

The **P**ALIMPSEST

MAY 1929

CONTENTS

THE NEW PURCHASE

Indian Affairs 161

JAMES G. EDWARDS

Making the Treaty of 1842 174

BRUCE E. MAHAN

Westward 181

The Promised Land 187

PAULINE GRAHAME

Comment 199

THE EDITOR

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.

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 ELY BRIGGS

VOL. X

ISSUED IN MAY 1929

NO. 5

COPYRIGHT 1929 BY THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Indian Affairs

We were fortunate in having arrived at the Sac and Fox Agency on Monday last, October 11, 1841, before any business had been transacted. Governor Chambers and T. Hartley Crawford, two of the commissioners, having arrived the day before, the several Indian bands paid their respects to them shortly after our arrival. The Indians were clothed in their best, and being well mounted presented a most imposing appearance. The usual ceremony of shaking hands being ended, they had a talk with the Governor and Mr. Crawford, the burden of which was that they were very much gratified at their visit, and expressed themselves much pleased at the happy issue to which the Governor and Agent had

[This narrative of the proceedings at the conference on the payment of government annuities held in October, 1841, at the Sac and Fox Agency on the Des Moines River was written by the editor of the Burlington *Hawk-Eye* who, among other notable Iowans, was present on the occasion. It is here reprinted from *Niles' National Register*, Vol. 61, pp. 168, 169, November 13, 1841.—THE EDITOR]

brought their long standing difficulties, so that now the several bands connected with their nation had the most amicable feeling toward each other. Directly after this interview we learn that Poweshiek's and Keokuk's bands were about to go through the ceremony of "smoking for horses". This being new to most present, excited considerable curiosity and as our readers may be equally curious, we shall attempt to give them a description of it.

Poweshiek, with his band, assembled on the beautiful lawn in front of the agency house, and commenced the ceremony by ranging his followers in a sitting posture on the ground. Keokuk and his band took their position about twenty paces immediately in front. These remained standing. Presently one of Keokuk's men crossed over to the other band, leading a horse with one hand and carrying a pipe in the other. Having selected his man, he handed him the pipe; after it was taken and smoked, he then placed the bridle in the smoker's hand and presented him with the horse. The horse was then led off to the rear of Poweshiek's band by the man who had received it, the donor retiring in great glee to his companions opposite. Immediately after and in quick succession several horses, amounting to thirteen, were smoked for and given in the same way. The most interesting part of the ceremony consisted in seeing Keokuk leading a horse with a small boy, about six or seven years old, mounted on him. Just before he arrived at the place of presen-

tation, he lifted the boy off the horse, placed the bridle in his hand, and then handed the pipe to one of Poweshiek's men, at the same time directing the boy to give the horse to the man to whom he gave the pipe. What added the most interest to this transaction was the fact that this little boy is a Sioux prisoner, who has been adopted by Keokuk, and is treated by him as kindly — and perhaps more so — as an only son. It is known that the Sioux are the most deadly enemies of the Sacs and Foxes, and the tenderness with which this child is treated may appear strange to those who are not aware that it is a custom among various tribes so to treat the children of their enemies who are taken in battle. Several have offered to take this child, and Mr. William Phelps promised to bring it up and educate it with his own children, if Keokuk would give him up; another offered two horses for the child, but all these propositions were peremptorily declined by O. K. as Keokuk is now called.

It is surprising to see the excitement this "smoking for horses" produces among the Indians. They not only gave away horses, but blankets, whole pieces of calico, every article of dress, and one Indian, who had on a handsome military coat, for which he probably allowed the trader from whom he purchased it one hundred dollars took that from his back and presented it to the Indian who had smoked for it. Another absolutely stripped off all his clothing, saving his leggings, breech cloth, and

moccasins, and gave them away in the same manner. When the above ceremony is conducted between two distinct tribes, it has another appendage, which was not put in requisition at this time. It is this: the Indian who makes the present starts off with a bridle and pipe in one hand and a common Indian whip in the other. The receivers or donees sit in a row, with their backs all bared. He approaches, and, after selecting his man, lays on the whip with all his might. If the man does not flinch under two or three "licks" on his bare back, the pipe is handed him, and, after taking a "whiff", he receives the horse, or whatever else it may be. If, however, he should make the least movement, or appear to writhe under the lash the present is withheld from him, and he is called a "squaw".

We have been thus particular in describing this ceremony, supposing many of our readers unacquainted with its details, and because nothing of more novelty has transpired since our arrival. Directly after the "smoking" was over, Keokuk made a speech, and the Indians dispersed.

The dragoons, who are stationed here to protect the Indians, then turned out and went through various evolutions, exhibiting a precision in all their movements which reflected credit on their commander and a state of discipline which can hardly be found out of the regular service. This company is composed of fine looking men. They are commanded by Lieutenant Thomas McCrate, who is a

noble, gallant officer, and by his modest, gentlemanly deportment in the private circle has endeared himself to all his acquaintances. The manœuvrings of this corps greatly delighted the Indians, who, while they care little for infantry, stand in great awe of mounted soldiers. Each man in the company is armed with a sabre, pair of pistols, and a "carbine", or short musket, with a very long bayonet. Since they have been stationed here, which is about a fortnight, they have done considerable service. It is known that all trespassers on the Indian lands were warned by the Agent, in pursuance of instructions, to leave the country by the first of October. Several left; and among them one man had secreted his household effects under the floor, with the evident intention of returning as soon as the dragoons had gone, which he thought would be as soon as the payments and treaty were over. Not knowing anything of what was under the house, the dragoons set fire to it, as they had done to fifteen or eighteen other cabins, and burned it up, with all its contents. Public sentiment, we are glad to find, seems to accord with this action on the part of the government officers; and it certainly has given the Indians confidence in their protectors. Infringements on the Indian territory will not be tolerated by the administrators of the government in these parts, depredators may rest assured.

