

Prairie to Garden • 1929 Stock Market Crash • Albert Hirsch & Buena Vista College • Graduation

Winter 2002 • \$6

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers,

The fellow on the front cover is George Newsome, a high school graduate from Sabula, Iowa. The year is 1894. George holds a diploma in one hand; on the rustic bench are books. One is *Webster's Condensed Dictionary*; another, a book of poems. Perhaps they're graduation gifts. With his fine clothes and watch fob, his erect posture and steady gaze, George strikes a distinguished pose.

When I chose this photograph for the cover (there are more graduation images inside), I thought about high school seniors and their families across Iowa going through preparations similar to those of our young George. I'm sure you can relate to senior pictures and graduation photos, because capturing these moments photographically is an important family ritual today, as it was for George in 1894 and countless other Iowans since.

Today's high school seniors go to their portrait photographers loaded down with several changes of clothes, from dress-up attire to very casual. Sometimes the graduate brings along sports equipment, a musical instrument, or something else representing a personal interest or talent. The photographer will use a variety of settings, from a formal backdrop in the studio to a patch of wildflowers or a rustic fence outside. Here, we're reminded of those late 19th-century portraits in which the photographer posed the subject next to a rustic arbor, gate, or bench, as in George's photo.

Senior pictures today, especially the casual ones, seem to reflect more of the graduate's personality, energy, and individuality, and I've got to admit that I like them a lot better than my own senior picture in 1969. I posed in one outfit only, a matching skirt and sweater. Remember those? They were practically the uniform for girls' senior pictures then. I looked pleasant and confident, but I remember thinking even then how much the picture didn't really look like me. I assume it was the best likeness, because that's the one that I handed out in wallet size to all my friends, and the one I presented, as a 5x7 in a stand-up cardboard frame, to my aunts and uncles. They, in turn, set it on their buffets or end tables, where it joined other formal graduation and wedding pictures of my many cousins.

Photographs dominate other parts of today's graduation rituals, too. As the calendar for May and early June fills up with

graduation parties and open houses, parents of seniors feverishly sort through boxes of snapshots, searching for that one of the fifth-grade sleep-over, or the eighth-grade soccer team, or the great shot where said graduate and best friend, both at age three, are playing in the mud.

The results of these searches are wonderful displays of photos at the graduation parties. They chronicle with pure delight and solid pride the story of tiny infant grown into young adult. Some families go one step further and create a videotape of favorite photos, complete with fade outs, close-ups, and music. (*Note: Keep tissues nearby. These videos can quickly bring parents and their friends to tears.*)

Videotapes created by the senior class are also becoming standard at the actual commencement ceremonies. As specially chosen music fills the gymnasium or auditorium, candid shots of groups of seniors—on band trips and at football games, dancing or just hanging out—flash on an enormous screen. (*Note: Expect more tears from parents.*)

High school is filled with social practices and traditions that can serve as a lens for looking at the past and comparing it to the present. Consider, for instance, what's the same or different today about prom or homecoming since you were in high school? Or consider sports or music. Or vocational education or school newspapers and yearbooks. How about after-school and weekend jobs? Transportation to and from school? Dress codes? Dating? School spirit and mascots? Gifts for graduation?

Both continuity and change make up history, and high school traditions are just one more example of how we can look at the past and the present, and try to discern the meaning of our actions then and now. Plus, it's fun!

—The Editor

From a reader

Just wanted to let you know I enjoyed very much your *Iowa Heritage* issue in which you published the diary of John F. Duncombe. How times have changed. Before retiring, my job took me to all the places in the central states that Duncombe mentions in his diary. The big difference is that I was traveling in a modern vehicle over good roads and bridges and he was traveling mainly with horses. Some times he was walking and maybe had to swim rivers and creeks. —Donald M. Larson, Story City, Iowa

