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The PALIMPSEST

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William Silag, Editor

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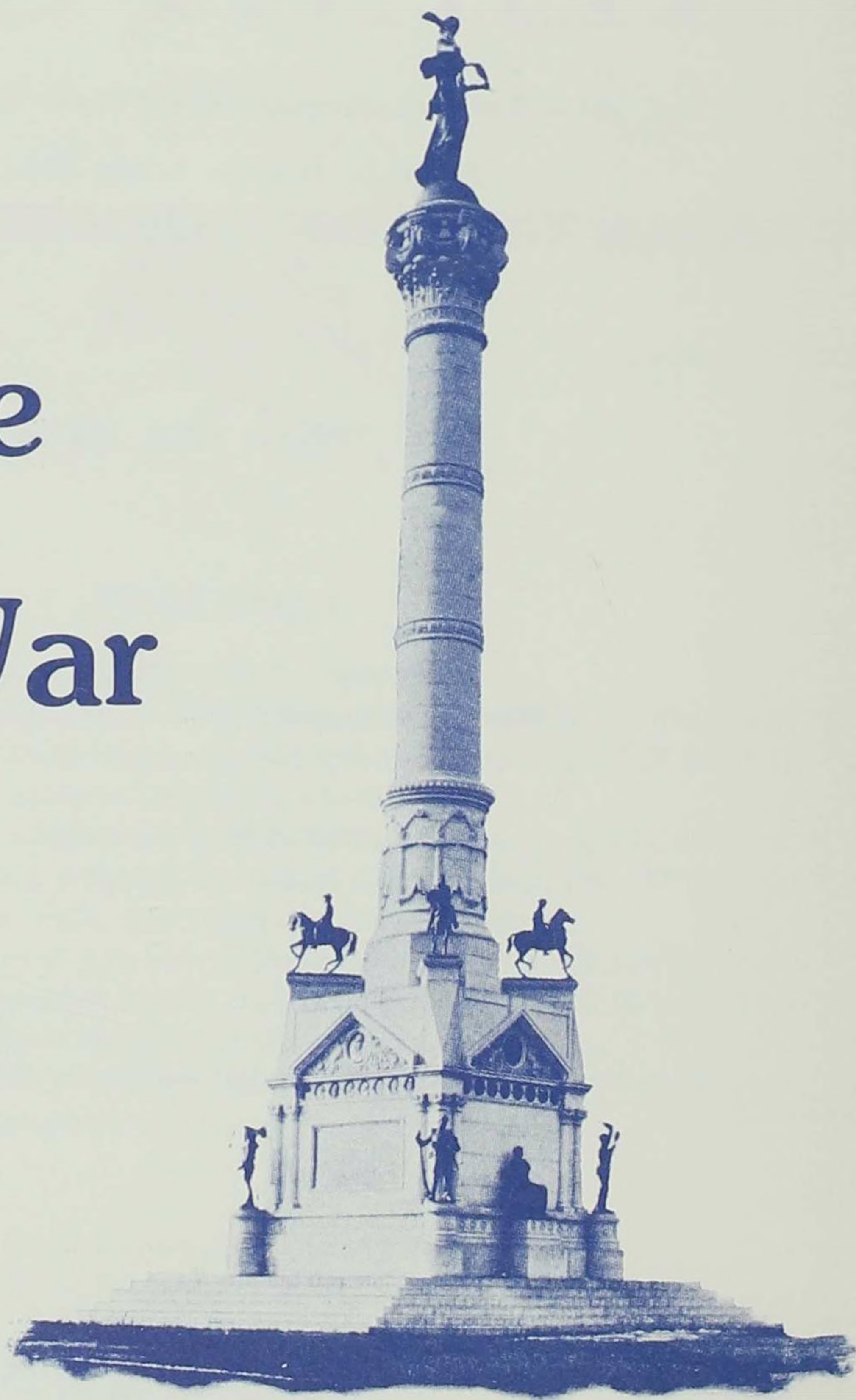


The Meaning of the Palimpsest

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 record 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.

Iowa and the Civil War



A Military Review

by Julie E. Nelson and Alan M. Schroder

Her silent gaze is fixed on the northern portion of the city, and her cold granite eyes stare at the passing motorists. She seems pensive, as if seeing a vision of the pain of dealing with an irreparable loss. The inscription on the granite memorial reads:

Iowa, her affections, like the rivers of her borders, flow to an inseparable union.

She is one of the figures on a 135-foot monument erected in Des Moines to commemorate the people who gave up their lives in America's Civil War. Constructed from 1,840 tons of granite, the monument stands as a tangible tribute, the inscription reads, "to the courage, patriotism, and distinguished service of all her soldiers and sailors who fought in the war of rebellion, 1861-1865."

When President Abraham Lincoln issued his first call for troops for the Union army, three days after the South fired on Fort Sumter, he set one regiment as the quota for Iowa. Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood was uncertain that he could raise the thousand men needed to fill this quota, but he did issue a proclamation warning Iowans that "The Nation is in peril. A fearful attempt is being made to overthrow the Constitution and dismember the Union. The aid of every loyal citizen is invoked to sustain the General Government. For the honor of our State let the requirement of the President be cheerfully and promptly met." Iowa's response far exceeded Kirkwood's hopes. The Iowa quota was filled by volunteers in the first day of recruiting, and the governor had to begin turning away offers of additional locally-formed companies.

With the enthusiasm for the Union cause at its peak, Kirkwood's real problem was in providing the material to supply and equip the

Iowa volunteer regiments. Troops were recruited at stations throughout Iowa, then collected in camps at Dubuque, Iowa City, Davenport, Burlington, and Keokuk. At the camps, they had to be fed, provided with uniforms, weapons, and equipment, and given some rudimentary military training. Food could be supplied from sources within the state, but cloth for uniforms was in short supply. Governor Kirkwood was forced to conclude that the state could provide the same uniforms for everyone in a company, but that not all the companies in a given regiment could be clothed alike. The same situation existed throughout the Northern states early in the war, so the Union forces marched off to war in a rainbow of uniforms. The dark blue uniforms so closely associated with the Union cause were not generally adopted until after the battle of Bull Run, when some Union troops fired on other gray-clad Union regiments.

Weapons to arm the Iowa regiments were in similarly short supply early in the war. Muskets that were supposed to have been held for them at the federal arsenal in St. Louis were sent elsewhere, and when a shipment of 2,000 finally did arrive they were described by Franc Wilkie of the Dubuque *Herald* as "more dangerous to friend than enemy—[they] will kick further than they shoot, and are appropriately known from their awkward peculiarities in this and other respects, among our Germans as *Kuh-fuss*—'cow-foot.' " Eventually, the Iowa troops raised in these early days of the war in 1861 were provided with some kind of uniform, a weapon of sorts, and just a bit of training and then sent downriver by steamboat to St. Louis. There they were reassigned to the latest point of confrontation between the Northern and Southern armies or to more peaceful rear

areas for garrison duty.

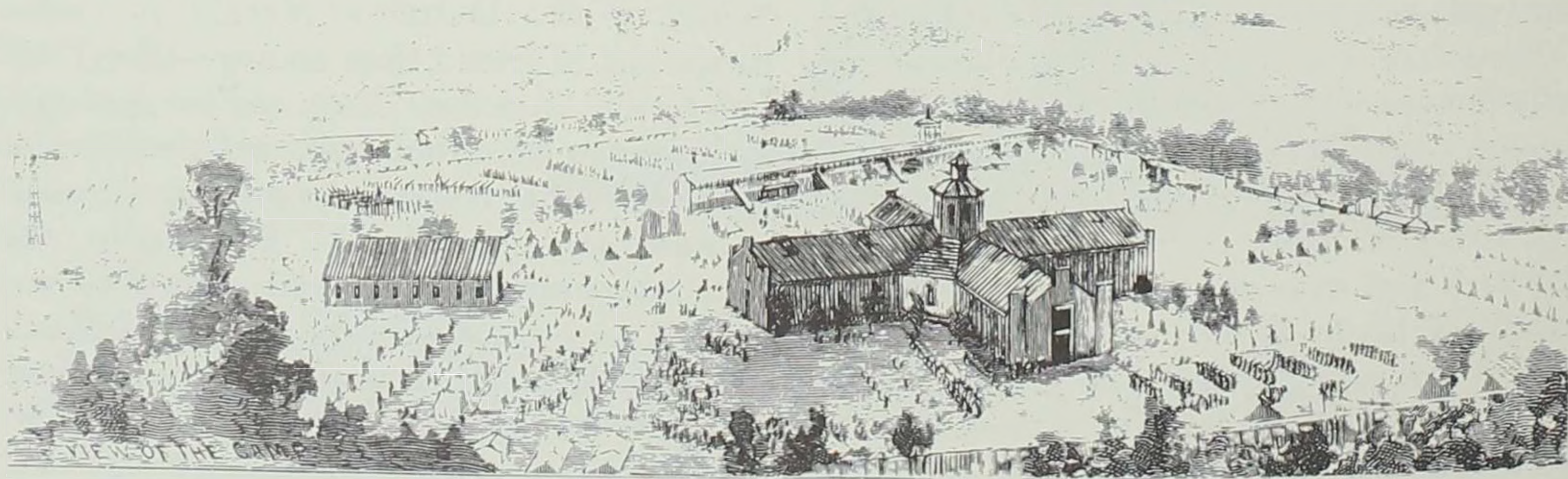
Over the course of the war, Iowa raised between 72,000 and 76,000 troops, counting enlistments and re-enlistments. Iowans filled forty-six infantry regiments, four companies of light artillery, and nine cavalry regiments, and black Iowans provided the basis for a black infantry regiment. Most enlistments were for three years.

Though the most prominent battles in the Civil War were those in the East—like Gettysburg, Antietam, and Fredericksburg—that were part of the struggle for the two capitals of Washington and Richmond, the battles of the western theatre were at least as important as factors in the Northern victory. These were the battles that secured the border states for the North and that eventually split the South in two and seriously damaged the economic base the South needed to support its military effort. Nearly all the troops Iowa sent to war were directed to the western theatre.

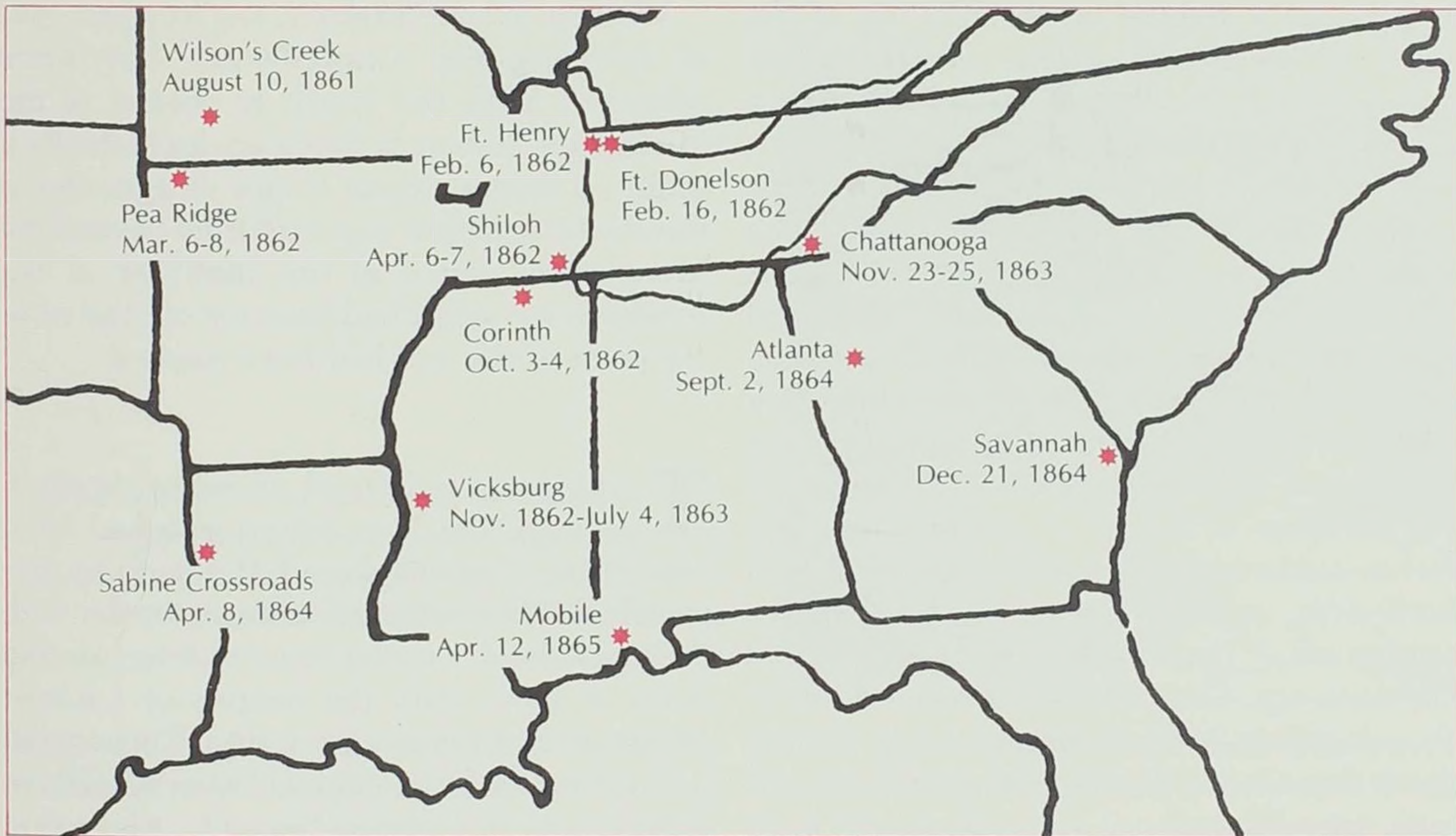
When the war began in April 1861, the allegiance of the border states was very much in doubt. Though a Missouri state convention favored the North, for example, the governor—Claiborne Jackson—sought to obtain the state's secession from the Union. To secure the state, most of the Iowa regiments raised in the early months of the war were sent first to Benton Barracks in St. Louis, then distributed