In the evening we visited Hardfish's encampment. Before mentioning the circumstances of our visit,

however, we shall endeavor to describe the various localities. As you approach the Agency from the settlements, the whole landscape is most beautifully interspersed with prairie and delightful groves of timber. Within a few miles of it, two of these groves nearly meet, as if disposed to kiss each other. The prairie is just rolling enough in all this region to make excellent farms. The agency house, which is built in handsome style, is situated directly in front of an extensive grove of first-rate timber, having a never failing stream suitable for stock, running within a few hundred yards of its rear; and in front, for about a mile in extent each way, lies a small prairie, most of which is under a high state of cultivation, called the agency farm. Directly to the east, in an enclosure, is the encampment of the dragoons. As you go beyond the Agency, and less than a mile to the southwest of it, you come to the encampment of Hardfish. About two or three hundred yards to the south, near a branch, the Burlington encampment may be seen composed of about a dozen tents, all crowded with a set of as jolly fellows as ever "camped out". About half a mile west of the agency house, Poweshiek's band have made their encampment. Near the road, and directly south of this encampment, stands the new council house. These with numerous individual encampments, form the *tout ensemble* of the vicinity of the Agency, including the interpreter's house, blacksmith's house and shop, and the old council house. About one mile

west the farm is situated. It is highly cultivated; upwards of one hundred acres of wheat have been sown this season, which looks remarkably well. Large quantities of corn, potatoes, turnips and melons, besides stock, have also been raised on it, the whole reflecting much credit on Richard Kerr, the government farmer.

Our visit at Hardfish's tent was interesting. We found most of the squaws cooking, which added much novelty to the scene. To see upwards of two hundred tents with a large fire at the mouth of each on a dark night was quite imposing. While the *ladies* were employed in cooking, some of the young men were engaged in dancing, others again were singing war songs in their tents. We visited Nahseuskuk's (Young Black Hawk) tent, where we found him with his handsome young wife and child, more comfortably and neatly fixed than many white families in regular built houses. This young man excites more interest than almost any other Indian. He belongs to this band. Next to his tent may be found his mother, who is still as polite to strangers as she was in the lifetime of her chief.

On Tuesday, the commissioners met the several bands at the council house, for the purpose of giving them a talk relative to the manner in which they would receive their second annual payment, two of which were now due. They had at a previous council determined to receive their first payments through their chiefs. Governor Chambers congrat-

ulated the Indians on the settlement of their difficulties, and hoped that they would now come to some harmonious conclusion among themselves, without the influence of the traders. He commented pretty severely on the course and influence of the traders, and told them he should leave a guard around the council house, at which place he would leave them to consult among themselves, without the presence of a single white man, including even the interpreters. He told them he should look for an answer from them the next morning.

On Wednesday, the commissioners and Indians again assembled at the council house. All the chiefs and head men spoke on the subject of the second payment. The purport of their talk was that they had concluded to receive it by heads of families. It appeared, however, that the very men who were the most strenuous for this mode of payment from the first, and who had permitted this question to foster the feud and bitter feeling which has for the last two years existed between them, were now most anxious that it should be made in the usual way. They could now see that by paying individuals, the traders were less likely to get their pay than by the old mode. It was anticipated that as soon as the heads of families received their share, instead of paying their old debts, they would scatter their money for new purchases, whereas, if it was paid to the chiefs, they would pay it out for the liquidation of their old debts.

After the Indians had expressed their determination to be paid in the new mode, it was necessary before proceeding any further to take a census of the whole nation and ascertain the number in each family. The Agent, Captain John Beach, then informed the Indians about the order in which he should take the census, and required that all the chiefs should be present during the whole process, so that they might be a check on each other, and detect fraud if any was attempted to be practiced. Governor Chambers also informed them that if he found a single family giving in more than its actual number he should deprive it of every cent of the payment. The Agent commenced taking the census on Wednesday afternoon, and by noon the next day he had completed it. Such expedition and promptitude on this occasion is highly creditable to the Agent. While the census was being taken, the Indians seemed to have much sport among themselves. As each representative head of a family would come up with his bundle of little sticks, to show the number in his or her family, numerous jokes were passed on both sides, either about the name or the queer way in which the interpreter spoke it, or about their families, children, &c. After the census was taken, it appeared that the whole nation of Sacs and Foxes only amounted to just twenty-three hundred. Mr. D. D. Mitchell, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis, who is now here, says that at the last treaty at Rock Island in 1832, he saw nearly

fifteen hundred warriors on horseback, who belonged to this same nation, and the nation could not then have numbered much less than *eight thousand* people. What a melancholy difference nine years have made among them!

