

The **P**ALIMPSEST

JANUARY 1942

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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

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSEST

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material 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

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Life in the Army

To the civilian far from the battlefields or the historian long after the military campaigns have ended, war is regarded as a sort of social phenomenon. The public is concerned with the collective behavior of the armed forces, the general conduct of the war, and the broad results. But armies are composed of men and grand strategy is the coordination of detailed movements of troops. The soldier in the ranks sees the war from his own particular viewpoint. Battles break down into thousands of individual fights, at long range perhaps and usually impersonal. Actual combat consumes relatively little time. The experiences of Civil War veterans, for example, as recorded in letters and diaries, included many activities not of belligerent character.

After three years of campaigning in Missouri, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Mississippi, the term of enlistment of most of the men in the Third Iowa Cavalry expired. More than 600, or nearly all

who were fit for duty, straightway reënlisted as veteran volunteers on January 1, 1864. Thereupon the depleted regiment was relieved from duty at Little Rock, Arkansas, and returned to Keokuk. On February 12th the men were given a month's furlough to go home, visit their friends, and secure recruits. The Third Iowa Cavalry was composed mainly of men from Lee, Van Buren, Davis, Jefferson, Appanoose, Wayne, Decatur, Marion, Monroe, and Lucas counties. There were only eight from Ringgold, including Commissary Sergeant George L. Bathe, Second Sergeant Henry Ross, Fifth Corporal John W. Blades of Company M, and five privates, three in Company M and the Baldwin brothers in Company L.

Although about 250 men out of Ringgold's small population of 2923 had already answered the call to arms, further recruiting was not impossible, for nine more men were induced to join the Third Cavalry. Among these were Benjamin Keller and his two brothers-in-law, William Everley and Isaac Talley. All three had been married about three years and were engaged in farming, but the need of the country seemed great enough to transcend their innate love of home and family.

Benjamin Keller was born in Noble County,

Ohio, on May 12, 1833. In 1856 his father moved to Ringgold County, following the tide of immigration then beginning to populate southwestern Iowa. In 1859 Ben purchased eighty acres of land from his father, and on February 9, 1860, he married Sarah E. Talley. Being raised as farmers, they planned to continue in a home of their own.

When Ben Keller decided to enlist his leave taking was not easy. Besides his young wife, a baby daughter hardly sixteen months old had to be left behind. However, Ben was assured that they would be well cared for because the neighborhood was composed of closely related families of Stahls, Talleys, and Kellers who would willingly look after Mrs. Keller's welfare.

Like many Civil War soldiers, Ben Keller kept a diary. It began on "February 29 A. D. 1864 — B. Keller left home to go into the United States Service". With the exception of April, May, and June, 1864, when he made only five entries, the diary constituted a nearly complete daily account of his war experiences. The items were usually brief, but gave a good picture of some phases of a soldier's life. From it, in conjunction with official accounts and letters, it is possible to learn what occupied the time of the soldiers of the Third Iowa Cavalry during 1864 and 1865.

After being mustered into the United States service at Fort Des Moines, the recruits were sent to Camp McClellan at Davenport for preliminary training. Further training, as well as arms and mounts, were received at St. Louis, Missouri. After some active service in Arkansas, Ben and his brothers-in-law were apparently transferred to Memphis, Tennessee, where on July 25th they were assigned to Company M by Colonel John W. Noble. On that day Ben also recorded that he "went on a scout fifteen mile southeast of Memphis."

On August 5th Colonel Noble "Started from Memphis on an expedition" to Oxford, Mississippi, with 351 men. By the 7th they had reached Holly Springs, Mississippi. The next day the Confederates were encountered at the Tallahatchie River, where the Union forces drove them back across Hurricane Creek and thence to Oxford. On the 9th Oxford was shelled. Then, after several skirmishing and scouting excursions, the Third Iowa "marched to Oxford" again and "burned the town." Three days later the rebels were well routed, and the Federal troops gained a short respite at Memphis.

