

# The **P**ALIMPSEST

JULY 1922

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

ENTERED AS SECOND CLASS MATTER JULY 28 1920 AT THE POST OFFICE AT IOWA CITY IOWA  
UNDER THE ACT OF AUGUST 24 1912



## 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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PRICE—10c per copy: \$1 per year: free to members of Society  
ADDRESS—The State Historical Society Iowa City Iowa



# THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN C. PARISH

ASSOCIATE EDITOR OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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VOL. III

ISSUED IN JULY 1922

NO. 7

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## Liquor and the Indians

Nearly three hundred years ago a Jesuit priest of Canada — Father Le Jeune — wrote to his superior about the sale of liquor to the Indians. His comments, which follow, appeared in the *Jesuit Relations* for 1637 in a discussion of the increasing death rate of the red men:

It is attributed to the beverages of brandy and wine, which they love with an utterly unrestrained passion, not for the relish they experience in drinking them, but for the pleasure they find in becoming drunk. They imagine in their drunkenness that they are listened to with attention, that they are great orators, that they are valiant and formidable, that they are looked up to as Chiefs, hence this folly suits them; there is scarcely a Savage, small or great, even among the girls and women, who does not enjoy this intoxication, and who does not take these beverages when they can be had, purely and simply for the sake of being drunk. Now as they drink without eating, and in great excess, I can easily believe that the maladies which are daily tending to exterminate them, may in part arise from that.



During that century the question of prohibition was often discussed. Not, however, as far as the white men were concerned — that would be preposterous. They merely twisted the Biblical injunction to read: "Look not upon the wine when you are red." The priests, who lived and worked intimately with the Indian tribes were the ones who most vehemently called attention to the evils of the traffic. The merchants were of a different mind, hence the movement toward prohibition made little headway. But in one case at least the liquor traffic was made a question of state and discussed in a council called by order of King Louis the Fourteenth.

In 1678 there met in the Chateau St. Louis at Quebec a group of the most prominent men of New France — called together by order of the king who had asked Governor Frontenac to get the opinion of the principal men of the colony on the question of selling liquor to the Indians. The delegates included La Salle — well known already although his exploration of the Mississippi Valley was still a matter of future history — and Louis Jolliet, intrepid companion of Father Marquette in the famous trip down the Great River five years before. Twenty men in all faced the question as to whether the sale of wine, brandy, and other intoxicating liquors to the Indians should be allowed in the towns and in the Indian country, or prohibited under heavy penalties.

Each man separately gave his opinion and a



procès verbal was drawn up embodying these statements. Perhaps the bald statement of Du Gué sounded the real key note of those who favored continuing the trade. "The trade in brandy is absolutely necessary," he wrote, "in order to draw the Indians into the French Colonies and prevent them from taking their furs to other nations." The nations whose competition the French feared were Holland and England, for the fur traders from the English colonies and from the Dutch settlements on the Hudson River had pushed their operations far into the Indian's country.

Business no doubt stood in the way of the suppression of the liquor traffic, but many other arguments were paraded as justification by the Canadian merchants. Some contended manfully that it was in the interests of the Indian's soul that he be given liquor, since if the French did not so supply him he would turn to the Dutch and English for liquid consolation and through contact with them would either remain in his own idolatry or take up with the evil and heretical beliefs of those two nations. And others contended that only by allowing the Indian the same liberties as the whites could they draw him into Christianity.

One man gave as his reason for advocating the continuance of the trade the fact that the French brandy was far superior to the Dutch variety to which they would otherwise turn; and they did not forget to use the time-honored argument that prohi-



bition would bring forth the bootlegger. If the trade were banned by order of the king, the *coureurs de bois* and vagabonds would carry on illegal and very harmful operations in the distant Indian camps, selling poor liquor and demanding high prices.

La Salle was among those who believed in the continuation of the trade, urging that it was necessary not only for commercial reasons but also for the preservation of peace in New France. He invoked the aid of statistics to further his argument. The normal beaver trade of Canada during a year was from sixty to eighty thousand beavers and the Indians who bought liquor numbered about twenty thousand. Since a beaver skin was ordinarily worth a pint of brandy, a fourth or a third of the entire trade might be carried on in liquor without making it possible for the Indians to get drunk more than once a year. La Salle, however, with vigorous ideas of discipline, believed in punishing severely any disorders arising from intoxication.

