

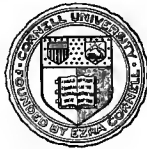
IOWA BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES

JOHN CHAMBERS

PARISH



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IOWA BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES
EDITED BY BENJAMIN F. SHAMBAUGH

JOHN CHAMBERS



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BY

JOHN CARL PARISH

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

IOWA CITY IOWA 1909

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

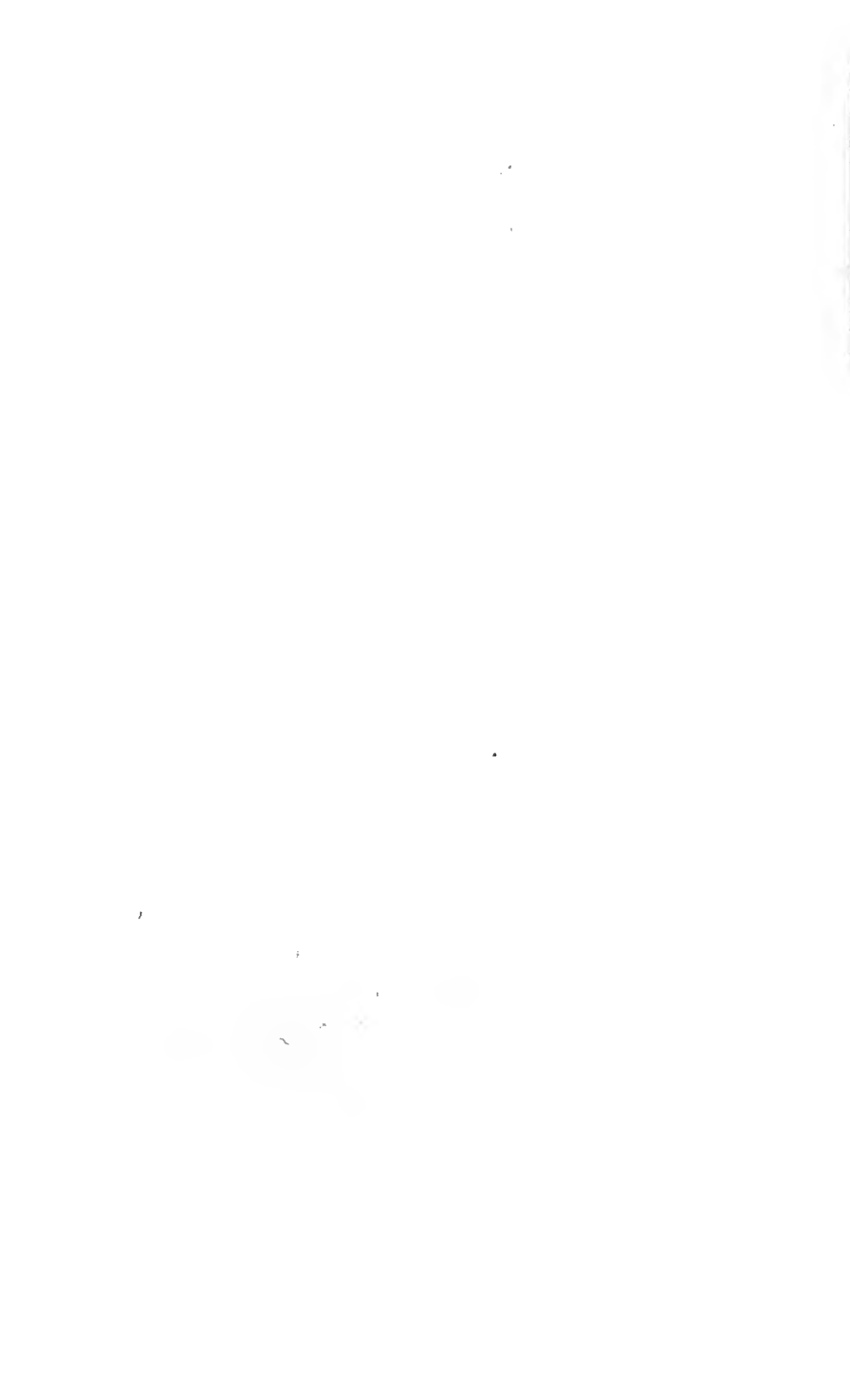
IN the biographies of Robert Lucas and John Chambers, as written for the IOWA BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES by Dr. Parish, may be found the outlines of the general history of the Territory of Iowa, since the administrations of these two Governors span all but one year of the Territorial period.

Moreover, the careers of Lucas and Chambers — the one born in Virginia and experienced in Ohio, the other born in New Jersey and experienced in Kentucky — suggest and in a measure illustrate the intermingling of northern and southern peoples and institutions in the early history of Iowa.

But the larger interest in these biographies will be discovered in the view which they reveal of that wonderful Westward Movement which peopled the Mississippi Valley and laid the foundations of an empire of American Pioneers.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH

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



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE story of John Chambers, second Governor of the Territory of Iowa, reaches from the coast State of New Jersey during the Revolutionary War out through the State of Kentucky in the time of its early settlement and growth to the pioneer Territory of Iowa in the days when it was making awkward but positive strides toward Statehood. It runs through more than seventy of the years of early development of the Nation, and of that development it tells a part.

To the State of Kentucky he gave more than forty of his active years; to the Territory of Iowa less than five. Yet these scant five years constitute the most useful period of his public service. In them came to fruition the experience of the long preceding period; and in them came the opportunity offered by a position of greater influence.

The writing of the present volume was undertaken upon the suggestion of Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of The State His-

torical Society of Iowa and editor of the *Iowa Biographical Series*. Upon a preliminary trip to Kentucky, Dr. Shambaugh found in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville an unpublished manuscript autobiography of John Chambers and other valuable letters and papers which were kindly loaned to The State Historical Society of Iowa — the autobiography for purposes of publication, and the other papers for use in the preparation of a biography. Further material was collected in Iowa, in various towns of Kentucky, and in Washington, D. C.

The author desires to make the most grateful acknowledgments to Mr. John Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky, a grandson of the Governor, to his mother Mrs. Henry Chambers, and to Mr. Harry Brent Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky, a great grandson of Governor Chambers, who have not only made accessible valuable manuscript sources but have done all in their power to give assistance and encouragement to the work.

Acknowledgements are due to Colonel Reuben T. Durrett of Louisville, Kentucky, for unrestricted access to his large private library which contains files of newspapers and rare books

obtainable nowhere else and without which parts of the present volume could not have been written.

For the loan of letters and for other valuable assistance the author is indebted to Mrs. Hannah Chambers Forman of Chicago, Mrs. H. H. Woodall of Covington, Kentucky, Mr. Throckmorton Forman of Cincinnati, Mr. John W. Townsend of Lexington, Kentucky, Mr. W. H. Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky, Dr. Thomas Pickett of Maysville, Kentucky, to Colonel Maltby and to Mr. Lucien Maltby and his family who now live in the old home of John Chambers at Cedar Hill near Washington, Kentucky, and to the officials of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, the Library of Congress, and the Office of Indian Affairs in Washington, D. C.

In particular the author is grateful for the kindly aid and encouragement given by the editor of the series, Dr. Benj. F. Shambaugh, from the inception of the work down to the reading of the last proofs.

JOHN CARL PARISH

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I

FROM IRELAND TO KENTUCKY

THE lines upon which is threaded the ancestry of our people run westward. They come from the far side of the Atlantic and cross to our eastern seaboard. A few going no further wind their succession of generations about a group of New England villages or find their way clear and distinct down through the families of the Old Dominion. But most of these lines now reach out beyond the mountains. Sometimes from their inland stretching they waver back again to the coast, but more often they follow mountain gap and westerling river until they have made their way to the Mississippi Valley, peopled the great plains, and reached the uttermost confines of the land. Along these wavering lines run the records of battle and bloodshed, flood and famine, suffering and sickness, peace and prosperity. Crossing and recrossing, mingling and intermingling, they interlace the continent; and their aggregate is the story of the American Nation.

The line of paternal ancestry of John Chambers, second Governor of the Territory of Iowa, runs back through four generations to the Province of Ulster, in Ireland. Here his great grandfather lived; and it is a family tradition that his forbears of the preceding century had crossed over from Scotland where they belonged to the Highland clan of Cameron and bore the clan name.¹ In the county of Antrim, in this Irish Province of Ulster, there was born in the year 1716 James Chambers, the third son of Rowland and Elizabeth Chambers and the grandfather of John Chambers.²

About four years later Rowland Chambers with his wife and children bade farewell to Ireland and, crossing the Atlantic, came at last to the rugged valley of the Susquehanna in the colony of Pennsylvania. Some miles below Harrisburg he bought a farm of about four hundred acres, located on the eastern bank of the Susquehanna River and north of Conewago Creek.³ A hint of his occupation is given by the fact that the place was known as Chambers' Ferry. The remainder of his days were spent in this locality; and here, in what is now Dauphin County, his son James, whom he had brought with him from Ireland at the age of four years, grew to manhood. It was some-

where near the year 1738 that James Chambers married an Irish girl named Sarah Lee, whom her grandson describes as "a woman of strong and cultivated mind and imperious temper".⁴

The children of James and Sarah Chambers were seven in number; and among them, born about 1744, was Rowland, father of Governor John Chambers.⁵ Now it happened that Rowland's mother had a sister, Betty Lee, who had married one Joseph Forman and was living in New York. And so to that busy port, in his young manhood, Rowland Chambers was sent to become a clerk in his "Uncle Josey's" mercantile establishment. Thus the line ran back for a time to the coast.

After a few years Joseph Forman died; but Rowland remained in the city and became connected with business that required him to make a number of voyages to European ports. It was perhaps not far from the year 1768 that he married Phoebe Mullican, an orphan girl living on Long Island. Not long before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War he left New York and formed a partnership with an Englishman, John Martin by name, who owned a farm and mills on the Raritan River in Somerset County, New Jersey. The place was known at the time as

Bromley Bridge. Besides the mills they opened a large retail store and began a prosperous business in the products of the country.

But the prosperity was short lived; the approach of hostilities between the colonies and the mother country brought calamitous results. One day there came a message to Rowland Chambers from his partner asking him to come to New York City with all the money he could collect. The unsuspecting Chambers complied, and Martin, after calmly receiving the funds, informed him that he was hiding from the American authorities and that there was in the harbor at that moment a boat ready to sail with him for England. In vain did Chambers urge an adjustment of their business affairs.

The thing that appealed to Mr. John Martin was the necessity of getting out of the country, and he would hear to no delay. He promised, however, to send from England full evidence of the ownership of Chambers to the entire property in New Jersey. He sailed away and soon afterward died in England, without having redeemed his promise. Chambers settled up the affairs of the firm, paid all the debts, and then discontinued the store. The mills he still kept in operation.⁶

Actual warfare had now commenced. The

Continental Congress had drawn up and signed the Declaration of Independence, and throughout the little strip of colonies men were laying aside the plough or closing their business houses and taking up arms. Rowland Chambers, ardent in his support of the cause of the American colonies, left his mills and joined the Revolutionary Army, finding service in the New Jersey militia.⁷

One noonday lightning struck the mills at Bromley Bridge, and when night shut down there were left only blackened embers. Henceforth the name Bromley Bridge gradually passed away and the place came to be known as the Burnt Mills. Disasters now did not come singly. On the first tour of army duty the unaccustomed exposure so crippled Rowland Chambers with rheumatism that he was finally obliged to leave the service after he had for some time persisted in his duties, being lifted to and from his saddle.

His heart was, however, no less with the cause than before; and he found new channels for the exercise of his patriotism. He now gave his time to the securing of supplies. The products of his farm went to support the starving army and his means helped to clothe it. And, by reason of his generosity, each year that

brought the Revolution nearer to a close saw further depletion of the Chambers fortune.

In the year 1780, on the sixth of October, John Chambers, the fourth son of Rowland, was born. In the days of his infancy the long struggle with England ended and peace came upon the land. But the evils of war often show themselves most clearly in the aftermath. The men who had for months and years followed the fortunes of battle returned, restless and unsettled in habits, to neglected farms and disorganized business affairs; and the process of rebuilding was slow and difficult.

In the years of his connection with the army and his subsequent association with army officers Rowland Chambers fell into ways of intemperance that boded ill for the recovery of his former circumstances. His vigorous mind naturally drew him into the affairs connected with the organization of government; and meanwhile matters at home were neglected and almost abandoned. Poverty and ruin came apace. The final act in the dissolution of the family fortune came when the heirs of John Martin crossed over from England and claimed the land upon which Rowland Chambers and his family lived.

In this time of dire discouragement there came, out of the West, Rowland's oldest son

William. Years before, William had crossed the mountains and made his way into the land of Kentucky; and his glowing account of the frontier now brought hope to the despairing family. It was a voice "behind the ranges" that had been calling since the time of Boone — a call that had in it a warning of danger that was a challenge to the hardy, that told of much to risk and much to gain. It was a call that passed by the weakling and drew to the Licking Valley men long of limb and stout of heart. Years before the voice had whispered to the struggling men in the mountains of western Virginia; and shouldering their rifles the gaunt mountaineers strode down into the valley that offered them a more plentiful living. Again it called and restless spirits from nearer the shore line — men whose means had vanished with the War — packed their few possessions and traversed the mountain passes into the new West.

So the call came to Rowland Chambers, and it found a willing response. He sold the stock and remaining property, and packed beds, furniture, clothing, and provisions into two large Jersey wagons. They did not make the journey alone. The family of Robert Davis — who had married Phoebe, the oldest daughter of Row-

land Chambers — and the family of Peter Davis, his brother, accompanied them — each with a stout wagon and team of horses.⁸

The little party left New Jersey in the summer of 1794 and began the slow and laborious journey across the mountains of Pennsylvania. Over the mountains and along streams, by rocky gorges and scarcely broken roads they made their way — the men and boys walking the entire distance, while the women and children rode in the wagons. Rowland himself went by way of New York City, and it was many days before he overtook the party in the Monongahela country. For several weeks they were delayed at the Monongahela River waiting for boats; and here they found themselves in the midst of the Whiskey Insurrection which was at its height in western Pennsylvania in the late summer of that year.

At length they secured boats and embarked. They were weeks upon the water, for the river trip was in those days a laborious passage. It was particularly so in time of low water when the shifting river channel and the numerous submerged rocks and sunken trees made it not only difficult but dangerous. From the Monongahela they entered the Ohio at Pittsburg. Down its waters the boats carried the emi-

grants, past Wheeling, past the town of Marietta at the mouth of the Muskingum, and past the Scioto where the town of Portsmouth had not yet sprung into existence. At length they reached a place where on the southern side a little creek emptied its waters from the lime-rock hills above into the curve of the great river. Here was the port of Limestone — famous among all those who knew the West as the point of entrance into Kentucky for Ohio River emigrants.⁹

To-day the town of Maysville, the county seat of Mason County, Kentucky, stretches along the shore for three miles and fills the lower slopes back to where the wooded lime hills rise abruptly. But the town of Maysville does not to-day occupy a position so important with respect to its surroundings as did the landing place of Limestone in the days of 1794. On the opposite shore, the hills of Ohio parted in a gap where a few years later the famous road of Ebenezer Zane from Wheeling across Ohio broke through to join at Limestone the trail into the interior of Kentucky.¹⁰

It was not mankind that first traced that pathway south from the Ohio River. In the bygone days when the buffaloes roamed the prairies east of the Mississippi River they

sought out and wore deep into the soil a track that wound up the hill from the river and across into the heart of the rich blue-grass pasturage. And man, coming after, saw the winding ribbon trail and made it his own. Thus began the old pioneer road by which thousands who descended the Ohio climbed the hills back of Limestone and reached the midst of the far famed land of Kentucky.

Passing along this road—later so well known as the Maysville Turnpike—the men who had come by the water route reached Lexington and there met those other hardy souls who had struggled through the Cumberland Gap and toiled along Boone's Wilderness Road northward into the land of promise.¹¹ But almost at the beginning of the road from the river was a town that played no small part in the early history of Kentucky. When the traveler who landed at Limestone reached the uplands back of the town he soon found himself in the village of Washington.

It was into this vicinity that Simon Kenton came, away back in the year before the Declaration of Independence was signed, and raised a crop of corn and built a cabin about a mile from the present site of the town.¹² In 1785 the town was laid out, and in the year following

it was organized by the legislature of Virginia.¹³ If Limestone be styled the northeast gateway into Kentucky, it may perhaps be said that the keepers of the gate dwelt in the village upon the hill. It was the county seat of Mason County (which in early days reached from the Licking River to the Big Sandy) and into its court rooms there gathered a coterie of lawyers whose fame was known throughout Kentucky. Business houses sprang up and it became a prominent place of trade for the population of a large surrounding territory.

II

EARLY LIFE

LATE in the month of October, 1794, Rowland Chambers and his family disembarked at Limestone and turned their steps toward the uplands of Kentucky. It is perhaps not to be doubted that as they toiled up the hills back of the town they paused now and then; for, as the road turned back and forth in its sinuous way, they could look down upon the roofs of the town and out over the tops of trees that burned red and yellow and brown on either shore and see running smoothly between the broad waters of the Ohio.

Once upon the heights, however, the land of their wayside dreams spread out before them; and the thought of the noble river that had brought them thither faded from their minds as their eyes fell upon the promised land. They had not traveled far when the town of Washington came into view. Strung along both sides of the road were more than a hundred houses, sheltering a sturdy and active pioneer com-

munity. In this year of 1794 one Lewis Craig built, on the brow of a little declivity that sloped down to the east side of the road, a courthouse whose ancient walls still speak of the days of the town's early fame.¹⁴ And while these walls rose and took form from the lime rocks of the surrounding hills, there walked into the village a fourteen year old boy whose life was associated with the building before he was out of his teens and whose voice for near half a century rung frequent in its halls.

Rowland Chambers settled at once in Washington. Young John Chambers had not been fortunate in his educational advantages. As he himself expressed it, he could scarcely read or write intelligibly and his language was "corrupted and mixed up with a sort of 'low dutch'" from the associations of his earlier boyhood days in New Jersey.¹⁵ To aid in the support of the family, John found an opportunity to clerk in the store of a man named Moore, who had just come to Washington and had opened up a small stock of goods. His employer paid for the boy's board in exchange for his services. Later, on somewhat the same basis, he clerked for a Mr. Wiggins.

Thus prosaically, and with little chance for mental development, the winter of 1794 passed.

In the following spring the older brother William, who had pointed the way to the West, again came forward in the role of a godfather and offered to send John to school at Transylvania Seminary in Lexington. In March, 1795, the boy entered, and attended the school until the summer vacation in July. At this time a difficulty existed between the President of the institution (Mr. Harry Toulman) and the Trustees. The doubt as to the resumption of the school, together with the perhaps more vital fact that his brother could not see his way clear to continue his support, led him to return home. These four months, then, present the sum total of the higher scholastic education of John Chambers. Never again did the opportunity come for a renewal of his studies — a fact which he regretted and lamented to the end of his days.

His return to the household at Washington was not, apparently, attended with cordiality on the part of his father. In his *Autobiography* he tells of his home-coming as follows:

I determined to return home, to which my father yielded with manifest displeasure, and was very stern and distant with me when I got home. I found he was cultivating a little field of corn, & the morning after my return I got up early and fed & watered his old

horse and went to ploughing — Nothing was said, and after several days diligent labors I had put the little field in good order, and then, for the first time went down town, where I found a new store just opening under the firm of Brownson and Irvin, and soon became their assistant behind the counter. In all these employments a part of the agreement was that they were to pay my boarding *at home*, so that by early rising I could always make my mother's morning fires and bring water for the days consumption.¹⁶

It was not long, however, until Rowland Chambers and his wife removed from Washington to Augusta, where their daughter, Mrs. Robert Davis, was now living. But John remained where he was and for two years sold goods across the counter of the village store.

There came a change in the fortunes of the young clerk in the year 1797. The position of Clerk of the Washington District Court was then held by a lawyer named Francis Taylor.¹⁷ In the latter part of this year Mr. Taylor, desiring a deputy, prevailed upon the employers of John Chambers to let the young man go into the Clerk's office in that capacity. He agreed with John to board and clothe him, and urged the value of the use he could make in his spare moments of Taylor's library and in particular of his law books. An indenture until he attained his majority was proposed which, says

Chambers, "I agreed to, with the remark that an Indenture of that kind would do very little good, as if a sense of duty did not bind me, the indenture would not, and I never heard of the indenture afterward".¹⁸

On the 18th of October, 1797, John Chambers took the oath of office required of the Deputy Clerk and began his work.¹⁹ Here was an occupation both congenial and profitable and it seems to have elicited his most diligent efforts. During the hours unoccupied in recording cases and performing other duties, he applied himself to the study of law. At the same time, during his eighteenth year, he served as Clerk of the Board of Trustees of the Town of Washington.²⁰ Thus was he acquiring before he was out of his teens an invaluable training for his life work.

He must have performed his duties to the eminent satisfaction of Mr. Taylor, for in the spring of 1800 he withdrew to his farm on the Ohio River, leaving Chambers to carry on the office and receive the fees. Taylor still nominally retained the clerkship in hopes that it would some time develop into a position of greater value. This change afforded Chambers a fair living, the fees in the first year amounting to somewhat less than four hundred dollars.

Out of this sum he supported himself and sent a considerable portion for the use of his mother at Augusta in the neighboring county of Bracken.

The three years in which John Chambers had had access to the library of Francis Taylor had been well spent. He had not only read a great deal of law but he had spent many hours with books of a general nature. He reached his twentieth year in October of 1800 and in the next month was given a license to practice law.²¹ Thus ended his score of years of apprenticeship; and with the century he began his career as a lawyer.

III

A KENTUCKY LAWYER

JOHN CHAMBERS came early into association with the profession of law. He was only seventeen when he entered the office of Francis Taylor and helped record the trials before one of the busiest district courts in Kentucky; and he had not yet attained his majority when he came into possession of all the rights and privileges that pertained to the bar. He retained his position as Deputy Clerk and began to gather a considerable practice in the inferior courts. Soon he was enabled to bring his father and mother back to Washington to live with him.²²

During the session of 1801-1802 the legislature of Kentucky abolished the District and Quarter Session Courts and established a system of Circuit Courts in their stead. The clerkship of this new court was an office of some remuneration, and two candidates immediately appeared. One was Thomas Marshall, who had been Clerk of the Quarter Session Court, and the second was Francis Taylor, Clerk of the

old District Court. John Chambers had now been performing the duties of Clerk for several years, and knew the work thoroughly. His friends urged him to become a candidate for the new office. The same advice was finally given him by one of the three judges in whom the power of appointment was vested. This judge promised Chambers his own vote and expressed the belief that one of the other judges would also vote for him. Upon these assurances Chambers entered the field.²³

He was at once denounced for opposing the candidacy of Francis Taylor. But he expressed the belief that in the years of his deputy clerkship he had rendered *quid pro quo* and that justice did not require that he refuse to be a candidate for any office for which Francis Taylor had aspirations. There were, however, further complications in the matter. During the preceding year the young and lovely Margaret Taylor, a half sister of Francis Taylor, had come out from Maryland to visit her brother. The Deputy Clerk forthwith lost his heart, and at the time of the clerkship appointment the two were engaged to be married but had told no one of the fact. In his *Autobiography* Chambers thus describes the outcome of this interesting situation:

I consulted her about withdrawing from the contest as the evident effect of it was to estrange her brother and myself and insure his opposition to her fathers consent to our marriage. She met the question as only such a woman could. She said my withdrawal and our subsequent marriage would give rise and plausibility to the imputation that she was sold to me as the price of my withdrawal from the contest, and altho she knew her brother, being an only son, had great influence with her father, she did not fear it. She had been raised in his bosom from her very infancy, without a mother, and she knew he had confidence in her judgment and prudence and would not sacrifice her happiness under any influence that could be brought to bear upon him. Mr. Taylor was elected Clerk and I soon after informed him of my engagement to his sister, and stated my object in doing so, to be to give him time to communicate with his father, as his sister & myself were both about to address him on the subject, the reply was very stern and to the effect that he would immediately send his sister home to her father. I told him such had been her wish, but that her health was then very delicate and I had earnestly advised her against encountering the journey of 500 miles on horseback (then the only means of travel), he answered that she could as well make the journey then as when she came to Kenty I reminded him that more than half the journey had then been made on the river and that her health was then good. he persisted however in saying that she should return immediately to her father, and upon my telling him that in that case I should accompany her, he

answered abruptly that I should not do it — here I thought forbearance ought to stop and I told him so, and that I would in defiance of him or anybody else go with her, and that any attempt to obstruct me would be fatal to who ever made it — That if he would treat her kindly until her fathers pleasure was know[n], that it was her determination & mine for the present to submit to it. I heard no more of her being sent away, and in due time her father answered her & her brothers & my letters, regret[t]ing that she had placed her affections upon a young man who[m] he did not know and could not judge of, and especially one whom her brother disapproved of. To Mr. Taylor he expressed his regret at what had taken place, but said he had raised that daughter without a mother and she had inspired him not only with the most unbounded affection, but with great confidence in her judgment and prudence, and to her he was willing under all circumstances to commit her fate in the matter of her marriage, and that his, Mr. Taylor's opposition to her marriage he hoped would at once cease.²⁴

On June 16, 1803, they were married at Mr. Taylor's house — Chambers himself describing it as “a melancholy scene” whereat “one young man at my request, and one young lady at hers, attended.”²⁵

The failure to secure the appointment as Clerk was perhaps the best thing that could have happened to John Chambers. He turned

his full attention now to the practice of law, making rapid strides in his profession. The dockets of the Mason County Circuit for these years have apparently not been preserved. The only records which give any clue to the amount of business enjoyed by individual members of the Mason County bar are two manuscript volumes entitled *Record of Personal Actions* and covering the years 1803, 1804, and 1805.²⁶ An examination of this official record shows that in the October term of 1803 somewhere near seventy-five cases came up before the Circuit Court of Mason County. In about thirty of these John Chambers was the counsel for the plaintiff.²⁷ In the September term of the following year, out of a total of fifty-three cases Chambers was employed by the plaintiff in twenty-three; while the remaining thirty cases were divided among six different attorneys.²⁸ In the September term of 1805 thirty-one cases were tried, and in twenty of these actions Chambers appeared for the plaintiff; while lawyers of such prominence as Adam Beatty, Will McClung, Alexander K. Marshall, Martin P. Marshall, and others divided the remaining eleven among them.²⁹ The records give no indication of the counsel for the defense. When it is considered that John Chambers was at this time

between the ages of twenty-three and twenty-five, and that the Mason County Circuit contained one of the strongest bars in the Commonwealth, the above record would seem to be an index of rather remarkable legal success.

Chambers had not been married four years before he was called upon to mourn the loss of his wife Margaret. She died on March 4, 1807, and left no children.³⁰ Some months later he made a visit to the home of his father-in-law, Ignatius Taylor,³¹ at Hagerstown, Maryland; and his own account of his meeting with Hannah Taylor, the half sister of his first wife, is too finely naïve to be omitted. It is given here verbatim.

On a subsequent visit to Maryland I found your dear and excellent mother, just in the full bloom of womanhood, admired by every one, and sought after by some gay dis[s]ipated and unpromising young men of "the first families" I at once saw her danger. her mother had died two or three years before and she was at the head of her fathers family. I advised her aunts and sisters to caution her against two young men particularly, as unworthy of her, but the answer was, they were young men of great promise and well connected and would be good matches for any girl in the County. My first wife had been dead but a few months and I felt the delicacy of proposing so soon to marry again. I pondered seriously upon it, and

ask[ed] myself the question shall, I leave this young and lovely creature to be sacrificed to a reckless sot, or enter the lists and carry her off, to wait longer may be fatal to her future happiness. I hesitated no longer and in a few days she flew to my arms for affection and protection, and no wife ever more deserved or enjoyed both — here let me remark that both the young gentlemen, I had wished *her* to avoid, married lovely girls whose parents were rich (one of them a cousin of your mother) and ended their respective carries [careers] before middle age in great poverty and perfectly besotted.³²

The marriage took place on October 29, 1807. It must have been about this time that Chambers determined to build himself a home. Withdrawn a little from the row of houses that constituted Washington, was a hill sloping in a long gradual descent to a road parallel to the Maysville Pike. On the crest of this hill, facing due east, John Chambers erected a well built frame house that, somewhat remodeled, still stands proudly holding its own against the decay that a century has brought upon the once proud village.³³

The wide slope of lawn before the house was thick with blue-grass, and with locust trees that whitened with bloom in the early summer and filled the air with fragrance. To the left were trees of June apples and Harvest apples — of

which the master of the house was so fond that in later years when he was in Iowa his relatives carefully hoarded them for his occasional home-comings.³⁴ At the foot of the hill a stone wall guarded the roadside, and along this wall and here and there in the lawn Chambers planted cedar trees which he brought home as foot-long shoots in his saddle-bags from the Blue Lick hills. After a hundred years these cedars, now well grown, still keep watch over the place which so long ago the owner christened in their honor, Cedar Hill.

The house which Chambers built on the hill-top was in keeping with its surroundings. It was a two story frame house with a wide hall in the center and large rooms on either side. A living-room about twenty feet square opened on the right of the hall and a dining-room of like size on the left. Upstairs were large bed-rooms which like the rooms below were fitted with large fire-places and wood mantels. Behind the house he built a cabin for the servants, and to the south a stone dairy house.

For more than a third of a century the life of John Chambers was centered at Cedar Hill. It was the birthplace and early home of his children. Here he dwelt on the edge of the busy little village and wrote out speeches, planned

campaigns, and worked over his legal cases. Here in later years he entertained the friends of his political life. Clay and Crittenden and scores of others found open house at Cedar Hill. On the broad lawn the lights often swung from the locust and cedar trees, while neighbors and friends made merry at a sociable or at a celebration after a political victory. And for days before these occasions the household down to the small children was kept busily at work grinding coffee and blanching almonds.

Two ivory miniatures made about this time show John Chambers as a sturdy young man with short brown hair and a clear eye, and Mrs. Hannah Chambers as a young woman of rare attractiveness and beauty.³⁵ She was also a woman of social abilities and accomplishments. John J. Crittenden used to say that Chambers ought to be made Minister to France because of his wife's diplomacy and her fluency in speaking the French language.³⁶

The years following his second marriage, though not lacking in legal opportunities, did not prevent John Chambers from indulging other fancies. The raising of hemp was a prominent occupation in Kentucky, and the manufacture of hemp rope was a naturally resulting industry. So Chambers built, on the



land south of his house, a rope-walk and began to make rope for the market. Here under the long sheds the men all day long walked backwards, twisting the strands of hemp fibre into cables and stern fasts. The undertaking did not at first prove a financial success, for Chambers soon found himself deep in debt and the loser of some twenty thousand dollars. How he solved the situation is best told in his own words:

I kept my business to myself and maintained my credit until I had struggled pretty well through my indebtedness, living economically and wasting nothing.³⁷

IV

THE WAR OF 1812

A GENERATION only had elapsed between the close of the Revolution and the opening of the War of 1812, but in that time marvelous changes had taken place in the Ohio Valley. In those thirty years mountain pass, wilderness trail, and navigable waterway had poured thousands of pioneers into the West—hardy men and women who had built towns, organized governments, and established industries. Back to the Congress in the East they sent men in whom burned that western spirit of vigor and independence.

When the administration was advancing fearfully and with cringing timidity to the point of resisting French and English insults, the West was openly and vehemently for war. Nor was it because the West would not suffer in such a war. Well did the men beyond the mountains know that the forts of the Northwest would be the objective points; and fully did they realize

that men of Ohio and Kentucky must bear the brunt of the fighting.

To the men of the West war meant more than national honor. It meant a struggle for their own existence — a fiercely fought conflict for the control of the resources that they had with such risk and labor wrested from the wilderness. The Indian tribes, backed by British influence were daily becoming more of a menace. Outbreaks and massacres were increasingly prevalent on these western plains while Congress dabbled with the problems east of the mountains. And so, when in June, 1812, war was finally declared, the West at once took its place in the field.

