TOUR OF IOWA COUNTIES.

VAN BUREN COUNTY.

ITS TOWNS AND WEALTH.

Bentonsport—Vernon—Bonaparte—Farmington—Summit—Birmingham—Milton—Winchester.

[CONCLUDED.]

BENTONSPORT.—This town is in Washington township, on the left bank of the river. It is in the midst of a rich agricultural portion of the county, but the bills in the immediate vicinity hide from view the many fine farms near by. The dam across the river at this place affords water power for a vast amount of machinery. There is a flouring mill belonging to Brown & Keck, doing a considerable business. It is a five story building built of brick, and furnished with the best of machinery. Green, Bragg & Co. many years ago built at this place the first paper mills in Iowa. It is yet doing good service. The building is stone, and is three stories high above the ground. There is also in operation a woolen factory, belonging to Brown & Moore, with machinery for carding and spinning. About two years ago the extensive factory of Mr. Brown at this place was entirely consumed by fire, a disaster which has retarded in no small degree the prosperity of the place. There is likewise a saw mill in operation. This place is one of considerable trade. One wholesale and retail establishment belonging to H. P. Greef & Bro. sells goods to the amount of £50,000 per annum. Their rooms are models in their systematic arrangement throughout. A. Laubach is also engaged in dry goods; Mason Bros. in the line of stores, tin-ware and furniture, while J. F. Mason, one of the brothers, runs a livery stable, and the other, George H. Mason, acts as landlord of the "Ashland House," the only hotel in the place. Mrs. H. A. Reiskopf has the largest harness establishment in the county, of which her son, B. F. Reiskopf, is in charge. Dr. A. H. Arter seems to be the physician and druggist of the place. The Railroad Company is faithfully represented by E. L. Clarke, their popular agent and telegraph operator. He is likewise agent of the U. S. Express Co.

A neat and spirited Democratic paper, called The Signal, is published here by A. C. Bailey, Esq., to whom we are indebted for many kind attentions during our visit. We have seen some excellent samples of job work executed at the office of our friend Bailey.

There are four churches, viz: Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational and Universalist, all of brick except one last, which is frame. Masonic and Good Templars Lodges exist here, both in flourishing condition. The town forms an independent school district, and has a good two-story brick school house. In addition to those mentioned, there are several other business firms. Mrs. Ann Appleton has charge of the Postoffice.

VERNON.—This town is immediately opposite Bentonsport, with which it is connected by a ferry. It has a large flouring mill belonging to Sanford & Keyg. It is four stories above ground, built of brick, and is fifty by seventy feet. It has three pairs of stones, and will grind fifty bushels per hour. The machinery is the best used. It was erected in 1858 by Allender and Freeman. The woolen factory here belonging to Allender & Gelati is one of the best in Iowa, and is doing a large business in the manufacture of cloths. We have before mentioned the pottery of Mr. R. M. Dickson. He manufactured last year 250,000 gallons of stone ware. A large proportion of his business is the manufacture of drain tile. His main shop is built of brick. He recently sustained a loss by fire to the amount of £2000. Another establishment of the same kind is just going into operation. It is owned by J. W. Fown, and will commence with sufficient capacity, as we are informed by its proprietors, for turning out 75,000 gallons of ware per annum.

The foundation of a new school house is just completed. It is 42 by 32 feet, with a vestibule 12 by 32 feet, and will be built of brick two stories high. It is to be finished in the best style and furnished with cast-iron seats. Riley Cass is the architect. The building will be an honor to the town. There are general stores, the largest perhaps, being that of Richards & Son, D. F. Wilson in the grocery line, and N. Mallett in drugs, both have good establishments. The last named gentleman is the Postmaster. We met here a hale and hearty old resident of this county in the person of Mr. James McCrary. He is the father of Hon. Geo. W. McCrary, of Keokuk. This town is making considerable growth. We noticed several buildings under way. Its population is about 600.

BONAPARTE.—Four miles below Bentonsport is the promising manufacturing town of Bonaparte. It has 4 general stores; 4 family groceries; 3 boot and shoe stores: 1 drugstore; 2 hotels; 3 wagon factories; 1 cabinet shop; 2 blacksmith shops; 1 planing, sash, door and blind factory; 1 cooper; 2 lumber yards; 1 pottery; 1 jeweller; 1 livery stable; 1 artist; 3 milliners; 1 harness shop; 1 tannery; 3 physicians, &c. Some of the manufacturing and business establishments are deserving of particular notice.