Jolliet was of a different opinion. With regard to the transportation of liquor into the woods — and no one knew the Indian country in those days better than he — it seemed to him necessary to prohibit it upon pain of death; but he would allow the sale to Indians by the habitants in their own houses and stores in the settlements, provided it could be carried on with moderation and with every effort to avoid making the Indians drunk. And Jacques La Ber — merchant of Montreal — agreed with him.



Three other men declared against the sale of liquor to the red men either in town or country. But out of the score of men who gave their opinion, full fifteen were in favor of continuing the trade without let or hindrance.

So the traffic continued. It is not surprising that the large majority of the leaders of New France should favor it. Aside from their thorough belief that their business interests were inseparably bound up with this trade, the use of liquor was a matter of course in their own lives. It appealed to them not as a moral question but as a question of expediency.

As the Frenchmen came down into the Mississippi Valley they brought brandy and wines with them. They were staple articles of trade and they facilitated conferences. The Indians had taught the whites the art of smoking a pipe and with this friendly rite they opened all peace negotiations. The whites taught the red men the use of their more potent peace-maker, but they could not limit its influence to the happy calling of pacification.

And when Iberville in 1699 came into the other end of the Valley at the mouth of the river, he brought liquor to the southern tribes. Inviting a group of Indians on board his ship one day he fired off the ship's cannon for them and gave them a drink of *eau de vie* or brandy; and he tells of the amazement of the Indians at the roar of the engines of warfare and at the liquor which burned after they had drunk it.



For a hundred years more the sale or barter of liquor to the Indians went on in the Valley and met with little protest. Then the United States Government, as it extended its power across the Mississippi River into the Louisiana Purchase, began to take steps to prevent the traffic. Laws were passed by the general government and by the local governments to prevent the introduction of liquor into the Indian country. That these laws looked toward the protection and welfare of the Indian as well as the protection of the whites against the results of the red man's intoxication is shown by the fact that they often carried clauses providing that money received or goods purchased of the Indians in exchange for liquor must be returned to them. But the traders on the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, carrying on their operations individually or on behalf of the various fur companies, were frequent violators of the law.

Whiskey running was hard to prevent but the Indian agents worked persistently. Frequent were the complaints turned in to the Indian Office with regard to Jean Joseph Rolette of Prairie du Chien, one of the most prominent of the traders on the Upper Mississippi. King Rolette he was called by the whites, while the Indians spoke of him as Zica or the Pheasant because of the speed with which he travelled. He was a French Canadian and his operations were paralleled by many others of his compatriots who enlivened the history of the Mississippi



River during the first third of the nineteenth century. He married the daughter of Antoine Dubois, a friend of Julien Dubuque, by whom it is reported the young girl was raised after her father had been killed by the Indians.

On the west side of the Mississippi, not far from Prairie du Chien, were the mines of Julien Dubuque, first permanent settler of the Iowa country. It is difficult to say how much of Dubuque's influence with the Sauk and Foxes was due to the insinuating services of the whiskey barrel. The evidence at hand, however, indicates that Dubuque held his unusual power over the Indians by reason of faculties which were uncommon even among the versatile French Canadians, rather than by use of the readily available expedient of intoxicating liquors. His companions were not able to hold favor with the red men and were driven out of the region upon Dubuque's death, nor could his rivals succeed to his post of profit.

Ten years later, in 1820, Henry Schoolcraft travelling through the Upper Mississippi Valley found great difficulty in getting permission to visit the mines, but at last succeeded by directing one of his voyageurs "to bring in a present of whiskey and tobacco". And in 1823 Beltrami, the Italian, coming up the river in the first steamboat to ascend to St. Paul, wrote:

The Indians still keep exclusive possession of these mines,



and with such jealousy, that I was obliged to have recourse to the all-powerful whiskey to obtain permission to see them.

