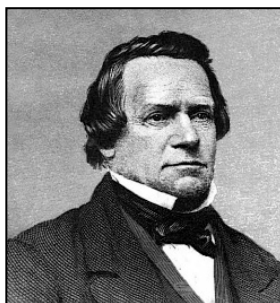


*Pieces of Iowa's Past*, published by the Iowa State Capitol Tour Guides weekly during the Legislative Session, features historical facts about Iowa, the Capitol, and the early workings of state government. All italicized text/block quotes in this document are taken directly from historical publications with the actual spelling, punctuation, and grammar retained.

## **The 100th Iowa County\***

There are 99 counties in Iowa. The establishment of Iowa counties had a close connection with the acquisition by the United States government of the lands of the Native Americans situated within the state boundaries. Every cession of land was followed closely by the establishment of counties. It was very important that counties were established and that government surveys were made so a form of government could be put in place to provide and record title to the land and provide the other basic government services settlers required.

In 1832, the first major treaty was made with the Native Americans and the first two counties were established in the territory that was to become Iowa.



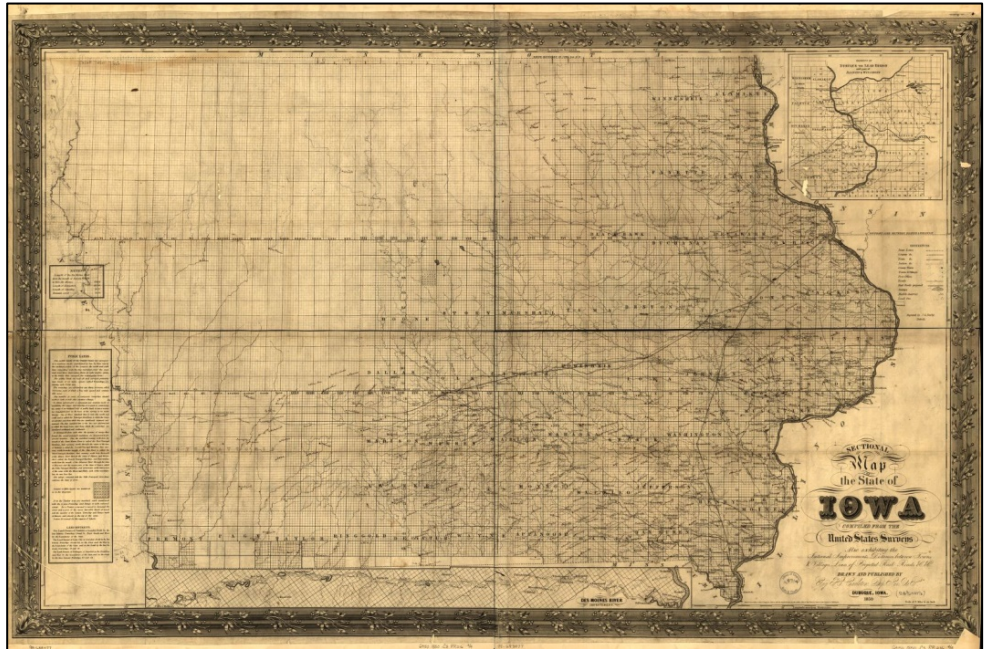
**Willard Barrows**

*A New Map of Iowa by Willard Barrows, 1845*

**This is a map of the Iowa Territory. The diagonal line through the center represents one of several proposed statehood boundaries known as the Lucas Boundaries. This proposal was rejected by Congress in 1844.**

When Iowa became the 29th state on December 28, 1846, 44 counties had already been established. In 1847, six more counties were established, increasing the total number to 50. On January 15, 1851, the 3rd General Assembly of Iowa passed a legislative [Act](#) that created 50 new counties, which increased the total number of counties to an even 100. For the first time, every part of the state was included in some designated county.

Kossuth County, as it was first established in 1851, was located between and was the same size as Palo Alto County to the west and Hancock County to the east. The county was square, 24 miles in length and 24 miles in width, and contained 16 congressional townships. At that time, Kossuth County was



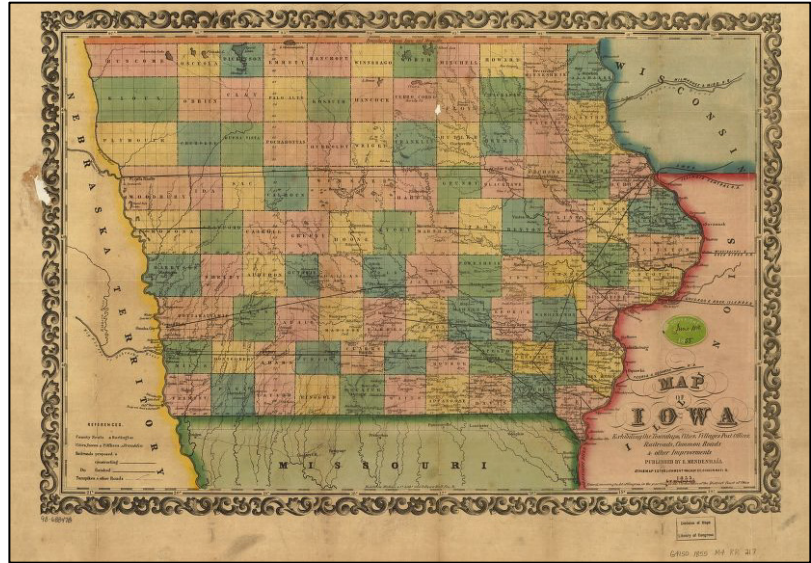
**This is an 1850 sectional map of the state of Iowa, compiled from the United States surveys. The map shows internal improvements, distances between towns and villages, and lines of projected railroads. Drawn and published by Guy H. Carleton, Dep. Sur. U.S.**

