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THE DISCOVERY OF WILLIAM SALTER'S ALMANAC-DIARY

PHILIP D. JORDAN

There is no doubt but that Dr. William Salter, for many years pastor of the Congregational church at Burlington, Iowa, was the most widely known and the most influential member of the Iowa Band, that group of eleven young men, all graduates from the Andover Theological Seminary in the spring of 1843, who determined to preach the gospel on the frontier and chose the Territory of Iowa.

Dr. Salter became prominent not only as a preacher and teacher of great gifts, but also as an author and historiographer of unusual talents. It is not surprising then that original Salter manuscripts and documents are prized as accurate source material concerning life and events at a time when Iowa was yet a territory and later when the territory assumed the political status of a state.

The diaries which Dr. Salter kept, beginning from the time the little group left Chicago in wagons for Burlington and continuing until long after the Civil War, are remarkable for their exquisite detail and vision. Until recently it was thought that all these diaries which were extant were in the possession of the Salter family. However, I have, during the past year, located the little paper covered almanac which Dr. Salter used as a brief diary for the year 1846.

After Dr. Salter had been ordained at Denmark, November 5, 1843, he elected to go to Maquoketa in Jackson County to begin his labors. Here he stayed, preaching and making parish calls on foot and horseback, until the middle of October, 1846, when he became pastor of the Congregational church at Burlington to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Rev. Horace Hutchinson, another member of the Iowa Band.

The almanac-diary contains a record of the year 1846, the last year that Dr. Salter preached in Maquoketa and the first

that he preached in Burlington. The little paper volume¹ measures about four and three-quarters by seven and three-quarters inches and is in comparatively good condition. On the outside front cover, in Dr. Salter's well-known handwriting, appears: "Rev. Wm. Salter. Maquoketa, Jackson Co., Iowa." The first four pages of this sixty-page church almanac are concerned with a dedication to the Congregational ministers and churches throughout the United States, with varied astronomical lore and with the listing of historical events of importance.

The first entry occurs on page five under the heading, "Memoranda For January, 1846." Here, on January first, Dr. Salter wrote, "A very rainy day"; on January tenth, "Colossians 2: in morning reading"; on January nineteenth, "2 Tim. 2: in morning"; on January 23, "Mr. Barnett commenced digging my well"²; and January twenty-ninth, "Dedication of Ch. in Du-buque." These five entries complete the diary for January.

The entries for February are only five in number. On the first "Communion at Cascade" is entered.³ On the eighth, a Sunday, Dr. Salter entered "in Maquoketa" and on the thirteenth he was "to preach at Cascade in the evening." On the following day he wrote "Rev. 12: in morning reading," and on the twenty-second he was "in Bloomington."⁴

On the seventh of March appeared the entry, "Rev. H. Hutchinson died 3 p.m."⁵ and on the eleventh he enters only "funeral of Mr. Hutchinson." On the fifteenth he writes, "begin Mat. 1: read two chapters a day," and for the seventeenth he was "On the Mississippi in Steamer Lynx." On the twenty-third and the following two days appears "Equinoctial storm," and from the twenty-sixth through the twenty-ninth occurred "blustering weather." On the thirtieth he wrote, "Mark 3: in morning reading."⁶

¹The/Congregational/Almanac./For the Year of Our Lord And Saviour Jesus Christ./1846/Being the Second After Bissextile and. Until July/Fourth. The Seventieth Year of The Independence/of the United States./Calculated For New England. New York, and the/Western States./By A Congregationalist./Boston: /C. C. Dean, 13 Cornhill./Charles Tappan, 114 Washington st.—Crocker and Brewster,/47 Washington st.—Benj. Perkins and Co., 100 Wash-inton st.—A. J. Wright, 3 Water st.

²In Dr. Salter's diary for 1843-1846 I find that the well-digging and walling with 5025 bricks cost \$81.71.

³Rev. Edwin B. Turner, a member of the Iowa Band, had selected Cascade in Jones county for his parish.

⁴Bloomington is now known as Muscatine. These entries on p. 7.

⁵Rev. Horace Hutchinson died of tuberculosis at the age of 29,

op. 9.

