

**Iowa: the First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase; From Its  
Discovery to the Admission of the State Into the Union, 1673-1846**

ISSN 0003-4827

Material in the public domain. No restrictions on use.



This work has been identified with a [Creative Commons Public Domain Mark 1.0](#).

---

**Recommended Citation**

"Iowa: the First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase; From Its Discovery to the Admission of the State Into the Union, 1673-1846." *The Annals of Iowa* 7 (1905), 150-152.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.3196>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

## NEW PUBLICATIONS.

*Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase; From its Discovery to the Admission of the State into the Union, 1673-1846. By William Salter. Illustrated with Maps and Plans. Pp. 289., Chicago, A. C. McClurg & Co., 1905.*

Within the covers of this attractively bound volume, Dr. Salter gives us an interesting account of the beginnings and of the development of Iowa's government prior to the State's admission into the Union. In a rapid, easily flowing narrative he takes his readers along the routes traveled by the noted French and American explorers, *ad interim* introducing them to the aborigines, and exhibiting more or less of the varying experiences of the French, Spanish and English governments in their attempts to grasp and to control the vast reaches of territory beyond the Father of Waters. The major portion of the volume is taken up with the evolution of the forms of governmental control, with the methods of procedure and the chief incidents in their establishment and transition from one to another under the rule of Congress. Thus in concise, compact chapters we may trace the growth of the State while the land and the pioneers were under the jurisdiction of Louisiana, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan and Wisconsin. As the author was especially familiar with the chief men of the State, during the first twenty-five years of its admission to the Union, one wishes that the narrative could have been extended down to the close of the career of Senator Grimes. We have, however, no sympathy, and but little patience with the notion that these pages are less valuable or less interesting because they relate the story of a dim and distant past, but little considered by the hurrying workers of the present. We can not appreciate the vigorous development of to-day unless we know the origins and conditions of growth, the streams of influence, the character of the stocks that entered into and constituted the fibre and stature of the State in its primitive days. If we would know the man we must understand his ancestry, infancy and youth.

Dr. Salter deals with the personal and political elements dominant and conspicuous in our territorial history, rather than with the growth and character of institutions or with the gathering, flux and differentiation of social forces and aggregates. The evolution of laws and constitutions, the influence of climate, soil and topography, of ancestral traditions of religion and industry are only matters of incidental consideration with him, as they may serve to illuminate the motives or to determine the conditions of success or failure of the chief men of the dominant movements in the upbuilding of the State. The struggles of the pioneers for their new homes and their economic advancement, the contests of politicians for office and preferment, the play and counterplay of immediate human interests, constitute the vital energy of laws and institutions. We can not understand the nature of institutions unless we know the character of the

men chiefly concerned with the conduct of the State. Between them, action and reaction are continuous, although in the constant variation the personal or political factors seem to be the more important. Perhaps this is so because human interests center chiefly in the personal element. Because Dr. Salter was a pioneer and knew the life of the men who formed the territory, because he was the intimate friend and counselor of Senators Dodge and Grimes, these pages are rich in personal reminiscences that are both instructive and interesting.

This narrative is not marred by the constant intrusion of "big talk" about the State and her citizens. The author does not insist *ad nauseam*, as so many of our chroniclers do, that Iowa is the greatest, the richest, the best State in the Union, that her climate is perfect, her soil the most fertile, her scenery incomparable, her people the sons and daughters of the elect in character, ability and achievement. He does not lack an abiding faith and buoyant pride in Iowa and her institutions, but he does what the true artist does, he makes you feel the grandeur of the State and the splendid character of the pioneers and their work by the telling force of his narrative.

The author does not indulge himself or his readers in the consideration or exploitation of controverted questions. He does not debate whether Joliet and Marquette or Groseilliers and Radisson first saw Iowa. No more does he bother himself concerning the particular spot whereon Joliet and his companion first set foot in the State. He contents himself with conclusions that have been more or less commonly held. When his narrative comes down to the times in which he himself played a part, he shows somewhat the inclination of his prejudices and sympathies, but only slightly. In the title he has given this volume he indicates his attitude towards slavery; and he shows frankly that his sympathy was with those who opposed the extension of the iniquitous institution. We suspect that Dr. Salter had, and still has, some vigorous antipathies respecting men and measures in the State's formative period, but his readers must be lynx-eyed to detect them and they can do so only by inference. His intimate friendship with the leaders of the two great political parties that differed so seriously on the one vital issue doubtless taught him to reserve harsh judgments respecting motives of conduct. Persons whose character or conduct he dislikes he is wont to leave alone, but if he says anything he is prone to refer to their commendable traits or accomplishments. He seldom puts forth adverse criticism. In the case of Governor Lucas, however, he does record a somewhat unfavorable judgment. He sides wholly with the legislature in the controversy over the Governor's vetoes; and he gives the impression that the Governor was needlessly perverse and stiff-necked in his course. In this it seems to us that he does not deal fairly with our first executive.

Another interesting phase of this history is Dr. Salter's reticence relative to the "views" and "works" of recent historians and investigators. He mentions them almost not at all. It cannot be that he knows them not for the readers of THE ANNALS and the HISTORICAL RECORD know that he

has read widely and studied minutely the literature of the State's history. Whether these recent "investigations" are too deep for him or have no attraction for him, or whether he takes no stock in them, and his silence signifies the scholar's disdain or christian charity, the curious may conjecture.

The chief complaint that will be made concerning this volume, we surmise, is that the author has kept himself too severely in check. In our homely vernacular he never "lets himself go". His crisp, concise style suggests constant repression. This is the sure sign of the scholarly historian, whom we prefer to the spluttering sentimentalist; but in this instance it seems to have resulted in our deprivation. He could deal more intensively as well as more extensively with many of the subjects of his story without detriment to his design. Despite this, however, Dr. Salter has given us by far the best narrative of Iowa's political history. Nothing heretofore published is comparable with it in point of style and scholarship.

F. I. H.

---

Under the pseudonym, "Wolcott Johnson," Johnson Brigham, State Librarian of Iowa, has added to the world of letters a little book of more than passing interest. From the standpoint of advanced years, Mr. Brigham has portrayed, with true fidelity of nature, in "An Old Man's Idyl",\* the not unusual or overdrawn happenings of every day life. While his own family and fireside have furnished the inspiration, the recital is none the less pleasing; in fact, there is ever a keener enjoyment in the recognition of the *real* incident, which, possessing the true ring, can neither be simulated nor concealed by the narrator's art.

To those familiar with Mr. Brigham's home life, "An Old Man's Idyl" is but the natural expression of one who lives deeply and loves devotedly; to those without the circle of acquaintanceship, there is the charm of simple and homely incident, entertainingly told; the word-painting, with its artistic touches of pathos and humor; the flesh-and-blood coloring, and enough of narrative to hold the reader's close attention to the final pages.

Mr. Brigham's previous work in literary lines has been recognized by high-class magazines. It seems almost regrettable that his efforts did not earlier assume more permanent form; but, as "An Old Man's Idyl" is the expression of his maturer years and experiences, possibly at no previous period could he so feelingly have entered into its spirit, and, through its recital, enlisted so generally the sympathy of his readers.

C. A. N.

---

\*A. C. McClurg & Co., Publishers, Chicago, 1905.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.