

TOUR OF IOWA COUNTIES.

VAN BUREN COUNTY.

RAILROADS BUILT AND PROJECTED.

Keosauqua—Its Growth, Business, and Advantages.

Sketches of the Village of Independent.

Iowaville—The Home and Grave of Black Hawk.

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Statistics, Generalities, and Traditions.

(CONTINUED FROM YESTERDAY.)

RAILROADS.

The Des Moines Valley R. R. runs up the valley of the Des Moines river through the county, making about 80 miles of railroad line completed, with seven stations in the county, viz: Farmington, Bonaparte, Bantonsport, Summit, Kibbourne, Doud's Station and Independent. A daily line of hacks connects the Summit with Birmingham, Fairfield and other points north. Hacks also run from Keosauqua to the Summit in connection with all passenger trains. The people of this county have, in times past, had several railroad projects in view, but have, so far, failed to realize all their expectations in this respect.—About two years ago a company was organized at Fairfield and duly incorporated for building a railroad from the Muscatine branch of the M. & M. road at or near Washington, via Brighton, Fairfield and Keosauqua to some point connecting with the North Missouri R. R.—Some \$30,000 of private subscription was raised in the town of Keosauqua, and other sums at Fairfield and other points. But the matter was dropped for a time. There seems to be some revival of interest in the project. The route of the proposed road is undoubtedly a perfectly feasible one, and the proposition is surely worthy of the serious consideration of those interested. There is also some agitation of the project of constructing a railroad connecting the B. & M. road at Mt. Pleasant with the D. V. road at Bonaparte. The day will doubtless soon come when Van Buren county will enjoy the advantages of increased railroad facilities.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

KEOSAUQUA.—This is the county seat of Van Buren county. It is situated on the north bank of the Des Moines river at the lower extremity of a peninsula, on what is known as the Great Bend, which, in the Indian language, the term *Keosauqua* (or *Keosauqua*) is said to mean. It is the opinion of some, however, that this was the Indian name of the river before it received its French christening of Des Moines. The town is four miles south of Summit Station on the D. V. R. R., and within about seven miles of the Missouri line. The first white man who settled on the spot where this place now stands, was one John Silvers, who in 1833, made a claim and built a small cabin on the bank of the river about where the old Keosauqua Hotel now stands. About the same time several other persons settled in the vicinity—among them, E. Fardom, Isaac W. McCarty, John Fatchett, and John Tolman, with his Indian wife. Silvers sold his claim in the fall of 1836 to Meesback Sigler for \$300. Mrs. Sigler was the first white woman who made her home at this place. In 1837, a company styled the "Van Buren Company," purchased of Mr. Sigler his claim. This company was composed of James Hall, James Manning, Edwin Manning, John J. Fairman, John Carnes, and Robert Taylor. Sigler subsequently became one of the company. Taylor soon sold his interest to William Billups and Simon Druillard. In 1837 they laid out a portion of the town, and in the spring of 1839 the whole town was surveyed and recorded. The first house in the new town was built by the Van Buren Company in 1837. In this, Carnes & Fairman kept the first store. Fairman was the first Postmaster, the name of the office being Portoro. At the land sales in 1833, James Hall was authorized by the Company to purchase in his own name the tract of land on which the town was located. In 1839 the first brick house was erected by Edward K. Tylec. In 1838, T. Lane opened the first tailor shop, and the next year formed a partnership with J. J. Kinersly. There is no record that either of these gentlemen ever rose from their humble position up through all the gradations of official life to the Presidency! The first physician was Cyrus H. Ober, and the first lawyer Isaac N. Lewis. The first hotel was kept by Elisha Puett, in a one-story log house. The landlord was a *hard case*, and as civilization encroached upon him, he went to Texas.—The first blacksmith was David Smith. In April, 1839, R. King laid out what is known upon the record as "Des Moines City," immediately below and adjoining Keosauqua.—Here a flouring mill was erected. At this point a dam is built across the river, and there is now a stone flouring mill with two runs of stones.

In the fall of 1839, the first steamboat ascended the river as far up as this point—the adventurous pioneer craft being the "S. B. Science," Capt. Clarke, Master. She brought goods for the Indian trading posts at Portland and other points above, with flour, meat, pork and other necessary articles for the settlers. This was an occasion of much rejoicing. It is said the good boat brought a liberal supply of *scotch-appe* (whisky) for both whites and Indians.