bounded on the north by a separate county named Bancroft County (the 100th County) which was 24 miles wide and 17 miles from its southern boundary to the Iowa-Minnesota state line. Bancroft County contained 12 congressional townships and was located between and was the same size as Emmet County to the west and Winnebago County to the east.

**SEC. 46. Bancroft—boundaries.** That the following shall be the boundaries of a new county which shall be called Bancroft, to wit: beginning at the north-west corner of township 97 north, range 26 west; thence north to the north boundary line of this state thence west on said boundary line to the north-west corner of township 100 north, range 30 west; thence south to the south-west corner of township 98 north, range 30 west; thence east to the place of beginning.

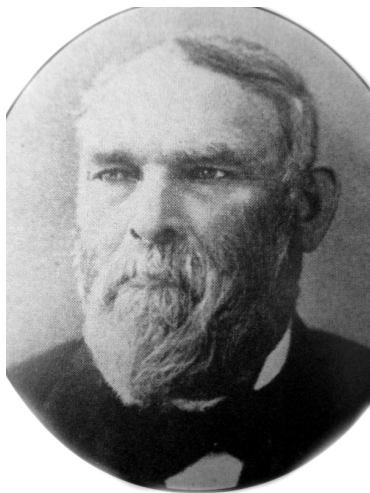


On January 24, 1855, the 5th General Assembly of Iowa approved legislation which bore the title of "An [Act](#) to extend the boundaries of Kossuth County and to locate the Seat of Justice thereof." Under this legislation the counties of Kossuth, Bancroft, and the north half of Humboldt County were all united into one county called Kossuth. This same legislation joined the southern half of Humboldt with Webster County, which at that time also included what is now Hamilton County. This legislative boundary change, which blotted out Bancroft County, was made before there were any settlers in Bancroft County, and therefore Bancroft County was never organized.



**Iowa, 1855**  
*Library of Congress*

The legislative Act that was passed in 1855 was greatly influenced by Judge Asa C. Call, who along with his brother Ambrose A. Call, were the first settlers in the county, arriving in July 1854. Judge Call not only persuaded the Legislature to greatly enlarge the boundaries of Kossuth County, but also saw to it that the legislative Act located the county seat nearly in the center of the greatly enlarged Kossuth County, where Judge Call founded the town of Algona and where the courthouse was eventually built.



**Judge Asa C. Call**



**Ambrose A. Call**

On January 28, 1857, the 6th General Assembly of Iowa passed a legislative [Act](#) to restore Humboldt County. It was intended by the Legislature that Humboldt County was to be restored as a 16-

township county, as it had originally been. Kossuth County returned the eight townships it had previously received, but through some legal maneuvers, Webster County only returned four of the eight townships it had received, so Humboldt County was restored with only 12 townships. The legislation did not restore Bancroft County.

On May 13, 1870, the 13th General Assembly created a new county from the northern 12 townships of Kossuth County. The new county included the same area that was originally Bancroft County. However, the organizers chose to name the new county [Crocker County](#). The county seat of Crocker County was Greenwood Center, which was located along the Des Moines River, about three miles west of the present town of Bancroft.

The formation of Crocker County did not meet with the favor of some settlers in southern Kossuth County, as they wanted to keep the county undivided and retain the honor of being the largest county in the state. They claimed that



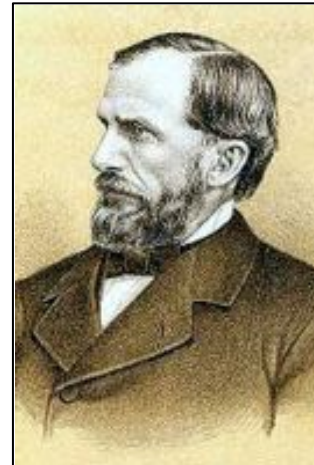
**Kossuth County Engineer 1870 railroad map**

the legislation that established Crocker County was unconstitutional because the new Crocker County did not contain a minimum of 432 square miles of territory as was required by the Iowa Constitution. Thus, the question was brought before the Iowa Supreme Court and the court ruled that the legislative act that had created Crocker County was unconstitutional. The territory that had been Crocker County for a short 19 months was restored to Kossuth County, returning the boundaries that it was given in January 1857. Those boundaries are the same that exist today. The present Kossuth County is about 41 miles in length and 24 miles in width with 28 congressional townships.

