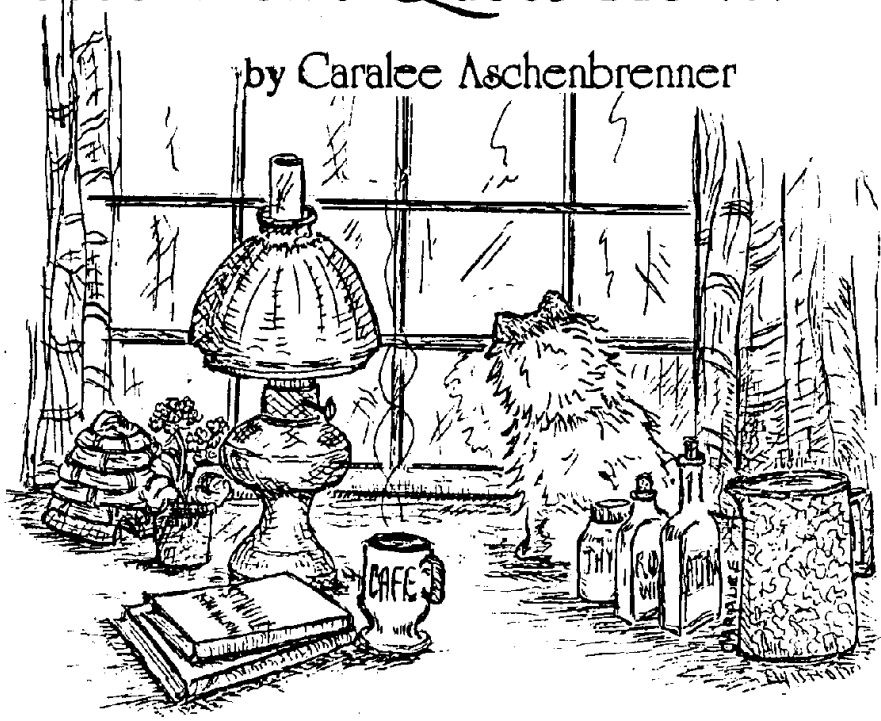


# Please Don't Quote Me ...

by Caralee Aschenbrenner



Part II



hy Carrollport? It was the port-o-call for travelers from Carroll County, that's why... a destination, a disembarkation point.

Many of its settlers cum visitors were from the Illinois side of the Mississippi or at least had to come from there to see what was going on in the West! It was reported that dozens of prairie schooners would be lined up on the east bank waiting to be passed over or ferried to go into Iowa Territory. It was a great and steady migration for years.

Carrollport was but a temporary name, however. As it turned out, even though the pioneer might appear to have a rough and crusty exterior they apparently had a soft center. The sensitivities over names of settlements was seriously scarred the day a box of goods arrived, shipped upriver and delivered to "Carrion Point."

Well, that just tore it. Carrion had such a negative connotation that then and there the community banded together and chose a new title, "Charleston," the only reason which can be thought of now is that Charleston and Savannah (with an H) are both on a coastline, too. Hmmm.

Even then, that wasn't permanent although the postmaster, William H. Brown, not the Bellevue gang leader, mind, was appointed to the office at Charleston in 1836 which gave legitimacy and dignity to a settlement rising there on a kind of sandbar.

But as it happened there already was a Charleston, Iowa so the town soon lost that new title so as not to confuse the sender. Then, too, of the three pioneers who immediately followed Isaac Dorman who'd log paddled there in 1835 was a Charles Swan. Not desiring to raise one citizen above another, residents thought that, after all, Charleston wasn't such a good idea either. See how sensitive our forefathers were.

To avoid further confusion in misdirection of the mail and eliminate a possibility of postal rage, it was determined by 1846 to absolutely, once and for all, choose a name no one else would ever think of. It should be a thing which would tell something uniquely their own... a prominent feature which, in their case, was sand. The Latin word for sand is *sabulum* which was a go from the beginning.