About this time, an affair of honor transpired between two of the settlers, A. W. Harlan, and one Bushnell. These King and Mr. Sigler were the second. Pistols were the weapons chosen, and it may be whisky was substituted for coffee! Fortunately no shooting occurred. Their friends induced them to settle the difficulty by the less dangerous method now practiced by the ring. Harlan came off victor, and thus ended this first, and so far as I have learned, last, appeal to the code of honor in Van Buren county!

The first white child born in Keosauqua was a daughter to William Billups, and the first marriage solemnized was that of Lewis Lappant and Nancy Hill on the 27th of January, 1833, by Benjamin F. Green, a Justice of the Peace. The first newspaper was commenced in the summer of 1843 by Jesse M. Shepherd and John T. Mitchell. It was called the "Iowa Democrat and Des Moines River Intelligencer."

I have thus briefly mentioned a few facts connected with the early history of a place that once had fair to become one of the most important points on the Des Moines river. For most of these facts I am indebted to Hon. Geo. G. Wright, as I gleaned them from an address delivered by him in Keosauqua on the 4th of March, 1854. The expectations of the founders of this once promising town have not been realized. What are the reasons? One of them doubtless is the fact that in the construction of the Des Moines Valley Railroad, Keosauqua is left about four miles distant, owing to its peculiar situation in the bend of the river. But it is believed she has advantages in water power and facilities for manufacturing which fully compensate for the loss of the railroad, if some of her wealthy citizens did not, like the rocks upon which she is built, belong to a former age! Some of them are of the ante-diluvian period. When they pass away, if they ever do, and men of the age of steam and electricity take their places, the vast water-power at this place may be turned to some account. At present, it is made useful in running but a simple flouring mill of limited capacity. In a natural advantage for manufacturing purposes, no point on the river excels this. There is an exhaustless quantity of the best building stone to be found in

the State, easily quarried within the town limits, and all around it. Coal and wood are abundant and cheap. Pottery clay is abundant in the vicinity of the town, and yet we heard of no one engaged in the manufacture of ware!

One enterprise, however, has been commenced, which, it is hoped, will prove successful.—A suspension bridge of 612 feet span is in course of construction. The abutments for the same are nearly completed, and it is hoped the bridge will be finished this year. The towers are to be about 57 feet above the abutments. Eight cables will be used in its construction, each of 2 1/2 inches in diameter, and, exclusive of the suspenders, calculated to bear a strain of 500 tons. The greater portion of the rock used is quarried within 500 feet of the river bank. For these particulars I am indebted to Mr. James L. Loring, the gentlemanly engineer in charge of the work.

The Court House is not a building of imposing appearance, but is substantial, and with another building used for the county offices, affords ample accommodations for the transaction of the public business of the county.—Both buildings are brick. The jail is built of stone and iron, with a brick portion attached, forming the residence of the Sheriff. It is one of the most secure prisons in the State.

Near the Court House, on lots purchased for the purpose, a Soldiers' Monument is about to be erected. It is to cost about \$5,000, toward which the county, in its corporate capacity, has contributed \$500. The names of all soldiers of the county who died in the service are to be engraved upon the monument.

Keosauqua, and some adjacent territory, forming an Independent School District, has now in process of erection, a brick school house, which is to cost \$15,000. There are four churches, viz: Methodist, Congregational, Episcopal and United Presbyterian, with Revs. I. P. Teter, J. W. Windsor, T. B. Kemp and J. S. Ross, respectively, as pastors. There are Lodges of Masons, Odd Fellows and Good Templars, all said to be flourishing. An excellent Brass Band is organized here, and holds itself in readiness to rally the Grand boys during the pending campaign. The city has one newspaper, the *Republican*—a sound Radical organ. Though the county at large may claim them as her representatives, we must here notice the popular county officers.—They are as follows:—Alexander Brown, County Judge; John A. Miller, Clerk District Court; Joshua S. Sloan, Treasurer; John C. McCrary, Sheriff; Edwin Goddard, Recorder; George E. Walker, Superintendent; Ira Clafflin, Surveyor; and L. W. Thornburgh, Coroner. With these gentlemen at the head of affairs, the county is financially sound, being entirely free from debt.

There are several attorneys in the place.—We mention Robert Sloan, Charles Baldwin, and Henry Strickling.

Among the reliable and enterprising business men who deserve to be patronized, we mention the following: L. W. Thornburgh, Lumber and Agricultural Implement Dealer; James L. Loring and Gebhardt & Son, are dealers in Hardware; Thomas Rankin, P. B. Wallis, Alexander Henry, and J. W. Moore, each have good establishments in the line of dry goods and groceries. M. C. Davis, W. C. Stridger, and A. Barnes & Co., are dealers in groceries.—By the way, M. C. Davis will be remembered as one of the paper-folders of the last House of Representatives. He was a good soldier in the war, and lost his leg in front of Atlanta.—His friends will be pleased to hear of his success. John Shane is the accommodating landlord of the "Shane House," which we found to be a pleasant home during our sojourn in the place. O. S. Willey deals in jewelry, watches, clocks, &c.