The woolen factory of Meek & Brothers is one of the largest in the State. The main building is of brick, 50 by 85 feet, and four stories high. They have in operation six sets of manufacturing cards, and four sets of double roll cards. There are six spinning jacks of 240 spindles each, and one of 200, making 1640 spindles in all. Twenty-two narrow and four broad looms, with the necessary machinery to operate them, occupy one story of the building. This department gives employment to about thirty women. About 500 yards of cloth are manufactured per day. During the last year the retail business of the establishment amounted to £75,000, and the wholesale trade to £139,000. In addition to the main building, there is also a large stone dry house, and a frame building, containing an additional set of cards and a spinning jack. They have also a three story brick building, 50 by 70 feet, for sales rooms, ware rooms, offices, &c. In this large quantities of wool and cloth are stored. The same gentlemen have in operation a flouring mill with four run of burrs, and also a saw mill. They run no stones about their factory or mills, except for heating purposes. They run the first spindles by machinery in the State, having commenced in 1851. In 1863 they were burnt out, but rebuilt the same year.

Messrs. Parker & Hanbeck have an extensive pottery for the manufacture of stone ware. They make 100,000 gallons per annum. The clay from which they make it, is obtained about three miles southeast of the town, from a vein about three feet in thickness.

A planing mill and sash, door and blind manufactory are just going into operation. The enterprising proprietors are Messrs. Ealler, Meck & Chapman.

Among the excellent business houses of the place we mention Troutman & Pickett, and Christy & Johnson, dealers in dry goods, groceries, &c.; George Schoonover, in boots and shoes, hats and caps; Charles L. George, in drugs and stationery, also news dealer; John Leach, proprietor of the "Bonaparte House," and J M Cor, the No. 1 agent and telegraph operator of the D M V Railroad. Among the live men of the place is Dr R N Cresap, who settled in the county as early as 1834. He has extensive interests in and around the place, and is perhaps its oldest inhabitant.

One of the institutions of the place which ought to live to-day, is that known as the "Bonaparte Academy." It has been in operation one term, under the charge of Prof. Edward F. Howe as Principal. The building is just completed, and is 70½ by 50½ feet, and two stories high. It is surmounted by a dome, and has an excellent bell. On the south side is a portico supported by four massive columns. There are four principal rooms, each nearly 35 feet square, and capable of seating 450 pupils. The seats and desks are patent cast iron. The rooms of the upper story have arched ceilings, and are divided by a folding partition. The building is to be heated by furnaces in the basement. Its cost is to be about £30,000. The location is a beautiful elevation, commanding a view of one of the finest landscapes in the West. Around this seat of learning, much that is grand and beautiful will combine to inspire youthful minds with those elevated and noble sentiments so essential to happiness and virtue.

There is also a flourishing District School and a Select School in operation. Lodges of Masons, Odd Fellows, and Good Templars are all in a flourishing condition. A large class in music is being taught by Miss Ella M. Kenbloe, an accomplished teacher. There are three churches, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist.

The people of Bonaparte are sanguine that a railroad will be constructed from their place to Mt. Pleasant, there connecting with a road running north to Minnesota. A survey has already been made, and great interest is felt in the project. The energy displayed by the people of this place in establishing manufactories and making other improvements, entitles them to the consideration of capitalists, and the chances are much in their favor.

In the vicinity of this town are some splendid groves of hard maple. In passing through one of them adjoining the village, I counted a group of seven mounds—the work of an ancient race. They form an irregular chain, running nearly north and south, parallel with the river, and nearly all have large trees growing upon them. All are about the same size, being some fifty feet in diameter at the base, and about four feet high. There is no appearance of excavation in the vicinity of these mounds to procure the material for them.

Some twenty years ago it was thought that salt water might be procured here by boring. The work was commenced, and a depth of 100 feet was reached. The project was then abandoned. The place where this well was sunk is now in the river, being then immediately on its banks.

Although this town has now a population of nearly one thousand, there is as yet, no municipal organization. Capt. Edgar Pickett serves the people, and Uncle Sam as P. M., and Wm. Entler officiates as J.P.

FARMINGTON.—This is the "ancient metropolis" of Van Buren county, and although I believe it has not gained in population for a number of years, its location is one of the most beautiful on the river. It is thirty miles from Keokuk on the Des Moines Valley R. R. The present population is about 800. There are 4 general stores; 1 dealer in agricultural implements; 2 in millinery and fancy goods; 1 family grocery; 2 harness shops; 2 wagon makers; 2 blacksmith shops; 1 painter; 5 hotels; 3 boot and shoe-makers; 1 steam flouring mill; 2 livery stables; 1 furniture manufactory; 1 lumber dealer; 1 pottery; 8 coopers; 4 physicians; 1 dentist; 1 attorney; 1 tobacconist; 1 artist; 1 brewery; 1 butcher; 1 rope-maker; 1 jeweller; 1 barber, &c.

