

**HISTORY OF ADAIR  
COUNTY, IOWA, AND  
ITS PEOPLE. VOLUME I**

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History of Adair County, Iowa, and Its People. Volume I by Lucian M. Kilburn

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LUCIAN M. KILBURN

SUPERVISING EDITOR

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ILLUSTRATED

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VOLUME I

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## A PREFATORY REMARK

To the patrons and readers of this history we desire to explain our connection with its production.

The manuscript of the general history was prepared by Mr. Gordon K. Miller, a man of much experience in similar work in other places, and its promotion and publication was undertaken by the Pioneer Publishing Company of Chicago, which has been in the business of publishing histories for many years.

We were asked by the advance agent to verify and supervise the manuscript of the history in the light of our experience of nearly fifty years' continuous residence in Adair County and the years in which most of its development has taken place. We have endeavored conscientiously to perform the task and to assist in securing facts which are creditable to the present generation and which should be recorded for the benefit of generations yet to come. The biographical volume should be especially interesting in years to come to the descendants of those who have made history in these earlier times. The teachings of the fathers and pride in their achievements have been mighty factors in the world's advancement. The pioneers who builded states were not the products of chance, but came from strong and vigorous ancestry whose history their descendants should be proud to record and perpetuate.

That much has been omitted which should have been preserved is probable, that some statements have not been sufficiently extended is likely, and that some generally accepted facts may not accord with individual experience and preconceived notions is possible; but the men who have prepared the work have done the best they could with the means of knowledge at their command.

History is not like mathematics, an exact science. Witnesses in court who see the same things rarely see them from the same angle or testify alike as to the exact facts. Much of history is tradition; tales passing from mouth to mouth, from sire to son, from generation to generation, and the truth never gains in the transmission of these tales. We accept as facts a great deal of history which doubtless

never occurred; much that in the light of the larger experience of our time we know cannot be true, but we take it with allowance and glean from it what we can.

The public and written records are reliable as far as they go, but are often defective or incomplete. The recollection of actors in past events are of value as history, but their credibility must be taken with regard to the accuracy of their observation and memory, the soundness of their judgment and their reliability to relate the facts unbiased by preconceived notions of personal interest.

From all available sources the historians have sought to gather the facts for this work. The development of Adair County covers less than three-fourths of a century; most of it has been accomplished in the last fifty years. Fifty years ago there were four postoffices in the county, served with a triweekly mail carried by stage coach from Des Moines to Council Bluffs. Now the mail is delivered daily in proximity to every farmhouse. Then there were only one or two buggies in the county; now they are numbered by the thousands, not counting the vast number of automobiles which have become the property of Adair County residents. Twenty-five years ago there was not a telephone in the county, except two or three toll stations on a new line just built; now nearly every farmhouse in the county is connected with all the world. This wonderful progress almost equals the imagination of the "Arabian Nights."

But in the brief space of time which history covers, the early settlers who have made history have nearly all gone. Many of the pioneers moved on to newer scenes when population, as they felt, began to crowd them. They were not content to be other than pioneers. The most of the first generation of settlers on the wild prairie are dead. They were too busy making a living to leave much record of their doings in the early times, and so the historian has to gather as he can the materials for this work; and however incomplete his record of the development may be, it will prove of value to generations yet to come. We hope it will prove on completion all that its projectors have promised and that its subscribers will appreciate the work that has been accomplished. All our judgment of our fellowmen and of their work may follow the old adage: "Be to their faults a little blind: Be to their virtues very kind."

LUCIAN MOODY KILBURN,  
Supervising Editor.

Greenfield, Ia., May 5, 1915.