throughout the northern Missouri counties to guard key communications points and rail lines. To strike at a concentration of Missouri Confederates being collected south of Springfield by General Sterling Price, Union Brigadier General Nathaniel Lyon moved out of Springfield on August 9 with a force of 5,800 troops from Missouri, Kansas, and Iowa. At the battle of Wilson's Creek on the following day, Lyon split his force and saw both halves defeated in turn. He retreated to Springfield with a loss of a thousand casualties. The following spring, however, the Northern forces—now under the command of Brigadier General Samuel R. Curtis of Keokuk—pushed the Southern forces commanded by Major General Earl Van Dorn out of Missouri and into Arkansas. Van Dorn was defeated at the battle of Pea Ridge, and the threat of Missouri's secession came to an end.

Further east, the ultimate control of the key border state of Kentucky was also in doubt that spring of 1862. For the South, Kentucky meant a buffer against the Northern drive to split the Confederacy in two. For the North, control of Kentucky meant protection of the essential transportation routes of the Ohio River Valley and of the cities in southern Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio. Striking against the Southern line that ran through central Kentucky from Bowling Green in the east to



Recruits for the Iowa regiments were collected at military camps like this one, Camp Henderson, at Dubuque. (SHSI)



As this map shows, Iowa troops were mainly involved in the Civil War campaigns to secure the border state of Missouri, to cut the South in two by gaining control of the Mississippi, and then to push eastward to the sea to starve the remaining Confederate armies by destroying the economic base on which they depended.

Columbus on the Mississippi River, a relatively unknown Union general—Ulysses S. Grant—moved up the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers with a force of 17,000 troops that included four Iowa regiments. His goal was the capture of Forts Henry and Donelson just across the border in Tennessee. Fort Henry, which was very poorly located, fell easily on February 6, 1862, and the Second Iowa led in the assault on Fort Donelson that produced a Confederate surrender on February 16. When the Southern commander requested Grant's terms, his famous reply was: "No terms except an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately upon your works." With his success at Forts Henry and Donelson, Grant's star began to rise, and he gained the nickname "Unconditional Surrender Grant" that remained with him in his eventual command of all the North-

ern armies.

Apart from securing western Kentucky, the Northern victories in February also began the inexorable Union march southward to split the Confederacy and gain uninterrupted control of the Mississippi River. As Grant continued southward, Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston concentrated a force of 40,000 troops at Corinth, Mississippi, and on April 6 attacked Grant's force of an equal size that was milling around Pittsburg Landing twenty miles north in Tennessee. In the resulting battle of Shiloh, one of the bloodiest battles of the war, Johnston's surprise attack gained him an initial success. But a stubborn defense of the Northern center by the Eighth, Twelfth, and Fourteenth Iowa regiments and the Fifty-eighth Illinois under General Benjamin M. Prentiss in the area that came to be known as the Hornet's Nest bought Grant enough time

to organize a defense on the first day of the battle and an offensive on the second day that drove the Confederates back to Corinth at a cost of half of Johnston's troops.

Grant rested his army at Shiloh for three weeks and then, reinforced by General John Pope after his successes along the Mississippi at Island Number 10 and at Memphis, he moved slowly southward to Corinth, which had been evacuated by Johnston. The invading force that had been collected for this drive southward was now broken up, with the Army of the Ohio and two divisions of the Army of the Mississippi sent to reinforce the Union forces that had been bottled up at Chattanooga in eastern Tennessee after their defeat at the battle of Chickamauga. General Halleck was ordered to Washington to become the general-in-chief of the Union armies, leaving Grant in command in the west. Corinth was a key rail center for the South, and Grant expected an attack as he settled in for the summer. The attack finally came on October 3, but in one of the most violent battles of the war, the Southern forces were eventually forced to retreat, leaving Corinth securely in Northern hands. Pope's earlier victories along the Mississippi and the seizure of New Orleans by David Farragut and his gunboats in April 1862 left only Vicksburg and Natchez as Southern strongpoints on the all-important river.

Unlike the two- or three-day battles that had preceded it, the campaign for Vicksburg was an eight-month struggle of maneuver and siege. The four army corps that Grant brought on the campaign included twenty-eight infantry regiments, two artillery regiments and two cavalry regiments from Iowa, and they played an important role in the operations that cut off Vicksburg from supply and reinforcement and allowed Grant to settle in for a siege. Finally, on July 3, 1863, the Confederate force, which was by then faced with starvation, surrendered.

With the fall of Vicksburg, the Northern goal of splitting the Confederacy had been achieved. With the North in control of the Mississippi, Robert E. Lee's armies in the East could no longer expect troops or agricultural commodities to flow eastward from beyond the Mississippi. Much of the lifeblood of the Southern war effort had been cut off; the turning point of the war had been marked.

The fighting continued, of course. At Chattanooga, the Iowa troops who had been sent from Corinth found themselves entrenched at the bottom of an amphitheater with the Confederates under Braxton Bragg staring down at them from the heights of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Encouraged to break out of the position as fast as possible in order to relieve Ambrose Burnside, who was in a similar position in Nashville, Grant decided on a frontal assault on the Southern positions. On the first day of battle, November 24, 1863, the Northern attack led to a Southern evacuation of Lookout Mountain, and the second day's assault up the steep slopes of Missionary Ridge produced a general Southern retreat that left Chattanooga secure and allowed Sherman to relieve Nashville.

Grant's successes in the western theatre led President Lincoln to appoint him general-in-chief of the Union armies in February 1864. When he left for Washington, Grant left Sherman in charge of the forces at Chattanooga with orders to destroy General Joseph E. Johnston's

Note on Sources

Works consulted for this article included the following: A.A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1865); Mildred Throne, "Iowans and the Civil War," *The Palimpsest* 50 (February 1969): 65-144; Jacob A. Swisher, *Iowa In Times of War* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1943); Vincent J. Esposito, *The West Point Atlas of American Wars*, vol. 1: 1689-1900 (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1959); Bruce Catton, *This Hallowed Ground: The Story of the Union Side of the Civil War* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1956).

The Hornet's Nest at Shiloh, where three Iowa regiments and an Illinois regiment held the Union center long enough to give Grant time to organize a defense against the Confederate attack. (SHSI)



army and move into the interior of the South, which Sherman interpreted to mean capturing Atlanta. He began his advance southeast in May with the Army of the Tennessee, the Army of the Cumberland, and the Army of the Ohio, a total of 90,000 men. The Iowa troops on Sherman's march were concentrated in the Army of the Tennessee, which included eighteen infantry, two cavalry, and one artillery regiment from Iowa.

Sherman moved slowly forward through May and June, carefully avoiding any major engagement that would divert his course from Atlanta. He reached the city on June 19 and began to encircle it with entrenchments. General John B. Hood, who had replaced Johnston, was in danger of being trapped in a besieged city, just as the Confederate forces at Vicksburg had been, but he evacuated his troops from the city before Sherman's encirclement was completed. Sherman entered Atlanta on September 2, having achieved one of the goals set by Grant, but allowing Hood's army to escape.

By now, the war was drawing to a close. Hood planned a march north into Tennessee that he hoped would draw Sherman away from his plans to attack Savannah or, failing that, to defeat Thomas at Nashville and then turn east

to join Lee in Virginia. All these plans were, however, only delaying actions to stave off defeat. Sherman was not particularly distressed by Hood's movements, pausing only long enough in his plans to ensure that Thomas had sufficient reinforcements to stop any invasion of Tennessee and Kentucky. Along with the Iowa cavalry regiments already in Nashville, these included five Iowa regiments brought in from Missouri. By the time Hood reached Nashville on December 1, Thomas had collected 55,000 troops to Hood's 25,000. Hood's army was defeated fairly easily in a battle that began on December 15, and in the retreat that followed it dissolved as an effective military force.

The Iowa troops who had been in Sherman's Army of the Tennessee since Chattanooga now set off again as part of his "March to the Sea." Leaving Atlanta with 62,000 troops in mid-November, Sherman met little opposition in what was essentially a punitive campaign. His intention was to deal a final blow to Southern morale and, by cutting the rail lines to Virginia, to further weaken Lee's desperate defense of Richmond.

Sherman's army reached Savannah on

December 22, in time to present it as a Christmas gift to President Lincoln, then turned north on a campaign through the Carolinas. The remnants of the Confederate forces were placed under the command of Joseph Johnston, but they offered little resistance to Sherman's hardened troops. By the time Lee had been driven from Richmond to surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, Sherman had reached Raleigh. After a period of negotiations and a truce, Johnston formally surrendered on April 26.