Presently, however, part of the Third Iowa Cavalry, commanded by Major Benjamin S. Jones, was detached for special duty, this time

destined for the campaign against General Sterling Price in western Missouri. Ben began his account on October 22nd when they started marching soon after midnight and, after crossing the Little Blue River, joined Major General Alfred Pleasanton's force at Independence. "Our Regt", wrote Keller, was "put in the front at dark driving the rebels 5 mi." Though the Third Iowa was "releaved at 10 Pm." there was "fiting till midnight", and the soldiers lay "in line of battle all night." At the end of twenty-four hours during the skirmish at Independence the men had no food, nor the horses any water.

On Sunday, October 23rd, the "battle of the big blew river commenced at Sunrise." The Third Iowa Cavalry was again placed in front at 8 A. M., charging the "rebs on foot, driving them 1 mile to the praire where a mounted Charge took place." That afternoon the Confederate troops were scattered and retreated southward. The next day at sunrise the pursuit began along the Missouri-Kansas State line. Ben and his comrades rode sixty-five miles before contacting General Price's rear guard at about 2 o'clock the next morning.

The "battle of the Osage River commenced at day brake" on October 25, 1864, with the capture of one cannon and twenty-five wagons. Seven

miles farther south at Mine Creek seven more pieces of artillery and 800 prisoners were taken, among whom were Major General John S. Marmaduke captured by James Dunlavy of Company D and Brigadier General William L. Cabell taken by Sergeant C. M. Young of Company L. Sixteen miles farther on the rebels made another stand, but again they were routed. Across Arkansas and into Indian Territory the cavalry pursued the fleeing Confederates without again overtaking them. By the end of November Major Jones's troop was again at Benton Barracks, having marched 1650 miles in less than three months.

This was the last fighting in which Ben Keller participated. The regiment was again united at Louisville, Kentucky, in January, 1865, and during the last months of the war was busy policing captured territory in Georgia. Six companies of the Third Cavalry helped take Columbus, Georgia, but Company M was not one of these, "being left to guard the wagon train." Active service ended on August 9, 1865, when the regiment was mustered out at Atlanta, Georgia.

If Ben Keller's diary is indicative of the interests of the soldiers, military exploits were scarcely as prominent as personal comfort, routine duties, news from home, and incidental experiences. Re-

ligion, for example, played a prominent part in maintaining morale in the army. Regimental chaplains conducted services for those soldiers who cared to attend. Since Ben Keller was a devout person, he seems to have attended divine worship whenever possible. His first mention of this was while he was in Little Rock, Arkansas, during June, 1864. There he "attended Colard quarterly meting" two Sundays.

The campaigns during the summer disrupted all religious gatherings for several months, so it was not until November 20, 1864, that Ben was able to attend church at Springfield, Missouri. Some Sundays he and his comrades went to church three times. This was especially true during the winter of 1864-65 while "religion [was] flourishing in camp." When the troops reached Georgia, religious services consisting of preaching by Chaplain James W. Latham of the Third Iowa Cavalry, prayer meetings, and Bible class were held not only on Sundays, but throughout the week as well. At many of these Ben "helped to seat a piece of ground" for the meetings.

Letters are important to soldiers. Mrs. Keller proved to be a faithful correspondent, as her husband mentioned many letters he received from her. One of these was particularly important to Ben. On December 2, 1864, he learned that a

month before a daughter, Rosa, had been born to his wife.

Speeches intended to stimulate courage and patriotism were common in the Civil War. Probably the experiences of the men in the Third Cavalry were typical. According to Keller's diary there were several such occasions during the summer of 1865. The first of June had been pronounced a "day of mourning and prayer and humiliation" for the death of President Lincoln. At one o'clock the Third Iowa Cavalry marched to the Presbyterian Church in Atlanta. There, amidst flags "dressed in mourning", they heard a "discorce delivered by the chaplain of the 3rd Iowa, Latham, sooted to the occasion."

On June 10, 1865, Brevet Major General Emory Upton, commander of the division to which the Third Iowa Cavalry belonged, recited the achievements of his troops and praised their valor. "Though many of you have not received the reward which your gallantry has entitled you to," he observed, "you have received the commendation of your superior officers, and have won the admiration and gratitude of your countrymen. You will return to your homes with the proud consciousness of having defended the flag of your country in the hour of the greatest national peril, while through your instrumentality liberty and

civilization will have advanced the greatest stride recorded in history."