Out of the quota of fifty-five hundred required of the Commonwealth, Kentucky was asked to send fifteen hundred men to the aid of Hull at Detroit.³⁸ So great, however, was the patriotic ardor of these men that more than two thousand were on the march when they met with the news of Hull's disastrous defeat and the surrender of Detroit. The result of this calamity in Kentucky was a deep and painful sense of the country's need and an immediate response thereto. An army, under the command of William Henry Harrison and composed largely of Kentuckians, began the march to the north intent upon the

immediate recapture of Detroit and the invasion of Canada.

During the year 1812 John Chambers was chosen to represent the County of Mason in the Kentucky House of Representatives.³⁹ The session convened early in December. In the executive office was the veteran Isaac Shelby who had served in the Revolutionary War and who had been chosen in 1792 as Kentucky's first Governor. A score of years had in no way dimmed the intensity of his spirit. On December 8, 1812, he sent to the legislature a message full of fire and vigor.⁴⁰ He discussed at length the war situation and was bitter in his denunciation of Great Britain. They were strong men who listened to this message, and the session was not unfruitful of response. Among those who sat with Chambers in the lower house were Robert McAfee of Mercer County, Chilton Allen of Clarke County, and Thomas Metcalfe of Nicholas County — men of great ability and strength of character.⁴¹ John Chambers was placed upon the Committee on Courts of Justice. He also served on the Joint Committee on Enrollments.⁴²

An interesting incident of this session shows somewhat of the spirit of the times. A Circuit Judge named David Ballengall was charged

with being an alien and unqualified to serve in his position because he had never taken the oath of allegiance to the United States. The investigation of his case was given to a committee of which Chambers was chairman. On January 7, the committee reported that Ballengall was, at the time of his appointment in 1805, and still was in 1813, an alien; that he was born in Scotland and was therefore a citizen of Great Britain, with whom the United States was then at war. The committee recommended the adoption of a resolution declaring him unfit for office.⁴³ Following this report the legislature passed a resolution and an address asking for the removal of David Ballengall. Whereupon the Scotchman was ousted from the office of Circuit Judge.⁴⁴

Meanwhile the recapture of Detroit by Harrison had proved a longer task than the eager volunteers had anticipated. Swamps and bad roads, made still more impassable by heavy fall rains, so delayed the army that at the opening of the year 1813 Harrison was still at Upper Sandusky. The left wing of the army, commanded by General James Winchester and composed almost entirely of Kentuckians, was somewhat in advance and on the tenth of January reached the Rapids of the Maumee River.

Venturing too far and taking too scant precautions against surprise, Winchester was attacked on January 22, 1813, at Frenchtown on the Raisin River.⁴⁵ His command was routed by the British and Indians under General Procter, and an indiscriminate butchery by the unrestrained savages completed the disaster.

The blow at Frenchtown came upon the home-keepers in Kentucky with terrific effect. At Frankfort where the State legislature was assembled the ill news came with little delay. Chambers writes thus of its reception:

The news of the defeat came by express & arrived after night and was suffered to spread in a crowded theatre, where the wives and daughters of nearly two full companies and many office[r]s were collected. I never saw and hope never to see again such another scene of wild distress and agony. Many were helpless widows and orphans, who went there as they thought happy wives & children.⁴⁶

This event removed any trace of inaction that may have hung about the State Capital. An act amending the militia law and providing for the emergency conditions was passed.⁴⁷ Governor Shelby was authorized to raise and organize a detachment of militia and agreed to take command of the troops in person. Led on by this vigorous stimulus, hundreds of Ken-

tuckians volunteered their services with the impulse of revenge in their hearts and the war cry of "Remember the River Raisin" on their lips. The fighting blood of Kentucky was stirred to its depths.

A letter from Governor Shelby to John Chambers extended an offer to place him in as favorable a position as possible in the body of troops.⁴⁸ But Chambers had already promised to join General Harrison as a volunteer aid-de-camp. The first few days of September, 1813, found him with the General's staff at Camp Seneca on the Sandusky River.⁴⁹ Here was a new field. "Ignorant as the horse I rode", he says, "of everything like military life, I had to begin with the a, b, c, of my study, but determined to make myself useful if possible, I began to look about me for something to do, and from the deranged state of the Genls. military papers, I soon found employment for myself and two educated soldiers, (drunken lawyers who having ruined themselves by their intemperance took shelter from starvation by enlisting) with their labour under my direction I soon produced order out of confusion, to the generals very great gratification."⁵⁰

The army did not remain many days longer in camp. Oliver Hazard Perry, on the 10th of

September, won his brilliant victory from the British squadron on Lake Erie; and the fortunes of war smiled at last upon the American forces. From Camp Seneca, General Harrison heard the guns booming on the Lake, and inspired by the famous message of Perry, "We have met the enemy and they are ours", lost no time in pushing to the front.⁵¹ At the shore of the Lake they were joined by Governor Shelby and his reënforcements. A few days later the combined army was placed on board the ships of the squadron and a number of transports, and was on its way across the Lake, eager for the invasion of foreign soil.⁵²

Meanwhile General Procter, who had retreated after his futile attempts to invade Ohio to the vicinity of Detroit and Malden, looked upon the movements of Harrison's army with terror; and when the American commander boarded vessels and commenced crossing Lake Erie with his army reënforced by Shelby's Kentuckians, he himself "remembered the River Raisin" and, gathering together his army, retreated up the River Thames, paying no heed to the contemptuous taunts of the Indians nor to the remark of Tecumseh that he was running away like a dog with his tail between his legs.⁵³ Many of the naked allies now deserted him; but Tecum-

seh, in spite of his contempt for Procter's cowardice, remained faithful with over a thousand Indians.

On the twenty-seventh of September the army under Harrison landed on Canadian soil. Procter had begun his retreat on the twenty-fourth. Harrison was now delayed waiting for the arrival of Colonel Richard M. Johnson's mounted regiment, and the pursuit began with the enemy a week in advance. This was ample time for an efficient commander to make good his escape. But General Procter did not seem to believe that he would be followed vigorously. According to his own report, he took his way eastward "by easy marches".⁵⁴ Less than a week, therefore, ended the chase.

Not far from the old Moravian town on the bank of the River Thames, on October 5, 1813, Procter was forced into action. Flanked on the left by the river and on the right by a swamp, the British and Indians occupied a strong position. But the Americans had the advantage of numbers and the day for the avenging of the River Raisin had come. A vigorous assault put the British to rout, but was not so successful against the Indians. The great leader of the savages, however, fell mortally wounded and with the death of Tecumseh

the spirit of his followers vanished. The Kentuckians, keenly mindful of the River Raisin, pressed hotly to the attack upon the Indians. From the thighs of a fallen warrior whom they took to be Tecumseh, they are said to have cut long strips of skin to carry triumphantly back to Kentucky for razor strops.⁵⁵

General Procter fled early in the battle, but not without pursuers. Harrison's two aids, Charles S. Todd and John Chambers, together with Majors Wood and Payne and a handful of others, followed the fleeing General mile after mile until he was forced to leave the road and escaped only after abandoning his carriage, sword, and papers.⁵⁶

The battle of the Thames was a decisive victory and brought no little joy to the invading army and to the country at large. In his report to the War Department, General Harrison made special mention of John Chambers both as to his general performance of duties and in connection with the spirited pursuit of the British General.⁵⁷ Nine days after the battle General Harrison wrote a letter to Chambers expressing his sincere thanks for his services and granting him permission to return to Kentucky, now that the active operations of the campaign were closed.⁵⁸

Thus ended the brief military career of John Chambers. It was scarcely sufficient to mark him as a military man, yet it was enough to prove his courage in action and it afforded an excuse — little needed in the gallant land of Kentucky — for the attachment to his name of the title Major, which under stress of political exigency was sometimes increased to Colonel by the non-military forces that plan out and lay siege to the offices of the State or National administration.

V

A DECADE OF RELIEF LAWS

DURING the decade which followed the War of 1812 John Chambers seems to have busied himself largely with the practice of law. The *Order Books* of the Mason County Circuit Court give no record of attorneys employed in the various cases, but fugitive references indicate that he was in partnership with one Taylor. This partnership ended in the year 1816.⁵⁹ Later he had as a law partner James A. Paxton, a distant relative who died in 1825.⁶⁰

In the year 1814 Chambers was urged to become a candidate for a seat in the Kentucky legislature but declined to do so; and when, in the year after, he was elected to represent Mason County in the lower house it was, as he expressed it, "very contrary to both my inclination and interest."⁶¹ The part he took in this session does not seem to have been conspicuous. He served, as before, on the Committee on Courts of Justice. Some of the topics under consideration by this legislature were the

boundary dispute between Tennessee and Kentucky, retaliatory measures against Indiana because of the action of that Territory in prohibiting the practice of Kentucky attorneys within its borders, relief legislation in behalf of the debtor class, and legislation for the building and improvement of turnpike roads. A large proportion of private laws was passed, several of which concerned Mason County.⁶²

During this session an act was passed renewing the provision made by the preceding legislature allowing debtors to stay the execution of a judgment for a period of twelve months instead of three. The conditions in Kentucky which brought about this legislation and the train of consequences which followed the pursuit of so short-sighted a policy are of basic importance to the understanding of Kentucky history for the next decade and in the interpretation of conditions which materially affected the life of John Chambers.

Following the session of 1815-1816 Chambers did not again act in a legislative capacity until 1828 when he was elected to Congress.⁶³ During this period his law practice was evidently attended with success. In 1819 he was commissioned as a Justice of the Peace and served until 1823.⁶⁴ In 1820 he was appointed by Govern-

nor Slaughter to the office of Commonwealth Attorney for the First District — a position of honor and one requiring legal ability of a high order.⁶⁵

During these years Kentucky was passing through a period of financial tribulation that sadly retarded the development of the State and arrayed men in a struggle in which the bitterness of feeling rivalled that which prevailed during the War for the Union and during the recent troubles over the raising of tobacco crops.⁶⁶ The great mass of the population of Kentucky was exceedingly ignorant of the elementary principles of public finance. Nobly had they defended the State from the savage tribes and built up industries and institutions; but the theories of financial legislation and the principles which underlie sound banking seemed beyond their comprehension.

The War of 1812, in which Kentucky had spent so much of its best blood and resources in the defense of Ohio and the Northwest, left the State in an impoverished condition. A large portion of the population was in debt and without the means of payment. This widespread state of affairs gave rise to a popular clamor for legislation in behalf of the debtor class. In response to this demand, the legislature of Ken-

tucky passed an act in February, 1815, extending the time allowed for the stay of a judgment from three to twelve months. The act was to be in force for one year, but was renewed in the session of 1815-1816 and by succeeding legislatures.⁶⁷

The natural result of this legislation was a tightening of the loan market and a withdrawal of money from circulation. Conditions grew steadily worse; and the popular party, which came to be generally known as the Relief Party, began to urge an artificial and extensive increase of the circulating medium. The Relief Party finally procured, in January, 1818, the passage of an act establishing some forty independent banks subject to no State control or supervision and empowered to issue notes redeemable either in specie or in the notes of the Bank of Kentucky or the Bank of the United States.

The new banks scattered money broadcast, but in most cases soon went into bankruptcy — after having flooded the State with a currency that soon depreciated and only intensified the economic distress. Two years later, in February, 1820, the legislature repealed the Independent Bank Act; but, throwing the fruit of five years' experience to the wind, they enacted at

the same session a law extending the time for the stay of an execution from one year to two years, unless the creditor agreed to accept in payment notes of the Bank of Kentucky.⁶⁸

Still went up that unthinking clamor for more money; and in November of 1820 the legislature — the infatuated servant of the Relief Party — jumped from the frying pan of financial un wisdom and shortsightedness into the fire of hopeless economic idiocy by the creation of a Bank of the Commonwealth with such provisions that it could do no otherwise than complete the wreck of the State's finances.⁶⁹

A mother bank with branches was established, the entire capital — fixed at two million dollars — to be held by the State of Kentucky. The sources of its capital stock were to be the public lands and the unappropriated surplus in the Treasury of the State at the end of each session. The capital stock of the Bank of Kentucky was also to be considered a part of the capital stock of the Bank of the Commonwealth. Money from the first of these sources was incapable of ready realization; funds from the second source seldom if ever had an existence, and it was evident that the capital of the Bank of Kentucky was fully needed by that institution without being stretched to cover the new one as well.⁷⁰

Yet upon this ephemeral basis the Bank of the Commonwealth was allowed to issue notes to the amount of three million dollars, to contract indebtedness to double the amount of its capitalization, and to make loans subject to manifold regulations. Its notes were made receivable throughout the State for taxes. The legislature which passed this act, after making further provisions with the purpose of forcing the notes of the new bank into circulation, appointed new directors of the Bank of Kentucky to insure that bank's acceptance of the notes of the new bank and then adjourned.

The Bank of Kentucky, once a sound institution, was now nearing a collapse; while the notes of the new bank soon depreciated to fifty per cent of their face value. The creditor was presented with the unpleasant option of receiving notes worth half the amount of the loan or waiting two years for an uncertain payment. Anarchy reigned in the Commonwealth, and hundred of citizens moved beyond its borders.⁷¹

It was not long until the monetary question came before the judiciary. In the fall term of 1823 a case which involved the stay of judgments came before the highest court of Kentucky, the Court of Appeals.⁷² This Court was composed of three Judges — John Boyle, Chief

Justice, and William Owsley and Benjamin Mills, Associate Judges. The Relief Party, fearful of a decision contrary to its legislation, used every manner of intimidation and threat to influence the men on the bench, but without avail. The Court unanimously decided that the law extending the term of stay was in violation of the United States Constitution since it impaired the obligation of contracts.⁷³

Immediate and intense was the outbreak of wrath on the part of the Relief Party. With a strong majority in the State, they looked upon the action of the Court as an unwarranted thwarting of the will of the people. Arrayed in support of the three Judges was the Anti-Relief Party, composed of the conservative elements of the State's population. Of this latter party were the great mass of the merchants, business men, and the legal profession. The Relief Party, however, numbered among its leaders some of the most prominent attorneys of the State. George M. Bibb, John Rowan, William T. Barry, Solomon P. Sharpe, and others allowed themselves to be carried with the current of popular feeling and fought for the relief measures with an intensity and persistence that would have done grace to a far better cause. Among the leaders of the Anti-Relief Party

were George Robertson, Robert Wicliffe, and Chilton Allen.

Now that the Court of Appeals had definitely passed upon the matter, the popular party turned once more to the legislature for help. The Judges were commissioned to serve during good behavior and were removable only by impeachment or by an address of the legislature carried by a two-thirds vote in each house. Thus the election of 1824 became the scene of the next conflict in the hope that a sufficient majority might be chosen to accomplish the removal of the Judges. They elected Joseph Desha, their partisan candidate for Governor, but failed to get a majority of two-thirds in the two houses.

Thwarted in their attempt to legally remove the offending Judges, they turned to the expedient of legislating them out of office. Amid overwhelming excitement a bill was introduced and passed repealing all the acts establishing the Court of Appeals, and organizing in its stead a new Court of Appeals having the same jurisdiction and duties.⁷⁴ Upon this new bench were placed four of the prominent leaders of the Relief Party. The position of Chief Justice was given to William T. Barry, whom Governor Desha upon coming into office had ap-

pointed as Secretary of State. Francis P. Blair, Clerk of the new Court, secured forcible possession of the records of the Court of Appeals and the popular tribunal began its work.

The Judges of the old Court, however, refused to leave office. They calmly met at their next session, issued an address to the people stating their position, and continued to try cases. Thus for term after term two Courts met side by side, heard appeals and gave decisions, each claiming to be the true Court of last resort. A majority of the attorneys of the State, however, carried their cases to the Old Court for adjudication.⁷⁵

Meantime, over the State, indignation meetings were being held and excitement waxed furious. The opposing forces now came to be known as the Old Court Party and the New Court Party. In Mason County a meeting was held in Washington at which resolutions were passed declaring the act reorganizing the Court null and void, and maintaining that Messrs. Boyle, Owsley, and Mills were still the true Court of Appeals. The resolutions were supported by Robert Taylor, John Chambers, and Adam Beatty, and opposed by Jacob A. Slack and W. Worthington.⁷⁶

In 1825 the Old Court Party won a majority

in the lower house but the Senate was still in control of the New Court Party. Governor Desha opened the session by a message denouncing the Old Court, the United States Bank, and the United States Supreme Court and applauding the revolutionary act reorganizing the Court of Appeals. The reaction came at last in the election of 1826. The Old Court Party gained control of both houses, and on December 30, 1826, repealed the Reorganization Act and re-established the old Court of Appeals.⁷⁷ Thus was the course of the three steadfast Judges justified, while the New Court dropped from existence. The act was vetoed by Governor Desha, but was subsequently passed over his veto. Gradually Kentucky won its way back to safety and sanity.

VI

THE DESHA TRIAL

IN the same issue of the Maysville *Eagle* which contained the inaugural message of Governor Joseph Desha to the newly convened legislature in 1824 there appeared a six inch item entitled "Horrid Murder".⁷⁸ It told of the discovery on November 8 of the dead body of Francis Baker near the road about five miles from the town of Mayslick. A week later, November 17, 1824, the same paper announced that suspicion had fallen upon Isaac B. Desha, the son of the Governor of the State, and that he had been arrested and conveyed for preliminary examination to Flemingsburg, the county seat of Fleming County.

Now it so happened that Fleming County, in which the murder had been committed, was one of the counties making up the district for which John Chambers was Commonwealth Attorney. It naturally devolved upon him, therefore, to prosecute the case for the State. Under the belief, however, that Desha could not receive jus-

tice in Fleming County, the legislature, on December 4, passed a special act allowing the accused to choose whether he would be tried in the Circuit Court of Fleming or of Harrison County.⁷⁹ Desha chose the latter, and, since this county was in the district of which William K. Wall was the Commonwealth Attorney, the duty of prosecution was removed from the shoulders of Chambers and thrown upon those of Wall. This met with the approval of Chambers who later expressed himself as of the opinion that "justice sanctioned the measure".⁸⁰

Coming as it did in the most heated period of the monetary conflict described in the preceding chapter, the surroundings and political connections of this trial threw it distinctly into the limelight. Governor Desha, the father of the accused, had just taken office and appointed as Secretary of State, William T. Barry, perhaps the most prominent leader of the Relief Party.⁸¹ He now turned to Barry for aid in the defense of his son. John Rowan, who had just been chosen United States Senator, also acted as counsel for the defense.⁸² It was John Rowan, who, in the preceding session of the Kentucky legislature had so strenuously pressed the legislative independence of judicial decisions and the nullification of the unpopular decrees of the

Court of Appeals.⁸³ There were few more powerful lawyers in the State than William T. Barry and John Rowan. With them were associated in the Desha trial, William Brown and an attorney named Taul.

Confronted by this array of legal talent the prosecuting attorney of the second district, upon whom the change of venue had thrown this important trial, felt keenly the need of assistance. The most natural man to turn to was the Commonwealth Attorney of the district in which the crime was committed and from which the venue had been changed. Wall, consequently, appealed to Chambers for assistance in the case. Chambers declined, but after repeated urging complied and came to the aid of his fellow prosecutor. Martin P. Marshall was also engaged by the friends of the murdered man.

A special term of court was appointed for the trial, to begin on January 17, 1825. After two judges had declined to hear the case, Judge Shannon of Lexington was induced to attend; and at Cynthiana in Harrison County the trial opened.⁸⁴ Two days were consumed in securing a jury. About forty-five jurors were challenged for cause and excused, and nine were challenged peremptorily. On Wednesday, Janu-

ary 19, the jury was complete and, closely followed by an excited audience, the examination of witnesses began.⁸⁵

It appeared from the evidence that Francis Baker, a stranger in Kentucky, stopped on the evening of November 1 at the tavern of Zedekiah Moore. He was riding a gray mare, and had with him about one hundred dollars. At sunrise the next morning he departed for the tavern of Richard Doggate, five miles away. Here the wayfaring stranger fell in with Isaac Desha and breakfasted with him. Nancy Doggate, the daughter of the tavern-keeper, testified that after breakfast Baker started from the tavern first, but was soon overtaken by Desha and that the two rode on together.⁸⁶

A little later in that same morning Milton Ball saw a gray mare come trotting up the lane at his father's place. He caught her and rode back in the direction from which she had come. Soon he met Desha's horse with blood upon its neck and withers, and further on he came upon Desha himself, walking and carrying Baker's saddle-bags. They were joined a little later by Elismon⁸⁷ Ball, who, following his brother, had mounted Desha's horse. After some conversation in which Desha explained that he had cut himself and that he had bought the mare of a

stranger, they parted. Six days later Milton and Elismon Ball found the body of Francis Baker.

For about a week witnesses were examined, the identity of the gray mare, the bloody saddlebags, and a number of other details forming the nucleus of the evidence. Throughout the taking of testimony the prisoner, a young man of twenty-three, sat with unruffled composure; while his father, the Governor, from his place beside the counsel, observed with a keen eye each witness who came upon the stand, signs of the deep and intense feeling that stirred him occasionally showing upon his countenance.⁸⁸

Finally the testimony closed and the counsel began their addresses to the jury. Martin P. Marshall opened for the prosecution and was followed by Wall, who took occasion to state that Marshall appeared upon the request of the friends of the deceased and that Chambers had given a reluctant assent to repeated solicitations by Wall to aid him in the matter. Mr. Taul of the defense occupied the remainder of the day, and Colonel Brown occupied the entire following day.

On Thursday morning, January 27, William T. Barry arose and began his argument.⁸⁹ There now came an exhibition of the feeling

which the relief laws had stirred up in Kentucky. Here was the son of the Governor, whom the Relief Party had just placed in office, on trial for murder. In his behalf were engaged two of the most prominent leaders of that party, while on the part of the prosecution was as decided if not as prominent an opponent of the policies for which they so vehemently fought. A murder trial in itself is likely to provoke interesting tilts between opposing counsel. A murder trial so projected into the midst of the most exciting and intense civil discord that had ever convulsed the State could scarcely be otherwise than bitter.

At the opening of his address Barry descanted upon the right to a fair trial and upon the nobility and good character of young Desha. He then turned the heavy guns of his eloquence upon the party spirit which he intimated had led to the "extraneous assistance on the part of the prosecution". "He would rather his right arm should fall from its socket; oppressed and embarrassed as he was he would sooner seize the plow, or even beg his bread than stoop to volunteer his services against the life of any human being upon earth."⁹⁰

"Gracious God," he ejaculated, "has party spirit brought us to this! Is the Commonwealth

so feeble as to require this interposition, the raising of a poney purse and the enlistment of a foreign emissary to accomplish the ends of justice? These gentlemen, moreover, bring with them a standing in society and a weight of character which are all thrown upon this unfortunate man, but Gentlemen his confidence, his hope is in your inflexible integrity.”⁹¹ It would appear from his argument that he considered it astonishing that Mr. Wall, an attorney far below him in reputation if not in ability, should hesitate to undertake alone the prosecution of the Governor’s son against the combined talent of four able attorneys, and that he regarded any variation from the ratio of four attorneys to one as an unfair trial.

He urged that the jury act only upon absolute proof. “If there is a *possibility* of innocence, if there lingers a solitary doubt, you must acquit.”⁹² After commenting upon the witnesses and the evidence, and making much of Desha’s former good reputation, his young wife, and the baby unborn at the time of the murder, he closed by picturing to the jury their own feelings as they lay upon their pillows having given a verdict of guilty and afterwards found that he was innocent. But how different would be their feelings if they pronounced him not guilty!

How it would thrill the crowd with joy — and put the prisoner in a position to regain his reputation and perhaps find the real offender.

John Rowan followed Barry.⁹³ He was an older man than his colleague, a man of high ability and character and a lawyer whose thirty years of practice had been full of forensic triumphs. He denied the statement that he had been employed by the defense. He had volunteered his services without any stipulation as to pay. Like his colleague he discussed the previous reputation of Desha and urged upon the jury that a man of twenty-three after an exemplary life thus far, had his character formed and it would be impossible for him to commit such a crime. He, too, indulged in a philippic against Chambers. “I would ask”, he said, “what in morals is the difference between murdering a man on the public highway for money, and attacking a man’s life in court for the same purpose? To be sure there is this difference. In the one case there is some danger of being apprehended, and a hazzard of losing your life by the hands of the individual assaulted. But here there is no such risk. Desha stands mute in this curious assembly and has his life assailed from patriotism!”⁹⁴

He emphasized the fact that Desha could have

had no motive for the murder. He tried to impeach the testimony of Elismon and Milton Ball, and suggested explanations for various details of the testimony. He closed with a peroration that brought before the minds of the jurors the family of the accused and the father's grief and suffering; and he rang in their ears the heart-rending cry of David over his son Absalom. Some of the members of the jury had sons who some day might be involved — why not do unto others as they would that others should do to them. His final plea was, that, though they might convict, they could never afterwards give back a life that they had once taken.

It was Saturday morning when John Chambers arose in a crowded court room to make the final speech in the trial of Desha.⁹⁵ He was not a man of eloquence. That wonderful gift of speech by which Barry and Rowan had been able to sway audiences and carry them along to conviction in behalf of as indefensible and illogical positions as had characterized the relief movement had not descended upon Chambers. But by the weight of his earnestness, by the solidity of his argument, and the strength of his sincerity he was a powerful speaker. On this Saturday morning he faced a situation which called forth his greatest powers. He stood be-

fore an audience that had heard him tongue-lashed in the most scathing language. He met the searching eyes of the Governor fixed intently upon his. Then he turned to the jury which for two days had listened to the persuasive eloquence of two of Kentucky's most famous orators.

He began speaking calmly, stating with dignity the reasons which had finally induced him to yield to the appeals of his fellow prosecutor and aid in the conduct of a trial from which he had been relieved only by legislative act. "Whatever may be thought of me in the future", he said, "though I should be consigned to the fate of the Jeffries the reflection that I was actuated by no other motive . . . than to see the ends of justice accomplished, will always console me." 96

Then he turned with some spirit upon Barry. "Mr. Barry enquires for the place which I will fill in the page of future history; Gentlemen I am too humble an individual to hope for my name to be handed down to posterity; and were I even so vain as to cherish such a hope, I should never envy that gentleman the rank which he will occupy on that page. I have never been clamorous in calling upon my fellow citizens to promote me, nor have I been found shifting

from one to another high office in our state.”⁸⁷ He denied that party spirit had actuated him. “I have a pride”, he said, “as a man, and as a citizen, and a confidence that the weight of counsel and his connexions to the contrary notwithstanding, the prisoner’s case will be fully and fairly investigated.”

“I am asked emphatically by Mr. Rowan,” he continued, “for the difference in morals, between murdering a man on the highway for his money, and attacking the life of an individual in Court, when money was to be received; it was unkind—it was applicable alike to his Honor upon the bench, and you gentlemen in your box, to Major Wall, and to myself; I know no other way to repel his ungenerous insinuation, than to ask him whether even that would be worse than to throw his Aegean shield around every prisoner, to rescue crime from its meritorious punishment? The talents and ability of that gentleman are proverbial and particularly in cases of this kind are deemed the greatest in this or perhaps the United States; and shall they who possess such stupendous talents, always interpose them, between crimes of the most common hue and punishment, and then to lay on us the charge of robbery and murder?”⁸⁸

He assured the jury that he would not attempt to enlist their feelings, but would address himself to their reason. He appeared from no ill will to the prisoner, for he was willing to acknowledge all his former amiability of character and virtuous course of life; but he maintained that Desha was no more than mortal and it was possible for any mortal to fall.

As he talked the charge made by Barry that it was a party trial seemed to recur to his mind with stirring effect. "I have been astonished, amazed", he said, "that they without any particular evidence of the fact should say that this is a party trial!! . . . 'Gracious God!' said Mr. Barry, 'has party spirit brought us to this?' Gracious God! has it come to this, that citizens friendly to justice, and who use their efforts to accomplish its end, shall for that, be charged with having sanguinary and bloody purposes against the accused? He would not directly charge them with a motive of this kind, but I must condemn in turn the reproachful insinuation."

Then he proceeded to a review of the testimony and a rebuttal of the argument. Here his advantage was eminent for his opponents had addressed themselves so largely to the task of enlisting sympathy that they had failed to meet

the evidence in the case with any degree of thoroughness. Chambers handled the testimony fairly and logically, constantly urging upon the jury not to mind any opinion he might express but to study the evidence. In conclusion he remarked that he might have compared the situation of Baker's relatives and friends, but that it was entirely extraneous. He had not sought to rouse feelings. He desired them to rely simply upon the facts in the case as adduced by the various witnesses.

The jury retired and, not coming to immediate agreement, the court adjourned until Monday morning. Shortly after nine o'clock on the thirty-first of January the jury was brought in and the foreman announced that they had agreed upon the verdict guilty.⁹⁹ After a short adjournment the counsel for the prisoner moved a new trial on the ground that the rules regarding the privacy of the jury had been laxly observed. Several parties had been allowed to converse with the members of the jury. Some of the jurors had left the room at times unattended, the Sheriff had slept in the room at night, and at one time a letter had been thrown into the room threatening that the jurors would be hung in effigy if a verdict were not given against the prisoner.¹⁰⁰

Such loose observance of jury regulations was inexcusable and it is not strange that Judge Shannon sustained the motion for a new trial. He was severely and very properly censured, however, because he took occasion, in granting retrial, to comment somewhat extendedly upon the evidence, although the only grounds brought forward in support of a new trial were misconduct in connection with the jury.

In March the process of trial turned back once more to its beginnings, but after more than one hundred twenty men had been summoned and only four jurymen drawn it was continued until the next term of court.¹⁰¹ Again in June did the attempt to secure a jury prove ineffectual and a second continuance resulted.¹⁰² In the September term, however, a jury was finally obtained and the case was tried. This time neither Chambers appeared for the prosecution, nor Barry or Rowan for the defense. William K. Wall conducted the case for the State unaided, while Taul and Brown, who had served in the first trial, assisted now by Bayley and Crawford, acted for the defense.¹⁰³ At eleven thirty in the evening of the last day of the term, Desha was once more found guilty. But the case that had already dragged through four terms of court was not to end so soon. Judge

Henry O. Brown, on the ground that the murder was not proved to have been committed in Fleming County, as was charged in the indictment, granted a new trial. With a confused mixture of hand clapping and hissing the excited audience left the court-house.¹⁰⁴

So the wearying process of searching the highways and hedges for jurors who had not formed an opinion on this notorious case, and the coralling of witnesses for term after term only to be dismissed upon the postponement of the trial, continued. On June 9, 1826, Elismon Ball, one of the principal witnesses, was drowned and the newspapers began to wrangle over the question as to whether or not he had suicided.¹⁰⁵ A month later, Isaac Desha, in an attempt at suicide in the jail, cut his windpipe nearly in two and seriously affected the roots of his tongue.¹⁰⁶ This added another stay to the proceedings. In September, Judge Brown granted a petition to set Desha free on bail, although the act allowing a change of venue specifically provided that he should not be discharged from custody because of any number of continuances.¹⁰⁷ So the year 1826 and the first half of 1827 went by.

At the June term of 1827 the usual failure to find a jury occurred and on the last day of the

term the Judge made his now time-honored announcement of a continuance. A motion to readmit Desha to bail was overruled and the Judge was about to give directions for making the jail as comfortable as possible when Governor Desha rose. Remarking that the time had now come for him to act, he drew from his pocket a document which when read by the clerk proved to be an official pardon for his son.¹⁰⁸

Thus ended the long and expensive attempt to bring the prisoner to justice. Nearly three years had elapsed since the murder, and thousands of dollars had been spent with absolutely no results. Yet the outcome seemed to be a relief to all parties. "*The long agony is over,*" said an anti-Desha newspaper as it congratulated the people of Harrison County upon the restoration of the benefits of a court of justice.¹⁰⁹

Grewsome are the tales in the newspapers of the day of the discharged prisoner as he departed from the haunts of his youth with a silver tube in his windpipe, breathing through a branch that protruded from his neck.¹¹⁰ And there drifted back from far away Texas a rumor of his arrest for a robbery and murder committed there.¹¹¹ But for the people of Kentucky

the matter was at an end and they were well content to let a father's pardon draw the curtain forever on the wearying court proceedings and the unsettled question of his innocence or guilt.