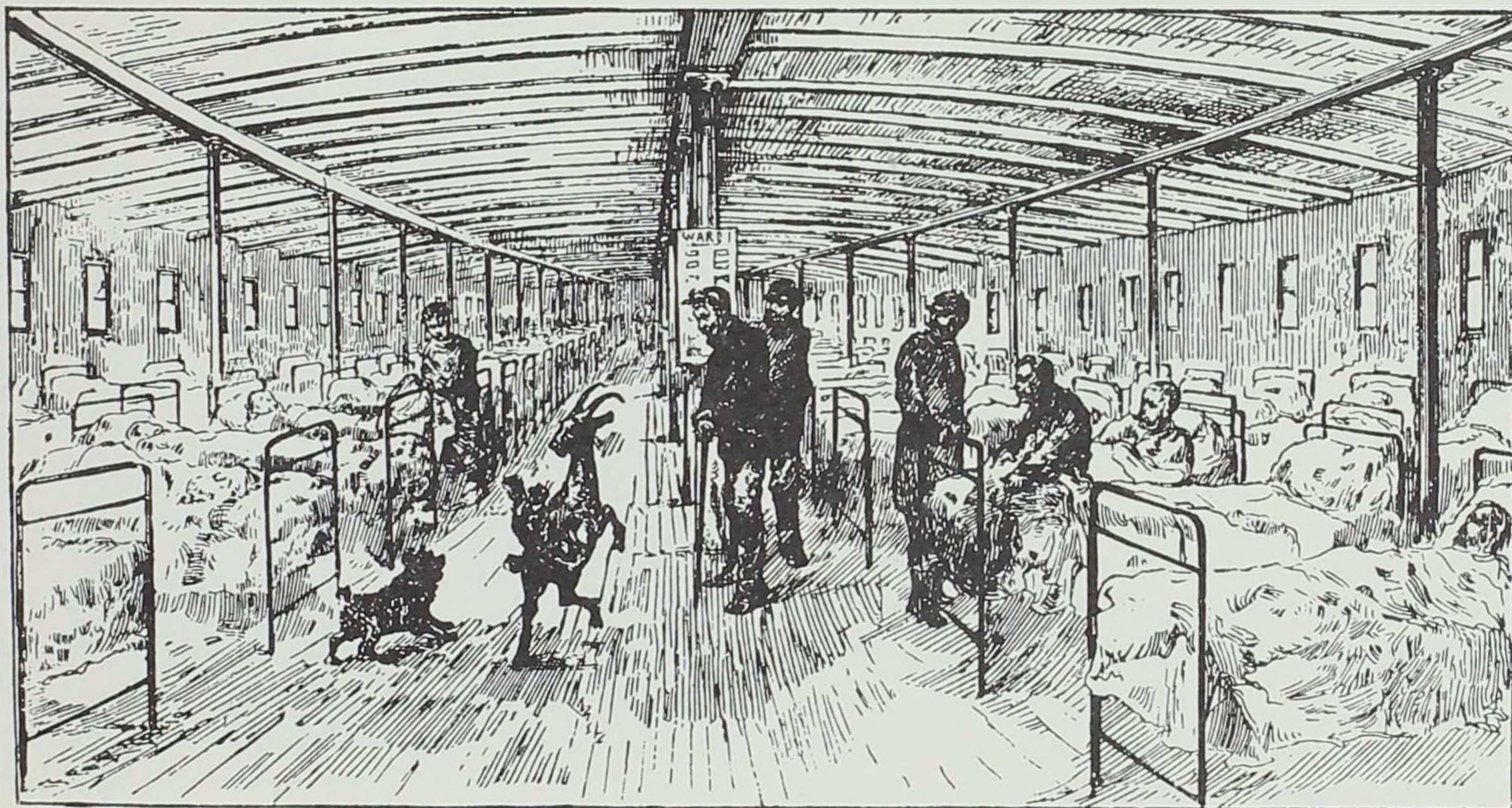
While the most significant campaigns involving Iowa troops were farther east, a number of Iowa regiments were also assigned to duty in Arkansas and Louisiana after these states had been cut off from the remainder of the Confederacy by Union control of the Mississippi. These states were not a major focus of attention

for the North, and Grant in particular only grudgingly assigned troops to the area. Several Iowa regiments were involved in the disastrous Red River Campaign, a poorly planned and poorly executed operation into northwestern Louisiana in the winter and spring of 1864. Led by the political general Nathaniel Banks, the campaign came to an abrupt halt with a Union defeat at the battle of Sabine Crossroads. Late in the war, Iowa troops also participated in the successful campaign to seize Mobile, Alabama in April 1865, but by then the military significance of the formerly very valuable port city had ended.

By the time the fighting ground to a halt for the Iowa troops at Raleigh and Mobile, they could look back on four years of war that had cost the state 13,000 of its men. Fully 30



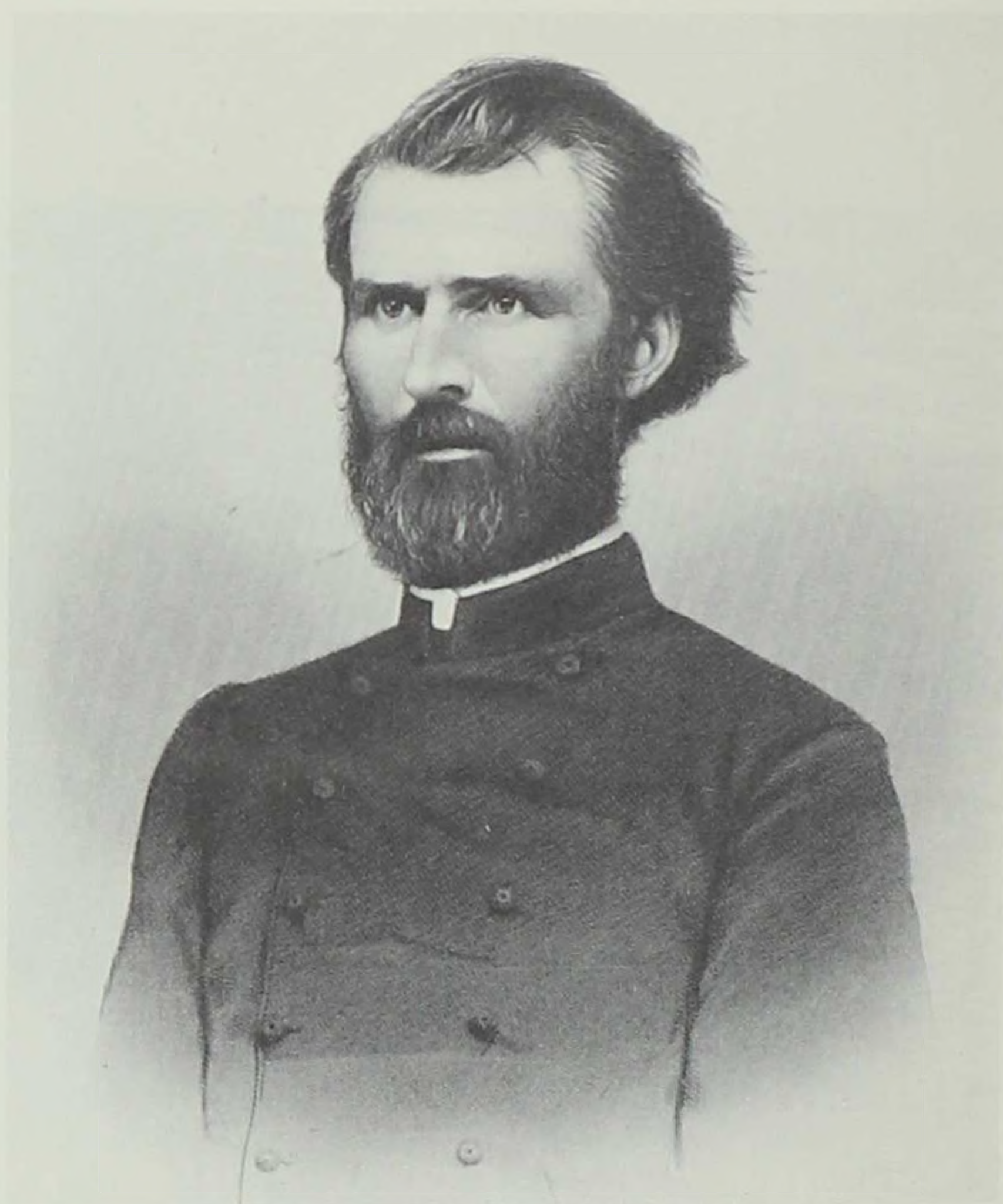
William F. Coffman of the Thirtieth Iowa made this drawing of the Union victory at Lookout Mountain in the battle of Chattanooga on the morning of November 25, 1863. Two days later he was wounded in battle. (SHSI)



Iowa casualties in medical facilities like this Mississippi River hospital boat were much more likely to be the victims of disease than of battle. (SHSI)

percent of all the Iowans who had served in the Union army had been either killed or wounded, and more than twice as many of the deaths had come from disease as from battle injuries. The soldiers' diet of bread, salt pork, and coffee had combined with the unsanitary conditions in military camps and hospitals to produce conditions that allowed diseases like typhoid fever, dysentery, consumption, and smallpox to spread rapidly through whole

regiments. The months of marching and sitting in camp proved far deadlier to the Iowa troops than the few days of battle that punctuated the monotony. From Wilson's Creek through Pea Ridge, Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, Nashville, and Atlanta to the final days at Raleigh and Mobile, Iowa troops won the glory of fighting for the cause of the Union, but they paid the price as well. □



WILLIAM M. STONE

Iowa's Other Civil War Governor

by Alan M. Schroder

When people refer to "Iowa's Civil War governor," they usually mean Samuel Kirkwood, who was in office when war broke out and who directed the state's enthusiastic response to the war effort in its early years. But, because of the two-term limit that Iowa governors then observed, Kirkwood did not run for reelection in 1863. Instead, the Iowa Republican party nominated William M. Stone and, with the Democratic party's association with the South and rebellion, he easily defeated his Democratic opponent, James M. Tuttle. Stone went on to be reelected in 1865 and served until January 1868.

More of an expert political opportunist than a great statesman or political philosopher, Stone

had a talent for finding out which direction most of the people were moving, then rushing out ahead to lead them. This talent does not produce innovative political philosophies or radical new social movements, but it does provide leadership of a sort, and it can lead to a successful political career.

Until the outbreak of the Civil War, Stone had lived the life of a typical midwestern small-town lawyer and judge in the early nineteenth century. He was born on October 14, 1827 in Jefferson County, New York. A year later the Stone family moved to Lewis County, New York, and five years after that they moved on to Coshocton County, Ohio. Stone grew up on the family farm in Ohio, acquiring only two terms of schooling along the way, then spent two seasons in his teens as a teamster for the

horse-drawn boats on the Ohio Canal. It was while he was serving later as an apprentice in a chairmaker's shop that Stone met James Mathews, who was to be his legal and political mentor for most of his early political career.

Impressed by Stone's aggressive personality, Mathews invited him to read law in his law office, and Stone readily accepted. After studying under a succession of lawyers (the commonly accepted equivalent of a law school education in these years), Stone was admitted to the Ohio bar in 1851 and entered into a partnership with Mathews in Coshocton. In 1854, Stone and his parents and brothers and sisters joined Mathews and his family—and a strongbox containing \$20,000 in gold, the product of Mathews' successful career in Ohio—in their move to Knoxville, Iowa.

Stone continued under Mathews' tutelage in Iowa, and their law practice proved successful. Stone also moved quickly into the arena of Iowa politics. He hauled the press that had been used to publish the *Valley Whig and Keokuk Register* from Keokuk and in October 1855 began publishing the *Knoxville Journal*. Stone established a firm antislavery position in the *Journal's* editorial columns. The slavery question set Iowa politics boiling in the 1850s, and by proclaiming his staunch opposition to the extension of slavery beyond its contemporary boundaries, Stone placed himself in the ranks of the men who would form the nucleus of the Republican party from the remnants of the old Whig party, which was, by the mid-1850s, in disarray.

Stone was, in fact, one of the earliest supporters of the formation of the Republican party in Iowa, and he served as Marion County's delegate to the first state Republican convention, held in Iowa City in February 1856. Then he went on to campaign throughout the state for the Republican ticket in the fall campaign, and he was chosen as a presidential elector by the new party.

Stone's advocacy of the new party in the columns of the *Knoxville Journal* was stilled on March 4, 1856, when a fire destroyed the *Journal's* frame building and all its contents. But the interruption proved only temporary. That fall, George W. Edwards arrived in Knoxville with his own press and type and went into partnership with Stone to reestablish the *Journal*. Stone soon sold his interest to Edwards, however, when his legal career took a new turn.

