



JOHN H. CHARLES  
A Pioneer of Sioux City, Iowa

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## REMINISCENCES OF JOHN H. CHARLES.<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION.

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The first plat of Sioux City was made in 1854. The late Mr. John H. Charles came to the new town on December 1, 1856, remaining here till the day of his death, which occurred on December 1, 1904, the forty-eighth anniversary of his coming. He was not a pioneer only; his residence in Sioux City had spanned at the time of his death practically the whole history of the town. He was here when the population numbered but a few hundred; he saw it increase to 40,000. He was here when the community possessed but little wealth; he saw prosperity come and abide. He was here when manners were rough and the country was wild; he saw culture and refinement come.

Mr. Charles' life was primarily a business career. He was successively a real estate dealer, surveyor, clerk, merchant and government transportation contractor. Though not a politician, and never an office-seeker, he was yet called upon to serve the community in the various capacities of justice of the peace, alderman and mayor. Other honors could have been his for the asking, but he had a distaste for public office, and rejected all suggestions of personal preferment. He chose to give his spare time and surplus energies to interests of a semi-private character. In this field several different subjects and enterprises claimed his attention and received his support. For years he was a loyal member of the Sioux City Scientific Association. He served the association as its president from 1892 to 1903. In the latter year he was foremost in the organization of the Academy of Science and Letters which was formed to succeed the Scientific Association. During its first year Mr. Charles was president of the Academy. At the time

<sup>1</sup> This article appeared in the Proceedings of the Sioux City Academy of Science and Letters, Vol. 2, 1906, and is now reprinted with slight changes.

of his death he was President Emeritus. Chiefly for his own personal pleasure he brought together from many places a numerous and valuable collection of geological specimens and Indian relics.

Mr. Charles was much interested in the Sioux City Public Library. To it he gave many books and much of his time serving as a trustee from the establishment of the library to his death. Personally he was a great reader. His private library was one of the largest and best appointed in the city. It also contained many rare volumes of great age and value, another example of his collecting spirit.

As a pioneer, who for fifty years had witnessed the remarkable changes brought by advancing civilization, Mr. Charles was anxious that the story of the early history of Sioux City and of Iowa should be preserved. A close friend of Mr. Charles Aldrich, Curator of the State Historical Department, he possessed a deep sympathy for the work of that institution and backed up his interest in a substantial manner. He was also for several years before his death a member of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

The chief service of Mr. Charles to the cause of local history was in connection with the erection of the Floyd monument. He was one of the organizers, in 1895, of the Floyd Memorial Association, an organization formed for the purpose of commemorating, in some suitable way, the name of Sergeant Charles Floyd, a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition, who died on the upward journey, in 1804, and was interred upon a bluff within the present limits of Sioux City. From 1896 on until his death Mr. Charles was president of this association, which in 1900-1 crowned its years of labor with brilliant success by erecting over the grave of Floyd a stately shaft one hundred feet in height. This successful consummation of the association's work, though many devoted men and women contributed to it, was more the work of Mr. John H. Charles than of any other individual. This fact is recognized by the Floyd Memorial Association itself, since at a recent meeting it voted to place upon the Floyd monument a bronze tablet in appreciation of the services of Mr. Charles in the erection of the same.



It was Mr. Charles' desire to aid in the preservation of the early history of Sioux City that caused him to dictate to the editor, during the late summer of 1904, the following reminiscences. In doing this no especial system was followed. Mr. Charles talked as the inspiration came, choosing his own subjects to some of which he would return on later days and make additions. The first task of the editor was to write out the dictations and read them to Mr. Charles for his correction. Such occasions were often seized by him for still further additions. One result of this method was to produce a fragmentary effect. The narrative was not always consecutive.

The chief task of the editor has been to rewrite and rearrange the Reminiscences, to verify statements and to correct what errors had crept in. Mr. Charles' exact words and phrases have been retained wherever possible. No facts have been altered. The meaning has always been preserved. One has a right to his own views, hence no changes of mere opinion have been made.

Mr. Charles was asked to spell all personal names as he dictated. His spelling has been preserved in the text. Sometimes it was that of the frontier which, though common then, would not always pass now. Where a different spelling has been suggested by the editor it has been placed in brackets in the text. Sometimes initials and given names have been missing. Whenever it has been possible to supply these they also have been placed in brackets. Other minor corrections have been indicated in the same way.

Foot-notes have been added by the editor for two reasons: partly for the purpose of making corrections more important or more extensive than those mentioned above; partly with the view of adding more light to the subject in hand.

What follows is not an autobiography of Mr. Charles. He makes no attempt here to tell the complete story of his life. Mr. Charles has limited his remarks mostly to life in Sioux City prior to 1865. His remarks are largely local and personal. The latter part, in which he recalls and describes a dozen prominent characters of early days, was added at the suggestion of the editor.

## I.

## PERSONAL AND LOCAL AFFAIRS.

My ancestors, on my father's side, were Swiss. My great-great-grandfather's name was Henry, or rather Heinrich, Karli. He was a native of the canton of Zurich, Switzerland. In 1734 he emigrated to America and settled in Manor Township, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. He was the father of three sons, namely: Joseph, John and Jacob. Joseph had two sons named John and Joseph. John, the eldest of these, was my grandfather. He also had two sons named respectively Joseph and John. Joseph was my father. He spelled his last name Charles, the family name having been Anglicized since their immigration to America.

I was born in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, on January the 19th, 1826. My mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Kauffman. Her people, who were also Swiss, had come to America and settled in Pennsylvania in 1717. I was the oldest child in a family of six children, four boys and two girls. In May, 1826, when I was four months old, my father moved from Pennsylvania to Mifflin Township, Richmond County, Ohio. A little later a shifting of county boundary lines threw my father's farm into Ashland County. This farm is still in the family. One of my sisters, Mrs. Ben J. Urban, now lives upon it [1904]. It is located about nine miles east of the city of Mansfield, Ohio.

I lived on this farm until I was twenty-four years of age. The first fifteen years were uneventful. At fifteen I began to learn the trade of a carpenter and joiner, at which I worked most of the time during the summer months until I was twenty-four. For four or five winters I taught school. For this employment I received during the first year eleven dollars a month and "boarded around." When I quit teaching I was receiving twenty dollars a month, the highest wages paid to teachers in Ashland County at that time.

In the spring of 1850 the news of the discovery of gold in California reached our place. I, as well as many others, caught the "gold fever." Being a strong young man, and in my prime, I soon made up my mind to go. My folks were not

much in favor of my plan. They, however, made no objection to my departure, though they saw me go with great anxiety. It was on the 13th day of March, 1850, that I left the old home for the far west. I went by rail from Mansfield, in an adjoining county, to Sandusky City, where I stopped overnight. Next day I went by rail to Cincinnati, where I took passage on the Yorktown, a large steamer commanded by Captain Haldeman, for St. Louis. The trip down the Ohio and up the Mississippi rivers took us ten days. While in St. Louis I stopped at the Missouri Hotel, which a gentleman who was waiting for passengers on the levee said was the "cheapest dollar a day house in the town."

