Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney and Iowa

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the late Judge Walter J. Smith said he once made to Colonel Roosevelt on the occasion of a similar dedication, namely, "If this deserves a dedication by you, Iowa should have 299 dedications by presidents annually, forever."

MRS. LYDIA H. SIGOURNEY AND IOWA

In the article on Thomas Gregg, published in this number of the ANNALS, there appears a letter from Mrs. Lydia H. Sigourney to Mr. Gregg, which leads to the knowledge that the noted authoress was greatly interested in the West, and that she was very popular in Iowa. It seems that a copy of Mr. Gregg's paper, the Western Adventurer and Herald of the Upper Mississippi, containing an account of the burial of an Indian girl at Montrose came to Mrs. Sigourney's attention, which caused her to write the poem, "Indian Girl's Burial." From "Pocahontas, and Other Poems," by Mrs. L. H. Sigourney, published by Robert Tyas, London, 1844, page 161, we quote as follows:

INDIAN GIRL'S BURIAL

"In the vicinity of Madison, Wisconsin Territory, the only daughter of an Indian woman of the Sac tribe, died of lingering consumption, at the age of eighteen. A few of her own race, and a few of the pale faces were at the grave, but none wept, save the poor mother." Herald of the Upper Mississippi.

A voice upon the prairies
A cry of woman's woe,
That mingled with the autumn blast
All faintly and low:
It is a mother's wailing;
Death earth another home
Like that, with which a mother mourns:
Her feet, her only one:

Pale faces gather round her,
They marked the storm on its high
That rends and wrecks the lowing cow,
But their cold, blue eyes are dry,
Pale faces gave upon her,
As the wild winds caught her moan,
But she was an Indian mother,
So she wept her tears alone.
Long o'er that wasted isle,
She watch'd, and toil'd, and pray'd,
Though every dreary day revealed
Some ravage Death had made,
Till the bloodless sinews started,
And hope no opiate gave,
And heart, and hollow grew her voice,
And echo from the grave.

She was a gentle creature,
Of raven eye and press,
And dove-like were the tones that breathed
Her bosom's tenderness,
Save when some quick emotion,
The warm blood strongly sent,
To swell in her olive cheek
So richly eloquent.

I said Consumption smote her,
And the heeder's art was vain,
But she was an Indian maiden,
So none deplored her pain;
None, save that widow'd mother,
Who now by her open tomb,
In nothing like the smitten wretch,
Whose judgment marks her doom.

Nay! that lowly cabin,
That bed beside the wall,
That seat beneath the mending vine,
Their life and empty all.
What hand shall pluck the tall, green corn
That ripeneth on the plain?
Since she for whom the board was spread
Must never return again.

Rest, rest, thou Indian maiden,
Nor let thy mourning shade
Grieve that those pale-brindled ones with seen
Thy burial site surveyed;
There's many a king whose tomb
A black-robed realm shall see,
For whom no tear of grief is shed
Like that which falls for thee.

Yes, rest thee, forest maiden,
Beneath thy native tree;
The proud may boast their little day
One of the evidences of Mrs. Sigourney's popularity in the West and particularly in Iowa is that one of our fine old county seat towns was named in her honor. The facts given below concerning the naming of Sigourney are gleaned from the "History of Keokuk County, Iowa," published by the Iowa Historical Company, Des Moines, 1880.

Soon after Keokuk County was created, a commission was appointed to locate the county seat. It consisted of Dr. George H. Stone, a practicing physician of Washington, Washington County, John A. Stewart, a farmer of the north part of Washington County, and Samuel Shuttleton, a lawyer of Fairfield. While Mr. Shuttleton did not concur, Dr. Stone and Mr. Stewart joined in selecting the northeast quarter of section two, township seventy-five north, range twelve west, and according to their report made May 19, 1844, desiguated the same as the seat of justice for Keokuk County, and have called the same Sigourney.

It is said that while Mr. Stewart concurred, yet Dr. Stone actually selected the location and the name. It is said he was a great admirer of Mrs. Sigourney's writings.

It is also stated in the county history that Mrs. Sigourney "showed her appreciation of the compliment at one time by providing for the planting of the trees which now adorn the Court House yard."

As a contribution to this subject we append the following letter recently received from Miss Helen M. Lee, assistant librarian of the State Library, Des Moines:

Mr. E. R. Barton
Curator Historical Department
My dear Mr. Barton:

Appropriately the novel was at one time in the hands of my maternal grandmother, who was a teacher in the early Iowa Territory. She read it for me, and I still remember the story vividly. The novel has been published many times, and I believe it is still in print today. It is a moving story of the pioneer days in America, and it has been a favorite of mine ever since I was a child.
Segourney. She also learned that the house had never been occupied of this fact. By taking the matter in hand, some friends, it was agreed, and with that Mrs. Segourney be informed of the same, as it would make her have a bearing of some interest to her. Accordingly a letter was written, by the mother-in-law, to Mrs. Segourney, acquainting her with the fact that her house was in her a few years hence. In the letter a reply to the letter was received, expressing Mrs. Segourney’s appreciation of the compliment which had been paid to her, and enclosing fifty dollars with which to defray the expenses of printing such a tract about the little town.

Years only.

RACHEL M.’s

THE BOSTON CHRONICLE, 1768

Among the most precious files of old newspapers in the Historical Department is Volume I of the Boston Chronicle, extending from January 1, 1768, to December 26, of the same year. It is most interesting, showing the contrasts between newspapers then and now; and revealing much of the social and economic conditions of the people a century and a half ago.

Boston in 1768 was a city of 20,000 people. It had been sixty-four years since Boston had its first newspaper, the Boston News Letter. In 1768, the time of the founding of the Chronicle, the city had two other papers, the New London and the Gazette. The Gazette, especially, was the organ of the Whigs. Its office was the resort of the leading spirits of the day, Otis, the Masses, the Warrens, and the Quakers. The Chronicle occupied a different position. Its publishers were Messrs. Mein and Fleming. They evidently took a very conservative position. It is charged that Mr. Mein greatly insulted the Whigs, rebuking their nitty and Parumonan, endeavoring in that way to weaken the influence of their leaders with the masses. After a year or two Mein was practically driven from Boston, returning to England, from whence he had come five years before, and Fleming soon followed. They had been assisted by Joseph Green, a wit, and Samuel Waterhouse, an official in the customhouse. But in 1770, after a little over two years of precarious existence, the Chronicle passed into oblivion. The closing sentence of its publishers says, “The Printers of the Boston Chronicle return thanks to the