Bloomington Comes of Age

William J. Petersen
Bloomington Comes of Age

Early in January of 1839 a traveler from Michigan jogged into the "much talked of" town of Bloomington, then better known as the "Town of Pinch 'em Silly." Despite the contemplated Cedar River Canal and the immense water power rushing by its door, Bloomington's prospects did not impress the Wolverine. "The famous town," he recorded, "is tastefully gotten up on a gentle acclivity bound in by lofty" bluffs on one side, "a stagnant pool and inundated swamp" on another, and encompassed by "some tilable lands," but mainly "consisting of broken fragments of hills and precipices, that look as if formed for pasturage and shaken to pieces by a fit of the ague before it got dry."

The traveler awoke the next day to watch numerous inhabitants go to the river to "obtain water from holes cut in the ice." With the rising sun he sallied forth, "and found some of the houses stuck up against the hills on high blocks like stilts, and others dug into the bluff, so as to place the one end entirely below the surface of the ground. The town includes a great deal of broken, irregular ground, many of the lots stand precisely on one end, others hang a little over; — such are bought
View of Bloomington (now Muscatine) in 1845 by J. C. Wild, a traveling artist. Exhibited at the Iowa House in November, 1845, Wild took orders at a price of $3.00 colored, $1.50 uncolored. An original in color is in the P. M. Musser Public Library.
INCORPORATIONS.

AN ACT to incorporate the town of Bloomington.

SEC. 1. Be it enacted by the Council and House of
Representatives of the Territory of Iowa, That all that
part or tract of land in township seventy-six north, and
range two west, and township seventy-seven north, range
two west, which has been surveyed and laid off into town
lots for commercial purposes, in which is embraced the
village of Bloomington, be and the same is hereby consti-
tuted a town corporate, and shall hereafter be known by
the name or title of the "Town of Bloomington."

SEC. 2. It shall be lawful for the free male inhabitants
of said village, having the qualifications of electors, to meet
at some convenient place, in said town of Bloomington,
on the first Monday of May, and annually thereafter, and
then and there proceed, by plurality of votes, to elect, by
ballot, a president, recorder, and three trustees, who shall
hold their offices one year, and until their successors are
elected and qualified; and any three of them shall be a
board for the transaction of business, but a less number
may adjourn from time to time: Provided, That if an elec-
tion of a president, recorder, and trustees, shall not be
made on the day when, pursuant to this act, it ought to be
made, the said corporation shall not for that cause be
deemed to be dissolved, but it shall and may be lawful to
hold such election at any time thereafter, pursuant to pub-
lic notice to be given in the manner hereinafter prescribed.

SEC. 3. At the first election to be held under this act
there shall be chosen, viva voce, by the electors present,
two judges and a clerk of said election, who shall each
take an oath or affirmation faithfully to discharge the du-
ties required of him by this act; and at all subsequent elec-
tions the trustees, or any two of them, shall be judges, and
the recorder clerk of the election; and at all elections to
be held under this act the polls shall be opened between
the hours of nine and ten o'clock in the forenoon, and
close at five o'clock in the afternoon of said day, and at the
close of the polls the votes shall be counted, and a true
statement thereof proclaimed to the electors present by
one of the judges, and the clerk shall make a true record
thereof, and, within five days after such election, the said
clerk shall give notice to the persons elected of their elec-
tion; and it shall be the duty of said town council, at least
five days before each annual election, to give notice of the
same by posting up notices in three of the most public
places in said town.

SEC. 17. This act may be altered, amended, or repeat-
ed by the legislature of this Territory.

APPROVED, January 23, 1839.

The Statute Laws of the Territory of Iowa (1838-1839) contain the articles of
Incorporation of Bloomington and numerous other laws relating to Muscatine
County and the surrounding territory. They were printed at Dubuque in 1839.
CHAPTER XXXII.

MUSCATINE CITY.

AN ACT to incorporate the City of Muscatine.

SECTION 1. Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Iowa, That the town of Muscatine, (formerly the town of Bloomington,) in the county of Muscatine, is hereby created a city, by the name of the "City of Muscatine."

§ 2. The said city is made a body corporate, and is invested with all the powers and attributes of a municipal corporation.

§ 3. All the rights, powers, privileges, duties, liabilities and property of the late town of Muscatine, are hereby transferred to, and imposed upon, the said city, except as repealed or qualified herein, and the same may be enforced by or against the city as they might have been by or against the town.

§ 4. The said city is hereby divided into three wards as follows: that part of the city which lies south and west of the middle of Chestnut street, is the first ward; that part lying between the middle of Chestnut street and the middle of Walnut street, is the second ward; that part lying north and east of the middle of Walnut street, is the third ward; but the city council may create new wards, and change the limits of those now or hereafter established.

§ 5. Every white male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years, who shall have been a resident of the city six months, and of the ward in which he offers to vote ten days next preceding a city election, is declared a citizen of the said city, and is entitled to vote at all elections thereof.

§ 7. A person offering to vote may be challenged as in the elections in the townships, and an oath may be administered to him under like circumstances, naming the qualifications herein prescribed.

§ 8. No person shall be eligible to any elective office mentioned in this act, unless he be a citizen of the city, as above defined, and have been a resident thereof one year next preceding his election.

The Charter to the City of Muscatine is contained in the Laws of Iowa passed by the Third General Assembly and approved by Governor Stephen Hempstead on February 1, 1851.
The Muscatine Journal traces its beginnings to the Bloomington Herald, one of the earliest newspapers in Iowa. John Mahin, one of Iowa's most famous editors, served for more than half a century as editor of this paper.
The Muscatine City Directory, which was compiled by John Mahin, was one of the earliest city directories printed in Iowa. Only a few Iowa towns can claim city directories printed before the Civil War.
Lumber Trade.