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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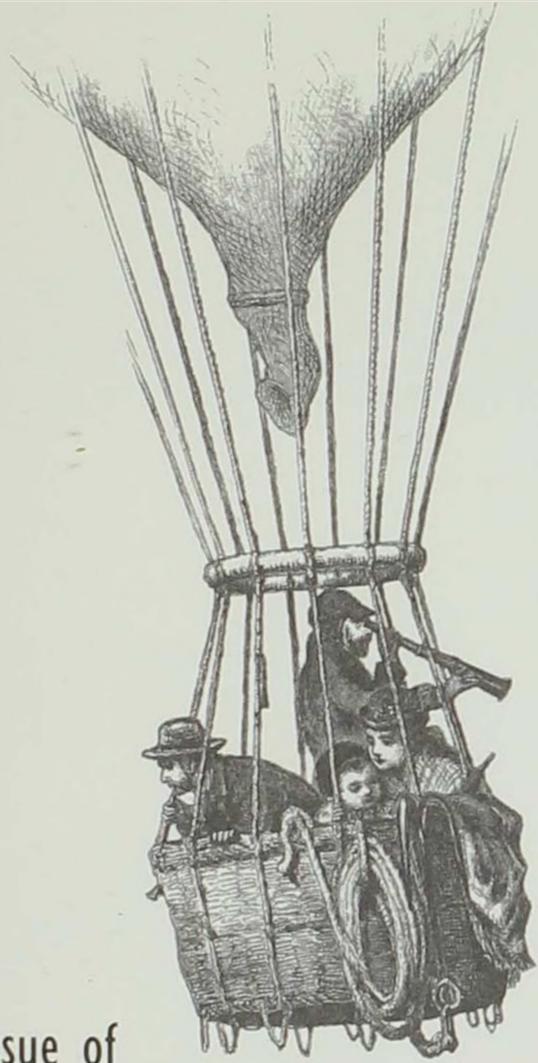
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Portrait in 1894, to mark
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in the 1880s and 1890s,
de visite. Family
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available on the market
display the images.

Iowa Heritage

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Formerly The Palimpsest

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SHSI (IOWA CITY)



On the Cover

George Newsome poses for this portrait in 1894, to mark his graduation from Sabula High School in Jackson County, Iowa. Cabinet cards like this one, typically measuring $4\frac{1}{4} \times 6\frac{1}{2}$ inches, became an extremely popular format for photographic portraits in the 1880s and 1890s, supplanting the smaller sized carte de visite. Family albums with velvet covers, ornate clasps, and slotted pages for the cabinet cards were available on the market and served as an elegant way to display the images.

"Iowa, the Garden of the World"

From Prairie to Farmland

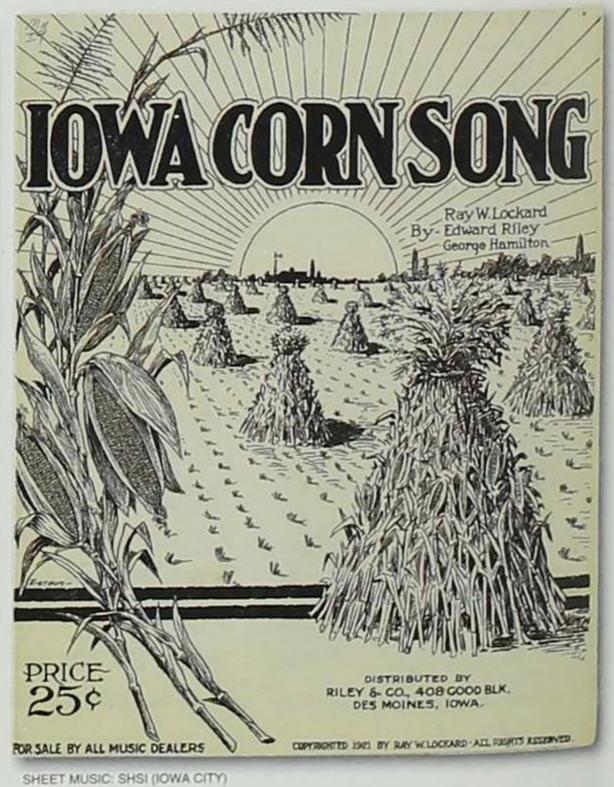
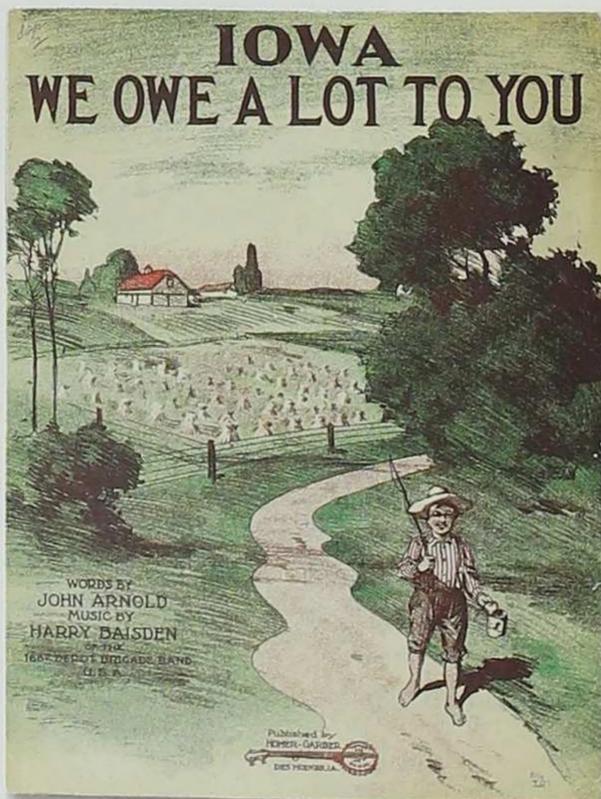
by C. Elizabeth Raymond

