

"For one thing," a lady from Terril said, "the Mexican laborers and their families were housed in flimsy shacks. Accustomed to the warm climate of Mexico they simply could not stand our winters. They stayed all winter, you know, and had no income during the long, cold winter months, so they became discouraged and wanted to return to their native country.

There were some Jamaicans imported to work in the sugar beet fields around Winnevago, Minnesota," she continued, "and there was much discontent, partly because of inadequately heated shacks which were the only shelters available to them."

What ever the reason—the sugar beet industry did not last long in Clay county. And the picturesque Mexican men, women and children have long since departed. . . .

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### "I AM PROUD TO BE AN IOWAN"

From The Des Moines Tribune,  
Tuesday, Aug. 10, 1948

WEST BRANCH, IA.—*Following is the prepared text of former President Herbert Hoover's address at his birthday celebration and homecoming here:*

I am glad to have your invitation to come again to this Iowa village where I was born.

Here I spent the first ten years of my boyhood. My parents and grandparents came to this village in the covered wagon—pioneers in this community. They lie buried over the hill. They broke the prairie into homes of independent living.

They worshiped God; they did their duty to their neighbors. They toiled to bring their children greater comfort, better education and to open to them a wider opportunity than had been theirs.

I am proud to have been born in Iowa. As I have said before, through the eyes of a 10-year-old boy it was a place of adventure and daily discoveries.

The wonder of the growing crops, the excitements of the harvest, the journeys to the woods for nuts and hunting, the joys of snowy winters, the comfort of the family fireside, of good food and tender care.

### Quaker

And out of the excessive energy of all small boys, the evenings were filled with accounts of defeat and victory over animate and inanimate things—so far as they were permitted in a Quaker community.

Indelible in those recollections was a widowed mother, sitting with her needle, cheerfully supporting three children and at the same time ministering to her neighbors.

After that came life with Uncle Allan on his farm near this village, with the joys and sorrows which come to every small boy en route to life's disciplines by way of farm chores.

And among them was the unending making of provisions for the next winter.

But in those primitive days, social security was had from the cellar, not from the federal government.

You may be surprised if I tell you that at an age somewhat under 10 I began here my first national service.

By my own efforts I furnished firecrackers required for the adequate celebration of the independence of the United States on July 4, 1882.

To get those firecrackers, I entered into collective bargaining by which it was settled that I should receive one cent per hundred for picking potato bugs in a field in sight of this stand. My impression then, and now is, that it was an oppressive wage rate.

Also, I took part in the political issues of the day by walking beside a Garfield torchlight procession in the presidential campaign of 1884. And by the village flags at half-mast, I learned of the assassination of Garfield, with some dim understanding that somewhere in the nation great men guarded its future.

### Meeting

One of the indelible impressions of memory was the original Quaker meeting house.

Those recollections chiefly revolve around the stiff repression of the explosive energies of a small boy sitting during the long silences.

One time, however, the silence was broken by the shrill voice of Aunt Hannah, who was moved in meeting bitterly to denounce the modernistic tendencies of those times. She had

firm views on any form of recreation, which included singing in Sunday school.

She closed with a peroration to the effect that if these tendencies persisted that edifice dedicated to God would some day become in fact that place of abomination—a "theatre."

#### Movie

And truly, the old meeting house in its decadent years, having made way for a better edifice, became a movie house. My view is that the abomination part depends on the choice of the film.

And among these recollections of a great lady who first taught me in school and remained my friend during her whole long and useful life, Mrs. Mollie Carran.

It was from her that I first heard something about the word American. Many great writers and statesmen have attempted to express what we mean by that word. But there is an imponderable feeling within it which reaches to the soul of our people and defies measure.

America means far more than a continent bounded by two oceans.

It is more than pride of military power, glory in war, or in victory.

It means more than vast expanses of farms, of great factories or mines, magnificent cities, or millions of automobiles and radios.

It is more even than the traditions of the great tide westward from Europe which pioneered the conquest of a continent.

It is more than our literature, our music, our poetry. Other nations have these things also.

#### "My Life"

Maybe the intangible we cannot describe lies in the personal experience and the living of each of us rather than in phrases, however inspiring.

Perhaps without immodesty I can claim to have had some experience in what America means.

I have lived many kinds of American life. After my early boyhood in this Iowa village, I lived as the ward of a country doctor in Oregon.

