting out to walk up the hills, "or rolls as they are called on the prairies." When the day dawned they "were passing over a piece of low ground, covered with rich woods and shrubbery", and the botanist had a good opportunity to look for flowers. It was not long before he discovered the mandrake plant in full bloom which pleased him much, "never having seen it before."

The stage reached Brooklyn in time for breakfast. The town consisted of "half a dozen houses scattered about on top of one of the swells or rollers, with a charming prospect to the left, looking over immense solitudes, but oh! how lonely! and what depressing sensations of stillness." The breakfast

table was crowded with "dishes of pies, cakes and preserves, leaving barely room" for the plates. Mr. Peckham "never saw such a mess." He had to put his cup of coffee on top of a pie and "when the dish of dipped eggs came round, it also was placed on a pie. The fried ham and potatoes were handed around, the whole scene being a jumble of everything, until if a person desired a particular dish, he had to hunt for and dig it out." Although he never ate "the confounded stuff," he "called for cake and preserves, just to make a bother, and see the landlord hunt about."

A few miles beyond Brooklyn a caravan of Mormons was sighted "far away on the horizon" where they resembled "a huge black snake trailing over that interminable sea of grass." They had about a hundred large covered wagons, "each drawn by several yoke of oxen, with some cows following. The wagons were new and painted, the cattle in good condition, and everything betokened a company of some property. There were many young girls, wearing large straw bonnets, with strings attached, by which the front was drawn down, or allowed to fly up over their heads. They were making nosegays as they went along. Some were quite pretty, and evinced some modesty", but the older women exhibited great indignation at being chided for their belief in polygamy. "Of the men, some were indifferent, some smiled and some laughed, but no one said a word." As the stage moved on, "the imi-

grants struck up one of their sacred hymns, their voices being wafted over the plains with a strange and thrilling power."

Grinnell appeared on the right. "Situated on a high swell of the prairie," its white houses were "very conspicuous for several miles, at which distance" it resembled a "town rising from the ocean". Lots were selling at from $50 to $300.

Newton, "the capital of Jasper county" was "a place of much pretention, houses widely scattered and some of them really imposing." Although "situated some miles north of the proposed railroad", everyone was insisting that a new line must be built to suit them. The hotel and stage office was "new and barely finished, yet there was an air of cityism about it". Outside in the shade "were lounging a motley set of large whiskered men, with large rim'd straw and fancy colored hats, and visages of bold and speculating stare." The dinner table "was adorned with tumblers of radishes, and dishes of lettuce and sliced boiled eggs, filberts and almonds, articles which cost nothing and which no one eats," and, as was expected, "only a small piece of roast beef or boiled mutton, which was carved at a distant table by a tall man with white apron, were passed round."

After leaving Newton, the route "passed over a long stretch of 'swamp land' with 3 or 4 preemption houses on it. A party of Mormons were also crossing at some distance". That evening they saw the

prairie on fire. "It was, of course, a pretty sight, and resembled very much the engravings" which were to be seen everywhere. The fires were kindled purposely "to find fresh feed, the old stubble being dry and tangled."

About midnight the travellers reached Fort Des Moines. After driving to all of the hotels which were full, they were compelled to "put up at the stage house". Mr. Peckham reflected that he had not had an hour of steady sleep since he left Chicago six days before, and during all of that time had not had his clothes off. He therefore bathed himself well in the common wash room, and changed his shirt and stockings, but could not shave. During the night it rained hard, and the road was in bad condition when the stage started for Council Bluffs the next morning at seven o'clock. "I had heard a good deal about Iowa mud," wrote Mr. Peckham, "and now saw it to my heart's content. It was as thick as dough and greasy at the same time. The horses would slip up and the wheels slide fearfully at every inclination of the road, and whenever we got out to walk it seemed as though we lifted a common sized farm at every step."

After passing through Adel the route again entered upon a rolling prairie. The sun and wind were rapidly drying the track, for road it was not. As Mr. Peckham described it, "when one track is too much worn, a new one is made by its side, as the traces of old ones are distinctly seen. Sometimes a

settler has located and fenced his land directly across the route, and then an entire new one is made, amid the curses of the drivers, who are often obliged to leave the coach and go prospecting.''