In the early decades of the 20th century, Iowans celebrated their state in an exuberant outburst of song. Sheet music of the time reveals an astonishing explosion of state fealty: "Carry Me Today, Away Back to Iowa," in 1923; "Iowa We Owe a Lot to You," in 1918; "Iowa I Love Best," in 1925; "Iowa Corn Song" in 1921. One undated song, titled simply "Iowa," summed up the impulse in a slogan on the cover: "It is easier to sing about Iowa than to keep from Singing." But what were they singing about? And why?

These songs and numerous others commemorate

an Iowa now familiar in the national imagination, a land of bountiful agriculture and neat farmyards, a state practically synonymous with its major crop, corn.

Even in the early 20th century, when most of these songs were published, this image of Iowa was too simple. It ignored Iowa's coal mines and its manufacturing, and entirely overlooked the post-World War I farm crisis. Ethnic tensions of the period are entirely absent from these songs. But realism wasn't the primary consideration for writers nostalgically enumerating the romantic attractions of their state. Consider, for instance,



another song titled "Iowa." With lyrics by Fannie R. Buchanan, it depicts a bucolic paradise:

*Iowa, the smiling prairie,
With her miles of waving corn:
With her wide-flung golden sunset,
And her clover-scented morn.
Iowa, the smiling prairie,
With her rolling fields of wheat:
Iowa, the garden of the world,
Where earth and heaven meet.*

This is the Iowa of the Corn Belt, the quintessential agricultural landscape still acclaimed with something like wonder by eastern journalists who are assigned to cover state fairs in the Midwest. As historian Martin Ridge points out, when most Americans think of farms, "the visual image . . . is neither the cotton field nor the vineyard, but the corn and wheat fields of the Middle West." They think of a landscape that looks a lot like Iowa.

This persistent image of the state as the agricultural heartland is celebrated in these early-20th-century songs, where flat, fertile, rectangular fields stretch out to the horizon on every side, punctuated at comfortable intervals by orderly farmsteads with a surrounding fringe of trees. Iowa's centennial stamp, issued in 1946, fostered this identification with agriculture as well. It featured an outline of the state flanked by stalks of corn. The 1996 sesquicentennial stamp repeated the theme, reproducing a painting by native Iowan Grant Wood. Even the Iowa Sesquicentennial Commission's summer 1995 newsletter came bearing "Greetings from the heartland," and announced proudly that "Iowa produces nearly 10% of the nation's food supply."

