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Pioneers

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EDITED BY BENJAMIN F. SHAMBAUGH

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## THE PIONEERS

A PAGEANT OF EARLY IOWA

COMPILED BY  
BRUCE E. MAHAN

Date Due

Date Due			

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PUBLISHED AT IOWA CITY IOWA IN 1927 BY  
THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA

## FOREWORD

This short pageant, dealing with the theme "The Pioneers", has been compiled for use as a high school assembly program during Iowa History Week, April 18-23, 1927. The idea of observing the third week in April as Iowa History Week was inaugurated in 1926 by the State Historical Society of Iowa in cooperation with the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs. The purpose of the movement was to stimulate a greater interest in the history of Iowa. Under the supervision of the Iowa History Committee of the Federation interest in the project became so widespread that Iowa History Week has been made an annual event.

The setting for this pageant is simple; the costumes are easy to prepare; and the number of characters may be adjusted to the size of the stage. A piano is sufficient for the musical score of the pageant, although a high school orchestra could be used effectively throughout Scene One. The local music supervisor may substitute, if desired, other selections for those suggested for Scene One. The Prologue should be given by a page or a trumpeter. The Synopsis together with the names of the cast might be mimeographed or printed as a program.

The Prologue is taken from the "Pageant of Shenandoah", which was written by Blanche Alden, Mrs. Helen Field Fischer, and Mrs. Dorothy Foskett Armstrong; and Scene One is an adaptation of a scene from the same source. The words of the games, *Miller Boy* and *Skip-to-My-Lou*, in Scene Two are taken from Wolford's *The Play Party in Indiana*, published at Indianapolis in 1916 by the Indiana Historical Commission.

Dance calls for the cotillion in Scene Two are taken from Cloz's *Reminiscences of Newcastle, Iowa*, published at Des Moines in 1921 by the Historical, Memorial and Art Department.

### SYNOPSIS

Place: A log cabin home in early Iowa.

Time: Decade of the forties or fifties.

Characters: A pioneer father, a pioneer mother, an older son, an older daughter, a younger son, a younger daughter, *Adversity, Prairie Fires, Fever, Ague, Blizzard, Snowflakes, Spirit of the Prairie, Sun, Sunbeams, Prairie Grasses, Prairie Flowers*, neighbor boys and girls, neighbor men and women, the neighborhood fiddler.

In Scene One the pioneer family, while engaged in common household tasks, is visited by *Adversity* who summons to her aid *Prairie Fires, Fever, Ague, Blizzard*, and *Snowflakes* in an effort to discourage the settlers in their new home. But the *Spirit of the Prairie*, aided by *Sun* and *Sunbeams, Prairie Grasses*, and *Prairie Flowers*, drives *Adversity* and her cohorts away, and restores the faith of the pioneers in the Iowa country.

In Scene Two the neighbors begin to arrive at the home of the pioneer family at early candle lighting. While waiting for the neighborhood fiddler to arrive they play such games as *Miller Boy* and *Skip-to-My-Lou*. When the fiddler comes, old-fashioned tunes and old-fashioned dances furnish an evening of rollicking fun.

## PROLOGUE

They came, the eager hearted pioneers  
They were the best and bravest of the East  
For coward soul would never dare to face  
The untamed land and break it to his will.

How far away and wild the stories sound;  
Of prowling wolves, of prairie fires and storms,  
Of insect enemies and pestilence,  
Of tiny cabins, shutting out the cold  
But open wide in hospitality—  
Of empty purses but with hearts of gold  
To share with every neighbor in his need  
And always, ceaselessly, the cruel toil  
As long as daylight lasted, and beyond.

So strange and far away it seems—and yet  
Men stand with us to-day—and women too—  
Who by that stern and unremitting toil  
Secured for us our lives of luxury.  
It is a wonder that they do not scorn  
Our easy days, our safe and selfish homes,  
But they look on serenely and content—  
Perhaps they hold the happy memory  
Of sweetness snatched from hardship which they knew  
Was finer than our cheaply purchased joys.