I left St. Louis on the steamer El Paso and went up the Missouri river as far as Liberty Landing,<sup>1</sup> from which place emigrants started at that time for California. At Independence, Missouri, we "fitted out" for California, which was the "far west" then surely. We bought four yoke of oxen for each wagon, loading each with about two thousand pounds of provisions, outfit, etc. This was not a large load for such a team, but we thought it safest to have enough oxen. There were about eighty persons in our crowd. Altogether we had twenty-one wagons, which with their four-yoke teams made a very formidable appearance. We had not gone far, however, before grass became scarce. Then, too, we could not always agree as to the best route to be taken. For these reasons our large party soon split up into smaller ones, each taking whichever route it pleased.

By the middle of May we reached Grand Island, Nebraska, where we found our first good grass. This was an important item, since our cattle were already getting weak and thin. From Grand Island, where we struck the valley, we moved up the Platte river to old Fort Carney [Kearney], thence west by Ash Hollow and the North Platte to Fort Laramie, situated at the point where the Laramie fork enters the North Platte. Arrived at the Rocky Mountains, we did not follow the usual route, but took rather the South Pass over the mountains, which were passed about June 1. Once over the Great Divide

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<sup>1</sup> In western Missouri, just south of the town of Liberty and a little east of Kansas City.



we went down the Humboldt<sup>1</sup> river to the Carson river and then up the Carson river to its head. The journey across the Sierra Nevada range, which was reached early in August, brought the greatest suffering of the whole trip, for the snow was heavy and it was biting cold. The crust on the snow was strong enough to bear up our heavy wagons, for which we were thankful, since it lessened the hardship somewhat. Descending the western slope of the Sierra Nevada range we reached the gold fields at a place called Hangtown [now Placerville], California, about September 1.

The three greatest trials of our four months' journey had been in crossing the Sierra Nevada mountains, some difficulty in always finding grass for the cattle, and scarcity of water, which was felt at times. It was in Nevada that we suffered most for water. On one occasion we ran out and while I stayed to guard camp my colleagues made a detour of many miles on either side in search of water. While I was awaiting the return of my friends a man came across the sands bearing a small keg of water upon his shoulder. When he came to camp I asked for a drink and was informed that I could have a cup of water for one dollar. I was so thirsty that I paid for the drink. Before leaving the man asked if we had an abundance of food. I answered "Yes." He started away, but soon came back and asked for something to eat. I charged him a dollar for a square meal and so got even with him.

I soon tired of prospecting for gold, and went to work for a mining company. The miners almost coerced newcomers into working for them, they wanted men so badly. Wages were high, so by May of the next year I had saved one thousand dollars. We had sold our surplus provisions upon arrival for a good price. Not liking life in the mining region, I now decided to return to Ohio, making the homeward journey by way of the Isthmus of Panama.

I now remained at home for eighteen months. Upon my arrival there I was sure I should never go west again. But soon several young men in my county began to plan a trip to California and I joined them. We went again to Indepen-

<sup>1</sup>In Nevada. No effort has been made to identify the exact route taken on this journey because the story of this trip may be considered as merely introductory to the main narrative to follow.

dence, Missouri, for our start across the plains. Here three of us who had made the trip to California before bought up a hundred cows. We got them for less than twenty dollars per head. We had an idea that we could drive them to California and make some money on them. We followed about the same route which I had taken two years before. We reached the mining country in the spring of 1853 and had no trouble in selling our cows at eighty dollars per head. Our party tried prospecting near Sacramento City. After a time I gave that up and superintended the construction of a plank road leading out of Sacramento City. During the spring and summer of 1855 I farmed. In December of the same year I started east again, this time by way of Nicaragua, reaching Ohio in February, 1856. I remained at home until fall.

During the summer of 1856, while in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, on a visit, I learned that the United States government had made some rich land grants to three railroads<sup>1</sup> that were going to build across the State of Iowa. Several things turned my attention westward again. First, I had been west twice and got something of the western spirit. I had an uncle who was loaning money on Wisconsin lands and he talked about the west to me. Then the nomination of Buchanan for president that summer seemed to promise trouble with the south, and finally I thought the land in Iowa would make a good investment. So I made up my mind to go west and settle down for good. After a careful study of the maps I chose Sioux City as my destination and started. From Mansfield I came by rail via Chicago to Iowa City.<sup>2</sup> Thence I went by stage to Des Moines, where I stopped off a few days. A second stage brought me to Fort Dodge. The hardest part of the journey lay between that point and Sioux City. No regular stage ran between these two places, only a lumber wagon which carried mail. In this I took passage. It took us six days to make the trip. The first night we spent at Twin Lakes, the next at Sac City, and the third at Ida Grove, where I stopped with a friend, Judge [J. H.] Moorehead. The last three nights we spent at Mapleton, Smithland and Sergeant's Bluff respec-

<sup>1</sup> These three railroads grew into the present Rock Island, Chicago and Northwestern, and Illinois Central systems.

<sup>2</sup> This was as far west as the railroad came in Iowa in 1856.



tively. At the latter place I passed the night with Mr. [W. P.] Holman. We finally reached Sioux City on Monday morning, December 1, 1856, during a fierce snow-storm. That night I stopped at the Hagy House, or Western<sup>1</sup> Hotel, of which John Hagy was proprietor. The hotel was located on the levee at the corner of Second and Water streets. It consisted of two log cabins near together, the space between enclosed only with rough hewn boards. The house was ordinarily referred to as "The Terrific."<sup>1</sup>

A dozen men were in the hotel lobby. All were in shirt sleeves, but each man wore from two to four flannel shirts. One old man named Cowan, known familiarly as "Colonel," sat by the stove with an umbrella raised over him. The storm was very severe and blew so much snow into the upper part of the room that it settled down all over the floor. Above the stove the heat changed the falling flakes into rain, hence the umbrella. The men were a hard-looking set, harder than I had seen in the California mines or even on the Isthmus. They were dirty and ragged, but talked chiefly of their real estate sales and of the money they had made. But they looked harder than they were, for some of them were well-educated and have since made their mark.

Near bedtime I looked around for a sleeping room. Seeing none, and wishing to make inquiry, I approached the only man in the hotel whom I saw wearing a white shirt. He answered that none of the men had rooms, that there were no rooms, and that I would be lucky to get even a bed. He said that he himself slept between the two houses, and not having any bedfellow I could sleep with him. He probably noticed that I also wore a white shirt, and since we two were the only guests that did, this may be the reason why he took me in preference to anyone else. We soon retired to sleep, under a buffalo-robe. That is all that kept us from freezing. In the morning we were covered with snow several inches deep. Frost had formed around our eyes and mouths and our faces were covered with snow and ice.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Hagy House of 1856 was called the Northwestern House later. The nickname "Terrific" had been applied to the house before Mr. Hagy became proprietor.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Charles' bedfellow that night was Charles K. Smith, afterwards postmaster of Sioux City.

When we arose in the morning we found the kitchen snowed up. The cook-stove was completely covered. The dining-room was half full of snow and it was still storming; indeed, it continued storming all that day and the next. It was nothing less than a genuine northwestern blizzard of wind and snow. On the whole, coming as I did almost direct from California, where running water never freezes, I thought I had been given rather a cold reception in Sioux City.