VII

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

THE intense feeling aroused by the struggle between the Old and New Court parties by no means died away with the overthrow of the New Court and the dissolution of the faction that had supported it. The spirit of partizanship still was bitter, and now that the State issues were in a measure settled the intensity found expression in the espousal of national issues. The Presidential election of 1824, with its quadrangular personal contest and resulting ill feeling, insured a bitter struggle in 1828, and in the year 1827 lines were drawing on John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson with a distinctness that left no doubt as to the return of party divisions throughout the country.

In the town of Washington, Kentucky, in 1827 the Fourth of July was celebrated by a gathering of men of both parties at the tavern of Mrs. Stith. The old time custom of toasting prominent men was followed, and many were the eulogies and invectives rained upon the

heads of Clay and Jackson and Adams on this day of patriotism. H. C. Edwards had just given the toast: "*Gen. Andrew Jackson: May he succeed in his undertaking, and at last arrive at the head of the American government.*" And John Chambers, mindful of one of the many acts for which Jackson bore the contumely of his opponents, responded "*The six West Tennessee militiamen — murdered at Mobile in the year 1815, on a charge of mutiny and desertion. May their execution be the last triumph of military despotism over the lives of American citizens.*"¹¹²

It was an epitome of the coming campaign. Each State fought with criminations and recriminations. In the State of Kentucky the feeling was highly intensified by local conditions. The men who, like Chambers, had followed the fortunes of the Anti-Relief and Old Court Party turned their support to the National Republicans and John Quincy Adams; while Barry and Blair and Amos Kendall and the other New Court men waged as valiant a combat for Old Hickory.

In the latter part of the year 1827 the candidacy of William T. Barry for the Governorship of the State was announced in the Democratic papers. Shortly afterwards a convention of

National Republicans (in which John Chambers and four others represented Mason County) met at Frankfort and nominated as their candidate Thomas Metcalfe.¹¹³ He was a man of humble birth, and from the fact that his early occupation was that of a stone mason he was given the sobriquet of "Old Stone Hammer". During the recent troubles in Kentucky, Metcalfe had been a strong Old Court man. He had for ten years served as a Representative in Congress for that district which included Mason County, and his new candidacy opened the field for Congressional aspirants.

The Maysville Eagle for March 5, 1828, contained an address to Chambers signed "*Many Voters*", asking if he would consent to run for the office. He replied in the next issue that he understood that the successor of Metcalfe was to be nominated by district convention. He urged them to leave the matter to the decision of that body and by all means to avoid disunion in the party. In the same issue, and immediately following the reply of Chambers, was a call made upon Adam Beatty, which well exemplified the need of the advice of Chambers to unite on one man. Beatty answered by a similar request that they leave it to the decision of the district convention. The convention met on May

2 at the Lower Blue Licks in Nicholas County, and John Chambers received the nomination for the vacant seat in Congress. Nicholas Coleman was selected as the Jacksonian candidate, and by early summer the campaign was in full progress.¹¹⁴

There was animation in every phase of the struggle in Kentucky. The State election occurred in August, and Metcalfe was successful over Barry by a very small majority.¹¹⁵ Chambers was elected as his successor in Congress with a good margin.¹¹⁶ The success of Metcalfe must be regarded as a final victory of the Old Court Party rather than an index of party sentiment in the State, for in the November election Jackson was given a majority of about eight thousand votes over Adams.¹¹⁷

It was on December 1, 1828, that John Chambers took his seat in the House of Representatives at Washington, D. C., for the short session of the Twentieth Congress. In the three ensuing months he enjoyed his first experience in national politics. The *Congressional Debates* for this session contain no speech by him and it is probable that his prominence in the House was not great. It was the last session in the Presidential term of John Quincy Adams and was subject to all the peculiarities that pre-

vail when the incumbents of office look forward not only to a change in administration but to a change in the party in power.

A letter written toward the close of the session by Chambers to his friend John J. Crittenden contains some interesting comments upon the politics of the day. Crittenden had been nominated by President Adams during the last two months of his term for the position of Justice of the United States Supreme Court,¹¹⁸ and a Democratic Senate resolved not to act upon the nomination until the session was over and the new administration was in power. The status of the nomination is the occasion of the letter from Chambers. After he expresses doubts as to the confirmation of Crittenden's appointment he remarks: "We are all doing worse than nothing here, and I am tired to death of it. We have a rumor that General Jackson is dead, but it is not credited, and I hope it is not true; I would rather trust him than Calhoun! Mr. Clay is quite unwell. 'The Old Quill', however, is in perfect health, and keeps the machinery in motion, says, 'How do, sir?' to everybody that calls on him and gives his friends a very cordial pump-handle shake of the hand."¹¹⁹

Meanwhile Mrs. Chambers remained at home

taking care of Cedar Hill and the children. On December 15th, in answer to a letter that must have been written soon after her husband's arrival in Washington, she wrote :

I am afraid my Dear Husband from your description of the kind of life you live that you might almost be called a solitaire. I should be much more pleased to hear you were mixing with the gay multitude and enjoying all the amusements the city affords, more particularly while we are going on so comfortably at home, attend all the public places of amusement and tell us all about the most admired Belles and Beaux, and all the fashionable follies as they rise to your view. I have such unbounded confidence in my beloved husband that I am not afraid of his engaging in any that can militate against his health or my happiness in any sense of the word.¹²⁰

Her injunctions must have been diligently obeyed for on February 3, 1830, she writes in the following strain :

Your last letter was a very pleasant one my beloved Husband. At the same time it set me to wondering what time you could possibly have for attending to the affairs of the nation from your description of the round of visiting you are engaged in, you must necessarily be up the greater part of the night, and consequently feel very unlike Business the next day. You must tell me how you manage these things. I frequently, when thinking of you fear that you will become so fond of amusement that you will not be

happy at home and that idea is very painful, at the same time I am delighted that your occupations are so diversified, as to make time swift.¹²¹

In December she wrote of the fear of an insurrection of blacks in the neighborhood and mentioned a number of experiences of an incendiary nature in which negro servants were suspected.¹²² But the winter passed safely; and soon after the inauguration of Andrew Jackson, Chambers returned to the family at Cedar Hill, and declining reelection to Congress took up once more the life of a Kentucky lawyer.¹²³

It was not long, however, before he found himself again called to the performance of legislative duties. In the summer of 1830 he was chosen as a Representative in the Kentucky legislature. The chief reason given in the call which appeared in *The Maysville Eagle* for the candidacy of Chambers was the need of some able man to push forward in the State legislature the interests of the Maysville Pike.¹²⁴ A bill for the Federal aid of this road had passed Congress during the early months of 1830 and had been defeated by the veto of President Jackson.¹²⁵

In this session of 1830-1831 Chambers occupied a place, as in both former sessions, on the Committee on Courts of Justice. He was also

a member of the Committees on Internal Improvements and on Ways and Means.¹²⁶

The macadamizing and improvement of the Maysville Pike through Washington, Paris, and Lexington was an undertaking which meant much to the people of Kentucky. Since Jackson with his antipathy for internal improvements had come into possession of the executive veto, the only remaining hope was in State aid. Early in the session Chambers introduced in the House a resolution instructing the Committee on Internal Improvements to inquire into the expediency of appropriating the funds invested in the stock of the Bank of Kentucky and a portion of the stock of the Bank of the Commonwealth for the construction of works of internal improvement, and the authorizing of a loan of money in anticipation of these funds to aid in the work. The resolution was adopted¹²⁷ and in pursuance thereof J. T. Morehead, Chairman of the Committee on Internal Improvements, made an extended report on January 3, 1831.¹²⁸ He urged the establishment of a system of internal improvements comparable to that of Ohio, and recommended the negotiation of a loan based on the stock of the two banks for the purpose of aiding the Maysville Turnpike and other roads in the State.

About this time it was decided to begin operations in the Senate and a bill was introduced in that body by Robert Taylor of Mason County.¹²⁹ It authorized the Governor to subscribe for five hundred shares, in behalf of the Commonwealth, in the stock of the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Road Company and appropriated at once a sufficient sum to pay the subscribed amount. The bill received a favorable vote in the Senate; on January 14, 1831, "after a violent contest"¹³⁰ it passed the House; and on the day following was approved by the Governor.¹³¹

Another bill which agitated this session of the legislature was one to prevent more effectually the importation of slaves. It evidenced the desire on the part of many in Kentucky to accomplish the gradual extinction or at least the prevention of further increase of slavery in the State — a movement which had many years before enlisted the support of Henry Clay and others. A law had been approved on February 8, 1815, prohibiting under penalty of a heavy fine the importation of slaves except by sojourners and immigrants who took oath that they were bringing them for use and not for sale.¹³² The law had not been enforced, however, because no one cared to inform upon the

offenders.¹³³ It was now proposed to enact a law in which the penalties and mode of enforcement would be such as to render it of practical effect. The bill, however, failed to receive the requisite majority. Chambers opposed the measure and upon its final consideration voted against it.¹³⁴

The session closed at the end of six weeks. The *Commentator* of Frankfort complained that although no session in many years had been so short, the business accomplished could have been done in one week instead of six. No bill to increase the revenue had been passed; there had been no election of United States Senator although sixteen ballots had been taken; and the total of legislation was made up largely of private acts.¹³⁵

John Chambers was reelected to his position in the House of 1831,¹³⁶ and at the ensuing session was made chairman of the Committee on Internal Improvements. He was very active in favoring the State aid of works of internal improvement. He supported a bill authorizing an additional subscription of five hundred shares for the Maysville, Washington, Paris, and Lexington Turnpike Road Company but it failed of passage.¹³⁷ The election of United States Senator again came up and Chambers cast his

ballot in favor of Henry Clay who was successful against Richard M. Johnson.¹³⁸

The failure in the preceding session of the attempt to prevent the importation of slaves did not entirely discourage its adherents and much time was spent in the session of 1831 in discussing the best mode of accomplishing the purpose. It seems to have been rather generally agreed that the increase of slaves was an evil, but there was considerable disagreement as to the proper method of checking such increase.¹³⁹ The bill now before the legislature prohibited the importation of slaves for merchandise and declared all slaves brought illegally into the State free after June 1, 1832. It also provided that slaves freed as a consequence of the act must leave the Commonwealth within six months.¹⁴⁰ Objections were made to the law because it provided for the emancipation of the slaves without compensating the owner and because it turned loose upon neighboring States the free negroes who were so cordially hated in all slave-holding regions.¹⁴¹ The record of votes in the House *Journal* shows Chambers to have been a constant opponent of the measure.¹⁴² It passed the House by a vote of 49 to 48,¹⁴³ but failed to become a law. A year later, however, a bill was passed embodying the policy

of the law of 1815 — the imposition of a heavy fine upon importers — but rendering it effective by making the prosecuting attorneys responsible for the enforcement of the law and turning over to them a fee of twenty per cent of all amounts collected.¹⁴⁴

The session ended on December 23rd, in time for the members to reach home for Christmas. Chambers refused to be a candidate for re-election and also declined, during the year 1832, an offer of a position on the Court of Appeals of Kentucky.¹⁴⁵

In this same year, 1832, on the eleventh day of November, Mrs. Hannah Taylor Chambers died after a sickness of two weeks.¹⁴⁶ Less than a fortnight had passed since the twenty-fifth anniversary of their wedding; and the quarter of a century of their married life had been full of happiness. Chambers lived the remaining score of years bravely and busily, but the sense of his loss made time drag heavily. He was a man of rather stern and dignified mien, but with a heart full of warmth and affection; and in his motherless children he now found a great source of comfort in his sorrows. There were eleven of them now — only three of whom had reached maturity — and with them he spent the next few years of his life

while he busied himself in the practice of law.¹⁴⁷ Particularly was he fond of little Lucretia, the baby of the family, whom he affectionately called Cushion or Cush.¹⁴⁸

During the two years following his wife's death the oldest unmarried daughter, Matilda, seems to have taken her mother's place in the home. In February of 1835, however, she was married to Charles Scott Brent and removed to Paris in Bourbon County.¹⁴⁹ Her father, writing to her a few days after her departure, said: "I will not undertake to describe to you the state of mind under which I suffered the day you left me. I little thought I could have felt such a privation so severely, for I had concluded that my feelings had been so often and intensely tried on the rock of misery that they had become indurated. I was mistaken however and even now after almost a week has elapsed I would rather think of anything else than of the separation from the beloved child whose attention to me and her brothers and sisters has for upwards of two years supplied to us as far [as] possible a loss of which I never think but with uncontrollable anguish".

In the same letter he said of Lucretia: "the poor little thing cried bitterly on thursday night about midnight and when I inquired what was

the matter she answered — ‘I want to see sister Tilley’ and on being told that you would soon come home she fell asleep again immediately and left me to finish the scene by doing as she had done.’”¹⁵⁰ Soon after the departure of Matilda her older sister Hannah with her husband Dr. John W. Henry came to Cedar Hill to make their home and care for the younger children.

VIII

CONGRESSMAN FROM KENTUCKY

It was only poor health that prevented John Chambers from rounding out his professional career by a term on the bench of the Court of Appeals of Kentucky. The position which he had declined in 1832 came to him once more in February of 1835 when Governor Morehead nominated him for a position on the bench of Kentucky's highest court. The nomination was unanimously confirmed by the Senate; but his physical condition at this time was such as to forbid the undertaking of so sedentary an occupation, and in March he resigned the office without having taken his seat.¹⁵¹

It seems that the restoration of his health demanded the exercise and excitement of a canvass for a seat in Congress; and so in the month following his resignation from the Court of Appeals he entered the field as a candidate for the honor of representing his district at the National capital.¹⁵² In the early part of the campaign various candidates for Whig support offered

themselves or were brought forward by their friends. Among these were George W. Williams and John Rootes Thornton of Bourbon County, and Adam Beatty of Mason County.¹⁵³ One by one, however, all these candidates withdrew until Williams and Chambers alone were before the people. After some newspaper criticism of his rather lukewarm advocacy of the United States Bank, Williams finally withdrew upon the appearance of a Democratic candidate in the person of William Tanner, editor of the *Maysville Monitor*.¹⁵⁴

In August, 1835, the election occurred and Chambers was chosen, polling over twice as many votes as the opposing candidate.¹⁵⁵ The fall months of 1835 were rife with political meetings. William Henry Harrison was in the field as the Whig candidate for the Presidency and everywhere were celebrations of the battle of Tippecanoe and the battle of the Thames. The little tin god of war strode triumphant in Whig politics and the man with battle-scars or a faded uniform found them of political advantage. The part played by Chambers in the battle of the Thames made him an interesting speaker at campaign meetings and the candidacy of his former chief received his warm and active support.¹⁵⁶

In the National House of Representatives the career of John Chambers is not a striking one. He served during four regular and one extra sessions, in each of which the Whigs were in a minority. He took his part in the routine of the opposition, persistently combated the financial measures of Jackson and his coadjutors, upheld with vigor and ability the interests of the State he represented, and occasionally assisted in the wearying tactics of the minority filibuster.

The year 1835 had witnessed a complete suspension of diplomatic relations between the United States and France, arising from the failure of the French government to pay the annual installments due to this country by agreement in the treaty of 1831. An outspoken message by President Jackson to Congress on the subject of the negligence of the French Chambers provoked intense feeling in France which found an echo on this side of the water.¹⁵⁷ In the first session of the Twenty-fourth Congress a resolution was introduced into the House instructing the Naval Committee to inquire into the expediency of increasing the navy.¹⁵⁸ This brought on a debate of some animation in which the prospects of war were commented on and the resolution was charged with being the commencement of a series of war measures.

John Chambers was one of a minority of eighteen who voted against the resolution. He was criticised for his vote by some of the newspapers of his constituency; but defended his action upon the ground that the President had made no further communication as to the status of affairs with France and there was no certainty that the present relations warranted such a resolution. War measures should be taken, not upon the initiative of the Naval Committee, but upon information from the Executive who was responsible for the foreign negotiations and from the Secretary of the Navy as to the needs of that Department. He had no doubt, he said, of the necessity of increasing the naval resources of the country, but he wished to act understandingly.¹⁵⁹

Less than a week after the resolution passed the House the President sent to Congress a special message, laying before them the recent communications between the two countries and urging an increase of the navy.¹⁶⁰ At this point, however, Great Britain offered to mediate and matters were amicably settled.

In his opposition to what was termed the New York Relief Bill favorable comment was received by John Chambers from the home papers. In consequence of the sufferings due

to the recent disastrous fire in New York City a bill was brought in for the relief of that stricken population. It was opposed by Chambers on the ground that it did not distinguish properly between the real sufferers and those who were attempting to profit by the woes of others.¹⁶¹ An insinuation of C. C. Cambreleng, the Representative from New York City, to the effect that the West owed support to the measure because of services previously rendered to that section met with an indignant protest from Chambers. No State, he said, had any claim on the gratitude of Kentucky. She did not envy to her sister States any aid from the Federal government; she only demanded a just and equal share of the surplus revenues which she had not received. "Heretofore", he continued, "Kentucky had nothing national but the blood of her gallant sons. When that was required for the great purpose of patriotic defense, it was poured out freely, aye, lavishly upon the field of battle. Her roads and rivers were never national and for all practical purposes, as far as the favors of government were concerned, she might as well be excluded from the confederacy."¹⁶²

The account of two of his speeches upon this subject appears in *The Maysville Eagle*, telling

of the warm commendation they evoked from Representatives Wise, Peyton, and others of the opposition.¹⁶³ Chambers himself in a letter to his niece, Lucretia Stull, laughed at her compliments and remarked: "The puffings about my speech which you have read in the *Eagle*, were the idle compliments of some letter writers here under the influence of some very partial friends on the floor of Congress among whom are the Virginia & Tennessee 'game chickens', Wise and Peyton who have taken it into their heads to be extravagantly fond of 'the old Kentuckian' ".¹⁶⁴

"I do want to get home very very much", he wrote to Cedar Hill; and the thought of the good things of his own farm brought out the injunction, "leave some good Bacon for me when I get home for I am heartily tired of fish & oyster and ducks & pudding & pastry but above all I *long* for a little milk".¹⁶⁵ He was always a home-loving individual, and the mental picture of Cedar Hill and the children awaiting the return of their only parent must have been very strong and constant with him. Nevertheless, when the Congressional elections recurred Chambers appeared in the field and was re-elected by a large majority.¹⁶⁶

Shortly after the August election of 1837 he

returned to Washington, D. C., for the extra session called by President Van Buren to take measures for the betterment of the financial condition. The session convened in September and lasted somewhat more than a month. Chambers was a part of a vigorous Whig minority which fought in vain against the acts withholding the fourth installment of the public deposits and providing for an issue of Treasury notes, but which succeeded in tabling in the House and defeating the Sub-Treasury Bill.¹⁶⁷

The bank question in particular aroused Chambers's interest. In a speech before his constituents he handled with uncompromising severity the policy of the administration in selecting certain banks for the location of deposits, stimulating them to large accommodations and excessive issues and subsequently attempting to crush them by forcing the payment of deposits in gold or silver.¹⁶⁸ On the floor of the House he remarked, apropos of the recall of money from the deposit banks, that the government stood in the same relation to the banks as the Devil did to the human race: he first tempted them to disobedience, and then ruined them. So the government had encouraged the banks to increase their circulation, and was now seeking their ruin.¹⁶⁹

Soon after the adjournment of the extra session a dinner was given at Wheeling, Virginia, to Senators Clay and Crittenden, at which a considerable number of Representatives from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio were present as invited guests. Clay and Crittenden responded to addresses, and Chambers, on behalf of the delegations from the three States, made what was termed "a forcible and eloquent speech".¹⁷⁰

Back of the shifting issues over which men contended in the decades that preceded the War for the Union lay always the dread subject of slavery. For the most part men avoided it as a dangerous topic of discussion, but with each passing year it obtruded itself more and more frequently into the columns of the press, the public platform, and the halls of Congress. In the thirties the question of annexing Texas, of prohibiting slavery in Arkansas and the District of Columbia, and of the reception of anti-slavery petitions in Congress gave ample occasion for the most stirring agitation of the mooted problem.

Chambers was himself a slave owner; he represented a slave-holding State, and it is only natural that his alignment should be with the South. Yet it was with the conservative rather than the ultra Southern faction that he cast his

lot. Some years before he had remarked to Crittenden that he would rather trust Jackson than Calhoun.¹⁷¹ He had no sympathy with nullification and believed with Clay in the policy of conciliation for the sake of preserving the Union.

In respect to the annexation of Texas his attitude was explicitly stated in a speech to his constituents late in the fall of 1837. He alluded to the subject as one "rife with materials the most exciting and inflam[m]atory." He believed that Texas would never be annexed without a severance of the Union. "The wild and mania-stricken abolitionists of the North", he said, "were playing into the hands of ambitious and designing disorganizers of the South". In his pessimism he was constrained to believe "That the admission of Texas was to be urged by certain politicians of the South with reckless and persevering obstinacy, and would be made a pretext by which to dissolve the Union and rear up a great Southern confederacy." He called upon the patriotic and conservative spirits of Kentucky to avert such a calamity, "to interpose and present a nucleus around which the sound and uncontaminated portions of the Union might rally. Kentucky had twice stilled the gathering tempest of civil strife. It was a

son of Kentucky who stepped forth as the great Mediator of the Missouri question. And it was the same son of Kentucky, who in the evil hour of Nullification and Southern revolt, had quelled the embryo elements of intestine war.''¹⁷²

Chambers could not know that the same man who had fathered these two compromises would more than a dozen years later bring forth a final desperate attempt to pacify the sectional strife and still less could he realize of how little permanent effect Clay's last act would be in averting the clash of arms.

The question of the reception and disposition of slavery petitions was one that harassed Congress for many years. Petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia became so frequent in the first session of the Twenty-fourth Congress that the House finally passed the Pinckney Resolutions in May, 1836, providing that all petitions, memorials, etc., relating to slavery should without being printed or referred, be laid on the table, and no further action be taken on them.¹⁷³ Against this and subsequent gag resolutions, which with justice he claimed were in violation of the constitutional guarantee of the right of petition, John Quincy Adams waged constant and inveterate war with a vigor that made the last days of the

“Old Man Eloquent” the most brilliant of his remarkable life.¹⁷⁴

In each of the four regular sessions during which Chambers was a member of Congress resolutions of this nature passed the House, and in each case, though present when the resolutions came up for final consideration, he refused to vote.¹⁷⁵ Chambers was not a man of vague principles, nor was he one who hesitated to express them. His entire Congressional record shows clearly that he was opposed to the slavery petitions and opposed to the meddling by Congress with the institution of slavery in the District of Columbia. It is probable, if one may judge from his vote on preliminary and similar questions and from a few incidental remarks that find their way into the *Journal* and *Globe*, that he belonged to a small class who believed with Wise of Virginia that the petitions should not even be received and who refused to vote for resolutions which by providing for their disposition implied the right to receive them.¹⁷⁶

It is interesting to note in this connection that between the second and third sessions of the Twenty-fifth Congress Chambers was engaged in a professional capacity to defend an abolitionist charged with aiding in the escape

from Kentucky of a number of slaves. In the fall of 1838, Mason County was deeply stirred over the trial of John B. Mahan, indicted for the abduction of slaves belonging to William Greathouse. Mahan was a tall, raw boned farmer and Methodist minister of Ohio — a stalwart abolitionist and a diligent agent for the underground railroad.¹⁷⁷ In the year 1838, fifteen slaves, including two belonging to William Greathouse of Kentucky, passed through his hands on their way north to freedom. Soon afterwards he was apprehended in Ohio, taken to Kentucky upon a requisition of the Governor of that State on Governor Vance of Ohio, and lodged in the Mason County jail.¹⁷⁸

For several months he lay in prison while excitement rose to a high pitch on both sides of the river. In Ohio the granting of the requisition by Vance was made an issue in the fall campaign by the abolitionists, with the result that Governor Vance was defeated for reëlection.¹⁷⁹ On the south side of the river the fear of losing slaves by kidnapping aroused consternation and the desire to administer swift judgment upon Mahan.

The case came to trial on Tuesday, November 13, and lasted six days. The prosecution was conducted by four prominent attorneys of the

county. The defense of Mahan was undertaken by a Cincinnati attorney named Vaughan and by John Chambers and his son, Francis Taylor Chambers.¹⁸⁰ During the taking of testimony a witness swore that Mahan had told him that, for the purpose of forwarding runaway slaves, there was a chain reaching from Kentucky to Canada, and that the slaves of Greathouse had been among those recently assisted by him.¹⁸¹ The defense moved that the Judge exclude the testimony from the consideration of the jury as wholly insufficient and incompetent to prove the offense charged in the indictment, or that the Judge instruct the jury that, in the absence of proof that the offense was committed by the prisoner in Mason County, he was not legally subject to conviction. It seemed clearly evident that Mahan had not for many years been in Kentucky; and, in his charge to the jury, Judge Walker Reid instructed them to find for the prisoner if it appeared from the evidence that the crime was not committed in Mason County. After a few minutes retirement the jury brought in a verdict of *not guilty*.¹⁸²

It should not of course be gathered from the espousal by Chambers of the cause of Mahan that he had any sympathy for abolitionism. He did not. He was both a believer and a partici-

pant in the institution of slavery. In the fall of 1840 at a meeting of the citizens of Mason County, resolutions offered by Chambers were passed, urging the importance of forming an association of the slave owners in Mason and the adjoining counties for the better security of their slave property.¹⁸³

The work of John Chambers in Congress was probably of more consequence in the performance of committee duty than in the exercise of the powers of debate upon the floor. In each of the five sessions which he spent in Congress, he was a member of the Committee of Claims, and at the opening of the session of 1838-1839 he succeeded the veteran Elisha Whittlesey of Ohio as chairman.¹⁸⁴ Indefatigable persistence was a marked characteristic of Chambers, and he performed with untiring devotion the routine duties of this office.

The *Baltimore Patriot* said of him: "It is but just to Mr. Chambers . . . to say, that at no previous short session has there been a greater amount of business done in this committee nor a greater number of bills for the benefit of claimants on the justice of the government acted upon than at the present."¹⁸⁵

In another paper we find from the pen of a correspondent the following tribute: "The

writer of this has often noted him at the midnight hour, when others were asleep or seeking amusement, patiently toiling over a mass of papers, carefully separating the fair from the fraudulent claim — anxiously endeavoring to protect the Treasury from illegal and exorbitant demands, and at the same time to do prompt and full justice to poor and meritorious petitioners.’’¹⁸⁶

IX

THE LOG CABIN CAMPAIGN

WHEN the fourth day of March, 1839, brought to a termination the final session of the Twenty-fifth Congress, John Chambers looked back over the busy decade given up so largely to legislative affairs and with a feeling of relief contemplated retirement from active politics. In January he had declined reëlection, and now he proposed to remain with his family in Kentucky and resume the practice of law.¹⁸⁷

For an avocation it appears that he turned to the peaceful pastime of silk culture. A widespread interest seems to have been prevalent in Kentucky at this time in the development of the silk industry. In July a meeting at Washington appointed Chambers and Henry Reeder as delegates to the State Silk Convention at Lexington; and in September a Mason County Silk Society was organized with John Chambers as president.¹⁸⁸ But the industry did not take very deep root in the Commonwealth. Perhaps the State which had been founded by men in linsey-

woolsey and buckskin still cared little for an occupation that savored so much of aristocracy as did the manufacture of silk. It may be that those who, like Chambers, threw themselves with such vigor into the log cabin and hard cider campaign of 1840, found the culture of silk inconsistent with their outcry against the finery of Martin Van Buren. At all events the industry did not become a formidable rival of tobacco and hemp.

While Chambers was attending silk conventions his companions who were still in the field of politics were looking about for a candidate for Governor; and among the names mentioned in the forecasts of the Harrodsburg Convention was that of John Chambers. A writer in *The Maysville Eagle*, commenting on the qualifications of Chambers, emphasized his active support of the constitution and laws during the stirring times of the relief legislation and the struggle over the Court of Appeals.¹⁸⁹ A contributor to another paper laid stress on the varied experience of the Old Kentuckian and his faithful and efficient work as chairman of the Committee of Claims, adding that he "had proof, in his attention to the sick, and generous sympathy for the afflicted; that Major Chambers possesses in an unusual degree, those kind,

warm and benevolent affections which ennoble human nature, and without which no one is to be trusted.”¹⁹⁰ No evidence is forthcoming, however, to the effect that Chambers had lost his desire for retirement from the political arena, and at the Harrodsburg Convention on August 26, 1839, his name was not brought forward.¹⁹¹ Robert P. Letcher was nominated and elected; while Garrett Davis was chosen to fill the seat made vacant by the withdrawal of Chambers.¹⁹²

Nevertheless the way out of politics is often more difficult to find than the way in, and so it was many years before there came to John Chambers actual surcease from political labors. At this particular time the tie that held him to the paths of politics was that well knit bond of affection for his veteran chieftain of the battle of the Thames. As the unfortunate administration of Martin Van Buren drew to a close it became increasingly evident that only through a combination of the various factions of the Opposition could the defeat of the Administration be accomplished in the national election of 1840. Among those who were opposed to the re-election of the Wizard of Kinderhook were the Whigs, with their diverse personal predilections for Harrison, Clay, or Webster; the Anti-

Masons, the Abolitionists, and the Democrats who had followed the lead of Old Hickory but found only disappointment in his chosen successor. The question now was: who could win the united support of these heterogeneous elements?

The process of elimination first of all dropped Webster which left the choice to the two men of the West — Henry Clay and William Henry Harrison. But Clay being a Mason could not command the Anti-Masonic vote; and, in a recent speech he had alienated himself from the support of the Abolitionists.¹⁹³ Moreover, General Harrison had received and accepted the nomination of the Anti-Masonic party;¹⁹⁴ and in December, 1839, the National Convention of the Whig party at Harrisburg wisely made the veteran soldier of Ohio their standard bearer.¹⁹⁵ The Democrats rallied to the support of Martin Van Buren and there followed the most exciting presidential campaign that the country had yet witnessed.

A careless remark to the effect that General Harrison would concern himself no longer with presidential aspirations if he were possessed of a log cabin and plenty of hard cider, gave to the Whigs a rallying cry which swept from end to end of the country.¹⁹⁶ Effective popular

comparisons were drawn between the simple and honest democracy of the log cabin and hard cider candidate and the gold and silver and liveried servants of the aristocratic Van Buren. This hypnotic suggestion, together with that ever potent worship of a military hero, served to bind together in Harrison's support a coalition that had neither well-defined party principles nor vestige of party platform.

Especially in the West did the popular fervor run high. From the Alleghanies to the Mississippi reigned a continuous Harrison carnival wherein the people amidst campaign songs, bonfires, torchlight processions, and immense barbecues worked themselves into a frenzy of enthusiasm which the sneers of the Democrats served but to inflame.

John Chambers, though a staunch political and personal friend of Henry Clay,¹⁹⁷ was heart and soul in sympathy with the candidacy of Old Tippecanoe. The circulation of reports derogatory to the character and military abilities of General Harrison brought Charles S. Todd and John Chambers and others who had fought with him in the War of 1812 into the field in an immediate and vigorous crusade in his defense.¹⁹⁸

Turning from his coveted retirement Chambers plunged without hesitation into a lengthy

and exciting political campaign. He was well fitted for effective campaigning. From his forty years of experience he was widely and favorably known. He was a convincing speaker, and his personal friendship for and military connection with General Harrison gave an added eloquence to his words. Many were the speeches he delivered during the winter following Harrison's nomination. In March he presided over a meeting at the court-house in Washington, which organized a Mason Central Tippecanoe Club.¹⁹⁹ A week later a constitution was adopted and provisions made for weekly meetings until the thirteenth of the next month and for monthly meetings thereafter.²⁰⁰ The thirteenth of April was the date set for a grand Whig celebration at Washington. Toward the last of March delegates from the various Tippecanoe clubs of Mason County met at Washington with John Chambers in the chair. Detailed arrangements were made for bands, processions, speakers and all the paraphernalia requisite for a successful Whig meeting.²⁰¹

The appointed day fell on a Monday. Day-break found people already on their way. The whole Whig portion of the county turned out, and strangers came by boat to Maysville from Louisville, Cincinnati, Covington, Portsmouth,

and all the other towns along the Ohio River. At Maysville they formed a procession, and led on by the inspiring strains of the Cincinnati Band playing the popular campaign tunes the Maysville Tippecanoe Club with its host of followers marched out of town and up the old road toward Washington. Arriving at the little town on the Pike they met other processions from the inland regions, and all joined in one great parade in front of the public square. At ten o'clock they marched to the sound of music to the ground prepared for the exercises. The speakers' stand was on a low piece of pasture ground surrounded by rising slopes where the audience assembled. In front of the stand were between five and eight hundred old soldiers. There were delegates from the neighboring counties and from all over Kentucky, perhaps ten or twelve thousand in all. Everywhere were buckeye branches and waving banners and log cabins.

