



Iowa City,  
Iowa - History

JEFFERSON HOTEL

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# IOWA CITY

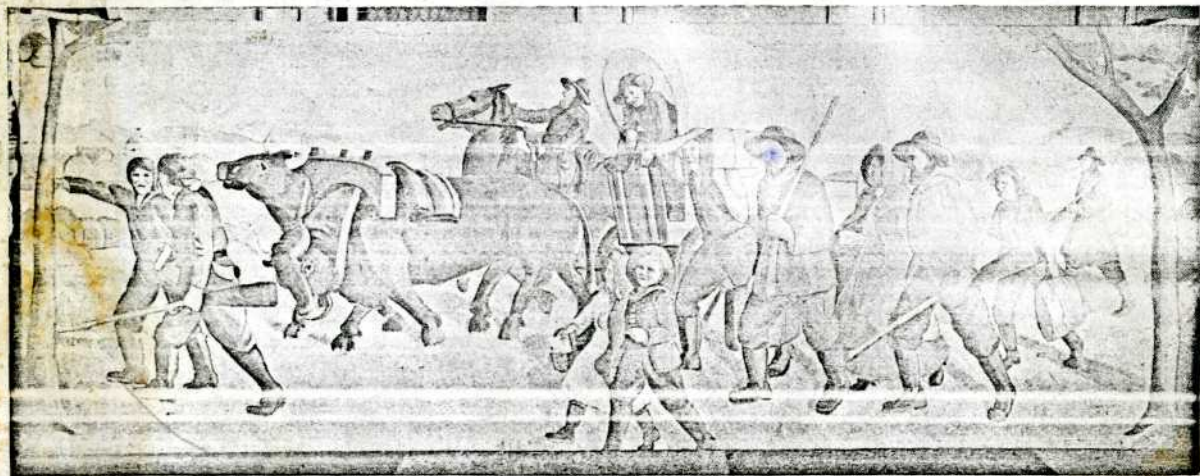
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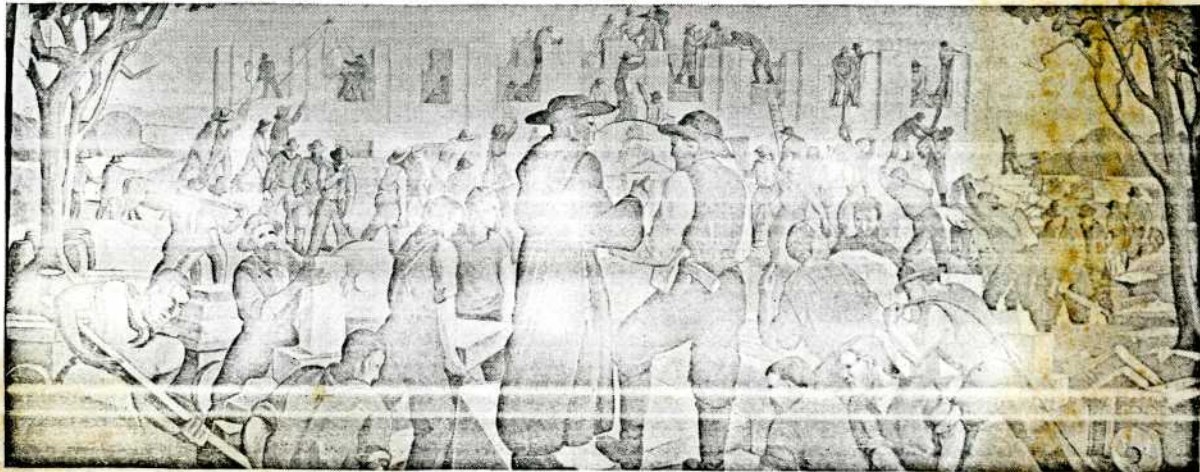