Over on the Missouri a similar traffic was going on. The American Fur Company began the operation of a distillery at Fort Union but the Indian agent reported the fact to the authorities and the company was compelled to cease its activities. The most famous of the Missouri River traders was the Spaniard, Manuel Lisa, of the Missouri Fur Company. He was a man of great energy and wide interests and had many enemies. In 1817 he found it necessary to defend himself against the charge of selling whiskey to the Indians. In a letter written to William Clark, Governor of the Territory of Missouri, he said:

If this charge is true it is capable of being proved. There are in this town, at present, many persons who have been in my employment, characters of the first respectability; also five nations with whom I have traded; among them can be found witnesses to attest the fact, if it be true. On the contrary, I appeal to the whole of them, and pronounce it a vile falsehood. At the same time, it is an act of hospitality indispensable in his intercourse with the Indians, for the trader to treat his hunters with small presents of liquor. They look for it, and are dissatisfied if they do not receive it. The permanent trader makes such presents with discretion. I have made them, and urged the necessity of them to your Excellency.

In May, 1838, Father De Smet was sent out to



establish a mission among the Potawatomi Indians. His post was near the site of the present city of Council Bluffs. In his diary are frequent comments upon the evils of the liquor traffic among the Indians. Once he wrote as follows:

Arrival of the steamer *Wilmington* with provisions. A war of extermination appears preparing around the poor Potawatomies. Fifty large cannons have been landed, ready charged with the most murderous grape shot, each containing thirty gallons of whiskey, brandy, rum or alcohol. The boat was not yet out of sight when the skirmishes commenced. After the fourth, fifth and sixth discharges, the confusion became great and appalling. In all directions, men, women and children were seen tottering and falling; the war-whoop, the merry Indians' songs, cries, savage roarings, formed a chorus. Quarrel succeeded quarrel. Blows followed blows. The club, the tomahawk, spears, butcher knives, brandished together in the air. Strange! Astonishing! only one man, in this dreadful affray, was drowned in the Missouri, another severely stabbed, and several noses lost. . . . A squaw offered her little boy four years old, to the crew of the boat for a few bottles of whiskey. I know from good authority, that upwards of eighty barrels of whiskey are on the line ready to be brought in at the payment.

May 31. Drinking all day. Drunkards by the dozen. Indians are selling horses, blankets, guns, their all, to have a lick at the cannon. Four dollars a bottle! Plenty at that price!! Detestable traffic.

De Smet's service at this post was short, but in



1842 Fort Croghan was established with Captain Burgwin in charge and this proved a new obstacle in the way of liquor selling by the traders, for the captain had orders to inspect boats going up the river and seize the liquor. Chittenden, however, tells of one case in which a cargo of liquor was smuggled up stream to the Indian country in spite of the inspection of Captain Burgwin.

The ship *Omega*, an American Fur Company boat commanded by Captain Sire and bound for the Upper Missouri in 1843, was halted opposite Fort Croghan by rifle shots across the bow and the message that it must wait inspection by Captain Burgwin. It so happened that the naturalist John James Audubon and his party were passengers upon the boat and they had a government permit to carry a limited amount of liquor. This was exempt, but not so the large quantities of liquor which the boat carried in its hold. Audubon, however, was disposed to help out his companion, the boat captain, in eluding the seizure. He sent word to Captain Burgwin that he would like to visit his post, and so flattered and pleased the army officer by the honor of his visit that he delayed the tour of inspection for two hours. Meanwhile the boat crew had not been idle. The hold was divided into two narrow compartments with a partition between. For the moving of goods there was a sort of tramway with little cars which ran the length of one compartment, rounded a curve in the bow of the boat and returned on the other side



of the partition. The crew loaded the barrels of liquor on these cars and ran them into a dark corner of the hold.

Upon the arrival of the inspector, he was regaled with the choice wines of the Audubon supply until he was in such a mellow mood that he was willing to forego the inspection. But Captain Sire insisted upon it, only urging that he be as rigorous with all other traders. So the inspection began in the corner of the dark hold away from the liquor-laden cars; and if the captain had been suspicious and watchful as he finished one compartment and passed through an opening in the partition to the other side he might have seen, smoothly rounding the curve at the far end of the boat, a string of cars bound for the localities he had just inspected. The liquor was safe and Chittenden ends his story with this remark: "But woe to the luckless craft of some rival trader which should happen along with no Audubon in the cabin and no tramway in the hold."