The exercises began with a welcome to the soldiers, followed by a presentation of resolutions by John A. McClung. John Chambers then delivered a speech, and Marshall Key read the resolutions of the Harrisburg Convention nominating Harrison. More speeches followed. Morehead, Metcalfe, Menefee, Richard Doug-

lass of Ohio, and others paid their homage to the famous victor of Tippecanoe and the Thames. From three different stands at the same time speakers told the gathered crowds of the rugged virtues of Harrison and hurled invectives at the artful Van Buren.

But the speeches were not all that had been prepared for the delectation of the multitude. Perhaps they alone would not have attracted a gathering of such proportions. There followed a banquet. Tables arranged in a hollow square about the large log cabin of the Central Tippecanoe Club were heavily loaded with all manner of things good to eat. Near by — and perhaps not least acceptable — was the large table piled with barrels and hogsheads of hard cider, the beverage of the campaign. And when the salute of a hundred guns was fired two large wreaths of smoke, disengaging themselves, rose and floated high above the heads of the observant Whigs until just over the speaker's stand they dispersed — an omen of the triumph of the two Whig candidates. At least so the enthusiastic followers of the old man of battles told themselves as they finally took their leave of the festive scene.²⁰²

From the day of this celebration Chambers was a busy man. In meetings at home and in

the surrounding regions he charged the administration with the responsibility for the financial tribulations and with corrupt practices, protested against the encroachment of the executive upon the legislative department, and sounded the cry for Harrison and reform. Every month saw greater enthusiasm in the West and more frequent Whig meetings.

In September he joined a party of fellow Whigs and took the steamer *Transit* up the river on the way to a big celebration at Chillicothe, Ohio. At Portsmouth the party received ample reënforcements; and as the five boats — one filled with ladies and four with the delegations from Portsmouth and Kentucky — made ready to ascend the Scioto, speeches were delivered by Ex-Governors Morehead and Wicliffe. At eight o'clock on the morning of Thursday, September 17, they arrived at Chillicothe and mingled with the thousands who awaited the arrival of General Harrison. About ten thirty a shout went up from the crowd gathered near the platform of the corner of Madeira's Hotel that Old Tip was coming. The rain came down in a deluge while the speaking progressed, but what cared the party that rallied to the standard of log cabin and hard cider. Again in the afternoon there was speech-mak-

ing at a sugar grove near by. For nearly two hours Harrison spoke, and was followed by John Chambers and Charles S. Todd.

The exercises continued on the day following when Harrison was presented with a cane from the battlefield of Tippecanoe. As the Kentucky delegation was about to take its leave, a meeting was held at which resolutions of thanks to the people of Chillicothe were passed. Chambers acted as chairman and Lewis Collins, the editor of *The Maysville Eagle* and Kentucky's pioneer historian, served as secretary.²⁰³

But perhaps the biggest celebration was the Miami Valley convention that took place at Dayton, Ohio. Here was gathered, so said the Whigs, a crowd of one hundred thousand cheering enthusiasts. General Harrison spoke for about an hour of the "great and good cause". Colonel Christie of New Orleans, and John Chambers of Kentucky also appeared and addressed the ten acres of people. The speech of the latter (if we may trust the enthusiastic judgment of the correspondent of *Niles' Register*) was "enlivened by frequent sallies of real humor. He gave a narrative of the battle of the Thames, which he should be induced to write out for publication." Handling Colonel

R. M. Johnson with consideration because of his military services, "he took hold of the great 'petticoat hero,' Senator Allen, and held him up before the searching fire of his sarcasm and rebuke, turning him first this way and then that, basting him now here and now there, as the blisters were seen to rise upon his epidermis, very much as a log-cabin house-wife manages a roasting goose, till every one present must have had a feeling of pity for the Ajax of locofocracy in Ohio."²⁰⁴

A liberty pole one hundred fifty feet high was raised at Washington on the twenty-sixth of September, and Chambers was one of the speakers. Less than a week later he was at Ripley, Ohio, where the Whigs of Ohio and Kentucky had gathered. Harrison was there and so were Todd and Wicliffe and Metcalfe, and they spoke to a crowd of perhaps twenty thousand. During the remarks of Harrison the clouds were very threatening, and Chambers, who followed him, had scarcely finished complimenting the ladies when the rain descended. Then Todd spoke and after the rain Wicliffe and Metcalfe were heard. Down at the river, meanwhile, F. T. Chambers and McClung were addressing crowds from the top of a ferry boat.²⁰⁵

Thus went the last weeks of that remarkable campaign. On Monday morning before the election a last grand rally was held in each precinct in Mason County, and at the one in Washington the voice of Chambers was heard in a final plea.²⁰⁶ Then for a few days the country held its breath and watched the bulletins. In Kentucky, Harrison defeated his opponent by a majority of nearly twenty-six thousand.

In the country at large a considerable majority for the Whig ticket convinced the unbelieving Democrats that the campaign which they had so derided had borne fruit in victory for the log cabin candidate; and an electoral vote of two hundred thirty-four to sixty brought an end, for the time being, to the long Democratic regime. The campaign on the part of the Whigs was, to say the least, not a dignified one. Lacking almost entirely in logical appeal, ostentatious in its display, ludicrous oftentimes in the extravagance of enthusiasm, it nevertheless was successful in welding together a variety of conflicting elements. It is probable, however, that such methods would scarcely have brought victory had not the country been ready and eager for a change from the calamitous four years that constituted the administration of Martin Van Buren.

X

WITH HARRISON IN THE WHITE HOUSE

WHEN William Henry Harrison was commanding General of the Army of the Northwest in the campaign of 1813 a young volunteer aid from Kentucky had won his gratitude by bringing order out of the confusion of his military papers. As he neared his seventieth year he ran for the Presidency of the United States, and in the Ohio Valley he found his former aid — now a man of sixty — making effective stump speeches in his behalf. He did not forget the service and when the year 1841 came in, and the time for the inaugural ceremony approached, he sent for John Chambers to accompany him to Washington.²⁰⁷ Charles S. Todd, at Harrison's request, also joined the party, and together with his two veteran aids the happy old man made his way to the Nation's capital.

On the morning of the ninth of February the President's party arrived at Washington "amidst a storm of snow and of people".²⁰⁸

A great crowd, headed by the Mayor of the city, escorted the President elect to the City Hall and cordially welcomed him.²⁰⁹ Harrison replied to the speeches and then withdrew to Gadsby's Hotel, which he made his headquarters until the fourth of March. Within a few days the new cabinet was announced.²¹⁰ Daniel Webster was to be Secretary of State, Thomas Ewing of Ohio, Secretary of the Treasury, John Bell, Secretary of War, G. E. Badger, Secretary of the Navy, John J. Crittenden, Attorney-General, and Francis Granger, Postmaster-General.

Harrison's inauguration was a scene of great popular demonstration. Tippecanoe clubs, militia companies, college students, and veterans of the War of 1812 joined in the procession. Log cabins and banners resurrected from the fall campaign were there in abundance. There was an entire lack of pageantry. Harrison was described as riding "on a mean-looking white horse, in the center of seven others, in a plain frock-coat or surtout, undistinguishable from any of those before, behind, or around him."²¹¹ From the east front of the Capitol he read his inaugural address — a rather cumbrous affair filled with references to the politics of the Romans.²¹² The address had been submitted to Daniel Webster and revised somewhat by

him to the sacrifice of many allusions to ancient history.²¹³

The hero of Tippecanoe now became master of the White House. It was reported that, in spite of the appropriations of the preceding administrations and the reputed luxury of Martin Van Buren's regime, Harrison found the Presidential home almost destitute of furniture and requested Chambers to purchase whatever was necessary, remarking that he would pay for it himself if Congress refused.²¹⁴ There were many things of importance to be thought of in the first few weeks of the new administration but it is probable that the matter which most fully absorbed the mind of the new Executive, forced itself into his leisure hours, and followed him into the wakeful night was the distribution of public offices. Long years had the Whigs been without participation in governmental office, and with the turn of the political wheel there appeared a clamorous army of applicants.

Chambers, who had agreed to act as the President's private secretary until the arrival of William Taylor (Harrison's son-in-law), was in a position to fully appreciate the unpleasant features of the situation.²¹⁵ Knowing that he was a strong personal friend of the

President and in a position of intimate influence, the office seekers came to him by the scores, pleading, cajoling, and demanding his help with the giver of political plums. To Chambers this was exceedingly irksome, and he soon began to wish to get away from the city of Washington and return to his private affairs. But the President objected. Chambers must stay in Washington and accept some office. He offered him the place of Treasurer, but Chambers declined the honor. The governorship of the Territory of Iowa was tendered to him, but this he also refused. The President, however, had set his heart on placing his old friend in office, and so Chambers at length agreed to accept the post in Iowa.²¹⁶

The position of Governor of the Territory of Iowa and Superintendent of Indian Affairs carried a salary of twenty-five hundred dollars.²¹⁷ Naturally there were others who desired the place. Out in Iowa, where Robert Lucas was holding his last few weeks of office, at least two had started for Washington to sue for the privilege of succeeding him.²¹⁸ Persistent rumors came to the Territory to the effect that General James Wilson of New Hampshire was to be appointed.²¹⁹ Finally news reached the frontier that Chambers had

received the position. The story was circulated that Webster had proposed the name of James Wilson and that the President had said that he had promised Chambers the appointment and if he wanted it he should have it. Webster insisted that his friend "tall Jim" must go to Iowa, whereupon Old Tippecanoe replied with emphasis that the Secretary of State might "go to the devil".²²⁰

Webster was not the only disappointed cabinet member. John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, though he had always been a close friend of Chambers, had made up his mind that the governorship of Iowa should go to his friend, Orlando Brown, an editor of Frankfort. "I am for you as governor", he wrote in January, "and I shall not, as lazy lawyers often do, *submit* the case; I shall *argue* that case; I shall try to give Chambers some other directions. We are old friends, and I can do as much with him as almost anybody else can".²²¹ To Robert P. Letcher, Governor of Kentucky, and a strong mutual friend, he wrote urging him to "write to 'Old Tip' a strong letter in favor of *Old Master*", as Brown was called.²²²

A picturesquely interesting character was Orlando Brown. To answer Crittenden's letter, he chose a time when his wife and the chil-

dren were attending a sleight of hand performance by Monsieur Adrien. "Your humble servant is left at home", he wrote, "to take care of the baby and to muse over his contemplated government of Iowa. Ah Sir, the way I would play Governor would be interesting. I would write a marvellous proper message and set most wholesome examples". He disclaimed the idea that emolument or reward were motives. The strong motive with him was the desire to leave his children a name "and not to have them designated as the *editor's sons*." ²²³

Letcher's letters also add to the illuminating glimpse of the candidate's character. "The young Govr. of Iowa", he wrote in the latter part of February, "is sitting up, in the corner, smoking one of my segars and reading the Edinburg Review. He looks very much like a Govr., and I am very particular in telling him how to act, when he gets to his Govnt, as much so, as ever Don Quixote was, in lecturing Sancho. I shall lecture him also, upon another point, and that is, to be *ready not* [to] take the office *if it should not come*." ²²⁴

In Washington, meanwhile, the round of events of the first month of the administration was varied and continuous. Daily did the vexing problem of patronage confront the old war

hero. He met the cabinet in frequent meetings to settle administrative policies. He canvassed the financial situation and issued a call for an extra session of Congress, and from time to time adapted himself to the social necessities of the Presidency. On the thirteenth of the month he entertained at dinner a party including Tyler and Calhoun, Webster and Clay, Crittenden and R. M. Johnson, and Chambers and Todd.²²⁵

The next day Crittenden burned the midnight oil to write a disappointed letter to Governor Letcher. "I have been laying my trains", he said, "and flattering myself that I was making progress toward the accomplishment of our object in making Orlando governor of Iowa. Chambers was to be located here. I was pleased to think *that* was fixed. To my surprise, in the last few days, I have understood that Chambers has changed his mind, and is to go to Iowa as Governor, and the indications now are that such will be the result. This is going a little ahead of what is generally known, and you must treat it as confidential; but disagreeable as it is, you must let Orlando know. I like Chambers, and cannot blame him, but he has disappointed me in two respects,—by not staying here himself, and interfering with my hopes for Orlando." ²²⁶

John Chambers was commissioned Governor of the Territory of Iowa by President Harrison on March 25, 1841.²²⁷ Two days later the President was seized with a chill and his doctors began a fight with pneumonia.²²⁸ For a little more than a week he struggled and suffered. On the second of April, Chambers and Todd informed those who inquired at the White House that the President was better;²²⁹ but on the third he became worse, and a half hour past midnight on the morning of Palm Sunday, April 4, the "kind old man" died. Chambers and Todd were with him at the last, and when life had departed Chambers reverently closed the eyes of his long time friend. The funeral took place on Wednesday, April 7. After remaining at the White House for a few days making private memoranda of the President's business for his son, and assisting the bereaved family in their preparations for departure,²³⁰ he set out for Kentucky to make ready for his new field of labor. In company with O. H. W. Stull,²³¹ who had been appointed Secretary of the Territory, he reached Maysville on the nineteenth of April, and proceeded at once to Cedar Hill.²³²

On a Monday morning, the third of May, 1841, a steamboat left Maysville with its prow turned

down the river toward the distant Territory of Iowa, and among the passengers was John Chambers.²³³ In the days when there were no steamboats and when the little port clinging to the outer edge of the Nation's growth bore the primitive name of Limestone, he had come there a boy of fourteen. Now, a man of past three score years, he was leaving a State large in population and in power to guide the uncertain ways of a western Territory — a handful of frontier communities strung along the west shore of the Father of Waters.

Somewhere on the Ohio bank, probably at Cincinnati, they stopped on the fifth of the month — long enough for Chambers to take the oath of office before John McLean, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. At Louisville he landed again and bought two new dresses to send home as presents to his daughters Mary and Laura. From there they passed on to St. Louis and up the Mississippi River. At six o'clock in the evening of May 12, 1841, they reached the town of Burlington.

XI

BEYOND THE MISSISSIPPI

As the steamboat which brought John Chambers to his new post neared the landing at Burlington the afternoon sun was fast dropping to the edge of the hills that formed the sky line back of the little pioneer community. The inhabitants of the town had not been entirely unaware of his approach. But the news had reached them tardily, and though the Whigs made instant plans to hire the ferry-boat "Shockoquon" and meet him on the river between Fort Madison and Burlington, they found the time too limited for such honors and regretfully gave them up.²⁸⁴ The wharf was well lined with citizens, however, as the steamboat came to its final moorings, and they gave to the new Executive a royal Whig reception.

On the bank of the river they began ceremonies at once. James W. Grimes, a sprightly young lawyer of twenty-four years of age, had been deputed to speak the welcoming word. Three years before Grimes had been one of a

committee to invite the newly arrived Governor Lucas to a public dinner in his honor, but during the administration of that stern old first Governor the two men had found many points of disagreement.²³⁵ Now the young Whig rejoiced to greet a Governor of his own party and his tongue was lavish in praise.

In the new Executive, he said, the people recognized one of the pioneers of the West, a veteran legislator of the chivalrous State of Kentucky, a leader in national councils, a champion of the Nation's rights in the second war for independence, but above all they rejoiced to behold in him one who enjoyed the unbounded confidence of their late venerated Chief Executive. He digressed long enough to eulogize Harrison, and then returned to his more immediate duty. "We bid you welcome", he said, "to the smiling prairies of Iowa; we welcome you to the hospitalities of our city, and to the warm affections of a generous and noble hearted people. We bid you welcome as the personal friend and companion in arms of the illustrious and lamented Harrison. We welcome you as our adopted fellow citizen, and as the Executive head of our Territory."²³⁶

The white haired man of sixty years listened gravely to the warm words of the sturdy fron-

tiersman, and replied quietly and with tact. He intended, he said, to identify himself with the interests and the prosperity of the Territory—to make it his future home and the home of his family. He would be a Hawkeye in spirit and truth, and in the discharge of official duties would try to do impartial justice to all. He urged that, as citizens of a Territory not participating in the government of the United States, they refrain from identifying themselves with the political differences and party interests existing between the States.

If he had not appreciated the fact before, the realization must now have presented itself forcibly to John Chambers that he had journeyed to the border line and that he had under his tutelage a raw young Commonwealth of pioneers. But he had, as Grimes intimated, been a pioneer himself. “In my first descent of the Ohio river,” he said, “the traces of civilization were ‘few and far between;’ a few log cabins were its only representatives in what now constitutes the populous and flourishing State of Ohio. I am not therefore unacquainted with the value of frontier population; it will always be found, as it always has been in our country, to include the industrious and enterprising from every part of the Union; and in

times of difficulty and danger more than an equal proportion of the bone and sinew of the nation.”²³⁷ When he had finished he was escorted to the National House, the new Governor leaning on the arm of Colonel Bennett; while James G. Edwards, the Whig editor of Burlington “brought up the rear with a small troop of the Gov’s negroes.”²³⁸

The dignified old man whom the citizens of the little river town greeted so stoutly had turned the pages to a new chapter in the story of his life, but it was the chapter that contained the climax of his career. He came in his late years to scenes like those he had known in his boyhood. As Governor of Iowa he found himself in charge of a pioneer commonwealth which had before it the same long process of development which he had witnessed for nearly half a century in the State of Kentucky.

Sixty years well lived and full of honors he had put behind him. The physical vigor that he had carried into the court room in his early professional career he no longer retained. The spirit which had flashed fire at the accusations of Barry and Rowan in the Desha trial burned more quietly now, but it was only subdued in the intense heat of a whiter flame. The three score years had whitened his hair and drawn

lines in his face. He had grown stouter in figure and slower in movement. His younger years and more active ways he had given to Kentucky — to her law courts and her army of defense, to her legislature and to her Congressional delegation. But there had come to him a maturity of judgment and ripeness of wisdom that time alone could bring. Now he had moved far from the land which for so many years had been moulding him for larger duties; and out to the West where two great rivers embraced a fertile soil and a scattered but hardy population he had come in the late afternoon of his life, strong with the strength of well-seasoned oak, tried by years of experience and ready to give to a rugged people the ripest fruition of his three score years.

The energetic spirit bred by his life in Kentucky was in no way lessened by the lengthening of his years. His mind was as keen as ever and more widely trained. His determination had suffered no diminution, though experience had mellowed it with more of tact. He applied to his new duties the same indomitable will and the same tireless and conscientious persistence. He hated shams and despised hypocrisy and denounced both as plainly as ever.

The long years of political life had perhaps

deepened his partisan feeling. He was a Whig in every fiber of his political being. But he did not fail to recognize that he was a citizen as well as a politician — a Governor as well as a Whig office-holder. Scarcely had he set foot upon the soil of Iowa before he was urging the citizens to avoid partisan strife; and throughout the four and a half years of his administration he made it his creed to keep his official duties clear from the embroilments of party politics.

Chambers was never a man of rugged health.²³⁹ A disease that affected his chest perhaps inclined him as he grew older to droop his head forward from its natural erect carriage. He was a large man, but probably not greatly above medium height.²⁴⁰ In personal appearance he was always most scrupulously neat, and would as soon have thought of missing his breakfast as of omitting his daily shave. Perhaps the happiest days of his life had been those early days when his wife Hannah dispensed hospitality at Cedar Hill. The years that followed her death were many and full of activities, but they could not blot out his grief. The lines tightened ever more closely about his lips and gave an air of stern dignity to his face; but through eyes that were calm and steadfast

he looked out upon his remaining years with unflinching courage.

One who came to the Territory of Iowa before Chambers, characterized the second Governor as "a sterling, sturdy, fresh-complexioned, honest gentleman from Kentucky."²⁴¹ Socially he was genial and courteous, and to the last degree kindly and generous to those in need. In his family life the wealth of warm and affectionate feeling showed itself most strongly. During the periods of absence from home he wrote to his children of his own doings and plans, and of his hopes for them. He encouraged, praised, and sometimes chided — all in a spirit of the most tender affection.²⁴² When he came to Iowa four of his children were still unmarried — Mary and Laura, who were nineteen and seventeen years old, and two boys, John James and Henry who were fifteen and thirteen.²⁴³ But when Chambers first went out to Iowa he took none of his immediate family with him, intending to find a suitable location and then have Mary and Laura come out and keep house for him.²⁴⁴ It was a year, however, before he gathered his children about him in the Territory of Iowa. Mr. J. O. Phister had accompanied him as private secretary and proved a very efficient assistant. Mr. O. H. W.

Stull, the Secretary of the Territory, had taken with him to the western Commonwealth his wife and, to the delight of the impressionable young men of the Territory, six "blooming daughters".²⁴⁵

Robert Lucas, the outgoing Governor, was at Iowa City when his successor arrived in the Territory; but before leaving Burlington he had given instructions that, should Governor Chambers arrive in his absence and present his credentials and oath of office, the seals and appurtenances of the Executive Department might be turned over to him.²⁴⁶ On the day following his landing at Burlington, May 13, 1841, Chambers complied with the necessary formalities and entered upon his service as Governor of the Territory of Iowa. A facetious young Democrat, describing this transition of administrations, wrote to Jesse Williams: "Col. Nealley has just given the Gov. the keys of the hog trough. The d—n *yankees* are coming in daily."²⁴⁷

Lucas being out of town, Chambers could not call upon him. He might and probably should have written to Iowa City notifying the former Executive of his arrival and assumption of office, but he did not do so, and it was more than a month before Lucas returned to Burlington.

Meantime Daniel Webster, the Secretary of State, had sent no notice whatever to Lucas of his removal or of the appointment of a successor. Indeed, it was not until June 17, nearly three months after the date of the new commission, that Lucas received from that official any tidings of the change. Such delay on the part of Webster, together with the neglect of Chambers to write to his predecessor announcing his arrival, caused Lucas some embarrassment and might have produced considerable bitterness between the two Executives.²⁴⁸

Chambers probably looked upon the delay of the Secretary of State as an added grievance against that gentleman. He and Webster had on several occasions run afoul of each other. When Webster had revised the Inaugural Address of President Harrison he proposed some changes, which in a conference with Chambers (then acting as the President's private secretary) led to a clash of a somewhat bitter nature between the two men.²⁴⁹ A few days later Webster found himself rebuffed by Harrison in his attempt to place General James Wilson in the office of Governor of Iowa; and when the nomination of Chambers was sent to the Senate, it was said — with how much truth it would be difficult to determine — to have been

laid upon the table at the instigation of Webster.²⁵⁰

In December, 1841, Chambers wrote a long letter to his friend Crittenden, who seems to have warned him of danger to his official position and urged him to use prudence. It clearly illustrates a characteristic of Chambers — the tendency to be outspoken at the risk of his personal interests. “I fully appreciate”, he wrote, “your admonition to be ‘cautious and prudent’ and acknowledge the justice of your remarks upon my ‘manner’ but it is ‘too late in the day’ now to correct it effectually. You would however if you knew how *very prudent* I am in my official intercourse give me credit for greater amendment than you could have expected; but I solemnly assure you it has not resulted from the fear of the consequences you hint at. I should hate myself if I thought such a consideration could influence a single word or action of my life. I know that the ‘Ajax’ of the North has an evil eye upon me, and I shall not willingly quit the world without an opportunity of telling him what I think of him.” He then commented briefly upon the trouble ensuing from the proposed change of the Inaugural Address, and continued: “He may even in the short period I have yet to remain subject to *Execu-*

tive pleasure produce the effect you apprehend may result from my own rashness, if he does he will do well to conceal his agency in it behind the council chamber screen.”²⁵¹

Soon after taking office Chambers visited Iowa City, then an infant town far to the interior. It had been created as the seat of government of the Territory and the capitol building, begun during the administration of Lucas, was now nearing completion.²⁵² It was not ready for use by the legislature in the winter of 1841, but the citizens of the new town generously offered accommodations and the session was convened at that place by a proclamation issued by Governor Lucas on April 30, 1841.²⁵³

Chambers did not like the little inland town of Iowa City. He found it almost without mails and not convenient of access; and so he declared his intention of residing at Burlington.²⁵⁴ Six miles west of the town he found a spot to his liking. In the latter part of the year he wrote to Crittenden: “I have bought a farm near Burlington and hope to be able to secure two or three thousand acres of fine land within half a days journey of it, for my four youngest children, so that my destiny is fixed. I am to be an Iowa farmer for the remnant of my life.” And he reiterated the statement so often upon

the lips of those who have spent many years in the toils of political affairs: "I long for the quiet of private life and shall embrace it at the first moment I can do so without an apparent wilful desertion of a part of some difficulty." ²⁵⁵

XII

GOVERNOR OF THE TERRITORY OF IOWA

THE Organic Act of the Territory of Iowa provided that the Governor should also act as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. As Governor he was to receive a salary of fifteen hundred dollars; as Superintendent he was to be paid an additional thousand dollars.²⁵⁶ Each department carried with it onerous duties and problems difficult of solution. The fact that one involved the government of white settlers while the other implied supervision of the red inhabitants naturally made the two distinct and separate. For that reason, matters relating to his activities as Governor are treated separately, while affairs connected with his superintendence of the Indians will receive consideration in a later chapter.

It would perhaps be wrong to say that it required less tact to preserve peace and good feeling with the white than with the red population: Governor Lucas, even though the legislature was dominated by a majority of his own politi-

cal belief, had found his three years of office somewhat plentifully strewn with thorns. Governor Chambers came into office as a Whig appointee when the Territory of Iowa was largely Democratic, and throughout his administration he had to contend with a legislative body in which his political party was in the minority.

The people of Iowa were a vigorous, determined people who had left the more settled portion of the country east of the Mississippi and had cast their lot with things new and untamed. Energy they had in abundance. Poise and an evenness of temper they lacked. An impulsive, headstrong vein was apparent in all their activities. It cropped out in their political conventions, in their legislative sessions, and in the editorial columns of their newspapers. The editors of the early partisan sheets were prone to call one another and the men of the opposing party, "liars", "poltroons", and "scoundrels"; and they were made no wiser by an occasional caning at the hands of an irate victim of such abuse. Yet the substratum of the pioneer population possessed a sturdy integrity and a rugged determination that conquered the rough frontier and in the few short years of Territorial existence

built up institutions and made ready for capable and prosperous Statehood.

The task which presented itself to Chambers was not a simple one; nor were the thorns of criticism which had made life miserable for his predecessor to be without point for him. In June, 1841, the month after his arrival, he was denounced in the resolutions of the Democratic Territorial Convention as an enemy to the West and to the western settler.²⁵⁷ The practice of the Federal government in sending to Iowa as Governor and other Territorial officers "importations" from the east was also a source of grievance to the ambitious citizens of the young Commonwealth.²⁵⁸ But Chambers was possessed of tact and his intention of settling permanently in Iowa and identifying himself with its institutions did much to allay this ill feeling.

The summer months of 1841 went by uneventfully and the time drew near for the convening of the Legislative Assembly. In the month previous to the meeting of that body Chambers found himself face to face with one of the perennial problems of the Territory — the boundary dispute with the State of Missouri.²⁵⁹ During the administration of Governor Lucas the trouble had reached a crisis in which armed troops gathered on both sides of the line ready

for action. Violent measures were averted, however, and the matter was turned over to a dallying Congress for settlement. While the excitement was at its height in 1839 Uriah Gregory, a Missouri Sheriff, was arrested by the Iowa authorities and held a prisoner for some time at Bloomington (now Muscatine).²⁶⁰

On November 10, 1841, Governor Reynolds of Missouri wrote to Governor Chambers, stating that the legislature of Missouri had instructed him to cause suit to be brought on behalf of Gregory against the persons in the Territory of Iowa who had apprehended and imprisoned him. He proposed to Chambers that the authorities of Missouri and Iowa agree as to the facts in the case and submit it to the Supreme Court of the United States for adjudication. Chambers replied that the question of the boundary was one over which the Territory had no control, since the Organic Act specifically reserved to Congress the power to alter the Territorial boundaries. Hence no agreement into which they might enter would authorize the Supreme Court to take cognizance of the dispute.

Furthermore, Governor Chambers doubted whether the Supreme Court could constitutionally, even upon an agreed case and by consent

of the parties, take jurisdiction of a controversy between one of the *States* and a *Territory* which remained subject to the legislation of Congress. He expressed his intention, nevertheless, of submitting the communication of Governor Reynolds to the Legislative Assembly; and this he did upon their convening a few weeks later.²⁶¹

On December 6, 1841, the Fourth Legislative Assembly came together in Butler's Capitol at Iowa City.²⁶² Both houses were Democratic. In the preceding session, for the only time during the Territorial period, the Council had had a majority of one Whig; but between sessions the seat of J. C. Hawkins, a Whig, was vacated and Shepherd Leffler, a Democrat, was chosen as his successor, thus restoring the Democratic majority. The new Governor sent his message to the two houses on Wednesday, the eighth of December.²⁶³ The subject of greatest importance in the mind of Governor Chambers was that of ascertaining the will of the people in regard to Statehood.

A year and a half before, a law had been passed by the legislature in compliance with the earnest recommendation of Governor Lucas, providing for the taking of a vote on the question of a State Constitutional Conven-

tion.²⁶⁴ The resulting vote in August, 1840, had been decisive against a convention. Since then, however, urged Chambers, the population had been rapidly increasing; and recent legislation by Congress for the participation of Iowa in the distribution of the proceeds of the sale of public lands and granting to new States which should be admitted into the Union five hundred thousand acres of land for internal improvements had removed the force of the argument that Statehood would mean burdensome taxation. So he recommended the passage of a law providing for the taking of a new vote on the subject of the formation of a State Constitution.

The system of education in the Territory deserved the close attention of the legislators. He urged that provision be made to exempt from the necessity of bearing arms those who had conscientious scruples against it. The condition and financial needs of the public buildings at Iowa City and of the Penitentiary received his attention. He also urged the need of improving the Mississippi River above the mouth of the Des Moines where the impediments in the channel caused great damage, and recommended an appeal to Congress for aid to this end.

There was little that could be called partizan in these recommendations. Indeed, the measure upon which Chambers laid the greatest stress, the matter of Statehood, was one to which the Democrats gave their support, while the Whigs vigorously opposed it—knowing full well that in the event of Iowa's admission the Democratic majority would leave no room for Whig office holders. Chambers, himself, was well aware that the formation of State government would mean the termination of his own position and that it would give to the ranks of the Democracy an additional State. He wrote in December to Crittenden that "They are now making *a rush* for a state government and will probably present their constitution next winter and if Congress will receive them, they will present to the Senate as fine a specimen of inveterate locofocoism as any other state in the Union."²⁶⁵ He must have felt that conditions in the Territory were such that, aside from party considerations, they warranted Statehood, and that under such circumstances it was only right that the will of the people should be ascertained.

The Legislative Assembly responded to his suggestion with a law, approved February 16, 1842, providing for a vote of the people at the

next general election on the subject of the formation of a State Constitution and government.²⁶⁶ There ensued a vigorous discussion of the question in the spring and early summer. The argument of most effect against Statehood was that it would entail so great a burden of taxation. In August the election occurred, and every county cast a majority of votes against a convention. Once more had the people decided that taxation was too high a price for independence.²⁶⁷

Two measures received the executive veto at this session — both of them on the ground that they were unconstitutional.²⁶⁸ The first was a joint resolution relative to carrying the mail from Iowa City to Keosauqua. Chambers vetoed it on the theory that it necessitated a departure by the postmasters from their duties to the Post Office Department. An attempt to pass it over his veto in the House resulted in a vote of but eight to eighteen. The other instance was his veto of an act appointing an Acting Commissioner at Iowa City and defining his duties. The bill appears to have contemplated the welding into one the two offices of Territorial Agent and Superintendent of the Public Buildings at Iowa City (both of which were filled by appointment of the Governor)

and the naming in the bill the person who was to occupy the newly created office. Chambers quoted from the Organic Act the provision which decreed that the Governor should nominate and by and with the advice and consent of the Council appoint all officers not provided for in said Organic Act, and withheld his consent from the bill. The attempt to pass it over his veto was unsuccessful.²⁶⁹

During the first month of the session Chambers wrote to Crittenden: "Your wish that I may be popular here is dictated by the kindness of your heart, but the soundness of your head must have reminded you that it is not the destiny of a territorial Governor if he honestly and fearlessly does his duty". "The truth is", he continued, "I found a decided majority here opposed to Whig principles . . . they retain that Majority and must continue to do so for want of talents and firmness to oppose them."²⁷⁰ Throughout his administration there was no change in the political complexion of the legislature and he remained subject to the disadvantages that surround a minority Governor. The session adjourned on February 18, 1842, and Chambers returned soon thereafter to Burlington.