OUR FIRST FAMILIES 1840

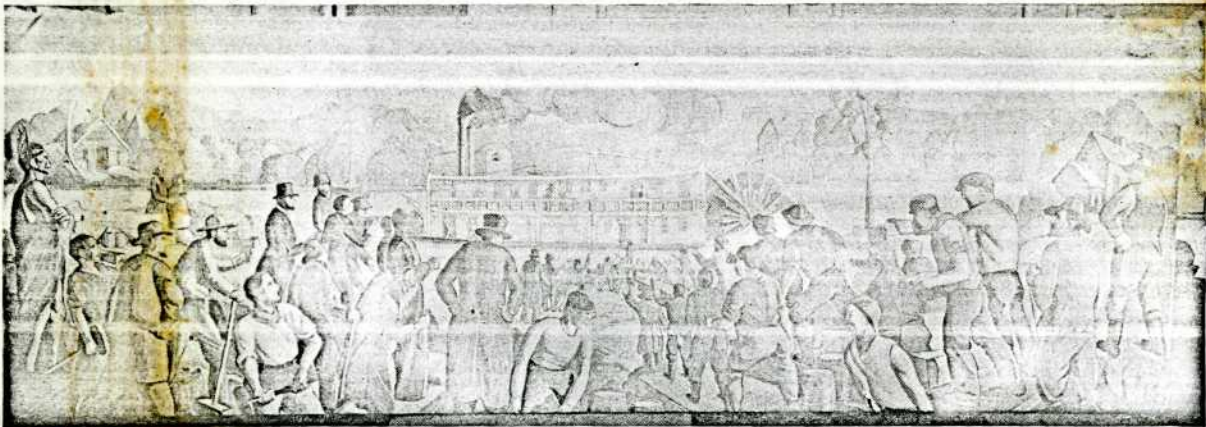
Iowa City is pre-eminently the historic capital of Iowa. Located in the cultural atmosphere of the State University, almost in the shadow of the Old Capitol itself, the Jefferson Hotel is happy to present in picture a few episodes in the history of Iowa City. The Jefferson Hotel discovered the artist within the gates of our own city and in 1934 commissioned Mildred W. Pelzer to restore these scenes. The management invites you to our yesterdays presented by her in eight murals.

☪ Step into the lobby and see Chief Poweshiek or "Roused Bear" waving a friendly farewell to the white men on the Iowa River. It is 1838 and Poweshiek and his Fox Indians are retreating from their homes just below Iowa City. "Soon I shall go to a new home and you will plant corn where my dead sleep," he said. "Our towns, the paths we have made, and the flowers we love will soon be yours." ☪ Another scene meets you in "Locating the Capital." In the spring of 1839 two commissioners, Chauncey Swan and John Ronalds, traversed the oak-crested ridges, the slopes, and the prairies of the Iowa River valley. A justice of the peace, Robert Walker, administered the oath of office to the men who then chose and marked the site for "Iowa City." ☪ But soon you expect and see the "First Families"—the men and women and children who founded homes. For Edwin Ford Piper there was more than prose in these "movers" creeping slowly westward:

The jolting prairie schooner, and its wheels  
Talk on the axle while the sweating steers  
Draw sturdily, nodding their patient heads.



