

"Documentary. Iowa — Developments — Resources" Essay from *The Annals of Iowa*, 1869

DOCUMENTARY. Iowa—Development—Resources.

BY SAMUEL MERRILL, GOVERNOR.

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STATE OF IOWA, EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,
DES MOINES, NOV. 23, 1868.

PETER COOPER, Esq., President Citizens' National Association of New York:

Sir : — Your communication of September 23d, asking information as to the resources and advantages of Iowa, with a view of inducing immigration to the State, has been received. You suggest that an official statement of some of the leading interests be made out by me, that you may translate the same into other languages for distribution in other countries. I cheerfully comply with your request, but have to regret that we have no State Board of Emigration, nor any appropriation to aid you in the laudable enterprise.

The State of Iowa is situated centrally in the Union, bounded east and west by the two great rivers of North America. Its area is 55,045 square miles, nearly as great as that of all England, much greater than that of Ireland, and nearly twice as large as Scotland. Its surface is over ninety per cent. prairie, nearly all "rolling" or undulating ; only a small part being what is denominated "flat prairie"; and while there are no mountains, there is a constant succession of gentle elevations and depressions, and along the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, bold eminences and picturesque valleys heighten the beauty of the scenery. The table lands between the waters of the two great rivers, according to the report of our State Geological survey, attain in the northern part of the State an altitude of 1,400 feet above the level of the sea.

The State has many fine streams. The Des Moines river, over three hundred miles long; the Iowa, the Cedar, and other streams flow into the Mississippi, while numerous tributaries of the Missouri drain the western counties. These streams are almost invariably skirted with timber, some of them heavily wooded. This timber consists of elm, black walnut, oak, linden, cottonwood, hackberry, sycamore, poplar, ash, and other varieties of forest trees.

Coal, which is found in parts of the State, is a source of vast wealth, which is being rapidly developed. In 1866 our State census shows there were 99,320 tons taken out; against 66,664 in 1864. Peat has also been discovered within a few years in many parts of the State, in quantities which promise an abundant supply of fuel.

This part of the republic is favored with a delightful climate, eminently conducive to health and longevity. Pulmonary complaints, in particular, are comparatively rare. This fact is especially worthy of consideration by the immigrant from the old world.

A soil of surpassing richness affords an abundant supply of all the necessities and luxuries of life. The character of this soil is thus described by an eminent geologist who examined it with the critical eye of science — Dr. James Hall, of New York. He says:

"The upper portion of the material constituting the superficial covering of the prairie is always finely comminuted, and usually has a few loose boulders or fragments of rock scattered through it, although they sometimes lie upon the surface in isolated groups or singly. Upon the great prairies in Central Iowa, one may frequently travel over a large extent of surface without seeing a single stone, not even so much as the smallest pebble. In the swales and in some of the bottom lands, especially in the southern part of the State, the rich black vegetable mould (sic) is very deep, but on the prairies it is usually from one to two feet. The subsoil is almost invariably a quite argillaceous loam, and there is a gradual passage downward into a material which, though containing sandy portions and occasional pebbles, the argillaceous element greatly preponderates."

A few statistics of the crops of 1866 and other years will give some idea of our resources. Wheat is grown in every county of the State, and no part seems unfavorable to its production in generous quantities. Spring wheat is the variety mostly raised. As early as 1850 Iowa was the fifteenth of the States of the Union, in the production of this invaluable cereal, and in 1860 it stood eighth — while in the former it was the twenty-fifth in the number of acres improved, and in 1860 was fifteenth.

The following are the figures of the productions of wheat for a series of years:

1864	15,021,149	bushels
1866	14,635,520	"
1867 (estimated)	20,000,000	"
1868	25,000,000	"

The next Federal Census (1870) will probably show a yield in the State of at least 35,000,000 bushels of wheat. Such is the opinion of intelligent agriculturists.

In 1849 Iowa stood eighteenth in the States in the production of corn, coming next to the old State of New Jersey at that early day. In 1859 it was the seventh, raising about five per cent, of all the corn produced in the country, and now ranking next to Tennessee ; the other States standing above her, being in their order, Illinois, Missouri, Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky. The census of 1870 will very probably place Iowa third in the order of the States in the production of this grain.

We give the figures for a series of years:

1864	48,471,123	bushels
1866	56,928,938	“
1867 (estimated)	74,000,000	“
1868 “	90,000,000	“

It is not improbable that the yield as shown by the next Federal Census (1870) will exceed one hundred and twenty millions.

The following table gives the figures of other crops for a series of years.

	1862	1864	1866
Oats, bushels	7,582,060	15,928,777	15,860,494
Rye “	474,675	662,388	492,841
Barley “	385,067	950,696	1,197,729
Potatoes “	2,362,918	2,730,811	2,666,678
Sweet “	37,498	26,222	50,390
Onions “ no report		297,638	213,285
Sorghum, gal's	3,012,393	1,443,605	2,094,507
Hay, tons	1,032,553	1,002,166	1,409,851
Butter, pounds	13,675,500	14,538,216	19,192,727
Cheese “	902,701	1,000,738	1,403,864
Grapes “	291,755	390,409	549,179

Stock-raising and wool-growing are profitable pursuits, and all kinds of livestock thriving finely in all parts of the State, no contagious or epidemic diseases having ever prevailed.

