

Early Pioneers of Iowa

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adjourned to meet on the second floor of the State House at 1:30 P. M.

At 2:00 P. M. the members of the association were conducted into the hall of the House of Representatives as the guests of the Forty-second General Assembly. Lieutenant Governor Clem F. Kimball and A. B. Funk presided jointly. An address of welcome was made by Senator Lloyd Ellis and a reply by H. W. Byers, after which the formal address of the occasion was delivered by Burton E. Sweet, as follows:

EARLY PIONEERS OF IOWA

Mr. Chairman, Members of the General Assembly, and members of the Pioneer Lawmakers' Association of Iowa:

At the outset I wish to express to you my profound appreciation for the compliment that you have paid me in calling upon me to address you upon this occasion.

As I look about me today I realize that nothing in this world can pause or stay, that there is unceasing change everywhere, and that this fundamental principle applies to men as well as events. Time is a great leveler, and it takes a very unusual man to be thought of or even spoken of one hundred years after his death. Not a member that served with me in this House twenty-seven years ago is a member of the present assembly. Some of the men I associated with then in public life have held high positions of trust and confidence in our state and nation. Some of them have been judges, governors, congressmen, senators, and members of the cabinet of the president of the United States. Some of them have succumbed to the ravages of disease and have gone to the Undiscovered Country. Some of them have returned to the ordinary walks of life, and have taken an active part in the affairs of their communities and counties, and have given of their best to the worthy citizenship of the state. Some of them were lawyers, doctors, farmers, artisans, and business men. All of them have played their parts well, and have contributed in no small degree to our present standing, achievements, and glory as one of the leading commonwealths of the nation.

Iowa, as a state, is unusually favored by way of location, soil, climate and resources. The other day I read in Holy Writ of the Garden of Eden. It is described as being a place where every tree and herb grew that was pleasant to the sight of man and good for food. It is also recorded that a river flowed through the Garden, which was divided into four heads or sources. It is described as an ideal spot for the abode of man. That such a place did exist on the earth at one time, the Bible is abundant proof. Where it existed is lost in the night of antiquity. Even tradition cannot assist us in finding it. As to where it

is located, scientists are silent. Theologians long ago have abandoned looking for it. They now say, "We know it did exist, but just when and where it existed we do not know and neither are we concerned, for when it existed and where it existed does not now enter into the salvation of man."

By a strang coincident, a few days ago, I picked up a book written by Agassiz, the great naturalist and thinker, and to my surprise I read the following:

"First born among the continents, though so much later in culture and civilization, than some of more recent birth, America, so far as her physical history is concerned, has been falsely denominated the new world. Hers was the first dry land lifted out of the waters; hers the first shores washed by the ocean that enveloped all the earth besides; and while Europe was represented only by islands rising here and there above the sea, America already stretched one unbroken line of land from Nova Scotia to the far west."

After I read this, I began to do a little thinking on my own hook. I reasoned that the Garden of Eden could not have been located in Asia or on the banks of the wandering Nile. Neither could it have been located in Europe or any of the small islands of the sea. Then I remembered that it was written in Holy Writ that the waters were gathered together in one place. That the dry land appeared and that the Garden of Eden was upon that dry land. I reasoned then that if the Garden of Eden was upon the first dry land, it must have been located upon the North American continent.

Having located it upon this continent, I began to look for evidence to determine if possible, just where it was on this continent. I glanced in the pages of Holy Writ and I found that a river ran through the Garden of Eden and thence it was parted and became divided into four heads or sources. I also read that one of these rivers compassed a land where there was gold. That one of the rivers branched to the east. I began to study the map of the United States. I saw the Mississippi River. I saw the three great tributaries, the Missouri, the Platte, and the Ohio. The conclusion was irresistible that it was located in the Mississippi Valley. The Missouri which finds its source in the Rocky Mountains and which compasses great gold fields, the Ohio which branches off to the far east and finds its source in the Alleghanies, are evidently two of the rivers. I knew then it must be in the Mississippi Valley, and I asked myself, "Where in the Mississippi Valley?"

