



DR. T. K. BROOKS

DOCTOR T. K. BROOKS

FEW, if any, of the first settlers here were better or more intimately known than Doctor Thomas K. Brooks, whose profession led him into the homes and confidence of the settlers. His genial, jolly, sympathetic nature made him very popular. Though an excellent physician, his presence was often more beneficial than his medicine.

He came to The Fort in September, 1845, and for a time made his home with John Beach, the Indian Agent, about half a mile east of Capitol Hill, on what was known as the "Four Mile" or "State Road."

The next year was a busy one. He purchased the claim rights of Phelps & Company, the fur traders, near where the packing houses are, and in the Spring began to cultivate a farm. He also floated brick down the 'Coon during high water, and in the Fall erected, not far from Beach's residence, the first brick dwelling-house on the East Side, in which he lived several years. Near it was a pretty little body of water known as Brooks' Lake.

In April, a weekly mail with Keokuk was established. The first bag was sent by a special messenger. On opening the bag, a commission was found appointing the Doctor Postmaster. He duly qualified, removed the office to his residence, and next year resigned as it interfered too much with his practice.

In this year agitation arose respecting the removal of the Capital from Iowa City to a more central point in the state. In January, a bill was before the Legislature to organize Polk County. Immediately, effort was made to secure the location of its county-seat. The Doctor, who had proved an indifferent farmer, and Jerry Church, laid out their claims into towns—on paper—and Brooklyn, Dudley, and Jerico became rivals of The Fort. Each had a strong lobby at Iowa City to get the Legislature to fix the county-seat, and after a spirited contest, it finally decided to send a Commission to

locate it within two miles of Raccoon Forks. There was then a lively scrimmage between Brooklyn and The Fort, but the latter had the most population, the greatest prestige, and the Commissioners located it there. Politics also had much to do with it. The Fort was on the west side of the river, and its voters mostly Democrats. The Doctor was a Whig and an East Sider. The first county election was held in April. There was considerable talk of sharp practice. A. D. Jones, who surveyed the original town of Fort Des Moines, and a man named Woodward were candidates for Surveyor.

Woodward was a Brooklyn supporter; Jones was a West Sider, with "expectations" if The Fort won. He spent the whole election day at the polls in Camp Precinct and did not get a vote. When the votes were returned, there were one hundred and five for Woodward from Camp and Allen precincts, and seventy for Jones from The Fort. By some peculiar method of addition, division and silence, the election was given to Jones. That was the beginning of the feud between the East and West sides, which for ten years was more or less furious, coming to a climax in the contest for the location of the State House. It left a rankling which still exists, a fact apparent in every city divided by a river.

After the county-seat question was settled, the Doctor devoted his time to his practice, with real estate as a side line. He was an active member of the Settlers' Claim Club, organized to protect settlers against claim jumpers and land sharks. He was an ardent Whig, a good speaker, and took an active part in politics, not as a place-seeker, but to prevent some Democrat from getting one.

In 1850, the Doctor was the Whig candidate for Probate Judge, his opponent being J. C. Jones. Probably owing to the Doctor's profession, the Democrats didn't want him to administer their estates, and they elected Jones by a vote of seventy-six to one hundred and eight.

In 1852, the farmers, beginning to have ambition and pride in their doings, had an agricultural Fair in the Court House yard. Brooks, who was a lover of the horse, drove some fine steppers, a pseudo farmer, exhibited some good equine specimens merely to set "the boys" thinking.

In 1853-4, the Doctor, with W. A. Scott, John S. Dean, J. M. and Harry Griffiths, and the two Lyons, began to build up a town by laying out and platting additions on the East Side. They were all hustlers, sharp, shrewd, and, to emphasize their individuality, disregard and disrespect for The Fort, they adopted "East Demoin" as the corporate name of their new town, and so it went in their real estate conveyances and on record. The Doctor built a fine residence near the corner of Sixth and Walnut streets, in which he resided until his death.

In the Spring of 1853, the State Agricultural Society was formed, and its first Exhibition was held at Fairfield, in the Fall. The Doctor, "Uncle Tommy" Mitchell and Judge Wm. McKay were the Directors for Polk County.