I lived among those to whom hard work was the price of

existence. The open opportunities of America opened out to me the public schools. They carried me to the professional training of an American university.

#### **"Work"**

I began by working with my own hands for my daily bread. I have tasted the despair of fruitless search for a job.

I know the kindly encouragement of a humble boarding-house keeper. I know that at that time there was an economic depression either coming or going. But nobody told me of it.

So I did not have the modern worry of what the federal government would do about it.

I have conducted the administration of great industries, with their employees.

I have seen America in contrast with many nations and races. My profession took me into many foreign lands under many kinds of government.

I have worked with their great spiritual leaders and their great statesmen. I have worked in governments of free men, of tyrannies, of Socialists and of Communists. I have met with princes, kings, despots and desperados.

#### **Asia**

I have seen the squalor of Asia, the frozen class barriers of Europe. I was not a tourist. I was associated in their working lives and problems. I had to deal with their social systems and their governments.

And outstanding everywhere to these great masses of people there was a hallowed word—"America." To them, it was the hope of the world.

My every frequent homecoming was a re-affirmation of the glory of America. Each time my soul was washed by the relief from grinding poverty of other nations, by the greater kindness and frankness which comes from acceptance of equality and the wide-open opportunity to all who want a chance.

It is more than that. It is a land of self-respect born alone of free men.

#### **War**

In later years I participated on behalf of America in a great war. I saw untold misery and revolution. I have seen human slavery again on the march.

I have been repeatedly placed by my countrymen where I had need to deal with the hurricanes of social and economic destruction which have swept the world. I have seen bitter famine and the worst misery that the brutality of war can produce.

I have had every honor to which any man could aspire. There is no place on the whole earth except here in America where all the sons of man could have this chance in life.

I recount all this in order that, in Quaker terms, I can give my own testimony.

#### **The Word**

The meaning of our word "America" flows from one pure spring. The soul of our America is its freedom of mind and spirit in man. Here alone are the open windows through which pours the sunlight of the human spirit. Here alone is human dignity not a dream, but an accomplishment.

Perhaps another etching of another meaning of America lies in this community. It was largely settled by Quakers over 90 years ago. This small religious sect in England had declared that certain freedoms of man came from the Creator and not from the State 150 years before the Declaration of Independence.

They spent much time in British stocks and jails for this first outburst of faith in the dignity of the individual man.

#### **Refuge**

They first came in refuge to New England.

But the Puritans cut off their ears by way of disapproval of their religious individualism.

Then came the great refuge which William Penn secured for them. From New England and Pennsylvania some of the ancestors of this community, before the revolution, migrated first to Maryland, and after a generation they moved to the Piedmont of North Carolina.

Then early in the last century slavery began to encroach upon them. Most of that community—5,000 of them—organized a concerted trek to Ohio and Indiana. This time they were seeking freedom from that great strain on human liberty. Again after a generation they hitched their covered wagons and settled on these prairies.

### Homes

Everywhere along these treks sprang up homes and farms.

But more vital was the meeting house with its deep roots in religious faith, its tolerance and devotion to liberty of the individual.

And in these people there was the will to serve their community and their country. Even this village was a station on the underground through which Negroes were aided to the freedom of Canada. Sons of this community were in the then Red Cross of the Civil war. And despite their peace-loving faith, many of their sons were enrolled in the Union army to battle for free men.

### Atom

That inbedded individualism, that self-reliance, that sense of service, and above all those moral and spiritual foundations were not confined to the Quakers. They were but one atom in the mighty tide of these qualities of many larger religious bodies which make up the intangible of the word American.

At the time our ancestors were proclaiming that the Creator had endowed all mankind with rights of freedom as the child of God, with a free will, there was being proclaimed by Hegel and later by Karl Marx a satanic philosophy of agnosticism and that the rights of man came from the state.

The greatness of America today comes from one philosophy, the despair of Europe from the other.

There are today fuzzy-minded people in our country who would compromise in these fundamental concepts. They scoff at these tested qualities in men. They never have understood and never will understand what the word America means. They explain that these qualities were good while there was a continent to conquer, and a nation to build. They say that time has passed.

No doubt the land frontier has passed. But the frontiers of science are barely opening. This new land with all its high promise cannot and will not be conquered except by men inspired from the concepts of free spirit.

It is those moral and spiritual qualities in free men which fulfill the meaning of the word American. And with them will come centuries of further greatness to our country.

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