Amount of Lumber, Shingles, Lath and Logs bought at Muscatine for the year 1855:

- 8,750,000 feet Lumber, costing $23 00 per 1000 feet in the yard - $201,250
- 7,500,000 Shingles, at $1 50 per 1000 - 33,750
- 4,500,000 Lath, " $3 00 " " - 13,500
- Logs, Timbers, &c. - $121,500

$370,000

NUMBER OF BUSINESS PLACES, &c.

Auction Stores,
Banking Houses,
Bakeries,
Barber Shops,
Blacksmith Shops,
Boarding Houses,
Book Stores,
Brick Yards,
Broom Manufactory,
Barrel Manufactory,
Beadstead Manufactory,
Cabinet Shops,
Chandlers,
Carpenter Shops,
Carriage & Wagon Manufactory,
Cigar Manufactory,
Clothing Stores,
Churches,
Clergymen,
Confectionaries,
Cooper Shops,
Daguerrean Artists,
Dentists,
Drug Stores,
Dry Goods Stores,
Forwarding and Commission Houses,
Foundry and Machine Shops,
Furniture Stores,
Flour Mills,
Groceries, (wholesale,) Grocery and Provision Stores,
Gunsmith Shop,
Hardware Stores,

2 Hat and Cap Stores,
3 Harness and Saddle Makers,
4 Hotels,
5 Insurance Agents,
14 Intelligence Office,
10 Jewelry Stores,
2 Leather and Finding Stores,
4 Lawyers,
1 Livery Stables,
1 Locksmith,
2 Lumber Yards,
10 Marble Yards,
2 Millinery Establishments,
12 Music Store,
7 Meat Markets,
3 Paint Shops,
9 Physicians,
16 Plow Manufactory,
13 Printing Offices,
6 Pork Packing Establishments,
7 Sash, Door & Blind Manufactory,
2 Restaurants,
4 Queensware Store,
4 Saw Mills,
20 Shingle Manufactory,
20 Shoe Shops,
5 Shoe Stores,
2 Soap Factories,
8 Stove Machines,
3 Tailor Shops,
2 Tin and Sheet Ironware Manufactory,
1 Upholstery Manufactory,
3 Vinegar Manufactory,
Plan of Muscatine

T. 76 & 77 N R 2 W of 5th P.M.

Plat of City of Muscatine from Andreas' Illustrated Historical Atlas of Iowa (1875).
### MUSCATINE.

**Residence and Post Office, Muscatine.**

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<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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Joseph Bridgman standing beside log cabin he built on SE corner of Second and Pine in 1839. It was used as a dwelling, and later as a stable, before removal to Weed Park. Bennett's Mill, built in 1848, is in the background.

The first Episcopal Church and Masonic Hall was erected in 1841. The lower story of this 22 x 50 foot frame building was used by the Episcopalians, and sometimes by the Presbyterians. The Masons used the upper story from 1841 to 1854. The building was taken down during the Civil War.
Second Street looking west from Cedar Street. Gas lights had been introduced in 1857 and general activity prevailed in the horse and buggy days of bustling Muscatine.

Bennett's Flour Mill was built by Joseph Bennett in 1848 and destroyed by fire August 23, 1851, with a loss of $33,000. Rebuilt by Bennett the same year, it was bought in 1869 (the year of photo) by J. B. Hale and called "Muscatine Mills." Used as sash and door factory by Huttig Brothers from 1876 to 1879. Purchased by Muscatine Oat Meal Company in 1879.
East side of Mad Creek — looking west. Richies Elevator at left center. Steamboats and raftboats made Muscatine a thriving river port.

Hershey's Mill as it appeared in early 1860’s. Built in 1857 by Benjamin Hershey near the head of Muscatine Slough, it replaced an older and smaller mill which had been built by Jacob Hershey in 1850, and run by Benj. Hershey after 1853.
Bashaw Feed Stable was established by F. Bernhardt in 1867 on present site of Y.M.C.A. building. Used for a feed barn and later a coal, lime, and cement store. Totally destroyed by fire on March 26, 1895. Photo taken by E. B. Edwards on Labor Day in 1880's.

Snyder's Livery Stable at 211-213 West Front Street as it looked in 1879-1880. On April 7, 1899, Snyder's Stable burned with a loss of 10 horses. It was rebuilt by Ottie Snyder, then owner. Dennis Jordan's Lafayette House stands at left.
Hotel Grand, J. G. Dermedy, Proprietor. Opened to public August 2, 1897.

Pennsylvania House — located at corner of Chestnut and Front streets — 1869.

Ogilvie House — George Low, Proprietor, NW Corner First and Iowa Ave.
Muscateine Store Victrola Room

Cohn Mercantile Company, Gents’ and Boys’ Clothing and Furnishings

Interior of McQuesten Hardware Company Store.
Old Street Car Barn about 1887-1888. Located SW corner Third and Mulberry. First cars, operated by horse and mule power, ran September 11, 1883.

Street cars, drawn by horses, passing the W. W. Webster Marble & Granite Works in 1883. Located on NE corner of Second and Cedar streets.

Inauguration of first electric street cars in Muscatine on May 30, 1893.
P. M. Musser Public Library — Dedicated December 20, 1901.

Hershey Memorial Hospital — 1902 (Hershey Memorial Hospital Home).

Muscatine Y.M.C.A.
Children feeding elephant at the Zoo in Weed Park. Dr. James Weed donated sixty acres of land on East Hill for City Park on May 13, 1899.

