

Old Letters

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crat in politics, but supported President Lincoln, who was a relative of his by marriage.

Todd was in partnership with a man of means who lived in St. Louis. The firm name was Frost, Todd & Co. They had stores at Sioux Point, across the Big Sioux, at Vermillion, at Yankton Agency and Fort Randall.

Todd was a tall man, but slender. His health was not good. He had been sickly from birth. He wore while here a full beard, reddish in color, like his hair. Educated at West Point he was a very capable man. He always passed as a gentleman, was sociable and very popular. His one fault was a common one here at that time, he couldn't let whisky alone.

OLD LETTERS.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SALTER.

I.

GEORGE DAVENPORT TO GEORGE W. JONES.

George Davenport was born in England. Came to the United States in 1804; served in the United States army, 1805-15; came to Rock Island, 1816, where he built a trading-house and was an Indian trader for the American Fur Company. In 1835 George W. Jones was delegate to Congress from Michigan Territory, to which what is now Iowa was attached by act of Congress, June 28, 1834. In 1836-'8, he was delegate to Congress from Wisconsin Territory, which then extended from Lake Michigan to the Missouri river.¹

The following is a literal transcript of the letters:

Rock Island, Illinois
Dec. 20, 1835

To the Honble
Geo. W. Jones
House of Representatives
Washington City

Dear Sir:

KeOkuk the principle chief of the Sac & Foxes has had a letter mail to Govoner Reynolds requesting him to lay it before the presi-

¹*Annals*, First Series, I, 99; Thirtd Series, III, 392. The "Flint Hill Settlement" was what is now Burlington.

dent wishing to sell his reserve on the Iowa River. You cannot confer a greater favour on the settlers of your territory, than by advocating its purchase, it will be necessary for Congress to make an appropriation for the purchase.

KeOkuk and the chiefs wish verrey much to visite Washington City and make sale of the reserve to commissioners appointed at that place. They wish to visite the United States at their own expence paying it out of the money they are to receive for their lands, rather than not be permitted to come on. You will oblige me if you will forward the wish of the Indians, it will be the greatest benefit you can confer on your frendes in the Territory and particularly flint hill Settlement, as the country is valuable and verrey much wanted by the Settlers.

Will you please to confer with Gov. Reynold on the subject, who is verrey friendly to the Indians and a well wisher to the prosperity of our western territory—

I am Respect'ly your friend

GEO. DAVENPORT.

Washington City

Feb. 6, 1837.

Honbl Geo. W. Jones

Sir.

I understand that two Indians is hear Belongin to a small band of Indians of the Sac Tribe that left the nation some years since and now reside on the Missouri

I am informed that thay want the government to assign part of the annuertys Belongin to the nation to them.

The Chiefs of the Sac & Fox nation have been making application for the last five years for premission from the government to com on to Washington City to Settle the question respecting their treatays and Boundrey lines, but goverment has from time to time refused them premission, and the agent and Others advised them not to go to Washington without premission. that the goverment would not council or receive them if they did.—

This being the impression on the minds of the Sac & Fox Chiefs they would think it unjust for the department to make aney alterations respecting their annuertys without their consent.

be pleased to impress uppon the department the propriety of Referring the complaint of those Indians to Govnor Doge Superintendent of Indian affairs, whear the depitation of the Sac of the Missouri could meet the chiefs of the Sac & Foxes and the settlement made in this maner would be satisfactory to the nation, but I hope the department will do nothing to affect the rights of the Sac

& Fox nation without giving the chiefs an opportunity to be heard, not one of the band thats on the Missouri was a party in making the treaty for which those annuertys is paid to the nation.

Respectfully your Ob. Ser.

GEO. DAVENPORT.

II.

HENRY DODGE TO JEREMIAH SMITH.