In the period of the Territory of Iowa the Governor was ex-officio Superintendent of Indian Affairs. Robert Lucas and John Chambers were both men of strong convictions on the matter of selling liquor to the Indians. Lucas vigorously attacked the trade in his first message to the legislature and as a result a law was passed imposing a fine of not more than one hundred or less than twenty-five dollars for each offence. This penalty, however, was so light in comparison to the profits to be made that



traders incurred the risk without hesitation and the traffic flourished.

Chambers also attacked the trade in his first message. Depicting the degradation and destruction of the tribes from this practice, he said:

Humanity shudders and religion weeps over the cruel and unrelenting destruction of a people so interesting, by means so dastardly and brutal, that the use of the rifle and the sword, even in time of profound peace with them, would be comparatively merciful.

He urged the amendment of the existing law to make efficient its enforcement. But no action was taken. A year later he advised the addition of a term of imprisonment to the pecuniary penalty; but the legislature would go no further than to raise the amount of fine to a minimum of \$100 and a maximum of \$500. This was a move in the right direction but it did not greatly check the operations of the whiskey runners.

The last payment of annuities to the Sac and Fox Indians before their migration west of the Missouri took place at Fort Des Moines in 1845. An account of this distribution by a witness shows that liquor was much in evidence — that it was given to the Indians by soldiers under the eyes of the officers, that Captain Allen presented the chief Pow-e-shiek with a bottle of liquor with his compliments, and that the aftermath of the occasion was a general debauch.

Within a year these tribes had moved out of Iowa,



and the other tribes remained little longer. It seemed, indeed, that the only way in which Iowa was able to solve the problem of the sale of liquor to the Indians, was to send the Indians beyond its jurisdiction.

JOHN C. PARISH



## The Handcart Expeditions

During the summer of 1856 there arrived at Iowa City, then the western terminus of the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad, several thousand Mormon converts from England, Scotland, and other European countries. Many of these people were wards of the Perpetual Emigration Fund Company which had been organized to assist converts who could not pay for their outfits and transportation, the immigrants signing contracts to work for the church until the full amount was refunded.

At this time the wave of immigration bound for Utah had become so great that the officers of the church decided it was impossible to provide wagons and oxen to transport all the needy immigrants from Iowa City to Salt Lake City, although the total cost of bringing one of these poor converts from Europe to Utah was only about sixty dollars. To meet this situation, Brigham Young and his advisers had, as early as the fall of 1855, evolved the plan of sending these hundreds of proselytes across the continent on foot. "The Lord, through his prophet, says of the poor, 'Let them come on foot, with hand-carts or wheelbarrows; let them gird up their loins, and walk through, and nothing shall hinder them.'"

To show how feasible the plan was, the head of the church wrote to F. D. Richards in charge of the converts in Liverpool: "Fifteen miles a day will bring them through in 70 days, and, after they get accus-



tomed to it, they will travel 20, 25, or even 30 with all ease, and no danger of giving out, but will continue to get stronger and stronger; the little ones and sick, if there are any, can be carried on the carts, but there will be none sick in a little time after they get started."

Lured by this rosy picture of a trip of which their limited experience gave them no real comprehension, some thirteen hundred converts arrived at Iowa City during the summer of 1856 pledged to undertake the journey on foot. Here the tired and bewildered immigrants found that their outfits were not ready: even the handcarts were yet to be made. While waiting for their equipment, the newcomers were camped on the prairie some two miles from Iowa City, often without tents or any shelter from the elements.

Finally, however, after two or three weeks delay one detachment after another got under way for the first stage of the overland journey — the trip from Iowa City to the Missouri River — following at first the old road to Fort Des Moines.

The first company left Iowa City on June 9, 1856, with two hundred and twenty-six people; the second, with about the same number, started two days later; and a third and smaller company, composed largely of Welsh converts, began their march on June 23rd. Since these three companies were small and started fairly early in the summer, they arrived safely at Salt Lake City before the cold weather began. The



first detachment, which reached its destination on the twenty-sixth of September, was met by a delegation of church officers, a large number of citizens, an escort of cavalry, and the bands of the Nauvoo legion. The "divine plan" of transporting converts was considered a great success.