In 1855, when the contest for the permanent location of the State House came on, the Doctor, with Scott, the Griffiths, the Lyons, Doctor A. B. Shaw, and others, formed an Association—a sort of close corporation—so close its ways were never disclosed—to provide the necessary means to induce the Legislative Commission, who were authorized to receive bonus, lots or aid of any kind, to fix the location on that side. The West Siders wanted it put on Grimmel's Hill, between Fourth and Eighth streets, School Street and Grand Avenue.

They subscribed to a fund \$159,250, to be paid if there located. By some peculiar system of financiering, the East Siders won. The West Siders were mad. They charged all sorts of sculduggery against the East Siders—that, whereas the money subscribed on the West Side was to be paid to the State, on the East Side it all went into the pockets of somebody else. It is a fact, however, that some of the men in it lost large sums, and if the truth was known, some of the Legislative Commission got more than their two dollars *per diem*, while making their investigation.

During this year, the Doctor was drawn to serve on the Grand Jury, and was made Foreman. In those days the County Commissioners issued licenses to keep "groceries," which, being interpreted, meant the privilege to sell "corn juice" and "tangle-foot" with tea, coffee, and sugar. The traffic, however, became so demoralizing that the Legislature cut it out, and prohibited the sale of

intoxicating liquors except by a duly authorized County Agent. The agent for Polk County was Doctor D. V. Cole. He was given one thousand dollars with which to purchase a supply of "pure, unadulterated liquor for medical, mechanical and sacramental purposes,"—so runs the record. The "purposes" were often very "mechanically" construed by purchasers, whose veracity was not very seriously questioned. It was not surprising, therefore, that there was notable increase of "sickness" and "mechanical industries," or that the "County Grocery" did a thriving business. The record, however, does not disclose any spiritual revival among the churches.

When Judge McFarland came, with his District Court and Grand Jury, he was unusually sober. He instructed the jury that it was a part of their duty to look for probable infraction of the laws, and especially the sale and quality of the "goods" kept at the County Agency. The jury—fifteen of them—proceeded forthwith to the examination, spending several hours testing the liquor, especially for purity, at the suggestion of the foreman. They finally returned to the Court House filled with the satisfactoriness of their work—in fact, it was said, too full for utterance—filed their report, at once adjourned, and went home. The Judge, learning the jury had returned, ordered the bailiff peremptorily to bring them into court. Being told that they had gone home, he inquired if there was "anything left." He was told there was a sample of "the best" on file in the Sheriff's office; he thereupon adjourned court, and invited the lawyers to go with him and "test it."

On another occasion, when the Judge was "full," the jury appeared before him for instructions. Straightening himself up, he said:

"Gentlemen of the Jury: You will (hic) find the law of Iowa in the laws of Iowa. It is your (hic) duty, gentlemen, to see that the law (hic) is obeyed, and that it is not violated. You are made (hic), gentlemen, a body to inquire into every breach (hic) of the law, and to do this you're duly sworn (hic)—sworn—sworn. If you have prob'ble (hic) cause to believe that liquor has been sold by the dram (hic), you must make presentment to the court. For your instructions (hic), I will say that a dram of whiskey is a (hic) mule's ear full. Mr. Foreman, you will indict (hic) every

man in the world (hic). Mr. Clerk, you will let (hic) Mr. Foreman have all the books in the (hic) world. You will retire, gentlemen to your (hic)—adjourn the court, Mr. (hic) Sheriff, to one o'clock."

The Doctor was especially interested in educational matters, and gave to public schools his earnest, vigorous support. In 1856, when the Lutheran Church State Conference decided to establish a college here, he was elected one of the Board of Trustees. The hard times of 1857 brought failure to the project, and the property passed to Elder Nash, and became what is now Des Moines College after several changes of name and location.

In 1860 and 1867, the Doctor was the Alderman from the Sixth Ward in the City Council, and a vigorous, active member of that body.

In 1864, the Soldiers' Relief Society was organized, with Mayor Leas President and the Doctor Vice-President. In December, a festival was held, at which the net proceeds were four thousand two hundred and forty-five dollars and twenty-eight cents. Everybody was open-handed, and during the year the society raised seven thousand two hundred and sixty-one dollars and thirty-five cents. Added to this were generous donations by civic societies, churches and individuals. In this benevolent service, the Doctor devoted his most earnest effort; for with him relief to the call of suffering was paramount.

He died in 1868, after a short illness, of pneumonia, aged fifty-seven, leaving a record of earnest, forcible effort to promote the prosperity and best interests of the city and county.

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