Cannon overlooking the Mississippi River in Weed Park.
St. Mathias Catholic Church — north side of West 8th Street between Chestnut and Pine. First church erected 1842, second 1856, present 1911.

First Presbyterian Church — Iowa Avenue and East Fourth. Organized 1842, first building in 1849, present building in 1856.

First Methodist Church — Iowa Avenue and West Fourth. The Methodists began their work in 1839. In 1840, J. A. Parvin, recording steward, wrote: "Here in these ends of the earth, the country new, the town small, but few members in class, and we all appear to think too much of this world's goods and too little of our soul's salvation. There are two organized societies in Bloomington, the Methodists and the Presbyterians. The citizens are very much addicted to Sabbath breaking, grog drinking, gambling, swearing, etc. O Thou who holds the destiny of nations and individuals in Thy hand, send salvation to Bloomington!"
Muscatine High School
One of the first in Iowa and one of the largest in 1964.

Muscatine Community College
A public, two-year, non-denominational school — over 400 students.
Masonic Temple. Muscatine claims to have had the first Masonic Temple in Iowa in conjunction with the Episcopal Church — 1841.

National Champion Muscatine Elks Club Men's Chorus at Los Angeles. The B.P.O.E. No. 304, was organized at Muscatine in 1895.
Muscatine firemen display new equipment. Department organized 1875.

Relief Hook & Ladder Company under arch built on Papoose bridge.

Four companies of Muscatine Fire Department ready to parade in 1878.
Grand Opera House

Second Street during a Fair
First Reunion of the 35th Iowa Infantry since the Civil War. Held at Muscatine on September 29, 1886. A Muscatine boy was the first Iowan killed in Civil War.
Muscatine Civic Center — headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce, Muscatine Development Corporation, Junior Chamber of Commerce, and United Fund. The Muscatine Commercial Club was organized in 1892.

Muscatine Municipal Electric Plant — largest municipally-owned electric plant in the State of Iowa.
Bustling Muscatine at the Turn of the Century.

Stein's Music Hall on top floor and McColm Dry Goods on main floor. In those "Good Old Horse and Buggy Days" in Muscatine.
ESTABLISHED IN 1854.

S. G. & P. STEIN,
Manufacturers and Dealers in

F U R N I T U R E.

Constantly on hand Bedsteads, Bureaus, Washstands; Extension, Dining & Center Tables; Chamber Sets, Sofas, Lounges; Parlor, Rocking, Reception, Office and Cane Seat Chairs.

We offer a larger variety and better goods than any house in this city.

Remember that "Headquarters" is the place to buy.

Nos. 100 and 102 Second Street, Muscatine, Iowa.

A typical advertisement found in numerous City Directories for one of Muscatine's oldest families and business firms. S. G. Stein, pioneer founder, died in 1892.

S. O. BUTLER,

P O R K   P A C K E R,

South Muscatine.

I have pens for four thousand Hogs, and scales for weighing alive with accuracy and dispatch. I can slaughter six hundred per day, and can pack thirty thousand during the season.

S. O. BUTLER.

Richard Packers, locally owned by one family since 1876. Noted for its fresh meats and sausages, its wood-smoked ham and bacon, and its Holland style Bologna.
Northern Line steamboat *Minnesota* at the Muscatine levee about 1869. Built at Pittsburgh in 1866, she made 21 roundtrips between St. Louis and St. Paul that year. S. G. Stein’s lumber raft and small towboat *Lily* lies in foreground. The *Lily* towed logs and barges of lumber for Hershey, Staples & Company in the Muscatine, Keithsburg, and Stillwater, Minnesota area.

The *Muscatine* was built at Pittsburgh in 1863. The following year Muscatine citizens presented her with a set of flags and bunting. The *Muscatine* was a money maker, earning $77,000 net in the St. Louis and St. Paul trade in 1865. In 1881 she was sold at a sheriff’s sale in La Crosse for $220.
The raftboat *Glenmont* and bowboat. Built at Dubuque in 1885, the *Glenmont* was 128' x 24' 6" x 4' 6" and measured 92.16 tons. She was owned for years by Van Sant and Musser Transportation Co. of Muscatine.

The *B. Hershey* was built at Rock Island in 1877 and named for Benjamin Hershey, head of Hershey Lumber Company. She saw thirty years service as a raftboat.

The *B. Hershey* with a raft in tow and the *Lotus* (second) with two barges of clam shells at Muscatine in 1901. Two famous industries are depicted.
THREE HISTORIC MUSCATINE BUTTON MANUFACTURERS
GRAIN PROCESSING CORPORATION. Grain alcohol, Solulac, Distiller's grain, corn starch and sugar, soybean oil and meal, and other products.

HOME-O-NIZE COMPANY manufactures steel office furniture, material handling, and construction and industrial equipment.
MONSANTO CHEMICAL COMPANY manufactures Anhydrous Ammonia and Aqua Ammonia, and Randox, a weed controller.

THATCHER GLASS MANUFACTURING COMPANY, INC. (Plastic packaging division) produces cellulose film closures and plastic tubes.
McKee Feed and Grain Elevators at Muscatine are the prime factor in Muscatine attaining the title of "The Port City of Iowa." The upper picture shows the newly built elevator dedicated on September 22, 1964. It handles 225,000 bushels of grain and will enable the McKees to handle and ship as much as 10,000,000 bushels of grain a year downstream.
and sold, it is said, by ‘perpendicular measure.’”