In the afternoon of Thursday the money was conveyed to the council house. The Agent informed the Indians that he was now ready to pay them their last year's annuity in the manner agreed upon. Before he proceeded to pay them, however, the Governor addressed them. It had been intimated to him that as soon as the individual payment was made the Indians would probably scatter, and thus frustrate the principal object of the commissioners in their attempt to hold a treaty. He informed the Indians that he wished the chiefs to pledge themselves for their several bands, that they would remain on the ground after the individual payment was made, as the commissioners had much of importance to say to them. The chiefs required till the next morning to make up their minds as to giving this pledge. Forty-one thousand dollars were then distributed to the several chiefs. The chiefs handed the bundles of Missouri bank bills around among their people, each headman taking them in his hands. While it was thus passed about, a bundle containing twenty-six thousand dollars was handed to Kishkekosh, who shrewdly asked if he might go away with it. On the breaking up of the council to-day we found Governor J. D. Doty at the agency house, who had

arrived a few hours previous, and of course the commission was now full.

On Friday morning, very early, the chiefs informed the commissioners that they could not accede to the pledge required of them, as some of their people might leave after the individual payment was made; and, rather than be thought to have deceived the commissioners, they declined giving the pledge. This frankness and honesty on the part of the chiefs is highly commendable, and shows that they have some honor in their composition, if they are Indians. This was good news for those who had been waiting for the treaty. Preparations were immediately made, and the council house was crowded early.

Mr. Crawford, Superintendent of Indian Affairs at Washington, in accordance with his instructions, made a proposition to the Indians, which was briefly this: The Indians were to cede all their lands to the United States. The government on being assured of such cession promised to convey the Indians to the *north* and give them a place on the land recently purchased from the Sioux by Governor Doty. For their safety, the government promised to erect three forts and man them; it also promised to erect for each family a *house* to cost \$150, with six acres of land fenced and plowed; the chiefs to have each a house at double the cost with twelve acres attached. They were also to be furnished with agricultural implements; a schoolmaster was likewise to be provided and a schoolhouse erected.

The proposition was left with the Indians, and they were to meet again at twelve o'clock on Saturday. On Saturday they met, but the Indians gave notice that they were not prepared to give an answer. They met again on Sunday at ten o'clock and informed the commissioners that they could not accede to the proposition of the government. Keokuk, since their reconciliation, has again become their chief orator. He objected to going north, and seemed quite eloquent, as he dwelt upon the claims his people had to the country they now occupied — that they had gained it fairly by conquest, and that they did not want to leave it. He spoke in the most ironical manner of the attempt to build houses and establish schools among them. They were free, and wished to remain free as air. Of course, this broke up the treaty.

To the thousands who are anxiously wishing for a new purchase, we would say, by way of consolation, that the prospect of making a purchase between now and next summer is very fair. Few will be sorry that the purchase was not made on the terms proposed. To erect the forts and the large number of houses, and plow up the ground, and perform the other preliminary engagements proposed by the government, would have occupied nearly three years; and as the government had pledged itself that the Indians should not be removed until everything was prepared for them, they of course would not have left Iowa until the government had complied with

its engagements. We believe that representations will be made to the government, and the people interested should petition Congress, so as to induce the government to acquiesce in the proposition to purchase one-half of the Sac and Fox country, say as high up as the Raccoon Forks, which place is upwards of one hundred miles west of our present boundary. We know from individual personal intercourse with the Indians that they are willing to sell half. If such a purchase should be made, the Indians could move beyond the boundary at a moment's notice, and the government could come into immediate possession of a large and beautiful tract of country.

We are informed by those who have travelled several hundred miles above the Raccoon Forks, that the country is not at all desirable after you get fifty or seventy miles above that point. The country abounds in elk and buffalo. Lieutenant McCrate informed us that he saw about seven hundred elk in one drove, and that it took the dragoons half a day to *cross* the trail of one drove of buffaloes.

JAMES G. EDWARDS

Making the Treaty of 1842

The Sacs and Foxes did not prosper after their crushing defeat in the Black Hawk War. By the treaties of 1832, 1836, and 1837 the eastern Iowa country had passed from their possession. Each year they became more heavily indebted to the traders and the white frontier pressed harder and harder against them. In 1841 Governor Chambers held a conference with them in regard to their debts and suggested that they sell the rest of their land in Iowa and move to a new home. But the Indians refused to sell. The debts, however, had to be paid, and the red men had nothing with which to pay them except their land. Accordingly in 1842 the Sacs and Foxes were summoned to another conference at the site of the Agency, a few miles east of the present city of Ottumwa.

At the appointed time the tribes assembled and encamped about a mile east of the agency house. They spread their wickiups, several hundred in number, over half a mile of prairie, making "as pretty and romantic a scene as eyes could rest upon" according to a writer who beheld the encampment and wrote about it for the *Burlington Territorial Gazette and Advertiser*.

To this same writer the Indians appeared much more elegant than he had anticipated, for their

clothing and trappings were all new. The Sacs and Foxes, he thought, were "the finest looking Indians on the globe — of large, athletic, and perfect forms, and most graceful carriage." Keokuk was there in savage splendor; and the handsome son of Black Hawk, over six feet in height and weighing two hundred pounds, was a striking figure. Kishkekosh, the Beau Brummel of the Foxes, carried a gold headed cane which he twirled in his fingers "in the most elegant style imaginable".

Nor were the whites eclipsed by the splendor of the red men. Upon the advice of his friend, William Henry Harrison, Governor Chambers had donned the showy uniform of a brigadier general of the army for the occasion. Captain James Allen and Lieutenant C. F. Ruff had arrived from Fort Des Moines with a detachment of United States dragoons. And the dragoon uniform of that day with its fancy cap, dark blue coat, and light blue trousers was impressive indeed. Commissioners Alfred Hebard and Arthur Bridgman, Indian Agent John Beach, the interpreters Josiah Smart and Antoine Le Claire, and the licensed traders such as George Davenport, J. Sanford, L. S. Phelps, William Phelps, J. P. Eddy, W. G. and G. W. Ewing, and James Jordan were prominent figures in the white contingent at the conference. Hundreds of visitors — small traders, land speculators, whisky vendors, some newspaper editors, and prospective settlers — had gathered for the occasion.