This productive landscape, pervasive in image and in song, remains a distinctive feature of contemporary Iowa. Yet it did not always exist. Both the physical contours of the current landscape and the accompanying elements of the Iowa image developed slowly, over decades of settlement by Euro-Americans. Iowa's prairies were not always America's bountiful heartland. Indeed, early settlers found them a challenge to clear, farm, and fence. Creation of the modern image took time, and its emergence is well worth tracing.

From the beginning, Iowa had been described positively. By the time Iowa Territory was created, in 1838, prairie land held few surprises. Settlers' experience with Illinois prairies had already taught the advantages, as well as the draw-

ENVELOPE: SHSI (IOWA CITY)



backs, of the rich, black soil. People knew that scarcity of timber posed problems, that low-lying prairies were too wet for successful cultivation, and that the vagaries of a changeable climate would have to be learned. Those in search of land to buy scrupulously avoided swampy areas where decaying vegetable matter was presumed to cause the familiar malarial chills of "ague." Despite these cautions, however, Iowa was considered a good prospect for prosperous settlement. Lt. Albert Lea's *Notes . . . on the Black Hawk Purchase*, published in 1836, painted a typical picture: "Taking this District all in all, for convenience of navigation, water, fuel, and timber; for richness of soil; for beauty of appearance; and for pleasantness of climate, it surpasses any portion of the United States with which I am acquainted."

As was the common practice, the publishing industry provided numerous settlement guides and emigrant maps to serve the new market. With titles like *Wells' Pocket Hand Book of Iowa* and *Iowa As It Is in 1856*, these guides were continuously updated to provide newcomers with the latest statistics on landownership, county organization, and agricultural production. Not surprisingly, they, too, painted a glowing picture of the new territory and state, as such guides were meant to do. Nathan Howe Parker waxed lyrical in *Iowa As It Is in 1856*, attempting to convey the general effect of the open countryside: "The novelty of the prairie country is striking, and never fails to cause an exclamation of surprise from those who have lived amid the forests of Ohio and Kentucky, or along the wooded shores of the Atlantic, or in sight of the rocky barriers of the Allegheny ridge. The extent of the prospect is exhilarating. The outline of the landscape is undulating and graceful. The verdure and the flowers are beautiful; and the absence of shade, and consequent appearance of a profusion of light, produces a gaiety which animates every beholder."

A broadside from Gowers' Land Agency in Iowa City emphasized the economic rather than the aesthetic advantages, but took up the same general theme of in-

cient abundance: "There is no place on earth like Iowa, and persons unacquainted with her advantages and prospects, little realize the opportunity now presented for profitable investment and for securing valuable lands."

Even Isaac Galland, whose 1840 *Iowa Emigrant* cautioned against too great an enthusiasm for what was still a new country with attendant hardships, was sanguine about prospects in Iowa. A generation earlier, he noted, when the Ohio Valley was settled, "most of the luxuries and many of the necessary comforts of life were only obtained by transportation across the mountains on packhorses, and at great expense." Now, however, transportation had improved. In Iowa, there were "great facilities afforded to emigrants, of carrying with them all the necessaries and most of the conveniences of life." Iowa offered its settlers not isolation, but "their entire security from danger, and the density and proximity of their settlements." It was, in short, a thoroughly modern frontier.

Galland himself had moved to Iowa in 1829, before Euro-American settlement was legal in Iowa and early enough to witness the displacement of the native tribes in order to accommodate the influx of settlers. Though he mourned the circumstances of the Indians' departure—"Thus it seems, that these ill fated people are first to be cheated out of all the *products* of their country by the traders; then to be robbed of the *country* itself by the Government"—he recognized that these "ill-gotten gains" meant land for ambitious white farmers. Settlers from the East, who left behind the delights of home and family "and the social enjoyments to which they have become attached by habit," received in compensation "the silent beauties of an undulating plain, ornamented with wild flowers of every tint."

