

# Morton's History of Nebraska

Authentic, Complete

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## CHAPTER VI CONTINUED (19)

And this enormous and almost incomprehensible sum vested in the farms, homes, manufactories, railroads, and other belongings of Nebraska has been accumulated almost wholly by the tillage of its fecund soil. The homely art of plowing and the faithful labor of planting, fused with domestic economy and good management by individual citizens, have populated, organized and developed the resources of the ninety counties, caused all the beautiful homes, the fruitful orchards, the bountiful crops, the thriving plants of manufacture, and the prosperous towns and cities to arise like exhalations upon the prairies. Then the most hopeful and prophetic hardly expected to see any acre of Nebraska land sold for agricultural purposes during his life for more than twenty-five dollars, or thought that improvement was practicable more than forty to sixty miles beyond our eastern border. Land in and of itself has no more exchangeable value than air and water; it depends for its value on human effort put forth upon it, or in relation to it. As lately at 1866 one could get agricultural college scrip for fifty to seventy cents an acre. The value of lands then expressed in cents must be expressed in like numbers of dollars now.

"I offered to sell to some parties in New York City twenty thousand acres of Otoe county land for twenty thousand dollars. The proposition was based upon an option of twenty thousand acres of college scrip, belonging to the state of Maryland, which a friend had secured for me. Elated at the prospect of making forty cents an acre I went in great haste to the city of New York, and here for two weeks labored to impress upon the minds of possible purchasers my faith that the land would be worth five or ten dollars an acre in ten or fifteen years. But, while they listened to my descriptions of the soil, its possibilities in productiveness, and my forecasts of future values, not a man of the wealthy financiers with whom I labored, and all of them had idle money, would buy an acre. The scheme fell through because, in the judgment of the New Yorkers, we were too remote from means of transportation."

No railroad touched the east bank of the Missouri opposite Nebraska until 1867. Then the Northwestern reached Council Bluffs, and offered the farmers of this state their first rail connection with Chicago and the markets of the east. Those rails were laid in relation to Nebraska lands. The Rock Island and the Burlington soon followed, and together with the Union Pacific and other railroad lines on the west bank of the Missouri contribute to establish land values from the river to the foot-hills of the mountains.

The acting governor of Nebraska, Thomas B. Cuming, ostensibly lived on the town-site of Omaha, but he really abode at Council Bluffs. The city of Omaha had a population not exceeding one hundred and fifty. It had no hotel, only a half dozen finished cabins, a few shanties, and a tavern in process of erection to be called the Douglas House; and neither man nor beast could yet find comfort there in the way of board and lodging. Of tawny autumnal color, the unbroken plains stretched from the hamlet to the Rocky mountains like a gigantic canvas awaiting only the touch of intelligent industry to make it glow with all the vivid shades and colorings of modern civilization. But precedent to all enterprise and development was required the establishment of order, civil organization, and law. The organic act provided for that. The United States had authorized the president to appoint for the territory a governor, a secretary, three district judges, a district attorney, and a marshal. President Franklin Pierce had named, and the Senate had confirmed Francis Burt of South Carolina, governor; Thomas B. Cuming of Iowa, secretary; Experience Estabrook of Wisconsin, United States district attorney; Fenner Ferguson of Michigan, chief justice; E. R. Harden of Georgia and James Bradley of Indiana, associate justices of the supreme court; and Mark W. Izard of Arkansas, United States marshal. Each of the judges of the supreme court was judge also of one of the three judicial districts.

It will be seen that the carpetbag system had full sway in that early day; and under it the unfortunate territories have ever since continued to be the eleemosynary asylum for superannuated or superfluous politicians. In considering the question as to who should succeed Governor Burt the Omaha Arrow furnishes us at once a strong and discriminating characterization of the pioneers—the more forceful and interesting because "written on the spot," and by one of them—and an attack on the carpetbag system.

"It is with heartfelt gratification that we witness the degree of patriotism and self-sacrifice manifested of late by persons throughout the territory desirous of serving the 'dear people' in the capacity of your humble servant, in the small number of offices within the gift of an honest pioneer constituency. Coosily seated as we are in our prairie sanctum, we can watch the whole field with a de-

gree of pleasure, an interest unappreciated by the aspiring patriots or, genteelly termed, Nebraska office seekers.