For a council chamber Agent Beach had erected a large circular tent with a slightly raised platform on one side for Governor Chambers, his interpreter, Antoine Le Claire, and a few others. In front of the platform was an open space for the Indian orators. A circular row of seats extended around the body of the tent for the accommodation of the chiefs.

Shortly before ten o'clock on the morning of October 4th, Governor Chambers, his interpreter, and his unadorned aids marched into the tent and took their places on the platform. Then Keokuk and his fellow chiefs "filed in slowly and as gravely as a band of Roman Senators" — Keokuk stopping directly in front of the Governor and his companions deploying on either side. Each chief wore his best blanket, "freshly painted with gay fantastic figures, with feathers and fine plumage in the hair." Many wore bracelets on their wrists and various dangles in their ears, "having a fancy war-club in one hand, richly embossed with large-headed brass nails."

At a given signal all were seated. Kishkekosh rested his chin upon the gold knob of his cane like a fine old English gentleman. Governor Chambers arose and said: "My friends, I am glad to meet you once more in council. When I was here last year, at the fall of the leaf, we made you an offer for the sale of your land in this territory to which you were not willing to accede. I then told you that no further attempt to treat with you would be made until you asked for it. Towards the close of the last winter,

your agent told me you wished to go to Washington for that purpose. I wrote to your Great Father and told him of your wishes, but the great council of the whites was then in session and he had too much business to permit him to meet you there. But he has now sent me here to talk to you again about it and he has told me he does not wish to hold frequent councils with you and make frequent purchases of you. He wishes now to settle you in a permanent home."

Then Governor Chambers explained that their Great Father would give them one thousand boxes of money — \$1,000,000 — for their land, out of which he would pay all their debts which ought to be paid, and would give them a new home out of the way of the white men who were pressing against them in such great numbers. His speech was translated sentence by sentence by the interpreter as he went along.

One by one the chiefs made reply. Said Keokuk, "We are happy to meet you here to-day, as the representative of our Great Father in Washington in friendly council." Kakake, a Fox chief, declared, "My friends, the advice of our father is good and I hope we may all meet and talk it over friendly and amicably."

After these opening speeches and greetings there was a general handshaking all around and the council adjourned. Meanwhile, the Claim Commissioners Hebard and Bridgman had begun their task of

investigating the debts of the Indians. They found that the total amounted to \$312,366.24. Among the items charged were looking glasses at \$30 each, "Italian cravats" and "satin vests" at \$8 each, "dress coats" at \$45, and superfine "satinet coats" at \$60 each. The commissioners sifted the claims carefully and reduced the total to \$258,564.34. There appeared no disposition on the part of the Indians to avoid payment of their just debts, but when a party near Iowaville brought in a bill for beef supplied the red men there was a hurried conference. Then Keokuk jumped up and in a loud voice exclaimed, "Throw that out! That worthless old bull has been too much paid for already!" This claim was omitted.

The negotiations lasted for several days. Many of the chiefs were loath to part with more land. They claimed that the Great Spirit made this beautiful country and put the Indian into it. His title to the land ran back to the beginning of things. They talked of "their great meadows of green, gay in the aftermonths of the season with blooming flowers — of the springs and running streams — of the groves that bordered the streams, and especially of the great sycamores and walnuts, that stood in vast numbers on all the larger alluvians." They also talked "of the sun and the moon, as though made for them — of the stars, with a kind of wondering delight, as guardian watchmen — of their Great Spirit hovering over them." There was some hag-

gling too about prices. Keokuk said little at first, allowing others to indulge themselves in oratory, but when he spoke he commanded instant attention by his eloquence. Throughout the conference he was a dominating figure.

Every night the Indian camp was converted into a vast ball room and every variety of dance was performed by the tribesmen. Under the bright light of a harvest moon young men and old joined in the revelry of the dance, swirling faster and faster in time to the weird throbbing of the drums. The younger members of the Indian encampment amused themselves by apeing the dance at a respectful distance or by wrestling and running races. The squaws took little part in the amusements, being content apparently to watch their resplendent braves perform tribal ceremonies.

At last the Indians reached an agreement among themselves and with Governor Chambers as to what they were willing to do. According to the treaty concluded and signed on October 11, 1842, the Sacs and Foxes ceded to the United States all of their land in Iowa, nearly one-third of the State. The tract extended from the boundary line of the so-called Second Purchase westward to where the waters begin to fall into the Missouri River and from the State of Missouri on the south to the Neutral Ground on the north. The Indians agreed to vacate the lands as far west as a line running north and south through the Red Rocks in Marion County by

the first of May, 1843, and to remove from the remainder in 1845. In exchange for this vast area the government agreed to pay annually to the Sacs and Foxes an interest of five per cent upon the sum of \$800,000 and to pay their debts amounting to \$258,566.34. At the request of the Indians the sum of \$100 was set aside to erect a monument over the grave of Chief Wapello who had been buried alongside the body of his friend, the late General Joseph M. Street. Moreover, a section of land, including the burial plot and the agency house, was given to the widow of General Street by the Indians in appreciation of the many acts of kindness he had extended to them as their Agent.