—Helen Field Fischer

## SCENE ONE: TRIALS OF THE PIONEERS

The scene is the interior of a log cabin occupying the center of the stage with one side open to the audience. The cabin is furnished with a fireplace at one end, cooking utensils, spinning wheel, and crude furniture—a table, stools, and a pole bed with a trundle bed beneath in the opposite corner from the fireplace. The pioneer mother is engaged in cooking a simple meal at the fireplace. An older daughter is spinning wool into yarn. A young man is cleaning an old-fashioned musket. A small girl is making a doll out of some rags and an ear of corn, while a small boy is making a figure-four trap for rabbits. The pioneer father is occupied with the task of greasing his boots and those of his older son.

While the pioneer family is thus engaged, strains from "The Death of Ase", Peer Gynt Suite, Grieg, are heard. *Adversity* dressed in a loose gray robe appears from the right and occupies the center of the stage in front of the cabin. She glares at the pioneer family, and summons to her aid *Prairie Fires*. Music, such as "The Fire Music", from "The Ring", Wagner, suggests the roaring and crackling of flames. Dressed in costumes of red with touches of yellow and blue they sweep on stage from right and left. They clasp hands and stretch across the stage in front of the cabin, swirling this way and that while long streamers of red, yellow, and blue extend from their arms to the ground and flow out behind as they rush forward. The pioneers shrink back in horror, the father and mother trying to protect the children from the angry flames. *Prairie Fires*, after a climactic swirl of fury toward the cabin, slowly recede and disappear right and left.

Then *Adversity* summons *Fever* and *Ague*. To the strains of "The Death of Ase", Peer Gynt Suite, Grieg, they come on stage from right and left respectively advancing slowly toward the pioneers. *Fever* is a tall figure dressed in a scarlet robe with a scarlet veil about her head. Her face is livid and her eyes unnaturally bright. *Ague* is also tall. She wears a gray shroud-like garment with a gray veil over her head. Her face is deathly white and dark circles appear below her eyes. As they advance in a threatening manner toward the pioneer family the mother administers to the needs of the stricken group, giving a cup of water to the fever-parched lips of one, placing a quilt about the shoulder of another, until she, too, drops from utter weariness. *Fever* and *Ague* then disappear. The pioneer family recovers.

The pioneer mother places a simple meal on the rude table and motions for the rest of the family to "set up". As the boys and girls gather around the table *Adversity* summons *Blizzard* and *Snowflakes* to her aid. *Blizzard* is dressed in white, with a pointed cap, and with long white streamers fastened to his arms. He carries a magic wand with streamers attached. *Snowflakes* are dressed in fluffy white garments. Led by *Blizzard*, *Snowflakes* swirl onto the stage. Music, such as Schubert's "The Erlking", arranged by Liszt, suggests a storm. Members of the pioneer family huddle about the fireplace as *Snowflakes* urged on by *Blizzard* surround the cabin in a whirling mass of snow.

Then the *Spirit of the Prairie* accompanied by her attendants, the *Sun* and *Sunbeams*, *Prairie Grasses*, and *Prairie Flowers*, appears on the stage opposite *Adversity*. *Spirit of the Prairie* is dressed in a flowing robe of blue with touches of earth-brown and leaf-green, and carries a wand tipped with a star. The *Sun* wears a loose robe of light yellow with a pointed golden crown. She holds in

her hand twelve yellow streamers at the end of each of which is a *Golden Sunbeam* (a small girl dressed in yellow). The *Sunbeams* dart out and away from the *Sun* at irregular intervals. *Prairie Grasses* are dressed in shades of green while *Prairie Flowers* wear colorful flower costumes. The *Spirit of the Prairie* and her attendants drive *Adversity*, *Blizzard*, and *Snowflakes* off the stage; then engage in a happy dance like frolic to appropriate music such as "Anitra's Dance", Peer Gynt Suite, Grieg. The members of the pioneer family recover their courage, and the *Spirit of the Prairie* and her attendants dance off the stage leaving the pioneers in a happy mood.