Although he had made glowing reports of other Iowa towns, the Wolverine found little to praise in Bloomington. “To attempt an enumeration of the improvements of the Bloomingtonians, would be rather an idle business,” the dyspeptic visitor wrote. “I will tell you, not what they have, but what they have not — They have no Church, no Prison, no Court-House; each of which are especially essential, if the people intend to serve their God, or the officers of justice their country. The absence of the first is justified on the ground of no religion — the latter on that of no law, which, in all these sun-down countries means no will to enforce it. They have no printing establishment — no school house, or seminary — and no manufactories, save one for converting brick-dust and molasses into ‘Sappington’s pills,’ an improvement invaluable in all ague countries.”

In the three years since the town was surveyed in 1836, Bloomington had not prospered. When William Gordon arrived on September 28, 1836, he found William St. John, Giles and Jonathan Pettibone, J. Craig, John Champ, Norman Fullington, Moses Couch, Lyman C. Hine, Suel Foster, John Vanatta, James W. Casey, Adam Ogilvie, T. M. Isett, Mr. Norton and wife, and Robert C. Kinney and wife already there. Gordon erected the first frame building, a structure measuring sixteen feet by thirty feet, containing three rooms be-
low and three rooms above, which was used as a tavern by R. C. Kinney.

In 1837 Adam Ogilvie opened a log-cabin store on Front Street and Joseph Bridgman started in the dry goods business. A. O. and D. R. Warfield built the first sawmill on Mad Creek in the same year. William Gordon, Henry Reece, and H. H. Hine were employed in the carpenter trade. The Panic of 1837 probably stifled expansion, for the town contained only seventy-one inhabitants and thirty-three buildings when it was incorporated in 1839. Muscatine County had only 1218 inhabitants in 1838, increasing to a mere 1942 by 1840.

Failure to secure a newspaper was a factor in Bloomington's slow growth. True, James T. Campbell intended to publish the Iowa Banner at Bloomington in 1838. Unfortunately, however, Campbell died at Covington, Kentucky, on September 11th while on his way home to get a press. At last, on October 23, 1840, William Crum began printing the Iowa Standard, only to move his press to Iowa City in the following year.

Exactly four days after the birth of the Iowa Standard, the Bloomington Herald was born in a wretched cabin no better than a stable. Editors John B. Russell and Thomas Hughes hoped their paper would get a "hearty reception at the fireside of every farmer in the county" as they took up the cudgels for the "democracy of Muscatine."

On April 19, 1841, the Herald expressed de-
light over the “great increase” of building con-
struction. “Quite a number of frames have al-
ready been raised, and in every direction, the
heavy timbers for others are seen, ready for the
square and chisel. Mechanics of all the building
professions, we believe, find ready employment.
While times are dull and money scarce, no place
in the west offers greater inducements to young
mechanics than this.” The editor believed in
“growing up” with a new community and prophe-
sied that Bloomington would soon become a large
commercial city. The town was already the depot
for a large district capable of “sustaining a dense
population.” Wealthy farmers were leaving the
“old states” and seeking the “better farms at
cheaper rates” around Bloomington.

When the Burlington Gazette asserted that
“several good buildings” were going up and sug-
gested that Burlington was “outstripping” other
river towns, the Bloomington Herald demurred.
“Don’t be too certain, Mr. Gazette—Bloom-
ington is going ahead at a rapid rate,” declared the
editor. “‘Several good buildings have already
gone up’ eh? That is not very definite, and if we
were going to speak of our place in particular, we
should say that considerably upwards of several
have gone up, besides many that are nearly ready
for raising.”

Despite such enthusiasm the Bloomington Her-
ald had serious financial difficulty. Subscription
rates were $3 in advance or $4 at the end of the year. At the close of the first year the editors offered to share the hard times "equally" with patrons if they would promptly pay $6 for the two years. They had labored nearly a year without "dunning" and were in pressing need of a little money. On December 31, 1841, the editor promised to enlarge the paper if subscribers would pay up — otherwise let it die.

When thirteen-year-old John Mahin became a printer's devil on the Bloomington Herald in 1847 there were only two printers in the town. Mahin worked for his board and room—a humble beginning for a man who was to become one of Iowa's ablest journalists. In 1852 he took the editorship of the paper, which had assumed the name of Muscatine Journal in 1849. Orion Clemens purchased an interest in the firm in 1853 and Mark Twain joined the Journal staff for a short time that year. In 1855 the paper began daily publication. John Mahin retained his interest in the Journal until 1903. In 1964 the Muscatine Journal had a circulation of 11,000 and could count forty employees in a plant valued at $1,500,000.

The Mississippi River was a vital factor in the early growth of Bloomington. Many pioneers arrived by steamboat and the great bulk of their supplies came up the Mississippi. During the season of 1837 steamboats discharged freight and passengers at Bloomington until mid-December.
When the steamboat *Dubuque* blew up a short distance below the town on August 14, 1837, William Gordon served as undertaker and was allowed $136 for making the rough coffins and burying the seventeen horribly scalded victims interred at Bloomington.

Beginning with 1840 such river news as the opening and closing of navigation, spring freshets and summer floods, low water, and high tariff rates were recorded in the weekly press. Thus, on February 26, 1841, the Bloomington *Herald* announced that the first steamboat had reached Keokuk from St. Louis. The ice was already breaking up at Bloomington and the editor hoped the "puff" of the steamboat would soon be heard. By the middle of March the *Otter* had arrived, followed during the next two weeks by the *Agnes*, the *Chippewa*, the *Illinois*, the *Indian Queen*, the *Ione*, the *Iowa*, the *Mermaid*, the *Nauvoo*, and the *Rapids*. The effect on trade was manifested on every hand: H. Musgrave alone received three tons of castings, including ovens, skillets, tea kettles, stew kettles, irons, lids, and miscellaneous equipment. On April 2, 1841, the *Herald* declared that heavy rains had caused the Mississippi to rise a foot a day. Boats continued to discharge heavy cargoes: the *Ariel*, *Brazil*, *Cicero*, *De-moine*, *Gipsy*, *Miami*, and *William Penn* being among the new craft that appeared during April.