Numerous other men addressed the soldiers. On July 10, 1865, James Johnson, Provisional Governor of Georgia from June 17th to December 14th of that year, spoke on the "state of the country" and urged the need of a reconstruction of the nation. John A. Kasson from Iowa delivered a short speech when the first orders for mustering out were read on July 21st. Three days before leaving Atlanta, Colonel John W. Noble presented a new flag to the regiment and took that occasion to praise his soldiers for the valiant way they had conducted themselves throughout the war.

When not engaged in battle or on the march, much time was spent in routine army procedure. Drill was the order of the day most of the time, and inspections were monotonously frequent. Sunday inspection, general inspection, inspection of arms, horses, and quarters were ordered repeatedly. In addition to these, dress parade was held nearly every week while the troops remained on guard duty in Georgia following the cessation of hostilities.

For a cavalry troop there was the additional necessity of caring for the horses. When the supply of hay was low, the horses had to be taken

out to graze every morning and evening. Besides this, the horses had to be shod and otherwise kept in condition.

Guard duty was another task that often proved unwelcome. Camp guard and horse guard had to be stood, sometimes for twenty-four hours, often in rain or snow. Occasionally there was special guard duty. At Elyton, Alabama, and Columbus, Georgia, the supply train had to be watched by Company M. In Montgomery the streets were patrolled. Ben Keller was stationed to safeguard "Judge" McKendree's home in Columbus while the public works in general were burned by the United States forces.

Fatigue duty was varied. It might range from building a bridge to cleaning up the quarters. At one time the men of Company M had to rive clapboards to build shelters for themselves. Unloading a barge of hay, working at the stable, laying a pontoon bridge, and making corduroy roads across the bottom of Swamp Creek were a few of the tasks in which Keller participated on the march from Louisville, Kentucky, to Montgomery, Alabama. At Atlanta the grounds around the hospital had to be cleaned. During June, 1865, Ben went to cook for five others of Company M while they were rebuilding a railroad bridge across the Chattahoochee River. On returning to

camp, he recorded that he cleaned up around headquarters and put up horse troughs.

Army life has always involved early rising. The call to start the day was likely to come at any time after two o'clock in the morning and usually the company was on the march within an hour afterward. Reveille was recorded by Ben Keller as early as eleven P. M., and Boots and Saddles hardly ever came later than "day Brake". When the cavalry was on an expedition, twenty to thirty miles were covered in a single day with as high as sixty-five miles traversed in times of great urgency.

Transportation was a continual problem. On raids and active campaigns, of course, the cavalry traveled horseback, but when troops were transferred from one theater of the war to another other means of transportation were used. Railroads carried supplies and sometimes troops. More often in the west the armies were moved by steamboat on the Tennessee, Ohio, Mississippi, and Missouri rivers. Thus, during October, 1864, the Third Iowa Cavalry traveled by boat from Cape Girardeau to St. Louis. On this short trip it was necessary to unload the men and a part of the horses in order to get over the sandbars. On December 10, 1864, Company M was ordered on board the *Schuyler*, but the river was so full of ice

that the boat did not attempt to start. The next day the ice broke several boats loose from the wharf so it was decided to go by way of the railroad to Cairo, as this was a more certain means of travel in the winter.

Ben Keller's diary mentioned some incidents which reflect no glory or honor upon the army. On the march from Montgomery, Alabama, to Columbus, Georgia, the troops lay by the roadside several hours, "the officers being too drunk to travel." On the Clinton Road from Columbus to Macon the Third Iowa Cavalry was "halted and by order each man in the command was searched for gold, silver, and other property taken unlawfully on the expedition."

Sickness is one of the serious hazards of army life. During the Civil War thousands of soldiers contracted diseases and hundreds died. Only twice, however, did Keller mention being sick during his period of enlistment. Even then he was more fortunate than many of his comrades for he had only "chills and fever".