There are in the town 6 dry-goods stores; 4 grocery stores; 2 drug stores; 2 harness makers; 3 dealers in boots and shoes; 1 news dealer; 2 hotels; 2 hardware stores; 2 watchmakers; 1 lumber dealer; 1 furniture dealer; 2 dealers in agricultural implements; 1 dealer in stoves and tin-ware; 1 barber; 2 tailors; 2 milliners; 1 dentist; 3 physicians, and 6 lawyers.

Across the river, opposite Keosauqua, is the town of Pleasant Hill, which also contains a store. The total population of Keosauqua according to the last census, within the town limits proper, was 683. Beside this, Pleasant Hill has a population of about 100. We now leave the county seat for the purpose of noticing some of the smaller villages and shall begin with

INDEPENDENT.

This is located in Village township, being the North-west corner township of the county. It is on the Des Moines Valley Railroad, eighteen miles from Ottumwa, and twenty from Keosauqua. It embraces 84 lots, mostly 66 by 132 feet in size. These lots, without improvement, range in price from \$50 to \$200 each, depending upon location. One George Stump was the original proprietor, as well as the owner of a large body of adjacent land. His enterprise of laying out a town at this point had its origin from the following circumstance: He desired the establishment of a public road from his premises to the neighboring village of Iowaville, but his project was strongly opposed by the intervening land owners. He then declared he would be independent of Iowaville, and lay out a town on his own land. Accordingly, in 1851, he carried his threat into execution, and located the town, calling it Independent. It struggled along through a half score of doubtful years under the frowns of its elder sister and rival, who delighted to apply to it, in the spirit of contempt, the unpoetical name of "Stump Town." But there was a day of deliverance coming. In due time the railroad found its way up the Valley, and found our little village quietly nestled in her arms, to retreat on the banks of the Des Moines. Under the fostering care and protection of the railroad it imbibed new life and vigor. Independent is now a point of considerable trade, and one of the best grain shipping stations on the Des Moines Valley Railroad. It is also said that during the last year about \$130,000 worth of hogs were shipped at this point. It now contains a population of about 120. There are five stores and groceries, a harness shop, wagon and blacksmith shop and hotel. There is a good school house, with a school now in prosperous condition under the charge of Miss Lizzie C. Robinson as teacher. A Methodist Episcopal Church is being erected, a portion of the material now being ready on the ground.

A laudable enterprise in the way of establishing manufactories is beginning to appear. A joint stock company has been organized for the erection of a large flouring and woolen mill. The work has already commenced. The main building is to be 31x54 feet, and four stories high, with an engine room 12x37 feet. A fifty horse power engine is to be set up, and the entire machinery and structure is to be first class. The work has been placed in charge of Capt. George W. Erick, formerly of the 30th Iowa Infantry. Under his superintendence the enterprise cannot fail to be a success. The facilities for operating manufactories by steam here cannot be excelled. There is a great abundance of water, timber, coal and building stone, all easily obtained. It is also in the midst of a fine grain-producing region. Indeed there is no good reason why Independent should not have a prosperous future.

The principal business house of the place is that of F. B. Adams & Co., whose sales during the last year amounted to over \$25,000.

D. C. Beaman, Esq., keeps a stock of family groceries, and a general assortment of notions. He also serves Uncle Sam as Postmaster and acts as agent of the U. S. Express Company. By the way, it must be kept in mind, that while the legal and railroad name of this town is "Independent" the name of the Postoffice is "Hickory," but the Express office is still designated as "Independent." The reason why the name of the Postoffice was changed, was because mistakes frequently occurred, in the transmission of mail matter, on account of the similarity of the former name to that of Independence, Iowa.

Dr. Joseph Knowland caters to the public appetite and comfort, and our experience warrants us in the assertion that no one need leave the "Des Moines Valley Hotel" hungry. He is also a physician of the Homoeopathic school.

The railroad station here is in charge of George B. Leonard, who also acts as telegraph operator.

The crossing of the road leading from Fairfield to Troy is at this point. The public will always find a safe and excellent ferry in charge of N. Sanford, who is its enterprising proprietor.

