

THE Goldfinch



Iowa History for Young People

Volume 16, Number 3 Spring 1995

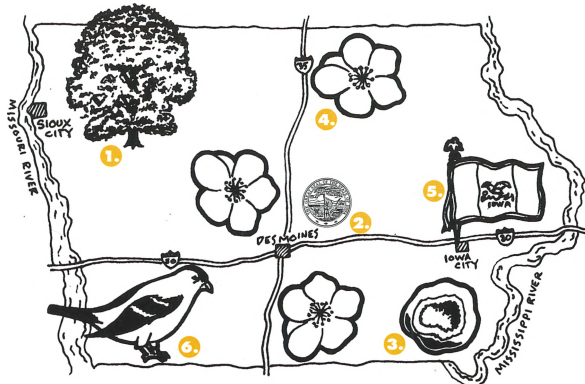


STATE SYMBOLS

- 1 Former site of Council Oak, a famous Iowa tree.
- 2 The best place to see the state seal is in the Gov's office. Better make an appointment before you pop in for a visit!
- 3 Iowa's southeastern corner is famous for its geodes.
- 4 The wild rose grows across the state. A common species, *rosa arkansana*, grows mostly in central Iowa.
- 5 Iowa's state flag flies atop many state buildings. In Iowa City it flies proudly on Old Capitol, Iowa's first state capitol.
- 6 The eastern goldfinch is common throughout the state. It even sticks around in winter when most birds fly south to warmer climates.

Wild Rosie's Map

Vrmm! Vrmm! You're off on a state symbol road trip. You'll see the sites, sounds, and smells of the state's sensations — from geodes to wild roses. Let's go!



THE Goldfinch

Winner of a 1994 Parents' Choice Honor Award

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Iowa Scenes



Photo by Steve Ohm, SHSI

GUTTENBERG — Artist and stone mason Paul Friedlein (1899-1984) celebrated Iowa with his hands and his heart. At Jolly Ridge, his home overlooking the Mississippi River in northeastern Iowa, Friedlein built colorful cement and stone monuments honoring his family, his neighbors, and his state. The Iowa Plaque (above) sits in a huge, natural rock.



Photo by Michelle Rubin

DES MOINES — One of Iowa's most important buildings is pictured above in a crazy, hazy kind of way. The first five readers who identify the mystery building *and* the building it's reflected in will win a year's subscription to *The Goldfinch*. Send your answers to: Mystery Building, *The Goldfinch*, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City 52240. Include your name, age, address, and phone number.

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Souvenirs like postcards, pins, knickknacks, and T-shirts spread the word about Iowa.

Symbols are part of communication, just like words and sounds. A symbol stands for something, like a thought, a command, or a feeling. You run across symbols every day of your life. The smiley face on your homework means “good job!” The street sign with a person walking across a line symbolizes a safe place to cross the street. An arrow on a map means “go this way.”

To have meaning to a group of people, such as kids in a school or residents of a state, symbols must be recognizable to these people.

You can make symbols with body movements, sounds, and colors, too. When a cyclist gets ready to make a turn, he or she will hold out an arm, which says to car drivers, “I’m going to turn here.” Some groups have special handshakes. You may sing a school song or wear certain colors to symbolize your school spirit.

Iowa’s symbols

Iowa’s state symbols — like the state bird, the state rock, and the state seal — symbolize how

Talkin’ ’bout symbols

some Iowans have viewed their state. When many Iowans look at an eastern goldfinch or a geode, they see more than just a bird or a rock. They see something that represents their state’s history and heritage. And they see what their ancestors saw 50, 75, and 100 years ago.

Symbols taken from the natural landscape show the importance of the environment to Iowans past and present. Native-American residents used the state flower to make medicines. Early pioneers built houses, barns, and furniture from oaks, our state tree.

Who decides?

Representing Iowa citizens, lawmakers have voted to make symbols a lasting part of Iowa history. Iowa’s official symbols were written into the lawbooks between 1847 and 1967.

Even today, Iowa’s lawmakers are encouraged to designate new symbols for the state. Most of our symbols were chosen so long ago that some

Iowans believe they represent the Iowa that exists only in history books and museums.

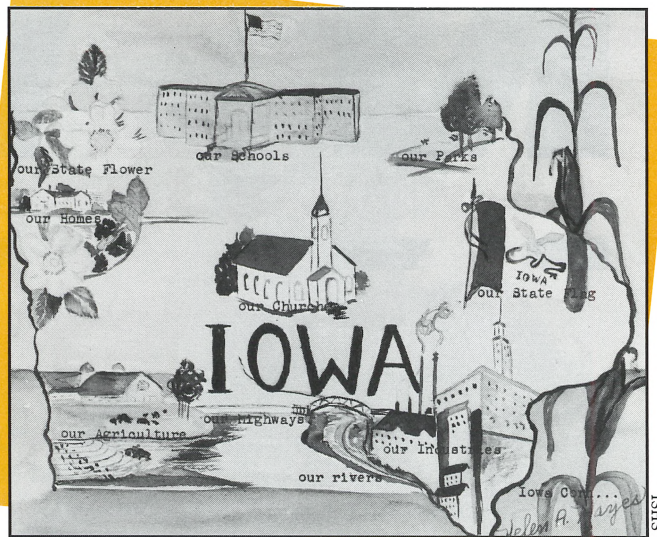
Sharing symbols

State symbols show other Americans what's special about Iowa. Our symbols appear on postcards, souvenirs, and license plates. They make impressions on people around the country and help them visualize what Iowa is all about.

Symbols represent Iowa's families, businesses, communities, and schools. They encourage people from different states to visit or even move to Iowa. Unofficial symbols, like corn and hogs, give clues to an important Iowa industry—agriculture.


Sometimes, certain symbols become dominant. When they're used on their own, they may give the wrong impression about something. For example, corn is such a strong Iowa symbol that some people think Iowa is filled with corn fields and nothing else.

Symbols bring people together, allowing them to share in something that is both special and unique to them. Only a handful of other states share Iowa's symbols. The goldfinch is the state bird of New Jersey. Oak trees also represent



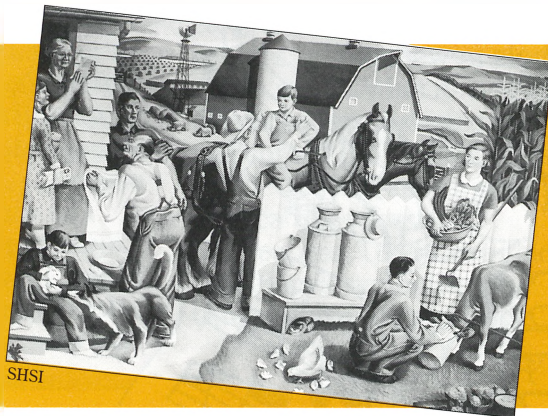
Which official and unofficial state symbols are represented in this 1950s painting?

Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, and Maryland.

When you look at Iowa's symbols, you might get goose bumps up and down your arms or a special tingling in your stomach. Don't worry, it's not the flu! It's just your state pride welling up inside you! 

Ask yourself

- 1 How does the farm mural to the right symbolize Iowa?
- 2 If Governor Branstad asked you to paint a mural representing Iowa in the 1990s, what symbols would you include in your creation? Where would you display your mural?

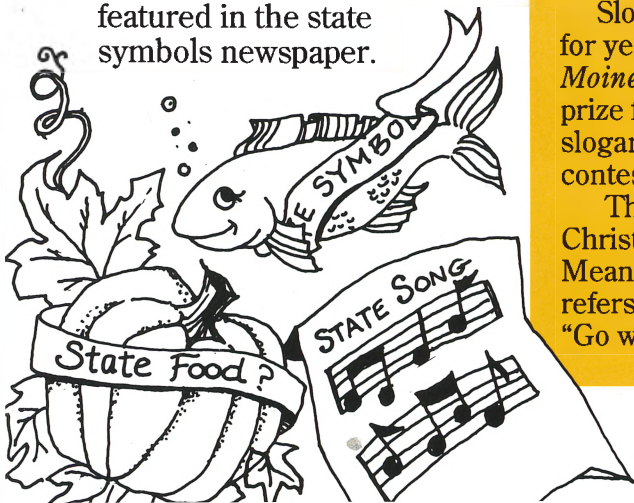


NEWZ

About Iowa Symbols



Can people or cartoon characters be state symbols? How about words, food, or buildings? Take a quick mental tour through Iowa's past and present and identify official and unofficial state symbols you may have seen around the state. Consider the state's landscape, businesses, and citizens. How have they been represented with symbols? When you have your answers, compare them with the symbols featured in the state symbols newspaper.