## SCENE TWO: PIONEER FUN

The same log cabin setting used in Scene One stands throughout Scene Two. The time is early candle lighting. The pioneer family is engaged in the task of placing the furniture back against the wall, and in making extra seats by placing slabs on chunks of wood. Neighbor boys and girls and men and women arrive in couples from right and left. The new arrivals are greeted cordially by the inmates of the cabin. A note of friendliness and hilarity prevails as those who have already arrived meet the newcomers. As the last couple arrives someone asks "Where's Uncle Joe and his fiddle?" Another replies "Oh, he's coming after while." Someone else suggests, "Well, while we're waiting let's play *Miller Boy*". This meets with popular approval. Each boy gets a partner, and all form a circle. The Miller stands in the center of the circle, as the partners arm in arm promenade around him in time to the singing. On the last line of the stanza each boy drops his partner's arm and tries to get the arm of the girl behind him and at his right. During this change the Miller tries to get a partner. If he succeeds the person without a partner is in the center for the next game. If the Miller fails in this he must be in the center until he succeeds. The Miller may be either a boy or a girl. The words for this game are as follows:

Happy is the miller boy that lives by the mill,  
He takes his toll with a free good will,  
One hand in the hopper and the other in the sack,  
The ladies step forward and the gents step back.

After a few rounds of *Miller Boy*, someone says "Let's play *Skip-to-My-Lou*". All agree, and stand around in a

circle with the boys at the left of their partners. One boy skips around to the right inside the ring, and takes the arm of a girl whose partner is not watching, and skips around the circle with her. Her partner skips after them trying to catch the couple before they get back to the place where the girl was stolen. If the partner catches the couple before they complete the circle he gets back his partner; otherwise he must skip around the circle and continue as his rival has done. The following words, or variations, may be used. The first line in each stanza is repeated three times:

The cat's in the buttermilk, skip-to-my-Lou  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
I'll get another one, skip-to-my-Lou  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Little red wagon painted blue  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Flies in the biscuit, two by two  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Mule's in the cellar, kicking up through  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Chickens in the hay-stack, shoo, shoo, shoo  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
If I can't get her back another one'll do  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Hurry up slow poke, do oh do  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
My wife wears a number 'leven shoe  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Flies in the cream jar, shoo, shoo, shoo  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
I'll get her back, in spite of you  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
When I go courting, I take two  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
Gone again, what shall I do?  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.  
I'll get another one sweeter than you  
Skip-to-my-Lou, my darling.

After a few rounds of *Skip-to-My-Lou*, Uncle Joe, the neighborhood fiddler arrives. He is given a most hearty greeting. A stool is placed on top of the table and Uncle Joe is helped up to this seat. He tunes his fiddle, and starts to play. Such tunes as *Money Musk*, *Arkansas Traveller*, *Old Dan Tucker*, *Old Zip Coon*, and *Pop Goes the Weasel* are used. The Virginia reel is danced first. Then Uncle Joe shouts "Git your pardners fer a cuttill-yun". Then keeping time with his feet, head, and body, he directs the dancing, using such calls as the following:

First four forward, and side four divide,  
Change partners in center, and swing to the side;  
and keep on around.

First two to right, and bow to the ground,  
Bird in the cage, and three hands around;  
and balance you all.

Ladies to right, and gents Highland Fling,  
Make him a bow, and cheat him or swing;  
and al a man left.

Ladies to center, and gents walk around,  
Pass by your partners, and swing 'em around;  
and all promenade.

On to the next one, salute and sashay,  
And double a shuffle, the old-fashioned way;  
and grand right and left.