Jeremiah Smith was a member of the last legislature of Michigan Territory, which met at Green Bay, and of the first legislature of Wisconsin Territory, which held its first session at Belmont. It was upon his promise to erect at Burlington a suitable building for the next session of the Territorial legislature of Wisconsin, that the legislature voted to meet there. He put up the building in 1837 at his own expense, and the legislature met therein until it was destroyed by fire on a wintry night. Congress voted an appropriation to reimburse him for the loss, but another man of his name got off with the money. He had been an Indian trader, and was present at the treaty made by Governor Dodge with the Sacs and Foxes, Sept. 28, 1836, by which they sold to the United States their reserve on the Iowa river, and they agreed to pay out of their annuities in the course of ten years what they owed to various traders, including Jeremiah Smith. He had a farm immediately west of the original boundary of Burlington, over which the city has since been extended. Black Hawk was a visitor there the year before his death; the cabin in which he was entertained still stands in the rear of the home of Mrs. Amelia Hay, 2700 West Avenue, the eldest daughter of Jeremiah Smith, born in Burlington, April 18, 1835.

Superintendency of Indian Affairs
for the Territory of Wisconsin
Mineral Point, June 7, 1837.

Major Jeremiah Smith
Burlington, Des Moines Co., W. T.

Sir—

The Senate of the United States having confirmed and ratified the Treaty with the Sacs and Foxes of the 28th September, 1836, with an amendment to the Second article thereof providing for the payment of \$48,458 87-100 to enable said Indians to pay such debts as may

be ascertained by the Superintendent to be justly due from them to individuals, in lieu of the residue of said article following the word "dollars" in the third line, I have appointed from the 28th day of June inst to the tenth day of July next at Mineral Point for the examination and adjustment of all debts due from them to individuals, when and where you will please to attend in person or by proxy with your account properly authenticated for settlement.

Very respectfully

Your obt. servt

HENRY DODGE
Supt. In Affs

III.

WILLIAM B. SLAUGHTER¹ TO JEREMIAH SMITH AND GEORGE W. JONES.

Mineral Point, Feb. 20th 1838

Major Jeremiah Smith
Burlington, Wisconsin Ty.

Enclosed is the letter I informed you I would write to Col. Jones in reference to your loss by the fire. I have no doubt that Col. Jones will do everything in his power to aid you, and he can do a great deal at Washington. I do not believe we could send a man there who would accomplish more than he.

Yr friend

W. B. SLAUGHTER.

Mineral Point, Feb. 20th 1838

Hon. George W. Jones, H. of Rep. Washington City

I intended long since to have written to you on the subject of Major Jeremiah Smith's loss by the burning of the temporary Capitol constructed by him for the accommodation of the Legislature of Wisconsin. It is almost unnecessary to say to you anything in reference to the building itself, for you have seen it and know that it was calculated for the purpose, and that such a building could not have cost at the time it was built much less than eight or nine thousand dollars. The country is new and the materials for building scarce. Labor is high in all the country and provisions also of every description.

A good deal is due to Major Smith on account of his energy and enterprise in undertaking a building of that kind on his own individual resources, and still more for his patriotism in thus providing

¹ Mr. Slaughter was the second Secretary of Wisconsin Territory (*Annals*, III, 384-5).

for the convenience & comfort of the Representatives of the people. We can only appreciate such motives and conduct when we contrast them with the miserly selfishness of the great mass who seek their own advantage to the exclusion of the interests of all others. I hope you will exert yourself to procure a sufficient sum to reward him amply for his loss and for all his exertions and patriotism. As ever your sincere friend

W. B. SLAUGHTER

IV.

JOHN CHAMBERS, GOVERNOR OF IOWA TERRITORY, TO JEREMIAH SMITH.

Burlington, Iowa, 16th Sept., 1844

Major J. Smith, Present

Sir—I deem it unnecessary that you should go to the District of Columbia as a Witness against Jeremiah Smith Sen'r, and will immediately write to Mr. Penrose, Solicitor of the Treasury, and inform him of having given you this statement.

Respectfully yours &c

JOHN CHAMBERS

V.