Sell Iowa!

IOWA — “Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain.” When that phrase became the state motto in February 1847, it expressed the spirit of Iowa with words, just as the state seal did with pictures.

The state motto and other state slogans “sell” Iowa to out-of-state tourists and businesses. Just like the official motto, slogans tell Iowans and non-Iowans what is special about the state.

Slogans have been popular for years. In 1923, *The Des Moines Register* offered a \$500 prize for the best original slogan entered in a state-wide contest.

The winner was Claude W. Christensen’s “Horace Greeley Meant Iowa.” This slogan refers to the famous advice, “Go west, young man, go

west.” Greeley gave this advice to J.B. Grinnell, who then moved to Iowa from New York City and founded the city of Grinnell and Grinnell College in 1846.

In 1970, Governor Robert D. Ray introduced “Iowa, A Place to Grow,” to sell Iowa as a great place to raise crops and families. Since then, other slogans, including “Discover Iowa’s Treasures” and “Come Explore the Heartland,” advertise Iowa’s strengths. The newest slogan, “Iowa, You Make Me Smile,” reflects one of Iowa’s best characteristics—the kindness of its people.

“The Tall Corn State,” “Beautiful Land Between Two Great Rivers,” and “Where Factory and Farm Share Prosperity” are other slogans that promote the Hawkeye state.

—Michelle Rubin



Stately Names

IOWA — Among Iowa's first American Indian residents were the Ioway. (Today they are called the Iowa.) This tribe lived throughout Iowa's grasslands and along its rivers. The Iowa may have named the Iowa River after their original tribal name, "ayuhwu."

U.S. Army lieutenant Albert M. Lea explored the Iowa River in 1836 and named the surrounding land the "Iowa District." This became the state of Iowa ten years later. The word Iowa is said to mean, among other things, "dusty nose."

"I think the main reason the state of Iowa got its name is because the Iowa tribe at one time owned the biggest share of land," Iowa Chief Jim White Cloud Rhodd told *The Goldfinch*.

The tribe lived in Iowa until they were driven out by the U.S. government beginning in the 1820s. Today the Iowa live mainly in Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

Iowa's state name honors the Iowa tribe and its heritage. "I'm proud that the state of Iowa is named after our tribe," Chief Rhodd said.

Chief Mahaska (White Cloud) was Chief Rhodd's great-great-grandfather. Today, a monument to Chief Mahaska in Oskaloosa helps Chief Rhodd and other Iowa Indians remember the tribal history in Iowa — the state that bears their name.

Other place names in Iowa, such as Keokuk and Sioux City, honor Native Americans.

The nickname "Hawkeyes" may also have Native-American origins. Some believe the name came from Black Hawk, a Sauk Chief who lived in Iowa in the 1800s.

Others think the nickname was taken from a popular fictional character, named Hawkeye, who appeared in 19th-century adventure novels.



The observant and cautious hawk is said to symbolize Iowa's early European-American settlers.

No matter what its origins, the nickname became popular and spread throughout the state. By the 1840s it appeared in political speeches and newspapers. Today, the gold and black hawk symbolizes the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

—Amy Ruth

People IN THE NEWS

OXFORD — William Floeschinger loved Iowa. In fact, he loved his home state so much he named his only child after it! On April 1, 1910, Iowa Lucille Floeschinger was born in Oxford, Iowa.

“My father named me after Iowa because I was the best girl in the best state,” 84-year-old Iowa Floeschinger Honn told *The Goldfinch* in a recent interview.

Growing up with an unusual name was a breeze. “You’d think the kids would have nicknamed me, but they never did,” she said. “They never called me Nevada or Missouri or anything else. They just called me Iowa.”

After she graduated from college and began her career as a teacher, her students found a new name for her. “The kids called me Mrs. Iowa,”



Photo courtesy Iowa Honn, Oxford

Iowa Floeschinger grew up with a pretty big namesake — the entire state of Iowa! She posed for this photo in 1914. Just a few years earlier another Iowa also lived in eastern Iowa. Maria Iowa Wray Young (1846-1909) lived near North Liberty. The two Iowas never met.

Honn said. “It was just something they did on their own.”

Although she has lived in Oxford all her life, Honn is an enthusiastic traveler who has journeyed across the country. But like her father, she loves Iowa best.

“I always feel like kissing the ground when I come home because Iowa is so beautiful,” she said.

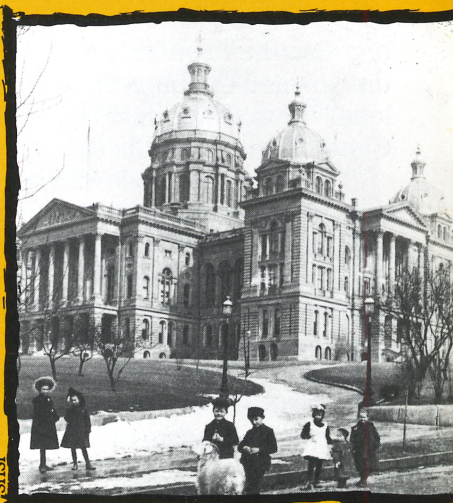
— Amy Ruth

Unofficial Symbols

IOWA — While eastern goldfinches, geodes, wild roses, and oak trees all have their places as Iowa’s official state symbols, there are many other “unofficial” symbols that represent Iowa just as well.

Take the state capitol in Des Moines. It was designed in the 1870s to inspire pride in the state. It cost \$2,873,295 and took over a decade to build. When Iowans glance at the gold dome, perhaps they are reminded of the laws that protect citizens and their rights.

Corn is another unofficial symbol of Iowa. It was the primary crop among Iowa’s first



The state capitol in Des Moines has symbolized Iowa for more than a century. Does the sheep in the above picture symbolize Iowa? It posed with these kids around 1906.



residents. European-American pioneers grew corn to feed livestock. Today, Iowa is known internationally for its corn production. Corn symbolizes Iowans' commitment to hard work. Remember that the next time you crunch on rich, buttered popcorn or chomp down on corn-on-the-cob!

Mascots are also unofficial state symbols. The University of Iowa's Herky the hawk and Iowa State University's Cy the cardinal are symbols that come to life and unite fans with a sense of loyalty to the teams and to Iowa.

The Goldfinch's cartoon characters, Goldie and Rosie, are "living" forms of the state bird and flower. When kids identify with these lovable cartoon characters, they're also learning about Iowa's traditions and history.

Unofficial symbols represent Iowa's businesses, landscape, and other things that are important to Iowans. How would you represent your part of the state with symbols?

—Michelle Rubin

mascot — a group or team's good luck symbol

DES MOINES — If Iowa had a state insect, what would it be? What about the state mammal? Or the state dance?

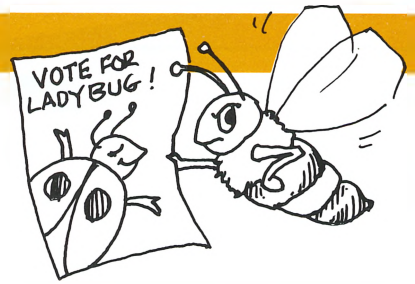
The last time the Iowa Legislature approved a new state symbol was in 1967, when the geode became the state rock. In the 27 years since, several proposals for new symbols have been made.

In 1979, students in Tama, Iowa tried to make the ladybug the state insect. Seven years later, Marshalltown junior high students encouraged lawmakers to recognize the honeybee.

Today, students in Tipton want the **bison** as the official mammal (see page 22). Others worked to get the square dance adopted as the state dance and Tama soil as the state soil.

With all of these efforts, why haven't we had a new state symbol in over 25 years?

According to Beth Brannen, who gives presentations about students' efforts to make the ladybug the state insect, some lawmakers thought other issues were more important than the ladybug to debate. But Brannen says symbols are important because they "help



identify us as Iowans."

