



DR. A. Y. HULL

DOCTOR A. Y. HULL

Of the men who figured quite prominently in political and civic affairs in the early days, was Doctor A. Y. Hull, father of our Congressman, Captain J. A. T. Hull. He came here in 1849, intending to make this his abiding place. He reconnoitered the town—what there was of it—to find a suitable corner lot on which to build a home. Having selected a favorable location, he went down to the "corner lot market," on Second Street, where he was very blandly informed that corner lots had gone up—the price was twenty-five dollars. The corner where the Kirkwood House now is was thirty dollars. He declared it was outrageous; he would not pay it; there was nothing in nor of the town to warrant such prices; he would go and start a town of his own.

The town had, just prior, received a little boost. Speculation was rife. The year before, the United States Geological Survey had sent Doctor Owen here to make a survey of the Des Moines Valley. The surveying party consisted of seven persons, who, with teams and instruments, started up the river in June. When up in Minnesota, a band of Sisseton Sioux attacked them, destroyed their instruments, and probably would have scalped them had not a band of Fox Indians come to their rescue. The outfit returned here in somewhat dilapidated condition. Doctor Owen was given an ovation. He was invited to give a talk to the people, which he accepted, and during his remarks, he tickled the crowd present with many, good sayings, which, viewed from the standpoint of to-day, were not a little prophetic. He said: "Located as your town is, in the center of this great state—a state midway between the two great oceans of the world, and washed on two sides by the two mighty rivers of the continent—with a soil of unsurpassed fertility, and vast stores of mineral wealth, yours must assume a broad place among the states of the

Union. When, in a few years, the Atlantic and Pacific are united by a railway, it will, in all probability pierce your state, and scale your town, giving you communication with every part of the world. This is Nature's choice for the great interior city of the state, and it needs not the spirit of prophecy to foresee that such must be its destiny."

The address tickled the real estate dealers down on Second Street, and they boosted the price on corner lots.

Doctor Hull went down the river, a point where, in 1848, Charles Freel had started a little settlement in Camp Township, near the southeast corner of the county, and purchased a largo tract of land. With his father's family, and his own, nineteen persons, they made their home in a log cabin fifteen feet square, with puncheon floor, and pole bedsteads. He laid out a town of large dimensions, and boomed it vigorously.

In the *Star*, in January, 1850, Doctor Hull advertised in big type a lot sale at low prices, one-third down, one-third in six months, and one-third in twelve months. The prices were made low, on condition that the purchaser was to build a house, or otherwise improve it. If he couldn't get a price, he would give a lot, provided a house was built on it.

He was a good mixer. He got on the warm side of the people, and his town, which he named Lafayette, grew. He had a big celebration one day, attended by one of the largest gatherings had in the county. Long tables, loaded with choicest viands, were spread under improvised leafy bowers. There were toasts and speeches, in which it was hinted that The fort must look to her laurels, with her two hundred people, while Lafayette, with her one hundred and seventy-five—actual count—her busy stores and shops, was growing fast. He established two rope ferries over the river, catch the large number of emigrants going west. He started a big shipping point, and in April, 1851, Lamp. Sherman, in his *Gazette*, said of it:

"Steamboats, when they succeed in climbing over the dam at Bonaparte, make regular stops there, and the blowing of the steamer whistle is a signal for the whole town to turn out."

It was a lively, bustling place, and worried The Fort folks not a little.

Early in April, 1851, the Doctor built two flat-boats, 16x63 feet, to carry corn and other produce to Keokuk, the first thus laden in the county, and of great benefit to farmers. There was haste and bustle to get them off, fearing they might be stranded at the Bonaparte dam on the return trip. There were no railroads. In the navigation of the river then rested the hope of the entire country. Schemes galore were projected at all towns along its banks for building craft suitable for river traffic, to be in readiness for the completion of the work of the River Improvement Company. The fort, at the head of navigation, was to become the trade center for the whole of Central Iowa, and the State Capital—if the rival towns didn't prevent it.

In May, heavy rains came, the river got high—rose twenty-two feet above the low-water mark. The whole country along the river was deluged. Houses, horses, cattle, bogs, and sheep were carried away; ruin and devastation swept over the bottom lands. "Uncle Jerry" Church's town of Dudley, an embryo Capital of Iowa, floated away with the common wreckage, and as the last building started, he climbed on the roof and fiddled a requiem of "departed days." The water crept up about the house of Doctor Hull, at Lafayette, over the floor, up into the beds and bureau drawers. Three times the family moved to higher places, and later, steamboats, which found unobstructed passage in a waterway nearly three miles wide, sailed over the town. When the flood subsided, the town had gone, but the public well was left standing in the middle of the river channel.

That was the historic "year of the great flood." Streams everywhere were over-swollen, bridges carried away, mills forced to stop, causing great scarcity of meal and flour. In many families, parched corn stood for coffee, and corn pounded with a Hickory stick in a Poplar log hollowed out for a mortar, was used for bread. The losses and devastation were more notable because the settlements and towns were principally located along rivers and creeks.