I knew it must be a place where trees, herbs and vegetation grew in abundance. It must have a healthful and invigorating climate. It must be a place upon which nature had showered the bounties of heaven. It must be a place lit by the smile of God.

I then turned my attention to Iowa. Iowa! Magnificent Iowa! Bounded by two mighty rivers! Surely, if there ever was a spot es-

pecially prepared for the abode of man, it is right here in our own native state.

We have a soil from two to four feet in depth which is not excelled anywhere in the world. We have less waste land than any other state in the Union. We have building rock strewn all over our farms in just the right amount to meet the demands of building purposes. A part of our state is underlaid with coal to supply us with fuel. Each season our farms are covered with waving golden grain and with corn fields as far as the eye can reach. And we behold each season cattle grazing on our thousand hills. Is it any wonder, then, that standing here in the presence of all these resources, with all these evidences of prosperity, of happiness, of thrift and enterprise about me, that I would naturally draw the conclusion that Iowa is and was the Garden of Eden?

I have indulged in this little bit of pleasantry to bring forcibly to your minds the advantages that we enjoy as a state by way of location, climate, and resources, and the immeasurable blessings that should naturally flow to a people so providentially favored.

The development and settlement of Iowa, the center of a great nation; the development and settlement of the Mississippi Valley, now the granary of the world; in short, the reclaiming of the West! How boundless the theme, how inspiring the subject! The rapidity with which the change has been wrought, the stupendous character of the transition that has taken place in the last seventy years can scarcely be compassed by the imagination of man in its wildest flights. It was an extraordinary migration. You may search the pages of history in vain to find a single parallel.

In order that we may get a just conception of what it meant to settle this great state, we must study the lives and characters of the men and women who participated in that settlement and spent their lives in assisting in the development of this territory. We must go with them to their huts and log cabins, with their dirt floors. We must go with them on to their farms, and seat ourselves at their firesides. We must live again the lives that they lived. We must endure the hardships and privations that they endured. We must sympathize with them in their sufferings and rejoice with them in their triumphs. We must be with them each morning at the rising of the sun. We must be with them at noonday as they partake of their frugal fare. We must be with them each evening as the sun sinks to rest in the western heavens. We must look in upon them during the long winter evenings and behold father, mother, sister and brother at the family fireside. We must behold them in the winter's fiercest storms when the boreal blasts sweep down from the North, and the blizzards rage. We must behold them when the summer's sunshine bathes all in a resplendent light.

As I stand here today in the Capitol building of Iowa, located in the heart of the nation, I cannot help but exclaim, what a magnificent

story to tell is the settlement and development of this great commonwealth! A story of courage, of self-denial, of frugality, of enterprise, of enthusiasm, which challenges the admiration of all the sons of men. Surely here is an example for civilized man in all succeeding ages to emulate and follow. Surely here is a scene for painters and poets. And as the mind dwells upon the scene the imagination kindles at the retrospect and we are transported back to the time less than one hundred years ago, when this whole territory was a vast unexplored and uninhabited wilderness. A land, so to speak, fresh from the hand of the Infinite. A land where white man had never trod before. Here was a vast area of land that slept for centuries untouched by civilized man.

The morning sun rose for thousands of years daily and its beams gilded naught but a boundless expanse of rolling prairies, covered in winter by snow and sleet and in summer billowed by waving grass which resembled the waves of a mighty ocean. Here in this very state of ours at that time, along the banks of our rivers, roamed herds of American bison. Here the deer and antelope bounded at will. Here, at the lonely midnight hour the coyotes set up their dismal yell. Here "the rank thistle nodded in the wind, and the wild fox dug his hole unscared." Here the smoke from the wigwams of the American Indian rose heavenward each morning and evening, and was lost in the blue dome of the azure sky. Here in autumn time the prairie fires raged at will, yet molested not a single white man. Here rivers rolled on in solemn silence to the sea, but they turned not a spindle. Not a city, not a village, not a church, not a single house or schoolhouse stood upon the banks of our streams. Our soil had never felt the enlivening touch of the plowshare. The sparse timber that skirted the banks of our rivers showed no signs of the woodsman's ax, or gave any evidence of civilized man. Everywhere was unrestrained nature.