The land in that section of the State he reported to be ''surpassingly rich, and needs no hoeing, raising from 50 to 100 bushels of corn to the acre; the grain being planted and harvested by machinery.'' In one field, however, he saw men planting corn by hand. The land having been plowed just deep enough to cut the roots and turn the grass under, a man, following the furrow, made cuts in the sod with an axe while another came along, dropped a few kernels in each cut, and covered them with the pressure of his foot.

On the afternoon of June 10th the stage passed through ''a perfect sea of beauty. The sky was clear, not a cloud to be seen, a good breeze blowing and no dust. Gently sloping hills, interspersed with bunches of trees, were constantly opening and closing''. There was an illusion that the hills were moving aside to allow the coach to pass. The country west of Des Moines was more wooded and the rolls were not so steep as in the eastern part of the State. At five o'clock the stage stopped on a high ridge ''with a horizon apparently as level as the ocean; the undulations of the ground hardly discernable afar off, but becoming more distinct as the eye dropped, till the foreground all around appeared cut up into a succession of pleasant valleys, soft as

velvet, all clothed 'in living green'." Over the whole landscape "there breathed the softness and repose of a fairy world, a kind of dreaminess, which was its greatest charm, and which no pen can describe, or pencil imitate. An unearthly stillness reigned everywhere, as if Nature herself had fallen asleep." A house "perched upon the very verge of the horizon, and lit up by the sun's rays like a ship at sea," was the only visible evidence of life "amid those vast and awful solitudes." There they "got a most excellent supper, consisting of curlew, woodcock and stewed prairie chickens, dipped eggs, coffee, tea and warm biscuit."

About midnight they crossed the divide and entered the valley of the Missouri River. Six hours later the coach pulled into Lewis for breakfast. According to Mr. Peckham it was the poorest breakfast he had ever tried to eat—"fried fat pork, hard bread and spring water, the only eatables and drinkables". There was also "a sprinkling of very suspicious looking dishes of preserves and cakes", which he surmised had been "put on daily for a month". Indeed, it was his observation on this trip that "poor fare always accompanied pies, cakes and preserves". He began to dread the sight of them. He noticed, too, that the "houses where this worthless stuff" was served, "or rather exhibited," were "always dirty, and the people low and vulgar." Fifty cents, "the invariable 50 cents," was demanded for every meal.

During the forenoon a party of the famous hand cart Mormons was encountered, "encamped near a rivulet crossed by a bridge of logs and brushwood." If these women, who appeared very dirty and untidy, were a fair sample of the others whom Brigham Young had praised so highly, his tastes certainly differed from Mr. Peckham's.

At noon that day the driver, who was tipsy, "got into a fight with a brother whip and was soundly thrashed, after which, with an awful looking face, he mounted the coach and called upon the passengers to get in; but they wanted their dinner and refused." He then drove off with all the baggage and left his passengers behind. After dinner most of them climbed into a lumber wagon to overtake the coach, which they did after going about eight miles in the jolting wagon with the sun blazing down upon them.

Toward evening of June 11th the stage came in sight of the Bluffs, they "being a heap of dumpy hills". Where the steep sides were destitute of verdure, the solid clay was exposed and looked bright in the sun. "The mighty Missouri was also seen, and on the opposite shore the villages of Belle View and Omaha." The Rhode Islander finally alighted at his destination, "dirty, sweaty and tired".

He was up bright and early the next morning and, having satiated his appetite on some much overdone fried liver, he set out to see the town. He found Council Bluffs "a miserable looking place, with but

one principal street, one-half mile long, between a small stream and gully on the north and a succession of clayey bluffs, well wooded, on the South." The store buildings were low, "principally of one story, the front carried up square to the peak of the roof, and unpainted". On account of the great width of the street, they appeared like huts, though opposite the Pacific House there were several brick structures. Extending six miles to the Missouri River was a flat which, though overflowed in the spring, was "all laid out into house lots". Steamboats were navigating the river but the town was so far away that there was no certainty of passengers being able to meet them. This seemed to be a great disadvantage, but the "Bluffers" contended that the difficulty would be obviated when the railroad came. Council Bluffs was in the throes of a boom: the hotel lobby was crowded with speculators.