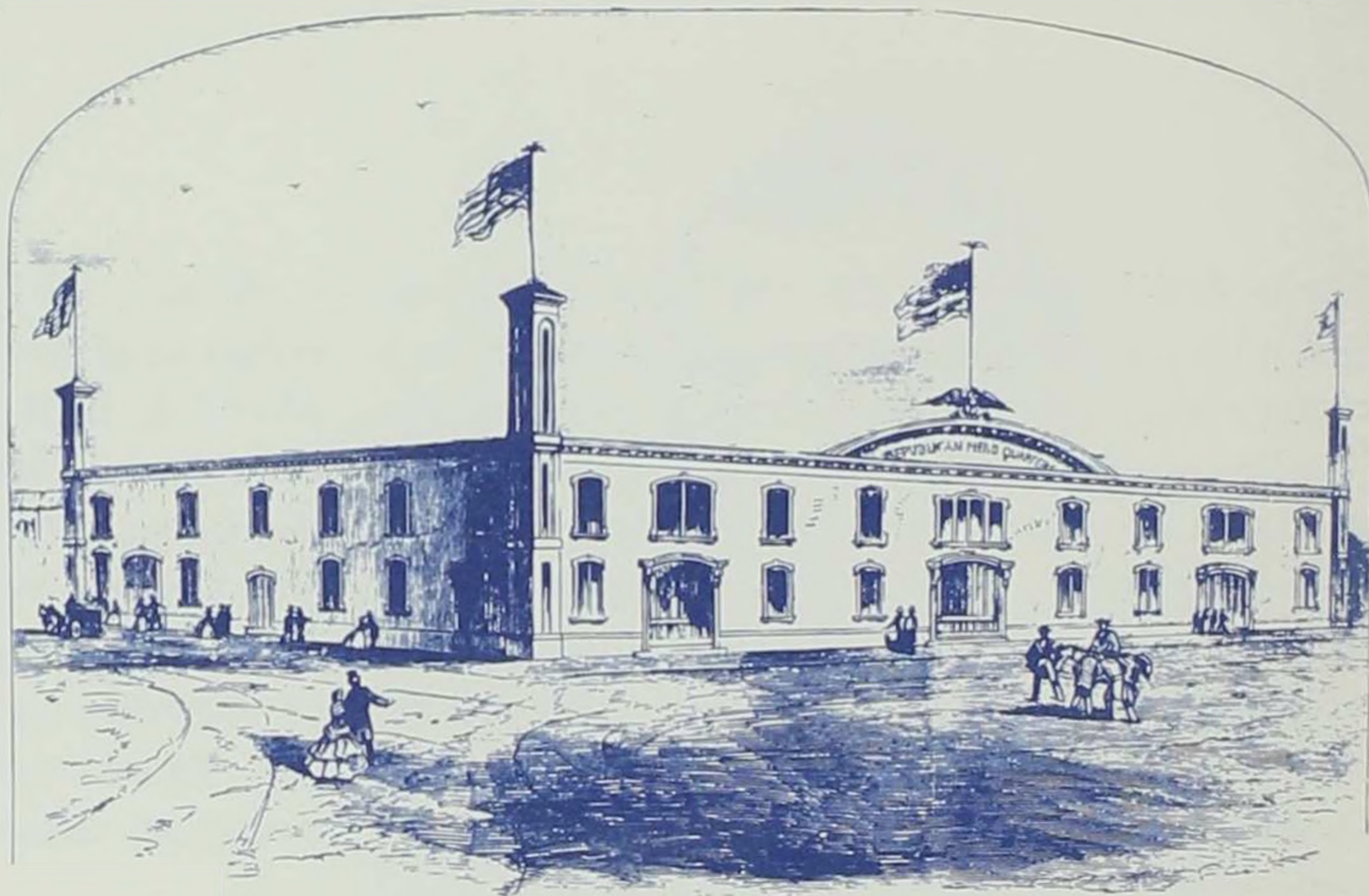
The success of Stone's law practice with James Mathews in Knoxville caused him to be chosen as judge of the eleventh judicial district in 1857 and elected as judge of the sixth judicial district when the new state constitution went into effect in 1858. Iowa was only a few years removed from the frontier period in these years, however, and justice was dispensed in a rough-hewn manner. Stone fit into the system very well. R.B. Graff, in his memoirs written in 1871, recalled an incident in Judge Stone's court in the 1850s:

In the morning, first business motions. His Honor [Judge Stone] was calling in the usual way. When he came to a motion, Mr. J.D. Templin would rise up on end, and spread himself in an eloquent, long, windy, rambling, scattering speech, while his honor sat patiently, with his legs crossed on the desk. When Templin had finished talking, and sat down, his honor said "Well," as he took down one foot, and let it strike the floor hard. Then the other would go through the same process; and his honor said: "Mr. Templin, I see no beginning, middle, or end to your speech; but hereafter if anything comes up during court, in which you are interested, I will consider your speech as already made."

Such was the decorum of the Stone court.

Stone's tenure as a judge did not prevent him from continuing his involvement with Republi-

The Wigwam in Chicago, where Stone impetuously seconded the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for president at the Republican National Convention in 1860.
(SHSI)



can politics. He served as a delegate to the Republican state convention in Des Moines in January 1860 and was selected, in turn, as a delegate to the Republican national convention to be held in Chicago in May. He went to Chicago as a dedicated supporter of Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, and in the tumult that followed Lincoln's nomination Stone jumped up and declared, "Mr. President, I rise in the name of two-thirds of the delegation from Iowa to second the nomination of Abraham Lincoln."

Actually, Stone did not speak for the majority of the Iowa delegation. He and the seven other Iowa delegates who were initially committed to Lincoln were entitled to cast a total of only two votes. These were, in fact, the only votes the Iowa delegation cast for Lincoln on the first ballot at the convention; the six remaining votes were divided among four other candidates. Lincoln did receive a majority of the Iowa votes on the second ballot, however, and eventually captured all eight Iowa votes in the balloting. Stone's seconding statement in favor of Lincoln was a good example of his talent for sensing the prevailing political mood, and it left a lasting impression on the future president.

"By God, I'm going to war!"

After the Chicago convention, Stone returned to his judicial duties. Then, one day in

April 1861 a messenger rushed into his Washington County courtroom and whispered a message in his ear. Stone rose and said, "Gentlemen, Fort Sumter has been fired upon. This court stands adjourned until this matter is adjusted. By God, I'm going to war!" Stone left the courtroom and took the next stage to Knoxville.

Following the military custom of the time, Stone requested permission from Governor Kirkwood to form an infantry company from the men in the Knoxville area. Receiving this, he drew together the unit that was to become Company B of the Third Iowa Infantry Regiment, and he was elected its captain by the men. The company joined the remainder of the Third Iowa encamped at Keokuk in May, and Stone was appointed major of the regiment in June.

The Third Iowa drilled at Keokuk for about a month, though the men were without military equipment. Later, one of Stone's biographers described the condition of the regiment's troops while they were encamped there:

It was perhaps the most motley crew of warriors ever assembled on a parade ground. There were no uniforms, no tents, no weapons and little discipline. Officers did their best and finally the soldiers mastered "about face" without falling over each other.

This accomplished, the Third Iowa was ordered to northern Missouri to guard the rail lines against destruction by Missourians who were sympathetic to the Southern cause. When the regiment finally received its uniforms, they proved to be old, surplus dragoon uniforms and they were grey. Understandably, this caused a degree of confusion when the various companies were spread out in a number of towns to guard the railroads. The men eventually received regulation blue uniforms, but they were still armed with muskets that had been manufactured just after the Mexican War.

Stone and the Third Iowa saw action that August in a skirmish at Kirksville, Missouri and at the battle of Blue Mills in September. Stone was wounded at Blue Mills, and he spent the winter recuperating while the Third Iowa went into winter quarters along the line of the North Missouri Railroad. Stone was back with the regiment the following spring when it was ordered to join General Ulysses S. Grant at Pittsburg Landing in southwestern Tennessee. There, while in command of the Third Iowa in the bloody fighting at Shiloh on April 6 and 7, Stone was taken prisoner and sent to a Southern prison in Selma, Alabama.

The war had been in progress for a year by this time, and the number of prisoners taken by both sides was mounting. While the Northern officers taken prisoner at Shiloh were being held at Selma, they prepared a proposal for an exchange of Northern prisoners taken at Shiloh for Southerners who had been captured earlier in the Union victory at Fort Donelson. General P.G.T. Beauregard approved the plan in May 1862 and granted permission for three officers to go to Washington under a forty-day parole to negotiate the exchange of prisoners. The officers at Selma selected Colonel Stone as one of their representatives, and accompanying him were Colonel Madison Miller of the Eighteenth Missouri and Captain J.M. Gregg of the Fifty-eighth Illinois.

The three men were unsuccessful in their negotiations, however, and they returned to Richmond, honoring the terms of their parole. But Confederate president Jefferson Davis still considered an exchange possible, so he sent them back to Washington on a fifteen-day parole to work for a general prisoner exchange. This time the officers were successful, and that fall thousands of prisoners on both sides returned home.

As a result of the successful negotiations, Stone and Miller secured their own release immediately and returned home. The third officer, J.M. Gregg, returned to the group of captured officers from which the three had been selected. Gregg located them at a prison camp in Madison, Georgia, and he brought with him a supply of clothing and a month's pay in gold for each officer. He was eventually paroled along with the rest of the group in the general exchange that fall.

Meanwhile, Stone returned to Knoxville, and in August 1862 Governor Kirkwood appointed him colonel of the Twenty-second Iowa Infantry, a new regiment that was to be organized at Camp Pope near Iowa City. From Iowa City, Stone's regiment moved to Rolla in northern Missouri to guard Union supplies stored in the area. In January 1863, Stone was made commander of a brigade consisting of the Twenty-first, Twenty-second, and Twenty-third Iowa regiments and the Eleventh Missouri regiment. In March his command was ordered south to join the forces that were being collected at Milliken's Bend, Louisiana in preparation for the assault on the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg. There, he was attached to the Fourteenth Division of General John A. McClernand's Thirteenth Army Corps.

Stone took part in the actions leading up to the actual assault on Vicksburg, most notably the battle of Port Gibson. None of the actions was particularly serious, however, until a

Southern threat to relieve Vicksburg caused General Grant to order a general attack for May 22 on the works that the Confederates had constructed around the rear of the city. In this assault, Stone's Twenty-second Iowa led a column of troops attacking Fort Beauregard, one of the Confederate strongpoints. Because of the strength of the Southern defenses, the assault proved a bloody failure, but General Grant, when writing about the Vicksburg campaign, noted that: "No troops succeeded in entering any of the enemy's works, with the exception of Sergeant Griffiths, of the 22d Regiment of Iowa Volunteers, and some eleven privates of the same regiment. Of these, none returned except the Sergeant, and one man." Stone was wounded in the right forearm early in the attack, and he turned command of the regiment over to Lieutenant-Colonel Harvey Graham.

The assault on the Vicksburg defenses on May 22 proved to be Stone's last military action. His wound was serious enough to cause him to be sent home for recuperation, and his career now turned from military command to political leadership.

When Stone arrived back in Knoxville, the Iowa political climate was beginning to heat up in anticipation of the gubernatorial campaign that fall. The first major event in the campaign was the Republican state convention in June. Stone's part in negotiating the prisoner exchange and his command of the Twenty-second Iowa at Vicksburg in May had made him into something of a war hero in the public eye, and he was selected as one of the speakers at a political rally in Des Moines on the night of June 16, just before the Republican convention was scheduled to begin.

The two main candidates for the gubernatorial nomination were General Fitz Henry Warren and Iowa Secretary of State Elijah Sells. Stone's name had been mentioned in the early political maneuvering, but he had collected



Stone, in command of the Twenty-second Iowa, was wounded in the bloody assault on the citadel of Vicksburg on May 22, 1863. (SHSI)

only a few supporters. Warren spoke first at the rally. He was an accomplished political orator, but he made the mistake of making some slighting remarks about his main opponent, Sells. This angered Sells' supporters and stirred an undertone of resentment in the hall where the rally was being held. Sells was no public speaker, and he was not scheduled to address the rally.

Into this dissension stepped Colonel Stone, ever the opportunist, in his blue uniform and with his arm in a sling. He must have known as he strode to the podium that he was about to deliver the speech that could make or break his political career. But as he began, it became clear that it was not to be an overtly political speech. Stone's hopes rested on only a very narrow political base at this time, with support from only a few of the convention delegates;

most of the remainder were virulent backers of either Warren or Sells. Stone did not make the mistake of attacking either of the major candidates, as the first speaker had done. Instead, he wrapped himself in the flag, blasting out a classic example of patriotic oratory. As Iowa historian Benjamin Gue later wrote, Stone "brought a message from the army before Vicksburg. Paying an eloquent tribute to the Iowa soldiers and their glorious deeds on the battle-field, he continued in glowing terms to eulogize the National and State Administrations under Republican rule, the superb loyalty of the people, their sacrifices and devotion to their country during the long and bloody war."