Near this place, on land belonging to the estate of the late George Stump, is a spot of ground exhibiting a peculiarity which may excite the speculations of the curious. It formerly contained an area of 30 feet square, on which, for twenty years, no vegetation could be made to grow, although regularly planted each year with various kinds of grain. The barren spot is now somewhat smaller, but still embraces about 20 feet square, on which not a single spear or leaf has ever been known to grow. The ground is a rich black loam, slightly damper than the surrounding land. It is situated on the side of what is called in the West a "draw," and below it at the bottom of the ravine is a spring, the water of which is slightly impregnated with sulphur. Scientific investigation may solve the mystery. Part of the town is an immense heap of sand, rising, we should judge, nearly 100 feet above the bed of the river. It is mixed with a sufficient quantity of vegetable mould to render it quite fertile.

IOWAVILLE.—A little over one mile west of Independent is the old trading post of Iowaville. This part of Van Buren county is indeed historical ground. Here the renowned Black Hawk, after his glory had departed, spent the closing days of his life. Near this place he was buried in the fall of 1838. This is also the old battle ground of Sacs, Foxes, and Iowa Indians, and the ruins of Keokuk's old house are still visible. The village is situated on the north bank of the river in the midst of an exceedingly fertile portion of the Des Moines Valley, which has in times past, produced immense quantities of corn for consumption at the large distillery a few years ago in operation at this place. The village contains a mill, two or three stores, and two churches, with a population of about 150. W. T. Abel is the proprietor of the mill and wool-carding factory, and C. D. Bailey and Aaron Parks have the principal stores of the place.—The last named gentleman is postmaster.

DOUD'S STATION.—Some five miles down the Des Moines Valley from Independent, is the handsome and sprightly little town of Doud's Station, only 18 months old. Its original proprietors were Hon. David Doud, and Hon. Elias Doud, the present distinguished State Senator from Van Buren county. Every deed conveying lots in this town contains a stipulation that no intoxicating liquors shall ever be sold as a beverage by the grantee, or with his consent, upon the premises. Of course there are no beer shops or whisky saloons in Doud's Station. The place contains three dry-goods and grocery stores. Those engaged in this trade are David Payne, Manning & Parker, and T. P. Doud. Each of these dealers has a well selected stock, and all of them seem to be doing a profitable business. The firm of Manning & Parker have sold during the past year goods to the amount of twenty thousand dollars. They have also shipped about 500 head of hogs and 2,500 bushels of grain. The sales of T. P. Doud have amounted to \$25,000. He has also shipped a large amount of grain—about 4,000 bushels—in the last month. Messrs. Winterbotham & Spn, recently of Fort Madison, have just established a hardware store, and also deal largely in stoves, tin-ware, and furniture. Two lumber yards supply lumber to a large extent of country—one kept by Capt. James Elerick, and the other by Tobias & Son. Capt. Elerick did his country service in the 54th Illinois Infantry.—Tobias & Son also deal largely in agricultural implements. The village also contains a harness-maker, shoe-maker, painter, wagon and blacksmith shop, saw-mill, milliner, &c., all doing a prosperous business. There are two physicians, Drs. Crawford & Whitten. Miss Mary A. Doud, daughter of Senator Doud, has charge of the Postoffice. Our young friend, T. C. Jackson, is the genial and accommodating railroad agent, telegraph operator, and U. S. Express agent.

The town is beautifully located on the north bank of the Des Moines, directly opposite the ancient town of Portland, the scene of many a pioneer adventure, and with which it is connected by an excellent ferry. It is 21 miles from Ottumwa, 15 miles from Keosauqua, 29 from Bloomfield, 15 from Fairfield, and 55 from Keokuk. The surroundings are highly picturesque and beautiful, with its landscapes of field, forest, and river. Vast quantities of the finest building stone are found in the immediate vicinity, some of which is susceptible of so fine a polish as to be nearly equal in that respect to marble. Stone coal is abundant, and the surrounding country is heavily timbered. The Doud brothers own some seven hundred acres of the best land to be found in the Des Moines Valley. They settled here about 27 years ago, in the days when almost the only roads were cow paths and Indian trails. They have lived to see the transforming influences of civilization and Anglo-Saxon energy. May they long live to enjoy the fruits of their personal sacrifices, and to witness the continued growth and prosperity of the town which they have founded.

I must not forget, however, to say that several new buildings are about to be erected, some of which are now under way. Among the improvements in contemplation, are a school house, church, hotel, and mill. Mr. Payne is erecting a fine residence. The village probably has a population of 100. Every thing about it impresses one with the idea of neatness, comfort and industry.

TO BE CONTINUED.