That is until the ladies of the place got hold of it and feeling that *sabulum* had far to an inelegant, harsh sound to it, suggested abbreviating the word to *sabula*. This was highly satisfac-

SABULA - SAVANNA	
FERRY TIME CARD	
<b>Week Day Schedule</b>	
Leave Sabula — 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a. m. 1:00, 3:00, 5:00 p. m.	
Leave Savanna — 8:10, 10:10, 11:45 a. m. 2:10, 4:00, 5:45 p. m.	
<b>Sunday Schedule</b>	
Leave Sabula — 7:00, 9:00, 11:00 a. m. 1:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:00, 9:00 p. m.	
Leave Savanna — 8:00, 10:00, 11:45 a. m. 2:00, 4:00, 5:45, 7:30, 10:00 p. m.	
Special Trips Made Excursion Parties	
GEO. P. WHITNEY, Owner Phone No. 56 Sabula, Iowa	

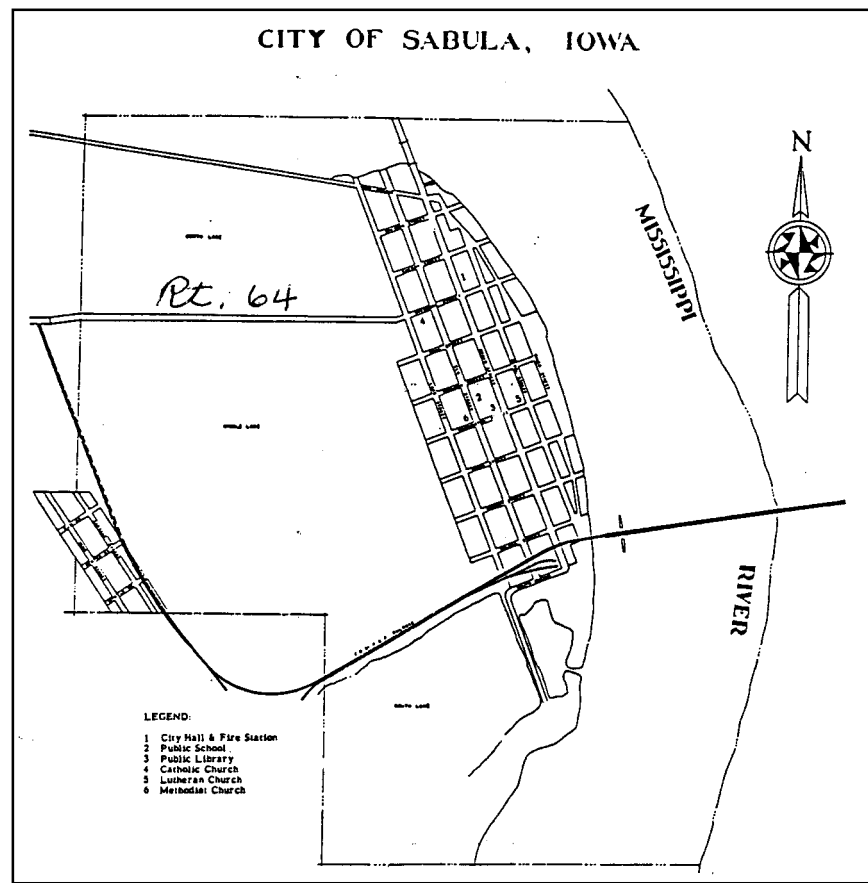
tory and thus it has remained to this day. Sabula.

Sabula never has grown very large in population but it has made its impact on the history of Jackson County, Iowa and for the fact that it boasts being Iowa's only "island city" which it has been mostly since its origins as a community.

A "south pike" and a "north pike" have had to be access to the "mainland," these having been built up layer by layer over the years due to routine incursions of the flooding Mississippi. The North Pike remains, though modernized, angling northwestward from Rt. 64/52 which is routed through the town. Near the south end of the causeway from the interstate bridge, the north road passes by a nice set of ball fields which have been transplanted from acreage now under water following building of the dikes and levees which protect the town. The old north pike (though it was never a toll road that we have found) travels through a wilderness-like landscape unlike what we inlanders are ordinarily used to. Two miles out is Evergreen Cemetery, far removed from Sabula but on higher grounds for burials.

The cemetery was begun in 1845 when the town purchased two acres for \$25.00. Burials were at first indiscriminately made, no orderly rows or plats and, history notes, a funeral could be got for \$6.00... \$5.00 for a

casket and a dollar for the privilege of being interred. In 1874, however, four more acres were added with a cemetery association organized to direct activity until the city took charge. Four more acres were bought in 1939, roads and trees now a part of the plan, which included a surveyed plat. the place has a wild charm about it yet. It evokes a quality of the early day, the loneliness of the frontier and the silence of the wild. Sabula also has a Catholic cemetery about a



mile west near the junction of Rt. 52 & 67. But we are getting ahead of ourselves... telling about endings before the beginnings.