Since the kitchen was snowed under, our hotel could not serve breakfast. About 8:30 a. m. I started out to get a bite to eat. The storm had not abated and I found the streets almost impassable. But I was successful in that I finally succeeded in getting what was called a "hot breakfast" at the Sioux City House, located on Pearl street between Fifth and Sixth.<sup>1</sup>

While going in search of this meal I met at the postoffice<sup>2</sup> Mr. Samuel T. Davis, whom I looked upon as a friend as soon as I learned that he was from Pennsylvania, the State in which I was born. The severeness of the storm caused some of those who went through it to give up their half-formed intentions of locating here, but after talking with Mr. Davis about Pennsylvania, California and some other states we made up our minds to stay in Sioux City. In closing the conversation I said to him, "I'll be in Sioux City on the morning of January 1, 1900, and as the sun rises over the hills to the east I'll say, 'Hail, old Fellow! I'm still here.'" It came to pass. On the morning of January 1, 1900, Mr. Davis took breakfast with me at my house. Forty-four years had passed since we first met that stormy day in the little post-office. You can guess what we talked about.

After looking around to see what could be done I made up my mind that I must pay expenses during the winter. So I went across the river, took up a claim in Nebraska and went to cutting cord-wood and saw-logs. In this way I made enough extra money to buy a compass in the spring so I could take

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<sup>1</sup> Rather on the corner of Fifth and Pearl. Building is still standing.

<sup>2</sup> Located on the corner of Second and Pearl streets.

up surveying, an occupation much to my liking. I soon had a chance to use my compass. During the last days of February, 1857, a man from Ohio, named Bennett, came to Sioux City. He represented an Ohio company which desired to locate a townsite somewhere along the Missouri river above here. None of this country had been surveyed and townsites had to be located as best they could in order to be held against the settlers. The pre-emption law allowed this to be done providing certain conditions were met. Mr. Bennett engaged me to locate his townsite for him. Accordingly on March 1, 1857, I took my compass and started, together with Father Martin of Dakota City, from Covington<sup>1</sup> where my claim was for the upper river. We had a span of horses and a sled to haul the provisions. The claim-men, ax-men, etc., walked, I with the rest. Towards evening of the first day we got as far as St. Johns,<sup>2</sup> Nebraska, where John Tracey<sup>3</sup> lived. The snow was two feet deep and we could make but slow progress. On the second day the expedition reached Ponca, where we stayed over night. The next day we started for Concord,<sup>4</sup> which is at the head of Lime Creek. When we got there we found some Sioux City people—S. B. Mulhollen (Mulholland) and [Wesley S.] Trescott among them. The fourth night we camped on the open prairie and almost froze to death, as it was the night of a terrible blizzard. It was only by building a big fire that we managed to live through it.

Next night we stopped at St. James,<sup>5</sup> Nebraska, on the Missouri river, where we found trappers who had gone there to trade with the Indians. I made my bed on a pile of beaver

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<sup>1</sup> Located on the Nebraska side of the Missouri opposite Sioux City. Both town and claim have since been washed away.

<sup>2</sup> Town has disappeared and site has been washed away. The present town of Jackson (Dakota County, Nebraska) is said to represent the former town of St. Johns.

<sup>3</sup> A Catholic priest and founder of St. Johns, having led a colony of Irish Catholics there in 1856. The fiftieth anniversary of this event was celebrated at Jackson during the summer of 1906.

<sup>4</sup> There is a town named Concord in Dixon County, Nebraska, but it is too far south to be the town here indicated because the party was following the Missouri river closely.

<sup>5</sup> In Cedar County.



skins and was sleeping away, like a pig under a gate, when, sometime during the night, I was awakened by loud talking and swearing on the part of the trappers. They had remained up late to play cards and got into some dispute about the fairness of the game. They were so abusive that I thought some one would be killed, especially since their revolvers were much in evidence, yet no harm came of it. These four men were Bill Copeland, John [Henry] Campbell, Bill Craven[s] and [John] Mitchell, commonly called "Old Mitch."

Next morning we went up the river to a point opposite the present site of Yankton, S. Dak., where we found a party of New York men holding a townsite. On the way we had passed a high rocky point, which had looked so good to me and commanded such a fine view that I now recommended that we return to it. This recommendation suited Mr. Bennett, so we went back and staked out a townsite consisting of over 2,000 acres, or more than three sections. This took us nearly a week, after which we were ready to return to Sioux City. In the meantime the snow had melted and the return trip was not so difficult. After reaching home I platted the town, naming it Opechee, a name afterward changed to St. Helena. It was in Cedar County, Nebraska, opposite<sup>1</sup> the present village of Gayville [which is in Yankton County, S. Dak.]. Bennett went east and had the plat lithographed and sold lots right and left, getting himself into trouble,<sup>2</sup> since the land had not yet been surveyed by the United States government.

In the fall of 1857 I was elected a Justice of the Peace in and for Woodbury County. One of the first cases to come before me was the trial of a man named William O. Allen, for killing Bill Craven[s], one of the quarrelling trappers whom we had met at St. James. Allen was bound over to the District Court, and, since there was no jail any nearer, the Sheriff<sup>3</sup> started off with the prisoner to Council Bluffs. They got as far as the Floyd river, then the Sheriff came back and reported that the prisoner had broken away. One thing is certain, he never came back.

<sup>1</sup> The town is still in existence.

<sup>2</sup> And into the penitentiary.

<sup>3</sup> John Braden.

Previous to our leaving St. James, the four trappers had had a second quarrel. "Old Mitch" was killed<sup>1</sup> by a blow on the head, "decently" buried in a shoe box, and nothing was ever done about it.

During the spring elections of 1858, Bill Copeland had a quarrel with H. W. Tracey, in front of the latter's store on lower Pearl street. As a result Tracey shot him. This was the third violent death among these four men inside of a year. But such things were not uncommon on the frontier in those early days. The survivor, John [Henry] Campbell, soon went east "for his health," and what became of him I do not know. I had had enough interest in these men to keep track of them as far as stated.

Because of the escape of Allen and the miscarriage of justice in other cases I became so disgusted with the office of Justice of the Peace that I would have nothing more to do with it. But before leaving the subject altogether I might mention another of my exploits as Justice.

One day while I was putting up an office opposite the Sioux City House, on Pearl street, a man drove up and asked me if I was Mr. Charles. I replied that I was. Then he asked if I was a Justice of the Peace. Again I gave him an affirmative answer. He said I was wanted at the Pacific Hotel, down on Fourth street, where there was a small settlement.

I got into his rig and went with him, expecting that I was wanted to make acknowledgment of a deed. Reaching the hotel I was led to the parlor, and there introduced to a Miss Livermore and a Mr. [Osmond] Plato, who, I was informed, desired me to marry them. I wouldn't have been more surprised if they had told me I was to be shot. Up to that time my experience with weddings had been slight; I had seen just one, my sister's. What to do I did not know. Just then the men who had come after me handed me a paper and said: "This is their license." I took the license and looked it over, pretending to read, but, in reality, I was trying to make up my mind what to say. Having made it up, I asked the parties to stand up and join hands. Then I asked if there were any

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<sup>1</sup> By Henry Campbell, mentioned in the following paragraph.

objections to the union of the couple. There being none, I said, "By virtue of the authority vested in me as a Justice of the Peace I pronounce you man and wife," and it was all over and just as well done as if it had been performed according to the elaborate Episcopalian ring service.