While out for a stroll Mr. Peckham came upon a party of Indians. Two men "with feathers in their topknots" and their faces painted "which showed them to be chiefs" passed by absorbed in a monotonous chant and keeping step with the song. Their only covering was a "patch of cloth in front, and a blanket which was originally on their shoulders, but which now had fallen down to the waist and held by one hand". Their "smooth limbs, with not a bone to be seen," shone in the sun. Following them came men, women, boys, and girls, "but of far different appearance, being dirty and wild looking."

Not being able to proceed farther West except on foot or horseback, Mr. Peckham resolved to return, so he secured a seat in the stage and left for the East at about three in the morning of June 13th. The coach was full but there were no ladies. In the middle seat were two brothers from Omaha, in front was a Bohemian from Sioux City, "pronounced Su", and two young chaps who, as soon as it was light, began to play euchre, "a game universally in vogue 'out West'." In the rear was a "young man from Fort Des Moines who had been prospecting near Spirit Lake and knew all about the Indian atrocities committed there", and also two queer individuals, one of whom, a fussy gentleman, turned out to be the Governor of South Carolina.

After passing Lewis, where they had as bad a dinner as the breakfast there a few days before, the stage took a different route to Des Moines. A bounteous supper, consisting of "fried veal, fried ham, fried and mashed potatoes, boiled and dipped eggs, warm biscuit, tea and coffee", was obtained at a log house eighty miles from Council Bluffs where they arrived at about midnight. Through inky darkness, relieved at frequent intervals by flashes of dazzling lightning, the stage proceeded. "It seemed as if the heavens were cracking and bursting to pieces, and that darkness itself had caught fire and exploded. Awful sight." The motion of the coach gave the impression of "riding over some fiery abyss" and the feeling "that the inhabitants of the lower regions

had risen en masse, and were using all their powers to encompass'' the destruction of the travellers. Yet through it all ''there was no thunder, but everything'' was ''as silent as the grave.''

Sunday seems to have been spent in Des Moines, for on Monday morning Mr. Peckham was again on his way and breakfasted at Keiths. His night's rest had given him an appetite worthy of the occasion and never more cheerfully did he ''fork over the accustomed fee of 50 cents''. When he came out of the house he found a red headed chap occupying his seat in the coach. ''I came up and told Mr. Redhead that he had got my seat and must abandon it; he refused. I was about to use force, when he yielded.'' But a tall individual who had climbed into the center seat remained there, ''provokingly sullen and obstinate''. He ''muttered that he had paid his fare, and should keep where he was, and it was not till the Brothers had grabbed him'' that he gave in, growling that ''if it rained, he guessed he would be inside somewhere. But the occupants guessed he wouldn't, and united in a determination to keep him out by force if he attempted it, but he did not, notwithstanding there were a few slight showers.''

At ''the ambitious city of Newton'' the hotel ''ceremonies had advanced a peg or two, soup being now passed round as the first course. A hundred guests and only 3 servants, rather a poor look. So I went into some baked beans, and bread and butter, and advised our lady voyager, who sat on my right,

to do the same. So by the time that soup was over, and the landlord, who had taken his stand in the farthest corner of the hall, had put on his white apron and commenced carving the beef and lamb, I was tolerably full and could hear the cry of 'Stage ready' without trembling."

From Newton the route lay through Westfield, Montezuma, and Millersburg to Iowa City. According to some handbills thrust inside the coach, Westfield was a place unusually "interesting to those seeking locations!"

WESTFIELD

Is a new Town situated in the Western part of Poweshiek County, 70 miles from Iowa City; 16 from Montezuma, 16 from Newton; 35 from Oskaloosa, and 30 from Marietta. It is located in a fertile and arable section of the country, which everyone will testify to who have been accustomed to reap the rich reward of a plentiful harvest, with a small amount of labor. Added to the above, it is in the center of a beautiful grove of excellent timber for this part of the country, containing about three thousand acres.