Official state birds, rocks, flowers, and trees are pretty common throughout the United States, but many states also have unique official

Selecting Symbols

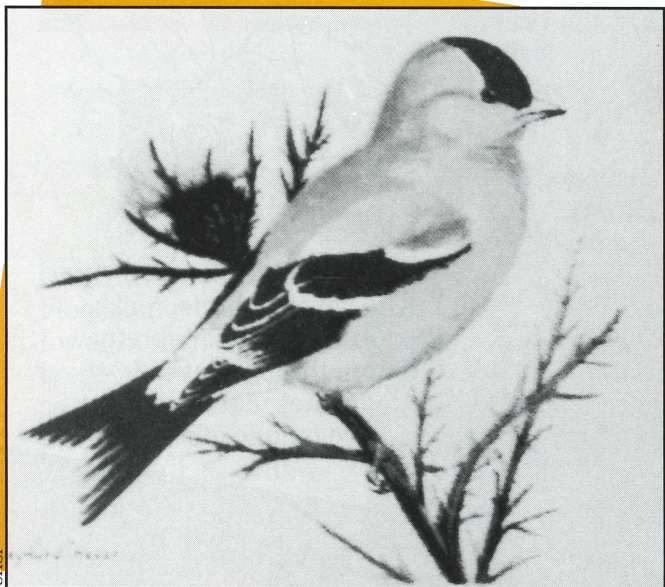
symbols. Mississippi, North Carolina, and Wisconsin all recognize milk as an official beverage. And Massachusetts has a state muffin — the corn muffin.

Do you think Iowa should have a state food or beverage? Maybe your idea could be the next new state symbol!

—Michelle Rubin



bison — buffalo-like animal in United States



SHS

The eastern goldfinch is also known as the wild canary because of its cheerful song and yellow coat.

The eastern goldfinch might be the proudest bird in Iowa. Not only is it one of the most colorful birds between the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, it is also our state bird.

The goldfinch has represented Iowa for more than 60 years. In 1926, when Kentucky chose the handsome, red cardinal as its state bird, other states wanted their own official feathered friends. Many women's clubs, garden clubs, and school kids across the country encouraged lawmakers to pick birds as special state symbols.

Some Iowans suggested the Iowa-Downy Woodpecker and the chickadee to represent their state. Many agreed the state bird should be a year-round Iowa resident. Althea Sherman, a bird lover and artist from National, Iowa, suggested the gold-

A common bird makes history

finch, describing it as “a beautiful bird, easily recognized throughout the whole year.” Iowa lawmakers agreed with Sherman and designated the goldfinch as the state bird in March 1933.

Life as a goldfinch

Iowa is the perfect place for goldfinches. They will live here during the hot summers and freezing winters as long as they can find their favorite foods scattered on the ground or in a backyard feeder. The tiny birds, which weigh less than a candy bar, gobble up thistle, dandelion, and rag weed seeds.

In May 1933, a *Des Moines Register* article reported that goldfinches' eating habits made the birds particularly popular with farmers. Goldfinches have done their part for Iowa's farms by eating weeds and insects that destroy crops.

Seasons and colors

In summer and autumn, male goldfinches are a bright, lemon-yellow color, with black caps on their heads and fancy, black-tipped wings. They perch on plant stalks along country fences or in pastures. By October, their coats turn a dull yellow, and finches head for cover in snow-topped bushes or trees.

Female goldfinches remain a dull shade of yellow all year. They don't have black caps on their heads. But like the male finches, they keep busy by hunting for seeds and singing cheerfully. Often seen in groups, the birds seem to bounce across Iowa skies.

Goldfinch population

Books about Iowa birdlife report that the goldfinch has always been a common bird throughout the state. In the 1888 edition of *Birds of Iowa*, the author wrote, "It's abundant. In the wintertime you can find flocks of several hundred birds." A 1907 book described it as "a common resident throughout the year."

Today, some people are concerned about the goldfinch because its population has decreased in the past 20 years. They believe fewer goldfinches can live in Iowa because the birds cannot find the food or shelter they need to survive. Plants like thistles and dandelions, which are vital to a goldfinch's diet, are also called "weeds" and are sprayed and killed by humans. Some of the birds' homes are cleared away for farmland or new houses.

James Dinsmore, a bird lover and professor at Iowa State University, believes the goldfinch

population is okay. He and other bird enthusiasts around the state watch and count many different species of birds.

"There's still a lot of habitat for the goldfinch and I don't foresee it becoming extinct," Dinsmore said in a recent interview. Although the goldfinch population has decreased, Dinsmore said it is still a common bird that is sometimes overlooked by bird counters.

Many bird counters take official counts in May or June, spotting birds as they make their nests. Because goldfinches don't nest until July or August, counters might miss them, Dinsmore told *The Goldfinch*. □

— Sherri Dagele

Did you know?

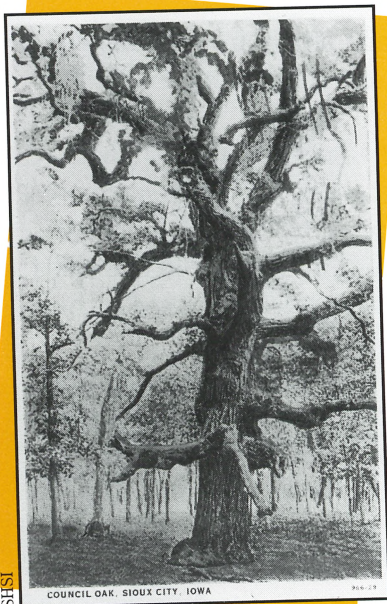
The best time to spot goldfinches is in the winter when they come to backyard bird feeders looking for food.

In July and August, look for the state bird in open fields where they might be munching on thistle seeds, or collecting thistle down to line their nests.

Study them from afar with binoculars. Don't make any sudden, jerky movements that might scare them away.



Thistles are prickly with many seeds. Goldfinches are sometimes nicknamed Thistlebirds.



Drawings and photographs of Council Oak were often used on Sioux City picture postcards, like this one from 1909.

Iowa's mighty oaks

When Iowa legislators named a state tree in 1961, they had a fairly easy choice to make. Oaks are one of the most common trees found throughout the state. For hundreds of years they have provided food and shelter for both animals and humans.

Because so many different species of oaks grow in Iowa, lawmakers didn't designate one particular species as the state tree. Today, the Burr Oak, White Oak, Red Oak, Black Oak, and

the Pin Oak are all considered Iowa's state tree.

Animals such as squirrels, wild turkeys, pheasants, and many other birds have depended on the oak's acorns for survival. Although European-American settlers who moved to Iowa in the 1830s didn't eat acorns regularly, they might have depended on them if other food was hard to find. "Acorns taste bitter," State forester William Farris told *The Goldfinch*. "They have been used for food, but you'd have to be very hungry." Native Americans and some pioneers also ground up acorns to make flour.

Oaks also have provided homes for humans and animals. Birds and squirrels nest in treetops. Iowa's European-American settlers cut down oaks to build furniture, tools, and sturdy support beams in barns. Oak tree branches and logs also were used as fuel to heat settlers' homes.

Native Americans and European-American settlers might have gathered oak leaves into piles to use as mattresses. In the summer, oak trees provided shade from the hot sun.

One of Iowa's famous oak trees was Council Oak. Located in Sioux City's Riverside Park, Council Oak was more than 350 years old when it fell to the ground and had to be permanently removed in the mid-1960s. While it was alive, Council Oak was a massive tree, stretching more than 100 feet into the sky.

Legends say that the famous explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark held meetings with Native Americans under the tree's shady branches in the early 1800s. □

—Amy Ruth

Tracking trees

Summer is the best time to identify trees. When school is out, grab your friends and head back to nature. You're going to make a list of local trees.

Start in your schoolyard, local parks, or other places in your community with many trees.

Draw a map that shows everything in an area, including buildings, driveways, and other objects. Next, draw each tree you see, numbering each one on your map.

Use clues to identify each tree, carefully writing the names on your map. The shape of the leaves is one of the best clues. Use the leaf key to the right to identify state trees.

By late summer and early fall, acorns will begin to drop to the ground. This is your second clue that you've found an oak.

It's easy to discover how old a tree is if you cut it down and count the rings inside. But to preserve Iowa's state trees, you may want to try another method. Using a tape measure or ruler,

measure four-and-a-half feet up the trunk from the ground. Then wrap a tape measure around the trunk at this height. This is the circumference — the distance around the tree. Write down the circumference for each oak tree in your inventory.

Ask a parent or teacher to help you contact a forester at your local parks and recreation department. The forester will use a table of figures to convert

your data and tell you how old your trees are.

If you want to identify other types of trees, borrow a tree identification guide from a library. Match your trees to the pictures in the book.