The rivalry between Bloomington and Burling-
ton is reflected in river comments. In May, 1841, a Burlington editor boasted of the "booming stage" of the Mississippi at that point. "Wonder what river runs by Burlington?" queried the Bloomington Herald sarcastically. "We have a very respectable river running by this place in that direction, but it has not been within six feet of high water mark this season." Three months later, on August 13th, the editor was still grumbling. "The river is so low at this place, that it is beneath our contempt."

Great anxiety was displayed over the closing of navigation. On November 19, 1841, the Herald expressed delight when the Rapids arrived with upwards of one hundred tons of freight. The editor believed all would be well if the weather remained favorable for a fortnight. Two weeks later the dwindling stock of paper caused the editor to curtail the size of his sheet. Ruefully he lectured his subscribers: "The late cold weather has broken into the calculations of many who anticipated a continuance of navigation. . . . Since boats have ceased running, almost daily we see extra carriages, waggons, or sleighs carrying home those who have been caught out by the cold weather."

Steamboating was still important a century later: in 1938 approximately 5,000,000 bushels of Iowa corn and other grain were shipped from Muscatine to New Orleans on Federal Barge Line
boats at the rate of four cents per 100 pounds. According to the Muscatine Journal: "Eating places, filling stations and other businesses profited from the influx of truckers. Higher grain prices put thousands of dollars into the pockets of farmers." One man brought corn from distant Odebolt and returned home with cottonseed meal.

Bloomington was slow to acquire adequate ferry service. In 1837 the district court granted Robert C. Kinney the right to operate a ferry "north of the old trading house." Moses Couch was awarded a similar license at a point close to Kinney's. On July 2, 1838, the county commissioners granted James W. Neally a Bloomington ferry license good for one year. The rates prescribed were: each footman, 25 cents; man and horse, 50 cents; wagon and two horses or yoke of oxen, $1.50; each additional horse, 25 cents; cattle, 25 cents; sheep and hogs, 6\(\frac{1}{4}\) cents. These first ferries were crude flat-bottomed skiffs propelled by poles and oars.

On December 14, 1838, the Territorial legislature granted Joseph Williams and Charles A. Warfield the right to establish a "horse or steam" ferry across the Mississippi at Muscatine. Their first ferry was the flatboat Polly Keith built in 1839 by D. C. Cloud and George Leffingwell. According to the Bloomington Herald the Polly Keith was kept in "the Slough, with ropes to propel it, so that travellers coming to it can ferry themselves,
their wagons and stock across without difficulty.”

This service was so inadequate that the Herald on December 11, 1840, carried an open letter regarding the “approaching forfeiture” of the ferry privilege by Warfield and Williams who, it was prophesied, could not obtain a renewal unless in “open defiance of the unanimous will of our citizens.” Since the ferry would soon become a “valuable privilege” the writer believed Bloomington should either be granted the charter or else a stock company of citizens should be organized. In answer to this plea the Territorial legislature passed an act on December 29, 1840, authorizing the president and trustees to “establish and keep a ferry” across the Mississippi for “one mile above and one mile below” Bloomington. The town officials had “full and entire control” of the ferry and could lease it for any period not exceeding ten years on terms “most conducive to the welfare” of the municipality.

On April 23, 1841, the town recorder advertised in the Herald that the ferry lease would be let to any one furnishing a “good and sufficient” steamboat. Captain John Phillips was granted the ferry license when he provided the diminutive steam ferry Iowa, a vessel which was condemned and dismantled at the close of 1842. For the next two seasons Captain Phillips had to resort to a flatboat with oars. In 1845 a horse ferry was introduced by Brooks & Reece. It was not until
July, 1855, that the steam ferry Muscatine was placed in service. With the opening of the high bridge in 1891 ferry service was discontinued.

When, in 1956, a span of the old 1891 high bridge collapsed with two trucks passing over it the bridge was declared inadequate for the car, or heavy bus and truck traffic moving east and west over Highway 92. Serious discussions were held by all in authority. The question was, could the 1891 structure be repaired, should it be replaced by a suitable new bridge, or should consideration be given to the proposal to dig a tunnel under the Mississippi — which, if done, would be the first of its kind beneath the Father of Waters.

A century ago, in 1839, Muscatine streets were a quagmire after every heavy rain. In pleasant weather the progress of the pioneers was impeded by ruts, deep holes, and stumps. The country roads were frequently impassable in wet weather. Small wonder that frontier mail service was slow: swollen streams, muddy trails, and drifting snow were hardly conducive to overland travel. Now, by contrast, half of Muscatine’s eighty miles of streets are paved. The city can boast 56.20 miles of sewers — troublesome Papoose Creek is now a closed sewer. In addition there are sixty-one miles of water mains and sixty-two miles of permanent sidewalks. The county has shown equal progress: 116.8 miles of primary roads are maintained by State and Federal funds. Muscatine
County has gravelled approximately one-half of her 630 miles of county roads.

A quarter century later, in 1963, fully 590 of the 645 miles of Muscatine County rural roads were either gravel or stone surfaced (482 miles) or asphaltic surface treated (104 miles). Since all roads led to Muscatine as a shopping center the $657,545.67 spent on secondary roads that year were not begrudged by Muscatine taxpayers.