Roads center at this place from almost every direction. The old State road from Iowa City to Newton, Fort Desmoines and Council Bluff passes through, with its daily line of stages; also roads connecting Montezuma with Newton, Oskaloosa with Marietta, Pella with Grinnell, etc.

Mill privileges are in abundance. We have one steam sawmill in our place, one in two miles, another in four; and one steam Flouring mill in five miles.

In the Mechanical line, we have one Blacksmith shop, with two hands employed; two Wagon-makers, and several

Carpenters. A Plasterer and Shoemaker would find it to their advantage to locate here.

We have one Tavern, and need another. One Bakery; and two Dry Goods and Grocery Stores.

We intend to educate our children notwithstanding our county is new. We have one School now in successful operation, and the material partly ready for building a school house twenty-two by twenty-four, and intend to have it ready for a Fall School.

Prairie land ranges from five to fifteen dollars per acre; timber land from twenty to fifty; and improved farms can be purchased at from fifteen to twenty-five dollars per acre. There is, perhaps, but few places in Iowa where farming pays better than on this line of road. The travel is so extensive that it consumes all the surplus that farmers can raise, at high prices and ready pay.

Lumber is worth two dollars and fifty cents per hundred.

The religious interests of the place have their average representation for the number of its inhabitants — amounting to between fifty and sixty — consisting of United Brethren, Christians, Methodists and Quakers.

Lots can be purchased at prices ranging from twelve to forty dollars.

Our Post Office address is "Sugar Grove, Poweshiek County Iowa;" our post office having been established previous to the location of our town.

For further particulars, address the proprietors of the town, viz: Messrs. Robert Golden, Jesse H. Cook, N. J. Latimer and J. Simpson.

Westfield, June 8, 1857.

The casual traveller, however, did not share the enthusiasm of the town proprietors. To be sure the

village was located in a "beautiful grove of large trees", and, though there was plenty of prairie all around, "these priceless trees" were cut down, "and corner lots laid out amid their stumps and young shoots." The town consisted of about six buildings, and around the hotel "were lounging the same number of dirty and ignorant looking men. Where their boasted 60 inhabitants were, was a mystery".

The remainder of the stage journey was made under very adverse conditions. The nights were dark and stormy, while the road was next to impassable. Though the drivers proceeded reluctantly, the passengers welcomed the command of the stage manager to "put 'em through anyhow". And so it was at 10 P. M. on the sixteenth of June, just eight days since he had boarded the stage for Council Bluffs, that Mr. Peckham returned again to Iowa City. Having spent the night on a cot in the parlor of the Clinton House, the hotel being overflowed with guests, he arose early the next morning, had his shoes polished, ate a scanty breakfast, "and then hurried to the cars". The engine broke down and it was not until nearly noon that he reached Davenport. Two days later he was at home once more in Providence.

Gleanings of an Editor

In December, 1858, the editor of the Dubuque *Weekly Times* began a series of tours over northeastern Iowa for the purpose of collecting general information about conditions in that part of the State. The first trip took him through the central portion of the district, including Monticello, Anamosa, Cedar Rapids, Vinton, Waterloo, and Manchester; on a second journey, begun early in January, 1859, he went as far west as Fort Dodge, the return being made by way of Cedar Falls, Waverly, Forest City, and West Union; while on other excursions during February, March, April, and May, he visited practically every Iowa town within a radius of a hundred miles of Dubuque. The editor seemed to be very observant and took a deep interest in the persons and places that he visited. His observations were presented at length in a series of articles which appeared weekly in his newspaper.

The chief means of travel between the towns was by stagecoaches. Railroads had just begun to make their appearance in the State, and travellers had to be contented with the more primitive means of conveyance. The Dubuque and Pacific Railroad had reached Nottingham (Earlville) in 1858 and work had already begun on a branch line from Farley to Anamosa, known as the Dubuque Western Railroad.