He now asked for and secured permission

from the Federal government to make a trip of some weeks to Kentucky on private business.²⁷¹ On the twenty-first of March he left on a steamboat going down the river and reached Washington, Kentucky, about the first of April.²⁷² His official duties were performed during his absence by Secretary Stull, who became for the time being Acting Governor.²⁷³

Chambers did not remain many weeks in his old home, for he was back again in Iowa before the middle of May.²⁷⁴ This time he did not come alone. His oldest son, Joseph Sprigg Chambers, with his wife and little daughter Mary, accompanied him, and the two boys, John James and Henry, also became emigrants at this time.²⁷⁵ Upon the farm west of Burlington Governor Chambers built a frame dwelling and upon its completion installed his family therein and began housekeeping. Because of the abundance of grouse in the vicinity he named the place "Grouseland", and it became a center for neighborly gatherings and a rendezvous for friends both white and red. The two boys were placed in a family where they could pursue their studies and at the same time learn something of industrial occupations.²⁷⁶

On the fifth of December the Legislative Assembly convened at Iowa City and found a por-

tion of the new capitol finished and ready for their accommodation. The message of Governor Chambers²⁷⁷ urged again the salutary measures which he had emphasized in his message of the preceding session. The need of an adequate system of confinement for convicted criminals necessitated the devising of some means to complete the penitentiary. Again he invited their attention to the matter of education, remarking that he feared that “until the *permission* to organize township schools is rendered a positive duty, enforced by proper penalties for neglect, the laws now in force will remain inoperative.”²⁷⁸ He deplored the fact that the failure of the officers of the militia to make returns concerning numbers and equipments had made the distribution of arms by the United States government impossible, and he urged provisions for the enforcement of the laws upon this subject.

The experience of another year had but confirmed his opinion as to the great importance of removing the obstructions to the navigation of the Mississippi, and so he submitted to their consideration the question of memorializing the present Congress for an appropriation. In response to this recommendation, a memorial was passed by both houses asking Congress for an

appropriation for a canal at each of the rapids of the Mississippi River.

He called attention to the necessity of retrenchment in expenses and recommended dispatch in legislative business.²⁷⁹ Chambers in writing to his two boys near the beginning of the session remarked that "There is very little for the Legislature to do that can be useful, and yet there is not the least probability of their adjourning before the 21st [of] February."²⁸⁰ The session came to a close on February 17, 1843, four days before the date predicted by Chambers.

Among the eighty-three private acts of this session was one entitled "An Act to divorce certain persons therein named."²⁸¹ It released the bonds of matrimony from no less than nineteen couples. When the measure was sent to Governor Chambers for approval he returned it with an emphatic veto.²⁸² He deemed the annulment of so sacred a connection to be manifest injustice where the party accused was denied an opportunity to be heard and held that such hearing could only be obtained in a judicial proceeding. He emphasized the theory of government that the three bodies of magistracy should be kept distinct, and maintained that the legislative exercise of the divorce power was an

encroachment upon the sphere of the judiciary. Hitherto, he said, he had given a reluctant approval to acts affecting individual cases of this kind, but more mature reflection and examination of the statute books had satisfied him that too much facility and encouragement had been given to applications for interposition and that it was safer and more consistent with the principles of government to leave the matter to the action of the courts. The vetoed bill was returned to the house from which it originated. Then it was taken up, passed over the executive disapproval and became a law.

It appears from the correspondence of Jesse Williams, a young Democrat who had come out to the Territory from Ohio with Governor Lucas, that he heard, in the summer of 1843, rumors of changes to be made in Territorial offices by President Tyler. Straightway he planted his hopes on securing the position of Secretary. He wrote to his uncle, M. T. Williams of Ohio, who made inquiries of politicians in that State and replied that as far as he could ascertain there was no change contemplated — “none as to the Govr. at least and probably none as to Secretary”.²⁸³ Nevertheless, in the fall Secretary Stull was removed.²⁸⁴ A Whig named S. J. Burr was appointed as his succes-

sor; and Jesse Williams bided his time until a change of administration brought him the coveted position.²⁸⁵

When the Territorial legislature met in December, 1843, Governor Chambers "considered it his duty" again to recommend the passage of a law for a vote of the people on the question of a State government.²⁸⁶ He advised also that application be made to Congress to fix and establish, at the present session, a boundary for the proposed State and to sanction the calling of a convention. "The establishment of a boundary for us by Congress", he said, "will prevent the intervention of any difficulty or delay in our admission into the Union, which might result from our assuming limits which that body might not be disposed to concede to us."²⁸⁷

The legislature passed an act in February, 1844, for ascertaining the will of the people at the next April election. A memorial was also passed asking Congress for authorization and an appropriation for a State Constitutional Convention, and suggesting boundaries for the State. The limits proposed in the memorial were the same as now exist for Iowa except on the north where the boundary line followed the forty-fifth parallel of latitude from the Mississippi to the source of the Cactus River, an east

branch of the Sioux, and thence by these rivers to the Missouri.²⁸⁸

The assembling of a new Congress caused Chambers to urge the legislature to renew its appeals to that body for relief, by means of a Federal appropriation, from the severe losses due to the obstructions in the Mississippi River. The Governor also made recommendations concerning the completion of the penitentiary, the enforcement of returns from the militia officers, and the limiting of the Territorial expenses. He reported the almost total neglect of the law authorizing the organization of public schools and remarked that "it is mortifying to see how little interest the important subject of education excites among us."²⁸⁹

On Christmas day, 1843, Chambers took the occasion to write to the two boys a letter full of affectionate advice.²⁹⁰ The family was by this time comfortably settled at Grouseland. The house was built on the old style with a center hall running through the house and rooms on either side. The front porch extended the entire length of the house. Along each side of the drive which led to the front door Chambers planted trees, and about the farm he made improvements which were said to be "exemplary to the neighboring farmers". Here he lived

when not attending legislative sessions at Iowa City. Sprigg and his wife and child, John James and Henry, and Mary and Laura were with him this winter and they kept open house as they had done years before at Cedar Hill.²⁹¹ Sprigg Chambers — a versatile individual who at divers times in his life practiced law, taught school, edited a newspaper, farmed, and interested himself in politics — numbered among his accomplishments the ability to play a violin, and often the neighbors gathered at the house for a dance or social. At such times the merry-making ran high, and it is even told that the dignified old Governor himself once added to the merriment of the occasion by dancing a jig with a neighbor until the shortness of his wind compelled him to desist. Sometimes friends came out from town to visit the young people. Associates of the Governor were often entertained, and occasionally his red skinned friends of the plains paid him the honor of a call.

XIII

STATE GOVERNMENT AND BOUNDARIES

IN April, 1844, at the township election, a vote was taken in accordance with the act of the Legislative Assembly, which resulted at last in a large majority in favor of a State Constitutional Convention. The election of delegates followed in August after a partisan campaign, and less than one-third of the seventy-three successful candidates were of the Whig party.

In October, in the stone Capitol at Iowa City, the first Constitutional Convention of Iowa met and framed a fundamental law.²⁹² As a natural consequence of the political make-up of the constituent assembly the constitution which resulted from their deliberations was a somewhat partisan instrument. From the Convention the new constitution passed to two fields of discussion—the people of the Territory and the Congress of the United States.

Meanwhile a Presidential campaign was stirring the country. The possibility of early Statehood seems to have inspired both Demo-

crats and Whigs in the Territory, and the respective admirers of James K. Polk and Henry Clay held enthusiastic meetings and promulgated lengthy and ardent resolutions. In July a convention of Whig delegates from the various townships of Des Moines County met at Burlington with Joseph Sprigg Chambers as chairman.²⁹³ At the same time a big mass meeting was held attended by Whigs from all over the Territory and by some from Illinois. The meetings of the latter were held out of doors, and speeches were delivered to a crowd of over two thousand. The banners, the mottoes, and the songs that had made famous the campaign of 1840 reappeared in profusion, and one enthusiastic delegation came marching up the streets of Burlington bearing aloft a tree in which was perched a live coon.

During the progress of the speaking Governor Chambers was seen upon the grounds and was loudly called for to address the crowd. He came forward and said that he must be excused from making a political speech. He had made it a matter of principle not to meddle with the political excitement of the day as long as he held an office under the United States government. However, he would, with their permission, take advantage of the opportunity to say

that his official position as Governor would cease within forty-eight hours. Information was reported to have reached Burlington on that same morning from St. Louis to the effect that a gentleman from that town had been appointed as his successor. He assured them that he had endeavored to discharge the duties of his office without partiality or prejudice, and that in making appointments he had sought only for integrity and capacity. He did not doubt that he had often erred but asked them to remember that forgiveness was an attribute of Deity which mortals were enjoined to imitate. He expressed his gratitude for the kindness with which his efforts to promote the interests of the Territory had been received. In closing he said that he had come to Iowa with the intention of making the Territory his permanent place of residence, that he had bought a home and had found it surrounded by kind and excellent neighbors with whom he hoped to spend many pleasant hours.²⁹⁴

With regard to a change in the governorship, Chambers was mistaken. The rumor of a new appointment was without foundation; and so for more than a year longer the old Kentuckian administered the executive affairs of the Territory of Iowa. But circumstances prevented the

consummation of his desire to retain a permanent home in Iowa. His urgent efforts to induce other members of his family to migrate to the new West were unavailing. Three months later the four younger children had returned to Kentucky. In the Family Record is recorded the death of John James on September 30, 1844, at Paris, Kentucky.²⁹⁵ Letters to John Chambers a little later mention Henry as slowly recovering from a severe illness, and Laura is spoken of as in perfect health again.²⁹⁶ Whether or not sickness necessitated their return from the West can, in the absence of more specific evidence, only be conjectured; but their removal went far to prevent Chambers from making Iowa the home of his last days. Sprigg and his family remained with him until the close of his administration when they too went back to the familiar haunts of Mason County, Kentucky.

The fall elections ended for a time the Whig control of national politics and determined the choice of James K. Polk as President of the United States. Just as the Whigs had, four years before, found a sudden interest in the appointments of a new President, so now the Democrats of the Territory began to speculate and to lay their trains for the capture of Territorial offices. Ex-Governor Robert Lucas was

mentioned as a candidate for the governorship, but the consensus of Democratic hopes seemed to center upon Judge Joseph Williams.

On January 8, 1845, twenty-three men, members of the bar of the Supreme Court and other citizens of the Territory, addressed a petition to President-elect Polk, asking that Joseph Williams be appointed Governor and protesting against the practice of "thrusting upon us strangers & non-residents as our officers."²⁹⁷ The petition was not a partisan paper for it was signed by as staunch a Whig as James W. Grimes. But it was of course impossible for Polk to make any change until the fourth of March; and, indeed, it was many months after the inauguration before the new incumbent saw fit to remove John Chambers.

The Missouri boundary dispute meantime was still far from being settled. In May of 1842 Garrett Davis of Kentucky, who had succeeded John Chambers as Representative in Congress from the Twelfth District of the State of Kentucky, made a report as chairman of the Committee on Territories relative to the disputed line and accompanied it by a bill declaring the Sullivan or Indian Boundary Line the proper division between the State of Missouri and the Territory of Iowa.

Delegate Augustus Caesar Dodge of the Territory of Iowa at once entered upon a vigorous support of the bill, and, ably seconded by Garrett Davis, succeeded in carrying it through the House in spite of the earnest opposition of John C. Edwards, Representative from Missouri.²⁹⁸ In the Senate, however, with no one to wage battle in its behalf, the bill was lost. For two years the matter lay untouched by Congress. Finally on June 27, 1844, an act was approved which provided for the determination of the boundary by a commission consisting of three members. The Governor of Missouri was to appoint one member, the Governor of Iowa a second, and these two commissioners were to select the third member.²⁹⁹ The act, however, included the fatal proviso that it should not take force unless sanctioned by the State of Missouri. A bill assenting to the act was passed by the legislature of that State, but received the veto of John C. Edwards who had now become Governor. So the Congressional legislation came to naught and the boundary affair was as far from settlement as at the beginning of the administration of John Chambers.

Down on the border line the unsettled condition of affairs led to no little trouble. The county of Adair in Missouri and the county of

Davis in Iowa overlapped so as to include a tract of land claimed by both authorities. Early in the year 1845 the Sheriff of Adair County was arrested by Iowa authorities for exercising the duties of his office without legal authority in the bounds of Davis County. The Deputy Sheriff of Adair County was also arrested and charged with having seized in Davis County and falsely imprisoned Frederick Acheson, a citizen of the Territory of Iowa. The Davis County District Court tried William P. Linder, the Deputy Sheriff, and sentenced him to a fine and ten days' imprisonment in the penitentiary. The trial of the Sheriff, Preston Mullinix, was continued to the next term of court, and upon his refusal to give his individual recognizance for his appearance he was also committed to prison.

At this stage of the proceedings Governor Chambers learned of the trouble. Without further ado he pardoned both Linder and Mullinix and set them at liberty. He then wrote to Governor Edwards of Missouri, expressing his regret at the conflict of jurisdiction which occasioned these prosecutions. He reiterated his position that the Territory had no power to adjust the dispute or to enter into any agreement for a judicial settlement. He therefore urged the Missouri authorities to petition Con-

gress for permission to litigate the matter either with the Territory or directly with the United States. He also intimated that the authorities of the Territory were bound to maintain jurisdiction over the limits assigned to them by the Federal government or be considered unfaithful to their trust. He casually remarked that he had hoped there would be an amicable and speedy adjustment of the dispute resulting from the Congressional act of the preceding year providing for a boundary commission, but since that solution had been rendered impossible by the veto of the bill giving Missouri's consent, he took the liberty of proposing the other mode of adjustment.³⁰⁰

The attitude of John Chambers on the boundary question was eminently wise. He was not less tenacious of the rights of the Territory than was his predecessor; nor was he more inclined to yield without authorization from the United States government an inch of the territory which had been assigned to the Commonwealth under his control. To be sure the conditions were now entirely different from those which confronted Governor Lucas in the winter of 1839. Then the crisis on the border called for immediate and decisive action. Since that time the matter had been taken up by Congress

and the excitement on the line had largely subsided in the prospect of a settlement of the question by Federal authorities. Although delay in Congressional action had led to occasional recurrence of the difficulties as in the case of Mullinix and Linder, yet it was to the advantage of all parties to conciliate the border neighbors and prevent disturbances and conflicts of authority until an adjustment could be secured.

Governor Chambers's pardon of the two offending officers was not only a politic but a most just and reasonable action — since individually the men were only performing what appeared to them to be the duties of their office, and as far as the dispute was concerned nothing could be gained by stirring up questions which it was out of the power of the State and the Territory by and between themselves to settle.

The judicial aspects of the dispute were more clearly seen by Chambers than by the Missouri Governors. As a Territory, Iowa could not constitutionally be a party to a suit, and an attempt at such procedure would only have tended to make confusion worse confounded. In the course of two years more Iowa became a State and was in a position to sustain the relation of a party in a suit before the United States Supreme Court. But now the only solution of

the difficulty lay in preserving border matters in a state of truce until Congress could be prevailed upon to take action.

Particularly was it desirable to avoid trouble over boundaries in view of the fact that Iowa was suing for admission to the Union. The Constitution which had been drawn up in October, 1844, was put into the hands of Delegate Dodge to present to Congress when it convened in December. Meanwhile it formed the basis of editorial comment and extended public and private discussion. It was a Democratic instrument, but it was not enthusiastically received even by all the Democrats; and it was universally denounced by the Whigs. Governor Chambers, though he had been and still was in favor of State government, could not reconcile himself to the provisions of the instrument. He was opposed to an elective judiciary, and he as strongly objected to the restrictions upon banking and other corporations.

In Congress the Constitution of 1844 was carefully considered, and an enabling act was drawn up providing for the admission of Iowa with that instrument as a fundamental law. But in framing this act Congress stipulated other boundaries than those proposed by the Convention. The Constitution as it came from

the Convention provided what were known as the Lucas Boundaries, by which the State was to extend from the Mississippi to the Missouri River. The act of Congress designated the Nicollet Boundaries, with a western limit some distance east of the Missouri River.³⁰¹

On March 3, 1845, the act of Congress was approved, and the news of the provision concerning boundaries reached the Territory a few weeks before the vote of the people was taken at the April election. It had instant effect. Democrats who favored the instrument itself were unwilling to countenance any act by which the State was to be denied the Missouri River as a western limit, and some even took the stump against its adoption.³⁰² On election day the Constitution was defeated by a considerable majority.

In May, 1845, the Seventh Legislative Assembly convened. A perplexing situation was before the legislators. The Constitution had been rejected by the people. Ordinarily that would have been the end of the matter, and further efforts towards Statehood would have been made, if at all, through a vote on a new constitutional convention. This procedure was recommended by Governor Chambers in his regular message on May 8.³⁰³ But the peculiar

conditions in the case impelled the Democrats, who were still tenacious of their Constitution, to employ other tactics. They contended, and it was undoubtedly true, that a large influence in bringing about the defeat of the Constitution was the fact that a considerable proportion of the people considered that in voting for the Constitution they would also be voting for the conditions named by Congress, including the change of boundaries. Hence they wished to resubmit to the vote of the people the Constitution upon its own merits or defects and without consideration of Congressional conditions.

Whether or not the vote in April did include both the Constitution and the Congressional conditions is perhaps an open question. The Constitution itself provided that it should be submitted to the people at the April election together with any conditions which might be made by Congress.³⁰⁴ The enabling act of Congress, approved March 3, 1845, made it an essential condition of the admission of Iowa into the Union that so much of the act as applied to Iowa be assented to "by a majority of the qualified electors at their township elections, in the manner and at the time prescribed" in the Constitution itself.³⁰⁵ Only upon the understanding that these provisions contemplated

separate ballots on Constitution and conditions could the people ratify the Constitution as drawn up and reject the Congressional conditions containing the obnoxious boundaries. But no separate ballot was provided, and a vast majority undoubtedly understood that the two questions were combined in a single vote.

With either understanding as to how much was included in the vote, a new enabling act was necessitated by the result. For, if the vote only applied to the Constitution it was now too late to accept the Congressional conditions since the act declared it a "fundamental condition of the admission of said State" that they take such vote "at the time" prescribed for voting on the Constitution. If, on the other hand, the vote in April did include the Congressional conditions, it meant their rejection, and Congress must make a new enactment for their admission.

In view of this condition, Chambers felt that the thing to do was to allow the people to vote on the calling of a new convention. But the Democratic legislature, making the most of the argument that the conditions in April had prevented a fair judgment on the Constitution, preferred to resubmit the original instrument to the vote of the people and run the chances of being able to persuade Congress to withdraw

from its position and pass a satisfactory enabling act. So, disregarding the advice of Governor Chambers to let go the old Constitution with the complications that adhered to it and take measures for the formation of a new body of law, the Legislative Assembly passed an act in May, 1845, to resubmit to the voters at the August election the Constitution of 1844 in the same form in which it came from the Convention.³⁰⁶

A minority of more than one third of the House of Representatives signed a formal protest against the act, claiming that the legislature had no power to resubmit the question and maintaining that the Constitution had already been deliberately and with a clear understanding rejected at the polls, and protesting against a new vote on so faulty a document.³⁰⁷ The act received the veto of Governor Chambers. Although he had not been and was not now opposed to Statehood, nevertheless he looked upon the Constitution of 1844 as a bad instrument, and this probably greatly influenced his opposition to its second appearance before the people. But he said nothing of his objections to the Constitution itself in his veto message. He admitted that the boundary question had exerted an influence upon the vote in April, and he ac-

knowledge of the right of the legislators to provide for a resubmission.

His message dealt largely with technical points in the situation. He pointed out certain respects in which the act would produce confusion and conflict of legislation between the act itself, the Constitution, and the act of Congress — if that were still in effect. He contended that at the April election separate ballots should have been used; and he was opposed to the resubmission now of the Constitution without the provision for a separate vote at the same time on the conditions. The weakness of his position here was that admission could not be secured by ratifying the Constitution and rejecting the conditions, and if both were ratified the two votes would produce conflict — particularly with regard to boundaries.

He pointed out the fact that the Constitution itself declared that the first general election should occur on the first Monday in August next after the adoption of the Constitution by the people, while the act which he was vetoing decreed that “no election of State officers shall be held under said Constitution, if ratified at said election, until after the admission of the State of Iowa is complete”. Since admission would not be complete until an indefinite period

of time after ratification, this provision of the act really amounted to an alteration of the Constitution — a thing which Chambers declared to be outside the power of the Legislative Assembly. Other discrepancies were mentioned, and he withheld his approval believing that in the event of a successful vote on the Constitution the act would only result in confusion.³⁰⁸

It is interesting to note in connection with this message, an assertion made many years later by William Penn Clarke, a young Whig friend of the Governor who afterwards was somewhat prominent in the State. He states that Chambers, who was in ill health at this time, came to him on the day previous to the delivery of the message and said he was in great pain and could not write. He handed Clarke some notes upon the subject and asked him if he would put the matter in shape. Clarke consented and wrote out the message. The next morning Chambers read it over, signed it, and sent it to the legislature.³⁰⁹

Among the Democratic supporters of the Constitution of 1844, this veto produced intense indignation and criticism, and their majority in the legislature was sufficiently large to pass it over his official disapproval. So the much discussed document went once more to the polls,

this time to be judged purely upon its own intrinsic worth. The election occurred on August 4, 1845, and although the majority in favor of its rejection was smaller than in April, yet the people of the Territory cast a sufficient number of votes to consign the Constitution of 1844 to the limbo of untried charters.³¹⁰ Thus the complications and the bickerings with Congress for a satisfactory enabling act, which would have resulted from the adoption of the Constitution, and the prospect of which Chambers had emphasized in vetoing the bill for resubmission, were obviated only by the failure of the instrument to receive a majority vote. And through the channel which Chambers had advised — the calling of a new convention — Statehood was ultimately accomplished.

In March of the year 1845 James K. Polk had come into possession of the White House; yet Chambers, although momentarily expecting dismissal, was undisturbed in his office. The expiration of the term of Augustus Caesar Dodge as Delegate to Congress from the Territory brought on in the summer of this year a campaign in which John Chambers and General James Wilson of Dubuque were prominently named by the Whigs as possible candidates to oppose Dodge for reëlection.³¹¹ But

it seems to have been the general impression, and probably with truth, that neither of these gentlemen would consent to be a candidate. Chambers at least was physically ill-prepared for such a campaign. Ralph P. Lowe, afterwards Governor of the State, was chosen as the candidate of the Whigs and conducted a somewhat vigorous campaign, but he was defeated by Dodge at the election in August.³¹²

Back in Kentucky the old friends of Chambers marvelled as month after month he retained his office. Some even came to the conclusion that he had turned Democrat;³¹³ but no such thought was entertained by those who knew him well. Indeed, if there was any part of his administration in which his Whig politics entered into his performance of duties it was at the time of his veto of the act for resubmission of the Constitution, two months after the change of administration.

In November, 1845, James Clarke, a Democratic editor of Burlington who had been Secretary of the Territory under Governor Lucas, was appointed to succeed Chambers as Governor.³¹⁴

It was well that the busy cares of the governorship were taken from the shoulders of John Chambers for his health was suffering greatly.

On October 29, he wrote to William Penn Clarke:—"Since I saw you I have been on the confines of eternity, and am so much reduced that you would scarcely know me. Yet under all this suffering, I have performed my every official duty promptly, sometimes lying flat on my back, dictating to my private secretary, and again scrawling illegibly for him to copy." He betook himself to the farm at Grouseland, making trips to town two or three times a week to transact business. "You would be amused", he wrote, "to see me feeding the pigs, turkeys, etc., and the efforts I make to work."³¹⁵ Chambers was at a loss to understand his retention in office by Polk; and after waiting in vain for a promise of leave of absence from the duties of Indian Affairs, he finally determined that his health necessitated his going to Kentucky in November whether removed from office or not.³¹⁶ So he left his office for his first vacation in three years and visited once more the town of Washington, Kentucky. During his absence the new Governor took office and the active political life of John Chambers was at an end.³¹⁷

XIV

INDIAN AFFAIRS

It was a vast Territory that lay subject to the supervision of John Chambers in 1841. Besides the land that now constitutes the State of Iowa it comprised the eastern half of the present States of North and South Dakota and the larger portion of what is now Minnesota. Only the eastern fringe was then settled by whites. On the broad prairies to the west and north the Indian tribes fished and hunted, waged war and drank themselves into degeneracy upon the white man's whiskey.³¹⁸ It was now a sadly depleted race that clung forlornly to the fast receding edge of the frontier.

In the days of their fathers the fair lands that lay between the two great rivers in the heart of the continent had been the meeting ground of many tribes. From the east along the Great Lakes and the Ohio came the various tribes of the powerful Algonquin family — a nomadic migration differing from the later movement of the whites in that it left no broad-

scarred trail in its wake. The moccasined foot of the Indian scarcely stirred the dead leaves upon the ground where the plow shares of the white man, coming after, turned acres of grass roots to the sun. The virgin plains where they hunted the buffalo and the forests through whose quiet recesses they slipped noiselessly in search of game, they left as unchanged as the streams whose waters stilled themselves after the silent dip of the paddle or the swift spear thrust of the red-skinned fisher.

On the banks of these same streams there went up often the hideous war cry. For the Algonquins from the East did not alone covet the watered plains of the Mississippi Valley. From the West and Northwest, down the broad valleys of the Platte and the Missouri, came the tribes of another great family of Indians — the warlike Dakotahs. Among them were numbered the Sioux, the Ioways, the Otoes, the Omahas, and the Winnebagoes. In the valley of the upper Mississippi these people for succeeding generations waged bloody wars with the Sacs and Foxes, the Pottawattamies and other Algonquin tribes.

Of all these Indians the Sacs and Foxes made the greatest impress upon the history of Iowa so far as that history concerns the white man.

They came from the vicinity of the Great Lakes, and before reaching the Mississippi had formed a close alliance. Upon the Mississippi and Des Moines rivers they found the powerful Ioways and subjugated them. Turning to the north they came upon the Sioux whom they engaged in ceaseless and bitter strife. These contests became so furious that in 1825 the United States government negotiated a treaty by which a boundary line was placed between the combatants.³¹⁹ It began where the Upper Iowa River empties into the Mississippi and proceeding along river channels and across prairies ended at the juncture of the Big Sioux and Missouri rivers. North of this line the Sioux were to remain, and south of it the Sacs and Foxes. Five years later it became necessary to set up on either side of this line a neutral strip twenty miles in width.³²⁰ To this Neutral Ground some years afterward, the Winnebagoes from east of the Mississippi reluctantly agreed to remove.³²¹

The principal town of the Sacs in the early days was on the east side of the Mississippi near the mouth of the Rock River. Here lived the warlike Black Hawk; and when in accordance with treaty agreements, which Black Hawk claimed were not valid, the United States gov-

ernment demanded the removal of the Indians from the east to the west side of the river he demurred. Keokuk, one of the prominent chiefs of the Sacs, located on the Iowa River and tried to persuade Black Hawk and his men to join him. Black Hawk, however, looked upon such withdrawal as cowardice, and he clung to his ancient haunts until he was surrounded by white settlers. Finally he was persuaded by troops to move across the river, but in 1832 he returned and the contest known as the Black Hawk War was precipitated.³²²

The warring Indians in that contest comprised a large portion of the Sacs and Foxes, reinforced by several hundred Winnebagoes. Many of the Sacs and Foxes restrained by the influence of Keokuk, remained quietly at home on the banks of the Iowa River in spite of the reproaches and taunts of the followers of Black Hawk. In a few short months the Indians were vanquished with the result that the confederated tribes of Sac and Fox Indians were compelled to cede to the United States government a strip of land extending about fifty miles west from the Mississippi River, with a reservation along the Iowa River for the benefit of Keokuk.³²³

Upon the land vacated by this treaty of Sep-

tember 12, 1832, there began the first legal white settlement of what is now Iowa. The defeated Black Hawk was supplanted in tribal leadership by the more peaceful Keokuk. After a somewhat neglected old age the old warrior died, but his sons and his followers nursed an increasing bitterness against Keokuk and his administration.³²⁴ In 1836 Keokuk's reservation on the Iowa River was given up,³²⁵ and in the following year an additional slice of territory west of the Black Hawk Purchase was ceded to the United States.³²⁶ The Sacs and Foxes moved westward and settled upon the Des Moines River and here we find them when, in 1838, the Territory of Iowa was organized.

There were, during the Territorial period, two principal Indian agencies within the limits of Iowa. One was the Sac and Fox Agency on the site of the present town of Agency City in Wapello County. Here General Joseph M. Street³²⁷ was Agent until his death in 1840, when he was succeeded by his son-in-law, John Beach. The other was the Sioux Agency on the St. Peters River (now the Minnesota) near its juncture with the Mississippi. The Indian Agent at this place during the first years of the Territory was Major Lawrence Taliaferro,³²⁸ who having resigned was followed in

1840 by Amos J. Bruce. Besides these posts there was a sub-agency near Council Bluffs where the Pottawattamies were located;³²⁹ and about 1840 there seems to have been a sub-agency founded on the headwaters of Turkey River, for the benefit of the Winnebagoes who had moved to the Neutral Ground.³³⁰

With each agency there were trading posts, and no treatment of Indian affairs would be complete or understandable without a consideration of these licensed trading companies. For through the sale of goods to the Indians they gained an ascendancy over the red inhabitants that materially affected every attempt at negotiation between the United States government and the Indian tribes.

Three important establishments were connected with the Sac and Fox Agency. Pierre Chouteau Jr. and Company, of St. Louis,³³¹ a well known agency of the American Fur Company, was represented at various times by Chouteau's son-in-law, Major Sandford, by William Phelps, and by the latter's brother, S. S. Phelps. Another firm was that of W. G. and G. W. Ewing who had removed to the Territory from a profitable trade in Indiana.³³² Both of these posts were on the site of the present town of Ottumwa. A third concern was operated by

J. P. Eddy who, having been licensed in 1840, located a trading post a few miles up the river at a point where the town of Eddyville now stands.³³³

These traders imported to the Indian country goods of all descriptions and sold them, as a rule, upon credit. When the time came each year for the payment of annuities the companies were the creditors of the Indians to the extent of thousand of dollars, and their representatives were generally present at every such occurrence to engulf the larger proportion of the payment and to secure an early chance at the sum which remained.

When Governor Lucas came into office six years had elapsed since the close of the Black Hawk War. Black Hawk himself was dead, but the factional spirit among the Sacs and Foxes was as strong as ever. The followers of the departed warrior rallied about his sons and a chief named Hardfish, and bitter was the antipathy between the band of Hardfish and the band of Keokuk. Particularly in the payment of government annuities was trouble wont to rise. It had been the custom to pay the amounts due the Indians to Keokuk and the more prominent chiefs; and upon them devolved the settling of debts to traders and the further distri-

bution of the remainder among the members of the two tribes.

Keokuk seems to have numbered among his weaknesses a fondness for money; and it was perhaps not without reason that Hardfish and his followers charged him with fraud and collusion with the traders. In January, 1840, about fifty Indians of Hardfish's band came to Burlington for a council with Governor Lucas.³³⁴ They protested that they did not know what became of the annuities paid to the "money chiefs" — as they called Keokuk, Wapello, Appanoose, Poweshiek, and the others to whom payments were made — and they urged that the money be paid directly to the heads of families. They appear to have even sought to renounce Keokuk as chief and to adhere only to the chiefs of their own band. Lucas tried to pacify them and told them that they must settle the matter of their chiefs and the payment of annuities among themselves. It is evident throughout the administration of Governor Lucas that his sympathies were with the band led by Hardfish.

