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G Sprague

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Northern Iowa — 1858

[In 1858 Iowa and the nation were recovering from the financial panic of 1857. The westward movement was in full swing and the frontier states were anxious to attract new settlers. The following letters, written by Henry C. Kelly, appeared in the *Dubuque Express and Herald* for March 4, 12, and 20, 1858. In the letter of March 20, Kelly includes a report from the manager of the Ohio Stock Farm in Butler County, an important experiment station for improving the breed of Iowa stock. Newspaper stories, and especially those of H. C. Kelly, give invaluable pictures of the early days of the Hawkeye State.—THE EDITOR.]

The Resources of Northern Iowa and Their Development.

Mr. Editor:—As I no longer occupy the position of Traveling Correspondent for the *Express & Herald*, and have located myself in the city, permit me through your columns to occasionally, in my leisure moments, give as far as my experience and observation extend, a succinct view of the present growth and future prosperity of Northern Iowa. In writing my former letters, I can with all truth and sincerity say that I have been actuated by an ardent desire for the advancement and growth of this part of the Great West, and I now have the pleasure of knowing that the masses of

the people who have received me with the warmest hospitality and noble treatment, will endorse my declaration. . . .

At this particular season of the year, it is highly important that every method and means of extending information of our advantages and resources to the tremendous tide of emigration flowing to the West every spring on the opening of the great arteries of travel, should be employed by our citizens of the city and country, and it is gratifying to see the great feeling and attention lately paid to this subject by the leading men of this city.

An active, healthy emigration of the *working population* of the east and foreign countries, is the life blood of our infant States and Territories, and so long as we have immense bodies of the most fertile land in the world unoccupied and uncultivated, so long should our efforts and means be unremittingly directed to induce the influx of farmers, mechanics, merchants, and all the useful avocations of business life and progress amongst us. Where a healthy, working, progressive and growing population exists, such as we have in Northern Iowa and Southern Minnesota, capital will invariably follow and seek investment, internal improvements will be pushed forward with rapidity and vigor, the products of our lands will be brought into an active competing market with more eastern sections, and great inducements offered to emigrants.

It is important to enquire what kind of an emigration we want. This is very easily answered. We want more producers and less consumers who are not producers. We do not want an emigration of town speculators and monied Shylocks who will inflate the prices of property to a wide extent, and bleed the country at every pore by their specious representations and inducements to extravagances. We do not want an influx of a class of eastern men among us who have been a curse of our State in their policy of buying up our best lands and holding them dormant and non-producing for an advance in value.

Five millions of dollars invested in government lands by nonresidents, and nonproducers set back the growth and wealth of our State for twenty years for obvious reasons known to every political economist. This money goes to the general government, none is expended amongst us except the small amount expended by office holders on themselves and traveling expenses, these lands are snatched away from the honest hard working farmers, who alone can make them valuable to the State and country, and are left as before useless wilds that appear as disgraceful blotches on the surface of our beautiful State, the poor preempting emigrants are compelled to go to less genial, less productive countries, in order to obtain a foothold on the soil and their labor and products (the real

wealth and prosperity of a State) are lost to us.

This system takes away our real capital, and places portions of our State at the mercy of strangers. Invest even twenty thousand dollars in actual farming producing operations, and let it be carefully managed, and its beneficial influence will grow and extend from year to year, and be felt over County, State and Country.

The present crisis, as regards the future prosperity of Northern Iowa, although it has ruined the pecuniary prospects of many, will undoubtedly result in vast benefit to the general prosperity. Many nonresidents who have purchased our lands in a spirit of speculation, with the hope of suddenly growing wealthy, are now forced to part with them, and thereby will offer greater inducements to emigration in many instances than can the general government. This I shall try to make clear in this series of articles.

What, then, we want, is an emigration of practical, hardy, enterprising farmers. We want the shrewd, educated, scientific farmers of New England, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania—we want the sturdy, persevering, frugal and progressive German, Irish, Norwegian and other foreign farmers; in short, we want the true tillers of the soil from every part of the enlightened world. We have a vast field for all in the Upper Mississippi valley, and we need but to use our own energy

in making its resources known to turn and retain a major part of western emigration.