Hemmed in by an ice-locked river during the winter and uncertain seasonal highways, the Bloomington pioneers awaited anxiously for news from friends beyond the eastern horizon. There was no post office in town until 1839. County histories declare that Mr. Stowell was the first postmaster appointed but that he left before his commission arrived. If so, this may explain the delay in establishing a post office. Records in Washington indicate that Levi Thornton was appointed first postmaster on December 6, 1839. A little later, it appears, Edward E. Fay became postmaster. When Fay died his brother, Pliny Fay, succeeded him on March 2, 1842, continuing in office to the close of Tyler’s administration. Times have changed in the Muscatine mail service: in 1938 postal receipts totalled $93,234.20. In 1963 the gross postal receipts were $401,763.82, which adjusted downward 70% to allow for the increased postage rates, made the total $281,636.44, the amount on which the Muscatine
Postmaster's salary was fixed at $8,995. The number of employees at the Muscatine post office over the past quarter century had increased to sixty.

Professional men were among the earliest pioneers in Bloomington. The first physician in Muscatine County was Dr. Ely Reynolds, an Indianaian who laid out the town of Geneva in 1835. Dr. Reynolds liked good whisky and horse racing, was kind-hearted and reliable, but, although he practiced medicine fifty-six years, was never wealthy. When J. P. Walton arrived at Bloomington in 1838 he found Dr. Reynolds was the leading physician for Bloomington as well as the country around Geneva. One of the first physicians in Bloomington was Dr. McKee, a Philadelphia bachelor, who practiced on others "to their sorrow." Another physician, W. H. Blaydes of Kentucky, is said to have been a better pork packer than a doctor.

There were other men with better training. Dr. Benjamin Weed came to Bloomington from New England in October, 1839, to practice medicine in a log cabin on Second Street. George M. Reeder, William L. Smith, Benjamin S. Olds, and James Davis were all practicing medicine in Bloomington by 1841. The grim reaper was no respecter of homes in those days: in September Dr. Olds's four-year-old daughter died of congestive fever.

Patent medicines flourished in Bloomington —
J. Lightner, Charles H. Fish, W. Hollingsworth, and J. S. Lakin all sold such drugs as Champion's Ague Pills and Sappington's Pills. Dentists were slow in putting in an appearance, the pioneers generally relied on doctors to pull their teeth. In 1838 there was but one turn-key for pulling teeth in Muscatine County and it belonged to Dr. Reynolds. In October, 1839, Dr. James Weed began the practice of dentistry in Bloomington. A century later, in 1939, there were twenty-four doctors, ten druggists, and sixteen dentist practicing in Muscatine. Twenty-five years later there were twenty-six general practitioners, two surgeons, eight druggists, and eleven dentists practicing in Muscatine.

The legal profession was represented by some distinguished characters. Joseph Williams arrived in the fall of 1838 to serve as a judge of the Territorial Supreme Court. He was also Chief Justice of the State Supreme Court in 1847-1848 and 1849-1855. His tenure was interrupted in 1848 by S. C. Hastings, whose judicial service in Muscatine began as justice of the peace with the trial of a man who stole $30 from a citizen and $3 from the court. The sentence was thirty-three lashes and banishment to Illinois—a penalty which was inflicted under the eye of the court and before a large crowd of people. The names of David C. Cloud, William G. Woodward, Stephen Whicher, A. J. Leffingwell, J. Scott Richman, and
BLOOMINGTON COMES OF AGE

Ralph P. Lowe are boldly written in Iowa as well as Bloomington annals.

Schools and churches were said to be lacking in the "Town of Pinch 'em Slily." But that was in January, 1839, when there were only a half dozen children in Bloomington. The first school was taught by J. A. Parvin in May, 1839. Classes were held in a small log cabin which Parvin rented for eight dollars. The salary of Muscatine's first school teacher was determined by the generosity and prosperity of parents.

During the next decade several private schools were established. In February, 1841, Suel Foster notified stockholders of the Bloomington Education Society to meet at the "School House" to consider the propriety of selling the school building. In the following September, J. Purinton informed citizens of his intention to start a school and continue it through the winter. His tuition rates were $3 for primary and $4 for the higher branches. Extra charges would be made for room rent and fuel. It was not until 1848 that the first concerted action was taken for public schools. In 1938 there were 124 teachers instructing 3550 students in Muscatine, besides 102 registered in the Junior College. The valuation of public school property was set at $1,078,000.

A quarter century later, in 1963, there were 189 teachers instructing 4,925 students in the eleven public schools. In addition, there were four paro-
chal schools with 640 students. Muscatine was particularly proud of its Community, or Junior College, which enrolled 322 full time students and 84 part-time students in 1963. The total replaceable valuation of public school buildings and equipment was set at $7,402,612 by Superintendent Johnson, in 1964, or one-half the price paid for the entire Louisiana Purchase.

Bloomington manifested other cultural developments. On February 23, 1841, T. S. Parvin lectured to the Bloomington Literary Association on the “Objects and Advantages of Literary Associations.” During the ensuing months the Literary Association listened to such men as Justice Joseph Williams, G. W. Humphreys, and Dr. Wm. H. Blaydes, the latter speaking on “Empyreanism.”

When the Wolverine traveler visited Bloomington in 1839 he was astonished at the amount of drunkenness — the citizens were said to consume enough liquor annually to “float the whole town.” By 1841 leading citizens had formed the Bloomington Temperance Society. N. W. Goodrich, J. A. Parvin, S. C. Hastings, and Rev. John Stocker spoke at the spring meetings. The “friends, foes, and neutrals” were “all invited” to attend the September temperance meeting to hear Robert Lucas and Dr. Law speak.