The following are the statistics of livestock for several years:

	1863.	1865.	1867.
Horses	275,697	316,702	425,055
Mules and Asses	12,022	14,303	22,037
Milch cows	292,025	310,187	326,559
Sheep	599,939	1,450,787	1,708,958
Swine	1,743,865	1,037,117	1,620,089
Other cattle	548,626	553,977	602,364
Pounds wool shorn	1,429,209	2,813,620	5,323,385

Fruit-raising amply remunerates the producer. Of late years attention has been largely devoted to the cultivation of grapes, with the most gratifying success. In 1866, there were 549,179 pounds of grapes raised, against 390,409 pounds in 1864. In 1866, there were 1,075,177 fruit trees in bearing, and in 1864, 636,458. These figures tell their own story, and show the steady advance in productive wealth.

The State is settled mainly from Ohio, Indiana and Pennsylvania, with a large admixture from New England. About one-sixth of the entire population came from foreign countries, Germany largely preponderating. Norway, Holland and Sweden, among the minor nations of the old world, have also thriving settlements in this State. A people loving liberty and order, and respecting and prising (sic) the political, religious and educational privileges of our State, is the natural result of the aggregation of such material.

The first permanent settlement, in what is now Iowa, was made in the county of Lee, in the south-eastern part of the State, less than forty years ago. The territory was detached from the territory of Wisconsin in 1838, and was admitted into the Union the twenty-ninth State, December 28, 1846. The population in 1836, was 10,531; in 1838, 22,859; in 1846, 97,588; in 1856, 519,055 ; in 1867, 902,040. It is now estimated at about 1,100,000; and yet much more than two-thirds of the State is still just as it came from the hand of nature. From twenty to twenty-five millions of acres of prairie land have not been touched by the plow. Homesteads may be secured in many of the counties of north-western Iowa, on Government lands, while the greater portion of unimproved lands may be bought at from \$2.50 to \$10 per acre, and nearly every acre of it is as good land as any which has yet yielded its wealth to cultivation.

Iowa has some twelve railroads, with more than fourteen hundred miles of lines in operation. Several other companies have been organized, some of which are grading their road-beds, while others are engaged in preliminary work. Within a year, at least, three railroads will traverse the whole State from east to west, — one being already finished. Other roads in the same direction, and several north and south roads are in progress. Telegraph lines accompany the railways, and an independent line, following the Mississippi river, has just been constructed across the State.

In the ninety-seven organized counties of the State, there were, in 1867, 6,229 schools, with a gross attendance of 251,281 pupils, costing for tuition \$1,161,653. The school-houses were valued at

\$3,450,978. The State has made ample provision for the support of free schools. The proceeds of all lands given, by the General Government for school purposes, and of the 500,000 acres given under an act of 1841, the five per cent granted by the United States on lands sold within the State, and the estate of every deceased person dying without will or heirs, constitute a perpetual fund, the interest of which goes to the support of common schools. The money paid for exemption from military duty, as well as the clear proceeds of all fines collected for breach of the penal laws, are similarly devoted to the support of the schools. All these resources, with the addition of a tax of from one mill to two and a half mills, go to the payment of teachers. The building of school-houses, keeping them in repair, fuel, apparatus, rent, etc., are provided for by a special tax. The amount expended for these purposes in 1867, was about \$880,000. It is believed that our system of popular education is as good as that of any of the States. In addition, we have a State University with an income of \$25,000, aside from the appropriations made by the General Assembly. There is also a State Agricultural College and farm, with an estimated income of \$40,000. Besides these, private schools of a high order, academies, colleges and universities, under the control of various denominations of Christians, are numerous throughout the State. From the earliest settlement of the territory, the friends of liberal education have persistently labored for the advancement of the cause, and have at all times been able to influence to some extent the legislature of the State in this behalf; and now it is believed no State in the Union has made more extensive provision for universal education.

I have thus endeavored to convey to you, in the fewest possible words, the information you desire. Permit me to add, that to this young but growing State, blessed as it is with a salubrious climate; with soil of unsurpassed richness; with an intelligent, progressive population; with a wise and efficient system of popular education; with many institutions of learning of a high grade; with rivers and railways bringing, or about to bring markets to the very homes, so to say, of all the citizens; with millions of acres of fertile lands which may now be had at very low prices, but which will rapidly increase in value ; with low taxes, and an unusually sound financial condition; with the privileges of religion assured to all alike; with a past prosperity hardly equaled in the country, assuring undoubted future greatness and rank among the eminent States of the republic, we most cordially invite upright citizens of all lands and creeds to come, here in this favored land to make themselves happy homes, and help us to build up the fabric of what is surely destined to be a mighty commonwealth.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

SAMUEL MERRILL , Governor of Iowa.