

"Ioway" and Iowa in History

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"IOWAY" AND IOWA IN HISTORY¹

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United States Senator from Iowa

In May, 1673, a party of French *voyageurs* left Green Bay in Wisconsin—bound for the West. Far behind them lay a maze of lakes and rivers, the rock of Quebec, and the Court of France. Ahead lay the wilderness. Through the forests the canoes glided, by the Fox river, then over the portage worn by countless Indian feet, and down the Ouisconsin river. Heading the company were Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet. One represented Father Claude Dablon, Superior of the Society of Jesus in New France, eager to gain a new empire for the Faith. The other traveled with orders from Count Frontenac and Jean Baptiste Talon, the governor and the intendant, to follow the Great River of the West to the sea and secure its banks for France.

Day after day the paddles dipped and rose, and on June 17 the canoes cut into the Mississippi—"this so renowned river," as Marquette called it. Ahead, on the

¹ An address by U. S. Senator Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa, December 28, 1946, on the occasion of the ceremonies opening the Iowa Centennial exposition at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., in honor of the one-hundredth anniversary of Iowa statehood, at which the librarian displayed from its accessions relating to Iowa, an extensive collection of rare books, manuscripts, old maps, prints, photographs, newspapers, together with documents of Iowa historical interest and value from the National Archives, the National Gallery of Art and institutions in the state.—EDITOR.

sunset shore, rose the bluffs and wooded hills of "Ioway." The Great River was delightful, not a thick muddy flood coiling through malarial flats, but a mesh of clear channels and wooded islands. They glided for a while, and trekked inland from the west bank to pass a pipe with the Illinois, who had fled to "Ioway" from the wrath of the dreaded Iroquois.

There were rivers flowing from a westward country full of grasses, flowers, deer, bison, and wild birds "that change their season in the night." They saw the prairies, some day to be described by an American poet in another tongue—

The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful,
For which the speech of England has no name.

—William Cullen Bryant

Other Frenchmen came. Pierre Charles LeSueur ascending the Mississippi about 1700 to find the lead mines of Perrot, saw the "open prairie" above the Des Moines river. His talented young companion, Jean Pénicaut, later described familiar features of eastern Iowa in his record of the journey. And the Jesuit Father Charlevoix, in 1721, reported that "the river Moingona (i. e., the Des Moines) issues from the midst of an immense meadow, which swarms with buffaloes and other wild beasts." By that time the French were mining lead on the upper Mississippi, and for many years their maps of the Great Valley had shown the bluffs, mines, and rivers of Iowa, the distant lodges of the Ioways and Otos, and mysterious lakes far in the Northwest, now recognized as those of the Okoboji region.

Iowa had emerged into mapped and written history, but for many years to come, only as an undefined vastness where French, Britons and Spaniards fought and schemed for lead and furs, and intrigued for the friendship of Indian tribes, who never dreamed that those adventurers were

Among the skirmishers that teased the future,
Precursors of the grave slow-moving millions
Already destined to the Westward-faring.

—Willa Cather, "Macon Prairie"

It was a battleground also of two Indian cultures, Siouan and Algonkian, for it lay between the eastern woods and the high plains where the bison was lord.

In the shifts of war and diplomacy, "Ioway" was shuffled from one empire to another: from France to Spain in 1762, and back again briefly to France under Napoleon, who tossed it into the lap of the United States. Then it became successively a part of the Territories of Louisiana, Missouri, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

LEAD MINING FIRST INDUSTRY

Lead and furs made Iowa's history for more than a century after LeSueur. They brought the miners, hunters, and traders, who controlled and often intermarried with the Indian. Across those years pass the picturesque figures of Julien Dubuque with his "Mines of Spain" confirmed to him by the Spanish Governor Carondelet in 1796; the Yankee explorers, Jonathan Carver and Peter Pond; Jean Baptiste Faribault, and the trader Thomas G. Anderson, who had an artist's eye for "The little islands of wood, scattered over the boundless plains . . ." And there was Jean Baptiste Trudeau, who represented Spain, traded on the Des Moines, and in 1794 intended to reach the Rockies by way of the Missouri. There were the settlers, like Basil Giard and Louis Honoré Tesson, who got titles from Spain, built low comfortable houses, and planted gardens. And many other enter the crowded pageant: Manuel Lisa, John Colter, Wilson Price Hunt, Pierre Dorion, Antone LeClaire, Russell Farnham, Maurice Blondeau, and the tragic George Davenport, whose name is proudly borne by a city.