In the fall of 1837, the Methodists heard the Reverend Norris Hobert preach at Bloomington. About this time Barton H. Cartwright held serv-
ices in the barroom of the Iowa House, Bloomington’s first hotel. In July, 1839, the first Methodist class was formed. On October 3, 1840, the first recorded Quarterly Meeting was held with such men as Joseph Williams, J. A. Parvin, George Bumgardner, and Charles A. Warfield attending. During the same year the Methodists and the Presbyterians began to use alternately a house for school and religious purposes. The Presbyterians had been organized on July 6, 1839, by the Reverend John Plank of the American Home Missionary Society.

The Episcopalians organized a church in 1839, the Baptists in 1841, and the Congregationalists in 1843. The Catholics performed their first rituals in a frame house constructed at Prairie du Chien and floated down the Mississippi. Church meetings were frequently recorded in the newspapers. Thus, on November 19, 1841, the Bloomington Herald announced that religious services would precede a “downeast” Thanksgiving to be held in the school room on Thursday.

In 1842 a local editor chronicled with pride the first pork packed in Muscatine by the firm of Isett & Blaydes. A total of 322 hogs were packed averaging 189 pounds in weight and costing $1.79 per cwt.

In 1858-59, according to Cincinnati Prices Current, Keokuk ranked sixth and Muscatine eighth among the great pork-packing centers of the Mid-
dle West. Four years later on November 12, 1863, the *Keokuk Constitution* reported that Godman & Co. had killed 2,200 hogs since the beginning of the slaughtering season. To this news the Muscatine *Weekly Courier* replied:

We admit that this is doing quite well for Keokuk, which made so much capital out of its extensive pork packing but it is just nothing at all compared with what Muscatine is doing. Up to Wednesday evening of this week over twenty-five thousand hogs by actual figures, were killed in this city. Up to Saturday evening, Nov. 7th fourteen thousand and fifty had been disposed of by two firms, Chambers & Bros. and S. O. Butler, as given in our last weekly. These figures are not mere guesses, but taken from the books of the packers. What do the Keokuckians say to this?

In addition to manufactured meat products, wild game was plentiful in the Muscatine area, at least for some hunters. The editor of the Muscatine *Weekly Courier* of November 12, 1863, ruefully reported as follows:

GAME. — Bowers & Mauck are buying in all the wild game they can procure, for shipment to Chicago. We saw them buy one hundred and twenty-six prairie chickens of one man, a few days ago. It is said that ducks and geese are very plenty in favorable localities, and that large numbers are bagged by enterprising hunters. We had heard so much of the abundance of game, that we thought we would try a hunting trip. Equipping ourself in the approved style we started out, but the game was not to be found. It may have been there, but we “didn’t see it.”
A century later, in 1964, the Richard Packers, locally owned by one Muscatine family since 1876, reported they were slaughtering 15,000 cattle and 10,000 hogs annually. They manufactured fresh meats, sausages, wood smoked ham and bacon, and Holland-style Bologna, which found a ready market in Eastern Iowa. The average cost of hogs live weight was $15.42 per cwt while the average cost of cattle was $18.31 per cwt, a far cry from the price paid in 1842.

The lumber business was one of the first industries in Muscatine. It also was without doubt the greatest and longest lived, lasting well into the 20th Century before being superseded as a leader by other and newer industries since World War II. Like other Mississippi River towns in Iowa, Muscatine quickly learned that good cheap lumber was necessary for the conversion of their log cabin community into one of frame houses. Of hardwood there was a great plenty in the Black Hawk Purchase; in 1839 F. H. Stone and Jack Richman bought 60,000 feet of hardwood lumber that had been sawed on the Maquoketa River and rafted it down the Mississippi to Muscatine. It was composed of black walnut, oak, and linn; the walnut, one pioneer asserted, being excellent for the "coffins" that must be made because of the prevailing sickness in Muscatine. According to J. P. Walton: "Stone worked one day and had the ague the next, when Richman, who had it, but on alternate days,
took his place, which was a great accommodation to their business."

The *Muscatine Journal* was alert to the growth of industry, and the lumber business was no exception. In 1867, for example, the *Journal* boasted that 12,260,000 feet had been sawed, 8,400,000 feet bought in the water, and 33,000,000 feet sold. In addition, it noted that 12,750,000 shingles and 8,527,000 lath had been sold, and that there were 10,000,000 feet of lumber on hand. The following year the *Journal* claimed that Muscatine stood second in the State in the lumber trade in 1867.

In the years that followed, large and costly lumberyard fires were recorded, but invariably the old ones were reestablished or new ones introduced. On May 1, 1871, a spark from a construction train set fire to the Hershey lumberyard, destroying several piles of lumber and the sawmill stables. This was of little consequence compared with the gigantic Chicago fire that horrified the Nation the same fall. Muscatine contributed generously to the Chicago fire victims, and one Muscatine firm shipped thirty-nine cars of laths to Chicago, mute testimony to the tremendous amount of rebuilding going on in the Windy City.

The Musser sawmill, which had commenced operation in June, 1871, soon was contributing to the growth and prosperity of Muscatine. Meanwhile, the *Journal* noted a monster raft passing downstream containing 2,000,000 feet of lumber
and loaded with 500,000 shingles, 700,000 laths and 100,000 pickets, towed by the raftboat, J. W. Van Sant. Such performances caused the Muscatine editor to comment on October 17: "Towing rafts by steamers was laughed at seven years ago — today rafters are built which cost $27,000."

