



BARLOW GRANGER

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BARLOW GRANGER—not to know of Barlow is to deny one's citizenship—came to Des Moines with a friend named Jones (before the flood of 1849) to grow up with the country. After looking over the town a couple of days, they concluded they could do better, and started away. About two miles out, on the bluff overlooking Des Moines River, like Lot's wife, they stopped and looked back. Though Barlow was never accused of aestheticism nor the pulchritudinous, he was pleased with the surrounding scenery and the prospective resources. They came back, and went into the real estate and land warrant business. Barlow, with great expectations—for both were in an impeccable way—selected a spot near where they halted on the bluff for a future suburban home, and Jones selected what is now Terrace Hill, the home of Fred M. Hubbell. Soon after, however, Jones joined the vast caravan then wending its way through this section to the California gold fields.

As business was not very brisk, Barlow added law to his repertoire. Though not pretending to be a full-fledged lawyer, he believed all things are possible to him who wills. He had graduated from a printing office in a large Eastern city, which is a better educational institution for a young man with all-round purposes than most of the colleges.

Lawyers in those days did not have very extensive libraries. When going over the circuit, a few books, a clean shirt and pocket handkerchief, a bit of lunch, a plug of tobacco, and a bottle of "something else" stored in a bag, and lashed to the saddle, was the usual outfit.

In April, 1849, the Democrats concluded their party needed a newspaper, and Curtis Bates, a lawyer with political aspirations, offered to become sponsor for the cost of an outfit. Barlow purchased a press and other material at Iowa City, Bates indorsing

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his paper, and, after many delays and divers obstructions in Skunk River bottoms, that holy terror of teamsters, stage drivers, and emigrants, causing more profanity than any other spot in the state, the fixtures arrived here, and the first number of the *Star* was issued June Twenty-sixth, 1849, from one of the double log barrack buildings on 'Coon Row, near the "Point." The second number did not appear until the last week in August, as the man who went to Keokuk for paper was taken sick with a fever and did not get back.

It was a seven-column paper theoretically, its price was two dollars a year, cash in advance, but practically, at the convenience of the subscriber, in dubious, stump-tail, wild-cat money, old rags, hen fruit and cord-wood.

The following Winter was very severe, snow was three to five feet deep, the winds blew in through the log chinkings, all over the office, and kettles of hot coals had to be kept under the press to warm the ink and rollers. The conditions were discouraging to an ambitious young man, and at the end of the year, finding that the paper interfered with his more lucrative affairs, Barlow abandoned it, satisfied with hebdomadal glory, and soon after the *Star* passed into gloom, but it scintillated brilliantly while it existed. Barlow was popular, and his paper was welcomed heartily by the entire community. He didn't have reporters—didn't need any—he knew everybody, their business, and all their family and social affairs. He took the field for Tom Benton and the Wilmot Proviso, lambasted the Whigs, and the slack-water-navigation-dams nuisance, regardless of style or diction.

Resuming the practice of law, he advertised his business thusly:

BARLOW
ATTORNEY AND COUNSELOR AT LAW
GRANGER
SOLICITOR IN CHANCERY
COURT HOUSE **FORT DES MOINES**
Barlow attends to all business in his line,
and Granger to some that ain't.

One of his first clients was a man named Robinson, who had made a claim and put up a cabin before the official survey was made, and when the survey was made, his cabin was just across the line on a claim made by one Daily. He came to consult Barlow, who told him the law was against him; that in a law suit Daily would hold the cabin. He was greatly worried, and insisted that as a lawyer Barlow could find some way to get out of it. Barlow looked wise, pondered awhile, and said:

"I know of no human method for relief, but you know Iowa winds are powerful they have moved houses and barns farther than your cabin is over the line," and resumed his reading.

Robinson dropped his head, communed with himself a few moments, put on his hat and went home. A few days after he came back.

"Good morning. How are things up the river?" said Barlow.

"Bad, bad enough. We had a h—l of a wind up there last night, and my house was blown clear over the line onto my land," was Robinson's reply, and he felt so good over it he laid a five-dollar bill on Barlow's table. Daily, finding himself outwitted, never said a word.

In 1850, Barlow was appointed to the staff of Governor Hempstead, and served four years. That's how he got the title of "Colonel." They didn't have spectacular displays, inauguration parades, nor military encampments in those days, so Barlow was spared the toggery of shoulder straps, gold trimmings, blue clothes and brass buttons.

Barlow says that the Governor called his staff together one day, and said he did not think there would be any occasion for action, unless it might be with the Missourians over the boundary question, "and if it comes, we will whip them—just get them drunk and we can whip them."