WE BUILD OUR CAPITOL 1841

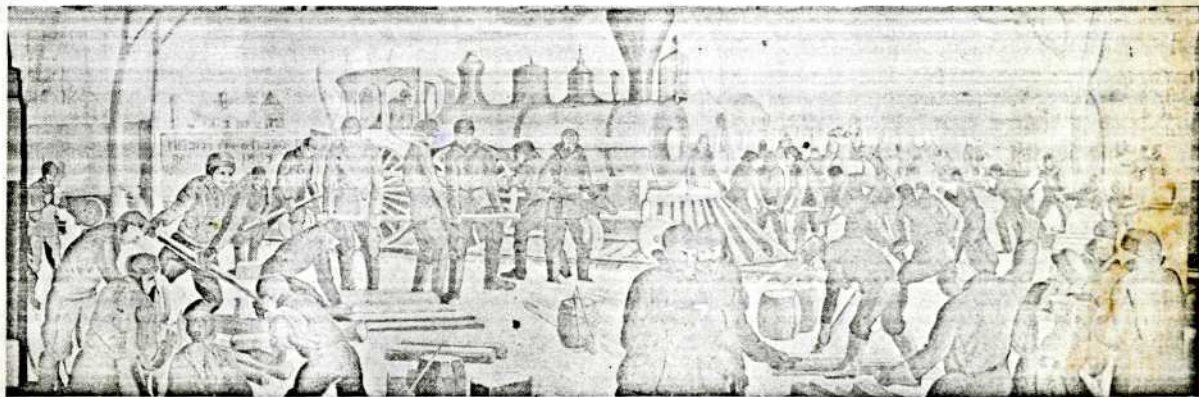


AT OUR CITY LANDING 1844

Humping between spring seat and canvas roof  
The bearded, weather-beaten driver guides  
With slackened line. An eager boy and girl—  
The lass with yellow curls, the lad well tanned—  
Peer close beside him. From the hidden depths  
Comes the low crooning of a lullaby.  
The meadow-larks rejoice, the wild flowers blow—  
He eyes the dusty margin of the trail  
Communing with his vision of a home.

☛ Draw closer to the fireplace and see the "Building of the First Territorial Capitol." Begun in 1840, Old Capitol first housed the assembly in December, 1842. Ox-teams and boats transported limestone or "Iowa City Marble" from nearby quarries. Hand labor with hand tools fashioned the stone and built the capitol. Drawing near, can you hear Commissioner Chauncey Swan and Father S. C. Mazzuchelli discussing a sketch of the statehouse? ☛ A low, mournful sound startles you away from the capitol to the "wharf" where the steamboat *Agatha* docked in 1844. The *Agatha* was the third of seven steamboat arrivals during the forties. Please stand back as she discharges boxes and crates of goods—the barrels and kegs are not for a state store—but for a local merchant. Iowa City toasted captains, boats, and river. It wanted to have river traffic like Davenport or Bloomington (Muscatine), rather than to "waggon" its goods to and from these

ports. But such high hopes could not overcome the crooked bends and shallow waters of the Iowa. ¶ A guest at the Park House or the Clinton House in Iowa City in 1855 heard the call, "Stage Ready." Band boxes and carpet bags were loaded on top and nine or ten persons wedged inside the four-horse Concord coach. The fare to Des Moines was \$10 and at one tavern a breakfast of fried pork, dry bread, and spring water cost \$.50. Note the driver—the horses are being changed, and the frontier minister is bidding his farewells. Along the stage route frequent stops were made to water the horses and "to brandy the gentlemen." ¶ The Iron Horse brought changes. "The Railroad Comes to Iowa City" is an animated scene in a temperature of  $-25^{\circ}$ . The road was to receive a bonus of \$50,000 if it could be brought to the Iowa City depot on or before January 1, 1856. On New Year's Eve the engine was still a thousand feet from the goal. Peter A. Dey and LeGrand Byington are urging the workmen to win the bonus. With only a few hours left the engine froze up and was then pushed and pried on the track to the depot. The bells of the city pealed triumphantly. Both Iowa City and the Mississippi and Missouri Railroad had won the race. ¶ Queerer, but perhaps equally important, was the appearance in the street in 1902 of that strange contraption in "Hold Your Horses." Eligible now for museums, the car was announced by a merchant: "See our Olds' Automobile. It's Fine as Silk." Those who admit ages beyond the turn of the century gazed in wonderment at the machine. It was an humble herald of paved roads, traffic laws, motor buses, and the rise of a vast new industry.



THE RAILROAD ARRIVES JAN. 1ST, 1856