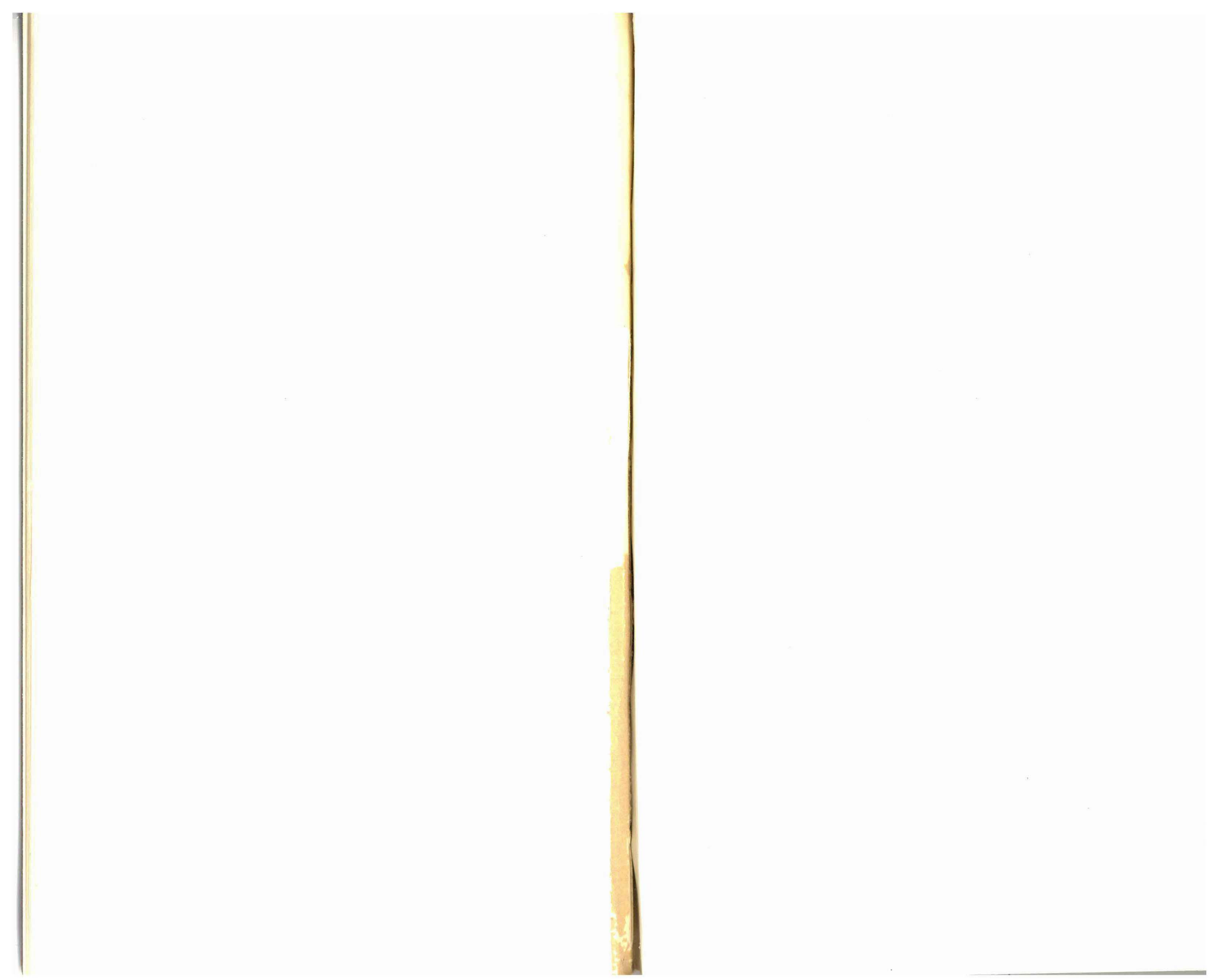
First four to right, and gents do se do,  
Half right and left, and ladies do so;  
and all hoe it down.

Ladies to center, form star with hands four,  
Left hand to partner, and do it some more:  
grand right and left  
and all run away—

#### SEATS

When the cotillion is ended the party breaks up, the neighbors go home, and the pageant ends.





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