John G. Wells's 1857 *Hand Book*, published during a period of poor crops and depressed land prices, echoed the theme. Iowa was a land of future plenty: "Her resources are inexhaustible, her advantages are beyond the scope of calculation, and her claims upon the attention of every class and sex of the energetic, the industrious, and the ambitious, are preemptory as they are vast." Like Galland before him, Wells cautioned against undue optimism. Responsibly, he quoted government surveyor Willard Barrows about the need for hard work: "A man cannot come here and grow rich in idleness: he must work. Our soil is prolific, but must have care and culture." Yet Wells was generally carried away by the enthusiastic rhetoric of boosterism: "It is true that man can live with less labor than in the older states; the soil is easier tilled," he wrote. "He can make himself a home much sooner, and far more easily, than those who pur-

chase land in northern New York, Ohio, and Indiana." Published accounts, at least, made Iowa seem almost too good to be true, a place predestined to become the garden of the world.

For some of those who took the advice of the guides, or succumbed to the blandishments of the advertisements, Iowa lived up to its promise. When A. C. Sutliff wrote to his brother in 1838, he reported having suffered from "a billious complaint" for six or eight weeks, but was optimistic nonetheless about his new life near Iowa City. He anticipated hiring a team to break the prairie sod the next spring, and raising enough grain the first season to pay the entire expense of plowing and fencing 100 acres (an almost incredible amount for people accustomed to the exigencies of woodland clearing). His summary was entirely positive: "I will not brag to you any more only to say that Iowa Territory is in all respects so far as I have traveled superior to any country I ever saw. . . . Tell our friends all that are desirous to emigrate to the far west to come on early in the spring and I will insure them as good a farming situation on the new purchase as anybody ought to wish for."

Similarly, when the Reverend Era Hyde wrote home to his brother, William, in Maine, he was almost overcome by his own enthusiasm for "this glorious, broad, free soul kindling country." Educated at Andover and Yale, he had gone to Iowa in 1844 to pay a surprise visit to his married sister. "When I looked about on the substantial comfort of Sarah's present dwelling, I laughed at myself for picturing to myself such privation, & barbarian rudeness as I did," he wrote. "Albeit the huge rough stone chimney with its logs 4 feet long blazing up is not so elegant as the neat air tight or Franklin [stove], or marble fireplace of an Eastern mansion, yet I find myself quite as comfortable and warm before it."

Indeed, he was positively rhapsodic about Iowa as a field for both religious and economic endeavors. "Clayton County is going to be one of the finest and richest farming counties in the West; Oh those magnificent prairies; what irrepressible ineffable emotions they excite in me; seeing them for the first time [in November] without any of the advantage of summers colors & foliage & fragrance. I cannot describe it; you must look upon it yourself or you can get no idea. . . . I feel that my largest anticipation will lag behind providence & my broadest & warmest hopes of good things will 'limit the holy one of Israel.' For a faint and feeble effort to do good which would fall dead & ineffectual in the East; here will tell, must tell, does tell & tell powerfully & on



Clearing the woodlands and plowing under the prairie turned Iowa into an agricultural garden. Here, near Elgin, Iowa, Ole Thorson clears a field, helped by Osvald Ugland and Lars Reierson standing farther back.

SHSI (IOWA CITY)

great materials." For the exultant Reverend Hyde, Iowa was both spiritual and temporal garden.

Less well educated, but no less enthusiastic, David Rich wrote to his brother in 1857, describing a journey across Iowa to Council Bluffs. His purpose was to look at land in Mills County that he had purchased sight unseen. Along the way, he reported his positive assessment of the country he passed through: "I confess without any hisitation that I never saw so much good crops in any Country as in this state. . . . I am led frequently to wonder who would stay in York state if they new what crops we have hear, compared with your thisels Mustard stinkroot & stones."

His land, when he found it, proved worthy of his ardor: 200 acres of rolling prairie, with a railroad planned to cross one corner of his land and, nearby, a new town and depot laid out as well. His own prosperity seemed inevitable.

Even fears of ill health proved unwarranted for these lucky newcomers. Sjoerd Aukes Sipma wrote home to

Holland from Pella, Iowa, in 1848 to report that "Mr. Beukema said that one had to lose flesh in America, but that does not have to happen here. The Hollanders are all thick and fat. All the people during this summer were very healthy."