On the first day of January, 1858, there came to my office in Sioux City a company of half-breeds and Indians from across the Big Sioux, who wanted me to come over there and marry a Frenchman and a Crow squaw.

While I was first a Justice the title "Squire" became attached to my name. After I had thrown up the office, following the escape of Allen, the murderer of Craven[s], I was still "Squire." Some years later I was appointed Justice by J. P. Allison, County Judge, to fill out an unexpired term. But when asked to go over to Dakota Territory<sup>1</sup> to marry this couple I was not a Justice at all, and so had no authority to perform such ceremonies. Even if I had been a Justice, my jurisdiction would not have extended outside of Woodbury County, much less outside of the State. So, of course, I refused to go.

The company went down town and saw Mr. L. H. Kennerly, who sent them back with instructions for me to go over and marry the couple. By and by Mr. Kennerly, himself, came up and talked with me. He said the Indians wanted me very badly and honestly believed that I could legally perform the ceremony. I repeated the statement that I had no authority, but finally, after Mr. Kennerly had presented the matter at length, I arranged for an escort of some twenty men and promised to go.

In truth, I was afraid of the half-breeds and didn't want to go. I know now that it was not a serious matter, but I thought differently then.

Next day we crossed the river. Arriving at the hut where the ceremony was to be performed we found everything in readiness. Without much delay I had the couple stand up. The Frenchman could not understand a word of English nor the Squaw a word of either French or English. The Squaw

<sup>1</sup> This phrase is allowable, though Dakota Territory was not established till March 2, 1861



had insisted that an American perform the ceremony. She had been deceived upon a previous occasion and now would trust only an American.

After the ceremony I asked a Mr. [Enos] Stutsman, who was present, a one-legged man,<sup>1</sup> but talkative, to make an address. This he did, giving the newly married couple some good advice (which they could not understand), and wishing all present a good time and finally that all might go to the Happy Hunting Grounds and have a continual good time there.

The next thing on the program was the feast to be given at another house down on the bank of the Missouri river. To this place we proceeded through the brush and timber, each fellow for himself. Even the bride and groom had to travel in this way. Arriving at the house we found ample provision had been made for the feast. Great camp kettles full of bouillon (soup of dog) made up the principal dish. Of this all were invited to partake. Nearly all present did, but for some reason I had no appetite. Then I was given a piece of beaver tail, considered by the Indians a great delicacy. This was considered an honor for me, for, since I had performed the marriage ceremony, I was looked upon by the Indians as a great chief, and treated as one—at very little expense to themselves.

After we had sat down to the feast some one asked where the bride and groom were. We all looked around but they were certainly not present. Upon investigation we found them outside. We at once made room for them and brought them in so that they might partake of their own wedding feast. Coffee and hardtack were now served, so I did not go hungry, in spite of the bouillon.

After supper we all went back to the Angie cabin, where the marriage ceremony had been performed. Here a certain John Brazo [Brazeau] played the fiddle and the dance proceeded, as was customary upon such occasions. Brazo was a character who was accustomed to say that he was the first "white man" in this part of the country. In fact, if he was not a negro, for he was as black as one, or a mulatto, he was at least a very dark Spaniard. In my opinion he had both negro

<sup>1</sup> A cripple from birth. Both legs were deformed and almost missing.

and Indian blood in his veins, but that made no difference with him. He considered himself a white man, and as far as he was concerned, that settled it. After the dance our party returned to Sioux City. This was the first wedding in Dakota Territory after white settlers came to Sioux City.

Whatever became of the married couple I do not know. I presume, however, that the Frenchman learned the Indian language, since the French did this readily, and perhaps became a fur trader. Of the twenty white persons who accompanied me across the river to perform that marriage ceremony but two or three are left to tell the story [1904]. One still living is James E. Booge, of Sioux City, and another is "Gov." F. M. Ziebach, of Yankton, S. Dak.

In 1857 there were two clusters of houses in Sioux City, one on the levee on Second street and the other in the region of Sixth and Douglas. At the latter place were located the United States land offices for the receiving and registration of claims, as well as the offices of many private land agents.

The first settler in Sioux City, probably, was Joseph Lyonais [Leonais] or Theophile Brughier [Bruguier].

Dr. John K. Cook, government surveyor, laid out the first city and named the streets. It consisted of a half section, laid out into lots, on the west side of Perry creek. This was in 1854.

Then Sioux City East was laid out on the east side of Perry creek, followed by a half section up on the bluffs known as Chamberlain quarter.

The population in 1857 numbered less than one thousand, though it was larger in this year than at any subsequent date till 1865, the last year of the war. Of the population, anywhere from two-thirds to three-fourths were transients, many of whom were frightened away by the hard times following the panic of 1857 and by Indian scares during the war. The population came largely to make money out of the sale of north-western Iowa lands. One-fourth of the State was for sale at the Sioux City land offices.

The inhabitants came from all parts of the United States, but in largest numbers from Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois. Pennsylvania and Ohio were not so numerously rep-

resented.<sup>1</sup> I was called a Pennsylvanian because I was born there, but, as I had lived most of my life in Ohio, I was more truly an Ohioan.

Everything needed in a frontier town came up the river by steamboat from St. Louis or Council Bluffs. The regular mail came in this way.

I remember I came into Sioux City from Fort Dodge in an open wagon, called a stage by courtesy, which carried mail. This was one of the first overland mails to come to Sioux City. During my first year of residence in Sioux City [1857] a number of boats ran regularly in the Sioux City trade. Coming up from St. Louis about once a month they brought us almost everything. I remember especially the Omaha, Captain Wineland, as being one of the most regular. The American Fur Company's boats for the upper river made but one trip a year, it was so long and perilous. Going up in the spring, loaded with merchandise, they did not return till fall, full of valuable furs. These boats all stopped at Sioux City both going and coming.

The year before I came to Sioux City there occurred a three-cornered contest<sup>2</sup> for the county-seat between Sioux City, Smithland and Sergeant's Bluff. Sioux City outvoted the others, and got the prize.

The election was held near the corner of Sixth and Douglas streets at the United States land office.<sup>3</sup> Out in the street in front of the office there was a well. A barrel of whisky was brought, placed beside the well and tapped. Whisky was as free as water that day, and as easily obtained.

The first election after I came to Sioux City took place in August, 1857. It was the charter election, i. e., the election when a city charter was voted on. The charter carried unani-

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<sup>1</sup> A study by the editor of the nativity of seventy of the old settlers of Woodbury County showed that the largest number was born in New York. Other states ranked in the following order: Vermont, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, etc. These old settlers did not all come to Woodbury County directly from the states of their birth. The states from which most of them came were in this order: Illinois, New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, Indiana and Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup> This county-seat election was held on April 7, 1856.

<sup>3</sup> Incorrect. The election was held at Thompsettown or Floyd's Bluff. The incident following, though it probably did not apply to this election, was more or less typical of early elections here.



mously. I was one of the judges of the election, and as Kirkie [Cartier], "the wild Frenchman," came up to vote someone challenged his vote on the ground that he was not a citizen of the United States, but he swore that he was. I administered the oath to him, closing with the words, "So help you God," whereupon he exclaimed, "I hope so, too, for no one else ever helped old Kirkie."