This branch was completed to Sand Spring by April, 1859. The Chicago, Iowa, and Nebraska Railroad, which passed through Clinton and DeWitt, reached Mount Vernon the same year. Freight facilities were more sadly lacking than passenger carriers — a deficiency that was felt particularly in the marketing of farm produce. It was a common sight to see cattle driven from Fayette and the surrounding country through Dubuque to market.

For transportation of passengers and mail, the Western Stage Company operated lines throughout the whole northeastern section of the State. While the service was maintained with regularity and the accommodations were fairly good, still stage riding was not attended with Pullman luxury and was not always regarded as a delightful experience. For example, on December 17th in going from Cedar Rapids to Vinton the editor declared, "Mr. Joseph Sharpe carries the mail on this route, and takes passengers when he can find them stupid enough to ride on his forbidding sleds and carts. Last week we were obliged to go from Sand Spring to Anamosa on one of his sleds — a Western patriarch of its family of vehicles. We had cold mail bags for a seat; nothing but Ursa Major to lean our back against, and paid one dollar and a half for the twenty miles ride in this covered carriage — covered by the blue concave through which comets have recently, and from time immemorial, been punching holes."

But this was not an ordinary case. The Western Stage Company usually ran covered hacks or regular coaches which, being lined inside, were very comfortable. "Drawn by fast horses over fine roads, they afford a delightful mode of travel." It sometimes happened, however, that a passenger was not lucky enough to get a seat inside. On one occasion the editor of the *Times* was forced to take his place beside the driver of one of the sleds, but as it was mid-winter the cold soon drove him to make other arrangements. One of the nine passengers inside the coach was a girl six years old who was travelling free with her uncle. The uncle refused to hold the child, whereupon "we finally succeeded by offering to hold the girl ourself, which we did for twenty miles, much to our mutual comfort. Rather than have ridden those twenty miles on the outside, we would have held the girl in our lap had she been three times six years old!"

Ten miles an hour was considered a good speed for the stages, although numerous stops to change mails and to take meals often made the travelling much slower. However, this was not looked upon as a great hardship because the railroads made scarcely better time and the welcome extended by hotel keepers and especially the bounteous meals that were served more than compensated for the lack of speed on the journey.

The different towns throughout northeastern Iowa presented much the same appearance. Cedar

Rapids, with a population of three thousand, was the largest place outside of Dubuque, although Lyons was a rising municipality of twenty-eight hundred. Marion had a population of two thousand, Maquoketa fifteen hundred, Decorah eighteen hundred, DeWitt fourteen hundred, Fort Dodge, Vinton, Anamosa, Delhi, West Union, Tipton, Bellevue, Mount Vernon, and Lisbon had approximately one thousand each, while the other towns counted their inhabitants in the hundreds. Parkersburg consisted of "the house of the postmaster" and a "few hay stacks in the distance".

Cedar Rapids was already an industrial center. Three flour mills, a cloth mill, several machine shops, a sash and door factory, a sawmill, a soap and candle factory, a furniture shop, and a distillery were in operation. Thirty million bricks had been manufactured there in 1857. The immense water power of the river made "the Rapids" a natural site for manufacturing, and a great future seemed to be in prospect. There were several fine brick buildings in the business district, some of three stories.

West Union was a typical town of that period where the traveller would find "open doors, kindly hearts and cultivated minds." West Union was settled by Eastern people, "who have brought their refinements with them, and who still enjoy the luxuries of life, social and mental as well as physical." Two hundred and fifty children attended the "three schools, two public and one select." The churches

were Methodist, Baptist, United Brethren, Disciples, and Congregational — all with houses of worship except the last. The town boasted five general variety stores, three groceries, two drug stores, a book dealer, two hardwares, two shoe dealers, two bakeries, two wagon shops, three harness shops, two tailors' shops, two livery stables, a chair factory, a large cabinet shop, a plow factory, four hotels, and "a good steam grist mill, with a saw mill attached."