Nine years later, in 1857, Henry Rickey reported similar good tidings to his wife's parents from Brighton Prairie in Washington County: "The people of Iowa certainley Eat more than the people of Any other State or country that I ever saw. it is not my own imaginations, but it is the opinion of a number of other citizens and the reason for it is that the health of the people is so good and it is attributed to a constant currant of air which Incresus our appetites and vigerates the System."

The pleasures of this early Iowa were simple, but enormously satisfying. When Kitturah Penton Belknap first came to Iowa from Ohio, in 1839, she was excited about seeing the prairies: "We had heard of the prairie land of Illinois but we had never seen anything but heavy timber land so we set our faces westward . . . was

four weeks on the way and saw prairie to our hearts content, and verily we thought the half had never been told." Although her journal of life in Iowa recounted a constant round of work, both on the farm and at her spinning wheel and loom, Belknap reported proudly that she and her husband "go to bed feeling that the sleep of the laboring man is sweet."

For others, however, Iowa proved to be a more mixed blessing. For the Indian peoples who inhabited the region, the newcomers represented disaster: despite the protestations of the Sauk leader Keokuk that his people "were free, and wished to remain free as the air," they were ultimately removed from their lands so that it could be turned into farms.

And some of those Euro-Americans who succeeded them were unaccustomed to the rigors of prairie life, despite all the helpful advice of the emigrant guides. In 1838, Aristarchus Cone crossed into Iowa at Davenport and then traveled southwest in search of land, battling mosquitoes all the way. Without horses, he was often unable to find his oxen when they strayed into the tall grasses. As his first winter drew near, he ironically enumerated "the pleasures [of] settling in a new country." "We were on the extream Frontier not a solatary settler West of us to the Pacific Ocean and but few settlers here Our provisions were nearly gone the Missispi frozen up and no provisions scarsely in the country and we without a shelter except the Tent and on the edge of the Prairie with any amount of Hungry Indians and Wolves about us."

In the face of such challenges, one can appreciate the inquiry that Territorial Governor Robert Lucas received two years later. A former resident of West Virginia asked about grounds for divorce in Iowa, because his wife refused to accompany him to the state.

In similar spirits in 1858, Sarah Morse wrote home to her Aunt Eliza in Massachusetts, from Genoa Bluffs in Iowa County, Iowa. Newly arrived, she found herself the only Congregationalist in a neighborhood of Methodists. Western customs were different from those she knew, and somehow alienating. Three families were crowded together into a single house. Soap was difficult to come by because Iowans fed their fat scraps to the dogs. Her German neighbors didn't salt their butter but smoked their pork, giving both an odd taste. Fruit was nonexistent. The prairie landscape didn't seem to be at all invigorating and her sleep was not sweet.

A loyal wife to her husband, Francis, Sarah was nonetheless unsure of her bargain: "Were it not that I

hope it will be better for Francis on some accounts bye and bye I could wish I had never seen Iowa." Francis was equally uncertain about Iowa, confiding to Aunt Eliza in 1859 that the railroad was going to bypass them after all, and that many people were leaving as a consequence: "There is some prospect of the village turning into a farm but it is hard times now. I hope it will be more encouraging by and by." After five years of trying, it wasn't, and Sarah and Francis Morse returned to Rhode Island.

Even those who remained were discouraged by the enormity of the obstacles they faced. Over the winter of 1858/59, in their home near Homer, in Hamilton County, the Williams family debated steadily about whether to leave Iowa, perhaps to join their son in Georgia. The advantages they contemplated were milder winters and more congenial society, including regular religious meetings and schools for the children. To be sure, Iowa had its compensations. As Eleanor Williams wrote to her son, James, in May of 1859, "Though we often lament the want of society I could not help thinking it was much better for the children to be surrounded by the works of the divine hand than to be in the false and corrupt society of this day."

The Williams family were not alone in their misgivings. When Thomas K. Warner wrote home to his wife in Indiana in 1851, he summed up Iowa as "a good country for a poor hard working man who cares but little for society or schools. . . . It is the pasture of the world for cattle and sheap but who wants to be a cow or sheap and die a heathen." Though their in-laws settled in Iowa, the Warners remained in Indiana.