A number of votes were sworn in in this way, among them that of Joe Leonais and others who had been fur traders for the American Fur Company. We did not know whether they were legally citizens or not, but it was safe to have them swear in their votes.

At these early elections we voted everybody. Everyone who could swear in his vote did so. Half-breeds were generally challenged, but since they were always willing to swear in their votes they were allowed to cast them.

There were three wards in Sioux City at this time [Aug., 1857]. Two aldermen were chosen from each ward. I was chosen an alderman from the Second Ward. My colleague was Enos Stutsman. Since the city government was not organized at this time, as will be explained, we never served the city in the capacity of councilmen.

The candidates for mayor at this election had been Ezra Millard<sup>1</sup> and Captain J. B. S. Todd, both democrats. Millard received the largest number of votes, but because of some irregularity the votes of one ward were thrown out and Todd declared elected. Not satisfied with such proceedings Todd refused to serve, leaving the town without any municipal organization until the following spring.

Again [April, 1858] two democratic candidates were pitted against each other. They were Doctor Townsend and Col. [Robt.] Means. The latter was elected, and served as mayor one year.<sup>2</sup> Colonel Means was quite a character. Immediately before retiring each night he always blacked his boots and brushed his hat. The first thing he did upon rising in the morning was to brush his hat and black his boots. Questioned

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<sup>1</sup> A brother of United States Senator Joseph A. Millard, of Nebraska.

<sup>2</sup> It was at this election that Tracey shot and killed Copeland.

as to why he did this he would reply, "I black my boots twice so that I may always have a shine left after the top one wears off."

In 1857 Sioux City was a land office town. The two United States senators from Iowa were George W. Jones and A. C. Dodge, both democrats. The democratic party was so strong here that there were not enough republicans to maintain an organization. But the democrats were divided into two factions, called the "Hards" and the "Softs" and this gave the republicans a chance. There were many regular fire-eaters here at that time and elections were generally disorderly.

I remember that when, in 1857, we voted upon the new State constitution I voted to strike out the word "white" and this offended many of my friends. But it was a matter of principle with me. I could not agree in all things with the dominant party. If I had been entitled to a vote in 1856 I should have cast it for Fremont and Dayton. But I had left California too late and had not attained a residence here before election day. I had lost my vote in 1852 in much the same way. In 1848 I cast my first ballot voting for Van Buren and Adams, the third party candidates.

I well remember Thanksgiving Day of 1857 because of a dinner which I attended at the Tremont House, a new hotel built in central Sioux City. Mrs. Hagy kept the hotel. I was made chairman of the evening because I came from the president's State. On my right sat J. P. Allison; on my left H. W. Tracey. Some of the others present were: L. C. Sanborn, Jerome R. White, J. B. Flagg, Al Lovering, Charles Warren, Colonel Means and L. H. Kennerly. All are dead now [1904] except Kennerly, Allison and myself; perhaps Kennerly is, but he was not a year or two ago.

This dinner I have good reason to remember vividly. We had a great old time. Mr. White and I were the only men present who did not drink. We were the only sober ones in the crowd, and sometimes I suspected White.

Each one had to sing a song or tell a story. Some of the boys got up onto the table and walked back and forth over it.

You will find this dinner reported in the *Sioux City Weekly Eagle*, Vol. I.<sup>1</sup>

The *Sioux City Eagle* was the first paper published here. It was edited by Seth W. Swiggett, who died a few years ago in Chicago. In politics the *Eagle* was neutral with democratic leanings. Its first issue was put out on July 4th, 1857. About two years later it was superseded by the *Sioux City Register*, "Gov." F. M. Ziebach, editor.

As I said before, Sioux City was, in the early days, a land office town. The United States Government Land Office, where claims were received and recorded, was situated here, as well as many private real estate agents.

Land sold generally at \$1.25 per acre, except when competitive bidding ran it up higher. Men bought not only for themselves, but for friends who were not on the grounds and also for speculation.

An agent was allowed to enter five or six quarter sections at a time. His commission on a quarter was about \$40. A common plan was to enter a quarter section at \$1.25 per acre and sell it at once on a year's time for from \$2.50 to \$3.00 per acre. By going east an agent could sell a piece for \$4 an acre. There was much politics in the land business. Agents were partial and not all comers were treated with equal fairness.

Early in 1858 Colonel Means and myself were admitted to the bar. He had some knowledge of the law, but I had none except what little I had picked up while I was Justice of the Peace. But the boys were bound to have me be a lawyer, so Colonel Means and I gave a supper. Judge Marshall F. Moore of the District Court presided. He appointed a committee to examine us. They asked us only one or two questions, and then certified that we had passed our examinations. In this way we were admitted to the bar, or as the boys put it, we were admitted to be "eternally at law and solicitous of good chances."

I never practiced law in spite of my highly successful examination for admission to the bar. In fact, about the

<sup>1</sup> The *Eagle* under the date of November 28, 1857, gives a column to the report of this banquet. Nineteen men are named as having been present, Mr. Sanborn's name not being among the list.



only advantage I received was to escape jury service thereafter.

In May, 1861, I was appointed by President Lincoln Indian agent for all the Indians on the Upper Missouri river. I did not accept the appointment because I was to be married the next week in Ohio, but I still have the commission in my possession. In July, 1861, we had an Indian scare here. On the 9th the Inkpaduta band<sup>1</sup> of the Sioux rose and murdered Thomas Roberts and Henry Cordway [Cordua] in Bacon's Hollow, now Greenville, while they were in their fields hoeing corn. It caused a great flurry among the people and stirred them to action.

A greater Indian scare<sup>2</sup> occurred in 1862, when the Santee Sioux rose and massacred the inhabitants of New Ulm, Minn. As the Indians proceeded west from New Ulm into Dakota the settlers along the Big Sioux and James rivers began to leave for Sioux City and the east. They abandoned their crops and newly made homes in such large number that the region was almost depopulated. Much plunder was left to the Indians for the taking. We, in Sioux City, did what we could to stop them. We placed a guard at the ferry across the Floyd river in order that their retreat might be shut off, but it was of no avail, for they would not be stopped. A stockade was built in Sioux City on the river front between Douglas and Pierce streets. Every man in town was expected to help in the work of making the town safe. But the Indians never came near us after that and gradually fear died away. Some of the settlers who had fled never came back. Others returning later found that their claims had been jumped in their absence. Altogether these Indian scares were very expensive.

In the fall of 1862 came the soldiers, parts of three companies, to protect us from the Indians. At first they had a tendency to stop the wholesale departure of settlers, but, finally, when they began to help themselves freely to everything they could find, it was neither pleasant nor helpful to the

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<sup>1</sup> Renegade Indians of the tribe of the Santee Sioux, undoubtedly, but probably not of the followers of Inkpaduta.

<sup>2</sup> Called the "War of the Outbreak" in the history of South Dakota.

town. By and by they left us and went south.<sup>1</sup> We were rid of them and still lived.