We must not stand idle, nor must we think that our great prospective resources will alone induce emigration, without the proper efforts to make them known. We have great and tremendous competition to contend with, and we must enter into the field with energy and rapidity, sparing no reasonable amount of expenditure or labor. We have to contend with us the sunny plains of Kansas, the vast regions of Nebraska, the fertile valleys of the incipient Territory of Dacotah, Minnesota, the great mineral Territory of Arizona, the Golden State, Texas, and other avenues of emigration. All these are using every effort. Men of intellect, the mighty press, the pen of the tourist, are all employed in portraying their advantages and inducements to the tens of thousands seeking their homes in this western empire. They are all engaged in the most glorious task that has ever engaged the attention of men. They are laying the groundworks and foundations of States that will in the future be far more mighty than the empires of the Old World. Their course is not attended with fire, war, bloodshed and devastation—they are conquering with the more mighty power of our free institutions, the press, individual enterprise, and the progressive genius of the Anglo Saxon race. All are benefitting their coun-

try and the general good, and at the same time enhancing their own wealth and resources.

But I must close these general remarks, and if pleasing to yourself and readers, will, as time permits, write a series of articles on Northern Iowa, on these various topics: The climate of Northern Iowa, as compared with the eastern climate of same latitude—its agricultural and mineral resources, capability of soil, streams, and water power—our railroad system, and the advantages of Dubuque as a railroad center—sketches of the various important points through Northern Iowa—inducements to eastern and foreign emigration—of its present population, their enterprise and resources.

HENRY C. KELLY.

Climate and Health of Northern Iowa

There are no subjects which should interest the emigrant so deeply, or on which he should be so thoroughly informed, as the nature of the climate and the general health of the country to which he thinks of emigrating, yet in too many instances, they are overlooked, and he, heedless of the health of himself and family goes, as it were, blindfolded into a new country, and too often finds that he has committed a fatal oversight on this all important matter.

No soil, however luxuriant and prolific, no cli-

mate, however pleasant and agreeable, if lacking in that great requisite, health, can compensate the emigrant for its loss.

We claim for Northern Iowa an eminently healthy and pleasant climate, as compared with Eastern States of the same latitude, and while we do not claim perfection in its general health and features, yet we claim that upon a close investigation, we have a more healthy, invigorating atmosphere, a climate not so subject to sudden and unpleasant changes, more uniform in every respect, less liable to epidemics than that of the Atlantic slope. When we cross the Mississippi, westward in this latitude, we strike the high rolling prairie table lands with their sub-strata of limestone, with their quick and rapid streams, and the dry and pure atmosphere of the Pacific coast, which terminates in the delightful climates of Oregon and Washington Territories. This climate is peculiarly adapted to the development of the physical and intellectual faculties of the inhabitants, and a close observer of human nature will find that the eastern man and the foreigner, and all who emigrate, (if not completely broken down before,) lose none of their original energy and enterprise, but on the contrary gain largely in both.

This may be disputed by many, yet it is an indisputable fact that climate and atmospheric influences control largely the temperament of man-

kind and the destinies of nations. The English, with their stern determination, systematic rules and ideas, and their bull-dog courage, can only exist as a nation where Providence has given them the climate suited to their constitutions and temperaments. So with the French—they with their enthusiasm, fickle dispositions, love of glory, and restlessness, could not exist only in sunny France, as a nation; and so on with all nations. The climate and health of a country is a sure criterion to the character and genius of a people.

In the regular seasons of Northern Iowa we can say that we have more uniformity than in the Eastern States. The spring is late, generally, not fully opening till the 10th or 15th of April, but when opened, Nature puts on her garb of verdure with a rapidity unequalled in the East, and vegetation of all kinds is more luxuriant.

The spring is not so liable to sudden and disagreeable changes, being free from the cold damp atmosphere and storms, so frequent and so injurious to health as we find in New York and Pennsylvania.