During the months that followed lines grew tighter between the two divisions. Each band held councils, and two papers were drawn up and signed — one by the Indians of the upper

village favoring payment to the heads of families, and one by Keokuk's band urging the distribution of annuities to the chiefs as before.³³⁵

Early in the summer of 1840 General Street, who had made a most excellent record as Indian Agent, died and was succeeded by John Beach. In July, at the extra session, the Legislative Assembly passed a memorial asking that the payments be made to the heads of families or to persons designated by the majority of the nation, but before it reached Washington, an order had been issued under date of August 18, 1840, directing that the payments be made to the chiefs.³³⁶

The council for the payment of the annuities for 1840 occurred at the Sac and Fox Agency House on September 28th. Governor Lucas attended in person and found the traders of the American Fur Company in abundant evidence. From St. Louis, Pierre Chouteau Jr., himself, and Messrs. Sandford and Mitchell were in attendance. The two Davenports and Antoine LeClaire from near Rock Island, S. S. Phelps of Oquawka, Illinois, and his brother William Phelps of the Indian Agency were all there to watch carefully the trading interests.³³⁷ The council was not a happy one. The Indians refused to come to a reconciliation, and Beach

finally reported that no agreement could be made with the two parties as to the method of receiving and distributing annuities; indeed, he favored sending away the money, which was in paper, to be returned later in specie when the Indians should have become reconciled.³³⁸

Thus the outcome was that the payment was deferred. Lucas fully believed that Beach was acting in conjunction with the American Fur Company, and when his later attempts to have the Agent make the payment proved futile, he recommended his removal from the Agency.³³⁹ Beach on the other hand wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington, stating his reasons for non-payment and complaining that Lucas had been pursuing a course which tended to destroy the official influence of the Agent with the Sac and Fox Indians and to sow discord among them.³⁴⁰ In the midst of this deadlock Governor Chambers came into office as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

Five days after his arrival at Burlington, Chambers wrote to John Bell, Secretary of War, in regard to Indian matters.³⁴¹ He had as yet been able to gather very little information concerning the status of these negotiations because of the absence of his predecessor; but from an examination of copies of a correspond-

ence between Captain Beach and Major Pilcher (the Superintendent of Indian Affairs at St. Louis) relating to the suspended payment of annuities, he inclined to the belief that they should be paid to the heads of families. At all events he expressed the hope that, in view of rumors of an agreement among the Indians, the order suspending payment might be immediately withdrawn.

A week later he wrote at some length to T. Hartley Crawford, United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs.³⁴² He had now received word from Beach in explanation of the dissensions among the Indians. He appears to have differed from Beach in attitude toward the opposing chiefs. He commented upon the fact that Keokuk had become intemperate and had lost the confidence of a considerable majority of the Indians, and he expressed the belief that Hardfish had been sincere in desiring to bring about an equitable distribution of the annuities. However, he believed that it was not necessary that the government or its officers take the part of either division, and that the Indians would probably now agree that each party should receive a just proportion in the manner that it saw fit.

It was about the middle of June that Governor Chambers hired a carriage and drove across

country for his first visit to the Indians on the Des Moines River.³⁴³ He made the acquaintance of his red skinned wards and of the Indian agent. Doubtless they sat down at the Agency House and discussed at length the dissensions among the Indians and payment of their long delayed dues. In July, Beach wrote him a letter full of good news.³⁴⁴ On the twenty-third of the month, the chiefs and warriors of both parties had come together at the Agency House. In solemn conclave the chiefs tried to make some arrangement for a division of the money but in vain. Then the aged Pashepaho, second in rank to Hardfish, conceived a plan. He proposed, since the chiefs could not agree, to leave it to the braves and abide by their decision. So the braves withdrew and argued the matter, but returned with the statement that the followers of Hardfish wanted eighteen thousand dollars while Keokuk's braves would not agree to give more than fourteen thousand dollars. Whereupon Agent Beach who, fortunately for the occasion, had been born in Massachusetts, suggested the Yankee expediency of splitting the difference. So it was agreed that out of the entire sum due, which amounted to something over forty thousand dollars, the band of Hardfish should receive sixteen thousand while the

remainder should go to Keokuk and his followers at the lower village. The opposing chiefs then shook hands and signed the agreement. Hardfish was absent because of sickness but among the signatures were those of his brother, of Pashepaho, and of the two sons of Black Hawk.

Thus the Indians had removed the greatest obstacle to the payment of their dues. Chambers at once wrote to Washington urging that the government immediately make arrangements for the settlement of the affair. He received before long instructions to combine the payment of the annuities of both 1840 and 1841 in one negotiation and was further informed that T. Hartley Crawford and Governor J. D. Doty of Wisconsin had been appointed to act with him as commissioners to arrange with the Sacs and Foxes for a cession of their land.³⁴⁵

Chambers made arrangements for the presence of a military force at the Agency to prevent intrusion upon the Indian lands and to preserve order during the negotiations. He also provided for the exclusion of white traders and others from the council in order to get the unbiased assent of the Indians. The assembly of Commissioners and Indians occurred in October. The payment of the annuities was made

— first \$41,000 for the year 1840, paid according to the agreement of July; and an equal sum for the year 1841, paid to the heads of families.³⁴⁶ Then they proceeded to negotiate for the sale of land.³⁴⁷ Mr. Crawford, United States Commissioner of Indian Affairs, made the proposal that they cede to the government all the lands claimed by them within the Territory of Iowa. In return the government would give them one million dollars and money enough to pay their debts, would locate them on lands at the headwaters of the Des Moines River and west of the Blue Earth River, and would build for them there, out of the million dollars, a large council house, mills, blacksmith shops, school-houses, and a house for each family.

Chambers followed, approving what had been said and warning the Indians against the extortions of the traders and against the unscrupulous whiskey sellers who infested the border line. The Indians listened quietly then counselled together. They asked for further explanation of the terms and finally with one accord began to find fault with the proposed location to the northward. It was poor land — they could not subsist there, and they did not want to leave anyway. Keokuk had never heard so hard a proposal: the new location was no

good; and, moreover, he had always been opposed to school-houses.

Thus ended an unfruitful negotiation. The receipt of double annuities was followed by a debauch such as the Indians had never known before. A small portion of their debts were paid, but the two past years had plunged them into obligations amounting to nearly half a million dollars and with their annuities gone and the cloud of debt still hovering over them they soon were in as destitute a condition as before.

By this time Governor Chambers had seen enough of the Indians to realize some of the evils practiced upon them by the whites. Two things in particular impressed him with the need of reform. One was the sale of liquor to the Indians by white men along the border line. The other object of his denunciation was the system by which private trading companies, licensed by the government, sold to the child-like natives at enormous profits goods often useless to them, and by reason of their intimate relationship acquired a power over the Indians that was frequently used to circumvent the plans of the government which had licensed them.

Chambers returned to Burlington after the failure to consummate the treaty in 1841 great-

ly disappointed. To the Commissioner at Washington he penned an emphatic arraignment of the system of Indian trade and intercourse.³⁴⁸ He urged that the practice of issuing licenses to traders be abolished, and that government agents be appointed to supply the Indians with goods at a reasonable price.

The regulation of trade was a matter for the Federal government to remedy; but the suppression of the illegitimate sale of whiskey could be reached by Territorial action, and when the legislative Assembly met in December 1841 the Governor depicted to the lawmakers the degradation and destruction that the infamous practice was producing among a people whose indolent habits and aversion to labor made them peculiarly fond of artificial excitement. "Humanity shudders and religion weeps over the cruel and unrelenting destruction of a people so interesting, by means so dastardly and brutal, that the use of the rifle and the sword, even in time of profound peace with them, would be comparatively merciful."³⁴⁹ But his recommendations for an amendment making efficient the existing laws on the subject fell upon stony ground.

Among the Indian villages in the winter of 1841-42, debt and poverty were working a

change of heart. One day in February, Keokuk, Appanoose, and Wapello came to the Agency House and told Captain Beach that they desired to cede a part of their land and so pay off their debts.³⁵⁰ They added that it would please them to be invited to Washington to see the Great Father and there have a treaty council. And the next day Hardfish came also to the Agent and expressed his concurrence with the plan. Chambers reported the incident to Commissioner Crawford.³⁵¹ He thought the plan was instigated by the traders to get the money paid at Washington, and he remarked that they had been stirring up feeling against him. Evidently by his exclusion of the traders from the late negotiations, the new Governor had not ingratiated himself with these captains of commerce. It seemed not improbable to Chambers, moreover, that the Indians would not only cede a part but all of their land in Iowa, providing they were sent to the Missouri River with the friendly Pottawattamies.

In May, after returning from a visit to Kentucky, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs reported to Commissioner Crawford a statement of the debts due to the three licensed trading companies from the Sac and Fox Indians.³⁵² Altogether the amount was over two hundred

thousand dollars. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the Indians contemplated a sale of their lands. During the summer of 1842 the Indian border line was a scene of turbulence. The Indians were restless; whites expelled from the red men's country were vindictive. The whiskey sellers were active and their increasing numbers contained many desperadoes of the most dangerous type. An old trading house, abandoned by Pierre Chouteau Jr. and Company, was burned to the ground. The Agent and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs were shot in effigy, and one Smith, a troublesome fellow who had been christened Jeremiah by his unprophectic parents, gathered a band of the Indians and clandestinely took them off to exhibit through the country.³⁵³

Early in September Chambers paid a visit to the Indian country to arrange for the payment of annuities which was made in that month.³⁵⁴ Upon his return to Burlington he found waiting for him instructions from the United States government to enter into negotiations with the Sacs and Foxes and with the Winnebago Indians. The Winnebagoes on the neutral strip were a vexing remnant. Chambers was not hopeful about them. They haunted the Mississippi River in spite of efforts to

keep them inland, and such close proximity to the whites and the ubiquitous whiskey jug wrought constant degradation to the rapidly thinning band. Chambers saw no possibility of treating with them that fall for they could not be moved to the Sioux country without the consent of the Sioux, and they refused to move southwest. He promised, however, to communicate with Agent Bruce at St. Peters and try to get the consent of the Sioux to receive the Winnebagoes upon their land.³⁵⁵

But a treaty with the Sacs and Foxes was a different matter. Here there was both the necessity and the possibility of immediate action, and the Superintendent of Indian Affairs began at once to make arrangements. While the time was ripe for such a step, there yet were many difficulties to be overcome. An eager white population, impatient and almost impossible of restraint, infested the border line, ready to swoop across and take up the new land upon the instant of a treaty's consummation. At his September visit to the Agency, Chambers had found hundreds of these landseekers. They came in wagons, on horse back, and afoot — all determined to believe that a treaty would be made and ready to drive stakes into the choicest bits of land. Some were peaceable, and made no

disturbance; some were drunk, threatened the Agent, the dragoons, and the Governor, and created so many kinds of disturbance that they must needs be placed under guard.³⁵⁶ So now Governor Chambers asked that a full company of dragoons be detailed from Fort Atkinson to proceed to the Indian country for the preservation of order.³⁵⁷

Another essential to the success of the negotiation was an examination of the claims of the trading companies and other creditors of the Indians. These claims had been carefully kept in readiness for an occasion just such as this when the debtors would come into possession of a large amount of money. Chambers determined that the Indians' interests should be preserved in this matter and so proposed to make a thorough investigation of all demands. For this purpose he appointed Alfred Hebard and Arthur Bridgman as special agents with instructions to accompany him to the Agency before the close of September and begin a scrutinizing investigation and adjustment of claims. He directed Beach to assemble the chiefs in order that the Indians might have an opportunity for objection.

The process of sifting out the just claims and arriving at a fair schedule of the Sac and Fox

indebtedness was a laborious one. The number of claims presented was fifty-eight and they amounted in all to \$312,366.24. The agents heard the testimony of traders and Indians, weighed the evidence, and reduced the total to \$258,566.34. The claim of J. P. Eddy and Company they allowed in its entirety, and they were lenient with the demands of Pierre Chouteau Jr. and Company.

The amount allowed to W. G. and G. W. Ewing was about twenty-five per cent less than they had demanded. They had sold the untutored native such useful objects as "Italian cravats", "sattinette coats", and "looking glasses" charged at twenty-two and thirty dollars. A clerk informed the investigating commission that these last articles should have been styled "telescopes". They had found purchasers among the red men for "fine satin vests" at eight dollars and fine spotted ones for six and seven. They had charged forty-five dollars for "dress coats" and "superfine cloth coats" and sixty dollars for "surtout coats" and "super over coats".³⁵⁸ Verily the white pioneer settler must have felt sadly tailored beside his Indian neighbor. The profits upon some articles were estimated at from one to nine hundred per cent.³⁵⁹

The negotiation of the treaty itself began early in October. In the negotiations of the preceding fall, the power of the commissioners had been more or less limited to a definite proposal. In the present instance Chambers was given wide discretionary powers. A large circular tent had been set up by Captain Beach for a council hall. Within was a raised platform at one side for the Commissioner and his aids while the chiefs sat opposite in a circular row of seats around the body of the tent. An open space lay between, and into this area the Indian orators stepped as they told of the beautiful lands the Great Spirit had given them.³⁶⁰ They were arrayed in their best blankets, their finest feathers and their most showy trinkets.

The Governor, having donned the uniform of an officer of the United States Army, opened the council by an address which the interpreter, Antoine LeClaire, translated to the waiting chiefs. Keokuk replied, and there followed much language. When all was said and the terms of sale were agreed upon the Sacs and Foxes had given up their entire claim to land in the Territory of Iowa. In return Governor Chambers, as Commissioner for the United States government, had agreed to pay the debts allowed by the investigating agents, and to pay

annually to the Indians the interest at five per cent on eight hundred thousand dollars. The Indians agreed to move, on or before May 1, 1843, to lands west of a north and south line drawn through a certain point in the upper waters of the River Des Moines. A final location was to be assigned them on the Missouri River or its waters and to this spot they must move before the expiration of three years from the date of the treaty.³⁶¹

On the eleventh of October, 1842, the agreement was made, signatures were affixed, and the council was over. It was an important treaty—the most important ever negotiated upon Iowa soil. It had been carefully planned and was negotiated with firmness and tact. Perhaps no event in the life of the Old Kentuckian is more worthy of attention.

Experience with the Indians had greatly intensified the conviction of Chambers that they were being daily sinned against. When the Legislative Assembly met, he denounced again the sale of liquor to the Indians and begged the legislators to take measures to render efficient the law prohibiting it.³⁶² This law, passed in 1839, provided for a fine, on conviction of such an offence, of from twenty-five to one hundred dollars; but the enormous profits

in such traffic made the risk of conviction a trifling matter. The message of the Governor was taken under consideration and in January, 1843, a law was passed increasing the penalty to not less than one hundred nor more than five hundred dollars.³⁶³ It was a step in the right direction, but it was not such a bill as Chambers had hoped for. He had favored adding to the pecuniary infliction a term of imprisonment. The new law came to be disregarded as had the old, and the ruination of the Indian victims continued.

On May 1, 1843, the Sacs and Foxes were to be west of their new boundary line and the tract they had occupied would be open to the whites; for, though the law decreed that surveys should be made first, it was not a point that was often insisted upon by the Federal officers. On the eve of May Day thousands of land seekers had gathered upon the border. The May time injunction "call me early, mother dear" was hardly necessary, for it is doubtful if there was much sleep in those prairie camps that night. All up and down the division line watches and clocks ticked away steadily, and when their hands drew near the top of the dial torches were lit. At the hour of midnight, marked by the firing of guns, the eager pioneers

crossed the line and almost before the echo was stilled were driving stakes into the prairie by the light of flaring torches.³⁶⁴ Thus did civilization crowd the heel of the departing red man. The Sacs and Foxes moved on to western Iowa for their brief sojourn, and when their allotted time was up the dwindling band gathered its ponies and camp outfits together and took their way to the lands southwest of the Missouri, accompanied by a military escort provided by the United States government.³⁶⁵

Up in the northeast, meantime, the Winnebagoes were causing trouble. In the summer of 1841 Governor Doty of Wisconsin had negotiated with the Sioux Indians a treaty for the cession of a tract of land west of the Mississippi.³⁶⁶ A primary object was to provide a location for the Winnebagoes, but it was also in contemplation to place other tribes upon the ceded portion.³⁶⁷ The treaty was, however, rejected by the United States Senate. In the fall of 1842 Chambers received instructions to negotiate with the Winnebagoes for their removal from their haunts on the Neutral Ground. But the proposition did not appear to him feasible, and it was deferred. In the summer of the next year he received similar instructions, and in July he entered into council with the Indians

but without avail.³⁶⁸ The tribe was fast giving way to intemperance; and encouraged by vicious and interested advisers among the whites they refused to remove from a place where whiskey was easy of access. Again in November negotiations with this tribe by the United States government came to naught.³⁶⁹ Chambers characterized them as "the most drunken, worthless and degraded tribe of which I have any knowledge".³⁷⁰ It was not until October of 1846 that the Winnebagoes agreed to give up their lands on the Neutral Ground and moved north of the St. Peters River.³⁷¹

The greatest factor in the degradation of these and of all other Indians was the white whiskey seller; and Chambers lost no opportunity of making this fact evident. In every regular message of his administration he urged upon the legislators measures for the suppression of this evil, and in letter after letter to the United States government he deplored his inability to check its growth.

Equally as consistent and determined was his opposition to the system of trade and intercourse with the Indians. A few months after the treaty of 1842 G. W. Ewing, a member of the trading company whose claims had been so open to criticism, wrote to Commissioner Craw-

ford complaining of the infamous practices of some of the unlicensed traders. Crawford sent the letter to Chambers, from whom he received a reply fiery with wrath. "If the vengeance of Heaven", he wrote, "is ever inflicted upon man in this life, it seems to me we must yet see some signal evidence of it among these 'regular traders'. It would be worthy of the labours of a casuist to determine whether the wretch who sells a diseased or stolen horse to a poor Indian or the 'regular trader' who sells him goods of no intrinsic value to him, at nine hundred per cent advance on the cost, is the greater rascal. It is deeply to be regret[t]ed that all your efforts to induce Congress to change the system have been unsuccessful."³⁷²

In his annual reports and in frequent letters to the Commissioner a change in the system was urged by Chambers. "Transfer to the Agents of the government the influence now, and long exercised over the Indians by the traders, and nothing but the employment of incompetent Agents can arrest an immediate and beneficial change in the destinies of the Indian race." This he wrote in September, 1843.³⁷³ The Legislative Assembly which met soon after passed a memorial praying Congress for a change in the system of trade and intercourse.

Chambers sent the paper to Delegate Dodge with a long letter setting forth his ideas. Let the government establish depots of goods, he urged, at each agency and under the charge of governmental agents. Let the goods be sold to the Indians at an advance above the cost sufficient to cover all expenses — perhaps ten per cent. He had no doubt that the Indians would in this way receive double the accustomed quantity of serviceable goods for the same price as before, and would soon come to repose as much confidence in the government agents as they now did in the traders.³⁷⁴

The record of John Chambers as Superintendent of Indian Affairs is deserving of the greatest praise. He came upon the scene when both governmental officers and Indian chiefs were in a state of discord. He made himself conversant with the red population by repeated visits. He studied their needs and with unflagging zeal contended for their rights and interests, even though it brought upon his head the harshest criticism from those whose iniquitous dealings he so fearlessly denounced. And it was by reason of his able management that there was secured to the United States a peaceful possession of the greater part of what now constitutes the State of Iowa.

XV

THE YEARS OF TWILIGHT

IN the first three years of the Territorial period storm and stress had characterized the administration of Robert Lucas. There had been heated tempers and strained relations, abuse and scathing reply. But when the stern first Governor left the office, the machinery of government was carefully organized and working with a fair degree of efficiency. In the period that followed, the long term of the second Governor, the Territory moved on to larger things. Population grew by strides and stretched out toward the Missouri. Institutions sprang into being. The Territory sloughed off the pale wrappings of its infant days and busied itself with the idea of Statehood. Its growing civic consciousness planned fundamental laws and knocked at the door of Congress for admission. Its material expansion crowded the Indian over upon the trans-Missouri plains and peopled the interior. Then followed the last term of Territorial Governorship — the scant year under

James Clarke. It was but a transition stage from the ripening Territory to the full fruition of Statehood.

It was the opportunity of this long second term of progress that had come to Governor John Chambers. With an unflagging zeal that had marked his entire career he acted to the best of his strength and wisdom the double role of Governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs until a Democratic President saw fit to remove him. For the sake of his health the release came none too soon. Ceaseless application to his official duties had told severely upon his strength and made rest a necessity. Early in November he quitted the town of Burlington and journeyed to his old home in Kentucky. He reached Maysville on Wednesday night, November 19, 1845,³⁷⁵ and soon was with his daughter Jane and her husband, J. S. Forman, who were now occupying the old home at Cedar Hill. From there he went inland to Paris to visit the Brents, but returned shortly after Christmas to Mason County.

From Washington he wrote in the latter part of December to William Penn Clarke, thanking him for sending a copy of the message of Governor James Clarke, who had come into office in November as the successor of Chambers.

“My health is improving”, he said, “and my flesh increasing, but I am still a good deal weaker than when in health. The prospect of a complete restoration is more favorable than I had hoped for, and I shall be with you early in the spring, and take hold of the plow-handles, or *put my shoulder to the wheel*, as circumstances may require.”³⁷⁶ He discussed the political situation in Iowa with a spirit that left no doubt as to his interest in the Commonwealth whose government he had directed. In February he wrote: “If I live and have strength enough, I shall return to Iowa in the spring. I cannot be contented here — the very sight of the negroes annoys me.”³⁷⁷

True to his word, before the summer of 1846 he was back at Grouseland in the Territory of Iowa. A rare tribute came to him here. The Mexican War broke out in the early summer and all over the country troops were organizing for the fray. Not knowing of the feeble condition of his predecessor in office, Governor Clarke came out one day to the country home of Chambers to offer him the command of the Iowa troops raised for the war. His health of course forbade his accepting. He had lost ninety pounds in flesh and was hardly more than a shadow of his former self. But for his

physical condition, he wrote a few days later to a friend, he would not have hesitated, much as he disapproved of the course of the government in bringing on the war.³⁷⁸

Through the summer he remained at Grouseland. In August he wrote of slightly improved health, but he still weighed only one hundred twenty-seven pounds.³⁷⁹ The spirit, however, was as active as ever. A second Democratic Constitutional Convention had met in May and drawn up an instrument known as the Constitution of 1846. It met the approval of Chambers no more than had its predecessor, the Constitution of 1844. "I go against it", he said, "as I will against every other which contains the odious feature of an Elective Judiciary, and takes from the people the ordinary powers of Legislation in relation to Incorporations."³⁸⁰ He also objected to the provision which made amendment possible only by the calling of a convention to revise the instrument.

He was still at Grouseland in September, 1846, and from there wrote to William Penn Clarke a long letter on political affairs.³⁸¹ The Whigs were about to hold a convention to nominate State and Congressional candidates, the Constitution having been ratified by the people; and it was this convention which stirred the

interest of John Chambers. Evidently Chambers had been spoken of as a candidate for the office of Governor. He authorized Mr. Clarke to say for him that his health would not permit him to become a candidate for office at this time. He remarked, however, that should his health become reëstablished and should the Whigs in the future desire his services for any post he would not decline. Neither ill health nor advancing age had weakened the interest which the Old Kentuckian felt in politics and in the affairs of the new State. He proceeded to name over the possible candidates for this or that office, to discuss party strength and local majorities, and to express his opinion as to the most expedient men to receive the Whig support.

In this letter James W. Grimes received the full strength of an outbreak of Kentuckian wrath. Chambers had been informed that Grimes was going to the convention with the intention of preventing him from being nominated to office. The lines of the letter wherein he conveys to Clarke his opinion of Grimes and his methods are, to say the least, not highly complimentary to that gentleman.

It is difficult to do more than guess at the life of John Chambers for the next year and a half.

His desire to remain in Iowa was not destined to be gratified, probably because of his continuing ill health. Joseph Sprigg Chambers, who had stayed with him in Iowa longer than any of the rest of his children, returned to Mason County and on February 19, 1847, published the first issue of *The Maysville Herald*, of which he was the editor and proprietor.³⁸² It seems likely that during this winter John Chambers also had journeyed back to the scenes of his younger days. At first he visited Jane at Cedar Hill; but he soon set about building a new home of his own a short distance east of Maysville. Here he installed himself in 1848. About this time the old home at Cedar Hill was sold by J. S. Forman to Colonel Goggin, whose kin still own and live in the house.

It was a quiet life that the ex-Governor now lived. He visited his children frequently, and they in turn came to stay with him. Through all his years he had found happiness in flowers and in gardening, and now the opportunity permitted a full gratification. He also kept chickens which he tended with the greatest care, feeding them with small potatoes which he boiled and mashed in their skins.

The greatest source of information concerning these later days of the life of Chambers is

a series of letters which he wrote to his youngest son, Henry Chambers.³⁸³ Henry was at Louisville during these years, unmarried and casting about for his life work; and to him the old Governor seemed to turn with a particular fondness. He advised with him about the choice of a profession, condoled with him in his discouragements, and poured out to him as he probably did to no other person his own sorrows. The last six years had in them much of pathos. He was a lonely old man, suffering almost continuously from poor health.

In the spring of 1849 he wrote to Henry from his home above Maysville telling him of the news from the relatives and discussing the spread of cholera in the towns along the river. He ended with the injunction: "If the cholera spreads in Louisville you must come home or write to me every other day if not every day."³⁸⁴ The disease, however, took effect in another direction. On the second of September in the same year, Mary and Laura, the two youngest daughters who had for a time kept house for the Governor at Grouseland, both died and were buried in the same grave at Paris.³⁸⁵

It was perhaps fortunate that there came at this time a call to public duties that took Chambers away from Kentucky and engaged his

thoughts in the time immediately following his bereavement. He had evidently not been forgotten by those at Washington, D. C., who had known of his experience in Indian affairs, for he now received an appointment to proceed to Mendota at the juncture of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers and there, in connection with Governor Ramsay of the Territory of Minnesota, negotiate a treaty of cession with the Sioux Indians.

He left Maysville on Thursday, September 6, 1849, with his son-in-law, J. S. Forman. The trip by boat was a tedious one. They stopped at Ripley to see Francis Taylor, who fifty-two years before had made John Chambers his Deputy Clerk, and at Cincinnati they visited Frank Chambers.³⁸⁶ Then they passed on down the Ohio and up the Mississippi, reaching the site of Fort Snelling and Mendota after three long weeks.

Upwards of two thousand Indians had come together by the first of October, and several thousand more were expected. In front of the tent of Chambers on Sunday, the last day of September, they held a scalp-dance. These dances were repeated at various times during the negotiations being participated in by from three to five hundred at a time.³⁸⁷ Their annui-

ties were paid at this time, and great efforts were made during several weeks to secure a purchase of land; but no treaty was made, although Chambers refers to the negotiation as partially successful. Chambers returned to Kentucky in the winter, loaded down with Indian trinkets and relics for his grand-children.

Never did Chambers lose interest in his children and his grand-children. The latter looked up to him with something of fear and remembered him as a man of sternness, but they well knew the affection that lay beneath his dignified mien. In his letters he reveals his true self. The death of a child of his daughter Matilda brought from him in October, 1850, a letter full of sympathy and counsel. "It can avail little my child", he wrote, "to know that your aged father sympathizes with you in your distress, and feels more than from his old age, and recluse habits might be expected."³⁸⁸ He then spoke of some of his own sorrows in the three score and ten years of his life, and wondered that his heart had not long since broken.

Good counsel abounded in his letters to his children. "The great secret of human happiness consists in making others happy", he admonished his daughter Jane in a letter written from Washington, D. C., back in the days of his

Congressional career. He seldom mentioned religious subjects, but in this same letter he took occasion to speak very clearly of his ideas. He recommended to Jane the reading of the New Testament which, he wrote, contained "many of the finest moral precepts that ever were written." "No person", he continued, "was ever rendered worse by becoming a christian in belief and in faith, but many believers become intolerant, vindictive and grossly sinful by attaching themselves to sectarian doctrines and denouncing all who do not concur with them in their narrow views & sectarian prejudices. You would perhaps think it strange to be told my daughter that your father never lays his head down to rest without a deep and ardent expression of gratitude to the giver of all good for his daily bounty for his forbearance and mercy toward him and his beloved children and imploring the protection of a merciful providence".³⁸⁹

Though the years came on apace and sickness racked his body, Chambers did not descend into that doddering stage of senility that comes upon so many men. That the Kentucky spirit still burned fiercely in his seventy-first summer, is well shown by an incident which he detailed to his son Henry in a letter written in May, 1851. It is evident that the old man had an

unsettled account, not financial, which he desired to settle. His own words best tell the tale:

A few days ago I met a certain cousen of yours, who I have been indebted to for some time, but could not consent to pay him while his excellent father lived, that difficulty removed I apprised him some time ago that whenever a suitable occasion presented itself he would *get it*, so meeting on water street (no person in sight) I give him my stick over his head & upon his twisting it out of my hand & raising it as if to strike I struck him in the mouth with my fist & again near the eye and then taking out my pen knife I made him give up the stick & again struck him over the head, by that time several persons reached the field & put a stop to the scene I did not hurt him seriously nor did I intend it. My object was to disgrace him, and think even that was hardly necessary, for he is very much despised in town — it will however teach him that it is not entirely safe to lie even about an old man.³⁹⁰

Perhaps this encounter convinced the people of Mason County that the Old Kentuckian was still good for years of political service. At all events he wrote in June, 1851, to Henry to say that an attempt had been made to induce, “if not to force” him to become a candidate for the Senate of the State to represent Mason and Lewis counties. He over and over again had emphatically refused to sanction the use of his

name, but he feared that a public declaration would be necessary to keep them from nominating him. Four days later he said in a letter to his daughter Jane: "I believe I have got out of my political difficulty, for I have positively refused to suffer myself to be used as a candidate and after the meeting of the County convention (day after tomorrow) I suppose there will be no more said about it. Your excuse for me that I am upwards of 70 years old seemed to have no effect, for every body insisted that I was just as able to do service as ever I was — fools, they don't know how a man of seventy years old feels".³⁹¹

In fact his health was very poor at this time and he was restless. He visited various springs in search of relief, and made several visits to Paris. When cold weather came on he went out to the little town of Washington and spent the winter at the tavern. Here he began and laboriously finished the *Autobiography* which Henry had asked for. The request of Henry's had pleased him greatly and he had been happy in writing out the sketch even though it was a task of no small proportions to one so feeble. On December he wrote a long letter to Henry telling of his progress on the sketch and adding the impatient postscript: "I am reduced to

writing with a steel pen and would as soon dig potatoes with a negroe mall." ³⁹² In January he completed the autobiographical sketch and sent it to Henry. ³⁹³

Before March began he had moved out to Paris and was living at the home of his daughter Matilda. It was his last move. In the late summer he found himself no longer able to sit up; and in the middle of the afternoon of September 21, 1852, he died at the home of his daughter, Matilda Brent, at Paris. ³⁹⁴ His body was taken on the following day to the town of Washington, and there he was buried near the scenes of his young days, the old turnpike road, the court house where he had argued so many cases, and the old home at Cedar Hill where he and Hannah had spent so many happy years.

No tombstone marks the grave of John Chambers. The wild grass and bushes overrun the spot. But the life of the big-hearted Old Kentuckian finds its symbol in a large pine, sturdy and straight, that reaches long branches out over the place where he lies buried.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

NOTES AND REFERENCES

CHAPTER I

¹ In the *Autobiography of John Chambers*, written during the last year of his life, appears the following statement concerning the ancestors of Governor Chambers:

I have understood that they were of Scotch origin, and from a conversation between my father and a very aged Scotchman when I was a boy, I learned that my more remote ancestors were of the Scotch clan Cameron, and bore the name of the clan, but refusing to join in the rebellion of 1645, they were compelled to emigrate, and took shelter in Ireland, changing their name to Chambers, which they were afterwards permitted by an act of the British Parliament to retain.

