

Comment by the Editor

THE BAEDEKERS OF IOWA

It was not for the information or the entertainment of those who lived in the countries they described that the little fat red books full of fact and historic lore and legend and description used to appear, but for the enlightenment of those who might come from afar. So in the early days when Iowa was the goal of tourist and emigrant, there appeared little pocket-size books, slender but full of optimism, and usually accompanied by that most alluring of all baits — a bright-colored folding map.

They were usually published in New York or Philadelphia; they had wide circulation in the east, and some of them found publication and circulation in England and other European countries. They constitute in all a goodly number of volumes, but there is time before we come to the last page of this sketch to take down from the shelf and examine at least one of those handbooks which were published in the Territorial days.

The most interesting of all is probably the earliest. The copy before us — one of a very few in existence — is a thin paper-bound volume not quite four by six inches in size. On the blue stained cover one reads: *Notes on the Wisconsin Territory; particularly with reference to the Iowa District or Black*

Hawk Purchase. It is the work of Lieutenant Albert M. Lea, of the United States Dragoons, and bears the date of 1836. The title is somewhat misleading for the content of the book, save for a copy of the act establishing the government of the Territory of Wisconsin, deals with the part of the Territory lying west of the Mississippi River, a tract of land which here has associated with it for the first time the name of Iowa.

Lieutenant Albert M. Lea had travelled over much of the country he describes, in company with the United States Dragoons in the summer of 1835, and he tells us in a preface that he "has been sedulous in collecting information from surveyors, traders, explorers, and residents."

In forty-two pages and a map he gives to the world this information. He locates the land and describes the climate and the seasons, all of which he finds charming. He commends the soil, but not being a prophet he does not do it full justice. He waxes eloquent, however, when he describes the "general appearance of the country". The products, the wild game, the population, trade, government and land titles he touches with a facile and enthusiastic pen.

One chapter deals with "Water Courses" and the final one with "Remarks upon Towns, Landings and Roads", wherein we find familiar names and some that are not so familiar. Under the heading "Kasey's", we learn that "A gentleman of this name intends laying out a town at the head of the Musca-

tine Slue." Next comes the name "Iowa". "This is the name of a town to be laid out at the mouth of Pine river, about 330 miles above Saint Louis." Lieutenant Lea has great hopes for this town. "It possesses the most convenient landing from Burlington to the head of the Upper Rapids; and no place could be better adapted to the erection of buildings. The harbour of Pine river runs through the town, affording good landings on both sides; and boats may land anywhere on the Mississippi shore, for a mile and a half above the mouth of Pine." And he is so impressed with its location that he remarks: "Should the seat of Government of the future State of Iowa be located on the Mississippi, it would probably be fixed at Iowa." On a modern map we have located Pine River, or rather Pine Creek, ten miles above Muscatine, but no town named "Iowa" seems to be yet ranged along its harbour.

The lieutenant mentions Parkhurst and says: "Of this place, not yet laid out, it is sufficient to say that the site is beautiful, the landing good, building material convenient, and the back country fine. There is nothing wanting to make it a town but the people and the houses, and these will soon be there." The town of Parkhurst did actually materialize but it soon merged with Le Claire and lost its original name. Burlington, Dubuque and Davenport each has a paragraph or two, and so have Throckmorton's Landing, and Clark's Ferry, Catfish, and Riprow.

In spite of its early date no book with the same amount of information appeared for at least five years. Yet to Albert M. Lea it was only meant as a beginning. "The reader will perceive", he says in his preface, "that the following '*Notes*,' are confined to such subjects only as are interesting, particularly to the emigrant, the speculator, and the legislator. The author reserves for another work, the notice of such topics connected with that country, as are better suited to the more general reader." Unhappily Lea never fulfilled the promise which his good intentions led him to make.

J. C. P.