Always there was the Indian, and always the increasing pressure of the white man, from the defeat of the Sacs and Foxes by the French in 1734-35, to the showman's visit of the Ioways to Europe in 1845, led by Young Mahaska or White Cloud. The traces of the hunter and the trader were gossamer threads through the wilderness, but after Jefferson's bold purchase of

Louisiana in 1803,² the explorations of the white man closed around the Indians' "Ioway" in an ever-tightening mesh. First Lewis and Clark built their fires along the tawny Missouri, and buried Sergeant Floyd on the bluff by the present Sioux City. Then Pike ascended the Mississippi, and after him came the Oregon-Astoria party on the Missouri, Stephen H. Long, Governor Lewis Cass and Henry R. Schoolcraft, and General Henry Atkinson. In 1820, Kearney's party struck boldly across the emptiness from Council Bluffs to the St. St. Peter or Minnesota river, giving Iowa a claim to a far northern boundary. In 1816, the southern limit was defined. Twenty years later another explorer, Albert M. Lea, published a little book that gave Iowa a definite place and name.

INDIANS SIGNED AWAY LANDS

With the explorers came forts, beginning with Madison in 1808-09, and then agents, and treaties, and the Indian was doomed: Keokuk, Wapello, Poweshiek, Appanoose, Black Hawk, in treaty after treaty, from 1824 to 1842, signed away the heritage of the race. Black Hawk fought in Illinois, retreated, pined in captivity, visited that other warrior Andrew Jackson, dictated his story to Antoine LeClaire, and then died in Iowa. The Black Hawk purchase treaty alone surrendered six million acres in eastern Iowa. The Red Man faded to the Western reservations; only the crafty Inkpadutah made a last gesture of savage resentment in the Spirit Lake massacre of 1857—the year of Iowa's second constitution, that permitted banks and corporations. The Indian was not of that world. With him faded also the buffalo:

But the flower-fed buffaloes of the spring
 Left us long ago . . .
 They trundle around the hills no more . . .
 With the Pawnees lying low.

—Vachel Lindsay

² Purchased from France for \$15,000,000 by treaty of April 30, 1803, by U.S. Minister Robert Livingston, who only had authority from President Jefferson to negotiate to buy the island of New Orleans and collect a damage claim, the larger transaction later being confirmed by congress.
 —EDITOR.

STATEHOOD SPEEDILY SOUGHT

Already "Ioway" had become Iowa and had lived a rich and exciting history. It had been a vast organized territory stretching from Missouri to Canada, a bright newspaper editor had called its people "Hawkeyes,"³ and Robert Lucas had come to govern them and to be agreeably disappointed at finding them not crude and bumptious, as he had feared.

The people had scarcely had time to get used to being a territory, when a vigorous agitation for statehood began to seethe. It gathered speed slowly until 1844, when a popularly elected convention drafted a constitution; then it lagged for two years while the Hawk-eyes insisted upon their natural western limit—the Missouri. Then congress yielded to them, accepted their constitution, and passed the bill which President Polk signed 100 years ago, creating the twenty-ninth state—*Iowa!*

Who were those Iowans, who made the two constitutions of 1846 and 1857? And why were there two?

The answer to these questions lies in the fact that there were two Iowas. The first was the child of the Great River, the Iowa of the miner, the trader and trapper, the Indian agent and interpreter, the soldier, and the hill farmer of the old eastern counties. That early Iowa derived mainly from the Upper South and the Ohio valley, and had a Southern and Democratic flavor. Burlington, Fort Madison and Keokuk were steamboat towns with fine spacious homes, and looked to St. Louis, while Dubuque became a lumber town and faced north. The people came largely by the riv-

