

## Iowa Episode

### *DEAD CAT POLITICS*

James R. Graham, pioneer settler and founder of the town of Redman, had been a Republican since the inception of that party. Furthermore, he had been extremely partisan all his life and had thoroughly indoctrinated his sons with Republican principles. Charles H. Graham, the son who operated the Graham homestead and carried on the family political tradition after his father died, staunchly supported President Benjamin Harrison for re-election in 1892.

Will Rockwell, a neighbor and friend of the Grahams, was an ardent Democrat. For a practical joke calculated to vex fervent Republicans, he erected, upon his own land directly across the road from the Graham home, a tall "skinned" pole bearing a huge Democratic banner.

Located beside the old "Transcontinental Road" (later named the Lincoln Highway), the banner attracted much attention. Graham was irritated beyond measure, especially because the neighbors who knew his feelings chided him about "his banner". Unfailingly they stopped and gravely asked when he had "changed parties".

Graham tried vainly to destroy the offending sign. At last George Harper, a youth employed by Graham, declared that "he thought he could climb that pole". As election day was rapidly approaching, Graham eagerly accepted the offer.

"But you really ought to put a Republican banner up in its place — if you get there," suggested Graham. Then he slowly added, "Only there's none here."

"Well, give me something else."

"Let's see," mused Graham. "There's that old dead cat out behind the barn — you might put that up."

And up it went. Harper climbed the pole, tore down the Democratic insignia, and in its place tied the dead cat.

The change amused the whole community. Residents for miles around heard of the new advertisement. Men driving by in smart buggies, farmers in their wagons, travelers — all who passed chuckled at the "dead-cat party". Rockwell, himself unable to climb the pole, at last had to cut it down to remove the offending symbol. Nevertheless, the memory of the episode lingered in the neighborhood. Henceforth, any ridiculous campaign tactics invoked the epithet of "dead cat" politics.

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