Next came the grasshoppers.<sup>2</sup> They were almost as bad as the Indians and soldiers. They mowed down field after field of corn; in fact, they ate up nearly all vegetation, causing much suffering and distress.

It did seem hard upon us to be preyed upon by Indians, soldiers and grasshoppers in such rapid succession. These were lean years for us in Sioux City. It was enough to make even the stoutest hearts quail.

In 1861 Dakota Territory was organized. Settlers had been going into that region for several years. Most of them passed through here on their way. Sioux City was also their depot of supplies, a kind of headquarters or capital for that territory. Some of our people went over there to settle. When Indian troubles threatened Dakota settlers fled here for refuge. Hence Sioux City and Dakota Territory had much in common in those days.

The settlers in Dakota used to be jealous because their judges and other officials often lived in Sioux City while holding office over there. But it was better living here and I couldn't blame them.

We used to go over there at election times to see that some did not vote too often and that all got a chance; in fact, to see that no frauds were permitted. At the first election in Dakota, after the territory was organized, for the choice of a delegate to Congress, J. B. S. Todd was a candidate and was elected. His opponents were [A. J.] Bell, regular republican, and Charles P. Booge, independent. Todd was the people's candidate. He had been elected first mayor of Sioux City four years earlier and his friends here were interested in his candidacy. I recollect that some of us went over the river when election day came to watch the proceedings. Todd was there,<sup>3</sup> but later in the day he went up to Vermilion and left me to look after his interests. The Frenchmen fell out and began to

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<sup>1</sup> They were, rather, sent up the river. Later they were mustered out at Sioux City.

<sup>2</sup> Fall of 1864 and spring of 1865.

<sup>3</sup> At Sioux Point, where Frost, Todd & Co. had one of their stores.

quarrel and fight and had an awful time. I wouldn't go through that experience again for all Dakota. Finally, when the votes were counted, it was found that less than 1,000 had been cast, but of these Todd had received a majority, and so was elected.<sup>1</sup> Todd had hardly gone down to Washington before he came back appointed by President Lincoln a Brigadier General and went into northeastern Missouri to fight the guerillas.

During my first four years in Sioux City, i. e., from 1856 to 1860, I was engaged in the real estate business. I also did considerable surveying. During most of this time I was closely associated with George W. Ryall, who had been a friend in Ohio. Our office was situated on Pearl street, across from the Sioux City House.

In August, 1860, I consolidated my business with that of Means, Allison & Co. The firm name was Allison & Charles. Our office was located on the lot where the public library building now stands. I remained in this firm but one month, selling out on September 6th to George Weare, who is still in the banking business in Sioux City, the oldest banker here and a good one.

I at once entered the general merchandise business of Milton Tootle as a clerk. I received \$65 per month. The store was on the corner of Second and Pearl streets, and faced the river. Tootle lived in St. Joe, so I was virtually manager of the store. In 1864 Mr. Tootle recognized this and I became a partner with him in the business, the firm name becoming Tootle & Charles. I was now manager in name as well as in fact. We did a large general business, picking up considerable river trade. In 1871 new interests came into the firm, and the name became Tootle & Co. Our steamboat business, which was very attractive to me, now increased rapidly.

In 1875 I left the firm of Tootle & Co. and formed a partnership with A. H. Wilder, of St. Paul. This time the firm name was Charles & Wilder. We owned four steamboats, which ran between Sioux City and the upper river. We carried freight for Indian traders and miners and took government contracts to supply Indian tribes with their annuities.

<sup>1</sup> The vote stood: Todd, 397; Booze, 110; Bell, 78.



Five years later [1880] I helped organize and became interested in the Benton Transportation Company. I became secretary and manager, holding those positions till July 1st, 1900, when the company ceased to exist.

Our business was entirely that of steamboating. From a large business at first, requiring as many as eight steamboats to handle it, we came at last to have almost none, owing to the building of railroads into the west. At the dissolution of the Benton Transportation Company I retired to private life.

The steamboat business was fascinating and romantic. The Missouri river is very treacherous, the channel always shifting. To be a pilot required great skill and courage. The pilot was extremely well paid. But the river was not the only danger. Some of the Indians of the upper river were extremely hostile. It required great courage on the part of the captain, too.

When the steamboats first began to come up the river they were a great curiosity to the Indians and were warmly welcomed, indeed, by the whites. The approach of a steamboat was generally known long enough in advance for a good sized crowd to greet it at the levee when it came to land.

The first steamboat to come as far up the river as Sioux City was the Yellowstone, in 1831. In 1863 two new factors entered in, which increased the number of boats on the river very much. Fully sixteen or eighteen boats were doing business on the upper river, between here and Ft. Benton, in 1863. One reason for the increase was the discovery of gold in Montana, which called for a large amount of manufactured articles as well as for provisions. All freight destined for the mines was taken up the river to Ft. Benton and then hauled by teams to the camps. The second cause was Indian troubles. After the New Ulm disaster in 1863 the United States Government tried to punish the Indians. General Sully was sent up the river in 1863 and still more troops followed in 1864.

The business increased in 1864 and 1865 and then fell away again, until 1868, when it reached high water mark. In the spring of 1864 the first boat up took from our house express packages valued at \$6,000. The transportation charges on the goods were often equal to their value. Everything,

from the needles needed for sewing their buckskin to steam engines used for crushing quartz, had to go up the river by boat and had to come by way of Sioux City.

The orders which we used to get were something to be wondered at. Upon one occasion one customer ordered a marriage license and another a tombstone. All sent to me, supposing I could get them whatever they wanted.

The trade was so good that the public soon got its eye upon it. Competition set in, and became very keen. The Union Pacific hurried up construction on its western division so that traffic would go to Salt Lake by rail and thence to Montana by wagons.

I recollect the first gold brought back from Montana in 1862. The party owning it came down the Missouri in boats, which they abandoned here, and proceeded the rest of their way east by stage. I met one man in the party whom I knew. He was an old blacksmith from Mansfield, Ohio. Mr. Thompson, for that was his name, sat and told me stories of the far west for two or three hours. From Sioux City he went by stage to Dubuque and thence to St. Paul.

After the railroads reached Sioux City in 1868 steamboating revived here and became better than ever. A regular line of boats made this their headquarters. cargoes coming here by the railroad were then reshipped and made the rest of the journey to Montana by boat.

Finally the Utah Northern was completed into Montana. Then, in 1870, the Northern Pacific was built and we were cut off all around. The steamboat business, which was at its height in 1868, began to decline about 1870 and by 1875 it was practically a thing of the past.

## II.

### FAMOUS MEN RECALLED.

In the fall of 1868 or 1869 I met Audubon as he came down the river, returning east after an expedition to Montana. He was accompanied by Louis Agassiz. Audubon was old and feeble and did not stop here, but continued down the river. Agassiz, who was in the prime of life, stopped off for a couple of days. Sioux City was the first railway station then as one came down the Missouri. From here he went by rail to Chi-

eago. While in town Agassiz spent most of his time in the office of Dr. A. Lawrence, the owner of a line of steamboats. It was there that I met this great naturalist and had several talks with him. He was neither tall nor robust, though he enjoyed good health and was a very hard worker. In his dress I found him a little careless. He was smooth shaven while here and wore glasses when reading. Completely absorbed in his own thoughts, he was a poor conversationalist. Indeed, he was rather impatient with callers, or at least that was what several of us thought who honored him by dropping in to see him. Perhaps if our acquaintance had been longer I could not have said that.