T. S. WILSON, J. WILLIAMS, CHARLES MASON TO JAMES K. POLK.

Iowa City, January 21, A. D. 1845

To His Excellency James K. Polk, President of the United States

The undersigned Judges of the Supreme Court of Iowa having understood that the friends of James Clarke, Esq. of Burlington, would present his name to your Excellency for the appointment of the office of Marshal for Iowa, take with great pleasure this opportunity of bearing testimony to his talents, high standing and great moral worth, and of expressing the great gratification which his appointment would afford us. There is no man in the Territory better qualified or more worthy, and from a long and intimate personal acquaintance with him we can say that his business habits are of the highest order, and that the duties of the office would be well attended to by him. Thus far we have spoken of him as a citizen and friend. So far as political considerations are concerned, Mr. C.'s claims are of the highest character. He has been the Editor of the best and most influential paper in the Territory,—a paper which has done much towards the promulgation of Democratic principles and to bringing about the triumphs of the Democracy in the Territory. Mr. C. was appointed by Mr. Van Buren to the office of

Secretary of the Territory, the duties of which were discharged by him with great satisfaction to the people of the Territory, but he was removed by Gen. Harrison when the Whigs here acknowledged that he was the most faithful officer that had ever performed the duties of that office. Believing him to have been badly treated in this matter—knowing that there could have been no ground for such removal except his ardent attachment to democratic principles, and that such is the feeling of the party towards him, we would like to see justice done to him.

With sentiments of the highest esteem we are Yours respectfully

A letter similar to the above was sent to President Polk from Dubuque, signed by Charles Corkery, George Greene, Warner Lewis, John King, David S. Wilson, J. M. Emerson, C. H. Booth, and others.

VI.

JAMES CLARKE TO A. C. DODGE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Burlington, Nov. 16, 1845

* * * Chambers has left for Kentucky, and the Sec'y is now discharging the Executive duties. If I am to receive the appointment it would have pleased me to have been commissioned in time to meet the Legislature, so as to have had the advantage of a message; but I despair now of such a result. My only course therefore is to call all my philosophy into requisition and patiently take things as they come.

This is one of the first letters I have written since my return from Wisconsin. For four weeks I was confined to my bed with ague and a salivated mouth, during which time I was a most miserable being. A week ago I ventured out for the first time, and have since been slowly but gradually improving. I feel that it will require the greatest care and prudence during the whole of the winter to prevent a relapse, and am resolved to be as prudent as possible in avoiding all danger.¹

¹Two days after the date of the above letter, Mr. Clarke received his commission as Governor, and he sent his message to the legislature, December 3rd.

VII.

GOVERNOR CLARKE TO JUDGE T. S. WILSON.

Burlington—Feb. 22, 1846.

Hon. T. S. Wilson
Dubuque

My Dear Sir:

A letter written by L. A. Thomas, Esq. of your place and dated Jan. 27th in relation to the trial of the Indians confined in the Dubuque jail on a charge of murder did not reach me till last night. By some mistake it was forwarded to Libertyville, Ill., and thence to this place. I regret the blunder which prevented the letter from coming into my possession for so long a period after it was written, inasmuch as its contents were of a character requiring an immediate reply.

Mr. T. expresses the conviction that the offence with which these Indians are charged is cognizable under the laws of the U. S. and under these laws only; and refers to the act of Con. of 30th June, 1802, to sustain his position.

My impression is (and I think an examination of the subject will lead you to the same conclusion) that the provisions of this act are intended to apply to offences committed within the Indian country and elsewhere where the laws of the States and Terry's do not extend; and in this opinion I am borne out by Judge Mason with whom I have conversed on the subject. The murder of Hertze was committed in Clayton county, and is, I have no doubt, cognizable under the laws of the Territory. The case is a parallel one with that of the Leagarden murderers, who were tried and sentenced in your district.

I know of no instance in which crimes committed within the organized limits of a State or Territory have been prosecuted in the manner and form pointed out in the Act of Congress referred to by Mr. Thomas.

Still, if the counsel for the Indians doubt the jurisdiction of our local laws in the case, they can easily test the question by suing out a writ of *habeas corpus*.