As I stand here in imagination, in this great wilderness, hundreds of miles from civilization, surrounded on every hand by a magnificent solitude, profound, unspeakable, a dead calm seems all the world contained. It is the Universe. Lo! As I stand here I am aware of an inexpressible premonition that something momentous is about to happen. I harken and I hear a distant sound as of the rush and roar of mighty waters. As I listen, I can hear the tramp, tramp, tramp of the army of civilization, as it is sweeping westward toward the setting sun. I look about me, and I behold the terror stricken face of the Red Man. He gazes for a moment toward the east as if in defiance. Then looks hurriedly about him, and for a moment he gazes out across the land that we now inhabit, wraps his blanket about him, bids a last farewell to his happy hunting ground, the graves of his ancestors, and flees hopelessly and swiftly westward before the onward march of civilization. His disappearance reminds me of the flight of wild birds in their mad rush before the oncoming, the awe inspiring storm. I see the American bison, deer, and antelope fleeing as it were, from the wrath of man.

They and civilized man cannot long inhabit the same territory. I look again, and I see the great army of civilization on its triumphant march across the states now known as Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Illinois. I see the covered wagons as they cross the Mississippi River and slowly make their toilsome journey into Iowa and invade our prairies. I see them felling trees on the banks of our streams. I see them in their scattered settlements along our rivers. I behold civilized man contending with crude conditions. I see them battling with their privations. I see them in all their primitiveness. I behold them laying the foundations of a mighty inland empire, and above it all and through it all it seems to me that I can see the hand of God directing the great course of events.

That applies to my ancestors, and your ancestors, and to you whose locks have been silvered by time. Many of your fathers, many of you, left the land of your childhood, the homes of your fathers, and the tombs of your ancestors and settled in splendid Iowa. Many of you came from countries across the sea.

I look again, and where once was all solitude, and a vast wilderness I behold fields of waving golden grain, corn fields extending as far as the eye can reach. I see towns and cities springing up like the flowers of the tropics. I see great lines of railroads constructed across our prairies, bringing the markets of the world to our very door. I see inventions leap like magic from the brains of men. I see the sturdy pioneers take part in a great Civil War for the preservation of the Union and the Flag. I see telephone and telegraph lines constructed connecting us with the peoples of every civilized country. I see the state filled with horseless chariots, which run like lightning. I see flying machines like white-winged ships sailing the ocean of the sky. I hear mysterious voices emanating from thousands of radios throughout the land. I see the wilderness turned into a blooming, fruitful garden. I see a new country, settled with steam and electricity, and where once was desolation and dreariness, I behold schools and books, and colleges, and universities and churches. I see factories and workshops filled with contented workmen. I behold order brought out of chaos. I behold the establishment of township, municipal and state governments, based upon the consent of the governed. I witness the convening of legislative assemblies, and constitutional conventions, and the formation of representative government. I behold the establishment of courts and tribunals of justice. I behold thousands of happy homes. I behold the faces of millions of free men and women.

I am proud of the fact that my ancestors took part in the development of this country. My mother was born in the state of Vermont, and my father in Ohio. They came to Iowa in 1867. My father's people came from the state of Massachusetts. And their tombstones are like milestones along the highway of our national development, as the mighty

tide of immigration rolled westward toward the setting sun, and our nation swept on to empire and to greatness. I rejoiced that they lived in an extraordinary age, and were early pioneers.

The early pioneers of Iowa were not attracted hither by the lure of gold, wealth, station or power. They were not imbued with the spirit of conquest or the acquisition of dominions. They came here to establish homes for themselves and their children. They were actuated by the highest motives of conscience, of parental duty, and religious responsibility. They looked upon the home as sacred and the prime unit of representative government. There is nothing just like it, or more heroic, in all history.