The two later companies were not so fortunate. The fourth detachment, commanded by James G. Willie, was detained at Iowa City for three weeks while the carts were being made for them and did not leave until the middle of July, while the fifth and last company for this year, with Edward Martin as its leader, began its long march on July 28th.

Their personal equipment was necessarily limited: seventeen pounds of baggage was allowed each person and this must include some food and the bedding and clothing for the long march. To carry this baggage there was provided for every five persons a cart — two wooden wheels, with thin iron tires, connected by a wooden axle upon which rested the body or box in which the baggage was to be carried. Attached to one end were projecting shafts about five feet long with a cross piece at the end by means of which the rickety vehicle was pulled along.

In addition to the carts a wagon drawn by three yoke of oxen was provided for each hundred persons and on this were the extra provisions and the five tents allotted to this group. A few of the very old or crippled members of the company were carried in these wagons but, for the most part, the company was on foot — men, women, and children. More-



over, the handcarts, weighing when loaded about one hundred pounds, had to be pulled over the rough roads or unbroken prairie.

To most people of to-day — even to the young and strong, unencumbered by supplies — the prospect of walking from Iowa City to Council Bluffs in July or August would be viewed with dismay, but these people were of all ages and conditions of physical strength, and there were more women than men. Many carts were pulled by women, although the men in the party were required to assist others if they were not needed by their own families.

A description of the fourth division during the march through Iowa, written by one of those who participated in the exodus, gives a vivid picture of the company as it trailed across Iowa:

As we travelled along, we presented a singular, and some times an affecting appearance. The young and strong went along gaily with their carts, but the old people and little children were to be seen straggling a long distance in the rear. Sometimes, when the little folks had walked as far as they could, their fathers would take them on their carts, and thus increase the load that was already becoming too heavy as the day advanced. . . . The most affecting scene, however, was to see a mother carrying her child at the breast, mile after mile, until nearly exhausted. The heat was intense, and the dust suffocating, which rendered our daily journeys toilsome in the extreme.

The daily rations consisted of ten ounces of flour — then selling for three cents a pound — for each adult and half as much for each child. As luxuries



they were occasionally served a little rice, sugar, coffee, and bacon. "Any hearty man", said the analist, "could eat his daily allowance for breakfast. In fact, some of our men did this, and then worked all day without dinner, and went to bed supperless or begged food at the farmhouses as we travelled along."

The people of Iowa gave food to the hungry wayfarers and urged them not to attempt the long trip overland, especially so late in the summer. The converts, however, were new to the difficulties of prairie travel; they were inspired by the hope of seeing the new Zion, and thoroughly under the influence of their leaders who constantly warned them against the Gentiles. Only a very few of the company withdrew.

Almost four weeks elapsed before the weary immigrants reached the Missouri River — the starting point of the great adventure. Here a council was held to discuss the advisability of attempting the journey so late in the year, but all the leaders except one — Levi Savage — urged that the train continue and the converts obediently voted to proceed. Savage, who had made the trip to and from Salt Lake, was rebuked for want of faith but promised to accompany the expedition and share the hardships.

A week of hurried preparations, and the detachment left Florence, Nebraska, on August 18, 1856, westward bound. If the trip through Iowa had been full of hardships that now before the immigrants



was appalling. In Iowa food was plentiful and charity frequently supplemented the regular rations. Any who were unable to continue the march might find a haven in some settlement where sympathy counteracted religious prejudice. But on the plains there was no opportunity to secure clothing or bedding as the nights grew chill, no settlers' shanties where food might be secured if their own supply gave out. There was food, it is true, in the herds of buffalo, but these European working men were totally unfitted to secure it. Indeed, with their equipment, it is doubtful whether experienced plainsmen could have lived off the country.

The carts were, consequently, more heavily laden than before, but even so, much in the way of bedding and warm clothing, the need of which was not evident in August, had to be discarded for lack of room. A ninety-eight pound sack of flour was added to each cart, nearly doubling the original burden. The flour ration, however, was increased to a pound a day, fresh meat was issued occasionally, and each hundred had three or four milch cows.