"We see around us and all over our territory needy aspirants for the forty representative offices within the gift of a constituency who have led the van in opening one of the loveliest countries the sun ever shone upon. We see persons anxious, eager, striving for the votes of a people upon whom the old fogy sobriquet of squatters has often been applied, yet a people as honest, as noble, as generous, as hospitable, as practically and theoretically democratic as any in this broad land of ours. They are our friends and we are emphatically theirs. They have come here, not as aspirants for political favors, or under outside pressure for patronage, but have come like us, to rear a home on the frontier, and freed from the anti-progressive customs of old states, act and feel as God in His infinite wisdom intended man to act and feel.

"In selecting those, therefore, who are to represent and make laws, to govern and protect us, we want practical, honest men; we want men who are even above the suspicion of being influenced by motives of pecuniary interest; men who know the country and people whom they represent, who have been identified with their interests, who have worked and will continue to work for those interests.

"We are half inclined to believe that every battle-riddled politician, every boaster of bold political deeds of days gone by, every ranting politician should be left to pursue any other avocation than to serve the 'dear people,' and plain, practical, progressive men be allowed to act for us in the legislative halls. Of all the creatures that roam this fair land of ours, whom we really most pity, and whom we hold in supreme contempt that species of greedy aspirants that always hurry to a new country to court public favor, without basing their claims upon the shadow of a right, stand in the superlative degree. We have no faith in their promises, no faith in their actions. They cannot pass the ordeal among Nebraska voters."

But our editor, like all of them who perch upon the tripod of the "organ," is no fool to make a stumbling block of his consistency, and does not hesitate to mock that baneful jewel. On the same page with his settler of carpetbagism he declares that the appointment of Izard from the alien Arkansas country "would meet with the hearty concurrence of the people," and he reinforces a puff of Secretary Cuming of the foreign state of Iowa for the same office, which he has clipped from an Iowa paper, with the assurance that "his many friends here would heartily rejoice at such a deserved promotion."

And then in the next column our editor, giving full vent to his innate sentiment and fancy, answers the question at the head of his article, "Who will be appointed governor of Nebraska?" in this strain:

"This is a question of no little importance and one that we often hear asked.

"Although we were born and reared in the East and all our early associations are bound up in the hills, valleys, hemlock slopes and clay soils of the East, still we do not the less appreciate the energy, spirit, talent, usefulness, and real perceptiveness of the pioneers of the West. We love them because we know there is the real stuff in them that constitutes all that is excellent, noble, brave, exalted, and statesmanlike. We speak not of the mass, but of many of the choice spirits that compose that industrious and excellent class of society.

"They leave the quiet firesides of home, often strewed with the luxuries to which their lives will in future be strangers, to the occupation and use of those who are less able to make a name and fortune for themselves, or who are less ambitious to do a work that shall signalize them among those who are benefactors of their fellow creatures.

"They are those who retreat from the pleasant haunts of youth, often sundering ties dearer than life to become a humble citizen of the great, the unbounded, the glorious West. Such heed not labor, toil, or privation, they are ever ready to meet the disappointment or success, and in this great school every day they receive a new lesson, and early become the true judges of human nature, the real philosophers of human phenomena. Such a class of men can never be oppressed or borne down, with servility or tyranny in any form, and of such are and will be the most intelligent and exalted statesmen of this continent.

"For 20 years have we been on the trail of the frontiers-men; and for that time have we ever noticed that among the early settlers may be found the men who will dare anything and who are capable of everything. Such men, tho' as tame as a summer flower, and as submissive to right as is the ox to his owner; still no men are better judges of right than themselves. They know the country, the locality, the wants and necessities of the people in their rude manners and customs, and there are no other class of men more capable of making laws or governing a country.

"We have noticed with some degree of interest the seldom falling practice by the chief executives of our Nation,

of appointing for the new territories men from countries far removed, that know little or nothing of the people over which they are to exercise a brief authority. Men whose tastes, habits, peculiarities, predilections, and views have been directed in a channel far different, and altho' they may be numbered among the best of men, they may be quite unfit for the position assigned them and unable to bear up physically under the great changes they are forced to undergo.