When the treaty had been duly signed, Governor Chambers said: "My friends, this business on which we have been engaged, being now concluded, I take pleasure in saying to you that you have acted nobly and generously. I shall so inform your Great Father who I am sure will feel much kindness toward you. The step you have taken is an important one.

"In conclusion, I implore that the Great Spirit above will always watch over and protect you. I bid you now farewell."

And the Indians, having taken the Governor by the hand, departed from the council chamber in solemn dignity. They had sold the very heart of the State of Iowa for approximately twelve cents per acre.

BRUCE E. MAHAN

Westward

It is a matter of surprise how little the intelligent inhabitants of New England know of the country west of the Mississippi, and especially of this Territory. Ask the first intelligent man you meet for the geography of Iowa, and, in nine cases out of ten, he can give you no definite idea of its position. He knows it is a Territory lying "somewhere out west," and this is about the sum of his knowledge on the subject. Tell him that in 1832 the white man made his first permanent settlement on its soil, and that it now contains a population of over seventy thousand, distributed among nineteen different counties, each thoroughly organized, with its seat of justice, its judicial and executive officers, its schools and churches; tell him that Iowa contains several cities already risen to commercial importance, and exporting annually millions of dollars in value of the productions of the soil; tell him that throughout its whole extent are scattered flourishing towns, where may be found taste, refinement, and education, and your auditor will listen with incredulity, if not with positive unbelief.

I suppose you of the east consider the present

[This letter by an unknown correspondent describing the character of the settlers and conditions in Iowa in the spring of 1843 is here reprinted from *Niles' National Register*, Volume 64, pp. 120, 121, April 22, 1843. It appeared originally in the New Haven *Palladium*.
— THE EDITOR]

residents of Iowa the very pioneers of the west. Never was a greater mistake; the true western pioneers have pushed on beyond us, or if here and there one still lingers, it is only that he may dispose of his farm and "improvements" and move on to a "new country".

Strange restless beings are the genuine pioneers. Among them you may find some who have helped to lay the foundation of every State, from the "old thirteen" hither; men who have successively held seats in every legislature, from Virginia to Iowa inclusive, but who are now moving to a new country, again to "make a claim", again to act a conspicuous part in the community in which they live, again to run the political race, become the members of the legislature of some future State, find themselves thrown in the shade by those of greater attainments who follow in their wake, and again to push for the "new purchase".

Fearlessness, hospitality, and independent frankness, united with restless enterprise and unquenchable thirst for novelty and change, are the peculiar characteristics of the western pioneer. With him there is always a land of promise farther west, where the climate is milder, the soil more fertile, better timber, and finer prairie. And on — on — on he goes, always seeking and never attaining the Pisgah of his hopes. You of the old States can not readily conceive the every-day sort of business an "old settler" makes of selling out his "improve-

ments", hitching the horse to the big wagon, and, with his wife and children, swine and cattle, pots and kettles, household goods and household gods, starting on a journey of hundreds of miles to find and make a new home.

Just now Oregon is the pioneer's land of promise. Hundreds are already prepared to start thither with the spring, while hundreds of others are anxiously awaiting the action of Congress, in reference to that country, as the signal for their departure. Some have already been to view the country, and have returned with a flattering tale of the inducements it holds out. They have painted it to their neighbors in the brightest colors; these have told it to others; and the Oregon fever has broken out, and is now raging like any other contagion. Mr. Calhoun was right when he told the Senate that the American people would occupy that country independent of all legislation; that in a few years the pioneers would overrun it and maintain it against the world.

"Wilson," said I, a few days since to an old settler, "so you are going to Oregon."

"Well, I is, horse. Tice Pitt was out looking at it last season, and he says it is a leetle the greatest country on the face of the earth. So I'm bound to go."

"How do the old woman and the girls like the idea of such a long journey?"

"They feel mighty peert about it, and Suke says she shan't be easy till we start."

The recent purchase is attracting considerable attention at this time. We have just heard of the ratification of Governor Chambers's treaty made last autumn with the Sac and Fox Indians, by which they ceded to the United States a large tract of country lying on the Des Moines River, west of the present settled portion of this Territory. This is a part of Iowa, and, by this cession, comes under the Territorial jurisdiction. It is a valuable purchase, having an excellent soil, well watered, and abounding in timber conveniently interspersed throughout the prairie. The Indians are to yield possession on the first of May. Now comes a rush and a scramble for town sites, mill privileges, county seats, and spring tracts, such as no one but an eye-witness can have any idea of. For more than eighteen months past settlers have been crowding to the frontier in anticipation of the purchase. During that time, singly and by companies, they have travelled over the whole tract, each selecting for himself a "claim" according to his fancy.

I was through the country, hunting buffaloes, last June, and saw with some surprise that even there, on both sides of the Des Moines, from the line to Raccoon Forks, a distance of ninety miles, settlers had been before me and "claimed" every eligible tract of land. The sign adopted to signify to others that any individual had "claimed" a particular tract varied according to the taste of the claimant. In some instances, a simple blaze on the trees was the

only sign; in others, the settler had cut his initials in the bark; while the more warlike had decorated the blaze with the figures of a bowie-knife and pistol crossed, signifying, I suppose, that the gentleman who had put that mark there would, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, maintain his right against the world. The "knowing ones" have a sign preferable to either of the above: they stake out their "claim", drive the stakes, with the date of their visit cut in them, so deep in the earth as not to be visible, the object being, in case of a dispute, to refer to the stakes for evidence of the priority of their claim.