The litany of complaints in letters and reminiscences was daunting. Affordable land was isolated. Convenient locations were expensive, as was fencing. Clear, running, "lively" water was hard to come by on Iowa's flat prairies. Gardens didn't do well on newly broken sod. Winters were cold. Summers were hot. Growing seasons were unpredictable. Wheat yields were falling. Thunderstorms were deadly. Anticipated railroads were slow to arrive.

Even as late as the 1880s, as Frances Olsen Day recalled, northwestern Iowa was still a challenge to its recent settlers. In her memoir of Calhoun County she remembered plenty of hard times: "We lived through blizzards that piled the snow higher than the houses, through summer wind and hail storms, that flattened the crop as though a huge roller had gone over the fields, through invasions of grasshoppers and army worms—through epidemics of those once terrible scourges of diphtheria and scarlet fever—through spring floods that made it impossible to get anywhere . . . through drought

that gave us a year of no crop at all, and dust storms that swept the soil off the fields into drifts that buried the fences."

This, surely, was no natural garden. It took the hard, steady efforts of its inhabitants to make it into a home.

Yet, over time, Iowa's roughness wore off. As new generations were born and bred in the state, farms replaced open prairies, and the hardships of the settlement period receded in memory. By the late 19th century, in county atlases and histories, in published and manuscript reminiscences, Iowans began to recount—and to romanticize—the story of their encounter with the prairies. By then, the outcome of their collective labors was no longer in doubt. The 1883 *History of Hardin County* cheerfully and succinctly described the result of decades of residents' labors: "The broad prairies of our grand county, lovely in summer but cold and cheerless in winter, have been transformed into beautiful farms and settled by an enterprising people."

By their exertions to replace the pleasing but wild prairies with productive farms, the succeeding generations had made Iowa into "The Brightest Star in the American Constellation." No longer did they refer to their prospects of plenty, but to their actual achievements. In 1893, the Iowa Columbian Commission was explicit about these: "Sixty years ago, a space of time embraced in the life of men yet active in business, Iowa was devoid of the essentials of a civilized State. There was not a charitable institution, public building, post office, church, school, mill, bridge, orchard, farm, or scarcely a squatter's cabin or barn within its boundaries."