Could the proceedings be properly instituted under the laws of the U. S., thereby releasing the Co's of Clayton and Dubuque from the expense which they must otherwise be necessarily subjected to, it would certainly be most gratifying to me to see the prosecution take that direction.

It will hardly be maintained, however, that concurrent jurisdiction exists, leaving it optional with us which to choose.

The opinion already advanced by me must preclude any interference in the matter which would lead to a departure from the course heretofore pursued in similar cases, unless, upon further ex-

amination and reflection, I become convinced that my conclusions were erroneous.

I write you at the request of Mr. Thomas. Estimating very highly his legal talents and acquirements, I differ with him not without distrust of the correctness of my views. He may, however, have given the subject but a cursory examination. Your opinion on the point involved I should like to have in writing, at an early day. If the case is not cognizable under the laws of Iowa, then have all the trials of Indians which have heretofore taken place been irregular and illegal.

Have you determined to hold a special court in Clayton Co. for the trial of these Indians? It is very desirable that a speedy trial should be had, both on account of the Indians (to whom confinement is worse than death) and of the expense which their protracted imprisonment must entail on Dubuque and Clayton Co's.

Either show, or detail the contents of this letter, to Mr. Thomas, at your pleasure. I am anxious that he be apprised of the delay in the rec't of his letter, so as to stand exonerated from the *seeming* lack of promptness in giving it the necessary attention.

Respectfully and truly, yours

JAMES CLARKE.

VIII.

JAMES CLARKE TO A. C. DODGE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Burlington, Feb. 14, 1849

*** There is little or nothing doing at the Land Offices at present. and the country is full of warrants [bounties of land to soldiers in the Mexican war]. They are selling very low and but little can be made on them. I sold two the other day for \$110 each. Others here are selling them at this price rather than lose a sale, and I concluded it best to meet them in the market. There is another risk which should not be overlooked—we are compelled to receive in payment notes of very many banks, and it is unsafe to keep these notes on hand a moment longer than is necessary.

Have you ever talked to Gen. Cameron on the subject of a Land Warrant speculation? Jesse Williams says that fifty warrants might be *loaned* at their face, with 10 per cent interest for one or two years, and he would like to be interested in such a speculation.

The California feeling runs very high, and will take off a large number of people from Iowa in the spring. In this county the prospect is that not less than 100 will leave. Had I not gone into business just at the time I did, I would have been on my way to the land of gold weeks ago.

We very much regret to hear of the impaired health of your father. Christy feels quite sad; but we both hope to hear of his speedy recovery.

The weather is very cold, and there is no prospect of a break-up.

Try and persuade your father and Gen. Jones to stop with us a day or two on their way home. Give to both of them our highest regards.

IX.

MRS. CHRISTIANA DODGE (HENRY) TO MRS. CHRISTIANA CLARKE¹
(JAMES).

Washington, February 19th, 1850

* * * Your father's health is improving; a bad cold gave him a backset, but he is getting better of that and gains. This climate is very changeable; bad colds prevail very much. Give my love to Mr. Clarke and the children and kiss them all for me. Your father joins me in love to you all. God in his mercy bless you, my dear daughter, is the constant prayer of

Your affectionate Mother.

X.

JULIUS F. TALLANT TO A. C. DODGE, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Burlington, August 7, 1850

It was almost the last request of our departed friend, Gov. Clarke, that I should write you, and give a full account of the mournful occurrences of the last month. Extreme mental excitement consequent upon overexertion, day and night, among those stricken down with the scourge which has raged so awfully among us, and the fact that nearly every person considering himself a friend, near or remote, of the family, appeared to have flooded you with letters, has prevented me from doing this before.

At this late date, it is useless to recall all the deprivations that have befallen the Governor's family. I was with him during the greater part of his illness until he was insensible. Mr. Coolbaugh will visit you, in Washington, according to a promise he made before he left here, and will communicate to you verbally all the particulars. Until he returns, everything will be left in *statu quo*.