Refreshed by the rest at Florence, trusting implicitly in their leaders, and unaware of the perils in front of them the immigrants started out gaily, gathering each evening around the camp fires for worship, exhortation, and singing. One of the favorite songs was specially written for the handcart travellers and was sung to the tune *A Little More Cider*. The words were as follows:



Oh, our faith goes with the hand-carts,  
And they have our hearts' best love;  
'Tis a novel mode of travelling,  
*Devised by the Gods above.*

## CHORUS:

Hurrah for the Camp of Israel!  
Hurrah for the hand-cart scheme!  
Hurrah! hurrah! 'tis better far  
Than the wagon and ox-team.

*And Brigham's their executive,*  
He told us the design;  
And the Saints are proudly marching on,  
Along the hand-cart line.

Who cares to go with the wagons?  
Not we who are free and strong;  
Our faith and arms, with right good will,  
Shall pull our carts along.

It was not long, however, before trouble developed. The carts were hastily and poorly made and on the dry prairie the axles were soon badly worn from the constant grinding of the dry sand. No axle grease had been provided and some of the company were compelled to use their cherished allowance of bacon to grease the wheels. Others used their soap, of which they had very little, and attempts were made to protect the axles by wrapping them in leather or tin. As the weight of the flour



dwindled, however, the carts ran easier and with grim determination the company pressed forward.

To those who have made the trip over this route by rail, watching the corn and wheat fields of Nebraska slip smoothly past the windows of the Pullman car or idly counting the prairie dogs which bob up and stand at attention as the train flashes through the barren hills of Wyoming, the journey is one of a few hours and no hardship. Even the tourist in the dust-covered automobile can have no real appreciation of the task of these four hundred and twenty men, women, and children as they walked wearily along day after day pulling the creaking, complaining carts or carrying little children in their arms.

To add to their difficulties their cattle were stampeded by the buffalo near Wood River and thirty of the oxen were lost. The one yoke remaining for each wagon was unable to pull the loads of some 3000 pounds over the rough roads and the beef cattle, cows, and young stock were put under the yoke. Even then another sack of flour had to be added to each cart to lighten the weight of the wagons.

It was in this time of perplexity that a group of Mormon apostles and leaders — including F. D. Richards, who had acted as Young's agent in England, and Joseph A. Young, a son of the prophet — passed the weary converts, camping with them one night. At their request for fresh meat the fattest calf was killed, though the immigrants themselves



were short of food. In their carriages drawn by four horses or mules the leaders drove rapidly ahead of the crawling caravan, pausing only long enough to point out the best ford for the crossing of the North Platte. "They stood and watched us wade the river — here almost a mile in width, and in places from two to three feet deep," wrote one of the company. "Our women and girls waded, pulling their carts after them."

The officials promised to leave supplies for the detachment at Fort Laramie but when the tattered and footsore immigrants reached there in September none had arrived. The supply of flour on hand, it was estimated, would not last until they reached their destination and unless relief reached them from Salt Lake there was no possibility of obtaining any more. It was decided to reduce the ration from a pound per day to twelve ounces for working men, nine ounces for women and old men, and from four to eight ounces for children, and to make every effort to travel faster.

As the caravan trailed up the Sweetwater River toward South Pass the nights became colder and the mountains were covered with snow. Fording the river chilled the exhausted travellers and their supply of clothing and bedding was inadequate to protect them from the cold. Exhaustion, cold, and lack of food soon showed results. The old and weak began to die: at first only an occasional grave was needed, but soon one or two persons were buried at



each camping place. Dysentery was added to their enemies and the young and strong also began to die. There were no medicines and no opportunity for caring for the sick. Men frequently pulled the handcart, on which were the supplies for their families and perhaps the children themselves, until the day preceding their death. Those wholly unable to walk were put in the wagons and when there was no room there, were hauled on the handcarts, jolting slowly over the rocks and sand of the trail or tipping this way and that as they were pulled across the creeks and ravines.

It was in this desperate situation that the caravan was met by Joseph A. Young, who had watched the company ford the North Platte. Apprehensive of the fate of the immigrants he had no sooner reached Salt Lake City than he reported their situation to his father and was immediately ordered to meet the two detachments with supplies. Pushing on ahead of the wagons with one companion he met the fourth company in the midst of its first heavy snow storm. After announcing the coming supply train he went on eastward to meet the fifth group, whose situation was even more precarious.