They were not ignorant of political institutions, civil liberty, and the teachings of christianity. Everything was civilized but the physical world about them. Within their hearts, brains and souls, they contained in substance all that the ages have done for human government. They possessed an indomitable courage and perseverance. They were independent and self-reliant. They were imbued with the spirit that actuated the early settlers of this country. They were filled with admiration for the deeds and the characters of their forebears. They had the advantages of being familiar with the traditions, examples and experiences of two hundred years of pioneering on this continent. Their conception of governmental institutions was in accord with the founders of the republic. They had a keen sense of right and wrong, and believed in the equality of all men before the law, regardless of position, power or wealth. They believed in the principles of liberty, justice, and equality advocated by the fathers. They asked no special favors from the state or nation, and they expected none. All they demanded was that the government protect them in their liberties and property, and guarantee to them an equal opportunity and chance in the race of life.

The pioneer lawmakers in drafting our State Constitution and in formulating our early laws, kept in mind the fundamental principles of government, set forth in the Federal Constitution. They realized that they were not establishing a business concern when they drafted our State Constitution, and gave us the form of state government under which we live. They adhered at all times to the doctrine "Render unto business the things that pertain to business, and unto government the things that pertain to government."

Let us have faith in Iowa. Let us remember that we live in an agricultural state. That agriculture must have its place in the sun. That notwithstanding that fact all the various interests of the state are inseparably bound together. That industries cannot succeed if the laborer is poorly paid. That transportation cannot prosper if agriculture declines. All of the various interests of this state must be considered, "for the benefit of one is the benefit of all, and the neglect of one is the neglect of all."

The early pioneers are fast passing into the shadows of the eternal

night. Their course on earth will soon be run. Who could ask for a more glorious existence than they experienced? Who would wish that they had lived in another age, or in a different clime? To be sure they toiled, but they were not slaves or vassals. They were free but they did not live unto themselves alone. They ruled, but they were not tyrants or despots. They endured hardships and privations, but they were not overcome; they were triumphant. The prairies were desolate and dreary at times, but they experienced a touch of nature vouchsafed to but few. They were influenced and educated by cloud and star, by storm and sun, and every winding stream. The absolutism and equality of nature became a part of their very being and mental makeup. Their deductions and conclusions on matters of statecraft were usually sound for they were brought in daily contact with the inexorable laws of nature. They reasoned naturally from cause to effect, and consequently they discerned man's true relation to man, and dealt largely with fundamentals of government. They transmitted to us a great inheritance. Let us then admonish those who shall rise to fill our places in the long line of generations yet to come, to follow in the footsteps of the early pioneers, to be guided by their precepts and governed by their examples.

Let them draw inspiration from the lives and characters of the early pioneers who dedicated their services to the founding of homes and the establishment of representative government in the state of Iowa—the best form of government yet devised by the mind of man.

If they do all these things the doctrines and sentiments of a Lenin and Trotsky will not gain a foothold on our soil. If they do all these things a Mussolini cannot rise in their state or nation to subvert our liberties and dominate our government.

We welcome future generations to the great state of Iowa. We welcome them to the inheritance which has been ours to enjoy. We welcome them to the benefits of good government. We welcome them to our fertile soil and verdant prairies, that they may share with us in the fruits of honest toil and the just rewards of agriculture. "We welcome them to the treasures of science and the delights of learning." We welcome them to our homes in agricultural Iowa. We welcome them to the innumerable blessings of husbandry and the joys and delights which are to be found in the Garden of Eden.

Informal speeches then followed by Senators F. C. Gilchrist and C. F. Johnston and Representatives E. A. Grimwood and Francis Johnson on behalf of the joint assembly, and by George M. Titus, E. D. Chassell, and Shirley Gilliland on behalf of the association. E. R. Zeller, who was an assistant secretary of the House in 1884 and a member in 1909 and 1911, then spoke, after which the joint assembly adjourned.

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