

ing cities near and far? Iowa actually lost population in the first decade of this century, in part because of migration to the Great Plains, but historians have yet to measure and explain the outmigration, in contrast to the stream from Oklahoma to California in the Depression. What became of the earlier farmers and villagers driven out by drought and low prices—did some later return to Iowa? State and federal manuscript censuses, county records (where preserved), and published reminiscences may provide some data for Iowa and for the Plains.

The twenty papers together constitute excellent work on the institutions, techniques, and economics of American Great Plains and Canadian Prairie Provinces agriculture for most of the past century. No one can understand the region without an awareness of the topics discussed at the Bozeman symposium, from dry farming to irrigation and from the application of the homestead law to recent political movements. The book has no map, but the publisher usefully keeps footnotes at the bottom of the pages and provides an adequate index.

—Earl M. Rogers
The University of Iowa

Harvey Ingham & Gardner Cowles, Sr.: Things Don't Just Happen, by George Mills. Edited by Joan Bunke. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1977. pp. x, 165. \$7.95.

"What? You've never heard of George Mills?" old-time readers of the *Des Moines Register* ask in some dismay when this and other once-familiar public names draw a blank stare from young men and women. Through two generations the "George Mills" by-line appeared almost daily on the front page of the *Register* whenever the Iowa Legislature was in session. It was a name Iowa politicians, especially, knew and respected.

The Iowa State House was Mills' beat for twenty-eight years. While the careers of big and little politicians waxed and waned Mills was the one person who provided a continuity, who interpreted and told the citizens what was going on and who, because of his own personal integrity, ultimately became a sort of watch-dog over the morals of the State House. It's safe to say as time went on no action was ever contemplated in that place without a thought as to what George Mills would be writing in the *Register*.

His stories won Iowa Associated Press awards three times. When the Legislature was not in session Mills was the *Register's* "star reporter" most likely to be sent when big stories needed to be covered in depth.

Since retiring in 1971 Mills hasn't been able to keep his fingers off his typewriter, specializing in historical articles and books. In 1976 he was lured into the new field of electronic journalism as legislative reporter and political analyst for Station WHO-TV. So the name, and now the face, is becoming

familiar to the public once again, at least in the Des Moines area.

Mills' most recent book is sub-titled "Things Don't Just Happen." The somebodies who began making things happen back in 1903 were two Iowa journalistic geniuses—Harvey Ingham and Gardner Cowles, Sr.—who meshed superb editorial and business talents to take over a moribund Des Moines newspaper and build it into one of the recognized great dailies of America.

The two were "small-town boys" from Algona, Iowa. (population then 3,000.) In the early 1880s Gardner was school superintendent and Harvey was editor of one of four local papers. Well-educated, individualistically-minded, tenacious, imbued with the Protestant work ethic, each at first drew sparks from the other while feuding over typically small-town issues in the slanderous rhetoric of the times. By 1900 Cowles, having achieved considerable financial success through investments and banking, was elected to the Iowa legislature. Two years later Ingham accepted editorship of the Des Moines "Register'n'Leader" to try to do something about the discouraging condition of that paper.

Mills dispenses the introductory biographies of his protagonists in the first chapter, getting quickly into the newspapering field he knows best and setting a fast tempo as he tells of the maneuverings and fortuitous circumstances which enabled the two men, now good friends, to buy the paper. Both were in their forties. The partnership was an amazingly strong amalgam of diverse talents. Cowles' perfectionism, astute business sense and canny eye for thrift guided the way to financial success. Ingham—a jovial, genial, generous personality in extreme contrast to Cowles' stern conservatism—was a liberal forward-thinker at a time when American journalism was turning away from personal politics toward public service. His strong views, strictly limited to the editorial page, and belief in broad, accurate news-coverage eventually warranted the slogan "the newspaper Iowa depends upon."

The road to success wasn't all smooth going, but the journey was exciting and lively and Mills describes it with vigor, having delved deeply into early-century files to dig out a treasure of entertaining anecdotes. The pages on "Ding" Darling, that irascible, beloved Pulitzer-prize cartoonist, who for 40 years brought an early-morning chuckle to Iowa breakfast tables, are some of the best in the book, with new information not even found in the Darling biographies. (And "Darling" is another of those once-familiar names which newcomers don't recognize, neither for his delightful cartoons nor his ahead-of-the times leadership in today's conservation and ecology movements).

There is a book-within-a-book which begins imperceptibly with Chapter 4 and will hook the interest of any reader over thirty with its side-view of history during the first half of the twentieth century. Names "in the news" of past days appear intriguingly on almost every page, each with some connection to the *Register* at the time: Teddy Roosevelt, Taft, Charles Evans Hughes, Woodrow Wilson, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, Wendell Wilkie,

Charles Lindbergh, Sacco, Vanzetti, Leopold, Loeb, Hitler, Churchill, Eisenhower, Nixon, Khrushchev, George Gallup. And long-forgotten news events—the Graf Zeppelin, Black Tuesday, the drought and depression, bank closings, Farmer's Holiday, Ku Klux Klan, and all the various wars.

This intermeshing of once-famous names and events with the growth of the Cowles-Ingham publishing empire presents the older reader with a pleasant nostalgia of how things were and wonder of how they might have been.

When Cowles envisaged an all-state daily newspaper at a time when farmers and small-town residents had only their local weeklies he could not have foreseen the extent to which the *Register* blankets Iowa today. And surely Harvey Ingham could have had no conception of this newspaper's national reputation for excellence that grew out of the inspiration of his personality and the journalistic guidelines he established. Suffice it to say that staffers have won twelve Pulitzer prizes, a record second only to the *New York Times*.

—Ralph Hollander
Sheldon, Iowa

Hoover, Roosevelt, and the Brains Trust: From Depression to New Deal, by Elliot A. Rosen. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977. pp. x, 446, notes, illustrations. \$16.95.

As contemporary Americans continually debate the economic issues facing the United States, the role of the federal government becomes essential to any rational discussion. And few individuals maintain neutral attitudes concerning the responsibility and duty of the national administration as it attempts to establish and supervise the achievement of specific societal minimums, a better distribution of income, and a reasonable pattern for economic and social intervention. These concepts are the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the Brains Trust.

In *Hoover, Roosevelt, and the Brains Trust*, Elliot Rosen—who uses the term “Brains Trust” as it was originally coined in the plural form—presents a detailed examination of the birth of that legacy. Primarily, this study is concerned with the years 1931-1932. However, the author is extremely adept at glancing to earlier years and piecing together the various elements and influences which created the diverse responses of Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt to the developing depression.

Rosen forthrightly rejects revisionistic attempts to rehabilitate the Great Engineer. Hoover was totally consistent; he constantly relied upon the nineteenth century values of individualism and voluntarism to confront the new economic disparities of the twentieth century. The author contends that the 1920's could be understood better as the “Hoover decade” rather than the New Era. Hoover underestimated the causes and scope of the Great Depression, and thus contributed to the downward spiral.

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.