You must know that the laws forbid any white man, except licensed traders, to settle or hunt on the Indian lands, or to be on them for any purpose except to pass and repass. You must know further, that after the Indian title is extinguished and possession yielded up, the first person who builds on, or in any other way improves a particular tract, not exceeding three hundred and forty acres, has a preëmption right to the same at the minimum price of one dollar and twenty-five cents per acre. These preëmption rights are, in the language of the country, called "claims". They are often quite valuable, the holder sometimes selling a mere claim on a choice tract as high as one or two thousand dollars.

The settlers are so eager to get on and secure their favorite selection, that even before the treaty, hundreds had gone on and commenced their "im-

provements". But, by the energy and firmness of Governor Chambers (by the way a high-minded gentleman and an excellent officer, who executes the laws regardless of personal consequences) these trespassers were driven out of the country, and their improvements destroyed. This was not accomplished without the aid of a corps of United States dragoons, whose presence has since been constantly required to keep the settlers within the boundary line. Consequently, they are crowded along the frontier just within the line, some two or three families in a cabin, each ready, when the day arrives, to hasten to his favorite spot, put up his cabin and confirm his claim. There will be warm work on the purchase on the first day of May. Some individual, who long before has marked out his claim, will be on the spot, bag and baggage, by half-past twelve o'clock of the morning of that day, and will find some other man has reached the place five or ten minutes before him, who, with materials previously provided, has got a cabin half up. Then comes the strife; he who first picked it out will assert his right on the boy's principle of "I dubs first", while his competitor will as pertinaciously maintain his claim because he "squatted" first under the law. Of course, the more audacious and obstinate will prevail; but when two unyielding, bold spirits come in collision, the rifle and the bowie-knife will act as umpires and settle the dispute.

The Promised Land

The first of May, 1843, was the date on which the New Purchase was to be opened for settlement. Long before this the news had travelled like wild fire through the land behind the frontier, so that weeks ahead of the eventful day the settlers were encamped for miles along the boundary, ready for a hurried dash into the "promised land".

The event had been well-heralded by the newspapers, which undoubtedly helped to swell the ranks of the immigrants. "Oregon is a small potato compared with the new Iowa purchase," said one editor, "so far as the interests of a western settler may be concerned." Another declared that the "Indians have represented the country as containing very rich and valuable mines of lead, iron, copper and a metal supposed to be tin ore. There can be no doubt but what the new purchase contains advantages altogether superior to any entirely new country now open to settlement in the United States."

People were urged to "take a look at the new purchase", for the "soil is unsurpassed in point of fertility by any portion of the west," and the "prairies are gently rolling, and well surrounded and interspersed with beautiful groves of a good quality of timber for farming purposes. The country bordering and watered by the Des Moines River

abounds with extensive beds of coal, easy of access and of good quality."

Besides these newspaper accounts there were many handbooks about Iowa, put out by professional boosters such as J. B. Newhall, which purported to be accurate guides to the immigrant and companions to the tourist. In all of these the new purchase was glowingly described as a happy land "possessed of a soil unrivalled in the variety and excellence of its products," and with a most "salubrious climate". They dwelt upon the scenery of the new country, setting forth the southern portion as "most picturesque, abounding with grassy lawns and verdant vales, interspersed with groves and meandering rivulets." The northern part on the other hand was described as more "bold and striking. The traveller here beholds the hill-top crowned with towering oaks to its lofty summit — the river tumbling its crested foam over precipitous ledges of cragged rocks — the spiral cliffs and massy ledges grouped in fantastic forms amidst the cultivated valley."

The prospective settlers were also furnished with minute information as to the climate. They were told that the "winters usually commence with December, and end about the first of March. They are generally dry and bracing, although the month of February frequently presents a temperature quite variable; sometimes warm and pleasant, and a sudden change to cold and freezing." The winter cli-

mate was pronounced to be "somewhat milder than the Atlantic States in the same parallel of latitude", and the snow was said to rarely fall "to the depth of more than six or eight inches, and seldom to obstruct travelling".

Of spring it was granted that the first "months are generally disagreeable and cheerless, and anything but what the softness of the name indicates." By the middle of April or the first of May, however, the "groves resume their foliage, the prairies are covered with their brilliant carpets of green, and all nature around appears to smile in joyous gladness to be released from the chilly habiliments of winter."

The third season was admitted to be warm, yet "not oppressively hot. During the sultry months, the heat is modified by soft, genial breezes and delightful showers, which are constantly giving the atmosphere a reviving elasticity." After the rain the "sun lifts his refulgent beams from the passing cloud — the flowers of every color and hue waving their beautiful crests, in fit resemblance of adoration to the omnipotent Power that smiles upon his own handiwork."

Of the autumn, one writer asserted that the "oppressive summer heat is over by the last of August, and from that time until the middle of November, the mellow softness of the climate, the beauty and grandeur of the foliage, the dry and natural roads that cross our prairies, the balmy fragrance of the atmosphere, the serene sky, all combined, present to

the eye of the traveller a picture calculated to excite emotions of wonder and delight.”

With the whole country flooded with such enticing literature it was not strange that home ties were strained and broken. The ever-rising tide of westward emigration was swelled by hundreds of settlers eager for the moment when they could enter the new El Dorado in central Iowa. There were many seasoned pioneers in the stream of travellers — men who were always ready to move on across the newest boundary line, who had been “first settlers” all the way from the Atlantic seacoast. Among the bona fide homesteaders were men from the established sections of Iowa who had been dissatisfied with the claims they had obtained in the last purchase, and were ready to try their luck anew. There were men from every State of the Union — young men who were out to start their fortunes mingling with the middle-aged rainbow-chasers who had been failures back home and were making a desperate effort to get a foothold in a new land. And with all these men came women and children, and cows and sheep and pigs and oxen, and as much paraphernalia of a household as could be packed within the bulging sides of a covered wagon. For established householders were not immune from the wanderlust.