If the people are given in proportion to the number of churches, Farmington is highly favored. There are no less than seven houses of public worship, to-wit: Methodist, Baptist, Christian, German Lutheran, German Methodist, Congregational, and Catholics.—The Methodist and Christian are brick buildings—the others frame.

Among the most active and wide-awake business men of the place, I take pleasure in mentioning the following: Boner & Sims, dealers in dry goods, groceries, grain, hay, &c. Since January 2d, they have shipped 8,000 bushels of grain and 340 tons of hay. Charles Glecker and Dr. O. P. Stevenson both deal extensively in dry goods and groceries. Shreve & Scott are the druggists of the place, and are young men deserving of success. Dickey & Kesior are the proprietors of the "O. K. Mills." John Meier seems to be the leading painter of the place. A. T. Church is the Railroad agent and telegraph operator, and like the Station agents generally along the line of the Des Moines Valley Railroad, is a gentleman in the true sense of that term. George Beeson, the "Des Moines House," is a No. 1 landlord.

The people of Farmington are expecting the completion, at an early day, of the Iowa & Missouri State Line Railroad. About forty miles are graded, and the work is now progressing. The friends of this road think there is a prospect of securing a grant of land to aid in its completion. E. Robinson is President; S. B. Tuttle, Secretary, and George Schramm, Treasurer. These gentlemen, with the directory, are doing all in their power to push the enterprise ahead as rapidly as possible. From this point, this road is to run west to Nebraska City, and east to connect with the Pennsylvania Central.

Another company is organized to construct a railroad from Mt. Pleasant to some point on the D. V. Road. A survey is about to be made from this place to Salem on the line of a survey already made from Mt. Pleasant to Bonaparte. Of this company, Gov. E. P. Lowe is President, and S. B. Tuttle of this place is one of the Directors. Governor Lowe is earnestly engaged in forwarding the enterprise. It will also be remembered that, some two years ago, a company was organized of which Senator James W. Grimes was elected President, to build a railroad from Burlington to Farmington. With all these railroad projects on the tapis, Farmington is hopefully looking forward for the "good time coming."

Col. O. H. P. Scott, who owns the water power at this point, contemplates the erection of a mill and factory at an early day. A gentleman is preparing to manufacture quicklime on a scale of sufficient magnitude to supply the Des Moines valley. The lime stone here is peculiarly adapted to that purpose.

About three-quarters of a mile southeast of the town, is the somewhat noted artesian well, on which a company here, several years ago, expended some £5,000. They bored to the depth of 710 feet, passing through, at 100 feet from the surface, what is said to be a vein of pure white marble, equal to any found in the United States, and 40 feet in thickness. At a depth of 700 feet the water rushed in with such force as to throw the drill to one side and stop much further prosecution of the work. A pipe or tube has been inserted, which throws the water some feet above the surface. The water is warm, very clear, and has a slight taste of epsom salts, or something similar. It is used by invalids in the vicinity, and it is said, with beneficial results.

SUMMIT.—The location of this village is on the D. V. R. R., four miles from Keosauqua.—It has a good hotel, kept by Geo. W. Miller, who is also the Postmaster and keeps a store. The name of the Postoffice is Mt. Zion. J. K. Waller is the efficient station agent, U. S. Express agent, and operator at this point. Moss & Beardsley keep a produce and provision store, and are extensively engaged in shipping hay, grain, eggs, &c. During the last year they have shipped 500 tons of hay, 600 bushels of clover seed, 6000 bushels of timothy seed, 15,000 bushels of oats, 25 cars of wheat and 4 cars of rye. During the egg season they have shipped 9,000 dozens of eggs per week.—There is a lumber yard, 3 stores, and 2 blacksmith shops. Price of lots from £50 to £150.—There is a saw mill in the immediate vicinity.

BIRMINGHAM.—This place is situated in the north part of the county, 11 miles from Keosauqua and 5 from Fairfield. It has a population of about 800. The country around it is unsurpassed in fertility, and is in the highest state of cultivation. Magnificent farms and splendid orchards are to be seen in every direction. All the indications of wealth and comfort are visible. The town is situated on a rolling prairie, with plenty of timber and coal convenient, and is supplied with the purest water from wells usually from 20 to 40 feet deep. The buildings are mostly frame, neatly painted white, but there are also a few brick buildings. The town is regularly incorporated. Its officers are: Dr J N Norris, Mayor; J W Latham, Recorder; Wm Trotter, H Huffman, and J J Randall, Council; and Casper Miller, Marshal.