With renewed hope the converts pushed desperately ahead, doubling teams when the worn out cattle were unable to pull even the diminished loads. Next morning they woke to find the snow a foot deep, their hungry cattle had strayed away, some of the exhausted animals had perished, and worse than all,



five of the company had died during the night. There was no flour and only a little hard bread which had been secured at Fort Laramie. To move through the snow in their starving and exhausted condition was impossible and it was determined to send two men — Captain Willie and a companion — ahead to hurry the supply train, and to await their coming in camp. Two of the worn-out oxen were killed for food and this meat, a few pounds of sugar and dried apples, a part of a sack of rice, and some twenty or twenty-five pounds of biscuits was all the food for the company until help arrived.

For three days they remained there — hungry, cold, many of them ill, the cattle dying of starvation. On the evening of the third day came the wagons which had halted on account of the snow storm, the teamsters not realizing that the handcart immigrants were actually starving. Wild scenes of rejoicing met the relief party and new hope of reaching Zion inspired the immigrants.

A part of the supply train continued eastward to meet Martin's party and the others took charge of the party in camp and began the slow return to Salt Lake. Those too weak to walk were permitted to ride in the wagons but even here they suffered intolerably from the cold. Many froze their feet and had to be carried from place to place. Food and renewed hope failed to save some of the sufferers. At the camp on Willow Creek fifteen persons were buried, their bodies stiffly frozen.



Perhaps in the history of the United States there are few pictures more pathetic than this company of Mormon converts as they straggled along through the snow, afraid to sit down to rest lest they perish with the cold, the oxen as dejected as the people. One elderly man — a farm laborer from Gloucestershire — unable to pull his cart, trudged along for a while with his little son, carrying in his stiff hands his cherished gun. At last he could go no farther and lay down in the snow, wrapped in an old quilt given him by a kindly companion. An ox team returning for the stragglers rescued him late at night, but he died before morning. Scenes like these were not uncommon. Sometimes three or four of the human teams combined to pull the carts but this was slow work and necessitated much additional walking.

After crossing South Pass, however, the suffering gradually diminished: the weather became warmer and they were met by wagons loaded with food sent out by the Mormon people. On the ninth of November, some four months after their start from Iowa City, the fourth detachment reached Salt Lake City, the Mecca of their pilgrimage of three thousand miles by steamer, one thousand miles by rail, and fifteen hundred miles on foot.

Sixty-seven of this company, however, had fallen by the way. The fifth detachment lost even more heavily: about one-fourth of the party perished during the journey. The tragedy of these two companies led to the exchange of recriminations and



charges between the Mormon leaders, and though at least three other companies were sent across the plains in 1859 and 1860, none were organized after the latter date. The ox team and the railroad took the place of the "divine plan".

RUTH A. GALLAHER



## The Passing of a Slave

The presence of an aged negro at the State encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic in Iowa City recently brought to mind another colored soldier who wore the blue during the trying days of the Civil War, and spent his declining years at Bedford, Iowa.

Born in slavery in Savannah, Missouri, and owned by a man named Jack Davis this negro had none of the advantages of education afforded his race today, yet he so improved his mind through an unquenchable thirst for information that he acquired a wealth of knowledge and wisdom. He died a few years ago, in 1915 to be exact, and the white man's church in which was read the funeral service was filled to the doors by the many townsmen who paid tribute to his memory.

During the war a detachment of Confederate troops came to the Davis place to take the slaves away to a safer location, and young Jack Howe was sent to the barn to care for a horse belonging to an officer. With some other negroes he managed to escape and to cross the Iowa line. He then enlisted in the Union army and served faithfully until the close of the war. One of his most cherished memories was the fact that he served in the campaign of Vicksburg under Grant. After receiving an honor-



able discharge he came to Taylor County, Iowa, and for several years engaged in farming. Later he removed to Bedford where he ran a truck garden.

Although he never learned to read, every evening found him seated in an arm chair in front of the town hall listening to the reading of newspapers. Governmental affairs interested him particularly and his memory for details was marvelous. He would listen to the reading of the President's message to Congress with all the interest displayed by a fiction lover in the latest popular novel. When the Payne-Aldrich tariff bill was in process of formation he followed painstakingly the framing of each schedule and foretold with considerable accuracy the unpopular reception it would create.