— AR



Leaf key



Black Oak

This leaf is 5 to 7 inches long. Its tips have several points.



White Oak

Like the Bur Oak, this leaf is rounded at the tips and measures 5 to 9 inches long.



Pin Oak

The smallest of the oak leaves, the Pin Oak leaf measures 3 to 6 inches long.



Red Oak

This leaf is kind of fat. Like the Black Oak leaf, the tips have several points. It measures between 5 and 9 inches long.



Bur Oak

This leaf has rounded tips and measures 6 to 8 inches long. The top part is the widest.

A state flower blooms

Long before the wild rose became the state flower, it grew throughout Iowa's prairies and woodlands, providing Native Americans with food and medicines for thousands of years. Young people from many tribes may have recognized the pink petals and yellow centers when they gathered plants in fall and summer. They'd pick wild roses from shrubs as tall as four feet, carefully avoiding prickly thorns.

Mesquakie, who now live mainly in Tama County, gathered the plant's fruit, called the "hip," which stays ripe as late as September and is rich in Vitamin C. They ate the fruit's outer skin to ease stomach aches. They boiled the hips into a thick syrup used to relieve itching.

Other Native American tribes

also put the wild rose to good use. They used stems, hips, and roots to relieve burns, swelling, sore throats, and eye infections. They shared their recipes with European-American pioneers who traveled to Iowa.

Both Native Americans and pioneers ate parts of the wild

rose when other food was hard to find. Wildlife also depended on the wild rose for nourishment.

"Although not a major source of food, birds, mice, deer, and raccoons still eat the hips," Rich Patterson, director of the Indian Creek Nature Center in Cedar Rapids, told *The Goldfinch*.



Art by Vicki Schipul

Native Americans in Iowa gathered wild roses to make medicines. Boiling the flowers' fruit made a thick syrup that relieved itching.

A state flower blooms

In the late 1800s, the wild rose was admired around the state for its beauty. In 1896, the Iowa legislature selected it as the **motif** on a silver tea set presented to the U.S. Navy and used on the battleship Iowa II. A year later, on May 6, 1897, the legislature, with the advice of the State Federation of Women's Clubs in Dubuque, designated the wild rose as the state flower to symbolize Iowa's landscape. A May 8, 1897, article in the *Iowa State Register* told its readers: "Children will be taught that of all the flowers, there is one which we love above all others, and that is the wild rose."

Several kinds of similar wild roses grew throughout Iowa when the legislature made its decision. Today, we do not know which one the legislature had in mind in 1897.

"They're all wild and native to Iowa, and they grow together on the prairie," said Deborah Lewis, who studies plants at the Ada Hayden **Herbarium** in Ames. "I

think they all could have been candidates to be the state flower."

The wild rose today

As Iowa's European-American residents settled the prairie,




State symbols are often pictured on postcards. The drawing above was taken from a 1960s postcard of many Iowa symbols and scenes.

ries, grew crops, and cut down trees for homes and farms, the wild rose lost much of its natural home.

As recently as 30 years ago, some people feared the wild rose would become extinct. Pesticides and growing cities threatened the state's flower. However, Dr. Roger Landers, a

professor at Iowa State University in the 1960s and 1970s, was confident the wild rose would survive. He told a *Des Moines Register* reporter in 1966: "The wild rose has proven itself [against] roadside weed spraying. Our guess is that the wild rose will dig in deeper and keep growing."

Today, the wild rose grows in Iowa's remaining prairies and in woodlands, meadows, and roadside ditches. They survive best in sunny areas with little disturbance, Lewis said.

So the next time you're hiking in a meadow or prairie or driving along a sleepy country road, look for Iowa's state flower. You can help preserve part of Iowa's history by leaving the wild rose undisturbed so future generations of Iowans may enjoy its beauty. 

— Susan Fletcher and Amy Ruth

Did you know?

The wild rose is also known as meadow rose and sweet briar.

motif — theme in work of art

herbarium — place where plants are dried and studied



Symbolize your state

K eep Iowa in your heart and at your fingertips with a set of state symbol trading cards.

Collect 'em, trade 'em, keep 'em. Use them to learn about Iowa history. Share them and teach others about Iowa's wildlife, natural resources, and state spirit.

Encourage friends or pen pals to make their own symbol trading cards to represent their home states.

1 At school or a copy shop, make one photocopy of page 16 and two photocopies of page 17 for a set of six trading cards.

2 In the blank space below, draw an unofficial symbol featured in *The Goldfinch*. Or, create your own symbol, like a state food or state insect.

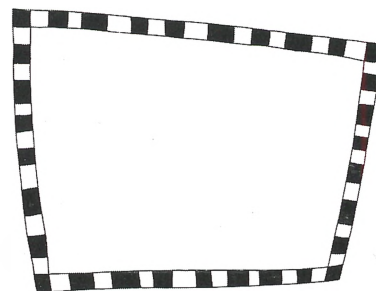
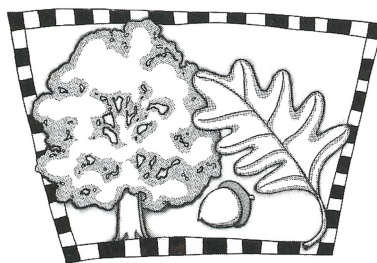
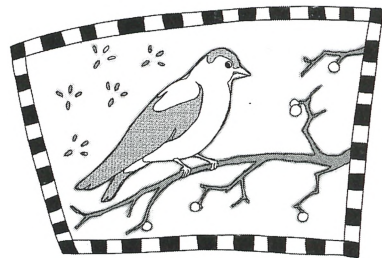
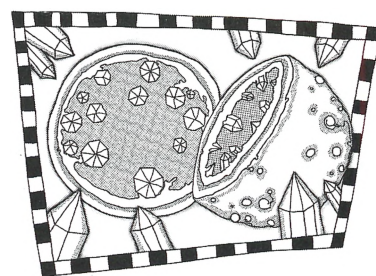
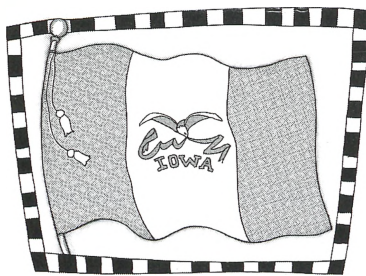
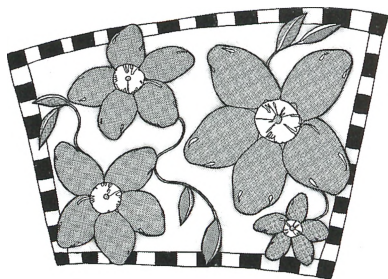
3 Cut out each symbol below, including your new symbol.

Set aside. Cut out the blank trading cards on the next page.

4 Glue the blank cards to construction paper or cardboard rectangles.

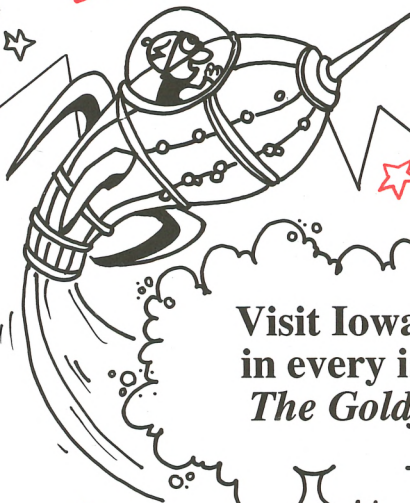
5 Glue each state symbol to the front of a card. Write the name of each symbol in the blank spaces. Use articles in *The Goldfinch* to fill in the descriptions.

Photocopy drawings before cutting!