"No, we assert it boldly and with a firm conviction of the correctness of our position. The Pioneers should for their Governor have a good, plain, practical, frontier man, one who is not afraid of the heat of summer or the frosts of winter, that can sup from a prairie dog and still be a statesman. One whose talent and good sense is as discernible in the rude cabin as the princely mansion. One who knows the people over which he is placed, as well as their wants and necessities.

"Give us such a man for Governor, and to such a one the people, the hardy pioneer, the energetic squatter, will subscribe with all their heart and soul. We look not at the outside; the roughest covering often hides the most brilliant gem, or the mine of wealth. Give us the men schooled in storms, or opposed by hurricanes of adversity. Such men are firm and unwavering in purpose and are worth a thousand band-box or silk stocking gentry."

On the 18th of October the death of Governor Burt, at the mission house in Bellevue, was officially announced by Acting Governor Cuming. The proclamation of that death was the first executive act. Thus the beginning of the life of a state which is indestructible was the official announcement of the death of its principal citizen, who saw only possibilities where others of his time and generation are permitted to experience great realities.

Acting Governor Cuming was thirty years of age, a swarthy, compactly built man, with a head and features that plainly bespoke power of will, sagacity and courage. He was about five feet eight inches in height, and weighed perhaps one hundred and thirty pounds. His hair was dark and as straight as that of an Indian. His black eyes, flashing energy and determination, possessed also that charm which sturdy and intellectual training so largely contribute. He was a thoroughly educated man, a graduate of the university of Michigan, for entering which he had been carefully and rigorously prepared in Latin, Greek, and mathematics by his father, the Rev. Dr. Cuming, a distinguished clergyman of the Episcopal church in the Peninsular state. With a fine aptitude and versatility, Governor Cuming had entered journalism zealously for his life calling, and was, when appointed secretary, editing the Dispatch at Keokuk, Iowa. No executive of the territory or state perhaps has equaled him in ability; and no documents from the executive office have been couched in better English than those he put forth.

Mr. Cuming's appointment as secretary of the territory was doubtless due to the potent influence of Iowa politicians added to that of Lewis Cass of his native state. His oath of office as secretary was administered August 3, 1854, by Peter V. Daniel, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and he arrived in the territory on the 8th of the same month. To the task of evoking political order from the chaos he found he was quite equal—his enemies said more than equal. In few of our commonwealths has the framing of the state fallen to men of such large ability as were the framers of political Nebraska; and in point of ability Thomas B. Cuming should doubtless be named with the half dozen or less of the first class. In executive capacity and aggressive force, in the judgment of some of his ablest contemporaries, he excelled them all. Two of those contemporaries have expressed the opinion, independently of each other, that if Cuming had gone to the Civil war he would have become a distinguished general. In audacity, and in his methods in general, he was Napoleonic. The difficult knot in which he found the question of temporarily locating the capital of the territory, which an ordinary man would have striven in perplexity to untie, he cut with an Alexandrian stroke, and his generalship in the campaign for formally and legally fixing the seat of government at Omaha was of the same order. By like methods he went about the task of organizing orderly government out of the chaotic material he found.

Bribery and other forms of corruption in the settlement of the capital question were freely and vociferously charged, and are credited as a matter of course by the survivors of those strenuous times. The partisans of Bellevue pushed as her superior claims seniority and the intent of Governor Burt, the real executive. At the third session of the legislature a well-distributed committee of the council, composed of Jacob Safford of Cass, Dodge and Otoe counties, Samuel M. Kirkpatrick of Cass and William Clancy of Washington, in their unanimous report in favor of relocating the capital, said:

To be Continued.

# Nast and President Arthur.

An Unrecorded Incident of Political History.

In the campaign of 1880, Nast refused to introduce Garfield into the pictures, though he did not hesitate to satirize Hancock with telling effect. Nast was never satisfied with Garfield's Credit Mobilier explanation, and he did not then highly regard Arthur. After the election, when the Garfield-Conkling feud seemed about to disrupt the party, and Vice President Arthur made a trip to Albany to confer with Senators Platt and Conkling, supposedly for the purpose of winning them back to the administration, Nast cartooned him as a bootblack polishing the disgruntled Senators' shoes. The artist lived to deeply regret that cartoon, for when Arthur succeeded to the Presidency he proved so noble a chief executive that he won the respect and even the love of his enemies.

