

IOWA'S TWO SONGS

The words of Iowa's state song, sung to the tune of "Der Tannenbaum" ("My Maryland")¹ were written in 1897 by Maj. S. H. M. Byers of Des Moines, "poet laureate" of his time. In the summer of 1868 the editor of the *Annals of Iowa*, Charles Aldrich, had this to say of the new song, "It requires time to settle the fact whether such a song possesses the mysterious elements of permanence—whether it shall be accepted by the people as the highest expression of their tastes and patriotic feeling . . . its reception thus far has been cordial."² Byers' words and the Tannenbaum tune were adopted as the official state song by concurrent resolution of the House and Senate, Mar. 24, 1911.

Iowa's other song, perhaps the one more familiar to residents and non-residents, is "The Iowa Corn Song." It takes its melody from a late 19th Century air of unknown authorship, called "Traveling"—which tells the story of a boy who was kicked out of a house by the irate father of the girl he was courting. The same tune later became the popular "Meandering," which is attributed to Cy Coben, Charles Grean and George Botsford.

"The Iowa Corn Song" was first sung by Za-Ga-Zig Shriners on a trip to a convention in Los Angeles in 1912. George E. Hamilton, a Shriner and the secretary of the convention bureau of the Des Moines Chamber of Commerce from 1914 to 1938, wrote the words. The "Corn Song" gained increasing popularity after 1921 when the national Shrine Convention met in Des Moines; each visiting band played it in honor of the host.

¹"Der Tannenbaum" was a popular German students' song as early as 1819. During our Civil War, the Southerners adapted it to "My Maryland."

²*Annals of Iowa*, Vol. 3, No. 6, 469.

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