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MENTION of men and events of early days would be incomplete that omitted "Colonel" Sumner F. Spofford, who came here in 1854, and for thirty-four years was a moving spirit in public affairs. Without a military record, he was given the title of "Colonel" by common consent, and it fitted him well.

In 1852, Conrad Stutsman made additions to one of the log buildings at the corner of First and Walnut streets, and named it the Pennsylvania House. It was one story and a half high, the upper story being one room. Beds were placed along each side, without curtains or partitions. It was usually crowded—sometimes three in a bed—such was the influx of land-seekers, and they were not very fastidious. There were no wardrobes. Hats, boots and shoes were thrown under the beds. Shelter, grub and a place to sleep satisfied the patrons. It was a lively hostelry.

In 1854, Stutsman moved it south, and built a large two-story frame, and sold it to J. C. Warner and John Yost, who opened it to the public in April, 1855. Both being East Siders, they named it "Demoine House," because that was the way the word was spoken, they said, and it remained so as long as the house existed.

Soon after the opening, the Colonel bought it for sixteen thousand dollars, and was host until 1862. It was a lively place. The bar-room annex on the south side was the rendezvous for politicians. There being no public hall, the dining-room was a favorite place for dancing parties, where, in the pale, mellow light of tallow dips or whale oil, joy went unconfined. The Colonel was an ideal Boniface, social, cordial, polite, energetic, and immensely popular.

In 1876, the house was torn down, to be replaced with one larger and up-to-date, long contemplated. The foundation was laid, but hard times and other causes forced abandonment of the project. A portion of the foundation still remains. The property now belongs to Uncle Sam, who, after the usual divisive river strife, and

the East Siders winning a river-front location, will erect a new Post Office creditable to himself and the city.

At the southwest corner of the hotel, at the rear, fronting on the alley, was one of the log barrack buildings, occupied by "Uncle" Thomas French, by right of eminent domain, as it were, so long as the hotel existed. He was a bachelor, kind, companionable, great lover of books, fond of children, and a good carpenter, but, as his expenses were light, little manual labor was required. He spent much time in fishing, seemingly for the sole satisfaction received from giving his catches to his friends, save what he cooked for himself—an art he understood. He could catch, too, when others could not get a "nibble." He had a "hook and line, bob and sinker" for every kind of fish that swam the stream. He was an inveterate smoker. He and "Ret" Clarkson were warm friends. "Ret" abhorred tobacco—would not allow smoking in his editorial room, yet it was generally understood around the *Register* establishment that "Uncle Tommy" could draw his pipe there. Politically, "Uncle Tommy" was a Republican; religiously, a hard-shell Baptist. His mission was to do good, care for the sick, and solace the sorrowing.

The energy and sterling qualities of the Colonel did not long escape attention.

In the contest for the State House location, he was a West Sider, subscribed one thousand dollars to the West Side fund, was a good persuader, a good Democrat, yet somehow he failed to win over his guests, the legislative committee sent to fix the site. As the story went, he did not run up against the right man. He should have spent a short time in that south annex in a hear-to-heart (sic) talk with one Baldwin. But that is another story, to be told later on.

In 1863, the Colonel was elected Trustee for the Second Ward, the office not having progressed to the dignity of Alderman.

In 1865, pursuant to a vote of the electors, the County Supervisors, of whom the Colonel was a member, purchased two hundred and eighty acres for a Poor Farm, at a cost of six thousand five hundred and fifty dollars. The Colonel and "Uncle Jimmy" Jordan were appointed a committee to purchase the necessary cattle, horses, hogs and farm machinery to put it in operation. That was the beginning of the present county asylum for the poor and insane.

In 1866, the Colonel, with Frank R. Laird, were granted the privilege of building the first bridge over the river, at Walnut Street, by County Judge Napier, who, as the law then was, had power to order bridges built wheresoever he pleased. It was a wooden Howe truss pattern, and soon after completion one span was broken by a drove of horses. It was a toll bridge. The Colonel collected the first toll, and he was the first person to cross it with a horse and carriage. The people did not take kindly to toll-paying, and in November, 1876, it was made a free bridge. The Colonel collected the last toll, and carried it with the first in his pocket several years as souvenirs. They were both of Uncle Sam's fractional currency, there being no silver coin in circulation in those days. The bridge was owned by the county, and, when made free, was turned over to the city, and all bridges tolled from 1871 to 1879, when, under agreement between the city and county, all were made free.

In 1868, the city being politically Republican by a small majority, the Democrats made extraordinary effort to gain the city election, and persuaded the Colonel, much against his inclination, to allow his name to go at the head of the ticket for Mayor. The contest was a vigorous one. The *Register*, edited by Frank Palmer, evidently alarmed by the popularity of the Colonel, lambasted him with a pointedness equal to some of Barlow Granger's expressions in his old *Star*. One day it said of him:

"The candidates on the Democratic city ticket plant their feet firmly on the infernal planks of the Copperhead platform adopted by the conclave (State Convention) last week. Spofford is just as much a part of the Democratic wheel, when it moves, as 'Dirty Shirt' Dean, Finch, 'Teetotaller' McHenry (Judge M. D. McHenry), 'Automatic Tom-Tit' Bently, 'Brick' Pomeroy, the miscellaneous youth, Ayres—not quite so noisy, not quite so blatant, and probably not quite so earnest, but pledged to it as much as they."