³ In J. Fennimore Cooper's "The Last of the Mohicans," the Delaware Indians bestowed the name "Hawkeye" upon a white scout and trapper who lived and hunted with them. This tale was published in 1826. Twelve years later, in 1838, Iowa and its people acquired the sobriquet "Hawkeye" through suggestion of Judge David Rorer of Burlington, and publicity through James G. Edwards, editor of the *Fort Madison Patriot*. In that year, at a meeting of territorial officials at the Burlington hotel room of Governor Lucas, also attended by Rorer and Edwards, the appropriateness of the suggestion was approved. In 1843 Edwards moved his newspaper to Burlington and changed its name to *Burlington Hawkeye*.—EDITOR.

ers and tended to stay near them. They were Mississippi French, Irish, and Scotch, and their homes and manners reflected those of the Ohio, the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the Missouri. They were Jacksonian—the Whigs called them “Locofocos”—and they sent a Missourian, Augustas Caesar Dodge, to congress as territorial delegate and later as senator. They were anything but submissive, but they respected law, held trials to suppress the lawless, and formed claim associations to protect their rights to the land.

The second Iowa, as one is tempted to call it, was something different. It came less by the rivers, more and more by land as the turnpikes and then the railroads thrust across the Mississippi and into the rolling prairies of the interior. In 1854 Iowa had not a mile of railroad track, but by 1866 the bigstacked locomotives puffed to the Missouri. This was the Iowa of the homesteader, drawn by the glowing immigrant guides and land advertisements, and coming increasingly from the Northeast and from Europe. In 1840 Iowa was almost purely native American and rather Southern, but by 1856 it was eleven percent foreign-born, and four years later contained 25,000 New Englanders. The Yankees came in groups, bringing their love of the village, the Congregational church, and the college—as at Grinnell. The change was reflected in the election of 1856, when Iowa turned Republican, and elected a New Englander, James W. Grimes, as governor, and an Illinoisan, James Harlan, as United States senator.

The newcomers descended upon Iowa like a landslide, pushing the population from 192,000 in 1850 to 674,000 in 1860, and to 1,600,000 in 1880. They were attracted by reports of the rich prairies—farm lands—for Iowa is over ninety percent tillable, a proportion no other state can rival. The earliest settlers tended to cling to the streams and groves, but as the leafy places filled up and the railroads struck out for the faraway Missouri, the pioneers ventured out into boundless light and space, and became a really new people, whatever their origins.

It is strange to live on the high world in the stare
 Of the naked sun and the stars . . .
 Men in the old lands housed by their rivers.
 They built their towns in the vales in the earth's shelter.
 We first inhabit the world. We dwell
 On the half earth, on the open curve of a continent . . .
 It is strange to sleep in the bare stars and to die
 On an open land where few bury before us.

—Archibald Mac Leish, "American Letter"

They brought flocks, herds, droves, wives, and broods of children, the family Bible, and the schoolteacher, and oxen to pull the great plows for breaking the hard prairie sod. So the life of our inland Iowa grew westward by rivers with strange names like Nishnabotna and Wapsipinicon. The prairie world was new and wonderful with its warm winds from the Southwest, its bright high stars, driving storms and steely cold, long lines of fire, trips to town and to the inevitable mill. How beautiful the prairie looked to a newcomer in spring is vividly told in the journal of the English woman, Jean Rio Pearce, a Mormon pilgrim of 1851:

The weather is now fine and the flowers are lifting their heads and looking more beautiful than ever. There are a great variety of flowers growing on the prairie, such as are cultivated in our gardens at home. We are constantly walking over violets, primroses, daisies, bluebells, the lily of the valley, columbines of every shade, from white to the deepest purple, Virginia stocks in large patches. The wild rose, too, is plentiful, perfuming the air for miles . . .

SETTLEMENTS GREW LIKE MAGIC

The human flood washed over Iowa as the railroads spread their net, eventually leaving no place more than twelve miles from the locomotive's whistle. The counties advanced, tier after tier, until they checkerboarded the state to the Missouri. The old river towns of the East began to look rather uneasily at new cities rising in the interior, as the capital moved to Des Moines. The steamboat interests recognized the enemy, and fought rails and bridges. And when a steamboat rammed the Rock Island bridge, Iowa first heard of Abraham Lincoln, the railroad lawyer.

