

THOMAS COX

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Thomas Cox by Harvey Reid

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HARVEY REID

THOMAS COX



IOWA BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

EDITED BY BENJAMIN F. SHAMBAUGH

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BY

HARVEY REID



THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

MEASURED by the careers of eminent men, Thomas Cox would not be classed among the great characters of his time. Nor does he occupy a conspicuous place in the history of Iowa. At the same time he was not unknown in the communities and Commonwealths in which he lived. He was an active, capable local leader, always identified with the social forces of the community whose movements he was often the most influential in directing.

History is not simply the biography of the conspicuously eminent men; it is more accurately defined as a record of the evolution of mankind. Indeed, the circumscribed and often inconspicuous careers of local leaders, builders of neighborhoods and communities, and even the simple lives of the nameless masses are important and in a sense essential factors in the process of hu-

man evolution. And so, "as typical of the lives of the local leaders among the pioneers of the West and of Iowa the career of Thomas Cox is worthy of the consideration of thoughtful students of history."

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT AND EDITOR
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA
IOWA CITY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE career of Thomas Cox was essentially that of a pioneer. Born in Kentucky before it was made a State, he became a resident of Illinois the same year in which that Commonwealth was organized as a separate Territory. He served as a member of the first legislature of the State of Illinois, campaigned as a soldier in the Wisconsin country when it was still a part of the Territory of Michigan, lived for a time in the original Territory of Wisconsin, and died in Iowa before the State was admitted into the Union.

It was in the early years of the Territorial period that Thomas Cox figured in the history of Iowa. He was a member of the first, the second, the third, the fifth, and the sixth of the Legislative Assemblies of the Territory. At each session in which he sat as a member of the House of Representatives he received votes for Speaker — to which office he was elected in the Third Legislative Assembly by acclamation. He received votes

for President in the first session of the Council in which he held a seat; and in the second he was elected to preside over that body, despite an adverse party majority.

The Governor and other officials, while Iowa was a Territory, were appointed by the President of the United States; so that, when the people of Jackson, Dubuque, Delaware, and Clayton counties elected Thomas Cox to the Territorial Council and that body made him their President, he became invested with the highest dignity, with the exception of that of Delegate to Congress, which could be given to any man by the suffrages of the people of the Territory.

In native ability and superior intelligence, in keen energy and forcefulness that defied opposition, in an imposing presence that compelled respect, in a winsome geniality and ready generosity that attracted love and esteem, in dauntless courage tried on battlefields, and in an inflexible devotion to law and order, Thomas Cox assumed a leadership that was unquestioned and unfaltering among the sturdy pioneers who came to conquer and settle the wildernesses of the West.

The memory and traditions of contemporary pioneers and their descendants, and