So it was that for many weeks before the first of May the lines of long “blue wagons” with their “white flowing tops” could be seen slowly winding

over the wide prairie like the "sailing craft of the ocean beating their onward course to the wished-for haven." They were stopped temporarily at the Mississippi, but tar buckets dangled from the back end of most of the wagons and the seams were calked so that the bodies would float while the horses or oxen swam. Rafts were also employed in crossing, and many a local citizen of Keokuk, Davenport, or Burlington made good money plying the trade of a ferryman. The *Burlington Gazette*, in commenting upon local events, said that "hundreds of emigrants have landed at our wharf within the last two or three weeks; and the tide still continues to pour in upon us — most of them bound for the Indian country."

When the boundary line of the Indian country was finally reached there was nothing to do but camp until the appointed day for settlement. All along the border of the Indian country, in Van Buren, Jefferson, Keokuk, and Iowa counties, there was scarcely a grove that did not shelter an encampment of pioneers. The women made friends with the other women; loaned and borrowed and gave, and hung out their washing on the same leafless trees. The men explored the promised land and located their claims. In the evening they built common camp fires, swapped stories, and divided the bounty of the day's hunt with their neighbors. A common spirit of sympathy and enthusiasm pervaded the clusters of camps.

But jealousies sometimes flared if there was too much particularized talk of claims and sections. For in the last analysis it was each man for himself and the "devil take the hindmost". The government had decreed that no boundary lines could be marked off, but stakes were surreptitiously driven into the ground so as to be almost out of sight and trees were blazed in inconspicuous places. But even if the invader was sure he could find the same piece of land again he never knew but what some of his neighbors had their hearts set on it too, and would get there first.

To avoid this misfortune a number of the more courageous settlers travelled on to their chosen claims and immediately squatted upon them. A company of United States dragoons was stationed along the boundary to prevent this, and they turned the poachers out as fast as they found them. However, some of the poor squatters, "who were striving to obey the edict", had such a perfect avalanche of bad luck, such as broken wagons, strayed cattle and oxen, or stolen property, that they managed to maintain the process of moving out until the first day of May. One man was busily engaged in driving a stake on his land when he was surprised by a number of dragoons and was immediately arrested. He was put to work digging up a stump near Garrison Rock as a punishment for crossing the line. A certain family, however, when discovered living in a cave near their claim, persuaded the dragoons that

they were doing no harm, and were allowed to remain unmolested.

And meanwhile, as the white people were engaged in an eager strife for the new country, the Indians were reluctantly preparing to leave their familiar hunting grounds. By the treaty of 1842 they were bound to vacate the eastern half of the New Purchase on or before the first of May, 1843. The balance of the purchase to the west of this line was to be reserved for the Indians for three years, after which time they were to move to a government reservation beyond the Missouri River.

These humane provisions, coupled with the fact that the red men had been given a million dollars for the land, silenced any qualms which the settlers might have had in taking possession of the "very heart of Iowa" and the "richest and most desirable portion of land ever obtained from the Indians; and better probably, than any now held by them." The settlers were jubilant over the bargain and cared little that another race was being thrust from its native groves and prairies. They reconnoitered the purchase and wrote back east with the news that "we can safely say there is room enough upon it for the population of almost every State in the Union."

So the "frail dwellings, beaten trails and newly made graves of the Indians" were left to be broken down and plowed over by the conquering civilization. The Indians passed and repassed through the timber, carrying away meager supplies of corn

which had been raised in their fields, and sometimes pausing by their old hunting grounds as if for a last look at the "land which had been so long their home." The wife of an Indian chieftain, as she was being hurried away, broke from the group and turned back with the cry, "Oh, let me go back and take one more drink from the old spring!"

As midnight on the thirty-first of April finally approached, there was suppressed excitement all up and down the long line of waiting settlers. The night was black, but everything was in readiness for a rapid advance into the new country. At the stroke of twelve, guns were fired and brush piles started blazing. It was time to march. What had been quiet expectancy for hours was now frenzied movement and pandemonium. Prairie schooners lurched along through the darkness bound for the farthest claims. Lone horsemen circled the slower caravans with shouts of glee. Men rushed forward on foot with their hatchets in their hands, leaving their women to follow as best they could. Thus the "tide of emigration poured in like the 'rush of mighty waters' ", and by one o'clock the woods resounded with the chopping of axes and the shouts of friends, while out on the prairie torches gleamed fitfully like enormous fireflies. The settlers had begun to lay the bounds of their homesteads.

In many cases wives held the torches while husbands drove stakes or blazed their claim on the sides of trees. Compasses were used to direct the lines,

and so many steps each way meant that the settler had encircled a quarter or half section farm. It was exciting business.

As daylight broke over the strange array many of the settlers were forced to admit that "haste makes waste", for much of the night's work had to be done all over again. Claims which were supposed to be square turned out triangular or many sided. Often they overlapped, while in other places wide expanses of fine land were left unclaimed.