The "mixed blood and the strangers" came: Hollanders fleeing from a frigid state church, Hungarians from Austrian rule, Norwegians from the cold hillside farms, Swedes and Danes from their landlords, Germans from the Prussian military caste, Bohemians from foreign oppression. Collectivist Christians like the Amana people, Socialist idealists like the Icarians, and Mormons on their way to their garden in the desert, all found a welcome and homes in liberal and democratic Iowa. Even Abner Kneeland and his Freethinkers, who settled near Farmington in 1839, were not cast out.

Iowans were a mixed breed, but they were generally of one mind, respecting the then deep cleavage in the American people: slavery against freedom. They supported the doctrine of Chief Justice Charles Mason of their own supreme court, in the case of *Ralph*, that when a slave lived on their soil with the consent of his master, he became a free man. They elected a Unionist for governor, Samuel J. Kirkwood, and when the storm broke, sent about 80,000 men to war.⁴ Iowans fought to hold Missouri in the Union, an Iowa regiment led the furious assault on Fort Donelson, Tenn., and Iowans were in Sherman's march to the sea. In 1864, Iowa helped to reelect Lincoln to complete "the unfinished work which they who fought . . . have thus far so nobly advanced." The state earned its inscription on the Washington monument: "Iowa: the affections of her people, like the rivers of her borders, flow to an inseparable Union."

Following the war, an Iowa justice of the United States Supreme Court, Samuel F. Miller (the first appointed from beyond the Mississippi), checked the trend to national absolutism by deciding that our people are citizens of the states as well as of the nation. Another Iowan, George W. McCrary, proposed the tribunal that

⁴ After only fifteen years of statehood Iowa recruited 47 regiments of volunteer infantry for Lincoln's Union armies, besides a Forty-eighth Infantry battalion, a regiment of infantry of African descent, and four batteries of light artillery, some navy volunteers and numberless civilians engaged in recruiting and other war activities.—ROSTER IOWA SOLDIERS.

possibly averted more civil strife by deciding the bitterly contested presidential election of 1876.

A TRADITION OF STABILITY

Iowa has done more than her share in every war since the Mexican and the one to save the Union, and in peacetime has preserved a loyal and conservative character. The people, to preserve their economic independence, have sometimes supported, seemingly radical but really conservative movements like the Greenback campaign against monopoly. But in the 1890's, when their neighbors went overboard for populism and free silver, Iowans shunned economic heresy. Their tradition of stability has been one of their many gifts to the nation.

Yet they have not been stay-at-homes. Since the gold rushes of the 1850's they have played an eminent part in conquering the far West. Twelve hundred Iowans pioneered in Utah, and in Oregon, where the provisional government adopted Iowa's laws. Council Bluffs for many years was the gate to the far West, where "Buffalo Bill," born and raised in the state, was an express rider. Three Iowans—Grenville M. Dodge, Samuel R. Curtis, and Peter A. Dey—promoted the Union Pacific railroad that linked the oceans in 1869, fulfilling the dream of an earlier Iowan, John Plumbe of Dubuque, and of Hartwell Carver, grandson of Jonathan, the explorer.

At an early date Iowa began to rival far wealthier and more populous states, in furnishing statesmen who influenced the development of our national administration and the course of our history. The first president born west of the Mississippi, Herbert Hoover, is an Iowan. The roll of cabinet members, sixteen in all, and famous members of congress is a long one, including Senators James W. Grimes, James Harlan, William B. Allison, Jonathan P. Dolliver, Albert B. Cummins; George W. McCrary, secretary of war; Ray Lyman Wilbur, secretary of the interior and president of Leland Stanford university; and *four* secretaries of agri-

culture—Henry C. and Henry A. Wallace, Edwin T. Meredith and “Tama Jim” Wilson, who practically created the department. We could name many more, if time permitted.

