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Comment

John Ely Briggs

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Comment by the Editor

BATTLEFIELDS OF IOWA

In a prehistoric sense all Iowa is a battlefield. Here through the countless ages of geologic time the air and the water have been ever at odds with the earth. Land has risen out of the sea, the hills have resisted erosion; but time and again the destructive forces have vanquished their constructive foes and carried the earth back into the ocean. Animal life came into existence, and over the surface of Iowa the constant struggle to eat and escape being eaten has waged ever since. No one knows what vanished races have roamed these prairies: no one can foretell the strife of the future.

As yet there are no great battlefields of modern wars within this State. Numerous collections of arrow-heads and battle-axes proclaim fearful Indian combats, but Iowa soil has seldom been invaded by a hostile military force since the advent of white men. War has often brought misery and sorrow and death to the people of Iowa; but no city has ever been pillaged, no factories burned or fields devastated by a merciless army.

Only once has the enemy penetrated far into Iowa. It was in the days when George Washington was just learning to talk that an expedition of eighty-four Frenchmen and over two hundred Indians set

out from Montreal to rid the country of a troublesome band of Sacs and Foxes who had sought refuge in the wilderness beyond the Mississippi. After months of marching, Captain de Noyelles and his followers found the Indian encampment; and there, near the present site of the State capital, sometime in March, 1735, they engaged the savages in battle. Two Frenchmen and several Indians were killed before a truce was made and the invaders withdrew.

More than half a century passed before another conflict occurred between Indians and white men in Iowa. Early in September, 1812, a party of Sacs under Black Hawk, arrayed in British uniforms and supplied with British powder, laid siege to Fort Madison, the only American stronghold in Iowa. For nearly a year the little garrison resisted intermittent attacks by the Indians. Several soldiers were killed; and finally, on September 3, 1813, the Americans set fire to the fort and escaped down the river. Later in the War of 1812 Major Zachary Taylor with about three hundred and fifty men was repulsed by some British artillery and a large force of Indians in the battle of Credit Island on the present site of Davenport.

All through the Civil War there was danger that Iowa might be invaded by guerrilla bands from Missouri. The Southern Border Brigade prevented any serious trouble; but once in October, 1864, a few desperadoes entered Davis County bent upon horse-stealing, plunder, and murder. Led, it is claimed, by

William C. Quantrill, the most blood-thirsty of all border ruffians, the raiders proceeded westward. There was great consternation in Iowa, but before the home guards could be mustered the guerrillas departed. That was the most recent invasion of Iowa.

J. E. B.