The young pastor's diary for April contains only five entries again, three of them having to do with the weather. On the sixth, he wrote, "begin Genesis? MAM?" and on the ninth occurs, "Des Moines Presbytery at Marion," and on the twenty-eighth and for the two days following he wrote "rain all day."⁷

On the first of May Dr. Salter wrote, "Ac. 6: in morning reading"; on the fifth he entered "South Iowa Association at Tipton"; on the twelfth, "Denmark Association at Farmington"; and on the next day, "Genesis 2: in morning reading."⁸

For the first of June the diary reads, "Gen. 40: in morning reading. Ecc. 1: MAM"; on the fourth "Gen. Association at Dubuque 7 P.M."; on the fifth, "To speak on Foreign Missions at Dubuque"; on the eleventh, "Ex. 10: in A.M."; on the twentieth, "Ex. 29 in evening and Gen. 10. MAM"; on the twenty-third, "Gen. 45: in morning"; on the following day, "Commencement at Galesburgh, Ills"; and on the twenty-sixth, "in morning, Ex. 1."⁹

During the month of July, Dr. Salter took a little trip east. On the seventh, he "left Burlington"; on the day following he says, "Galena"; on the twelfth, "Chicago"; on the fourteenth, "Bradford, Mass."; on the day following, "Detroit"; on the next day, "Buffalo"; on the eighteenth, "New York"; on the twentieth and the three days following, "Ague"; and on the thirtieth, "Congregational Convention at Michigan City."¹⁰

There are no entries for the month of August.¹¹

On the eighth of September, Dr. Salter wrote, "New Haven, C't."; and on the fifteenth, "Westchart, N.Y."; on the seventeenth, "Brooklyn"; on the twenty-second, "left New York, 7 a.m. for Albany. Delivan House \$3.00"; on the day following, "Auburn House \$2.00"; on the twenty-fourth, "Buffalo. Bennet's Temperance House"; and on the following day, "rain."¹²

On the third of October he "hired Copp and Parsons' House from this day"; on the ninth, "arrived at Burlington in the morning"; and on the fifteenth, "commenced Housekeeping."¹³

⁷p. 11.

⁸p. 13.

⁹p. 15.

¹⁰p. 17.

¹¹p. 19.

¹²p. 21.

¹³p. 23.

November was a busy month for this young pastor. On the first his diary shows that "Rev. C. R. Fisk preached for me in the afternoon"; on the third and fourth he writes, "beautiful weather"; on the fifth, "beautiful weather and Ps. 7: and in Hebrew"; on the tenth, "Sewing society at our house"; on the twelfth he "visited Rev. A. Leonard's"; on the day following, "Rain"; on the eighteenth, he "visited Mrs. Hodges, Mr. Fordney, Mr. Hendrin, Mr. Pope, and Mr. Blackman"; on the next day, "visited Mrs. Leonard, Mrs. Ware, Mrs. Lindsley, Mrs. Field, Mrs. Rand"; on the twentieth, "visited Mrs. Sheldon"; on the twenty-first, he wrote, "rain in the morning, cleared off P.M."; on the twenty-second, "Rev. Mr. Marst preached for me in the afternoon"; on the next day, "visited Mr. Leveridge, Jacobi, Linneman—Lower Town"; on the twenty-fourth, "Snow storm Monday night, called on Mr. Norris"; two days later, "Thanksgiving. Thermometer at 12 at 8 A.M."; on the twenty-seventh, "Anti-Slavery Society at Denmark"; on the twenty-ninth, "To preach in Lower Town. Evening at Danville."¹⁴

The entries for December are not many. On the ninth, Dr. Salter wrote, "Snow at night"; on the fifteenth, "Snow at night"; on the seventeenth, "A very little snow at night. Prayer meeting at my house"; on the twenty-fourth, "Prayer meeting at my house"; on the twenty-ninth, "Rain and prayer meeting at my house"; on the day following, "unpleasant. Cong. Ct. Burlington, Ia. Dedicated to God. Rev. Wm. Salter installed Pastor of it"; and on the thirty-first, "unpleasant. Prayer meeting at Mrs. Sheldon."¹⁵

These comprise all the entries with the exception of some thermometer readings which Dr. Salter recorded.¹⁶

Although these hurried jottings and rapid entries lack the polish and the details which the other diaries possess, they nevertheless are important for they are the only records we have of the last few months at Maquoketa and the first few months at Burlington. For that reason the Almanac-Diary forms an important contribution to the Salter manuscript collection as well as to the history of early Iowa.

¹⁴p. 25.

¹⁵p. 27.

¹⁶pp. 24, 26.

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