Amid the innumerable duties of military life, there were still a few intervals for private interests and recreation. Each man had to take care of his personal belongings. Clothing had to be washed and mended. Ben Keller made a knapsack while in Atlanta. One day while he was washing his

blanket in a creek, a Confederate soldier suddenly appeared and demanded his money and gun. Ben, noticing some uncertainty on the part of the Southerner, refused and then discovered that his would-be captor had no ammunition. As a result, the tables were turned, and the Confederate was captured. On another occasion he visited the battlefield at Peach Creek. Blackberry hunting was also a welcome diversion in the summer of 1865.

Besides keeping a diary and writing letters, Ben tried to compose ballads. Once he mentioned that he spent the day writing five, of which four have been preserved with his diary. Three of them were in Negro dialect, probably based upon his own observations. Written for his own amusement, the ballads like the diary were not models of orthography or poetry, but they were probably typical of many similar efforts by Union soldiers. One, called "Oald Shady", expressed the irrepressible jubilation and childlike faith of the free Negroes. His "Song of Babylon" and "Grandmother Told Me So" represent the naive attitude of the slaves toward the war. A ballad which expressed the sentiments of many of his comrades was "A Soldier's Farewell to Home".

Ben Keller was unusually thrifty. During 1864 he drew \$265.45 in monthly pay and bounty

checks. Of this he sent \$235 home for his wife and family. When he was mustered out, the government still owed him \$100 in bounty besides some monthly pay. He kept a record of the clothing drawn and the value of it. At first he received a blouse — \$3.15; 1 pair of pants — \$2.50; 1 gum blanket — \$2.48; 1 woolen blanket — \$3.35; 2 shirts — \$2.80; 1 pair of drawers — \$.95; 1 overcoat — \$7.50; 1 hat — \$1.60; 1 pea jacket — \$6.00; and 1 pair of socks — \$.35. Later he drew the following articles: 2 pairs of cavalry pants — \$8.30; 1 overcoat — \$10.50; 1 pair of boots — \$3.25; 2 pairs of drawers — \$2.00; 1 hat — \$1.80; 1 blouse — \$2.50; 2 pairs of socks — \$.70; and 1 shirt — \$1.50.

On August 5, 1865, the men of Company M turned over their arms and horses, and on August 9th the regiment was mustered out at Atlanta, broke camp, and boarded the cars, bound for Davenport where "the sitisins gave us a reception by making a short speech witch was followed by colonel Noble." On August 19th they were "paid off and Discharged from the United States Service" at Camp McClellan.

Ben Keller at once boarded a boat for Burlington. On Sunday, the next day, he went by train to Ottumwa where he stayed all night. From Ottumwa he traveled by wagon to Leon where he

caught a stage and rode all night to reach Mt. Ayr at sunrise.

He was glad the war was over. For many soldiers who had to find new employment in civil life the transition was difficult, but Ben Keller found readjustment relatively easy. He simply returned to his family and resumed farming. In later years he prospered. He became the father of a large family, and remained a staunch supporter of the Union.

HOMER L. CALKIN

Old Dutch Fred

Frederick Wilhelm Feldmann was born in the town of Bunde, Prussia, in the year 1828. He married Wilhelmina Eilers, and one child, a daughter, Marie Sophie Feldmann, was born of the union. Irked by Prussian requirements of military service, and longing for the freedom of American citizenship, Fred plead with his wife to accompany him to America. She, thinking of her relatives and friends and fearing the possible dangers in an unknown land, refused to go; but she was willing that Fred alone should make the venture. Leaving wife and child, he came to the United States and, about the year 1866, arrived at the home of Hannibal H. Waterman at O'Brien, in O'Brien County, Iowa. Mr. Waterman, who was the first white settler in the county, hired him as a helper on the farm and built a small tenant house, which Fred plastered and in which he lived. One year Fred rented and operated the Waterman farm.

On August 22, 1868, Feldmann was in the United States Land Office in Sioux City and filed a homestead claim on eighty acres of land in section thirty-four, Waterman Township, O'Brien

County, Iowa. This was rather rough land, partially covered with timber, but having a small area suitable for crop cultivation.

