

floats. My mother, as a widow, my Uncle Henry, my older brother and myself, having reached eighteen years of age, could claim 160 acres. I did not at that time fully understand the meaning or the value of this privilege. By an act of congress, when two or more parties entitled to pre-emption rights settled upon the same quarter-section, one party might enter that quarter-section, and the others each were entitled to select a quarter-section anywhere else in the same land district which was liable to entry and not claimed by prior rights. These privileges were called "floats," and were considered very valuable, as they could be located anywhere for mill sites or town plats, without the obligation of settling thereon or proving up.

When we had our proofs perfected and ready, I again, accompanied by my brother Frank, repaired to Mineral Point to make our entry. We stopped at the tavern of Mrs. John Hood,¹ who kept a good house for those times. Every tavern was full to overflowing. Speculators and gamblers had congregated in crowds, and during the land sales Mineral Point was anything but a quiet and desirable place to live in. We sold two of our floats, one to Ebenezer Brigham, of Blue Mounds, who located a valuable tract of land near the mound, and for which we got \$10. The other we sold to a speculator, whose name I have forgotten, also for \$10, which, however, he never paid us. As I said, we had no idea of their value; but were told we could readily have got \$50 for each, if we had known how to manage the matter, or had had a friend to consult with. But we were well satisfied, and when our business was finished we returned home proud and happy in the thought that we had now again a home of our own.

But we did not enjoy that home very long. Our experimental farming did not result in success. That fall the prairie fires were frequent and destructive, and we lost all

¹ *History of Iowa Co.* (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1881), pp. 656, 657, gives an account of the Hoods, who settled at Mineral Point in 1828. Hood, who was a miner, and served in the Black Hawk War as a lieutenant of volunteers, died in 1844.—Ed.