Attention:

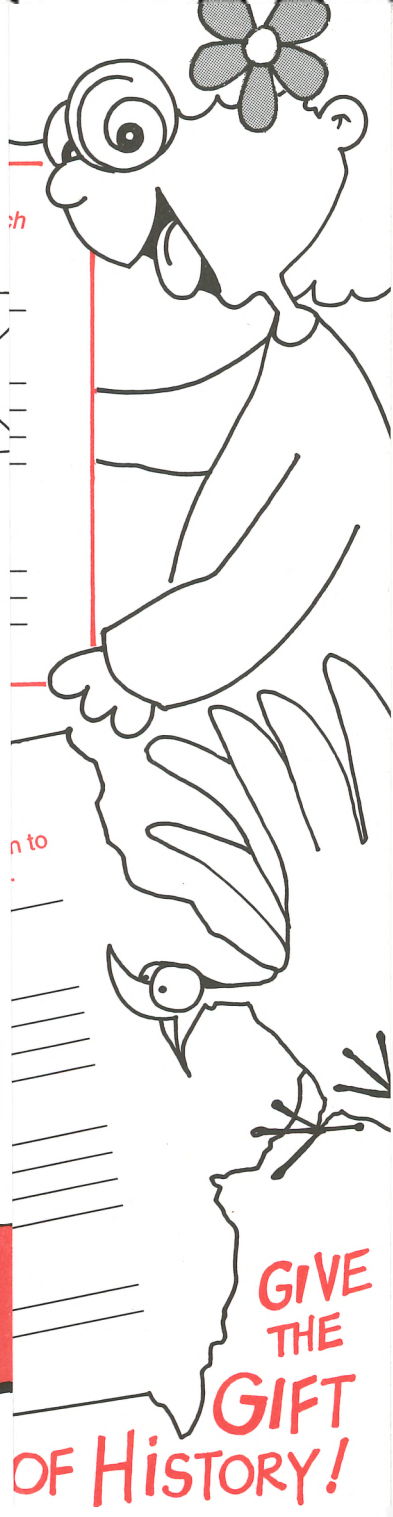
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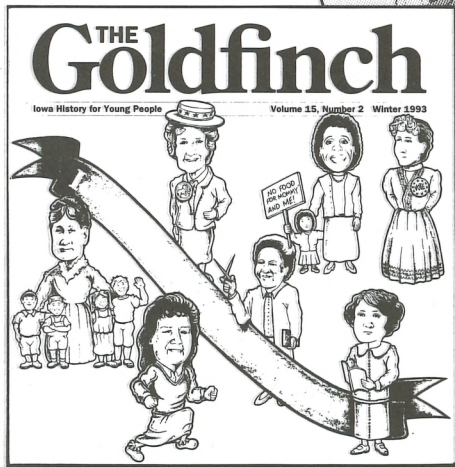
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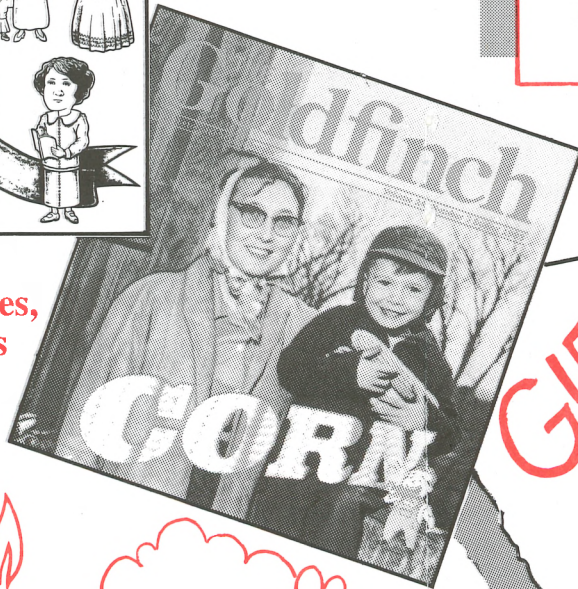
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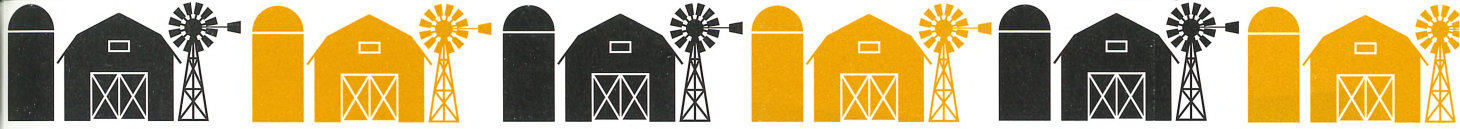
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SHSI

Dixie Cornell Gebhardt is to Iowa what Betsy Ross is to the United States. Gebhardt designed Iowa's state flag in the early 1900s. By 1946, when this photo was taken, Gebhardt still had her Iowa spirit.

Iowa pride flies high

When Iowa lawmakers approved Dixie Cornell Gebhardt's design for the state flag on March 29, 1921, the speaker of the House of Representatives overlooked just one thing — he forgot to sign the bill.

“Since 1921, we only thought we had a state flag,” last year's speaker, Harold Van Maanen of Oskaloosa, said in a *Des Moines Register* article.

But just because Iowans only thought they had a state flag doesn't mean the thousands of ban-

ners flying all over the state haven't represented Iowa well for nearly 75 years.

Iowa needs a flag

When Iowans began thinking about a state flag in the early 1900s, they were one of the few states left without their own flag. Iowa National Guard troops stationed along the Mexican border at that time saw other troops' state flags and decided Iowa should have one, too. Mem-

bers of an Iowa chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) promptly formed a state flag committee, and Dixie Cornell Gebhardt of Knoxville started designing the flag.

Resistance to a state flag

The effort to create a state flag lasted from 1913 to 1921, when the legislature finally approved the flag's design. One reason for the delay was that some Iowans didn't want the state flag to compete with the national flag. They didn't think people should be more loyal to their state than to their country. But patriotic groups like the D.A.R. convinced Iowans that the state flag wouldn't conflict with their loyalty to the United States. They were right — even now it is against the law to fly the state flag above the U.S. flag.

The flag's design

Dixie Gebhardt kept the flag's design “so simple that every school child could recognize its symbolism and know what it meant,” she said in 1949.

Through its colors and pictures, the design was meant to honor Iowa's history before it became a state. The flag's colors are blue, white, and red — the same colors in the French Tricolor, which was the first flag to fly over Iowa. According to Gebhardt, red symbolizes courage,

white stands for purity, and blue for loyalty, justice, and truth.

Gebhardt designed the flag to resemble the official state seal. She used Iowa's official motto, “Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain,” and the eagle, which is our national bird. In Iowa's flag, the eagle holds a ribbon with the state motto printed on it.

Below the eagle, the word “IOWA” is printed in large, red letters.

Gebhardt did such a good job on the flag that a leading national flag manufacturer once said that Iowa's flag was the “best balanced, most artistic, and most historically accurate” of all the 48 states that made up the country at that time.

Today's flag

Today, Iowa lawmakers want the state flag to have the legal status it deserves. On January 23, 1995, Iowa's state representatives voted 92 to 0 to designate a state flag. State senators are also expected to approve the bill, giving Iowans their long-awaited state flag. But official or not, the Iowa flag has flown above the state for years as one of the state's most important symbols. □

—Michelle Rubin

Did you know?

Iowa's flag is also called the state “banner.” Every state has a flag that represents its history.

Dixie Gebhardt kept the flag's design so simple that every school child could recognize its symbolism and know what it meant.

Geodes Galore

Like the best boxes of cereal, Iowa's state rock has a prize inside.

You never know what you will find in a geode (JEE-owed) until it is carefully cut in half.

Many geodes are filled with sparkly crystals and minerals that are white, blue-grey, or clear. Others are filled with white or grey powder. A few hold liquid or a smaller geode! Some are duds, containing only the same grey material that forms the rocks' bumpy shells.

Scavengers hunt for geodes in river beds where they were

formed from mud deposits millions of years ago. Lee, Henry, and Van Buren Counties and nearby Geode State Park in southeastern Iowa are best known for geode sightings.

Early scavengers

European-American settlers who came to Iowa in the 1830s found hundreds of the world's grandest geodes. A pioneer kid could find grey, hollow balls that were as small as a pea or as large as 400 pounds.

After 130 years of geode traditions and fame, the Iowa legislature named the geode the state rock in 1967. Today, rock enthusiasts from around the country visit Iowa to check out this state treasure. Most geodes found today are the size of baseballs.

Geode genius

Collectors put the state rock to good use.

Photo by Michelle Rubin



The Renaissance Design Group, a Des Moines architectural firm, designed the "geode building" in the late 1980s.

Some cut geodes into glittering jewelry. Others display them on walls or in cases. Many geodes decorate flower gardens and sidewalks. However they're used, they symbolize Iowa's natural riches and remind Iowans of the resources in their state.