War news, too, held his attention. During the Spanish-American imbroglio of 1898 he was the first to buy a paper when the newsdealer put the morning dailies on the counter and then he would seek some other old soldier to read it to him. Part of this interest was due, doubtless, to the fact that he had a son in the famous colored regiment that supported Roosevelt and his Rough Riders at San Juan and El Caney. Later this son went with his regiment to the Philippines and there he died after a lingering illness.

During the Russo-Japanese struggle of 1904-1905 Jack Howe stubbornly defended the cause of Russia, arguing that Russia was the friend of the Union in the dark days of 1861-1865 and hence deserved the



sympathy of the United States in her difficulty. He lived to see the beginning of the great World War and, feeble though he was, his hunger for information was unabated and he importuned his friends daily to read or tell him the progress of the struggle.

Jack was a regular attendant at the sessions of the district court and to hear him mimic the leading lawyers of the county seat was a rare treat. Half in fun and half in earnest opposing counsel in a jury trial would consult him as to the verdict when the case had gone to the jury, and the remarkable thing about his answers was the number of times he accurately predicted the outcome.

In politics he was one of the best-known characters in southwestern Iowa. Republicanism was almost a religion with him. He admitted that there were some good Democrats but how a negro could vote the Democratic ticket was beyond his comprehension. Even in local affairs, in city and school elections, he supported Republicans only. At every Republican rally or meeting he occupied a front seat and when the speaker made some telling point or soundly berated the Democratic party Jack would raise his voice in his own version of the rebel yell to the great amusement of the audience and to the consternation of a speaker who had not been warned of the old negro's enthusiasm. All the Republican candidates who campaigned in the eighth Congressional district knew him personally and laughed heartily over his enthusiasm during their speeches.



“Uncle Pete” Hepburn, Judge H. M. Towner, Senator A. B. Cummins and former Governor Leslie M. Shaw were his favorite political orators and they were sure of a rousing reception on Jack’s part every time they spoke at Bedford.

Jack Howe, ex-slave and ex-soldier, was a credit to his race, and his death reminds us of the passing of the American slave. He was past ninety when he died, and the youngest negro born in slavery has already reached the twilight of his life. A few years more and the rapidly thinning ranks of the negroes who served in bondage will be depleted. Then will have gone from American history many who like Jack Howe were courteous, genteel and faithful — a distinct and worthy type of the colored race.

BRUCE E. MAHAN



## Comment by the Editor

### OUTFITTING FOR THE WEST

Probably it comes as a surprise to most of us to find that Iowa City was an outfitting post for a series of expeditions as considerable as those described by Miss Gallaher in the story of the Handcart Expeditions. And yet it is a natural enough incident in the history of that time. Iowa City was the western end of the railroad, which reached the town on January first, 1856, and it was in the following summer that the hundreds of European proselytes to the Mormon faith gathered there in a camp two miles from town and waited for the busy citizens to make them handcarts and otherwise profit by their preparations for the long overland trail.

Other towns had already become outfitting places. Before the days of the railroad Burlington and Dubuque, lying beside the great waterway, had served travelers who left the river to go into the interior wilderness. Mormons crossing in the great trek of 1846-1847 made their own camps as they went, but established on the site of Council Bluffs the outfitting town of Kaneshville which served Mormons and Gentile for long years before it changed its name to Council Bluffs.

The Fifty-niners with their canvas covered wag-



ons flaunting the slogan of "Pike's Peak or Bust" traveled across Iowa by the thousands and sampled the supplies and the good cheer of the town on the Missouri before they crossed on the ferry and began the trail across the plains.

It was through Iowa that the railroads from the East first penetrated on their way to the far West, and the railhead was always more or less of a jumping off place. Sioux City as well as Council Bluffs soon succeeded to this advantage. In the seventies when the gold strike in the Black Hills stirred the adventurers of the country, Sioux City became the outfitting post for many expeditions.

But the towns of Iowa served these purposes only as temporary functions and with the westward flight of the frontier they settled down to the more prosaic and more permanent task of acting as community centers for an agricultural State.

J. C. P.



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