In August, 1854, he was elected Prosecuting Attorney, and held the office until July, 1855, when, by the resignation of Judge Byron Rice, and operation of law, he became County Judge, which office he held one year, being succeeded by Thomas H. Napier. It is of record that as County Prosecutor Barlow had not a verdict quashed, and gained every case in court but one. He even beat the eccentric Judge McFarland on a question of ethics.

There was a well-known man named Milner, living in the north part of the town, who came sauntering into court one day with his hat on. On seeing him, the judge ordered the bailiff to arrest him, and on his appearance he told the judge he was a Quaker—always wore his hat in meetings. "Well, sit down, then, with your hat on," replied the judge. Before court adjourned, Milner forgot his Quakerism, took off his hat, and laid it aside. The judge, on discovering it, yelled out: "Mr. Quaker, put on your hat, and keep it on."

A few days after, Barlow started to leave the court-room with his hat on. Seeing him, the judge ordered the bailiff to arrest him and bring him before the court. As the bailiff approached, Barlow whirled about and went straight to the judge.

"Don't you know you are in contempt of court by wearing your hat in the court-room?" queried the judge.

"My religious principles, sir," said Barlow, "are such that I never take off my hat except in the presence of my Maker and to sleep. I am a Friend."

"Friend of what?" said the judge.

"I'm a Quaker," explained Barlow.

"Oh, a Quaker, are you? Well, sit down, Mr. Quaker, and keep your d—d hat on if you want to."

In 1855, Barlow was elected Mayor of the town, with W. H. McHenry, Wm. McKay (both subsequently judges), F. R. West, Martin Winters, A. Newton (subsequently mayor), W. C. Burton, and J. D. Davis as City Council, all now dead but Barlow. The officers were: Lamp Sherman, Recorder; Benj. Bryant, Treasurer; Ed. Clapp, Street Commissioner, all now dead but Ed.

Barlow was prominent among those who have builded the city. Always solicitous for the success of every projected improvement, active in support of every enterprise and industry in the early days, until he concluded the city had become strong enough to go alone, when he began to shirk the collar.

In the notable Capital location fight, in 1854, he was an important and efficient factor, and gave to his home community all the power of his brain and brawn. It required genuine pluck and public spirit to go in mid-Winter, buffeting the storms and discom-

forts of stage-company jerkeys and crowded taverns, to labor with the lawmakers without fee or hope of reward, to secure the location, for it was the field against The Fort.

When the Seat of Government had been won, and the East Siders and The Fort went to battle for the location of the State House, in 1856, Barlow was in it for all he was worth, for Grimmel's Hill, lying north of Chestnut Street, between Fourth and Sixth streets, and he did not hesitate to express himself in true Barlow style respecting the matter generally, and the East Siders especially.

When the laggard Slack-Water Navigation Company had failed in its trust, and so obstructed the river with its half-constructed dams and debris that boats could not pass up, and had become a nuisance, railroads were projected as a remedy, talked of in settlers' cabins, on street corners, in mass meeting—Barlow was in it. Petitions were sent to Congress for help, and the agitation then begun resulted in the railroads we now have, while the dam of the River Improvement Company at Bonaparte still remains to be damned by all fishermen above it.

Politically, Barlow is a Democrat, of an independent and an entirely original variety. He never sought a public office, yet he was several times elected to places of importance. He was always ready, however, when a political scrimmage was on. He was not such an orator as "Dan" Finch, but he was a good talker, plain, blunt—called a spade a spade. His special function was that of advisor or corrector, for whenever the party got into close quarters and prospects were dubious, a secret conclave would convene in his office, and, as with Robinson's cabin, he generally found a way to get out, as Hoyt Sherman once discovered when, in 1855, he was candidate for Sheriff. The election returns sent in showed a majority for Sherman. The Whigs were jubilant, and had a jollification, but a fellow named Spaulding, from a back, forgotten precinct, turned up with votes enough to elect another man, precisely as scheduled by Barlow at a conclave held two days before.

Financially, Barlow is on Easy Street. With several fine, productive stock farms as bread-winners, in his pleasant suburban home, surrounded by natural and acquired beauties, on the spot

selected the second day after he arrived here, he is passing his eighty-eighth year in peace and contentment, always pleased to meet the many friends and neighbors who enjoy his sociability and his remarkable recollection of men and things he has rubbed up against.

Nearly every day, he comes into town to keep in touch with events. If you see a plain man, with white hair and beard, soft hat of olden vintage, on the street, swapping yarns with some old-timer, or lampooning the Republicans, and twirling a jack-knife between his left thumb and first finger he has worn out three handles already—that's Barlow Granger.*

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*Died June Seventh, 1905.

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