By 1843, Sabula-yet-Charleston, was rather the butt end of a putdown which some was broadcast by saying, "it is so small that a quarter of beef would glut the market; a single pig would find no purchaser." There were eleven buildings in the place so surely the description was unkind.

It had been platted in 1837 with a few log houses in place and in which the putative founder, Isaac Dorman had exchanged his travel log(!) for ascow ferry to officially launch the longest term business in the town, the ferry. It ran for 95 years. It was essential to traffic and trade. A more modern interstate transport made its appearance in 1850 when a horse ferry pulled at the wheel, a time when the Golden West was the ob-

jective of thousands... covered wagons, handcarts, farm wagons with as motley a variety of citizens on the move as anywhere. The horse ferry gave over to steam in 1859 until it, too, was replaced with a much more convenient stern wheeler in 1880—the "Iowa."

But again in 1883 a horse-powered ferry reappeared, the "Sabula Belle," whose motility was provided by a treadmill on either side. Imagine. This was large enough to carry several teams and wagons besides a number of passengers. The prow and stern each had a hinged gangplank to be let down so that the boat did not have to turn around.

Until 1880 when the railroad bridge was built, it taking two years under extremely dangerous conditions, railroad cars were also ferried across one at a precarious time after another. In winter, ties and rails were laid directly on the ice and pulled over. Imagine that.

The history and evolution of the ferry business from the early day is long and fascinating, a chapter all its own. Various types and sizes have made those trips, each doing yeoman work and which was key to the livelihood of thousands. Some of the boats proved too small, some too large but they did an uncommon task with the typical can-do attitude of Americans everywhere.

In 1909 a gasoline launch, the "Hiawatha," was introduced by George and Walter Whitney. As the

distinctive way-of-life which is being a riverside resident. Once it was a common sight to see dozens of seines and hoopnets drying along the banks and smell the tang of fish and algae and muddy water of Ol' Miss. There was a time when huge log rafts were floated from Wisconsin or Minnesota to places like Sabula, Savanna or Clinton where bustling factories ripped the timber to planks or boards.

In such a river town, boys could make pocket money by stacking barrel staves at the saw or planing mill, bundle scrap slab for 50¢ a cord or shovel away the sawdust some of which, perhaps, went to Busch's Meat Market to cover the floor in the oldtime accepted practice. Pete would give any kid a weenie to chew on the way home from getting 15¢ worth of round steak for the family supper. You could catch crawdads to sell for bait or be a drover like the cowboys but instead of steers they were dairy... a heard of sixty, a hundred to be herded to graze out on the savannas surrounding PDQ Me continues...

the town where now the backwaters or small lakes lap. The late Bud Stanek related that he often did that daily chore for a local minister and got paid 25¢ a day.

It was an adventure living on the river... anticipating the clammers haul or waiting for the four toots of a steamboat to indicate a landing. Who or what was coming in?

There was much sent out by boat and later the railroad, too, because of the sawmill or flour mills inaugurated in the 1850s and '60s. The flour mill ran eighteen hours a day. There was an oatmeal mill, too, one of three in the entire state, an incentive for local farmers to plant an alternative crop. And speaking of that, the fertile bottomlands benefitted by periodic flooding, was a wonderful medium to plant celery. For some years celery, onions, other truck produce was raised there and shipped to distant locations. Large greenhouses raised flowers. The florist was noted for his expertise.

When the railroad came, first paralleling the bluff north-south from Dubuque to Clinton in 1870, an entirely new aspect in potential came about. Just two years later in '72 the Sabula, Ackley and Dakota Railroad was constructed from the Mississippi westward to Marion, Iowa. It was an important link in the later Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul system. With the railroad bridge coming in 1880 Sabula became a busy depot for transfer in all directions until post-World War II when the face of transportation changed drastically... semis and barges carried more and more freight. Passengers became motorists and the rail way dwindled. The Sabula depot was closed in April of 1958 when the Southwest Limited pulled out of the station for the last time. Once nineteen passenger trains alone went through the town, seventeen of them stopping. Natives of the place packed the station on weekends for shopping or entertainment excursions.

You may only picture now the amount of traffic and bustle the town once enjoyed as characteristic of a river-rail town. There was much unique in the place made so because of its site along the Mississippi.

Next Week — more.