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THE FIRST ELECTION HELD IN THE COUNTY OF CLAYTON.
BY ELIPHALET PRICE.

The first election held in that part of Dubuque County now known as the County of Clayton, took place on the first Monday in September, 1836, at the residence of Robert Hatfield, on Turkey River, which residence was situated about three miles from the mouth of the river, looming up with log- cabin stateliness, solitary and alone, in the very heart of the town of Winchester. Among the many proprietors of the town of Winchester, was the Hon. John S. Homer, who was at that time the acting Governor of Wisconsin, whose boundaries then embraced the present State of Iowa. At this election a delegate to Congress and five members of the Territorial Legislature were to be chosen. The candidates for Congress were George Meeker and George W. Jones. Both of these persons resided upon the east side of the Mississippi. The judges of the election were Edward Dickens, John E. Griffith and Henry Redman; the clerks were William H. Haymon and Eliphalet Price. It was believed that every voter residing at that time in what is now known as the County of Clayton, was there on that day, and exercised his right of suffrage. The whole number of votes cast was thirty-one; of these Meeker received twenty-eight and Jones three. Nearly every voter was dressed in buckskin, and appeared upon the ground with a rifle upon his shoulder; and of the whole number that voted, but seven had ever exercised that right on any previous occasion.

A controversy arose as to whether it was necessary that the judges should be sworn, which was terminated by the majority ruling that the administering of an oath was an expression of doubt as to the truthfulness and honesty of the person taking it, and was one of the benighted customs of the Eastern States, and ought not to be introduced upon our western confines. Accordingly the oath was dispensed with, when Dr. Griffith, one of the judges, mounted a pot-ash kettle that was turned bottom upwards, and announced the opening of the polls, closing his remarks with that ancient judicial warning, " Silence is commanded, under a penalty of fine and imprisonment." Mr. Redman, one of the judges, offered the loan of his straw hat to be used as a ballot box, which was accepted, notwithstanding its dilapidated appearance seemed to express a doubt as to its ability to perform the duties that would be required of it, the rim having entirely disappeared, except so much of it as was necessary for a kind of frontispiece or handle; and after having carefully adjusted in the bottom of the hat a stocking that was hanging upon a chair in the room, so as to prevent the ballots from leaking through, the voting commenced. Col. Henry T. Lander deposited in the ballot box the first vote given and recorded in the County of Clayton. a few votes were received by the judges, when Mrs. Hatfield offered the loan of her willow arm-basket, to be substituted as a ballot box in the place of the hat; she wanting the stocking for the purpose of darning a hole in the heel of it, being at the time engaged in the domestic repair of that kind of wardrobe. The basket was accordingly accepted, and the hat returned to its owner.

There were a number of persons from Cassville present, who, together with a few of our own people, seemed not to be aware of the disastrous consequences too often resulting from the imprudent use of intoxicating drinks, which soon resulted in a boisterous expression of thick, abbreviated words, accompanied with a pugilistic desire to demonstrate their manhood. Mr. Daniel Justice, whose conduct began to lean over the rim of propriety, addressed some

imprudent remark to the judges of the election, when Dr. Griffith arose, with an air of insulted dignity, and seizing the ballot box by the handle, swung it around his head a few times with increasing momentum, and then, with his teeth firmly clenched, brought it down on the cranium of Mr. Justice with such crushing force that the teal" lots radiated from the basket like sparks from a galvanic battery, and in the next moment Mr. Justice was standing bolt upright in the door-yard, his head protruding through an eight-by-ten light of a window sash, while all around him the glittering fragments of window glass announced his retirement from the interior of the house. The electors now rushed into the room, and began to divest themselves of such apparel as might incommode them in protecting the sacred character of the ballot box, when some person thrust his head through the window of the absent sash, and announced that his excellency, Gov. Horner, had just arrived in a canoe, from Cassville, bringing with him a barrel of whisky. The polls were immediately adjourned for an hour. The crowd having dispersed to receive the Governor, the clerks proceeded to gather up the tickets, when it was discovered that the ballot box, having spread itself on the occasion, had acquired so much of the pan-cake character that it was deemed no longer adapted to election purposes, and accordingly it was returned to Mrs. Hatfield, who, with becoming dignity, announced this as the last election that would ever be held in her house.

His excellency soon made his appearance upon the ground, accompanied by a party of the electors, who were hauling a one-horse wagon that contained the barrel of whiskey. The Governor, after shaking hands all round, and making the usual inquiries concerning the health of each person, proceeded to draw a faucet and spike-gimble from one pocket, while a tin-cup was released from the other, with the assistance of one of the electors. The barrel was soon on tap, and the cup in circulation, when the Governor mounted an old ash-hopper and proceeded to state that he had come over from Cassville (where he resided) for the purpose of offering, at public auction, a few desirable lots in the town of Winchester, of which he was one of the proprietors. Dwelling for a time upon the superior commercial advantages of Winchester, its agricultural resources and the unequalled character of the hunting grounds in its vicinity, he at length closed with the prophetic remark, that "there were persons present who might live to see the day when the smoke would curl upward from the white man's cabin for more than a hundred miles west of Winchester." He then proceeded to unroll a plat of the town, and after explaining its geographical outlines, called upon the people to give him a bid upon a corner lot fronting upon the public square; and after crying the lot for some time, Mr. Jesse Durgan stepped forward with a bracing, angular stride, and after taking a drink from a tin-cup he held in his hand, observed in a fearless and venturesome manner, Governor, I'll bid two thousand dollars on that are lot." At this announcement the Governor closed up one eye, gave a low whistle, slid down from the hopper and observed "Boys, the sale's adjourned. Let's take a drink all round." The polls, which had been closed for an hour, had resumed some time previous to the ending of the Governor's auction and simultaneous with it the closing of the polls was announced in due form.