After digging and erecting a sod shanty, he built a stable for his livestock. He owned a yoke of oxen, some chickens, and a pig. The framework of the stable was made of poles, set erect, firmly planted in the ground, to form the sides of the structure. The top was covered with poles and then the whole building was covered with wild prairie grass, in quantity and position to keep the stable warm in winter and dry in summer.

In the fall of 1868 he plowed some land for the next year's wheat crop and started cutting dead and down oak timber for fuel. During the winter he continued to cut timber for poles, rails, and fence stakes, which he easily sold at a profit. Nine-tenths of O'Brien County was prairie and only a small acreage in the southeastern part of the county, where Fred lived, had timber. His oxen hauled him to O'Brien, the county seat, three miles away across the Little Sioux River, when he needed food. At first he traded at the store of H. A. Sage, but when "Clark" Green came to the county in 1869, he seems to have patronized his store.

Fred had two large red oxen, rather wild in their disposition, and prone to run away and break

things. To better control his "neat cattle", as the assessor called them, Fred had two ropes. Each rope was tied to the horn of an ox, while they were yoked and being driven. Fred held the other ends of the ropes, to jerk the heads of his team backward when necessary to bring them to a standstill.

With an old second-hand breaking plow he broke the tough prairie sod and each year raised wheat and garden truck, but his cut timber brought the most revenue. As there are only thirty-six numbered sections of land in each government township, and in those days there was considerable timber land still owned by the United States, the settlers frequently cut wood on a mythical section "thirty-seven" and prospered thereby. We have no record that Fred did this but he might have accidentally got over a government line not well marked.

Fred had no saw, but he was handy with an ax and also a small hand ax which he kept sharp on a grindstone suspended in a wooden frame and rotated by an iron handle. At the time of his death he had a large amount of rails, poles, and fence stakes on hand.

While Fred was friendly, he rarely talked to people. He had few confidants. Especially was he reticent concerning his early life. About his

family in Germany he kept silent in two languages, until he realized that death was near. Though he lived by himself in his little sod house, and must have been lonely, he was always cheerful, good natured, and rarely worried. He cooked his own meals and made some of his own clothes. No one ever called him by his real name. Universally he was known as "Dutch Fred" or "Old Dutch Fred". He seemed to like the appellations.

About five feet eight inches in height, he weighed 155 to 160 pounds. His eyes were blue, his hair brown, and his beard dark. He always wore his trousers inside the tops of his heavy boots. For one pair of boots he paid H. A. Sage \$6.50.

In spite of his reclusion Old Dutch Fred had many friends for he was honest, industrious, and droll. A number of anecdotes indicative of his character are still remembered by persons who knew him well. Among his pioneer acquaintances who contributed information for this article are Jacob Waggoner and Charles F. McCormack of Sutherland, Iowa; Charles Youde of Signal Hill, California; and Mrs. Emily McLeran, oldest daughter of H. H. Waterman, who resides in Chicago.

Mayor Charles McCormack tells of a threshing accident in which Fred, working near the ma-

chine, caught the corner of his smock in an iron cog wheel. He was being drawn into the machinery when two men caught him and with considerable difficulty dragged him away, leaving a large portion of his smock in the gears. He had made the smock out of cotton grain sacks sewed with heavy twine. If he had used thread, the garment could have been torn loose more easily. While he was being drawn into the machine he made no sound, but after he was free he remarked apologetically, "I make him too stout."

Again he would shake his ragged clothes and laugh: "Dese be boor dings mit clothes, but Old Dutch Fred be under here, and his heart beat shust like odder mans."

Some of his sayings were widely repeated. "I am der peoples", he used to say. "Der rest all be officers. Don't it?" This was almost literally true because when Fred came to the county the Waterman family and he were the only ones there without a stain on their reputation for honesty. The county was controlled by a gang of transient carpetbaggers, who had organized it for profit, and held all the offices.