On February 22, 1913, legislation was introduced to once again create a new county in the northern territory of Kossuth County. The new county was

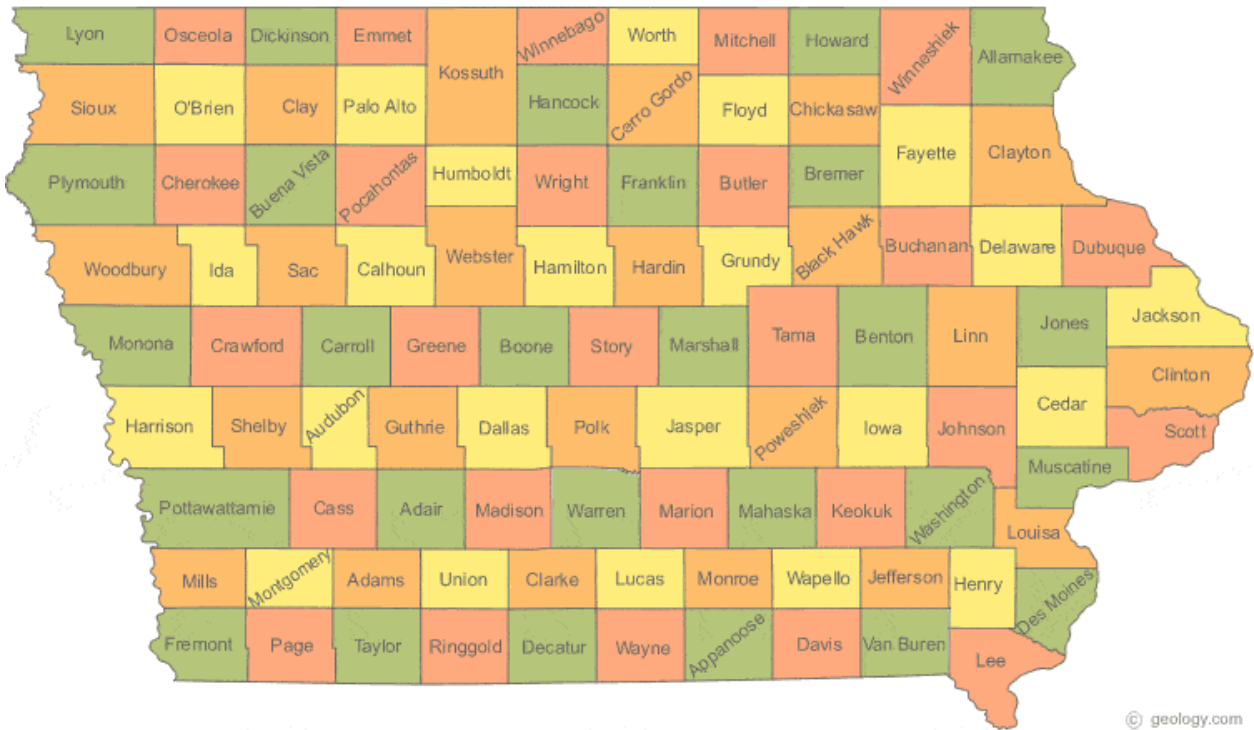
proposed to be named [Larrabee County](#) in honor of Governor [William Larrabee](#).

There were large delegations from the proposed new county as well as from the southern parts of Kossuth County lobbying the Legislature for and against the establishment of the new county. The delegation from the new county (Larrabee) proposed that the matter would be submitted to the voters of the new county only. The bill was introduced in that manner; however, it was defeated. The delegation from southern Kossuth was successful in amending the legislative bill to see that the matter was put before the voters of both the north and south parts of Kossuth County. An election was held in 1914, and the results were 920 votes for the division and 3,599 against the creation of Larrabee County. This final attempt to divide Kossuth County failed, and Kossuth County retained its status as the largest county in the state of Iowa.



**Governor  
William Larrabee**

**SEC. 3. Question submitted—ballot—form.** The proposition to change the boundary of said county of Kossuth as herein provided shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the county of Kossuth as now established at the general election held therein in the year 1914. The proposition shall be submitted in the following manner: The ballot shall have written or printed thereon the following: "Shall the new boundary of Kossuth county, Iowa, be established?" and on the right hand margin, opposite these words, two spaces shall be left, one for votes favoring the new boundary, and the other for votes opposing the same. In one of these spaces, the word "Yes" shall be written or printed, in the other, the word "No", and to the right of each space, a square shall be written or printed to receive the voting cross. The elector shall designate his vote by a cross mark thus: X, placed in the proper square, all of which shall be substantially as provided by section 1106 of the code of 1897 for submitting constitutional amendments or other public measures to be voted upon.



**Current Iowa Map of Counties**

***\*This article was prepared from information provided by Kossuth County Engineer Richard O. Schiek, P.E. & L.S.***