The towns were usually well planned, but presented varied appearances. Marion had "wide streets, laid out at right angles; good side walks; a large public square, well filled with shade trees planted one year ago; and other indications of enterprise and taste." West Union "is seen from afar as the traveller journeys thitherward, and it is *not* distance in this case, that 'lends enchantment to the view.' The nearer one gets to the town the better it looks, and the longer one stays there the longer he wants to stay." Monticello, however, reminded the traveller that "God made the country and Man made the town", but, "with a little taste on the part of the denizens of the place, and an uncompromising and abiding hatred of whisky, it may become one of the loveliest villages in the interior of the State." Waukon looked like a bright "New England village recently established in a beautiful woodland," while St. Charles (Charles City) was the "loveliest town on the loveliest of Iowa's streams."

The settlers in this section of the State came

chiefly from the East. New England was well represented, and many residents were from the States of the Ohio Valley — a fact indicated by the names of some of the settlements. Wyoming was named for Wyoming County, New York, whence came the founders of the village. It had "no lofty hills around it, like Wyoming in western New York; it may not have a Gertrude, with the roses of England blowing on her cheeks, as once had fair Wyoming, on Susquehanna's side, immortalized by Campbell; but it has locked arms with a lovely little grove; slopes to the eastward to catch in its bosom the freshest beams of Phoebus; and has its feet perpetually washed by a brace of crystal rivulets, where they form a happy alliance." La Porte City, with two hundred and twenty-five inhabitants, was laid out by Dr. Jesse Wasson, formerly of La Porte, Indiana. "As Rockford, Illinois, is the loveliest town in northern Illinois, so its child is one of the loveliest towns in northern Iowa." It was settled by Rockford, Illinois, people.

The people took a great interest in education. Numerous schools and churches showed that the pioneers were as determined to educate their children and preserve their faith as they were to build homes and fortunes. Every town had at least one school. There were many select schools, conducted by talented teachers, in addition to the public schools — Cedar Rapids, Manchester, and Independence each had two select schools, while West Union, Garna-

villo, Cascade, Maquoketa, Waterloo, and Andrew had one each. Clayton County already had a high school located at Garnavillo. In one of the district schools at Hopkinton there were classes in philosophy, algebra, and Latin in addition to the common English branches.

In almost every community efforts were being made to develop higher education. Cornell College had been founded in 1854, and in 1858 reported nearly two hundred students; Upper Iowa University was also functioning in 1858 with about one hundred students. Both of these were coeducational, and the subjects taught — mental philosophy, belles-lettres, Biblical literature, mathematics, Christian ethics, Latin, Greek, natural science, English, music, French, and ornamentals — indicate that the courses were designed to develop culture. There was a Female College at Lyons where "special pains are taken, not only to cultivate the mental and moral habits of the young ladies, but also to protect their physical health, and to make their stay in the Institution not less agreeable than profitable to themselves." A large educational establishment was being built at Hopkinton at a cost of ten thousand dollars to be ready for use in 1859; Wyoming had subscribed twelve thousand dollars for a female seminary; Fort Dodge had reserved several acres of ground to be given to the first party who would undertake to build a seminary. Andrew had started to build a normal school, but hard times had caused

the project to be abandoned; the Cerro Gordo County Teachers' Institute had held regular meetings for some time; and coeducation at the State University had been proposed.

Practically every town had a literary association and programs were held regularly, especially during the winter months. Even Marble Rock in Floyd County, with a population of only thirty families, had its literary association. West Union had a Junior Literary Association of eighty members as well as a literary society for adults. In many places lectures were given each week on subjects of a literary, religious, or scientific nature. At Manchester the editor found "a large school house full of well-dressed, intelligent and refined people, listening to a lecture on 'The Educated Man'." A more attentive audience he had never seen. At St. Charles there was "a flourishing Lyceum" which, "like everything else in this place," had "*life* in it." The village was, in truth, such "an Arcadian spot" the editor marvelled that half the townspeople did not turn poets, but instead they were "deeply interested in getting their daily bread — and butter." The president of the lyceum, James Jackson, was a mechanic —"a self-made man of fine talents and of no inconsiderable mental culture." The organization was doing much to improve the taste of the community. To the circumstance that the women were members of the lyceum and regular in attendance, the editor attributed the thrift of the society.