## INTRODUCTION

The history of Adair County as United States territory reaches back to that eventful day in May, 1803, when the treaty was signed by which France ceded the vast territory included in the Louisiana Purchase to our Federal Government. The hand of Providence seems plainly manifest in the course of events which led to its acquisition. It is said that the American envoys who conducted the negotiations on behalf of the United States "spent no small part of their time explaining that they only wished a little bit of Louisiana, including New Orleans and the east bank of the Mississippi." Livingston indeed went so far as to express a very positive disinclination to take the territory west of the Mississippi at any price, stating that he should much prefer to see it remain in the hands of France or Spain, and suggesting by way of an apology for its acquisition that it might be resold to some European power. Madison, who was at the head of the State Department at that time, "felt a strong disinclination to see the national domain extend west of the Mississippi, and he so instructed Monroe and Livingston," who were in charge of the matter on our part. But Napoleon, harassed on every hand by the great powers of Europe and fearful that the territory might fall into the hands of the English, rapidly abated his demands from the exorbitant sum first asked, finally offering to take \$15,000,000 and forced Livingston and Monroe to become reluctant purchasers, not merely of New Orleans, but of all the immense territory stretching vaguely northwestward to the Pacific. Another strange thing about the matter is that Jefferson, in whose administration the purchase was made, "had led his party into power as special champion of states' rights and the special opponent of national sovereignty. He and they rendered a very great service to the nation by acquiring Louisiana; but it was at the cost of violating every precept which they had professed to hold dear. Thus came into the possession of the United States a territory of vast and very ill-defined extent. Congress authorized a temporary government for the newly acquired province

on October 31, 1803, but its jurisdiction was merely nominal, as the French governor retained his power at the request and by the authority of the United States. By further action of Congress the whole of the province north of the thirty-third parallel was organized into a court district and formed for governmental and judicial purposes a part of the Territory of Indiana. This action was had March 26, 1804, and affected what are now the states of Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa; also Southern Minnesota. It was called Upper Louisiana, and in this way the name District of Louisiana originated, by which it was known during the early history of the country.

On March 3, 1805, Iowa was included as a part of the Territory of Louisiana, with the capital at St. Louis, and that part of the Louisiana Purchase now known as Louisiana became Orleans Territory. The Territory of Missouri was organized June 4, 1812, and Iowa was embraced in it. When Missouri became a state in 1820, Iowa, with other territory, was detached and forgotten and "remained a country without a government, either political or judicial, until June 28, 1834, when the abuses of outlawry and crime became so prominent and serious that, as a means of redress and correction, it was included in the Territory of Michigan. During all these years it is probable that the only civil law in force in Iowa was the provision of the Missouri act which prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude in the territories of the United States north of thirty-six degrees, thirty minutes, north latitude."

By 1836 the population of this region had so increased that the territorial government of Wisconsin was organized, which at first included a part of the upper peninsula of Michigan, the whole of Minnesota and Iowa, and that part of Dakota lying east of the Missouri and White Earth rivers. When the Territory of Iowa was organized, July 12, 1838, it included the present State of Minnesota and parts of North and South Dakota.

By an act of Congress, approved March 3, 1845, provision was made for the admission of Iowa into the Union as a sovereign state, with boundaries extending on the north the parallel of latitude passing through the mouth of the Blue Earth River and on the west only to seventeen degrees, thirty minutes, from Washington, corresponding very nearly to the existing lines between Ringgold and Union counties on the one hand and Taylor and Adams counties on the other. This reduction of the boundaries laid down by the constitutional convention of 1844 was very distasteful to the people, and the admission was rejected by a popular election, and in 1846 Congress

proposed new boundary lines, having the State of Minnesota for the north boundary, Missouri for the south, the Mississippi River on the east and the Missouri and Sioux rivers on the west. The date of admission to the Union was December 28, 1846.

Comparatively few of the counties as at present established had been organized previous to the convening of the First Territorial Assembly. The three southern tiers of counties in Iowa at present were carved from the original County of Des Moines. Des Moines was the second county in Iowa to be established, Dubuque having been the first. The limits of the County of Des Moines were defined in section 2 of an act to lay off and organize counties west of the Mississippi River. In the definition of the boundaries of Des Moines County an error was made in that the county was not limited, in so many words, to territory to which the Indian title had been extinguished. The intention of the framers of the act was to erect the southern part of the Black Hawk Purchase into Des Moines County, but by the omission of a phrase the county was apparently extended westward to the Missouri River. The territory enacted into new counties was only the southern part of the Black Hawk Purchase. It did not extend westward to the Missouri River.