In general every one had sought the heavily wooded areas, for they thought that "land that wouldn't grow timber wouldn't grow corn". They were also desirous of having plenty of fuel, protection from the winter winds, and a good supply of fish and water from the streams which usually accompanied the timber. If prairie farms were taken at all it was customary to include a bit of timber with them. The Des Moines River lands were particularly sought, for that stream was deeper and clearer than it is now, and well stocked with fish. The pioneers had yet to learn that stump-pulling was endless work, and that heavy timber shut out the sunlight so that water became stagnant and caused fever.

As soon as the arduous task of bounding the land was over the next thing to do was to make "improvements" upon it. This usually consisted of a log house and a little broken sod. The houses were roofed with bark and sod or swamp grass, and had

stone fireplaces with flues of sod, or of stones plastered together with mud. Some of these dwellings were actually half built by dawn of the first of May.

Numerous disputes arose as to the rightful squatters on conflicting claims, or whether a cabin was a greater "improvement" than a few acres of broken sod, but once the question was settled every one abided by the decision. The new citizens of a land which had no government held sacred the bounds of a homestead.

Within a few weeks "claim committees" were organized to deal with the unscrupulous breed of men known as "jumpers", who squatted on a piece of land after it had been taken, and under one pretext or another tried to drive the homesteader out. The type of justice administered by the committees was crude but effective. They usually made a plain statement of their opinion of the rights of the injured party, and ordered the trespasser to submit to their judgment, in default of which he might be driven out of the country, if not out of the world altogether. It was well understood that "when the committee reported it meant business", and generally the "mighty threats of battle ended in smoke."

On that first day of settlement every settler was potentially a farmer, but there were some who had visions of towns and cities being subsequently located on their claims. One such group in particular, organized as the Appanoose Rapids Company, became the founders of Ottumwa, at first called Ottum-

wanoc after an Indian village of that name. They located claims on the Des Moines River near the center of the newly created county of Wapello, and proceeded to mark the land off into streets and lots in the hope that the county seat would be located there.

Other towns grew more spontaneously where a few chance settlers had clustered together. The most important of these were Philadelphia, Iowa-ville, Dahlonga, Eddyville, and Agency City. The first two have long since passed out of existence and Agency City, now only a village of less than four hundred inhabitants, is known as Agency. It is on the site of the old Sac and Fox Agency a few miles east of Ottumwa.

Whatever the motive for settlement, the New Purchase was suddenly swarming with people, particularly along the Des Moines and Skunk rivers. It was estimated that two thousand settlers came into Wapello County on the first of May, and the influx of homesteaders in neighboring counties was equally remarkable.

The citizens of the New Purchase proceeded to make themselves comfortable in their hastily constructed log cabins. They fared bountifully on corn bread, mush and milk, turkeys and grouse, and a profusion of wild berries. There was little preparation for the coming winter, however, as it was too late in the spring to sow crops. "Sod corn" was about the only grain planted. This was done by

striking an axe into the turf, dropping in the corn, and letting nature do the rest. The yield was usually fifteen or twenty bushels per acre, and the crop had the further merit of rotting the sod so that it could be more easily broken the next year.

The glorious summer passed pleasantly and all too soon. Before the settlers were well prepared, cold weather began and the long winter was unusually severe. Faith in the "salubriousness" of the Iowa climate was taxed to the utmost. But the hardships of the present were rendered endurable to most of the settlers by their hopes of the future — the time when, with their frugally saved gold, they could pay the government \$1.25 an acre, and become the lords of their precious homesteads.

PAULINE GRAHAME

Comment by the Editor

THE PRICE OF IOWA LAND

While Congress is arguing about the alchemy of agricultural income, and industrial stock is absorbed in financial aviation, the farmers are planting another crop of corn. Irrespective of the success of statesmen in stimulating markets with their talk or the achievements of capitalists in manipulating prosperity, the fundamental processes of producing food go on inevitably. There is no use in being reticent about the actual situation for the season proclaims the fact—May tenth is past and the click of the corn planter is heard in the land.

Farmers are now more concerned about the weather than they are about panaceas. With favorable wind and rain, the rich black loam of Iowa will yield abundantly. It has never failed. Hard times in this State may be measured largely by the disparity between the cost of land and the price of what it produces, rather than by crop failure. Certainly much of the prevalent agrarian distress may be traced to the excess valuation of tillable soil.

A hundred and twenty-five years ago, when the principal products of Iowa were game and pelts, the finest valleys were worth very little in cash. The United States bought Louisiana from France for

\$15,000,000, which is the same as saying that Iowa cost two cents an acre. Whatever the country may have been worth to Napoleon, the Indians valued it higher. All together the government paid approximately \$3,454,685 to the various tribes that inhabited Iowa for their title to the 56,147 square miles which comprise this Commonwealth. That amounts to nine and a half cents an acre. Maybe Indian hunting grounds were worth no more than that, but the white settlers were willing and anxious to give the government \$1.25 an acre for the same land. And now, after three-quarters of a century, the decimal point could be omitted and the figure doubled. Such is the effect of economic evolution.

J. E. B.

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

Established by the Pioneers in 1857
Located at Iowa City Iowa

PUBLICATIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The Quarterly Journal of History
The Palimpsest—A monthly magazine
The Public Archives Series
The Iowa Biographical Series
The Iowa Economic History Series
The Iowa Social History Series
The Iowa Applied History Series
The Iowa Chronicles of the World War
The Miscellaneous Publications
The Bulletins of Information

MEMBERSHIP

Membership in the State Historical Society may be secured through election by the Board of Curators. The annual dues are \$3.00. Members may be enrolled as Life Members upon the payment of \$50.00.

Address all Communications to

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Iowa City Iowa