One of the attractive features of the village is its delightful park, neatly enclosed with a circular fence, and ornamented with forest trees. It is now being provided with a stand, seats, and other conveniences for public meetings.

There are three churches, to-wit: Methodist, Old School Presbyterian, and United Presbyterian. All of them are neat and commodious frame buildings. This place has an enviable reputation for its educational advantages. It has a college in successful operation, in which all the higher branches are taught. The college building is a substantial three story brick structure, and finished with all the modern conveniences for the accommodation of pupils of both sexes. It is in charge of Rev. G. P. Bergen as Principal, with competent assistants.—During the last term over 100 students were in attendance. There are also two other schools in operation most of the time, one in the German and the other in a brick building, each of good size.

Birmingham has five general stores, 3 drug stores, 2 hotels, 4 blacksmith shops, 3 wagon shops, 1 plow shop, 4 cabinet shops, 2 harness shops, 1 artist, 1 tannery, 1 shoemaker, 2 milliners, 1 stove and tin ware dealer, 1 family grocery, 3 physicians, 1 lawyer, 1 cooper, 1 tailor, 1 livery stable, and 1 establishment for the sale of agricultural implements.

In business enterprise, O. L. Moss, is conceded to be the leading man of the place. He has in connection with D. C. Cramer an extensive woolen factory in operation, also a large flouring mill, saw mill, lath and shingle mill, blacksmith and wagon shops dry goods store, and a farm of 500 acres. He has constantly in his employment from 40 to 50 men. Beside the above branches of business, he sometimes packs pork, and deals largely in stock.

Among those engaged in other branches of business, who are deserving of special mention, are the following: J J Randall, general store, and dealer in stoves and tin-ware; W G Travis & Bro., general store; Huston, Duffield & Son, general store; W C Davis, family grocery; W B Young and Calhoon & Hope, druggists; S G Torrance, cabinet maker and manufacturer of window blinds: A W Silvis, enlisted maker and inventor of an improved hand loom. A Cole is the veteran landlord of the "Birmingham Hotel." He has been engaged in the business 50 years, and knows all about it. D Q Calhoon keeps the "City Hotel," and has a good reputation as a landlord. Our legislative friend, Hon. Joel Brown, has associated himself as one of the firm of Moss, Shott & Brown, for the manufacture of plows and wagons on a large scale. Birmingham may be set down as a live village, and with such men as we have named as her leading spirits, she will continue to prosper.

MILTON.—This place is situated on the prairie in Jackson township, near the Southwest corner of the county, about 14 miles from Keosauqua. It has a Postoffice, 3 dry goods and grocery stores, 2 drug stores, 2 blacksmiths, 1 wagon maker, 3 cabinet shops, 2 shoe makers, 1 hotel, and 1 saw mill. Its population is about 100, and the business of the place is estimated at about £100,000.

WINCHESTER.—This place is four miles southeast of Birmingham. It has a Postoffice 2 general stores and a blacksmith shop. It is one of the oldest villages in the county, and although in the midst of a splendid agricultural region, has seen better days. One of the rich farmers of Iowa, Timothy Day, whose herds of fine blooded cattle have a reputation throughout the West, lives near this place.

I have now made the tour of Van Buren county, and have endeavored to set forth fairly, from personal observation, its material wealth and resources, and to do justice to the different points visited. The reader will agree that the element requisite to elevate the country to a high position in the various industrial pursuits, exist within her borders in great profusion, and only wait for enterprise and capital to develop them. A. R. P.

Modamin, Harrison county; Oakland Mills, Henry county; Olin, Mitchell county; Tracy, Dallas county; Bladinsburg, Wapello county; Woolstock, Wright county; sheffield, Dubuque county; Rock Creek, Mitchell county; Unionburg, Harrison county; Horn, Jasper county; Meros, Mitchell county; Griffinson-ville, Appanoose county; Ahamont, Shelby county; Warren Grove, Jasper county; Honey Creek, Pottawattamie county; Boyleston; Henry county; Hockbery, Floyd county; Viona, Humboldt county; Washia, Cherokee county; Alaska, Union county.

RE-ESTABLISHED.

Sigel, Clayton county; Corills Grove, Jones county; Copl, Johnson county; Ione, Iowa county; Van Dyke, Des Moines Co.

DISCONTINUED.

Sharpsburg, Mills county—nearest office, Montezuma; Bottom, Monona county—nearest office Onawa City; Cedar Grove, Lucas county—nearest office, Chariton; Dairy Grove, Jasper county—nearest office, Newton; Otterville, Buchanan county—nearest office, Independence.

NAMES CHANGED.

New Jefferson, Green county, changed to Jefferson; and Cedarville, Washington county, to Lexington.