An effort was made by Mr. Jacob Van der Zee to verify these statements by an examination of materials in Oxford and London, but no substantiating evidence was found.

This *Autobiography*, which was recently secured by Benj. F. Shambaugh from Mrs. Henry Chambers, has been edited by John C. Parish and published by The State Historical Society of Iowa. The original manuscript has been for over half a century in the possession of the family of Henry Chambers, the youngest son of the Governor. Constant use has been made of the material given therein. It will be referred to in these pages as the *Autobiography of John Chambers*.

² Many of the facts concerning the family of John Chambers have been gathered from an unpublished *Chambers Genealogy*, compiled from old letters, wills, family Bibles, and other original records by Mr. Harry Brent Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky, a great grandson of Governor John Chambers. A copy of this manuscript was kindly loaned to The State Historical Society of Iowa by Mr. Mackoy for use in the preparation of this volume. It will be referred to herein as Mackoy's *Chambers Genealogy (Manuscript)*.

³ Chambers makes the statement in his *Autobiography* that his grandfather, James Chambers, settled on the Juniata River, while Mackoy places his as well as his father's location as given in the text.— See *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 1; and Mackoy's *Chambers Genealogy (Manuscript)*.

⁴ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 2.

⁵ Mackoy's *Chambers Genealogy (Manuscript)*.

⁶ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 5.

⁷ There is in the possession of Mr. Harry Brent Mackoy a certificate from the office of the Adjutant General, Trenton, New Jersey, to the effect that Rowland Chambers served as a private in Jacob Ten Eyck's Company, First Battalion, Somerset County, New Jersey Militia, during the Revolution. John Chambers makes the assertion in his *Autobiography* (p. 5) that his father was in command of a regiment of New Jersey militia and the statement receives credit by Mackoy.

⁸ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 7.

⁹ Hulbert's *Historic Highways of America*, Vol. XI, pp. 156, 157.

¹⁰ Chapter III in Volume XI of Hulbert's *Historic Highways of America* is devoted to a discussion of Zane's Trace and the Maysville Pike.

¹¹ The famous Wilderness Road which pierced the mountain wall at Cumberland Gap, and over which so many thousand of Kentucky's pioneers traveled, was laid out by Daniel Boone in 1775.—See Roosevelt's *The Winning of the West*, Vol. I, p. 302, 303; and Hulbert's *Historic Highways of America*, Vol. VI.

¹² Collins's *History of Kentucky*, Vol. I.

¹³ Hening's *Statutes of Virginia*, Vol. XII, p. 361.

CHAPTER II

¹⁴ A stone over the front doorway bears the initials (L. C.) of the builder, Lewis Craig, and the date 1794. From this time until 1848, when Maysville was made the county seat, this building was the scene of hundreds of historic meetings and the forum of a half century of Kentucky eloquence. In the front court yard was held many a slave sale, and it was while watching one of these scenes that Harriet Beecher Stowe, a visitor in the town, conceived the idea of the slave sale in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. [In 1909, after the above was written, the court-house was destroyed by fire.]

¹⁵ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 7, 8.

¹⁶ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 8.

¹⁷ Francis Taylor was the son of Major Ignatius Taylor of Hagerstown, Maryland, by his first wife. He came from Hagerstown to Kentucky in his early manhood and was a very successful lawyer.

¹⁸ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 9, 10.

¹⁹ *Rules of the Washington District Court*, pp. 59-60. This ancient record of cases coming before the District Court in Washington is preserved in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court at Maysville, Mason County, Kentucky.

²⁰ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 28. An effort was made by the writer to find the records of the town of Washington, both in Washington and in Maysville, but without success. The county records, however, were safely transferred from Washington to Maysville when the latter place was made the county seat, and are preserved in excellent condition.

²¹ The license of John Chambers to practice law "in any of the Courts within this Commonwealth" has been preserved by his descendants. It is a sheepskin manuscript, yellow with age but still clearly legible. It bears the date of November 5, 1800, and is signed by John Coburn and John Allen, before whom he appeared for examination.

CHAPTER III

²² *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 10. Just when Rowland Chambers and his wife returned to Washington is difficult to say. John Chambers says that he proposed their removal in the spring of 1801

and "soon accomplished" it. *Order Book A* (p. 100), however, of the Bracken County Court shows that on July 4, 1801, Rowland Chambers qualified as a Justice of Peace of that County.

²³ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 12.

²⁴ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 14.

²⁵ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 14.

²⁶ These volumes are now preserved in the Office of the Clerk of the Circuit Court of Mason County, at Maysville, Kentucky.

²⁷ *Record of Personal Actions, A*, Circuit Court of Mason County, Kentucky.

²⁸ *Record of Personal Actions, B*, Circuit Court of Mason County, Kentucky.

²⁹ *Record of Personal Actions, B*, Circuit Court of Mason County, Kentucky.

³⁰ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 39.

³¹ Ignatius Taylor, the father-in-law of John Chambers by both his first and second marriages, was married three times, in each case marrying a widow who had children by a former marriage. His first wife was Mrs. Ann Parran (née Wilkinson) and their children were Francis Taylor, and Ann Taylor who married one Joseph Sprigg. The second wife of Ignatius Taylor was a Mrs. Jourdan, and their only child was Margaret Taylor, the first wife of John Chambers. Ignatius Taylor's third wife was Mrs. Hall (Barbara Bowie) and their oldest daughter was Hannah Taylor, the second wife of John Chambers. The above facts are taken largely from manuscript

notes in the possession of Mr. Harry B. Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky.

³² *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 15.

³³ Cedar Hill is now owned by Mr. Lucien Maltby, by whom the house has been recently remodeled and improved. Aside from the addition of a porch extending across the entire front of the house, in place of the original one which was much smaller, the general effect of the house has been little changed. The old fireplaces and mantels, the walnut hand rail and the simple balusters of the graceful stairway remain as before, and at every turn one feels the spell of the former days.

³⁴ Manuscript letter from Jane Chambers Forman to Governor John Chambers, February 5, 1842.

³⁵ These miniatures are now in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers, of Louisville, Kentucky. Plates were first made from them for the *Autobiography of John Chambers*. In this volume they appear opposite page 26.

³⁶ Manuscript letter from Throckmorton Forman to Mrs. M. B. Mackoy, February 6, 1893.

³⁷ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 16. There is in the Historical Department at Des Moines a letter from John Chambers to Messrs. N. Poyntz and Company of Maysville, Kentucky, dated January 18, 1832, itemizing a quantity of rope which he was sending to that company for sale by them. The ropewalk was finally sold to John S. Forman, a son-in-law of John Chambers.

CHAPTER IV

³⁸ Shaler's *Kentucky*, p. 158.

³⁹ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 16, 17.

⁴⁰ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1812-1813, p. 9.

⁴¹ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1812-1813, pp. 3, 4.

⁴² *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1812-1813, pp. 6, 8.

⁴³ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1812-1813, pp. 58, 74, 110, 111.

⁴⁴ *Laws of Kentucky*, 1812-1813, p. 106.

⁴⁵ For accounts of this engagement, see Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, pp. 72-98; also Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, pp. 354-360.

⁴⁶ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ *Laws of Kentucky*, 1812-1813, p. 99.

⁴⁸ This letter, written from Frankfort on August 20, 1813, was found in the possession of Mr. Throckmorton Forman of Cincinnati, Ohio.

⁴⁹ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 20.

⁵⁰ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 20

⁵¹ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 20, 21.

⁵² *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 21.

⁵³ Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 130.

Richardson's *War of 1812* (Casselman edition), p. 206. John Richardson was a Major in the army of Procter and his account is valuable because of the British view point which it gives.

⁵⁴ Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 133.

⁵⁵ Richardson's *War of 1812* (Casselman edition), p. 212; Henry Adams's *History of the United States*, Vol. VII, p. 140; and Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, p. 556.

⁵⁶ M'Afee's *History of the Late War in the Western Country*, p. 398; and Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*, p. 555.

⁵⁷ Report of General Harrison to John Armstrong, Secretary of War, October 9, 1813.

⁵⁸ This letter, dated October 14, 1813, was found in the possession of Mr. Throckmorton Forman of Cincinnati, Ohio.

CHAPTER V

⁵⁹ In *Circuit Order Book, H*, p. 411, of the Mason County Circuit Court, proceedings are recorded for the May term, 1816, involving the firm of Chambers and Taylor. In *Circuit Order Book, I*, p. 163, further proceedings in the same case are recorded for the November term, 1816, and John Chambers is here mentioned as the surviving partner of the late firm of Chambers and Taylor.

⁶⁰ This information is given in a letter from William Paxton, son of James A. Paxton, to Throckmor-

ton Forman. The relationship is mentioned in the *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 26.

⁶¹ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 22.

⁶² *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1815-1816, *passim*.

⁶³ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 22.

⁶⁴ The commission of John Chambers as Justice of Peace is in the County Clerk's Office at Maysville, Kentucky, and bears the date May 11, 1819. See also *Register of Justices* in the State House at Frankfort, Kentucky. His resignation is recorded in a manuscript volume entitled *County Order K*, on June 7, 1823. This series of records is preserved in the Office of County Clerk at Maysville, Kentucky, and is the official account of the doings of the County Court, which consisted of the Justices of the Peace of the county, meeting as one body. The office of Justice was filled by commission from the Governor, upon nominations made by the Justices of each county. At the February term of the Mason County Court, in 1819, a majority of the Justices met and recommended John Chambers and James A. Paxton as proper persons from whom the Governor might choose a Justice. It is presumable that Chambers and Paxton were at this time law partners.—See *County Court Order Book, H*, p. 291.

⁶⁵ Chambers was nominated for this position on February 12, 1820, and commissioned two days later.—See *Executive Journal of Governors Madison and Slaughter*, 1816-1820, pp. 219, 221. The original vol-

umes here referred to are in the State House at Frankfort, Kentucky.

⁶⁶ The most detailed account of this period of monetary difficulties of which the writer has knowledge is an extended article on *The Old and New Court Struggle*, by W. H. Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky, appearing in *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*, pp. 304-318. The manuscript of this article was kindly loaned to the writer by Mr. Mackoy and has proven of great service in the preparation of the present chapter. Good accounts are also given in Collins's *History of Kentucky*, in Smith's *The History of Kentucky*, and in Shaler's *Kentucky*. Much original material is to be found in the newspapers of the time, in the *Journals* and *Laws* of the Kentucky Legislature and in the reports of the Court of Appeals. In Frankfort two weekly publications reflected the partisanship of the contest. These were the *Patriot*, the organ of the New Court Party, and the *Spirit of '76*, representing the Old Court. The issues of *Niles' Register* also contain much good material.

⁶⁷ Mackoy's *The Old and New Court Struggle* in *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*.

⁶⁸ Mackoy's *The Old and New Court Struggle* in *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*.

⁶⁹ Mackoy's *The Old and New Court Struggle* in *The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*.

⁷⁰ The Bank of Kentucky had for many years existed on a sound basis. Recently, due to the demand made upon it by the United States Bank for the payment of its notes, it had been forced to suspend specie

payments. The financial legislation on the part of Kentucky gradually forced it into bankruptcy, and in 1822 its charter was repealed.

⁷¹ Sumner's *History of American Currency*, pp. 81, 84; Mackoy's *The Old and New Court Struggle in The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*.

⁷² Blair v. Williams, 4 Littell 34. This case was appealed from the decision of Judge Clark of the Bourbon Circuit Court, who had held the law unconstitutional.

⁷³ The decision in the case of Blair v. Williams was given on October 8, 1823. See also the decision in the case of Lapsley v. Brashears, 4 Littell 47, given by the Court of Appeals on October 11, 1823.

⁷⁴ The Reorganizing Act was approved on December 24, 1824.—See *Laws of Kentucky, 1824-1825*, p. 44. A few days later an act was approved increasing the salary of the Judges of the Court of Appeals to \$2000.—*Laws of Kentucky, 1824-1825*, p. 107.

⁷⁵ The records of the New Court are contained in a volume of one hundred and fifty-two pages containing one hundred and sixty-one decisions.—Mackoy's *The Old and New Court Struggle in The Lawyers and Lawmakers of Kentucky*.

⁷⁶ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. IX, No. 428. March 12, 1825. The most extensive files of Kentucky newspapers of the early period now in existence are in the private library of Colonel Reuben T. Durrett of Louisville, Kentucky.

⁷⁷ *Laws of Kentucky, 1826-1827*, p. 13.

CHAPTER VI

⁷⁸ *The Eagle* (Maysville), November 10, 1824. The most complete files of this paper, as of the *Commentator* referred to above, are in the private library of Colonel Reuben T. Durrett of Louisville, Kentucky.

⁷⁹ *Laws of Kentucky, 1824-1825*, p. 25.

⁸⁰ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 197.

⁸¹ Mr. Barry took the oath of office as Secretary of State on September 2, 1824.—See *Executive Journal of Governor Joseph Desha, 1824-1825*, in the State House at Frankfort, Kentucky.

⁸² The election of Mr. Rowan as Senator occurred on November 5, 1824.—See *Executive Journal of Governor Joseph Desha, 1824-1825*.

⁸³ *Niles' Register*, Vol. XXV, pp. 275, 276, January 3, 1824.

⁸⁴ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. IX, No. 423, February 5, 1825.

⁸⁵ Among the rare volumes in the private library of Colonel Reuben T. Durrett of Louisville, Kentucky, is a book of about two hundred twenty pages entitled *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*. It was compiled by Robert S. Thomas and George W. Williams and published in 1825. The indictment, the testimony of the witnesses, the speeches of four of the attorneys, and the procedure in the first trial are contained herein and form the most valuable source of information for the present chapter.

⁸⁶ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 31.

⁸⁷ This name is spelled variously as Elismon, Elizbon, and Elisbon.

⁸⁸ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. IX, No. 423, February 5, 1825.

⁸⁹ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, pp. 160-177.

⁹⁰ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 161.

⁹¹ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 162.

⁹² Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 162.

⁹³ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, pp. 178-196.

⁹⁴ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 181.

⁹⁵ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 181.

⁹⁶ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 197.

⁹⁷ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 197.

⁹⁸ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, p. 198.

⁹⁹ Thomas and Williams's *A Statement of the Trial of Isaac B. Desha*, pp. 214, 215.

¹⁰⁰ *The Eagle* (Maysville), February 9, 1825.

¹⁰¹ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. IX, No. 431, April 2, 1825.

¹⁰² *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. IX, No. 443, June 25, 1825. This paper estimated the monthly cost of keeping and guarding the prisoner at two hundred dollars.

¹⁰³ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), September 17, 1825.

¹⁰⁴ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), October 1, 1825. This issue contains the following item in regard to the Deshas:

This family hangs heavily upon the Treasury — the father draws 2000 as his salary — the son-in-law draws 1000 as secretary of state — and Isaac B. the son, in less than one year, has cost the Commonwealth \$3000, as a culprit arraigned under the charge of a small offense of murder, of assassinating an innocent and unarmed traveller. Long will the people of Kentucky remember the reign of JOSEPH I.

¹⁰⁵ *The Maysville Eagle*, June 14, 1826.

¹⁰⁶ *The Maysville Eagle*, July 12, 1826.

¹⁰⁷ *Laws of Kentucky*, 1824-1825, p. 25. The action of Judge Brown in this case received much adverse comment, and the next legislature discussed the question of subjecting his conduct to an official investigation.—See *Journals of House and Senate*, 1826-1827, *passim*.

¹⁰⁸ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. XI, No. 71, June 30, 1827.

¹⁰⁹ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. XI, No. 71, June 30, 1827.

¹¹⁰ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. XI, No. 71, June 30, 1827.

¹¹¹ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. XII, No. 139, October 18, 1828.

CHAPTER VII

¹¹² *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. VII, No. 39, August 8, 1827.

¹¹³ *The Maysville Eagle*, December 26, 1827.

¹¹⁴ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. VIII, No. 30, June 4, 1828.

¹¹⁵ The official returns made by the Sheriffs of the various counties gave Metcalfe a majority of only 709 votes in a total of over 77,000. Underwood, who was the candidate of the National Republicans for Lieutenant Governor, was defeated by the Democratic candidate, Breathitt, by a majority of slightly over 1000 votes.—See *The Maysville Eagle* for August 27, 1828.

¹¹⁶ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. VIII, No. 40, August 13, 1828.

¹¹⁷ Shaler's *Kentucky*, pp. 185, 186.

¹¹⁸ The vacancy on the Supreme Court bench was caused by the death of Robert Trimble and was filled through the appointment of John McLean by President Jackson.

¹¹⁹ Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, p. 79.

¹²⁰ Manuscript letter from Mrs. Hannah T. Chambers to John Chambers, December 15, 1828.

¹²¹ Manuscript letter from Mrs. Hannah T. Chambers to John Chambers, February 3, 1829.

¹²² Manuscript letter from Mrs. Hannah T. Chambers to John Chambers, December 19, 1828.

¹²³ In the *Annals of Iowa* for July, 1871, Vol. IX, p. 553, there appears an excellent sketch of Governor Chambers written but not signed by his oldest son, Joseph Sprigg Chambers. It is based largely upon the *Autobiography*, but contains much that came from personal knowledge. In the sketch the writer tells of the introduction by Chambers in Congress of a bill granting a pension to General Simon Kenton, the famous Kentucky pioneer, and of his father's speech in favor of the bill which secured its passage; and he goes on to recount an affecting scene in Chambers's law office, when Kenton, having walked all the way from his home on the Mad River in Ohio, came to thank his friend for his service. The incident is probably based on fact, but the forty years intervening perhaps dimmed the writer's memory somewhat, for the bill which granted twenty dollars a month as a pension for Simon Kenton was approved on May 28, 1830, at a session when Chambers was not a member of Congress.—See *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. VI, p. 434. It is probable that Chambers, who had known Kenton well, was instrumental in a private way in securing the pension.

¹²⁴ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. X, No. 37, July 20, 1830.

¹²⁵ Nelson's *Presidential Influence on the Policy of Internal Improvements in The Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, Vol. IV, pp. 40, 41, January, 1906.

Hulbert's *Historic Highways of America*, Vol. XI, pp. 167-174. The veto message of President Jackson was dated May 27, 1830, and is found in Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. II, pp. 483-493. This attitude had a very considerable influence in alienating the affections of the people of Kentucky from Andrew Jackson and building up the popularity of Henry Clay.

¹²⁶ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XI, No. 6, December 15, 1830.

¹²⁷ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1830-1831, p. 136. The date of the adoption of this resolution was December 29, 1830.

¹²⁸ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1830-1831, p. 156. The report occupies a little more than eight pages of the *Journal*.

¹²⁹ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XI, No. 10, January 11, 1831.

¹³⁰ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XI, No. 11, January 18, 1831.

¹³¹ *Laws of Kentucky*, 1830-1831, p. 117.

¹³² *Statute Laws of Kentucky*, Vol. V, p. 295.

¹³³ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), Vol. XV, No. 300, November 15, 1831.

¹³⁴ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1830-1831, p. 237.

¹³⁵ *The Commentator* (Frankfort), January 18, 1831.

¹³⁶ *The Maysville Eagle*, August 9, 1831.

¹³⁷ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1831, p. 280.

¹³⁸ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1831, p. 65.

¹³⁹ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XII, No. 6, December 13, 1831.

¹⁴⁰ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1831, p. 108.

¹⁴¹ *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XII, No. 6, December 13, 1831.

¹⁴² *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1831, *passim*. See also *The Commentator* (Frankfort), November 29, 1831.

¹⁴³ *Journal of House of Representatives* (Kentucky), 1831, p. 241. The final vote in the House was taken on December 15, 1831.

¹⁴⁴ *Laws of Kentucky, 1832-1833*, p. 258. The law was approved February 2, 1833.

¹⁴⁵ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 23. Chambers was also very active in local politics at this time. He was appointed as Chairman of the Committee of Correspondence for the Second Congressional District in December, 1831, and appointed as a delegate to the Cincinnati Tariff Convention. In the fall of the year 1832 he served as Chairman of the Committee of Vigilance for Mason County.

¹⁴⁶ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 41; and also *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XIII, No. 2, November 15, 1832.

¹⁴⁷ It is evident from his letters to his family during these years that his law practice was very extended, necessitating his attendance at the courts of Mason, Bracken, Fleming, Lewis, and other counties.

¹⁴⁸ Lucretia Chambers, the youngest child, was born March 14, 1830, and died on the fifth of March, 1836. — See *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 41.

¹⁴⁹ The oldest daughter of John and Hannah Chambers, Margaret Taylor Chambers, had, in 1826, married Hugh Innis Brent of Paris, Bourbon County, who was a brother of Charles Scott Brent.

¹⁵⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Mrs. Matilda Chambers Brent, February 21, 1835.

CHAPTER VIII

¹⁵¹ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 23. Chambers here places his resignation in April, but his memory is evidently at fault.— See also *The Maysville Eagle*, February 26, March 5, and March 26, 1835. The issue for March 26 said: “We speak the feelings of the bar here, and we believe of the country generally, when we express a regret that Mr. Chambers declines taking a seat upon the bench of the Supreme Court. It was a station where he could and would have been eminently useful — bringing to the decision of litigated cases a strong and clear judgment, extensive legal knowledge and a strictly impartial temper.”

¹⁵² The first announcement of his candidacy appears in *The Maysville Eagle* for April 16, 1835.— See also the *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 23.

¹⁵³ The last named of these candidates, Adam Beatty, lived a long life in Mason County, holding many positions of public honor. In his last years Chambers writes affectionately of his old friend Adam Beatty.

¹⁵⁴ Williams expressed himself as in favor of the Bank of the United States, but stated that he was not in favor of a re-charter but a charter of another similar bank, fearing that if a re-charter were granted “the Bank would take it as a triumph over the government, and would be likely to run into the very practices with which she has been charged by the Administration.”— See *The Maysville Eagle* for May, June, and July, 1835.

¹⁵⁵ The last election returns, reported in *The Maysville Eagle* for August 13, 1835, gave Chambers 1148 votes in Mason County against 274 for Tanner; while in the entire district the vote was 3155 for Chambers and 1365 for Tanner.

¹⁵⁶ At a celebration of the Battle of Tippecanoe held at Paris, Kentucky, on November 7, 1835, Chambers delivered a speech in praise of General Harrison and closed with the following toast: “*The memory of the brave Kentuckians — who fell in battle in the late war — History has recorded their gallant deeds, but the State owes a monument of marble to their memory.*”— *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, November 18, 1835.

¹⁵⁷ Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. III, pp. 97-101. The message alluded to was the regular annual message of December 1, 1834. The diplomatic correspondence may be found very largely in the documents sent to Congress during the last session of the Twenty-third Congress and the first session of the Twenty-fourth Congress and published in the above volume of Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*.

¹⁵⁸ *Journal of the House of Representatives*, 1835-1836, Twenty-fourth Congress, First Session, p. 165.

¹⁵⁹ The explanation of the attitude of Chambers upon this resolution is given in an extract, published in *The Maysville Eagle* for February 6, 1836, from a letter of Chambers. With respect to the anticipated war he remarked: "There is, and will be a sad shrinkage, in the ranks of our party on the war question; for myself I have no fears about it; if a war becomes inevitable, I shall go as far, in support of it, as others who will be more ready to rush into it."

¹⁶⁰ Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. III, p. 188. This message is dated January 15, 1836.

¹⁶¹ *The Congressional Globe*, Twenty-fourth Congress, First Session, 1835-1836, pp. 196, 204, 238.

¹⁶² *The Maysville Eagle*, March 16, 1836. The account of the first speech of Chambers against the bill is quoted from the *Paris Citizen*. The same issue of the *Eagle* contains an account of a second speech delivered on March 8, 1836.

¹⁶³ Henry A. Wise was for many years an active and very intense Representative from the State of Virginia. Upon his appearance in the House the following comment is made by John Quincy Adams in his Diary: "He is coming forward as a successor of John Randolph, with his tartness, his bitterness, his malignity and his inconsistencies." — *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. IX, p. 88.

¹⁶⁴ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Lucretia Stull, April 3, 1836, found in the possession of Mrs. Hannah Chambers Forman of Chicago. Lucretia Stull was at this time on a visit at Cedar Hill. She was a daughter of O. H. W. Stull, Secretary of the Territory of Iowa during the first part of the administration of Governor Chambers. O. H. W. Stull had married Letitia Sprigg Hall, a half sister of Hannah Taylor, the second wife of John Chambers. Hannah Taylor had also two full sisters — Jane, who married Judge Samuel Treat, and Lucretia, who married Arthur Fox of Mason County.— See Bowie's *The Bowies and their Kindred*, pp. 51, 52.

¹⁶⁵ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Lucretia Stull, April 3, 1836, found in the possession of Mrs. Hannah Chambers Forman of Chicago.

¹⁶⁶ The first announcement of the candidacy of Chambers for reelection appeared in *The Maysville Eagle* for March 15, 1837. A little over a month later a call appeared signed "Many Voters", requesting Thomas Metcalfe to become a candidate. Metcalfe replied in a lengthy communication in which he declined to oppose the candidacy of Chambers. The fol-

lowing quotation from his remarks illustrates the change of attitude of the Southern Whigs toward John Quincy Adams by reason of his espousal of the right of petition :

Led on, by the man no longer a patriot in fact, whatever he may be in design, who but recently filled with my most cordial approbation the first office in the world (and filled it nobly and patriotically too) the mock philanthropists of the North (unless they are frowned into silence by the virtuous and patriotic portion of the North itself) will never resist [desist] from their diabolical assaults, until with *one heart and one mind* we repel their wicked intermeddling with the *institutions of the South*—institutions which they have no moral or constitutional right to disturb.—See *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), May 3, 1837.

¹⁶⁷ *Journal of House of Representatives*, Twenty-fifth Congress, First Session, September-October, 1837, *passim*.

¹⁶⁸ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. III, No. 4, November 15, 1837.

¹⁶⁹ *The Congressional Globe*, Twenty-fifth Congress, First Session, September-October, 1837, p. 141.

¹⁷⁰ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. II, No. 207, October 28, 1837.

¹⁷¹ See above p. 69.—Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, p. 79.

¹⁷² This speech was delivered at Washington, Kentucky, on November 13, 1837, and is reported in *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. III, No. 4, November 15, 1837.

¹⁷³ The Pinckney resolutions were three in number,

and were voted upon separately. They were as follows:

1. *Resolved*, That Congress possesses no constitutional authority to interfere, in any way, with the institution of slavery in any of the States of this confederacy.
2. *Resolved*, That Congress ought not to interfere, in any way, with slavery in the District of Columbia.
3. *Resolved*, That all petitions, memorials, resolutions, propositions, or papers, relating in any way or to any extent whatever to the subject of slavery, or the abolition of slavery, shall, without being either printed or referred, be laid upon the table, and that no further action whatever shall be had thereon.

The first resolution passed the House on May 25, 1836, by a vote of 182 to 9. The second and third were passed on the day following with votes, respectively, of 132 to 45 and 117 to 68. In none of three cases did John Chambers cast a vote.—See *Journal of House of Representatives*, Twenty-fourth Congress, First Session, 1835-1836, pp. 876, 881, 884.

¹⁷⁴ One of the most remarkable commentaries upon American politics is the *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*. This work comprises portions of his diary from 1795 to 1848 and is full of the most valuable material throwing light on American history and biography.

¹⁷⁵ *Journal of House of Representatives*, Twenty-fourth Congress, First Session, 1835-1836, p. 884.

Journal of House of Representatives, Twenty-fourth Congress, Second Session, 1836-1837, p. 236.

Journal of House of Representatives, Twenty-fifth Congress, Second Session, 1837-1838, p. 129.

Journal of House of Representatives, Twenty-fifth Congress, Third Session, 1838-1839, p. 70.

¹⁷⁶ This attitude is clearly shown in the remarks of Southern members on December 12, 1838, when the resolutions known as the Atherton Gag were passed. The resolutions were introduced by Charles G. Atherton of New Hampshire. The first four declared that Congress had no jurisdiction over slavery in the several States; that the petitions for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia and the Territories was a part of a plan to affect the institution in the States, that the agitation of the subject of slavery in the District of Columbia or the Territories was an infringement of the rights of the States and a breach of the public faith; and that Congress had no right to discriminate between the institutions of the various portions of the Union. The fifth resolution declared that all attempts by Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia or the Territories were in violation of the constitution and closed with the provision that all petitions or papers relating in any way to slavery should be laid upon the table without being debated, printed, or referred.

The resolutions were divided and passed in eight sections. Chambers voted for six out of the eight. On the last vote, which concerned the tabling of petitions, a number of Southern members balked. Wise of Virginia denounced the entire series, declaring that they were not Southern measures. Upon the last proposition he stated that since it admitted the right of petition on that subject, he should refuse to vote for it. Mr. Jenifer of Maryland inquired if the affirmation of the last proposition would not be identical with a virtual reception of all petitions on the aboli-

tion of slavery by the House. He was told by Speaker Polk that each gentleman must interpret for himself. Mr. Pope of Kentucky, who had voted for the first seven propositions asked to be excused from voting on the eighth on the ground that he did not wish to affirm the reception of abolition petitions, and further, that it was inconsistent with the previous propositions. Any vote he could give, he said, would be misconstrued. "On similar grounds to those of his colleague", says the *Congressional Globe*, Chambers also wished to be excused. The motions were refused, but none of these men voted.—See *Congressional Globe*, Twenty-fifth Congress, Third Session, 1838-1839, pp. 22, 23, 25, 26; and *Journal of House of Representatives*, Twenty-fifth Congress, Third Session, 1838-1839, pp. 53-71.

In a speech on a bill for civil and diplomatic appropriations, Mr. Pope digressed until called to order in an explanation of his views in favor of denying the right of petition on the subject of slavery.—*Congressional Globe*, Twenty-fifth Congress, Third Session, 1838-1839, Appendix, p. 345.

¹⁷⁷ Birney's *James G. Birney and his Times*, pp. 166, 167, 432.

¹⁷⁸ *Niles' Register* for November 24, 1838, contains a letter from Mahan to Governor Vance dated at Washington, Kentucky, on October 4, 1838, in which he speaks of his imprisonment at that place loaded with irons awaiting the time of trial. He denies having expressed any disapprobation of the action of Governor Vance, but declares himself innocent of the

crime charged, not having been in Mason County for nineteen years.

¹⁷⁹ Birney's *James G. Birney and his Times*, p. 340. *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. III, No. 98, October 10, 1838. See also in *The Works of Henry Clay* (Colton, Reid, McKinley edition), Vol. IV, p. 430, a letter from Henry Clay to Francis Brooke, November 3, 1838.

¹⁸⁰ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 6, November 21, 1838. This issue contains a good account of the trial. It is made more widely accessible by being copied in *Niles' Register* for December 1, 1838. Other mentions of the case are found in the issues of *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), for October and November and in *Niles' Register*, Vol. LV, pp. 114, 164, 195.

¹⁸¹ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 6, November 21, 1838. William Henry Smith in his *Political History of Slavery*, Vol. I, p. 44, states that "the testimony against him related merely to acts done in Ohio, and was given by a single witness of disreputable character, who admitted on cross examination that he had practiced a system of gross deception."

¹⁸² *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 6, November 21, 1838.

¹⁸³ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. VI, No. 5, November 21, 1840. As a result, perhaps, of alarm felt in Kentucky over such instances as the Mahan case, James T. Morehead and J. Speed Smith were

sent by the State of Kentucky to Ohio for the purpose of procuring the passage of laws by the legislature of that State for the prevention of interference with the slave property of Kentucky by "evil disposed parties" in Ohio. Their mission undertaken in the early months of 1839 was reported as successful, a satisfactory law having passed the Ohio legislature.—*The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), February 9, 1839, and March 2, 1839.

¹⁸⁴ *Journal of House of Representatives*, Twenty-fifth Congress, Third Session, 1838-1839, p. 42.

¹⁸⁵ Quoted in *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 33, February 23, 1839.

¹⁸⁶ *The Green River Gazette*, quoted in *The Maysville Eagle*, Vol. XIX, No. 38, July 24, 1839.

CHAPTER IX

¹⁸⁷ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 21, January 12, 1839.—See also the *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 23.

¹⁸⁸ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), July 10, August 28, and September 11, 1839. At the State Convention at Lexington on August 12, 1839, a State Silk Society was organized and a constitution drawn up. Chambers was appointed as chairman of a committee of eight to bring before the State legislature at its next session a memorial urging the advantages of silk culture and asking State patronage in the way of bounties and protective laws.