One winter day he was found alone in the sod hut on his homestead claim, unable to rise. The neighbors immediately gave him their friendly care and took him to the home of Frank O. Rad-

eke, who lived just over the Cherokee County line, about a mile from Fred's cabin. Against Fred's wishes, Mr. Radeke secured the services of Dr. M. S. Butler of Cherokee, a pioneer physician of unusual ability. Dr. Butler made three trips to see Fred and gave him careful attention, but the patient did not seem to want to live and did not help the doctor as he might have done. Without fear or trembling, on February 13, 1873, Frederick Wilhelm Feldmann passed on to the Great Beyond. In the presence of two score of friends, D. W. Young, a neighbor and a layman, preached the funeral sermon. A ladies' quartette sang appropriate hymns.

Of all his friends Fred esteemed most highly Archibald Murray who had been exceptionally kind to him. Murray was a ubiquitous individual who successively held the O'Brien County offices of surveyor, sheriff, recorder, treasurer, county judge, and auditor. Incidentally he had acquired what in those days was considered great wealth. While Fred was suffering in his last illness he spoke complacently of his coming death, and seemed to be a fatalist. He said he was going to die; there was no use to call a doctor or give him medicine. He expressed a wish that his daughter would be given his property. He also said he wanted to be buried beside his dear friend, Archi-

bald Murray, who had died a few weeks prior to Fred's illness. But the latter request was not fulfilled.

While Fred had occupied his homestead four and a half years after entry, he lacked six months of the required five years' occupation and the administrators were unable to find an heir to continue possession. Patent issued on August 26, 1896, to Conrad Smith, and the land is now owned by Charles Youde who has given consent to the placing of Fred's grave and monument on the old homestead.

The assets of the estate were sold for \$237.30. The inventory filed by W. S. Fuller, John W. Brockschink, and Frank O. Radeke, his administrators, listed 600 rails and poles, 450 fence stakes, eight pine logs, a stable, a pig, 44 chickens, two oxen, a truck wagon, bob-sled, fifty bushels of wheat, carpenter tools, cooking utensils, and a coffee grinder that sold for twenty-five cents.

After payment of debts the estate was kept open until proof of heirship could be secured. This was furnished through the German Consul at Chicago, and Marie Sophie Feldmann, the daughter, was paid \$32.55 in 1880.

In 1922, through the perseverance of James P. Martin of Sutherland, a fund was secured by dollar contributions, with which to purchase material

for a marker for the grave. Roy Lampman disinterred the remains which had been buried in a valley and excavated a new grave on a bluff. Over the grave, facing the Little Sioux River, a suitable monument, bearing his name and the date of his death, has been erected to the memory of Frederick Wilhelm Feldmann.

"Old Dutch Fred lived a hermit life, far from wife, daughter, home and the fatherland" in order to escape the tyranny of Europe and enjoy the freedom of life in the United States of America. In his humble way he contributed to the best elements of the community in which he lived.

O. H. MONTZHEIMER

Iowa Anecdote

TWO CREEKS

Most of the lesser streams in the vicinity of the pioneer village of Redman in Tama County were not named before the community developed. They were of little importance, too small to be charted except on purely local maps. Nevertheless, they played their part as landmarks in the neighborhood.

To the north of the town, flowing westward to join Salt Creek, was a shallow, spring-fed stream called by various names. Most general usage simply designated it as "The Crick". Its course carried it directly across the county-line road, running north and south. Spring thaws and fall rains often turned "The Crick" into a raging flood. At such times crossing was almost impossible for a day or two. Northbound travelers were forced to wait at the Redman inn until the flood abated.

During the flood periods, derogatory comments of the stranded people flew thick and fast. "Such a bother. That 'crick' is more trouble than it's worth", said one early traveler, voicing the sentiments of all concerned. The appropriate epithet

was remembered. Little by little the usage of that description grew. From a nameless "crick" the little stream became Troublesome Creek.

Flowing near Redman was another brook. Unlike its more unruly sister to the north, this stream caused no trouble. According to local tradition it was named in quite a different manner.

James R. Graham, founder of the town, was passionately fond of buttermilk. The neighbors who knew this usually saved some when they churned. On one such occasion Graham was told that his neighbor, Simon Overturf, had that day churned, and so, though the sky was already dark, he sent his small son, Charles, after it.