The soil is of a sandy, porous nature, necessarily a very warm and quick soil, hence, although a little later perhaps than eastern springs, yet the rapid growth of vegetation makes up for the lateness of time, and we can have the spring vegetables fully as early. The remarkable warmth of

the soil is shown by the rapidity with which it is dried up. In the Eastern States we find that often two weeks after the sun has attained a full spring power, that the soil is wet and cold and incapable of being ploughed, whereas in this region no matter how long has been the winter or how wet, three days of the genial rays of the sun will prepare it for cultivation, and growth. Where the ground is not covered with snow in the winter, a large majority of the ploughing is done in the months of February and March. Summer is seldom accompanied with intense heat as in the Eastern States. The days are warm, but a cool pleasant breeze is constantly playing over the surface of the country. The nights are cool and free at all times from oppressive heat.

In regard to the falls and winters of this climate, until the present season, for the last two years we have had a contradiction of their accustomed temperature, but not more so than the different States of the Union, yet to those who inform themselves only of the locality in which they may happen to be at the time, a prejudice has arisen and has been widely circulated to our disadvantage.

The unprecedented winter of 1855 and 1856 bore severly on Iowa and Minnesota, and all of the Northern States. In excessively cold winters, the prairie states must necessarily experience a

greater degree of cold from the more exposed surface, and the absence of hills and timber to break the cold cutting winds and storms of the prairies. In the groves of Iowa and Minnesota, even in those winters, people did not suffer more severely from cold than did they in the Eastern States.

Time and human skill and industry can soon even on the wildest prairies, overcome the evils of the exposed surface in winter, as, witness the prairies of Illinois and Indiana. But a few years since, those which we see now covered with palatial residences in the bosoms of beautiful groves, were devoid of a single stick of timber or a human dwelling; now in the pleasant season of the year there is no rural scenery so beautiful. The locust tree which they plant grows as quickly and as vigorously in Iowa as in Illinois. The general character of our falls and winters, as judged by the present and former winters, excepting those named, are of the pleasant temperate class. The Indian Summer of the falls generally exceeds in length that of the Eastern States, and far surpasses it in beauty and pleasantness.

In the winter, spring, and fall seasons, we have none of the foggy, hurried, consumptive changes occurring on the Atlantic slope. If we have severe cold weather, we have it with a dry pure atmosphere, free from fogs and wet snows. If we have a relaxation of it, we have the same atmos-

phere, free from the same influences. A wet, cold atmosphere, liable to change at any time to extremes, is far more injurious to the human constitution and far more productive of coughs, asthmas, fevers and epidemics, than a strictly uniform climate. Hence we see in this climate comparatively few cases of original diseases such as consumption, lung complaints, &c. The ratio of mortality, as compared with the same amount of population east, will show an astonishing difference in our favor, and also the amount of diseased and debilitated population.

As in all new States, we are somewhat troubled with their invariable first plague, fever and ague, to a certain extent, in portions of the country, but very lightly as compared with Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, or the first days even of Pennsylvania and New York. We find it only where there is stagnant water formed by the sloughs of our rivers or the damming of our streams, or where a large amount of prairie soil is upturned and allowed to rot in the summer sun. The disease is of a milder nature and more easily broken than in the East. We see none of the emaciated, lack-energy, corpse-like forms that we often meet with on the banks of the more sluggish streams of Illinois and Indiana.

The climate of Northern Iowa may be said to be a strictly temperate one, and with proper care

on the part of man himself, cannot, as a whole be surpassed in healthiness and uniformity.

H. C. KELLY.

The Soil of Northern Iowa and Its Capabilities

The soil of Northern Iowa, in point of available cultivation and adaptation to *all the wants of a practical farmer*, will fully equal the soil of any of our North western States.

There are many questions which arise in the mind of the really practical farmer, as to the different capabilities of the soil, and it is, and should be always his aim in obtaining a farm, to secure to himself that quality of land which will in the many avocations of a husbandman, yield him the greatest variety of profitable crops, the greatest facilities for his stock, and the greatest conveniences for his own and his household's comfort. In all these necessary qualities, we hold that the farming lands of Iowa will vie with any. We find the true farmer, when locating in a new country, looking ardently for those great requisites, a healthy climate, a fertile soil easy of cultivation, good water easily obtained, a sufficiency of timber and building stone.