Stone's speech on the night of June 16 was not, strictly speaking, a convention speech, but it might as well have been. When he was introduced to the convention the next day, his appearance was greeted with tremendous applause. As the balloting began, it became clear that Warren's speech of the night before had irretrievably alienated Sells' delegates, but that Sells himself had little chance for victory. As a result, the delegates who had been committed to Sells gradually switched over to Stone in the successive ballots. By the eighth ballot, Stone had received a clear majority of the delegate votes, and Warren withdrew his name from consideration. Stone had gained the nomination by seizing the political opportunity at the right moment.

In the campaign that followed, the war was, of course, the only real issue, and there was little doubt that the state would vote Republican in the election in October. Stone's Democratic opponent for governor, General James M. Tuttle, had a fine war record himself, and he was more popular among the troops in the field than was Stone. As one Iowa soldier wrote home from his encampment at Columbus, Kentucky: "If Tuttle had come out Independent he would have had a good chance for the soldiers' vote. As it is, nothing but those that have been Democrats without the possibility of

change will vote for him. I presume he is just as good as Stone but being in bad company is what we don't like."

The Democratic party was considered to be "bad company" by Iowa voters in general. Even though many Iowa Democrats—the War Democrats—supported the Union cause, the Democratic party could too easily be labelled the party of Copperheads, Southern sympathizers, and outright traitors. Stone resigned his commission in the Army and campaigned vigorously throughout the state, and he was aided by an extensive speaking tour by Governor Kirkwood. In the fall election, Stone polled a total of 85,896 votes to Tuttle's 56,169.

When Governor Stone took office in January 1864, it was clear that war-related issues would dominate his administration. Three issues in particular captured his attention: Iowa's response to the military draft calls, the threat of raids by Confederate guerillas along Iowa's southern boundary, and the more general menace of disloyalty that came under the label of Copperhead activities.

Stone took the Copperhead menace much more seriously than did many Iowans by 1864. He was convinced that two-thirds of the Iowa Democrats were disloyal, for example, and that secret Copperhead societies still claimed thousands of members in Iowa. He denounced the Copperhead protests at violations of their civil rights, declaring that Lincoln's expanded war powers were necessary to preserve the Union and the Constitution. To restrict the President in wartime to "the mere letter of his civil authority," Stone declared, "is to deprive him of the very means of discharging that high duty, and make the Constitution, thereby, the weapon of its own destruction." Throughout his first year of office, Governor Stone took very great care to assure that no Copperheads slipped into the ranks of either Iowa's military organization or its civilian government on any level.

Stone saw an equally grave threat to the state from outside its borders. Believing that Missourians were responsible for various crimes being committed in Iowa's southern counties, he strongly reinforced the Southern Border Brigade, which Governor Kirkwood had created in 1862 in response to similar fears early in the war. Actually, the Brigade was never a very effective military force. When a band of guerillas crossed into Iowa in the fall of 1864, they were able to terrorize the rural areas of Davis County for twelve hours and recross the border without suffering any harassment from the Border Brigade.

To prevent a general infiltration into Iowa of "refugees from the rebel army, guerillas, and

governor—the military draft—was more concrete than the nebulous rumors of Copperhead activities or the threat of a major invasion from the south. The first time Governor Stone encountered the problem was in February 1864. On February 1, President Lincoln issued a call

"We are coming, Father Abraham, with 500,000 more."

for 500,000 men, with a draft to begin on March 10 to fill any quotas not met by volunteers. Iowa had never needed to resort to a draft to fill its quota, and in response to Lincoln's call Adjutant General Nathaniel Baker telegraphed Lincoln: "There will be no draft in Iowa. You



Iowa soldiers in the field voted strongly for Stone for governor in 1863, considering his opponent Tuttle to be, as one soldier said, "in bad company" as a Democrat. (SHSI)

bushwackers" from Missouri, Stone issued a proclamation on August 20, 1864 commanding peace officers and officers of the state militia in the southern tiers of counties to stop "all suspected persons" who arrived in Iowa from the south and detain them until they could satisfy the officers that they had a lawful purpose in entering the state. Clearly, Stone took the threat from Missouri very seriously.

The third major issue of Stone's term as a war

shall have our quota without it. We are coming, Father Abraham, with 500,000 more."

Iowa did, in fact, meet its share—6,000 men—without a draft. But the state's enthusiasm was beginning to wear thin after three years of war, and some Iowans were reported to be preparing to depart for the West, preferring the gold fields to the battlefields. In response, Governor Stone issued a proclamation forbidding any Iowa citizen to leave the state before

March 10, when the draft would begin, if it proved necessary. He instructed provost marshals and military commanders on Iowa's western border to stop anyone from leaving the state who did not have a valid pass from the provost marshal of the district where he lived. Though Iowa did not have enough troops to enforce such an order, Stone's proclamation did serve as a warning to draft evaders and as an indicator of the stresses that repeated calls for troops were creating.

That spring, Governor Stone was again able to report Iowa's success in meeting a call for volunteers—this one a call for 200,000 men by April 15—and a second call in April for another 100,000 men. The latter call was not part of the regular recruitment of troops for extended enlistments. Instead, it called for men to serve for 100 days in newly created regiments that were to perform guard duty in fortifications and military bases and along the nation's borders in order to free combat veterans for the summer campaign of 1864. Along with the other new units created by this call was a unit called the "University Company," Company D of the Forty-fourth Iowa. The company was composed of about ninety men, all of whom were from the State University of Iowa, Western College, and Coe College. Frank Horack, an early Iowa City historian, concluded that the formation of the University Company "left the State University deserted almost to a man." Apparently, the 100-day enlistments were considered a reasonable way of passing the University's summer term.

Iowa was finally forced to resort to the draft in the summer of 1864. On July 18, Lincoln called for an additional 500,000 men to hasten the end of the war. Iowa's quota was 15,784 men, but this number was reduced to 5,749 by credits allowed the state for an excess of volunteers on previous calls. Even though many Iowa towns increased the bounties they paid men to enlist, and thus help fill their quota, the state was eventually required to draft 1,862

men. This was, however, the last time Iowa would be required to canvass the state for enlistments. A readjustment of the credit allowed the state from previous calls meant that no new troops were needed for Lincoln's final call, for 300,000 men on December 19, 1864.

Although he was preoccupied with the state's internal involvement with the war effort, Governor Stone also played a role in national affairs during his first term. President Lincoln called the governor to Washington shortly after Stone's inauguration in 1864, apparently remembering the support Stone had given him at the Republican convention in 1860, and Stone often returned to Washington during the remainder of the war for confer-

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Note on Sources

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Many of the illustrations in this article came from the following sources: *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Famous Leaders and Battle Scenes of the Civil War* (New York: Mrs. Frank Leslie, Publisher, 1896); *Harper's Pictorial History of the Civil War* (Chicago: Puritan Press, 1894); and *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (New York: Century Co., 1887).

COPPERHEADS IN IOWA

Septor July 28th A.D. 1863
We the Undersigned do hereby agree
to form ourselves into an Independent Military
Company of Mounted Riflemen for the purpose
of assisting the proper authorities in enforcing
the laws of this Government upholding
and supporting the Constitution of the
United States and of the State of Iowa
and for the further purpose of protecting the
rights of Citizens, preserving order and
justice in the Community.

There exists "a faction, in the Northern States, which has persistently opposed the action of our Government in its efforts to subdue the Rebellion, and clamored for peace upon any terms. While professing to be loyal, the members of this faction have given strength and courage to traitors, and by their conduct proved themselves the most insidious and dangerous foes of the Union."

Governor William M. Stone, January 14, 1864

"Although various Iowa officials and Republican newspaper editors contended that a subversive society operated in their state, not a shred of unimpeachable evidence substantiates those contentions."

Frank L. Klement, *Annals of Iowa*, Winter 1965

As the statements by Governor Stone and historian Frank Klement indicate, there has been some disagreement about even the existence of a Copperhead movement in Iowa during the Civil War. The State Historical Society manuscript collection contains a document that may shed some light on this subject. It is the membership list of the Independent Military Company of Mounted Riflemen of Cedar County, dated July 28, 1863, the introductory statement of which is shown above.

The activities associated with the Copperhead movement in the Midwest reached a frenzied pace in late 1862 and early 1863. The term "Copperhead" was the epithet given to Peace Democrats in the North. The Peace Democrats spoke out vehemently against the war policies of the Lincoln administration. Their motto was "the Constitution as it is, the Union as it was!" The antiwar faction of the Democrats was also comprised of men who sought peace at any price, including the dissolution of the Union, and men who adamantly rejected any other than the Democratic ticket.

Copperhead sentiment was apparent in Iowa

in the 1860s. Iowa Copperheads were charged with discouraging enlistment in the Union army and encouraging desertion, denouncing conscription, and resisting federal tax collection. Iowa Copperheads included Democratic officeholders and party members, as well as outspoken newspaper editors. Among the most fervent critics of the Lincoln administration were editors Dennis A. Mahony of the *Dubuque Herald* and Daniel Sheward of the *Fairfield Constitution and Union*. In the autumn of 1862, Mahony was arrested by United States Marshall H.M. Hoxie and taken to the Old Capitol prison in Washington, D.C.

With Copperhead activity increasing, Northern war hysteria manifested itself in a surge of potent rumors. The Copperhead menace was said to include a highly organized network of secret societies, known by such titles as "The Order of the Star," "The Circle of Honor," and "The Order of American Knights." The most prominent of the alleged secret societies was "The Knights of the Golden Circle." The KGC, as it came to be called, was supposedly a nationally organized subversive

society. Rumors of KGC infiltration made headlines in the Iowa papers. In February 1863, the KGC was reported to have 42,000 members and branches in every township in the state. The Republican press in Chicago and New York picked up on the KGC rumors in Iowa and gave them a degree of public credibility by reprinting them. The growing alarm about KGC penetration in Iowa was exploited by Republican officials who zealously smeared Democratic candidates in the 1862 elections with accusations of terrorism and who defended the arbitrary arrests and denial of civil liberties to Copperhead editors such as Mahony by charging them with KGC connections.

How does the membership list of the Independent Military Company of Mounted Riflemen fit into this uproar over the Copperhead menace? The introductory statement appears to proclaim the patriotism of the organization. But Judge John T. Moffit of Tipton, who donated the document to the Society in July 1917, claimed that it was the original membership list of the Knights of the Golden Circle of Cedar County. The question is whether the membership list really is an indication of Copperhead activity in Iowa.

The evidence is contradictory. Arguing against the document's authenticity is the fact that many of the signatures were apparently written in the same hand. Also, at least three of the men who signed the document were members of the Union army at the time, and this was before Iowa had resorted to the draft.

Arguing in favor of the document is the fact that Iowa newspapers reported Copperhead activity in Cedar County in 1863. A notice published in the *Tipton Advertiser*, a Republican newspaper, on August 13, 1863 reported that

The Cops. have organized a company of "Hoss Marines," numbering about 180 horses and men, and were out on parade last Saturday evening. The object of this company is as near as we can learn: 1st, To keep a vigilant eye on "them ar' guns" belonging to Uncle Sam 2d, To enforce the laws 3d, Keep down the Abolitionists

4th, Not to assist in enforcing the draft. Ab. Piatt is Captain.

Abner Piatt is the ninth name on the membership list.

On August 21, 1863 the *Muscatine Daily Courier*, a Democratic paper, printed a letter from a "Light Horse Rifleman" from nearby Rochester who suggested that people "take a squint at Cedar County." The county, he continued, "boasts a democratic prowess, which may be defeated, but never can be conquered." He went on to declare that,

We have reached a memorable point in our political history; this point almost amounts to a distinction of races, placing the Democratic Caucasian party on a basis by itself, and the different hordes of political mongrelism in a blessed and unenviable paradise by themselves.

The Light Horse Rifleman's flagrant racism repeats the Copperhead determination to "Keep down the Abolitionists" mentioned in the *Tipton Advertiser*.