In West Des Moines, the state rock was used as a model for an office building that greets drivers on Interstate 80. One side is round, like a geode's outer covering. The other sides are jagged blue glass and look like crystals. □

— Sherri Dagele



The geode pictured above is about the size of a volleyball and much heavier. It was found in southeastern Iowa. Photo by Jim Meisner



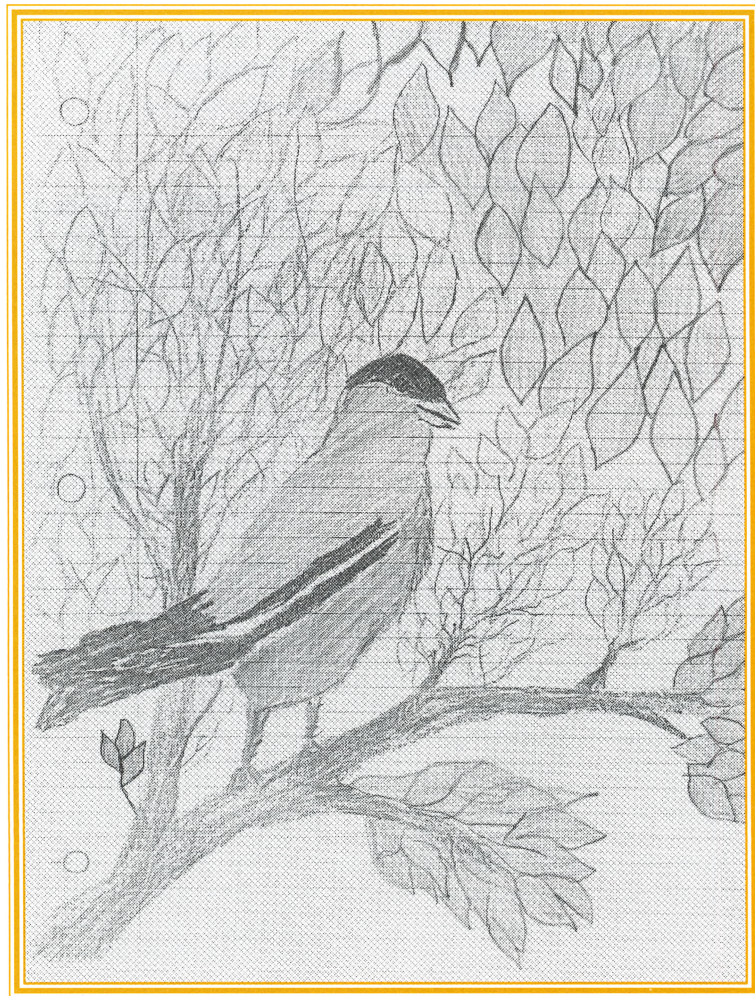
We asked young Iowans to celebrate their state with poetry, drawings, stories, and other creative work. We're publishing some of their creations in this issue of *The Goldfinch* so other Iowa kids may enjoy their talents.

If you would like your work published, write or draw something about life in Iowa — 1846-style! Send your work to: Amy Ruth, editor, *The Goldfinch*, State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City 52240. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Wild rose

by Jenny McGee, 12
Chariton Middle School, Chariton, Iowa

Wild rose,
Wild rose,
You are watered with the rainfall.
The sun is setting,
You are closing,
Everyone is asleep.
You are wondering,
Why am I not being admired?
At midnight someone creeps up,
Ready to pick.
He says, "Beauty, Beauty to last
Forever and stay with its surroundings."
Then you go to sleep.

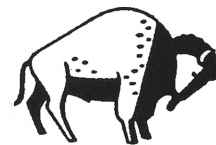
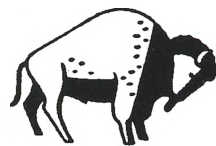


Drawing of Iowa's state bird, the eastern goldfinch, by Haley Sanford, 11, Perry Elementary School, Perry

History Makers

story and photo by Millie K. Frese

Where the bison roam



Although **bison** herds no longer thunder across the plains, 17 Tipton Middle School students want to put the majestic animal back in Iowa's spotlight.

Last year, science teacher Stephanie Frett asked seventh-grade students to research and report on their choice for a state mammal to represent Iowa.

"Just about every animal found naturally in Iowa was suggested," Frett told *The Goldfinch*. Fox, raccoon, cats, dogs, pigs, cows, and squirrels topped the list, but Stephanie Peters' choice sparked everyone's interest. She suggested the American bison (sometimes called the buffalo), and propelled the class through an ongoing adventure in history and politics.

"Buffalo are an important part of Iowa's heritage," said classmate Nick Gilliam.

"Indians and pioneers used buffalo for food, clothing, and shelter."

The students contacted Dan Boddicker, their representative in the Iowa House of Representa-

tives. Boddicker then wrote House Joint Resolution (HJR) number 2011, which suggested the American bison be considered as the official state mammal for the sesquicentennial period, 1846 to 1996. Then students wrote to every state senator and representative and to Governor Branstad.

"We got lots of letters back," Frett said. Representatives voiced support, uncertainty, or opposition. One representative said the House didn't want to waste time on a "feel-good" issue. Others thought pigs or cows would better symbolize Iowa's farm economy. The students disagreed.

"Pigs and cows were brought here from Europe," said Faron Olds. "Buffalo are native to the area."

"Each student wrote back to each of the 'no' people," Frett continued. "Seventeen handwritten letters have more impact than one letter with 17 signatures."



These Iowa eighth-graders might make history in 1995. They are trying to convince Iowa lawmakers to name the bison Iowa's state mammal through 1996.

The students kept track of the letters on a chalkboard.

When the House of Representatives voted on HJR 2011 on March 10, 1994, Frett and her students witnessed the results from the House balcony. The measure was adopted with an 87 to 10 vote. The bill later died in the Senate without coming to a vote.


This year, as eighth graders, the same group of students meet before and after school to continue the project. They're one year older and wiser and determined to do all they can to see the bison adopted as the state mammal during the 1995 legislative session.

"You can't predict what will happen in politics," said Rachael Carney.

"But if you want something, you have to work for it," added Stephanie Peters.

This year, the students are using the same strategy — writing letters. Lots of letters.

"We'd like to go to Des Moines before the vote and talk to the senators and representatives individually," said Brian Wood.

"This is well worth the time we spend," Chad Armstrong added. "Even if things don't turn out the way we want." 

If you would like to see the bison, or another animal, selected as the state mammal in 1995, ask a teacher to help you contact your senator or representative in the Iowa legislature.

BISON TODAY

Bison once roamed the Great Plains, from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. Their numbers were too many to count. The animals weighed up to 1,000 pounds and withstood extreme weather conditions. Native Americans depended on the shaggy beasts for survival, using every part of each animal killed. Meat was eaten right away or dried for later use. Native Americans fashioned knives, tools, toys, and jewelry from bones. They used the hides for teepees, clothing, and moccasins. The animals' fat was used to make soap, hair

grease, and cosmetics.

As European-American settlers moved west, hunters killed bison for their heads and hides, leaving the rest of their bodies to rot. Bison populations soon dwindled.

Estimates say fewer than 100 bison remained on the plains by 1890. Congress passed laws protecting bison, but for many years it seemed they'd survive only through images on coins and postage stamps and in paintings and books.

In recent years, the bison



Bison are the largest North American land animal. These bison lived in Keokuk Park in northeastern Iowa in the early 1900s.

population has increased, thanks in part to farmers and ranchers who are raising private herds. In Iowa, more than 30 producers maintain herds totaling more than 700 bison.

— MF



Sing a song of Iowa

The Hawkeye state has many popular songs, but only “The Song of Iowa” is the official **anthem**. Some kids may sing it in school. Others may recognize the tune as “O Christmas Tree,” a popular Christmas carol.

The state song does in words and music what other state symbols do in pictures. It brings Iowans together to share pride in their state.

The story behind the state song is happy and sad. In 1864, Samuel Byers, a young Union soldier from Oskaloosa, was captured while fighting in the Civil War. Byers spent the next few months in several prisons. In a Virginia prison, he often


heard southern bands playing “My Maryland,” a song that praised the South.

Byers was desperately lonely for his life back in Iowa and vowed that when he returned home, he would “put that tune to loyal words.” It took 30 years for Byers to keep his promise. In 1897, he finished “The Song of Iowa.” It was performed in Des Moines that year and quickly became popular throughout the state.

Byers, who wrote many songs, stories, and poems, lived to see the Iowa legislature select “The Song of Iowa” as the official state song in 1911.