Professor [E. D.] Cope, of the University of Pennsylvania, also stopped off in Sioux City on two of his Missouri river trips. With him I became quite well acquainted. Some time before his first visit a boat pilot had found, way up the Missouri river, some of the bones of a plesiosaurian. He brought them down to Sioux City and I gave him \$25 for them. When Professor Cope was here I gave the bones to him. Later he printed a description of the bones in a paper published by the University and in it he gave me a complimentary notice.<sup>1</sup>

Professor Cope was intense, very much wrapped up in his subject [zoology]. He could hardly talk anything else. During his second visit here a trip up the Big Sioux was arranged

<sup>1</sup> The paper in question was entitled, *On the Structure of the Skull in the Plesiosaurian Reptilia, and on Two New Species from the Upper Cretaceous*, by E. D. Cope. It was read before the American Philosophical Society on February 2, 1894, printed in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 33, and reprinted in pamphlet form on March 6, 1894. The paper is a description of two specimens. One of these, termed "Embaphias circulosus," is declared to be both a new genus and a new species. After the description and measurements occurs this paragraph: "This is a species of large size, though not equal in dimensions to the known species of Elasmosaurus. It was found in the upper cretaceous bed of the Pierre epoch, at the big bend of the Missouri river in South Dakota. It was presented to the Academy of Natural Science by Mr. John H. Charles, of Sioux City, together with the remains of Elasmosaurus below mentioned. I wish to express my sense of the obligation under which Mr. Charles has placed the academy and myself by his liberality in this and other matters."

The second specimen, termed "Elasmosaurus intermedius," is declared to be a new species. Following the description and measurements occur the words: "This specimen was found with that of the Embaphias circulosus at the Big Bend of the Missouri in South Dakota, and was presented to the museum of the Academy of Natural Science by Mr. John H. Charles, of Sioux City, Iowa."



by D. W. Jenkins, Perrin Johnson, George W. Felt, Professor Cope and myself. On the morning of the proposed trip Cope came to my house after me before I was up. He seemed much interested in all we had to show him.

Professor Cope was a German looking sort of a man, with black beard and eyes. His appearance was neat. He was of wiry build, a good conversationalist, a travel-polished student and gentleman.

When the old Scientific Association, the parent of the present Academy of Science and Letters, was in its second year, having some money in the treasury, we decided to secure some noted man for a course of lectures. At the suggestion of D. H. Talbot, one of our charter members, correspondence was begun with Alfred Russell Wallace, the great English scientist, who was then in this country. The result of the correspondence was that Mr. Wallace, after finishing an engagement in New York State, came out to Sioux City and gave us a course of four or five lectures upon the subject of evolution.<sup>1</sup> We threw the lectures open to the public, and they were well received.

Several of us became quite well acquainted with Mr. Wallace during his stay of a week in Sioux City. We found him a typical English gentleman in every particular. He was a much traveled man of wide acquaintance. He understood himself and had confidence in himself. Though nothing of a society man he was easily approached by friends. Only those who felt antagonized by his views had any reason to feel his reserve.

Polite, genteel, neat in dress, he stood six feet high and was built in proportion. At the time of his visit here he was wearing a closely cropped beard.

Wallace was not an orator, not even a smooth speaker. He spoke carefully, without notes, and always kept within bounds. His lectures were strictly scientific. It was what he said, rather than how, that attracted. He was a pleasing conversationalist, one not given at all to small talk. Though it was

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Wallace delivered but three lectures before the association. They were entitled, "The Darwinian Theory," "The Origin and Uses of Colors in Animals," and "Oceanic Islands." This was in the spring of 1887.

hard for him to get away from the subject of evolution, I do not remember that he spoke a single time while here concerning his own great part in the working out of the evolutionary hypothesis.

In the fall of 1859 Samuel J. Kirkwood, republican candidate for governor, and A. C. Dodge, democratic candidate for the same office, held a joint debate in Sioux City. I met and became acquainted with both gentlemen. Abe White and I went down below Sergeant's Bluff and met Kirkwood, who drove in, and brought him back to Sioux City. Dodge came in a little later on the stage from Council Bluffs.

Kirkwood was a farmer, and looked it. He wore coarse shoes, no stockings and flannel shirt. But though he was simple and plain he was also honest and straightforward, and so impressed people. He took well here. Though he didn't carry the town, because of the big democratic majority here in those days, he succeeded in reducing that majority considerably. He was elected governor.

Dodge was the son of a United States senator from Wisconsin. He, himself, was one of Iowa's first two senators. He became a United States senator when Iowa became a state, in 1846.<sup>1</sup> He was re-elected once. Then he was succeeded by James Harlan, a republican. He was nominated by his party for governor in 1859. It was thought that his services to Iowa in Washington, D. C., both before and after the State was admitted, would elect him governor, but they didn't. He was just the opposite kind of a man from Kirkwood. He was very dressy, with his patent leather boots, white shirt and starched collars. In fact, he was quite a gentleman and aristocrat. He was a good man, however, and smart. In speaking he was earnest, but a little rhetorical. He was made much of here by his party, and probably lost votes here only because opinion in Iowa was turning strongly to the republicans.

George W. Jones, of Dubuque, was Dodge's colleague in the United States Senate. I knew him better than I did Dodge. Jones was interested in the establishment of Sioux City. He

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<sup>1</sup>This is not strictly true. Dodge was one of Iowa's first two senators but was not chosen until 1848. A deadlock in the legislature in 1846 left the State without representation in the upper house of Congress until 1848.

owned one-eighth of the town, and was the most important factor in getting governmental legislation favorable to the place. He did many things of advantage to the town; in fact, he was a sort of patron saint to Sioux City.

Jones used to come here very often. I remember that in the spring of 1857, while he was yet a United States senator, he went up the Missouri river as far as Ft. Randall. On his return he left the boat here, and went home to Dubuque, across the State.

Senator Jones was a good-looking man, small in size, but well built. He must have been about fifty years of age in 1857. To me he looked like an Englishman. He did not impress me as a very remarkable man, and yet he must have been, though Dodge was the brainier of the two men, I think. Jones was more democratic or common in his dress and appearance. He was not much of an actor, was easy to get acquainted with and had a strong hold upon the people. Dr. S. P. Yeomans was his best friend in Sioux City. Yeomans was in the legislature at the time of Jones' last election to the United States Senate and cast the decisive vote for him for that office. Jones made Yeomans first register of the United States land office in Sioux City.

One of the most interesting characters I ever knew in this northwest country in the early days was Charles Larpenteur, a French Indian trader. I say a Frenchman, but since he spoke German as fluently as he did French it is my judgment that his ancestry was Swiss-French. Larpenteur came from the region of the St. Lawrence river to the Upper Mississippi, where he traded for a time. Then he changed over to the Missouri river. At first he worked for the company of Pierre Chouteau, of St. Louis, but later for himself. While in the employ of Chouteau he was stationed as agent at various places up the river, among them Ft. Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone. I knew Larpenteur well. He purchased goods of me for his trade with the Indians for several years.