Certainly the newspaper accounts in the *Muscatine Daily Courier* and the *Tipton Advertiser* support Governor Stone's apprehensions about Copperhead activity. But, while Iowa Copperhead activity may have occurred in 1863, there remains a question about the authenticity of this document. The document's connection with KGC activity was not made until a half century later, when Judge Moffit donated it to the State Historical Society. Still, the existence of the membership list speaks in a voice more resonant than wartime gossip. Just as a document need not be a forgery to be misleading, a rumor need not be based on falsehood. One must keep in mind that there is a past which remains ever immutable, and there is history as we know it, which is relative to the beholder. Manuscripts such as the membership list provide us with a means of examining events. Our interpretations are ever changing.—Kathy Krafka

ences with Lincoln or with Secretary of War Edwin Stanton.

Shortly before the Republican national convention at Baltimore in June 1864, at which Stone was to head the Iowa delegation, Lincoln selected him as one of a small number of influential delegates he asked to press for the nomination of a Union Democrat as the vice-presidential nominee for his second term. Lincoln was not opposed to his current vice-president, Hannibal Hamlin, who was a Republican, but he told Stone that he believed that the nomination of a prominent Union Democrat would help to calm Southern fears about the future of the South if the federal government were dominated by the Radical Republican faction. A bipartisan ticket would signal Lincoln's intention to pursue a mild reconstruction policy after the war and thus help to reunite the nation. Though he named several Democrats who might fill the position, Lincoln did not single out any particular man in his talk with Stone. Stone himself favored Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, who was attracting a growing following as the convention neared.

When the nominations for president began at the Republican convention in Baltimore the next day, Simon Cameron, a Radical Republican from Pennsylvania, immediately rose to renominate Lincoln for president and Hamlin for vice-president. By uniting Lincoln and Hamlin in the same resolution, Cameron apparently sought to make any opposition to Hamlin seem to be an attack on Lincoln himself. This, Stone later maintained, left the convention delegates stunned. Stone, however, climbing onto his chair in the rear of the hall, shouted a motion that the Cameron resolution be tabled in order to allow the convention to consider other nominees.

An uproar immediately broke out between the supporters and opponents of Hamlin's candidacy, but when a vote was finally taken on Stone's motion, it was carried almost unanimously. With this vote, the momentum

changed. Lincoln was nominated for president in a separate resolution and it passed, of course, by acclamation. Andrew Johnson's name was then placed in nomination for vice-president, and he triumphed on the second ballot. As he had in 1860 and in 1863, Stone again proved himself to be a master of the political mechanics and psychology of a nominating convention.

Considering the strengths of Governor Stone's ties to President Lincoln, it is perhaps appropriate that Stone was in the audience at Ford's Theater the night that Lincoln was assassinated. When he heard the shot and saw John Wilkes Booth jump down to the stage, Stone rushed to the president's box. He aided in moving Lincoln to the boardinghouse across from the theater and remained at his bedside until Lincoln died the following morning. Stone was named as one of the pallbearers in the funeral cortege, and he rode on the train that carried Lincoln's body home to Springfield, Illinois.

With the close of the war in April 1865, the old wartime issues no longer consumed either the governor's or the state's energies. But now a new issue arose in both national and state politics: the issue of Negro suffrage. In Iowa, the question revolved around a provision of the Iowa Constitution of 1857 that limited suffrage to white males. At the Republican state convention in June, the Negro suffrage issue sharply divided the party. A resolution that would strike the word "white" from the suffrage section of the Iowa Constitution produced a bitter fight. In the end, the resolution passed by a vote of 513 to 242. Though he was not without opposition in the party, Stone was nominated for reelection as governor by acclamation.

Iowa Democratic leaders in the summer of 1865 realized that the Democratic party had been made synonymous with treachery during the war and that the Republican party had be-

come the party of loyalty, Union, and victory. They concluded that their only chance for success in the fall election was to draw votes away from the dominant Republican party by playing on the racism among the electorate at large that lay beneath the liberal call for Negro suffrage. The result was their creation of a new Anti-Negro Suffrage party and the calling of a "Soldier's Convention" in August. The convention denounced proposals for Negro suffrage and nominated General Thomas Hart Benton, Jr. (a nephew of the famous senator from Missouri) as the new party's standard bearer in the gubernatorial race. When the formal Democratic convention met, the delegates voted to support the "Soldier's Ticket."

During the campaign, Stone and other Republicans tried to play down the whole issue of Negro suffrage, declaring that they had not intended anything so radical as actual racial equality. As a campaign issue, they turned to the tactic that would come to be known as "waving the bloody shirt," stressing the old Democratic ties to rebellion and treason during the war years. The Democrats, meanwhile, in the guise of the Soldier's Ticket, stirred the old pre-war fears of an influx of vast hordes of Negroes into the state. Iowa had always been more of an antislavery than an abolitionist state, so it was not difficult for a campaign speaker in 1865 to conjure up the image of Negro suffrage as simply the first crack in the dam holding back a floodtide of Negroes.

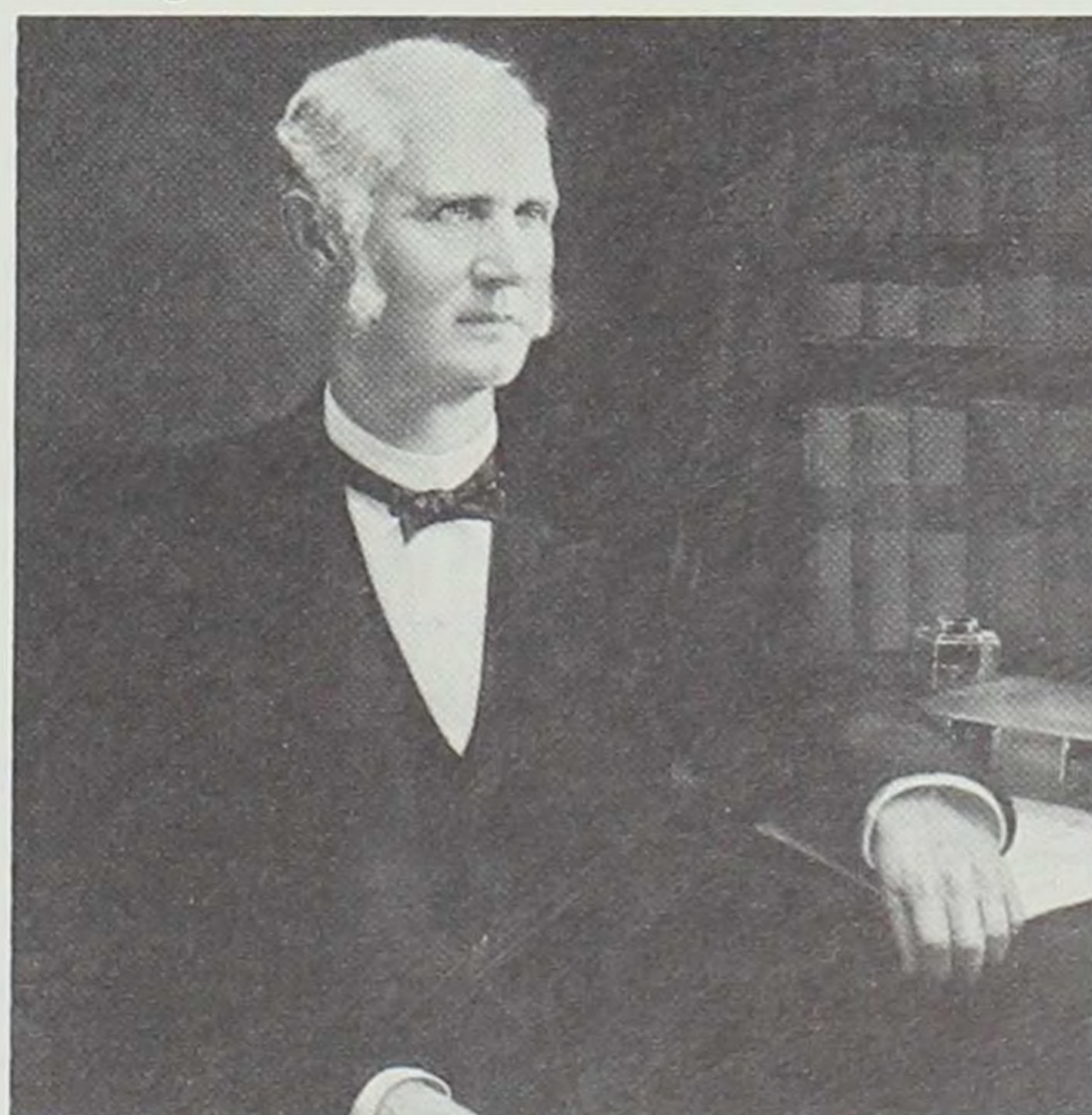
In the election, Stone triumphed over Benton by a vote of 70,445 to 54,070. This was a substantial margin, but not as great as those the Republicans had gained in the wartime elections, and in total votes the Republicans brought out 18,521 fewer voters than they had in 1864, while their opponents brought out 4,484 more.

Governor Stone had been reelected essentially on the Negro suffrage question, and he devoted a major part of his second inaugural address, on January 11, 1866, to a call for pas-

sage of a constitutional amendment by the state legislature that would delete the word "white" from the Constitution of 1857 and for submission of the amendment to the people for ratification. He stressed the military role that Negroes had played in the Civil War, particularly the seven hundred who had filled part of Iowa's quota of troops.

In truth, however, while Stone's call for Negro suffrage in his inaugural address rang with phrases that would warm the heart of the most vehement Radical Republican orator, Stone himself was no leader in the fight for Negro suffrage. His main interest in seeing the measure safely enacted and approved by popular vote was to remove the suffrage issue from the political arena. The real leader of the Negro suffrage campaign was Edward Russell, the editor of the *Davenport Gazette*. Russell had been a staunch abolitionist before the war, and he led the fight for suffrage in the Republican convention in 1865, in the campaign that followed, and now in the voting in the state legislature and in the popular referendum.

Voting on the issue in the Iowa General As-



After he left office in 1868, Stone returned to his law practice in Knoxville and went on to be appointed Commissioner of the General Land Office by President Benjamin Harrison. (Division of Historical Museum and Archives)

sembly was almost completely along party lines. In 1866 the Eleventh General Assembly approved an amendment that struck all racial restrictions from the Iowa constitution, and in 1868 the Twelfth General Assembly gave the necessary second approval. The constitutional amendment was included in the ballot in the general elections in the fall of 1868, and it won a 56.5 percent majority of the votes cast. Negro suffrage had become law in Iowa.

Apart from the Negro suffrage issue, Governor Stone's second term proved to be largely uneventful. Late in his administration, a scandal arose concerning his secretary's theft of money from the proceeds of federal swamp land warrants. The secretary, a man named Orwig, endorsed the warrants with the governor's signature, cashed them at a Des Moines bank, and used the funds to invest in real estate. The state was eventually reimbursed from the sale of the land holdings, and Orwig was never prosecuted. Governor Stone was not implicated in the scandal. Like the scandals that were later to plague the Grant administration in Washington, Stone was considered to be guilty of a poor choice of associates, but he was not accused of corruption himself.

When Stone completed his second term in January 1868, he returned to Knoxville to practice law in partnership with his brother-in-law, O.B. Ayres. John B. White, who read law in the offices of Stone & Ayres in the 1870s, later recalled that Ayres—whom he described as “a painstaking, hard working, sound lawyer”—conducted most of the office work. Stone, he recalled, “would often sit with a kind of far off look as if he were dreaming, and would often start up, don his plug hat, take his cane and go down on the street to mingle with the ‘boys.’”

Stone continued to practice law for most of the next twenty years, though he lived for a time in Marshalltown, Boston, Pueblo, Colorado, and finally Des Moines. By 1886 he was

back in Knoxville. Except for a period as a Greenbacker from 1870 to about 1875, Stone remained a loyal Republican, serving one term in the state legislature. He also served as an elector for the Harrison ticket in 1888 and was selected to carry the official Iowa returns to Washington in February 1889. Ever the political opportunist, Stone returned from his Washington trip with a position as assistant commissioner of the General Land Office. When the current commissioner resigned, Stone replaced him and served until the new Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland awarded the patronage plum to a replacement in 1893.

Stone then moved to a farm he had purchased near Oklahoma City, hoping to establish a law practice there with his son, William A. Stone. But he had been a victim of Bright's disease for several years by this time, and he grew progressively weaker. He died on July 18, 1893 and was buried in Graceland Cemetery in Knoxville.