Charles made the trip in record time. Hurrying across the fields, he secured the buttermilk and started homeward. Unfortunately, as he crossed the brook, he stumbled. The open pail fell from his grasp, spilling its contents into the water. For a moment, dismayed, he stared at the pail. Then, with thoughts all his own, he trudged home, swinging the empty pail.

Graham met his son at the door. "Where", he asked, "is the buttermilk?"

"You know that crick of ours? It used to be water — but it's buttermilk now."

And it still remains Buttermilk Creek.

WALTER E. KALOUPEK

The Gem of the West

"The traces of man's industry and genius are few; and at best they are crude and primitive as yet." Thus wrote Ole Munch Raeder, a Norwegian traveler, after his journey in eastern Iowa in the fall of 1847. He predicted that it would be "a long time" before the "dreary monotony of the woods" would be "enlivened by the appearance of neat little towns and smiling landscapes with cheerful farmhouses". Within five years a Davenport correspondent of the *New York Times* observed transitions wrought "under the magic power of the hammer and spade" which were so "apparent and great" that he "burst forth in new strains of admiration." Similarly, the Council Bluffs *Chronotype* reported "the cultivated field and domestic herd every where proclaim the great change". Within a decade after Raeder's journey the *Des Moines Journal* noted "a wonderful and stupendous change". "Thousands" of farmhouses had replaced Indian wigwams; cities and thriving villages had "arisen as if by magic;" mills clattered on the banks of "every river," and locomotives were snorting across the prairies, the *Journal* recorded.

The transformation was wrought by the onward flow of increasing immigration. In 1852 it was "pouring in . . . like a flood, apparently exceeding that of any preceding year", the *Des Moines Star* stated. "Ere long," it believed, Iowa would "bud and blossom like a rose" and become "one of the most prosperous and rich agricultural States." Emigration to Iowa was reported in the *Louisville Journal* to be "astonishing and unprecedented" in 1853. A *New York Times* correspondent noted the arrival of "many thousands" in 1855, while in the next year the *Daily Express and Herald* of Dubuque stated that river ports were "thronged with the surge" of emigrants. "There is a force in this flood of immigration as irresistible as the Mississippi at the 'June Rise' ", wrote Charles Foster of Washington, Iowa, in the *New York Tribune* in the spring of 1857.

That Iowa should receive an influx of settlers was inevitable. Interest in the State was stimulated by correspondents and newspapers, thus speeding the process of settlement. This was the opinion of Josiah B. Grinnell, writing in the *New York Tribune*. Many "favorable notices" given the pioneer Commonwealth in the *Tribune*, *Springfield Republican*, *Chicago Herald*, and other newspapers brought "a deluge of letters" of inquiry, he stated. Questions about land, living

conditions and society, water power, opportunities for mechanics, comparisons with prospects in neighboring States, and "how, on the whole, do you like Iowa?" were most common. Iowa editors and correspondents presented the inducements to settlers in both local and eastern newspapers. Indeed, the State was "very appropriately termed the Canaan of the emigrant," the *Chicago Press* declared.

It was only natural that agricultural opportunities should receive most stress by correspondents, for "an Emigrant", writing in the *New York Tribune* in 1851, recognized that Iowa "probably" contained "more of the first class arable land, in a healthy climate, than any other of the United States." Jacob M. Eldridge presented figures in the same paper to induce farmers to go to Iowa. Abundant fertile land could be obtained at the government price of \$1.25 per acre, or \$100 for an eighty. At \$2.00 per acre, it could be broken for \$160, while fencing it, at seventy cents per rod, would cost \$336. Thus, Eldridge estimated, a prairie farm could be purchased and opened for \$596. An income of \$2380 from the sale of crops could be expected the first year. Forty acres of wheat, at the prevailing price of seventy cents per bushel, would total \$840; thirty acres of corn, at thirty cents per bushel, would net \$540; while ten

acres of potatoes, at fifty cents a bushel, would bring another \$1000. If all his estimates were correct, a balance of \$1784 would remain after subtracting \$596 from the total income of \$2380. "There is your year's work and farm clear," wrote Eldridge. "If you can beat that in the State of New York, just let me know," he added.