He was a delicately built man, though his life was one of much hardship. I believe he was thoroughly honest and upright. If he was more conscientious, he also had more refinement than the majority of the French Indian traders. His



wife was an American woman. At the trading business he was very successful, so I think he did not lose because of his honesty.

In 1848, or thereabouts, Larpenteur settled at a ford on the Little Sioux, in Harrison County, Iowa. This particular ford was on the route from Sioux City to Council Bluffs. A little town grew up around him, which he called Fontainbleau. There he lived till 1873, farming in the summer and trading up the river with the Indians in the winter season.

Larpenteur was alive to the romance of his career. He kept an interesting journal, which has since been edited by Coues and published by Harper. It is very interesting to me.

Two of the most prominent men ever connected with the fur trade of the Northwest and with the business of steamboating on the Missouri were Pierre Chouteau, Sr. and Jr. They were Frenchmen, descended from the men who first settled and laid out St. Louis. The father first traded upon the Upper Mississippi, but later transferred to the Missouri. He built the first steamboat on the river, and ran it up to the mouth of the Yellowstone in 1831, astonishing the natives and everyone else who saw it.

When I came to Sioux City they were the principal men doing business on the Upper Missouri. Of course, they always had competition, but it never amounted to much. I did business personally with Pierre Chouteau, Jr., and so was acquainted with him, but not with his father.

I was better acquainted with some of the steamboat captains and pilots than I was with the principals whom they served. Two of the greatest pilots that ever guided a boat up the Missouri river were Joseph and John LaBarge, two French brothers, who lived in St. Louis. After serving the American Fur Company for years they at length purchased boats of their own and operated them independently. For years they stopped at Sioux City both fall and spring. Our house acted as their agents here. John LaBarge, the younger of the two, died in the service of the Benton Transportation Company. Joseph, the elder, continued steamboating till the early nineties, when the business languished and finally died. His career was as long as that of the business he followed. In his *History*

*of Steamboating on the Missouri River* Colonel Chittenden weaves his story around the life of Joseph LaBarge, and makes a hero of him. While Joseph was older and was the head and front of the LaBarge interests, still John was a steamboat pilot and captain whom everyone looked up to. In my opinion he was as good a pilot as any the river ever had. He was a man of undoubted veracity and good character, too.

Joseph was a large, portly man. He used glasses and always wore a beard. He was a man of few words, much more dignified and reserved than John, who for this very reason was the more popular.

Among the first men I met after I came to Sioux City was Dr. John K. Cook. He was a man of splendid physique, an Englishman by birth, educated as a physician. He came here in the early days as a Deputy United States Surveyor. It was said that he came to this country for the purpose of joining the Mormons, but of this I have never seen any definite proof. He was a man of good habits, considering that everyone on the frontier drank whisky and chewed and smoked tobacco; all of which he did, but with moderation.

Cook was the first postmaster of Sioux City, and it was said that he had his office in his hat and handed out letters to the citizens whenever he happened to meet them on the streets. I can't vouch for the truth of this statement, for when I came here Mr. [S. T.] Davis was assistant postmaster, and whenever the mail came in he blew a horn and we all went at once to the postoffice, on Second street, between Pearl and Water, and the mail was distributed.

At this time Cook was about fifty years old and a married man. He was easy-going in his habits and very popular. For a number of years he was the only practicing physician here, and was very successful. I doubt if he ever made out a bill in his life. He was not much of a surveyor, though he did plat the first edition of Sioux City. He was a member of the first company which owned the town. His share was one-eighth. He disposed of his interest too soon, and hence did not make much out of it.

Probably the oldest settler within the present limits of Sioux City was Theophile Bruguier, a French Canadian, who lived

on the river here for several years prior to the founding of Sioux City. From Canada he went to St. Louis, where he entered into the service of Pierre Chouteau [Sr.] and became a fur trader, his field of operations being the Upper Missouri. He became very intimate with the Indians, in fact he practically lived as an Indian until the whites came to this locality in large enough numbers to plant a colony.

Long before the Indians left this vicinity Bruguier settled at the mouth of the Big Sioux. This was about 1849. He had married a daughter of War Eagle, chief of the Yankton Sioux, and when she died he married a second daughter. War Eagle lived with him till he (War Eagle) died, whereupon he was buried upon the bluff along the Big Sioux, this side of Bruguier's place. Bruguier had lots of children, half-breeds of course, but they turned out to be the worst kind of Indians. Sometime after the whites came Bruguier went to St. Louis and married a French woman. He brought her up here and lived with her till he died. She made him a good wife.

Bruguier was a large man, with black hair and beard. He was careless in his dress. His education had been neglected. He was a good-hearted man, but his ideas of right and wrong were peculiar. They were not as well defined as they should have been, but it cannot be said that the frontier was the best place in the world to develop morals. Those pioneers, many of them still living, but rapidly falling off, who came through it all morally sound, were true men, indeed.

Bruguier was a sociable man, rather talkative. I think he was a little inclined to paint his stories to suit the occasion at hand. He especially liked to tell what "I done to the Injuns."

One of the most influential men in Sioux City when I came was J. B. S. Todd, early settler, trader, land speculator, politician and soldier. He was elected first mayor of Sioux City, but did not serve. Later he moved across the Big Sioux, his object being to get land in Dakota and become rich by holding it. He had seen land values rise in Iowa and expected the same to occur in Dakota. They sent him to Congress as the first delegate from Dakota Territory, after its organization in 1861. He didn't stay long, but soon came back, appointed a Brigadier General by President Lincoln. Todd was a demo-



erat in politics, but supported President Lincoln, who was a relative of his by marriage.

Todd was in partnership with a man of means who lived in St. Louis. The firm name was Frost, Todd & Co. They had stores at Sioux Point, across the Big Sioux, at Vermillion, at Yankton Agency and Fort Randall.

Todd was a tall man, but slender. His health was not good. He had been sickly from birth. He wore while here a full beard, reddish in color, like his hair. Educated at West Point he was a very capable man. He always passed as a gentleman, was sociable and very popular. His one fault was a common one here at that time, he couldn't let whisky alone.

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### OLD LETTERS.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SALTER.

#### I.

GEORGE DAVENPORT TO GEORGE W. JONES.

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George Davenport was born in England. Came to the United States in 1804; served in the United States army, 1805-15; came to Rock Island, 1816, where he built a trading-house and was an Indian trader for the American Fur Company. In 1835 George W. Jones was delegate to Congress from Michigan Territory, to which what is now Iowa was attached by act of Congress, June 28, 1834. In 1836-'8, he was delegate to Congress from Wisconsin Territory, which then extended from Lake Michigan to the Missouri river.<sup>1</sup>

The following is a literal transcript of the letters:

Rock Island, Illinois  
Dec. 20, 1835

To the Honble  
Geo. W. Jones  
House of Representatives  
Washington City

Dear Sir:

KeOkuk the principle chief of the Sac & Foxes has had a letter mail to Govoner Reynolds requesting him to lay it before the presi-

<sup>1</sup>*Annals*, First Series, I, 99; Third Series, III, 392. The "Flint Hill Settlement" was what is now Burlington.

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