The sequel to the Albany incident occurred on the eve of the national convention of 1884. Arthur had become Nast's candidate for the nomination, and he was also favored by certain members of the Harper firm. With J. Henry Harper Nast called on President Arthur at the Hoffman House for the purpose of urging him to make a more definite personal effort to win the nomination. They believed that a combination might be made which would defeat Blaine, whom they bitterly opposed, and leave the victory in Arthur's hands. The President listened to their suggestions and admitted that he greatly desired the honor of the nomination, yet he would make no special effort to obtain it.

"I will accept it, of course, if it falls to me," he said, "but I can do no more. I ought not to do that. I am far from a well man, and it is likely I shall not survive the administration. No, I can't do any more. I can't do it!"

Nobody spoke for several seconds; then Arthur regarded Nast gravely.

"Do you recall that once you caricatured me as a bootblack," he asked, "polishing the shoes of Platt and Conkling?"

Nast nodded unhappily.

"I do, Mr. President," he said. "It hurt me," continued Arthur. "It hurt me terribly. Yet you were right—far more so than you knew—though not altogether in the way you thought."

Then he related the circumstances of a political bargain whose harvest

had ended party disgrace, which had ended with national tragedy.

"With the Maine election of 1880," he said, "matters began to look bad for our ticket, and Mr. Garfield agreed with me that we must in some manner enlist Conkling and Platt in our cause. I advised that we come to New York and see them, and we did so. Meantime they had heard we were coming, and had taken train for Albany. They refused to meet Garfield, who then suggested that I see them and make any arrangement that would bring them into line. I saw them, and they at first declined to believe in my assurances of Garfield's good faith. 'Gentlemen,' I said, 'I pledge you my word as a man of honor that Mr. Garfield made me that promise, and I will undertake to see it carried out.'

"It was then understood among us that Conkling and Platt should control the New York patronage, and it was with this assurance that they worked for the ticket. Grant came back from the West and took the stump with Conkling, and everything was done by Platt and Conkling as agreed. You know what happened after the election. But there is one thing you do not know. It is true I went to Albany again—I did so far descend from the dignity of my office as to go to see Platt and Conkling—but I did not go to conciliate them. It was worse than that—much worse. I went on their order to come and explain why I had not made good my pledge. They knew I would not refuse to come, and I did go, and I humbled myself for not having been able to keep my pledged faith. Now you understand why your picture was even truer than you could know."

During the final sentences the President's voice had broken, and when he finished, the tears were streaming down his cheeks. A gentleman of gentlemen—ill and already nearing the doorway of death—the memory of his broken pledge and his humiliation he could not calmly recall.

Conkling and Platt had resigned from the Senate when the President had failed to accord them the State patronage, and Nast had recorded the episode in the famous set of "Lost Head" cartoons. President Arthur's revelation had flooded the matter with new light. To Conkling, at least, the cartoonist was more friendly from that day.—Albert Bigelow Paine, in Harper's Weekly.



## A Forcible Meeting

He longed to know her. Ah, 'twas weary waiting.  
Though she was overplump, he thought her nice.  
One day they met by accident when skating,  
And that was quite enough to break the ice.

### Gone Back to Good Old Times.

"I was looking over the society column of my newspaper," said a lady of the old school to the New York correspondent of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, "and it did my heart good to see how people have returned to the good old habit of giving their girls names that stand for dignity, poetry and the traditions of our race.

"There was not a Sallie, a Mamie or a Nellie in the list. In one announcement of a reception by a mother on the coming out of her daughter there was 1 Dorothy, 1 Alice, and 1 Eleanor, Melans, 1 Augusta, 1 Elizabeth, and,

thank heaven for it! one plain, lovely and old-fashioned Mary. There was a Lucy, a Jane, an Agnes and three or four Ruths. It seemed to me, almost, as if I were reading a society roster of the respectable days of forty years ago."

### Told Him the Truth.

Mrs. Strong—What did you say, dear, when he asked you your age?  
Miss Sharp—I told him the truth.  
Mrs. Strong—You did! really?  
Miss Sharp—Yes; I told him it was none of his business.