What shall be done with the Gazette now?—is a question which every member of our party is asking. Could you not send us a

¹ Mrs. Clarke died July 14th, and Mr. Clarke July 28th, 1850, of epidemic cholera.—*Iowa Historical Record*, IV. 11.

good man from Washington to take charge of it, strong-minded enough to steer clear of cliques, and clear-headed and intelligent? I have been doing all that has been done for the paper since Mr. Clarke's death, except one article, but I can never do it justice, following as I do a business which requires my undivided attention, and a laborious county office on top of it, to say nothing of the exertions all of our citizens have been compelled to make among the sick and dying, in the most sultry and oppressive weather ever felt, for the last month.

When Mr. Clarke was taken ill, he engaged Judge Webber to take charge of the paper, but when the epidemic appeared, the Judge left town and has not returned yet. We will try to get along somehow till Mr. Coolbaugh comes back, and do what we can for the paper.

The Democratic ticket has been again dragged through, despite the bolting of the grocery keepers, and the Catholics, both Irish and German. We may now consider our county as permanently Democratic. We lost heavily by the California emigration, and felt very apprehensive that the Whigs would have a majority.

We are happy to say that the epidemic has left us entirely now. It has left, but in its track is many a desolate household, many a mourning widow and weeping orphans. Heaven it is to be hoped, will find friends for those in need, and there are many such. As a body our citizens have behaved admirably, many devoting themselves entirely to the sick, regardless of fear of infection. Their nobility of mind has not been unrewarded; not a man of those who thus offered themselves as voluntary victims of its wrath, has suffered. Our friend Carpenter (Anthony W.) has been truly a ministering angel in this dread hour. A Township trustee, and as such called on by all whom poverty had rendered incapable of assisting themselves, day after day he devoted himself to alleviating their sufferings and ministering to their wants.

XI.

ROBERT E. LEE, BREVET COLONEL TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEERS, TO

A. C. DODGE.

Honble A. C. Dodge

Senator of Iowa

Washington City D. C.

Fort Carroll

15 Dec. 1851.

Dear Sir:

I have had the honour to receive your letter of the 12th Inst. in reference to the practicability of improving the navigation of the Mississippi river at the Des Moines and Rock River Rapids. You are aware that the Act of Congress under which I operated in the

years 1837 and 1838, confined the application of the App'n to the bed of the river. I therefore in my examinations did not look beyond it. At the Des Moines Rapids but two plans seemed worth considering. One was to build a continuous wall in the bed of the river, from the foot to the head of the Rapids, along the Iowa shore and at a sufficient distance to form with it, an ample canal for the passage of Steamboats, with a lock at each extremity.

The other, to improve the natural channel of the river, by opening a passage through the reefs that separated one basin from the other, and thus form a continuous channel through their whole extent.

The first if completed would be certain in its results, and afford a sure communication at low water through the Rapids. But of no advantage in an incomplete state; would cost much time and money, and had it been adopted, would to the present time, as experience now shows, been of no advantage.

The second I considered equally practicable; affording more speedy relief to the Commerce of the Country, which was labouring under the greatest disadvantages; and by operating at the worst passes first, would produce with the means then available, a general benefit which would be felt at mean stages of water, as well as at the lowest.

This plan was accordingly recommended.

Similar considerations influenced me in reference to the improvement of the Rock River Rapids.

I did not then think, nor had I any reason to apprehend afterwards, that the water above the Rapids would be sensibly diminished, if care was taken in opening the main channel, to stop up with the stone excavated the minor ones.

The effect would be to unite in one channel the water that flows through many, and which the two seasons that I was on the Rapids, even at the low stages of the river appeared ample for the purposes of navigation.

You can judge better than I can which system of improvement is better adapted to the present state of the country. Whether its Commerce and development can wait for the perfection of one, or would be more advanced by the progressive improvement of the other.

Believing it to be a question of great moment not only to the great country of the Upper Mississippi, but to the country at large, I have taken the liberty to give you the reasons that governed me in the matter; that in resuming the subject, you might examine it in its different bearings, and adopt that plan best calculated to promote its success.

With my earnest wishes that such may be the result of your efforts I remain very resptYour Obt. Servt.