This screed bears very much the ear-marks of Seward Smith, who wielded a pen with a sharp, caustic point, a shrewd, astute political manipulator rarely equaled. It was not Palmer's style. Smith was the candidate for City Solicitor against Bently, who

subsequently defended the convicted murderer, Howard, hung at a lamp post by vigilantes, and who fled the city on being informed the vigilantes were seeking him. He never came back.

The Colonel came out of the fray with a seat in the Mayor's chair, but the remainder of the ticket was carried by the Republicans. That was the last time the Colonel could be inveigled into political office seeking.

When, in 1871, the Ulm & Coskrey Bank and the Citizens Bank were merged, and the Citizens National Bank was organized, the Colonel was elected one of the Directors, and served several years.

In 1860, the Legislature, to promote immigration to the state, provided for the establishment of an agency in New York, but with very unsatisfactory results, and, in 1872, it was discontinued, a Board of Immigration substituted, with headquarters here, and Governor Merrill, a Republican, appointed the Colonel a member of the board. Pamphlets entitled, "Iowa, the Home for Immigrants," were printed in English, Dutch, German, Swedish and Norwegian languages, setting forth the advantages of the state for the farmer and business man, and sent broadcast over Europe, resulting in an immense gain to our population. The board was abolished in 1876.

In 1872, with Captain F. R. West, George A. Jewett and Wesley Redhead, he organized the Des Moines Scale Company, to manufacture scales, windmills and butter makers. He was the Vice-President. In 1874, the business passed to Dickinson, Berry & Sargent. This last company did not exist long. It was not equipped to compete with the big Howe and Fairbanks companies. Sargent was an inventive genius, and very poor. He carried around in his pocket a small model of a railroad brake shoe he had invented, which he was satisfied was a good thing. To get it into use was the problem. He had no money. Another impediment was, a mechanic for the Union Pacific road had a patent for a brake shoe, the wearing surface of which was chilled iron, which, when pressed against the chilled iron of the car wheel, had no grip, and proved impracticable. Sargent's shoe was precisely like it, except that when molding it he put in old wrought iron nuts and pieces of scrap wrought iron. These being softer than the chilled iron, would

grip the car wheel. But the shoe was valueless to him so long as the patent on the other shoe existed, even though that shoe was of no value. In some way, Sargent got possession of all the rights of the other shoe, went to Chicago, where it was quickly approved by practical men. It is now in use on nearly every railroad in this country and Europe, and Sargent is many times a millionaire.

In 1873, Governor Samuel Merrill, Judge Casady, Lieutenant-Governor Gue, ex-State Auditor Elliott, and the Colonel incorporated the State Printing Company. The Colonel was elected President. Its business was to furnish "insides" for country newspapers, and the purchase and sale of printers' supplies. In 1876, the name was changed to Iowa Printing Company, and in 1880 to Western Newspaper Union, which it is to-day.

In 1871, A. J. Jack laid out the town of Commerce, about eight miles west, and built a flour mill and dam across 'Coon River. Soon after, Spofford, who, in his young days, was the "mill boy" in one of his father's mills, and being only president, vice-president, director, secretary, or treasurer in a dozen corporations, concluded to add this flour mill as a reminder of his early training, and purchased it. In 1874, he put in his last "grist," and sold the mill to A. J. Delano.

The Colonel was greatly interested in agricultural Fairs. In the old days, before the wheels were removed from the State Fair, which itinerated over the state, the County Fair was his special hobby. He admired a good horse. He was a superb horseman—not the fast variety—and usually had a few fine steppers. While he did not "follow the races," there were few horses that could eat hay from the rear end of his wagon when on the road. He was a great favorite with the young women, and nothing gave him more pleasure than to fill his big four-seated carriage with them on pleasant days and give them a ride about the city. If the days were long enough, all had a chance, filling the air with the bubbling-over of their merriment and happiness. In Winter, it would be a big sleigh or a broad hay rack on runners. Sometimes it would be an evening skylarking surprise to "Uncle Jimmy" Jordan or the Flynns. A turn-out with the Colonel was an event coveted and enjoyed by many matrons now living. At big civic functions and parades, the Colonel was the Chief Marshal.

Though politically a Democrat, Republican Governors many times appointed him to places of trust, without pecuniary profit, yet he was ever ready to give his time and service to benefit the community. He was often a good reliance in emergencies, when individual effort was more potent than money.

He went to rest in Woodland, in 1885, but the spot is lost to the searcher, as the inscriptions on the monument erected to his memory have become obliterated.

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