Northern Iowa possesses not only an almost inexhaustible surface of fertile soil, but also possesses beneath its surface all the elements necessary to keep it up to its present character.

For centuries upon centuries the wild and luxuriant grasses of the prairies and forests have decayed and formed their stratas upon stratas of their fertilizing matter. Beneath this surface lays what may as properly be termed the "Bed Rock" of Northern Iowa, as the Quartz Rock of California, so termed, namely, the limestone strata, which may be seen jutting out of almost every hill and prairie slope, in many districts interspersed with its adjuncts, water lime, gypsum and plaster of Paris. With such a sub strata, and with these used as proper fertilizers, the soil cannot be worn out, but on the contrary can be made stronger from year to year.

The great depth of the black loam now forming the soil of this region, will not absolutely demand that any fertilizers should be used upon it for a great length of time. Hence we shall see for years what may be termed careless farming, arising from a disposition on the part of many farmers, too often seen in the West, to depend too much on its natural fertility.

A brief glance at the geography of this region will illustrate its general features and its capability. Fronting on the upper Mississippi are the large and wealthy counties of Jackson, Dubuque, Clayton and Allamakee. These counties with the high and bold bluffs of the Mississippi, their table lands, prairies, and heavy bodies of timber skirting

the Maquoketa, the Turkey, Volga, North Iowa Rivers, and many other streams, offer to those emigrants fond of the hills and valleys of the East, great inducements.—The soil in these counties partakes more of the clayey tenacious soil of Pennsylvania and New York, but with greater depth. The quality of grains grown, especially wheat, is superior, and a large surplus is already raised, which finds a ready market in Chicago, St. Louis, Dubuque, and St. Paul.

West of these are the great prairie counties of Northern Iowa, fully and agreeably diversified with all the elements of a farming and grazing country. The counties irrigated by the Wapsipicon, Cedar, Iowa, Boone and Des Moines Rivers, are remarkable for their fertility of soil and availability and are rapidly gaining in wealth and population. Through these counties we find that a large proportion of the farmers are eastern men of enterprise and education, who are rapidly making this section of the State one of the garden spots of the West.

These are now raising a large surplus of produce, and the rapid extension of rail roads will soon bring them to the doors of an eastern market. Until this season they have found a ready and profitable market at their own doors from the large emigration going through, but its almost total cessation for the last six months, and abundant crops

reaped over the whole country, have had a serious effect upon the prices of the staple articles of produce, although upon comparison with the prices of Illinois and Indiana we find that they in almost every district have maintained fully as high rates. The average yield of grains to the acre will equal the yield of other western States, with the ordinary culture bestowed on western lands.

From a careful estimate I think that the following table will be nearly an average.

Winter wheat	20 to 28	bu. per acre.
Spring wheat	20 to 30	" " "
Indian corn	40 to 75	" " "
Oats	40 to 75	" " "
Potatoes	100 to 200	" " "
Timothy and Clover.....	1½ to 3	tons " "

By ordinary culture we do not mean the thorough, scientific culture of the east, where rotation, deep ploughing, farms heavily stocked, and all the appliances of modern farming are taken advantage of, but the ordinary cultivation of western farms, where there is often very shallow ploughing and great inattention paid to putting in crops and to their proper care while growing. With the same labor and industry used on the older eastern lands, these crops could be largely increased.

As a stock raising country Northern Iowa offers great inducements, and for the last two or three years much valuable stock has been brought into

it. We can now find scattered through all our counties the best blooded stock of England and America, and it so far has amply repaid all who have taken an interest in it. Our immense prairies with their groves and running streams and the nutritious wild grass, open a field of almost unlimited scope in the raising of stock. Too much neglect has prevailed in the proper housing of stock through our winters, but after the experience of the last two seasons our farmers are more attentive to this important matter.