Among the raftboats built and bearing testimony to the importance of Muscatine in the lumber trade were the Musser and the B. Hershey. In 1883 the raftboat B. Hershey was owned by the Hershey Lumber Company of Muscatine while the Silver Wave, James Fisk, Jr., and LeClaire Belle were owned by the Van Sant and Musser Transportation Company of Muscatine. Seven years later, in 1890, the B. Hershey still had the same owners while Van Sant and Musser had the Musser, the LeClaire Belle, and the J. W. Van Sant. In 1893 the Glenmont had taken the place of the LeClaire Belle, joining the Musser and J. W. Van Sant in the towing fleet owned and operated by the Van Sant and Musser Transportation Company.

On a number of occasions prior to 1900 the "hands" of the various sawmills went on strike for a 10-hour day instead of 11 hours' work. On September 4, 1873, the Muscatine Journal stated that the "old time and old wages were resumed, the strikers losing their time while idle."

Although sawmills hummed busily in Muscatine there were more productive lumber towns in
Iowa. The statistics of manufactures for lumber manufacturing in Iowa for the year ending May 31, 1880, reveal Clinton County leading in the total value of all proper sawmill products: Clinton County — $1,974,127; Scott County — $843,980; Lee County (Keokuk and Fort Madison) — $641,840; and Muscatine County — $612,400. A quarter century later, in 1905, out of ten selected industries analyzed in the State Census, the lumber industry was still the largest in point of capital invested. Lumbering attracted $13,258,000 in capital, compared with $7,297,000 for slaughtering and meat packing and $7,210,000 in printing and publishing in Iowa. Lumbering too, was, next to meat packing, the least profitable, showing 10.12% profit on investment compared with 33% for both the printing and publishing industry and the canning and preserving of fruits and vegetables.

One new, unique, and decidedly important industry began as Muscatine started down the second half-century of its history in 1890. This was the pearl button industry, which developed out of the presence of an abundance of clam shells in the Mississippi and its tributaries. The history of the domestic pearl button industry in America is claimed to have begun in Muscatine in 1890 when a German farm laborer, John F. Boepple, cut his foot on a clam shell while swimming in the Mississippi. Boepple had made buttons out of horn in
Germany. He decided, after close examination, that clams were ideal for this purpose. He accordingly gathered a few clams, rigged up an old foot power lathe in his home, and cut a dozen buttons which he sold to a Muscatine store for ten cents. These are said to be the first fresh water pearl buttons manufactured in the United States and marked the beginning of the fabulous Muscatine button industry.

Boepple's industry and perseverance, coupled with his ability to find a ready market for his buttons, finally convinced citizens of Muscatine that a rich treasure lay at their very doorstep. Soon the rush was on and clam boats dotted the surface of the Mississippi. At night the banks of the Father of Waters fairly glowed with fires of hundreds of clam-boiling outfits. This activity resulted in more button works and soon piles of shells littered the town. Unfortunately, most of the buttons manufactured were so poor at first that no one would buy them. It was then that capital was invested, precision machinery introduced, and experienced hands developed which made Muscatine the "Pearl Button Capital of the World." Today, with clamming virtually unknown and plastics taking the place of pearl buttons, Muscatine still claims to be the "World's Fresh Water Pearl Button Capital."

The pearl button industry, like lumbering, has been forced to bow to newer Muscatine industries
that flowered during or since World War II. The first five industries in Muscatine, measured by the number of persons employed are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPANIES</th>
<th>EMPLOYEES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Grain Processing Corporation</td>
<td>800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grain alcohol; Solulac; Distillers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Thatcher Glass Mfg. Co., Inc.</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cellulose film &amp; plastic tubes &amp; Closures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Home-O-Nize Company</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steel office furniture. Material handling</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. H. J. Heinz Company</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food processing (tomatoes and pickles)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Huttig Manufacturing Company</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sash, doors, millwork</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The growth of transportation and communication in Muscatine has kept pace with her sister cities to the north and south. The first telegraph dispatch was received in Muscatine on August 3, 1848, by operator Oliver Hudson Kelley, destined to become one of the founders of the Patrons of Husbandry, or National Grange. The first railroad linked Muscatine with Davenport in 1855, and with Iowa City in 1856. Two years later, enterprising Muscatine celebrated the construction of the railroad westward to Washington.

The telephone system was inaugurated in Muscatine on June 7, 1881, and communication opened with surrounding communities as far distant as Clinton and DeWitt during the next fifteen months. There were 12,571 telephones in Muscatine, including rural phones, in 1964.
The first streetcar was run in Muscatine on September 11, 1883. It was a horse-drawn affair that operated over a stretch 2 1/2 miles long. Seven years later, on March 25, 1890, Muscatine was asked to grant a franchise for an electric street railway, which was granted and soon installed.

Just as exciting for Muscatine, perhaps, was the introduction of gas into the city in 1857, the acquisition of the first fire department in 1875, and the inauguration of the first water works on West Hill in 1878. Year by year other events followed: the adoption of Standard Time all over the country in 1883 (with Muscatine and Iowa falling within the Central Time Zone) posed no problems since most men worked ten or eleven hours a day and sports-minded Iowans were relatively few. The opening of the Hotel Webster amidst brilliant entertainment on March 5, 1884, was followed in 1885 by the Macadamizing of Front Street and the opening of the Turner Opera House. By 1890 the files of the Muscatine Journal covered a half century of colorful history and all Muscatine could celebrate the Golden Wedding of the Joseph Bridgmans, who were married in Muscatine in 1840.

In the years that followed, Bloomington had much to be thankful for: a rich soil, healthful climate, and homogeneous people have been important factors in causing the population to expand from about 1,600 in 1846 to 20,997 in 1960. Muscatine still has her sash and door mills, reminiscent
of lumbering days. Muscatine still employs almost five hundred button workers. Muscatine still dwells in the sunset land, enjoying the rich educational, religious, and cultural heritage handed down by the pioneers of yesteryears.

William J. Petersen