As they listened to the eulogies delivered after Stone's death, Iowans who thought back on his career could not really have concluded that they had lost a great statesman or a political philosopher or even, truthfully, a great war hero. What Stone had been was an expert politician, a politician with a talent for seizing the political moment. When he tied himself to the rising star of the Republican party in 1856, when he jumped up to second the nomination of Abraham Lincoln for president in 1860, when he strode to the podium in the 1863 rally that brought him the gubernatorial nomination, and when he played a part in the 1864 Republican national convention, Stone was simply displaying a talent for gauging the political mood in a turbulent situation and placing himself in a position to benefit from it and to lead it. William M. Stone was a politician, nothing more, but nothing less. □



Custer

And the First Iowa Cavalry

by Robert E. DeZwaan, Jr.

Historians have probably written as much about George Armstrong Custer as they have about any other officer in American military history. By some, he is praised for his bravery in the face of overwhelming odds; by others, he is condemned for his incompetence. While the Battle of the Little Big Horn is the action that brought Custer his fame—or infamy—he also held a cavalry command in the Army during the Civil War and Reconstruction. When he was ordered to occupy an area of Texas near Houston after the surrender of the South in 1865, his command included the First Iowa Cavalry Regiment, and the incidents during that period that are narrated in the following excerpts from an unpublished manuscript have an important bearing on the much-disputed question of Custer as a military commander.

In late September 1865, Iowa governor William M. Stone received a very disturbing letter from Surgeon Charles H. Lothrop of the First Iowa Cavalry Regiment. Lothrop reported that Private Horace Cure of Company M of the First Iowa had recently had his head shaved and had received twenty-five lashes as punishment for an offense, and that this had been done without his ever having been tried by court martial, which Lothrop declared to be in violation of the Articles of War and an Act of Congress of August 5, 1861. Stone, incensed,

wrote directly to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton asking that this “degrading and unmilitary treatment,”—as well as reports he had also received of unfit rations being issued to the First Iowa—“be searchingly investigated.” He also demanded that the First Iowa be “relieved from this barbarous order,” meaning Custer’s Special Order Number Two, on which the punishment of Private Cure had been based.

Iowa Adjutant General Nathaniel B. Baker received a similar letter from Lothrop. Baker, whom a contemporary described as “rough and unguarded in his language . . . [and] plain spoken,” flew into a rage and fired off a telegram to



GENERAL GEORGE ARMSTRONG CUSTER

"an educated soldier, a strict disciplinarian and . . . boundless in his ambition"

Stanton asking: "Has Genl Custar [sic] now in Texas, under the articles of war & the Acts of Congress any right, with or without court martial of offender, to order or inflict punishment of a member of the 1st Iowa Cavalry by shaving of head & infliction of lashes? If he has such a right or authority, from what source does he derive it? An answer by telegraph is respectfully solicited." Stanton sent no reply.

These two Iowa officials were not alone in their efforts to secure the release of the First Iowa. In Washington, General Fitz Henry Warren, who had been the regiment's first colonel, spoke with Stanton in the First Iowa's behalf, but to no avail.

When Governor Stone drew no response from the War Department to his letters, he wrote again to Stanton on October 18: "I am

constrained to indulge in the belief of gross misconduct on the part of the General towards these veteran troops, and to again demand the immediate interference of your Department in their behalf. . . . In view of the fact that this regiment has been in active field service for over four years, participating in the most arduous and perilous campaigns of the western division of the army, I respectfully suggest and urge that it be discharged as soon as the exigencies of the public service will permit." The War Department's reply stated that the matter would be referred to General Grant.

Governor Stone's letter passed through channels for a response by General Custer. His reply is crucial to an understanding of his role in the incident Lothrop described, and it is worth quoting at length here:

I have the honor to submit the following report in regard to the case of Horace Cure, a private in Co. M, 1st Iowa Cavalry, referred to in a telegram from His Excellency, Governor Stone of Iowa, to the Secretary of War. . . .

Under instruction from the Major-General commanding this Military Division, I pro-

ceeded in June last to Alexandria, La., to assume command of the following named regiments, viz: First Iowa Cavalry, Second Wisconsin Cavalry, Fourth [?—Fifth] and Twelfth Illinois Cavalry, and Seventh Indiana Cavalry. These regiments had, prior to this time, been serving in Tennessee and other States farther north. A portion of them had

preceded me to Alexandria, the others following soon after my arrival there. The conduct of these troops while at Alexandria was infamous, and rendered them a terror to the inhabitants of that locality, and a disgrace to this or any other service. Highway robbery was of frequent occurrence each day. Farmers bringing cotton or other produce to town were permitted to sell it and then robbed in open daylight upon the streets of the town—this, too, in the presence or view of other soldiers than those perpetrating these acts.

No citizen was safe in his own home, either during the day or night. Bands of soldiers were constantly prowling about the surrounding county for a distance of twenty or thirty miles, robbing the inhabitants indiscriminately of whatever they chose, and not unfrequently these squads of soldiers who were so absent from camp, not only in violation of orders but of articles of war, were accompanied by officers. Upon two occasions . . . parties being under the charge of the Adjutant of the regiment [H.L. Morrill], were trespassing on the premises of a citizen nine miles from camp. [When] the latter remonstrated against it, the Adjutant seized a revolver belonging to a negro who accompanied the soldiers and threatened to blow the citizen's brains out if he dared to oppose them.

Such instances were of almost daily occurrence. Had this misbehavior been only chargeable to the enlisted men, I could have corrected it by calling in the assistance of the officers, but unfortunately the officers were the responsible parties. When not engaged with enlisted men in committing unlawful acts, they sanctioned such conduct when brought to their notice, and never to my knowledge, did an officer of the command take a single step toward suppressing the disorder complained of unless when acting under special instructions to do so. This may appear incredible, but is accounted for as follows: I found, upon assuming command of the above named regiments,

that a feeling amounting almost to mutiny existed throughout the command, occasioned by their determined opposition to remain longer in the service, and particularly was this opposition heightened by an impression that they were to be required to go to Mexico, a measure that they would not consent to under the circumstances. They claimed that they had enlisted for the present war, that the war was over, and they were entitled to their discharge from service. This was the universal feeling among officers as well as men. Many openly stated their intention not to accompany the command on its proposed march to Texas, and large numbers of men did desert from this reason alone. It was also openly stated that if the Government determined to hold them in service, they would, by their conduct, compel their discharge. Actuated by these motives in addition to the natural viciousness which is ever found among an unrestrained soldiery, the disposition and conduct of these troops, as manifested daily, was such as to excite the deepest anxiety.

I first appealed to the regimental commanders, referred them to such cases as were brought to my notice—cases in which the perpetrators of wrong were members of the regiment of which the officer addressed was the commander—urged them to correct the evil complained of, and prevent their recurrence in future. In one instance, I remember, I instructed one of the regimental commanders to the effect that if the complaints against his regiment—of thieving, &c., all of which were well founded, did not cease—I would relieve him and place an officer in command who could and would control it.

In no instance did my efforts in this direction succeed. The sympathies of the officers were so strongly enlisted in favor of the men that my appeals were fruitless. Officers would offer . . . such arguments as the following: "The boys think that they ought to be allowed to go home, and if not allowed to go home, they ought to

"The conduct of these troops while at Alexandria was infamous, and rendered them a terror to the inhabitants of that locality, and a disgrace to this or any other service. . . . Bands of soldiers were constantly prowling about the surrounding country for a distance of twenty or thirty miles, robbing the inhabitants indiscriminately of whatever they chose, . . ."



have a little liberty"—meaning by "liberty" unrestrained permission to go where they pleased and rob whoever came in their way. Such at least was the practical exercise of this "liberty." I was powerless so far as I relied upon the regimental officers for cooperation to secure discipline, obedience, and proper regard for the rights and property of others. Under other circumstances I could have summoned a court-martial for the trial of offenses such as I have named, but this would have been a mere mockery and would have defeated the very aim it was intended to promote. I was located several hundred miles away from my next superior officer, with no means of immediate communication. Before instructions could have been asked for and received, it was expected that the expedition I was to command would move; . . . then I would be entirely cut off from communication with any other command, until I had

completed a march of hundreds of miles, and reached a new base in a different department. My instructions from the commanding General were to treat the inhabitants of the country with whom I was brought in contact with kindness and conciliation—to permit no foraging, to pay for all supplies of beef or grain which it became necessary to take, to issue stringent orders which should prevent depredations or outrages being committed upon citizens by troops of my command. Under these circumstances, as I have related them above, actuated by the single desire to discharge my duty, carry out strictly the instructions of my commanding officer, and to prevent and remove the disgrace which was daily attaching itself to the troops of my command, I issued an order referred to by His Excellency, Governor Stone—stating as a reason for so doing that a court-martial would be impracticable while the command was on

the march or in any unsettled state. The order was intended as only temporary, and to express my view of the punishment, a general court-martial, sitting in my command, of which Lieutenant-Colonel McQueen, First Iowa Cavalry, was president, in the case of an enlisted man found guilty of a very serious offense, sentenced [Private Cure] among other punishments, "to receive twenty-five lashes well laid on. . . ."

In regard to the case of Private Horace C. Cure, Co. M, First Iowa Cavalry, I would state that, at a time when the commissary department was furnishing the troops of this command with a full supply of the best quality beef, Private Cure, in company with a Mexican, stole a valuable beef from Dr. Peebles, collector of the port of Galveston, drove it to the vicinity of camp, killed it, and, taking a small portion for their own use, left the remainder on the ground. This was an offence which was being committed daily. No shadow of reason existed for such conduct, for whatever deficiencies existed in the commissary department, the supply of beef was always ample and of the best quality. Nothing but a desire to commit a wan-

ton outrage could have prompted it. The usual excuse that the owners were rebels would not be true, as in this case the owner was Dr. Peebles, who, according to my opinion, is a man whose sacrifice and personal suffering in defense of the Government and the Union have been greater than those of any other individual, either north or south. The punishment was inflicted both upon Private Cure and upon the Mexican, and had its intended effect, as no outrage of a similar character has been committed since.

I will add in conclusion, that I have been in almost continuous command of troops since the commencement of the war, frequently in much larger numbers than at present, and that I never found it necessary or desirable to issue such orders as I have referred to, simply because I have never been in command of troops whose conduct, both as regards officers and men, so nearly resembled that of a mob as was the conduct of these troops when I assumed command of them. I am happy to say that today no better behaved regiments are included in the volunteer force than those now composing my command."



"Private Cure, in company with a Mexican, stole a valuable beef from Dr. Peebles, collector of the port of Galveston, drove it to the vicinity of camp, killed it, and, taking a small portion for their own use, left the remainder on the ground."

Certainly depredations were committed before and after Custer's arrival at Alexandria, Louisiana, but were they, as he states, on a daily basis? If depredations had been as frequent as Custer claims, then his orders and notes would reflect such a state of affairs, but they do not. First Iowa Adjutant Morrill's party had not been ordered to rob anyone, but was under specific orders and instructions to *buy* fruit from planters. If indeed Morrill was operating under questionable circumstances, why was the matter not brought up at the time and only raised in this letter?

Until the time of the Cure incident there is nothing in Custer's papers that reflects any improper behavior on the part of members of the First Iowa. Colonel William Thompson expressed the opinion that the greatest dissatisfaction was the result of the actions of the provost marshal, "who endeavored" Thompson charged, "to place himself 'high up' in the estimation of his General by the infliction of cruel and unusual punishments as a means of enforcing army discipline. He was not a graduate of West Point, but supposed an imitation of the worst and most strikingly abused notions of young and inexperienced graduates, was the best course to pursue in rendering himself conspicuous and consequential. General Custer was an educated soldier, a strict disciplinarian and was boundless in his ambition, but he let this Provost Marshal of his, hinder and obscure all his native kindness and benevolence. Had he long since given this officer the 'bounce,' he would have experienced greater satisfaction with his Command and have saved himself from much outside, really undeserved animadversion."