In 1852, Judge Casady, having served as State Senator in the second and third sessions of the Legislature, and declined a renomination, the Doctor was nominated, and elected by a large majority, for he was immensely popular with the early settlers, and had much

influence with them from his many acts of kindness and helpfulness as a physician. He was well educated, a fluent talker, and had a hankering for editorial work—in fact, he was, for a time, editor of the *Star*, giving zest and notable spirit to the early twinkler in the effort to elect Curtis Bates Governor against Grimes, Barlow Granger having become satisfied with newspaper glory and retired. The opposing candidate of the Doctor was John Lewis, a man of advanced age—too old to tramp the district, which embraced several counties—and Lewis Todhunter, a brother of the Doctor's wife, took the stump for Lewis. It was a peculiar and lively campaign, unlike any before or since. The Presidential contest was on; the fugitive Slave Law excitement was stirring up the body politic; the Slack Water Navigation Company's dam and obstruction to river navigation had incensed the people to the vituperative stage, and they were clamoring for railroads, the Whigs laying all the river troubles to the Democrats, while the Democrats, in turn, charged it all to the vacillating acts of Tom Ewing, in charge of the Land Department at Washington. There was also the "strip" question. Warren County was vociferously demanding the return of the six townships taken from her to help Des Moines get the County Seat. P. Gad. Bryan was her mouthpiece, and was saying ugly things, denouncing it not only robbery, but disrupting the legislative districts. To the surrender of this territory, Polk County was naturally opposed. To all this was added the local pride and interest in the candidacy of Judge Bates.

The contest became so hot and grossly personal between the newspapers and the supporters of the two Senatorial candidates, respecting their positions on the various issues, that the Doctor and Lewis published a joint statement in the newspapers, and by handbills, that upon the "strip," river dam nuisance, and railroad questions, they were agreed, and requested that personal abuse be stopped, and both be treated like gentlemen.

Immediately the Doctor took his seat in the Senate, he prepared and introduced the first bill to remove the Seat of Government to Des Moines. Instantly, there was opposition from all sides. Iowa City was ferocious, the counties of Marshall, Jasper, Mahaska, and Story, at once showed their teeth, the latter county having located

at State Center the geographical center of the state. The Doctor was obstructed at every move, by dilatory and conflicting amendments, throughout the entire session. He failed to secure the change, but he defeated all schemes to fix the location elsewhere.

P. Gad. Bryan, the Representative from Warren County in the Lower House, had a bill before that body, restoring Warren County the "stolen strip."

When the Government survey was made, the south line of the county was run straight due east and west. At the then southwest corner of Camp Township, the river bends to the south, thus leaving a strip of several sections between the line of original survey and the river, which was part of the territory taken from Warren, and on which the Doctor had his town of Lafayette, and on which he then resided. Bryan's bill restored the entire territory taken. The Doctor vigorously opposed it, as it practically legislated him out of office, located him in another county and another senatorial district, but Bryan secured its passage. The effect of it was so glaringly unjust that the Doctor secured an amendment to the law by which the river was made the boundary line, and all of the "strip" north of it was to remain a part of Polk County. The bill, however, cut Allen Township in twain and set "Uncle Jerry" Church and his town of Carlisle over into Warren County. Thus ended the first chapter in the many, exciting incidents of the contest to permanently fix the Seat of Government at Des Moines, extending over eighteen years, to the Fourteenth General Assembly, in 1870, when the final quietus was put to it in the appropriation to build the New Capitol, an event with a history full of exciting scenes, to be disclosed later on.

At the close of his senatorial term, in 1854, the Doctor disposed of his land in the "strip," came to town, bought two lots on East Locust Street, where the Mirror Theater now is, built a fine cottage, opened a law office, and became an active participant in many legal skirmishes in the courts with "Dan" Finch, J. E. Jewett, M. M. Crocker, and other prominent lawyers, in Judge McFarland's court. The Judge, though a good jurist, was eccentric in many ways, and loved whiskey. The stories the lawyers used to tell of him would fill a book. The conventionalities of the court in those

days were not quite up to the standard of to-day. On one occasion, it was said, a well-known lawyer came into court while a trial was on, and during a lull in the proceedings, arose near the bench, and very sedately asked the court if a motion could be received. "Yes, sir," replied the Judge. "Motions are always in order in this court."

"Well, then, take notice of the motion of my elbow," said the lawyer, as he held up a bottle of good "Old Rye."

"Yes, yes; but, d—n ye, don't drink it all up before I get there," said the Judge, as he left his seat, went down and helped the lawyer dispose of his "motion." He then resumed his seat, and court went on as though nothing had happened.

In the notable contest over the location of the State House, the Doctor was an East Sider, and took an active part in defeating the West Side, though he had nothing to do with the alleged peculiar land deals, in which a large number of city lots on the East Side got into possession of certain of the Legislative Commission sent to fix the site of the State House.

The Doctor continued his law practice here until 1860, when he removed to Sedalia, Missouri, where he edited a newspaper several years. He died at Kiowa, Kansas, in December, 1900. His remains were brought here and deposited in Woodland.

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by L. F. Andrews

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