Even before Governor Lucas noted their intelligence, Iowans began to give their state the highest rank in literacy. They had schools, printing presses, and newspapers, before they had a territorial government. One of the first acts of the state legislature provided for the security of the common-school fund, and a country school was set up at the center of each four sections of land. Today, Iowa is a land of colleges and universities, boasts one of the nation's finest state universities, and Iowa State college at Ames has always been pre-eminent in agriculture and engineering. Iowa claims better local provision for higher education than any other state. A wise observer, the statesman James Bryce, thought that the numerous small colleges probably were more efficient agents of culture than a single public university would have been. In the middle of the last century nearly every town had a lyceum, and most of the famous lecturers visited Iowa and were astonished at the high level of culture they found. For these advantages Iowans owe a great debt to the pioneers who established the private and denominational colleges, and to the statesmen and educators who fought the battle for endowed and tax-supported public instruction, from the one-room schoolhouse to the higher state institutions. The results of their idealism appear in many beautiful campuses with modern buildings. The memorials of the struggle are hidden away in petitions signed by thousands of Iowans, for land in aid of schools, and in the catalogs and lectures that streamed from the early printing presses to advertize the advantages of popular education.

RELIGIOUS FAITH ENDURES

Religion has been in Iowa since the Catholic missionaries came in canoes to offer the sacraments to explorers, traders, miners and Indians. Before the region was

a territory, came the Methodist circuit-rider and the Baptist exhorter to preach anywhere and everywhere and build log meeting houses. The flood of immigration made liberal Iowa the "city of refuge" of many denominations—Quakers of antislavery faith, orthodox Lutherans, German Catholics, Spiritualists, Anglicans, Disciples. Their faith left its landmarks in the many simple white churches that ride on the long swells of the prairies. They seem more typical of the simple and abiding faith of the people than the city churches of massive stone built almost anywhere in the urban East.

As Iowans emerged from the pioneer era and considered their past, they began to write their recollections, the beginning of a native literature. A tiny volume of poetry prepared by an Iowan appeared at Davenport as early as 1856. In the 1890's indigenous literature produced the "Stories of a Western Town," (1893) by Alice French, better known as "Octave Thanet." Since then a band of Iowa novelists and poets have created a literature of their society. It is not the facile product of the temporary "investigator," but the mature work of men and women like Ruth Suckow, Josephine Donovan, Herbert Quick and Phil Stong, who have grown up in the river town and on the prairie farm, and know the rural school and church and the state fair. The literary influence of Iowa has been borne far and wide also by several magazines, founded and ably edited by Iowans. They have answered the complaint of Walt Whitman, eighty years ago, that Americans had no really American literature.

Iowa can claim also some native composers, who have written modern interpretations of Indian melodies, and popular ballads that swept the country, like "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree." The church music of Sumner Salter reflects the plain religious faith of the masses, while the scientific appreciation and popular teaching of music are represented in the research and writing of Carl Seashore and the school work of C. A. Fullerton. One of the most beloved of symphonies, to

Americans, the "New World Symphony," is believed to have been written in part while Antonin Dvořák enjoyed the Iowa summer at the little Bohemian town of Spillville, where he composed, loafed, strolled and played the church organ.

HOUSEHOLD ARTS PRESERVED

Art in Iowa has made the headlines through the paintings of Grant Wood, who established a new and vigorous school of American painting, and other modern artists, but its roots lie deep in the character and experience of the people. National groups brought to Iowa their traditional arts and handicrafts and a genuine thirst for culture, and their household arts have been preserved for posterity in local collections like the Norwegian museum at Decorah, and in delicate water-colors for the Index of American Design. These and the older pioneer American stocks have founded collections and fostered new art. One of the nation's earliest municipal art galleries was established at Davenport through the generosity of C. A. Ficke, father of the Iowa poet, Arthur Davison Ficke. The state and the people have promoted art in the public schools, colleges and universities; and by bringing to the public prominent American artists and their work, have fostered the general understanding and interest that have played a vital role in the growth of American contemporary art.

This is but a cursory review of Iowa's gifts to American life, which have been carried to the remotest verges of the "open curve of a continent" by her children. In 1930, more than a million of them—not the least of the gifts—were living beyond her bounds. Their reunions, societies and meetings testify to their pride in the state that has given these things to our native American culture.

This is our land, this is our ancient ground—

The raw earth, the mixed bloods and the strangers,

The different eyes, the wind, and the heart's change,

These we will not leave, though the old call us.

This is our country-earth, our blood, our kind.

—Archibald Mac Leish, "American Letter"

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