This communication drew a comment from the *Tribune* editor who observed that Eldridge was "a good hand at cyphering — we trust that he is equally good at farming." It was pointed out that no allowances had been made for seed costs, cultivating, harvesting, and marketing. Nor did Eldridge include any costs for equipment such as a team, wagon, and essential implements. Consistent with his policy, however, the editor urged "poor men with little money and a good many children (present or prospective)" to go to Iowa. Those who had previously settled there "may well thank a kind Providence and need not wander to Sacramento in quest of gold," he wrote.

"No country on earth" could compete with Iowa in livestock raising, according to an anonymous correspondent from Poweshiek County. Much land was held by speculators, he pointed out, and farmers could graze their cattle and cut hay on it "for years to come." In the meantime, settlers could fence their own farms and raise

grain and corn to fatten the livestock. This, he believed, was "a very great convenience" to a settler in a new country.

"Buckeye" reported in the *New York Times* that he had seen the "richest and most splendid" crops of corn, oats, and wheat in Iowa. Nor was this surprising, for a New Yorker, who traveled in Iowa, wrote that the soil was "rich as a stable-yard," while Alice Mann declared that it made "little difference what seeds are put into the ground, or how. . . . The seed sown is sure to grow abundantly." Little wonder that a rumor of Iowa farmers being "unable to sleep" because of "the racket made by the rapid growth of corn" was reprinted in several newspapers. Such vegetation justified the *National Intelligencer* (Washington, D. C.) in stating that "flattering accounts" of Iowa's fertility and productivity were "not exaggerated". Indeed, the *Albia Weekly Republican* summarized Iowa's agricultural opportunities as constituting "emphatically Eden for farmers."

Iowa presented opportunities in other fields of endeavor as well. Many correspondents stressed the excellent water-power resources. "The almost unlimited water power at this place", it was reported from Elkader, "forms a nucleus around which, at no distant day, a populous and enter-

prising village is sure to grow." Charles Foster at Washington announced in the *New York Tribune* a great need for laborers at \$1.25 to \$1.50 per day, as well as for mechanics at \$1.75 to \$2.25 per day. Teachers were also needed: ladies could get from \$12 to \$16 per month and men from \$15 to \$50, he stated. Indeed, correspondents were agreed that Iowa in the fifties offered attractive opportunities to much needed workers in all occupations. Only of lawyers and land agents, "our greatest pests", were there "too many", correspondents agreed.

"The privations and hardships . . . incident to Western life, do not exist here," an Iowan wrote in the *New York Tribune*. Other correspondents testified that Iowa's "salubrious" climate was "less severe than in Minnesota," nor did it have the "consumptive changes" of other States. Moreover, "the socialities of life," "Buckeye" stated in the *New York Times*, "are here much better than many conjecture." Indeed, Mrs. Frances D. Gage, temperance lecturer, found Iowa pioneers of the fifties to be "very much the same people in Iowa" that they had been "at home". She paid tribute to the men whom she saw at a political rally in Oskaloosa. They "looked just like men elsewhere," except they were "a little more civil and genteel, and did not

make quite so general a spittoon of the Court-House." Though still in the "log cabinage" stage, the "little deprivations" called out the "latent powers" of people which "cultivates the fallow grounds of heart and feelings," she wrote in the *New York Tribune*. The new country, she reported in 1854, made them "more free, more earnest, more charitable". Her sister testified that neighborly communities were developing. She had settled in Iowa ten years earlier and "for weeks I saw no face of woman." Yet when Mrs. Gage came to visit, the "friendly cheerful smoke of twenty home-fires" could be counted from her sister's door. Mrs. Gage "ate and slept" in these cabins and found "there was peace, plenty and cheerfulness." She could not fathom why people would live in "the dust and smoke and din" of eastern cities when Iowa beckoned with "so much of beauty, freshness and utility unappropriated." Mrs. Gage's opinion was corroborated by another *Tribune* correspondent, "who had travelled in Iowa." He did "conscientiously recommend" and "earnestly advise" people to settle here. That would make the "the fortunates among the children of men," for, he wrote, "I think Iowa bids fair to be the gem of the West."

THOMAS E. TWEITO

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