Near the first of October 1865 the voting commissioner arrived to take the vote of the First Iowa for the upcoming gubernatorial election. The regiment voted overwhelmingly in favor of Governor Stone, whose efforts on their behalf were well known. It should also be mentioned here that the involvement of Governor

Stone was not a matter of political debate and in no way figured into the election. Of course, this is not to say that the families and friends of members in the regiment did not vote for Stone for this particular reason, but it is unreasonable to assume the entire state voted in favor of him because of his actions to gain relief for the regiment.

In Iowa the letters published in newspapers and those released to the press by government officials, including Lothrop's letter and accompanying documents, created quite a stir, and it was not without its ramifications. One of the first orders of business after the Iowa General Assembly convened in January 1866 was the passage of the following resolution: "*Resolved*, That His Excellency, Governor Wm. M. Stone, be respectfully requested to furnish to this House such information as he may possess, or the records and correspondence of his office may show, touching the *gross outrages* and cruelty which have been inflicted, as punishments, upon members of the First Iowa Cavalry, or of any other Iowa regiment, contrary to the Regulations and Articles of War, by order of Major-General Custar [sic], or any other officer of the U.S. Army, who has been in command of Iowa regiments now or recently in the United States service."

General Custer, meanwhile, had received orders that his muster out would be effective on February 1. On the last day of January Custer began to dismantle his staff. At about the same

Note on Sources

Sources consulted for this article included the correspondence of the Adjutant General of Iowa, letterbooks of Governor William M. Stone, and an autobiography of William Thompson, all of which are held by the Division of Historical Museum and Archives in Des Moines. Also consulted were issues of the *Des Moines Iowa State Daily Register* from August through October 1865, volume 2 of the Iowa Adjutant General's report for 1866, the journal of the Iowa House of Representatives for the Eleventh General Assembly, and Charles H. Lothrop's *History of the First Regiment Iowa Cavalry Veteran Volunteers* (Lyons, Iowa, 1890).

time, orders were also received for the First Iowa to be mustered from service. On February 3, an order came from the chief quartermasters department, approved by General Custer, that Lieutenant Heberling, First Iowa, was to have "twelve horses from your train to send out as relays for the General. Have them ready by twelve o'clock. I want only the horses without harness." In one last defiant act taken against Custer, Lieutenant Colonel McQueen "ordered Lieutenant Heberling to take the teams back to quarters. . . . which he did." Having made other arrangements, Custer left on the evening of February 3, or possibly the next evening. The high regard shown for Custer was

evidenced by his farewell party, "a detachment of men in the bush before daylight, with carbines to fire a parting salute, but he passed about two hours before they got into position." With Custer's departure General Sturgis was left in command.

Beginning on February 19, the First Iowa, escorted for a short distance by General Sturgis and the brigade band, traced a northern route and arrived at Davenport, Iowa, by steamboat on March 12. Three days later the men were paid and mustered out. One day after the First Iowa's arrival in Davenport the Iowa legislature unanimously passed a joint resolution that read in part:

Members of that regiment have unjustly received from the hands of Major-General Custer, while under his command, such ill treatment as no other Iowa soldiers have ever been called upon to endure; that such treatment or punishment was dishonorable to the General inflicting it, degrading to the name of American soldier, unworthy of the cause in which they were engaged, and in direct and flagrant violation of the laws of Congress and the rules and articles of war.

The regiment was one of the foremost in answering their country's call to put down the rebellion, having enlisted in April and May, 1861, and so eager were they to take an honorable part in their country's service, and fearing that Iowa's quota of troops would not be large enough to admit a cavalry regiment from this State, they immediately, after their organization, tendered their services direct to the Secretary of War, and they were accepted by him as an independent regiment. Every enlisted man furnished his own horse and equipments, and continued to do so until July, 1864, when they were compelled to sell them. Early in 1864, nearly six hundred of them re-enlisted for another term of three years. They served in all the campaigns of Missouri and Arkansas, and were honorably mentioned in general or-

ders by Generals Rosecrans, Davidson, Heron, Blunt, Dana, Reynolds, and others, and even by General Custer himself, as will appear hereafter in this report.

This regiment was first under the command of Major General Custer on the day of its arrival from Memphis, Tenn., at Alexandria, La., which was on the 23d day of June, 1865, on the following day, viz: the 24th of June, 1865, General Custer issued his Special Order No. 2, one clause of which is in these words, viz: "Every violation of this order will receive prompt and severe punishment. Owing to the delay of courts martial, and their impracticability when the command is unsettled, it is hereby ordered that any enlisted man of this command violating the above order, or committing depredations upon the person or property of citizens, will have his head shaved, and in addition will receive twenty-five lashes upon his back, *well laid on.*"

Another clause of this order is as follows: "Citizens of the surrounding country are *earnestly invited* to furnish to these headquarters any information they may acquire which will lead to the discovery of any parties violating the foregoing order."

Your Committee beg leave to state that the above order, aside from its brutality and in-



"The regiment was one of the foremost in answering their country's call to put down the rebellion, having enlisted in April and May 1861. . . . Every enlisted man furnished his own horse and equipments, . . ."

humanity, is in direct violation of a law of Congress, approved August 5, 1861; while the latter part of it is, as every officer and soldier knows, too readily responded to by rebel citizens eager to bring Union soldiers into discredit and disgrace. . . . many soldiers deserted what they termed a reign of terror, even though the war had ended, and the prospect of a speedy return to their homes and firesides, and an honorable discharge from their long and active service, were about to be soon realized. . . .

General Custer, in justification of his barbarous treatment, and of his conduct in suspending courts-martial and substituting unlawful and unwarrantable orders, denounced the character of his entire command of five regiments—including field and line officers—as "infamous and mutinous," unwarrantable and sweeping charges made against a regiment of soldiers whose conduct and bearing had been hitherto irreproachable. . . . Furthermore, Gen. Custer himself, in his official report to

Major-General Sheridan, made on the 26th of October, 1865, and while in command of the same troops whose character he had defamed so recently, made this remarkable admission: "I am happy to say, that today, no better behaved regiments are included in the volunteer force than those now composing my command. . . ."

[The following resolution accompanied the statement:]

WHEREAS, By an act of Congress approved August 5th, 1861, passed from a consideration of the fact that the perilous condition of the country was inducing many thousands of its best and most patriotic citizens to enlist in the ranks, the barbarous and inhuman punishment of flogging was prohibited throughout the armies of the United States; and

WHEREAS, By Special Order No. 2, dated at Headquarters Cavalry Division, Alexandria, La., June 24th, 1865, issued by command of Major-General Custer, authority was given to Provost-Marshals to cause American soldiers to

be punished by "twenty-five lashes on the back, well laid on," without their being allowed the formality of a trial by Court Martial; and

WHEREAS, On the 14th day of September, 1865, two American soldiers, one of whom was a member of the First Regiment Iowa Veteran Cavalry, were punished by flogging, by parties acting under authority of said order, therefore, be it

Resolved by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa, That, while we recognize the necessity of strict enforcement of military discipline, and the propriety of punishing every violation thereof in such manner as the laws of

Congress and Articles of War may direct, we also consider that the infliction of the cruel and barbarous punishment referred to could only have a tendency to render soldiers discontented and insubordinate, and that by this wanton and atrocious outrage, the majesty of the law has been condemned, the honor of the State has been insulted, and the rights of American soldiers trampled under foot, and we demand that the author thereof be held to strict accountability, and, after proper trial, be subjected to condign punishment, that future tyrants may take warning from the example."

For all the strength of its language in defending the First Iowa Cavalry and attacking Custer, the Iowa General Assembly's resolution possessed all the elements of an anticlimax. By the time the resolution was passed, the incident had been essentially closed. The First Iowa had already been mustered out, and General Custer went on to be

commissioned a lieutenant colonel in command of the newly formed Seventh United States Cavalry, following the path that would eventually take him to the Little Big Horn. The record of the incident remains, however, as evidence in the historical debate on the question of the competence of George Armstrong Custer as a military commander. □



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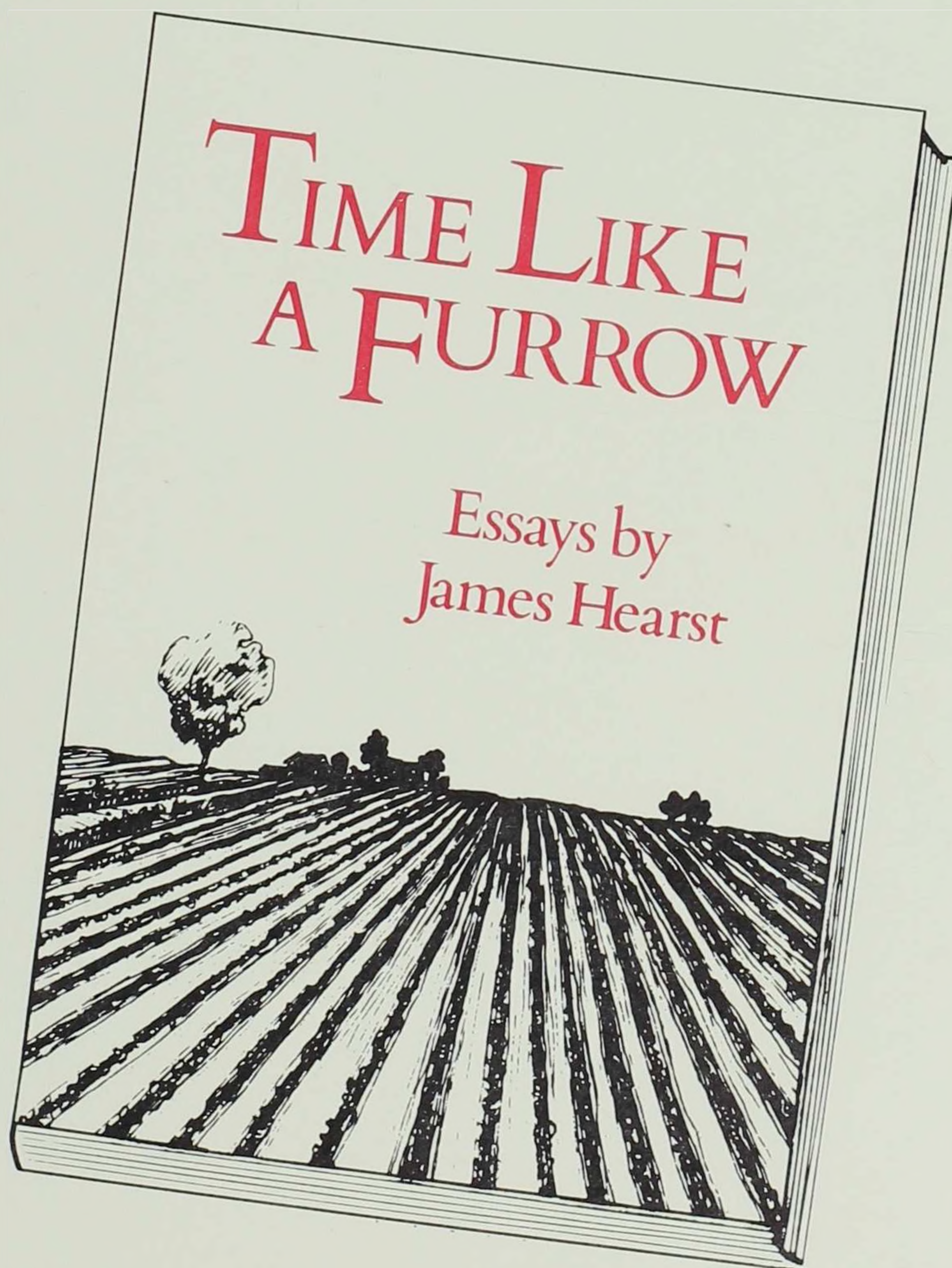
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Editor's Note

We neglected to provide complete identification for some of the murals illustrated in "The New Deal Murals in Iowa," which appeared in the May/June 1982 issue of *The Palimpsest*. Richard Haines' "Iowa Farming" (pp. 86-87) was painted for the Cresco post office; John Bloom's "Cattle" (p. 91) was installed at the Tipton post office in 1940; and William Henning's "Iowa Farm Life" (pp. 94-95) was completed for the Manchester post office in 1938. The editor wishes to apologize to the authors and to *Palimpsest* readers for omitting this information.

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