Below I append a letter on this subject from one of the enterprising proprietors of the Ohio Stock Farm at Bear Grove, Butler County, Iowa, which valuable information is derived from actual experience. In another article I shall continue this subject.

H. C. KELLY.

Ohio Stock Farm, Bear Grove,
Butler Co., Iowa, March 8, 1858

Dear Sir: In answer to your enquiries, in regard to our stock, etc., I would say in brief, that we commenced improvements on our land last spring, bringing with us some 20 head of horse stock, and in June we brought from Ohio the remainder of our horse stock, together with the largest herd of fine bred cattle that has ever been put upon one farm in any country, at the outset.

Our cattle are "Short Horned Durhams," a breed that is supplanting all others, in the old country and in this, readily commanding, in England, Scotland, Ireland, and in this country full twice, and in many instances thrice the prices for which the best specimens of other improved breeds can be purchased. Our herd numbers over 70 head, most of which are thoro bred, (having descended directly from imported animals on both male and female side,) with pedigrees recorded in the Herd Book.

Our cattle were driven west in June last, traveling about 700 miles, at the rate generally of 20 miles per day. They fattened up rapidly on the native grass, and winter well on native hay, with a small feed of corn each day. Our hay was cut late, much of it after the first frosts, hence it is less nutritious than hay which is cut early.

It is certainly "a good country" that admits of placing upon a new farm, the first year of improvements or tillage, over *one hundred head of breeding stock*, cattle and horses, and raising nearly grain enough, and cutting nearly enough hay for the first winter. This we did last year, besides putting up two dwellings, (one of which is of brick) hauling our lumber, lime, etc., from 20 to 30 miles. We find the native grass to be more nutritious and less liable to scour cattle or horses, than the tame grasses.

The atmosphere being dry and bracing, the water pure, and but little water standing upon the surface, renders the country extremely healthy for man or brute. This we find to be the case in a remarkable degree.

So far as horses are concerned, we find our Black Hawks and Morgans, stand the climate and change of feed far better than any others. They are admirably adapted to the country in every particular. Our breeding horse is of the Black Hawk family on the sires' side, having for his progenitor "Champion Black Hawk," winner of first prizes at State Fairs of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Ohio; the \$100 prize at the Penn. and Ohio horse show, and with his five colts, (the one now in our possession being the oldest of the five;) the \$100 prize at Ohio State Fair at Cleveland, in 1856. Champion was afterwards sold for \$4,000 to a company at Alton, Ill. His portrait, with high commendation, may be seen in Lindsey's work upon Morgan Horses.

On the dam's side, the horse from which we are now breeding, traces to thorough bred stock viz: sire "Pirate," gr sire "Sir Archy," gr gr sire Imported Diomedes. Pirate was half brother to Bertrace, Sir Charles, Timoleon, and other first class horses. I mention these items in order to more fully answer your enquiry as to the value of our stock. Upon his individual merits, he was

winner of the first prize at the Ohio State Fair at Cleveland in 1856, as the best 3 year old, for "all purposes," against strong competition. Champion Black Hawk is half brother to "Ethan Allen," "Stockbridge Chief," "Flying Cloud," "Belle of Saratoga," &c., &c. We have among our fillies, four by "Flying Cloud," others by "Green Mountain Morgan," &c.

In regard to crops, I would say that we find oats fed in the sheaf to be especially valuable for farm stock, and we propose to grow pretty largely of this crop the coming season. For colts and calves it is the best feed in use, and there is no better for horses or cows; cut early, the straw is nearly equal to good hay.

We hope in a few years to be able to furnish to Dubuque, such beef as always commands fancy prices in New York market, where such as you are now consuming drags at the lowest quotations. We have the foundation from which to produce a goodly number of fine steers, and the grass on 8000 acres of choice land should summer them well.

Our location is 125 miles west of Dubuque, and 5 miles north of the route of the D. & P. R. R.

This will be a favorable year for emigrants, as provisions of all kinds, and grain and hay is plenty and at low prices.

G. SPRAGUE.