

Autobiography of William H. Fleming

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

Recommended Citation

"Autobiography of William H. Fleming." *The Annals of Iowa* 15 (1925), 67-68.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.4931>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM H. FLEMING

In assembling and organizing materials upon Iowa history we have from the beginning inclined toward the personal or individual rather more particularly than the institutional phases, and thus have accentuated among the books such materials as genealogy, local history, travel and of enterprise such as war, adventure, colonization, and domestic life in all its types from the cultured back to the primitive and aboriginal. Our maps and documents, while revealing fully the organized and institutional relations of men, are nevertheless individual evidence. Our key thought is that at least for our purposes any life is more interesting than any book, and that the population of our community looked at as individuals, and, in excepted cases for their valor or attainments, forms the field of our endeavors and the facilities for all historical enterprises.

William H. Fleming, in his last years, at the suggestion of the Pioneer Lawmakers Association of Iowa, was afforded by the General Assembly a staff appointment in our institution and thereby the opportunity of thumbing through our documents and reviewing his own career. He prepared the accompanying autobiography with the simplicity of thought and diction that distinguished his admirable mind and character. What he set down was confessedly incomplete, but elucidates and interprets where one without his extraordinary experience remains puzzled or unacquainted. He had not strength, time nor purpose to set himself forth as a conspicuous, much less an indispensable, factor in the long series of public administrations with which he was concerned. But he possessed and his writing discloses a revulsion against the motives and the measures of public men remaining unnoticed, unappraised, and especially unappreciated.

That Mr. Fleming's pen dropped in the Drake administra-

tion and is silent throughout the remainder of his record, which may be gleaned in the January, 1925, ANNALS, will be common regret with all who love our state.

We close this remarkable life in the ANNALS with his *au revoir*. We acknowledge his unerring guidance through the documents and the unwritten and the traditional in Iowa affairs, and we commit with some emotion his last written utterances to the printed page.

THE PALMETTO FLAG

In the ANNALS for July, 1911, we published a photograph of our great Palmetto flag with editorial suggestions as to compliance with a request that it be returned to citizens of South Carolina.

We now reprint elsewhere that illustration opposite a letter of the late Major S. S. Farwell, written to the *Anamosa Eureka* from the front soon after the capture of Columbia, South Carolina. Although that letter does not mention the flag, the dramatic background of its capture is placed. It was seized from the portico of the unfinished State Capitol of South Carolina. The Stars and Stripes replaced it. Major Farwell's Company H of the Thirty-first Iowa Infantry made the exchange.

We have only public considerations in mind in setting out the correspondence. The principles set out ought to be by our institution and by all concerned regarded as settled. The disposition of all emblems of public valor and of public honor should be dealt with in their light.

Although it is a public and not a private subject, we can illustrate private relations to the Palmetto flag of other than Carolina individuals through setting out our personal relation to it.

The opening to settlement of new and inviting regions, into which flowed successively the populations of older communities, scattered the Harlan family, which was of the Irish contingent of Penn's Colony.¹ Earlier than the Revolution scores of these families scattered through South Carolina. Under the Palmetto

¹[Lincoln's] "genealogy does not account for this rare personality. The first American of this ancestry appeared in Connecticut about 1637. Downward this line proceeds through New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Kentucky into the nineteenth century."—A. B. Funk in "Abraham Lincoln, a Character Sketch," page 2.

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.