Throughout Iowa history many have celebrated the state with songs. One of the more rousing tunes is the “Iowa Corn Song.” Written in 1912, it’s a popular song often played by marching bands. Young people love to sing along with hand motions.

Other songwriters and poets have used their talents to capture the hearts and imaginations of Iowans. You may have tapped your toe to “Iowa Gold” or “The Iowa Waltz.”

No matter which song you like best, remember they were written by Iowans in love with their state and proud to sing about it! 

anthem — song that praises something or someone



Let’s face it — most songs about Iowa probably won’t climb the charts on rock ‘n roll radio stations. These songs don’t even have music videos!

It might be time for a more modern, catchy tune to symbolize younger generations of Iowans.

Brainstorm with a group of friends or your school music class about Iowa’s far-

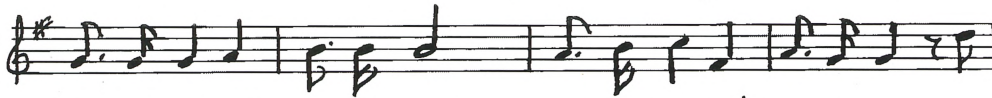
out characteristics. What do you like best about the Hawkeye state? If you moved away, what would you miss?

Set your words to music — rock, reggae, rap, or jazz. Choose a tune you and your group know well. Record your song on a cassette tape or write it down and send a copy to *The Goldfinch*. The first five songs entered will win a year’s subscription to *The Goldfinch*.

"The Song of Iowa"



1. You ask what land I love the best, I-O-WA, 'tis I-O-WA The



fair-est state of all the west, I-O-WA, O! I-O-WA. From



yonder Mis-sis-sip-pi's stream To where Mis-sou-ri's wa-ters gleam O!



fair it is as po-et's dream, I-O-WA, in I-O-WA.

2 See yonder fields of tasselled corn,
Iowa, in Iowa,
Where Plenty fills her golden horn,
Iowa, in Iowa.
See how her wondrous prairies shine,
To yonder sunset's purpling line,
O! happy land, O! land of mine,
Iowa, O! Iowa.

3 And she has maids whose laughing eyes,
Iowa, O! Iowa,
To him who loves were Paradise,
Iowa, O! Iowa.
O! happiest fate that e'er was known,
Such eyes to shine for one alone,
To call such beauty all his own,
Iowa, O! Iowa.

4 Go read the story of thy past,
Iowa, O! Iowa,
What glorious deeds, what fame thou hast!
Iowa, O! Iowa.
So long as time's great cycle runs,
Or nations weep their fallen ones,
Thou'lt not forget thy patriot sons,
Iowa, O! Iowa.

Send submissions to: State Song Headquarters, *The Goldfinch*, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City 52240.

You may also want to bring your musical group together to rip off a few bars of "The Iowa Song." We've reprinted it above. Take it to music lessons, choir, or band practice. Organize a sing-along in your community today!

— CK



Get your musical group together and start practicing! These kids from the 1940s have a 50-year head start!

SYMBOLS & SURPRISES

By
Sherri
Dagel



Nine-year-old Emma Clark plopped down in front of the television with a bowl of popcorn. She grabbed the remote control and turned on the set. Her favorite shows were nature programs, but today she searched for a western.

“Hey, kiddo. Whatcha watching?” yelled Emma’s older sister, Margie, as she ran into the room pretending to shoot hoops. “Switch to a basketball game!”

Emma rolled her eyes and flipped a piece of popcorn into her mouth.

“I’m watching TV for a social studies report. I need to find a western so I can start writing.” Emma aimed the remote at the television again.

“What kind of report do you need to watch TV for?” Margie asked. She sat down cross-legged on the floor and eyed Emma’s snack.

“I’m writing about Native Americans,” Emma said, passing the popcorn to Margie. “All the books at school were checked out, so I’m going to watch a movie.”

Emma’s fingers punched the remote until an old, black-and-white western appeared on the screen. The girls watched an actor in feathers and face paint come out of his teepee and dance in a circle.

Margie jumped to her feet to block Emma's view of the television set.

"Look, Emma," she said, angrily. "If you want to write a report about Native Americans, you better find some books." She turned off the television and handed Emma a jacket.

"What's wrong with the movie?" Emma asked.

"Native Americans don't always dance and wear face paint. Let's talk to Mr. Bear at the library. He knows a lot about Native Americans."

At the library, the two searched for Mr. Bear, but couldn't find him. Margie spotted a teenage boy reshelving books. "Excuse me," she whispered, "we're looking for Mr. Bear."

"He's away this week," the boy answered. "I'm his nephew, Wesley."

The girls introduced themselves, and Margie explained Emma's situation.

"I can help," Wesley replied. "I'm from the Mesquakie tribe, just like my uncle."

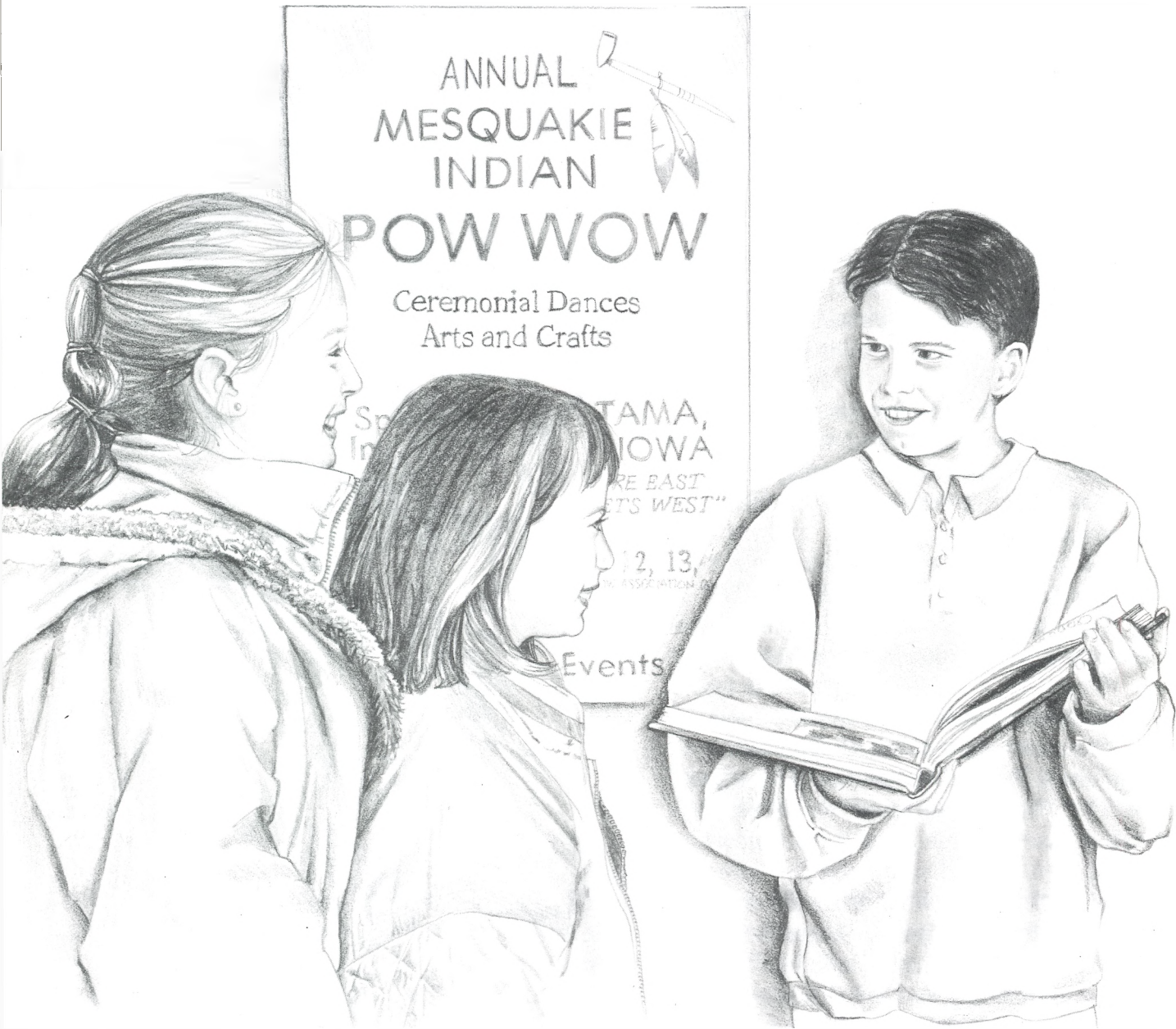
"You are?" Emma asked. "But you don't look like the Native Americans I see on TV!" She was surprised that Wesley was dressed in blue jeans and a rugby shirt.