Musical talent was abundant and much attention was given to its development. Marion's glee club could "discourse as sweet music as one need expect to hear in the West." Waterloo had a harmonic society; West Union boasted of a brass band of nine pieces; while the Decorah brass band, "well known in all these parts, often goes thirty or forty miles to play on public occasions." The Iowa Falls string band was made up of three very accomplished musicians, whose services were greatly appreciated at dances in the neighborhood of that town.

There were more than thirty newspapers in northeastern Iowa in 1858. Dubuque, Maquoketa, Anamosa, Lyons, Vinton, DeWitt, Tipton, and Marion each had two papers, one Republican and one Democratic. These papers were mostly weeklies, and contained a wide variety of news, rather more general and national than local. They seemed to be dominated with an educational purpose. Most of them were notably partisan in politics.

Local pride was rife in each community. Nearly every town felt that its location, its resources, and the spirit of its people had destined it to become the metropolis of Iowa, and its citizens acted as if they did not wish to shirk the responsibilities thus thrust upon them by nature and by good fortune. It was predicted that Iowa Falls, Cedar Falls, Anamosa, and Cedar Rapids would become large and progressive cities on account of their water power; it was felt that the location of Hopkinton would make it a

great commercial center. Elkader seemed to offer every facility for paper and cloth mills. The people of McGregor thought that the railroad from Milwaukee to Prairie du Chien would transform their village into a great city; the Dubuque and Pacific Railroad had located a depot site in Fort Dodge, and a railroad from Keokuk was slowly progressing toward that town from the south; deposits of copper, iron ore, and coal were supposed to abound in the region of Fort Dodge and there were also gypsum beds that could not "be exhausted in one thousand years". The hills south of Webster City, "one of the neatest and liveliest young towns west of Independence," were crammed with coal. St. Charles was to be the junction point of the McGregor and Missouri Railroad and the Cedar Falls and Minnesota line, and the people of Nashua were rejoicing over the prospect that with the coming of the Cedar Falls and Minnesota Railroad nothing could prevent their town "from one day becoming a fine city like St. Charles and Waverly".

While many communities directed their gaze toward the glowing future, others were much depressed by the "hard times" of 1857. In Delhi, for instance, the value of town lots had decreased, and some of the inhabitants in 1859 were "much more temperate in their expectations of speedily realizing a fortune," than they had been eighteen months before. The editor suspected that some of them "would be contented with the assurance" that they

would be "independently wealthy, and prepared to retire from business in two years from this date." Maquoketa and Andrew were particularly hard hit by the financial depression, but Independence seemed to have weathered the hard times fairly well.

The Pike's Peak fever was raging in northeastern Iowa as well as elsewhere in the State. The steady train of covered wagons, bound for the West and carrying people whose hopes were high and who spoke always of gold, offered a strong temptation which many were unable to resist in spite of the fact that discouraging reports appeared continually in the papers. It was rumored that laborers received from twenty to twenty-five dollars a day in the West. From New Oregon, a little town of four hundred inhabitants, four teams and twelve men were to start for the new El Dorado, on March 2, 1859, and two or three other teams the following week. "So they go."

One of the chief criticisms of many places was the presence of saloons and distilleries. Where they were plentiful, there seemed to be a lack of community pride and brawls were not uncommon. It was one of these disgraceful brawls in which the founder of the town of Burrington participated, that caused the people of that community to change the name of their town from Burrington to Manchester. Monona seemed to suffer from the liquor evil too. Mud was abundant and loafers plentiful there. "The only drawback to the prosperity of the town,

that we can discover, is the multiplicity of whisky shops. They must be dried up or Monona will be ruined", wrote the editor. "Purged of whiskey", the place would "become a thrifty and happy village", he thought. Fayette was "a quiet little town, destitute of liquor." Lawyers could not or did not live there. A shocking murder, the result of whisky, had led to the formation of a temperance society at Lansing. Lectures were given weekly denouncing the liquor menace and as a result drunkards had been reclaimed and most of the whisky venders, for want of patronage, had been obliged to abandon their avocation. The Sons of Temperance were numerous in the vicinity of Hopkinton.