R. E. LEE,
Bt. Col. Eng'rs.

XII.

ENOS LOWE TO GEORGE W. JONES, U. S. SENATE.

Enos Lowe, M. D., was born in Guilford, N. C., May 5, 1804; came to Indiana, where he was elected to the State legislature; removed to Burlington, Iowa, 1837, and was second postmaster of the town, then in Wisconsin Territory. He was a member of the First Constitutional Convention of Iowa, 1844, and of the Second, and its President, 1846. He was Receiver of the Land Office at Iowa City and Council Bluffs, and afterwards one of the founders of Omaha, Nebraska, where he died, Feb. 12, 1880. T. S. Parvin paid a just tribute to his life and character in *Iowa Historical Record*, VIII, 289-296.

Burlington, January 9th, 1853.

Esteemed Friend—

Carrying the mails on Sunday years ago troubled the consciences of some persons, and they petitioned Congress to pass a law to stop them on that day. These petitions were referred to a Committee, of which Col. Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, was Chairman, who made a report adverse to the prayer of the petitioners. This report was unanswerable, and so satisfactory that the question has not been disturbed since. And so esteemed was this production by many acquaintances of mine, of undoubted piety, as to be considered worthy a place beside the Declaration of Independence in an ornamental frame. In short, I understand it to be the settled policy of the Government that the transmission of mail matter is not to be retarded on any day—that the transmission of intelligence to the people is to be facilitated, not delayed, and that the regulations of the post office should be in accordance with this design.

Notwithstanding we receive the Eastern mail at about 8 o'clock A. M., on Sundays, we are not permitted a sight at its contents until 4 o'clock P. M. under a petty rule of Fitz Henry Warren or somebody else, who delights in a display of his official power, thereby frustrating the object in a great degree of sending us the mail thus early.

When I was postmaster here under Amos Kendall, the rule governing the case of "mails arriving on Sunday" required the office to be kept open one hour after such mail was opened. This rule is in conformity with the rule and contract which brought us the mail on Sunday. But the present rule leaves us in almost as bad a condition as if the mail was detained in Illinois over Sunday. It matters not to us whether the mail is in this or some other office, if it is withheld from us. The P. Master should be required to open &

distribute the mail as soon as it arrives on Sundays as well as any other days, and to open the office as soon as it is done, and keep it open one hour.

Can this regulation be procured *now?*—if not, if there is virtue in a change of administration, may we not look for it soon after the 4th of March.

IOWA AND THE FIRST NOMINATION OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN.

By F. I. HERRIOTT,

Professor of Economics, Political and Social Science, Drake University.

1. *First Expressions—1856-1857.*

Forecasting the Presidential fates is an inveterate habit of Americans, particularly of editors and politicians. The quadrennial election is no sooner over than some venture upon predictions or suggestions as to candidates for the ensuing Presidential contest. The practice was vigorous in the fifties. The returns showing Buchanan's triumph in 1856 had hardly been certified before the *N. Y. Herald* ran up Fremont's name as the best candidate for the Republicans in 1860. It asserted that the opponents of the Slavocrats could "only hope" for success "under the name of Fremont;"¹ that his nomination would signify the popular overthrow of the oligarchical rule of politicians "who care for no earthly thing but the spoils;"² and after pointing out that he had excelled Jackson and Harrison in popularity it declared that "in every direction the Fremont papers are running up his name for 1860."³

After quoting his eastern contemporary Mr. J. B. Howell, Editor of *The Gate City* of Keokuk closed an editorial (November 11) with the prediction that the next president "will be John Charles Fremont! Look over the field calmly and considerately, and, answer, Why not?" On the same date Mr. John Mahin said in the *Muscatine Daily Journal*: "We would rather run his name to our mast head today for the

¹ *N. Y. Herald*, Nov. 8, 1856. 2. *ib.*, Nov. 9. 3. *ib.*, Nov. 12. Before 1860 the management of *The Herald* suffered a radical change, Seward and John Brown causing it to become a violent opponent of the Republican party.

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