Wesley pulled a book from the shelf behind him and flipped through the pages. "Does this picture look like the Native Americans you see in movies?" he asked, handing Emma the book.



She glanced at the page and nodded. She saw a Native-American mascot dancing on a football field. His face was yellow and red. Fans in the bleachers had painted faces, too.

● mascot — a group or team's good luck symbol



ANNUAL
MESQUAKIE
INDIAN



POW WOW

Ceremonial Dances
Arts and Crafts

Sp
In

TAMA,
IOWA
"EAST
WEST"

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Events

“Native Americans are much different than mascots and movie characters,” Wesley whispered. “Football mascots are stereotypes.”

“What are stereotypes?” Emma asked.

“Stereotyping is saying and thinking all Native Americans look and act a certain way, even though we all have our own customs,” Wesley replied.

“Would it be stereotyping if people thought that because Margie wears high tops and always plays basketball, that our whole family does?” Emma asked, glancing at her sister’s sneakers.

“That’s the idea!” Wesley whispered, excitedly. “Just because an actor dresses up in feathers and dances, doesn’t mean that’s all we do.”

“But Mesquakie dance sometimes, don’t they?” Emma asked.

Wesley smiled. “Not at football games. We don’t want our sacred customs on a sports field.” He pointed to the necklace around Emma’s neck. “Imagine if someone made a mascot out of the **Star of David**,” he said. “Suddenly, your sacred symbol would mean something different.”

Emma fingered her necklace and thought for a moment. “So when do Mesquakie dance?” she asked, shyly.

“C’mon, I’ll show you.” Wesley led the sisters to the library’s front entrance. He

pointed to a big poster that read “Annual Mesquakie POW WOW. Ceremonial Dances. Arts and Crafts.”

“Every August Mesquakie from all over the midwest come visit the settlement in Tama,” Wesley said. “Tourists come to watch, but we dance to remember our history and our ancestors.”

Emma glanced at the poster and then back at the football mascot. “Thanks for helping me understand, Wesley,” she said. “I’m going to check out some books and write my report about real Native Americans, not TV stereotypes.”

“Good,” Wesley said. “But your research won’t be done until you come to the next Pow Wow!”

“You mean it?” asked Emma excitedly.

Wesley grinned and nodded. “I mean it.”

Ask yourself

- 1 What is the difference between a symbol and a stereotype?
- 2 What are the important symbols in your life?



Star of David —
symbol in the
Jewish faith

Your turn

Through 1997 Iowans will have the chance to vote for a state fossil. First you'll want to check out the candidates.

Start by getting to know the crinoid (CRY-noid), a tiny animal that looks like a flower but functions like star fish. Crinoids live in salt water. Millions of years ago these animals lived in what is now Iowa. Crinoid

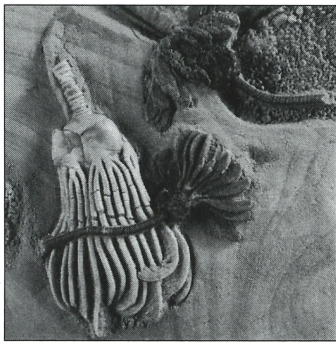


Photo by Chuck Greiner

remains are imbedded in massive blocks of limestone. Today, they are a typical fossil found in Iowa.

There are only a few places in the world where these creatures' delicate structures have been preserved intact. Some of these places are in Iowa.

Check out these special fossils at the Flowers of the Iowa Seas exhibit at the State Historical Society building in Des Moines.

When you're ready to cast your vote for the state fossil, add your name to the petition at the exhibit, or nominate another candidate. ✨

Answers (History Mystery from back cover):

The Great Seal of the State of Iowa represents the early years of the state. The soldier holding the American flag represents Iowa's loyalty to the United States. Farm equipment and a wheat field symbolize the importance of agriculture in Iowa. The prairie scene celebrates pioneer days when the land was covered with prairies and wildlife. To the right of the soldier is a pile of lead and a furnace. These symbolize the lead mines

Symbol Survey

We want to know what YOU think about Iowa's state symbols. Have we outgrown them? Do we need a different bird, a hipper flag, or a cooler motto?

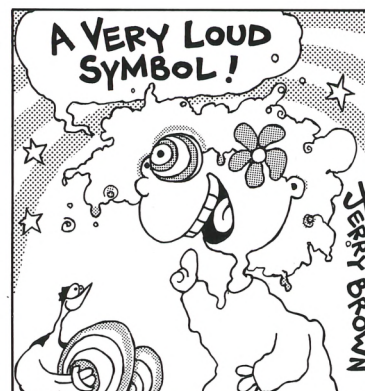
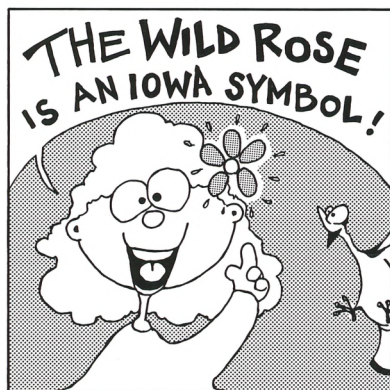
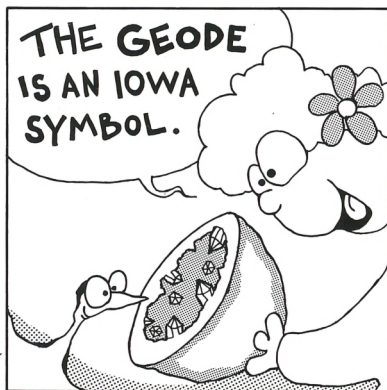
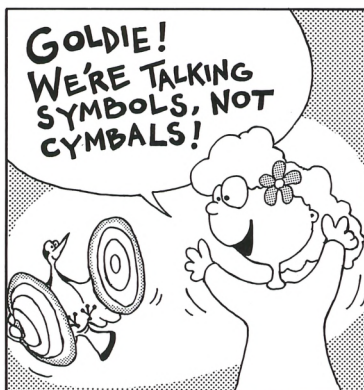
Make YOUR symbolic gesture by sending your thoughts to:

The Goldfinch
402 Iowa Ave.
Iowa City, IA 52240

Please include your name, age, and address. Use this form, or another piece of paper if you run out of space.

in Dubuque — Iowa's first permanent European-American settlement. A steamboat floats down the Mississippi River symbolizing those in Iowa who have relied on rivers to provide transportation, goods, and services. An eagle above the prairie scene symbolizes Iowa's national heritage. In the eagle's beak is a scroll with the state motto.

The Roost



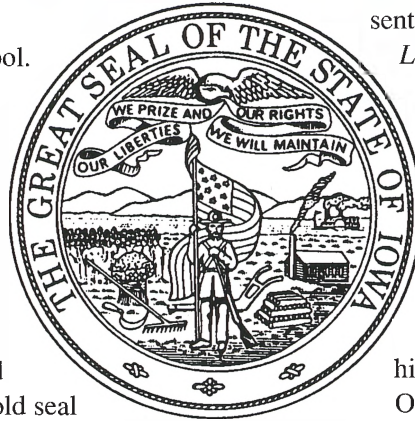
HISTORY MYSTERY

Look closely at the Great Seal of the State of Iowa. Closer.

Notice the symbols within the symbol. Iowa's seal is made up of many parts. What do you think each symbol represents? (Answers on page 30.)

Designed between 1846 and 1847, the seal was approved by Governor Ansel Briggs on February 25, 1847.

The seal is controlled by the governor who uses it on documents such as certificates honoring communities and individuals and proclamations. The gold seal makes these documents official. No one may reprint the seal without the governor's permission.



In 1909, the seal was criticized for not representing Iowa properly. A *Register and*

Leader reporter in Des Moines studied the seal and saw "no cattle, no hogs, no corn, no prairie, no farm scene." He believed these items, representing agriculture, business, and landscapes would bring the seal up to date.

In 1988, a women's organization said the seal was sexist because it did not depict women or their roles in Iowa history.

Only minor changes have been made to the seal since 1847. Today, it is almost identical to the original design.

THE
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