¹⁸⁹ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 63, June 8, 1839.

¹⁹⁰ *The Maysville Eagle* (weekly), Vol. XIX, No. 38, July 24, 1839.

¹⁹¹ The State Convention met at Harrodsburg on August 26, 1839, with Thomas Metcalfe as President. Francis T. Chambers was a delegate from Mason County. The only two names balloted upon were Robert P. Letcher and William Owsley, the vote being 48 to 26 in favor of the former.—*The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), September 4, 1839.

¹⁹² *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. IV, No. 81, August 10, 1839.

¹⁹³ In a speech delivered in February, 1839, in the United States Senate he supported a petition against the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and attacked the abolition movement with considerable vigor.— See Schurz's *Henry Clay*, Vol. II, pp. 165-169.

¹⁹⁴ The so-called National Convention of the Anti-Masonic party met at Philadelphia in November, 1838, and nominated Harrison and Webster.

¹⁹⁵ The National Convention of the Whig party opened on December 4, 1839, at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. For reasons of expediency it abandoned Henry Clay and nominated William Henry Harrison and John Tyler.

¹⁹⁶ This remark seems to have been made by a friend of Clay in commenting on the Harrisburg Convention and found its way to fame through the columns of the *Baltimore Republican*.

¹⁹⁷ The descendants of Governor Chambers tell of

a cut glass decanter which was presented by Henry Clay to John Chambers as a token of their friendship.

¹⁹⁸ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 23. Even as early as 1816 Harrison had found faithful support in matters of political import from his aids. In April of that year C. S. Todd wrote to Harrison in regard to the latter's candidacy for Congress and mentions writing to Butler, Chambers, and Smith, conformably to the request of Harrison, asking them for statements as to their General's conduct at the Battle of the Thames.—See Manuscript letters from C. S. Todd to William Henry Harrison, April 23 and April 25, 1816.—*Draper Mss.* 5 X, Library of State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

¹⁹⁹ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 39, March 18, 1840.

²⁰⁰ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 41, March 25, 1840.

²⁰¹ This meeting was held on March 23, 1840. Seven clubs were represented.—See *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 41, March 25, 1840.

²⁰² A detailed account of this celebration is most graphically given in *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly) for April 15, 1840. It is perhaps a fair sample of the hundreds of Harrison celebrations held throughout the country but most pronounced in the West, where liquor flowed more freely than logic and more attention was paid to the needs of the stomach of the individual voter than to the needs of the country at large.

²⁰³ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 92, September 23, 1840. The reports of this celebration were in the form of letters sent by Lewis Collins, the editor, who attended the meeting in Ohio.

²⁰⁴ *Niles' Register*, Vol. LIX, p. 56, September 26, 1840.

²⁰⁵ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 95, October 3, 1840. At this celebration at Ripley, Francis Taylor, the brother-in-law of John Chambers, is reported to have presided and to have entertained General Harrison.—Notes in possession of Harry Brent Mackoy of Covington, Kentucky.

²⁰⁶ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. V, No. 100, October 21, 1840.

CHAPTER XI

²⁰⁷ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 24.

²⁰⁸ Letter from John J. Crittenden to R. P. Letcher, February 9, 1841.—See Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, pp. 143, 144.

²⁰⁹ *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. X, p. 416.

²¹⁰ John Quincy Adams mentions the announcement of cabinet appointments as early as February 12, 1841.

²¹¹ *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. X, p. 439.

²¹² Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. IV, pp. 5-21.

²¹³ McMaster's *History of the People of the United States*, Vol. VI, p. 600. From a letter written by Chambers to Crittenden on December 27, 1841, it ap-

pears that other changes were proposed by Webster which were not made, and that Webster and Chambers were involved in a somewhat bitter altercation as a result thereof.

I have repeatedly thought of writing to Mr. Ewing to ask him to bear in recollection a conversation between that man [Webster] and myself at which he was present, but it was too marked and the language too strong to have been forgotten. It related to the proposed change or rather grew out of the proposed change of the Inaugural address. If he had been a man of the high toned feeling which became the station he was about to take he could not have accepted it after the language he used on the occasion alluded to—his subsequent conduct proved to me that he deeply resented the rebuff he received and the necessity he was under of retracting his expressions, while he must have felt conscious that his manner shewed anything but honest regret for what he had said.

²¹⁴ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. VI, No. 41, March 27, 1841.

²¹⁵ The duties of private secretary were performed with the understanding that he was not to be formally appointed or known as such.— See *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 24, 25.

²¹⁶ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 24. Chambers here makes the statement that he was urged by some of the cabinet not to accept the post in Iowa, but to remain in Washington, D. C. “But” says Chambers, “I had upon very mature reflection come to the conclusion that the personal friend & confidant of a President was by no means so enviable a position as was generally supposed, and that the very reputation of occupying it was the certain means of creating unceasing & inveterate vituperation & slander.” It

is not improbable that the pressure from Cabinet members upon Chambers to remain at the Capital city arose from a desire to place some other party in the position in Iowa. *Niles' Register* for April 3, 1841, quotes the following from the *National Intelligencer*:

Col. John Chambers, of Kentucky, it will be perceived, is officially announced as being appointed by the president to be governor of the territory of Iowa. It is understood that the president tendered to him an office of greater emolument at the seat of the general government, but he preferred the station to which he is appointed.

²¹⁷ According to the Organic Law of the Territory of Iowa, he was to be paid \$1500 as Governor of the Territory and \$1000 additional as Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

²¹⁸ *Bloomington* [Iowa] *Herald*, Vol. I, No. 23, April 2, 1841. These candidates were Philip Viele and Joseph C. Hawkins.

²¹⁹ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot*, Vol. II, No. 40, March 4, 1841; *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. I, No. 23, April 2, 1841.

²²⁰ *Bloomington Herald*, Vol. I, No. 29, May 14, 1841. The story concerning Webster's candidate is quoted from the *New Hampshire Patriot*, published by Isaac Hill. The item also states that the nomination was tabled by the Senate at the instigation of Daniel Webster. This may be the biased version due to the partisan gulf that separated Isaac Hill and Daniel Webster. A few months later General James Wilson was appointed Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin.—See *The Miners' Express* (Dubuque), Vol. I, No. 8, September 25, 1841.

²²¹ Letter from John J. Crittenden to Orlando Brown, January 17, 1841.—Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, pp. 138, 139.

²²² Letter from John J. Crittenden to R. P. Letcher, February 9, 1841.—Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, pp. 143, 144.

²²³ Manuscript letter from Orlando Brown to John J. Crittenden, January 29, 1841. This letter is among the Crittenden manuscripts in the Manuscript Department of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

Orlando Brown was the son of John Brown, who represented the district of Kentucky in the Virginia legislature, served in the Congress of the Confederation in 1787 and 1788 and in the First and Second Congresses under the Constitution, and was for many years United States Senator from Kentucky.

²²⁴ Manuscript letter from R. P. Letcher to John J. Crittenden, February 26, 1841. This letter is among the Crittenden Manuscripts in the Manuscript Department of the Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²²⁵ *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. X, p. 444.

²²⁶ Letter from John J. Crittenden to R. P. Letcher, March 14, 1841.—Coleman's *Life of John J. Crittenden*, Vol. I, p. 150.

²²⁷ There have been carefully preserved four commissions issued to John Chambers as Governor of the Territory of Iowa. The first is dated March 25, 1841. It is signed by Harrison and declared in force until

the end of the next session of Congress. The second was issued by John Tyler on July 15, 1841, for a term of three years. On the second of July, 1844, John Tyler issued a new commission to extend to the close of the next session of Congress. December 23, 1844, he renewed the commission for a term of three years. The appointments were in all cases, however, subject to termination at the pleasure of the President and in 1845 President Polk removed Governor Chambers and appointed a Democrat in his place.

²²⁸ Report of attending and consulting physicians, April 4, 1841.—Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. IV, p. 31.

²²⁹ *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams*, Vol. X, pp. 454, 455.

²³⁰ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 25.

²³¹ See note 164.

²³² *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. VI, No. 48, April 21, 1841.

²³³ *The Maysville Eagle* (semi weekly), Vol. VI, No. 52, May 5, 1841.

CHAPTER X

²³⁴ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* (Burlington), Vol. II, No. 51, Thursday, May 20, 1841.

²³⁵ Parish's *Robert Lucas*, pp. 168, 194, 209, 210, 214.

²³⁸ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* (Burlington), Vol. II, No. 51, Thursday, May 20, 1841.

²³⁷ *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* (Burlington), Vol. II, No. 51, Thursday, May 20, 1841.

²³⁸ Manuscript letter to Jesse Williams, May 13, 1840 [1841] signed "The last half of the firm". This letter is among the unbound Jesse Williams manuscripts in the Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. The writer of this letter comments: "The Gov. I think is a pretty decent old fellow, and will manage things well enough if the Whigs will but leave him alone." The negroes who are here mentioned were probably Uncle Cassius, a dignified old body servant, and "Cary" Bennett, a young darkey whose mother had been a slave in the family. It is likely that Governor Chambers upon his arrival in Iowa gave them their freedom. Miss Mary Chambers, of Louisville, Kentucky, who accompanied her father Joseph Sprigg Chambers to Iowa in the spring of 1842, says that Cary remained in the Territory when the Governor returned to Kentucky; while Uncle Cassius moved back, doubtless because of affection for his old master.

²³⁹ As early as the time of Desha's trial he complained of ill health. In 1835 he refused for this reason a position on the Court of Appeals; and his letters during the last dozen years of his life give abundant indication that he suffered greatly at times.

²⁴⁰ The statements as to the height of John Chambers, given by those who knew him vary with a greatness that is but an indication of the frailty of human memory. Some have said that he was a man of about six feet in height. William Penn Clarke, who knew

him in Iowa, limits him to five feet, five inches, while Alfred Hebard described him as of medium height.

²⁴¹ Letter from Samuel W. Durham to William Penn Clarke, February 14, 1894, printed in Clarke's *Governor John Chambers* in the *Annals of Iowa* (Third Series), Vol. I, No. 6, p. 444, July, 1894.

²⁴² Almost the only letters of John Chambers (with the exception of those written as Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Iowa) of which the writer has knowledge are family letters, mostly written to and from his children and bearing dates from 1828 to 1852. These letters have been preserved by various of the descendants and are invaluable in giving an insight into the domestic nature and habits of Chambers. It is evident from the letters from his children that his fondness for them was returned by strong affection on their part.

²⁴³ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 40, 41.

²⁴⁴ The fact that Chambers took none of his children with him on the journey to Iowa in 1841 is abundantly proved by the letters written by various members of the family in the years 1841 and 1842. In numerous instances the letters close with a message of "love to our dear father, Aunt, uncle and cousins" or similar greeting — referring of course to the Stull family. But in none of the letters prior to his visit to Kentucky in the spring of 1842 is there a message sent to any brother or sister, a rather strong evidence if none other existed, that there was no brother or sister in Iowa at that time. However, specific references in letters to each of ten living sons and daugh-

ters prove them all to have been in Kentucky during the first year of the administration of Governor Chambers.

²⁴⁵ Manuscript letter to Jesse Williams, May 13, 1840 [1841], cited above, note 238.

²⁴⁶ Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa, 1838-1841*, p. 278.

²⁴⁷ Manuscript letter to Jesse Williams, May 13, 1840 [1841], cited above, note 238.

²⁴⁸ Governor Lucas, upon receipt of Webster's letter, answered expressing his surprise that he had not received any notice from Washington during the months intervening since the appointment of his successor and that he had received no communication from Governor Chambers. This letter is printed in Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa, 1838-1841*, pp. 277-279.

²⁴⁹ See above, note 213.

²⁵⁰ This version is told in the *New Hampshire Patriot* and quoted in the *Bloomington [Iowa] Herald*, Vol. I, No. 29, May 14, 1841. See above, note 220.

²⁵¹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to John J. Crittenden, December 27, 1841.—Crittenden Manuscripts, Manuscript Department, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²⁵² This building is still standing in good condition and is generally known as the Old Stone Capitol. It is used by The State University of Iowa, largely as an administration building. The corner stone was laid

in 1840, upon which occasion an address was delivered by Governor Robert Lucas.

²⁵³ This proclamation is given in Shambaugh's *Executive Journal of Iowa, 1838-1841*, p. 275. It created considerable comment in the Territory, being attacked fiercely by the Whig press as premature and without authority since Chambers had already received his commission. The latter argument at least was without basis since it was unquestionably the duty of Lucas to act as Governor until the arrival of his successor. The wisdom of the proclamation is perhaps open to question.

²⁵⁴ Manuscript letter from Bernhart Henn to Jesse Williams, June 20, 1841.— Jesse Williams Manuscripts, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

²⁵⁵ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to John J. Crittenden, December 27, 1841.— Crittenden Manuscripts, Manuscript Department, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

CHAPTER XII

²⁵⁶ *Organic Act of the Territory of Iowa*, sections 2 and 11.

²⁵⁷ *Iowa Standard* (Iowa City), Vol. I, No. 29, June 10, 1841. This paper, a Whig sheet, reports the meeting of the Democratic convention and upholds the leaders who had received the denunciation of the Democrats.

²⁵⁸ This feeling was less a spirit of partisanship than a result of local pride and ambition. It was in evi-

dence at various times during the administrations of both Lucas and Chambers.

²⁵⁹ The discussion of this dispute is perhaps taken up most exhaustively in Pelzer's *Augustus Caesar Dodge* and Parish's *Robert Lucas*. More brief accounts are given in various issues of the *Annals of Iowa* and the *Iowa Historical Record* and in other historical works dealing with the history of the Territory of Iowa.

²⁶⁰ Parish's *Robert Lucas*, pp. 245, 246.

²⁶¹ The letter from Reynolds to Chambers, dated November 10, 1841, and the reply written ten days later were submitted to the legislature in connection with his first annual message. Chambers made no recommendation in regard to the matter and no action was taken.— See Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 257-261.

²⁶² This building was erected by Walter Butler at his own expense with the understanding that he was to be reimbursed by the citizens of Iowa City. It was occupied until the Stone Capitol was ready for the accommodation of the legislature, but the public spirited Mr. Butler is said never to have received compensation for his outlay.

²⁶³ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 251.

²⁶⁴ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa* (extra session), July, 1840, p. 46.

²⁶⁵ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to J. J. Crittenden, December 27, 1841.— Crittenden Manu-

scripts, Manuscript Department, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²⁶⁶ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1841-1842*, p. 70.

²⁶⁷ The best discussion of the entire movement toward Statehood is given in Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*.

²⁶⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 289, 290.

²⁶⁹ The appointee of the legislature to this proposed office seems to have been Walter Butler, who had provided the temporary building for the use of the legislature at this session.— See the *Iowa Standard*, Vol. II, No. 11, February 12, 1842.

²⁷⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to J. J. Crittenden, December 27, 1841.— Crittenden Manuscripts, Manuscript Department, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

²⁷¹ Manuscript letters from John Chambers to John C. Spencer, February 1, 1842, and from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, March 19, 1842.— Manuscript volumes of letters of Governors of Territory of Iowa on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. The law required the Superintendents of Indian Affairs to procure sanction from the United States government for all absences.

²⁷² Manuscript letter from Acting Governor Stull to T. Hartley Crawford, April 2, 1842, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

²⁷³ Several letters by Stull are on file in the Office

of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

²⁷⁴ The date of the return of Chambers is unknown, but there is on file in the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C., a letter written by Chambers at Burlington, on May 13, 1842.

²⁷⁵ It is possible that Mary and Laura Chambers also accompanied their father at this time. This had been the plan, and for several months they had been looking forward to it with considerable eagerness. However, it seems more probable that John James and Henry, who had not hitherto planned to go, were taken in their place and that they came out at some later time. It is certain from the family letters, which give fragmentary information on these points, that the two girls were in Iowa in the winter of 1843 to 1844.

²⁷⁶ See Hebard's *An Indian Treaty and its Negotiation* in the *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. I, No. 5, April, 1894, p. 398.

²⁷⁷ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 262.

²⁷⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 266.

²⁷⁹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 268.

²⁸⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to John James and Henry Chambers, December 9, 1842, found in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky.

- ²⁸¹ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa, 1842-1843*, p. 82.
- ²⁸² *Shambaugh's Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 292.
- ²⁸³ Manuscript letter from M. T. Williams to Jesse Williams, July 16, 1843.—Jesse Williams Manuscripts, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.
- ²⁸⁴ *The Davenport Gazette*, Vol. III, No. 12, November 9, 1843.
- ²⁸⁵ Williams was appointed Secretary of the Territory in 1845 by President Polk and served for some time before the removal of Governor Chambers.
- ²⁸⁶ *Shambaugh's Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 271.
- ²⁸⁷ *Shambaugh's Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 271.
- ²⁸⁸ *Journal of the Council of the Territory of Iowa, 1843-1844*, pp. 46, 49.
- ²⁸⁹ *Shambaugh's Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 275.
- ²⁹⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to John James and Henry Chambers, December 25, 1843, found in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers, Louisville, Kentucky.
- ²⁹¹ The presence of Mary and Laura at Grouseland this winter is indicated by the letter of John Chambers to the two boys on Christmas day, written from Iowa City. He speaks of hearing from Mary that the boys were employing the long winter nights in reading and study and he closes by sending love to "your sisters Mary and Laura."

CHAPTER XIII

²⁹² An excellent treatment of the proceedings of this convention is given in Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, pp. 175-227. A great deal of valuable material is also included in Shambaugh's *Fragments of the Debates of the Iowa Constitutional Conventions of 1844 and 1846*.

²⁹³ *Hawk-Eye* (Burlington), Vol. VI, No. 8, July 18, 1844.

²⁹⁴ *Hawk-Eye* (Burlington), Vol. VI, No. 8, July 18, 1844.

²⁹⁵ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 41. John Chambers after the record of his death writes: "Thus ended one of the most amiable noble boys of his race."

²⁹⁶ Manuscript letters from Matilda Chambers Brent to John Chambers, November 9, 1844, and from Laura Chambers to John Chambers, November 4, 1844, found in the possession of Mrs. Hannah Chambers Forman of Chicago.

²⁹⁷ This manuscript petition is in a miscellaneous, unbound manuscript collection at the Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

²⁹⁸ The account of the Missouri-Iowa boundary dispute, from the standpoint of its consideration in Congress, is well told in Pelzer's *Augustus Caesar Dodge*, Chapter VI.

²⁹⁹ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. V, p. 677

³⁰⁰ In his fourth annual message to the Legislative Assembly read on May 8, 1845, Governor Chambers

discusses the incident of the arrest of Linder and Mullinix and the situation on the border line, and appends a copy of the letter which he had written on April 19, to Governor Edwards of Missouri.— See Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 278-288.

³⁰¹ Probably the greatest political blunder in the life of Augustus Caesar Dodge was his open letter advising the people of Iowa to accept the Nicollet Boundaries as prescribed by Congress and assuring them that not another square mile of territory could be obtained.— See Pelzer's *Augustus Caesar Dodge*, pp. 116-119.

³⁰² Among the prominent Democrats who took the stump against the adoption of the Constitution, because of the boundaries prescribed by Congress, were Theodore S. Parvin, Enoch W. Eastman, and Shepherd Leffler who had been president of the convention which drew it up.

³⁰³ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, pp. 279, 280.

³⁰⁴ *Constitution of 1844*, Art. XIII, Sec. 6.

³⁰⁶ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. V, p. 742.

³⁰⁶ *Laws of the Territory of Iowa*, 1845, p. 31.

³⁰⁷ *Journal of House of Representatives of the Territory of Iowa*, 1845, p. 167.

³⁰⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 296.

³⁰⁹ This story is told in a sketch entitled *Governor*

John Chambers written by William Penn Clarke and published in the *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, p. 425. It consists largely of letters from Chambers to Clarke, the remaining material being little more than an explanation of the letters. The letters themselves contain valuable information, but the accompanying material is full of mistakes. One of the letters printed, under date of August 7, 1850, is not by John Chambers as it purports, but by an entirely different man, named M. Chambers, as an examination of the original among the correspondence of William Penn Clarke in the Historical Department at Des Moines clearly shows. By a curious mistake, too, a photograph, probably of Judge John Chambers of New York is reproduced in this article as a likeness of Governor John Chambers in his earlier years. Clarke seems to have edited the letters somewhat carelessly and to have relied too much on his memory for events of the administration of Chambers.

³¹⁰ Shambaugh's *History of the Constitutions of Iowa*, p. 283.

³¹¹ Manuscript letters from Ralph P. Lowe to William Penn Clarke, May 26, 1845, and from Timothy Davis to William Penn Clarke.—Correspondence of William Penn Clarke, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³¹² Pelzer's *Augustus Caesar Dodge*, pp. 121, 122.

³¹³ Manuscript letter from Mary Chambers to John Chambers, April 17, 1845, found in possession of Mrs. Hannah Chambers Forman of Chicago.

³¹⁴ James Clarke, the last of the Territorial Gover-

nors, was born in Pennsylvania and migrated from there to Missouri, then to Wisconsin, and finally to Burlington before the Territory of Iowa was organized. He was, therefore, less of an "importation" than either of his predecessors in office.

³¹⁵ This letter is published by William Penn Clarke in his sketch of *Governor John Chambers* in the *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, pp. 433, 434.

³¹⁶ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to William Penn Clarke, October 29, 1845.—Correspondence of William Penn Clarke, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³¹⁷ In the *Family Record* kept by John Chambers, and published with the *Autobiography* he makes the following entry: "Octr. 20th 1845 — Removed from office by President Polk, to make room for a political partizan. Let it be remembered that this removal from office was made without the imputation of improper conduct or of neglect of duty, or other cause assigned." In his *Autobiography* Chambers asserts that the removal probably saved his life since his health would not have withstood further performance of his laborious duties. He makes the following comment upon Polk: "I knew the man personally — he was a third rate statesman, a sprightly county court lawyer and an unscrupulous partizan.—Peace be to his ashes."—See *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 38, 25.

Back in the thirties when Chambers represented Kentucky in the lower house of Congress, James K.

Polk was Speaker of that body during the entire length of service of Chambers.

CHAPTER XIV

³¹⁸ The sources of information concerning the Indians in Iowa are numerous. Of the manuscript materials the most valuable are of course at Washington, D. C., in the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior. Another important collection is at the Historical Department at Des Moines, Iowa, where three large manuscript volumes contain letters written by Governors Lucas, Chambers and Clarke on Indian Affairs. These letters were secured from the records at Washington and do not include by any means all of the correspondence of these officials with the United States government. Of the office record books of Governor Chambers, all that has been preserved is a section of about forty pages of a manuscript record book in which evidently were entered copies of letters on Indian Affairs. The letters in this section are dated from May 5 to July 11, 1845. There was found, in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky, a series of vouchers and statements of accounts kept by John Chambers with regard to Indian negotiations. These give some helpful incidental information. In the Archives of the Offices of Governor and Secretary of State at Des Moines, Iowa, are a few valuable manuscripts on Indian Affairs. The newspapers of the time contained some material. Access was had to a collection of extracts from Territorial newspapers compiled by Professor Benj. F. Shambaugh in preparation for a

documentary history of political parties in Iowa. Information is to be gleaned from the official reports of the Office of Indian Affairs of the United States government, from *Executive Documents*, Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, and from the *Laws and Journals* of the Territory of Iowa.

Of a secondary nature, Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa* is the most extensive treatment. Articles and monographs of varying importance are to be found in the *Annals of Iowa*, in the *Iowa Historical Record*, in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, in the *Minnesota Historical Society Publications*, and in many other publications of the Upper Mississippi Valley.

³¹⁹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 250.

³²⁰ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 305.

³²¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), pp. 345, 498.

³²² Stevens's *The Black Hawk War*. Also *Life of Black Hawk* (dictated by himself).

³²³ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 349.

³²⁴ Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 241, 242.

³²⁵ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 474.

³²⁶ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 495.

³²⁷ General Street had been an Indian Agent for the United States government since 1828 when he was located at Prairie du Chien. He located the Agency near the Des Moines River in 1838 and moved to the new location in the spring of 1839. His death occurred in May 1840. Previous to his career as Indian Agent he had been prominent as an editor in Kentucky.—See Street's *General Joseph M. Street* in the *Annals of Iowa*, Third Series, Vol. II, No. 2-3, July-October, 1895, p. 81.

³²⁸ See *Autobiography of Maj. Lawrence Taliaferro* in the *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. VI, pp. 189-255.

³²⁹ See manuscript letter from Stephen Cooper (Indian sub-agent) to John Chambers, September 2, 1841.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³³⁰ James MacGregor was sub-agent at this place for some time, being succeeded by Jonathan E. Fletcher in 1845. A number of letters to these men are copied in the fragment of the record book of Governor Chambers, mentioned in note 318. See also Price's *The Conquest of Sodom* in the *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. VIII, No. 4, October 1870, p. 309.

³³¹ Chittenden's *The American Fur Trade of the Far West*, Vol. I, pp. 382-384. See also Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 358-360.

³³² Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 359-360.

³³³ Fulton's *The Red Men of Iowa*, pp. 359-360. Mr. Eddy appears to have moved over from Burlington and engaged in the trading business with the hearty concurrence of Governor Lucas. His post was situated at the "upper village" where Hardfish's band lived.

³³⁴ Annual report of Robert Lucas, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, October 23, 1840—Manuscript Volume on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. See also *Hawk-Eye and Iowa Patriot* (Burlington), Vol. I, No. 35, January 30, 1840.

³³⁵ Annual report of Robert Lucas, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, October 23, 1840.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. The petition of Keokuk's band was signed by 503 persons. Lucas had an interpreter confer with the Indians and ascertained that in 356 cases out of the 503 the signatures were spurious or made in ignorance of the contents of the petition, or were affixed by women, children, or Missourians. A census was taken in the summer of 1840 by direction of Hardfish and the chiefs of his band. The result was an enumeration of a little over 350 families, listed by name and giving the number in each family. It included both Sac and Fox Indians but excluded the lodges of the followers of Keokuk, Poweshiek, Wapello, and Appanoose. A copy of this enumeration is found among the Archives of the Office of Secretary of State, Des Moines, Iowa.

³³⁶ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 149.

³³⁷ Annual report of Robert Lucas, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, October 23, 1840.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³³⁸ Annual report of Robert Lucas, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, October 23, 1840.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³³⁹ Manuscript letter from Robert Lucas to T. Hartley Crawford, February 18, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴⁰ Manuscript letters from John Beach to T. Hartley Crawford, February 2 and 19, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of the Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴¹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to John Bell, May 17, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴² Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, May 24, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴³ The vouchers of Governor Chambers for the expenses of this trip are to be found in a collection of financial letters and accounts in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky.

³⁴⁴ See manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, July 27, 1841, Office of Indian

Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C. Chambers enclosed with this letter the letter from Beach and the proceedings of the council with the Indians.

³⁴⁵ See manuscript letter from John Chambers to D. Kurtz, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, September 25, 1841.— Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁴⁶ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, October 24, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴⁷ The minutes of this negotiation were kept by James W. Grimes, Secretary of the Commission, and are preserved in the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴⁸ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, October 24, 1841, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁴⁹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 254.

³⁵⁰ Manuscript letter from John Beach to John Chambers, February 26, 1842, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁵¹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, March 12, 1842, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁵² Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, May 13, 1842, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

Chambers enclosed with his letter the statement from Beach which showed the firm of Pierre Chouteau Jr. and Company to be a creditor for over \$87,000, while the debts due J. P. Eddy and Company and W. G. and G. W. Ewing amounted respectively to a little more than \$50,000 and a little less than \$72,000.

³⁵³ Manuscript letters from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, July 16 and 23, 1842, Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C.

³⁵⁴ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, September 17, 1842.— Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁵⁵ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, September 17, 1842.— Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁵⁶ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, September 17, 1842.— Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁵⁷ Manuscript letter from John Chambers "To the Officer commanding at Fort Atkinson Iowa Territory", September 16, 1842.— Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁵⁸ The detailed report of the investigating agents was transmitted to Commissioner Crawford by Chambers together with a letter dated November 22, 1842.

It is on file in the Office of Indian Affairs, Department of Interior, Washington, D. C. The report contains an interesting discussion of the most noteworthy of the claims and a schedule showing the sums claimed and allowed in each individual case. The traders who received the most severe censure were Peter and William Avery whose claim of \$6284.73 was repudiated by the Indians and rejected entirely. The investigating agents were of the opinion also from the examination of witnesses that these men had also sold liquor to the Indians. They had built their trading house upon the line of the Indian country and were trading without a license.

³⁵⁹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, February 24, 1843.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department. Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁶⁰ An excellent article on the Treaty of 1842 is written by Alfred Hebard who, as investigating agent of the traders' claims, was of course present at the negotiations. It appears under the title *An Indian Treaty and its Negotiation* in the *Annals of Iowa*. Third Series, Vol. I, No. 5, April, 1894, p. 397.

³⁶¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 546.

³⁶² Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 265.

³⁶³ *Revised Statutes of the Territory of Iowa*, 1843, p. 292.

³⁶⁴ *Hawk-Eye*, Vol. V, No. 1, August 10, 1843.

³⁶⁵ These Indians located upon lands in what is now Kansas, but they were not satisfied. Many sickened and died. Others, homesick for their haunts on the rivers of Iowa, trailed back to the State of Iowa in the fifties and purchased land upon which they settled. The Meskwaki Indians living in Tama County are a remnant of the Foxes who drifted back from the southwest to the land of their early home.— See Ward's *Meskwakia* and *The Meskwaki People of Today* in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* for April, 1906, pp. 179-189 and 190-219.

³⁶⁶ Hughes's *Treaties of Traverse des Sioux* in the *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. X, Part I, pp. 101-129. In the latter part of this article are reprinted several valuable newspaper comments upon the treaty negotiated by Governor Doty, among others being one from the *Burlington Hawk-Eye*.

³⁶⁷ See a communication to President Polk from John Bell, Secretary of War, printed in Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. IV, pp. 59-63.

³⁶⁸ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 272. See also the *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 38.

³⁶⁹ Shambaugh's *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa*, Vol. I, p. 284.

³⁷⁰ Annual report of John Chambers, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, September 28, 1845.— Manuscript Volumes on

Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁷¹ Kappler's *Indian Affairs*, Vol. II (Treaties), p. 565.

³⁷² Manuscript letter from John Chambers to T. Hartley Crawford, February 24, 1843.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁷³ Annual report of John Chambers, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, to the United States government, September 27, 1843.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁷⁴ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Augustus Caesar Dodge, February 26, 1844.—Manuscript Volumes on Indian Affairs, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

CHAPTER XV

³⁷⁵ *The Maysville Eagle* (tri weekly), Vol. XI, No. 10, November 22, 1845.

³⁷⁶ Clarke's *Governor John Chambers* in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, p. 436.

³⁷⁷ Clarke's *Governor John Chambers* in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, p. 437.

³⁷⁸ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to William Penn Clarke, June 19, 1845 [6].—Correspondence of William Penn Clarke, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa. See also *Niles' Register*, Vol. 70, p. 312, July 18, 1846.

³⁷⁹ Clarke's *Governor John Chambers* in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, p. 439.

³⁸⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to William Penn Clarke, June 19, 1845[6].— Correspondence of William Penn Clarke, Historical Department, Des Moines, Iowa.

³⁸¹ Clarke's *Governor John Chambers* in *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. I, No. 6, July, 1894, p. 439.

³⁸² *The Maysville Eagle* (tri weekly), Vol. XII, No. 48, February 20, 1847.

³⁸³ These letters were found in the possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky.

³⁸⁴ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, April 19, 1849.

³⁸⁵ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. 40, 41.

³⁸⁶ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, September 11, 1849.

³⁸⁷ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Frank Chambers, October 1, 1849, found in possession of Mrs. Henry Chambers of Louisville, Kentucky. Also manuscript letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, October 8, 1849.

³⁸⁸ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Mrs. Matilda Chambers Brent, October 28, 1850, found in the possession of Mrs. F. F. Woodall.

³⁸⁹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Mrs. Jane Chambers Forman, December 16, 1835, found in the possession of Mrs. H. C. Forman of Chicago.

³⁹⁰ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, May 11, 1851.

³⁹¹ Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Mrs. Jane Chambers Forman, June 19, 1851, found in possession of Mrs. H. C. Forman of Chicago.

³⁹² Manuscript letter from John Chambers to Henry Chambers, December 5, 1851.

³⁹³ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, pp. viii, ix.

³⁹⁴ *Autobiography of John Chambers*, p. 41.

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