Such are a few of the pictures that the editor of the *Times* placed before his readers in 1859. At that time Iowa was peopled by substantial, energetic, and hopeful people who were proud of their new acquisitions and who were determined to add to the material resources of their new homes the culture of the homes from which they had migrated. The country had just passed through the panic of 1857. Hard times generally work disaster on new communities, and Iowa was a comparatively new community. That so few indications of disaster were found and so much evidence of enthusiastic thrift and genuine prosperity after the nation-wide crisis was due to a great extent to the perseverance and the courage of the pioneers.

FRANK A. MULLIN

Comment by the Editor

THE FABULOUS FIFTIES

According to the census of 1850 the population of Iowa numbered 192,214. Nearly ninety per cent of these pioneers were Americans and fully one-fourth were natives of Iowa. Many of the original settlers came from the South — from North Carolina, Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, and Kentucky — down the Ohio River, up the Mississippi, and then, forking off at every tributary, they staked their claims and lived as they had always lived in the thin fringes of timber along the streams. For several years after Iowa was admitted into the Union, the Southern element in the population retained its prominence and Southern influence continued to be felt decisively in politics and in the manners of the people.

But a new era dawned. The decade from 1850 to 1860 was probably the most remarkable ten years in the whole history of Iowa. The entire State was opened to settlement and a mighty flood of immigration poured across the borders and swept out upon the great open prairie. For miles and miles, day after day, the highways of Illinois were "lined with cattle and wagons" pushing ever westward. At one place seventeen hundred and forty-three wagons passed in a single month, all bound for Iowa. Twenty thousand immigrants went through Burling-

ton in thirty days. The ferries at Dubuque were equally busy. "Daily — yes, hourly"— settlers arrived "from Ohio, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois." An endless procession of "large canvas-backed wagons, densely populated", moved toward the interior —"a mighty army of invasion". By hundreds and thousands they came, "from the hills and valleys of New England", gathering fresh accretions from the resolute and hardy population of New York, Ohio, and Indiana as they swept onward. "Still they come! By railways and steamers", exclaimed a Keokuk newspaper. "By the side of this exodus, that of the Israelites becomes an insignificant item, and the greater migrations of later times are scarcely to be mentioned." Stagecoaches in Washington County were "crowded with passengers, piled in, shaken down, and running over".

For the first time immigrants made their homes on the open prairie. "The first trickle of the human stream which for two centuries seeped slowly through the forests like a flood held back by fallen leaves and brushwood," wrote Herbert Quick in his autobiography, "at last burst forth in a freshet of men and women" who for generations had watched the sunset "through traceries of the twigs and leafage of the primal forest" and finally stood "with the forests behind them, gazing with dazzled eyes sheltered under the cupped hands of toil out over a sea of grassy hillocks, while standing in the full light of the sun." They were the true prairie dwellers.

Out along the Mormon Trail, the old Ridge Road, and many other westward routes the prairie schooners made their way to Council Bluffs, to the Fort Dodge country, to the rich valleys of the Cedar, Iowa, and Des Moines rivers, and even to the fateful vicinity of Spirit Lake. Men stood in line at the land offices until their feet were frozen, while some who secured a number designating the order of their appearance had time to go home and put in the crops before their turn. Doing "a land office business" became a significant phrase in Iowa during the fifties.

By 1860 the population of Iowa had more than trebled. The Southern element was almost lost in the Northern migration, yet more than a fourth of all the inhabitants were still native-born Iowans. Through years of flood and drought and cholera, in spite of the panic of 1857, with scarcely a shudder at the Spirit Lake massacre, Iowa continued to prosper. Several railroads pushed far toward the Missouri; the telegraph came; and fields of wheat and corn checkered the prairie. Towns, well supplied with mills, schools, churches, and stores, sprang up as by magic — in fact as well as on paper. In politics the new Republican party, under the leadership of James W. Grimes, accepted the challenge of the slavery issue and took control of the State government. The capital was changed from Iowa City to Des Moines, and a new Constitution was adopted.

J. E. B.

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