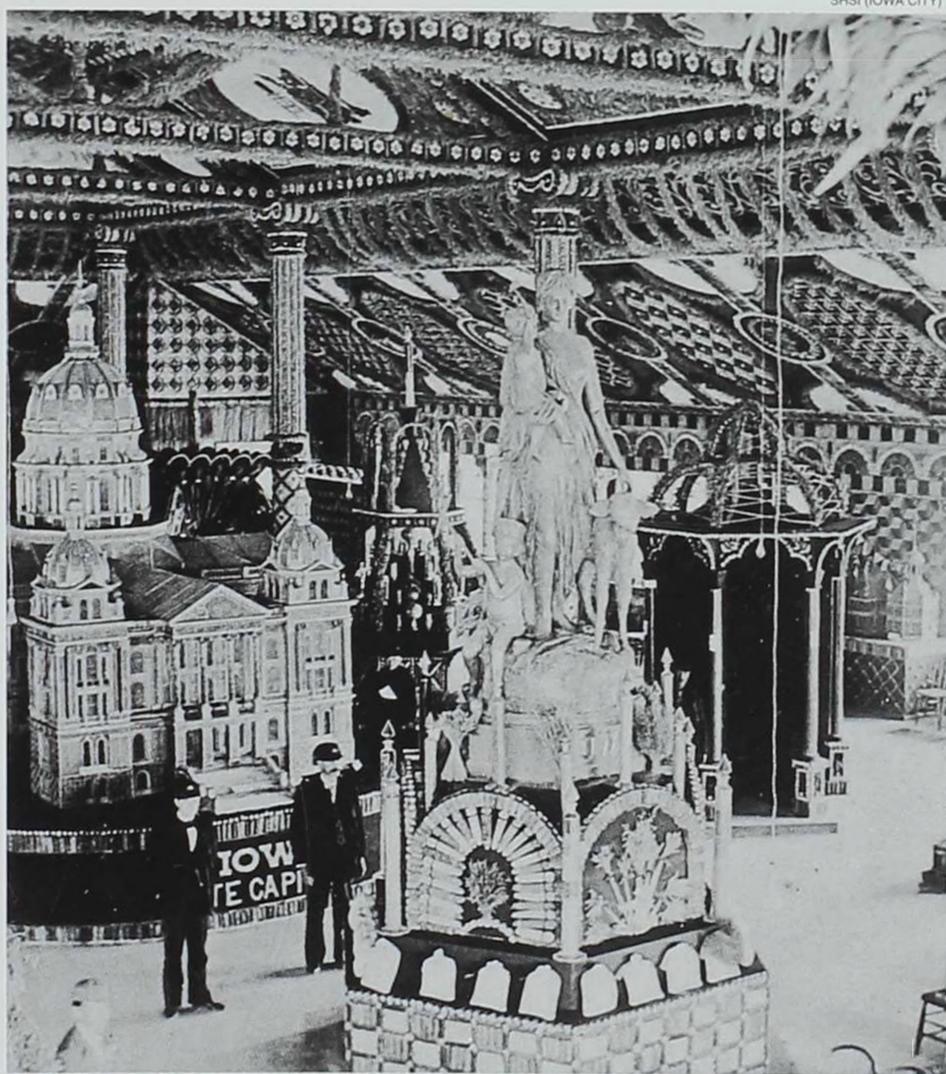
In 1893, on the other hand, there were all these and more, including 215,000 "grand farms," with attendant outbuildings. The commission commemorated this progress by decorating the Iowa Building at the Chicago World's Fair with "the simple grains and grasses gathered from our fields." Significantly, however, these were cultivated plants, not the native grasses and wildflowers of the original prairie landscape. Not nature's promise, but rather the triumphant displacement of nature by Euro-American civilization was now being celebrated by Iowans.

Of course, conditions in the state had changed substantially in the intervening years. The advent of rail-

roads and the discovery of coal deposits meant that Iowans were no longer so dependent on limited native timber for fencing and fuel. Windmills provided access to good water where creeks and streams were lacking. An increasingly integrated national economy meant that it was profitable for Iowans to grow corn and raise hogs, and purchase other necessities with the profits.

The Columbian Commissioners confidently looked forward to what they took to be the next phase in Iowa's development, the "establishment of great and profitable manufacturing enterprises." Hardin County's historian, by contrast,

looked backward across 50 years and marveled: "One can hardly conceive how great a change has taken place in so short a time. The clothing, the dwellings, the diet, the social customs, have undergone a total revolution, as though a new race had taken possession of the land." Iowa was seen to be an impressive feat. A 1904 Iowa atlas simply gloried in the prosperous present: "[The farmer] lives on the fat of the land and produces it himself."



The interior of the Iowa Building at the Chicago World's Fair was elaborately decorated with grains and other natural materials.

In doing so, Iowa farmers had physically remade the land they encountered. The survivors chronicled the changes with pride, in enumerations like those of the Iowa Columbian Commission, and also in the farmstead engravings that prosperous farmers paid to have inserted into the county and state atlases of the period. These idyllic engravings invariably depicted imposing farmhouses on well-maintained roads, with majestic barns next to neatly fenced fields. The owners' pride in their handiwork, and in the artists' often exalted depictions, was palpable in these views, but those Iowans who lived through the transition period knew well that such a landscape didn't just happen overnight.

Indeed, Nehemias Tjernagel, when he chronicled the lives of the Norwegian settlers who arrived in Story County before the Civil War, deplored the general messiness of the farms they created: "Too many . . . showed a rather haphazard grouping of facilities, together with more or less of neglect, a somewhat disorderly array not exactly calculated to brighten the mood of the pass-

erby." Tjernagel understood the historical reasons: "The early fields were irregular in pattern on account of more or less of wet and marshy areas, and clung to the contours of the hills and uplands in consequence. And the fences were usually required to turn and twist in deference thereto."

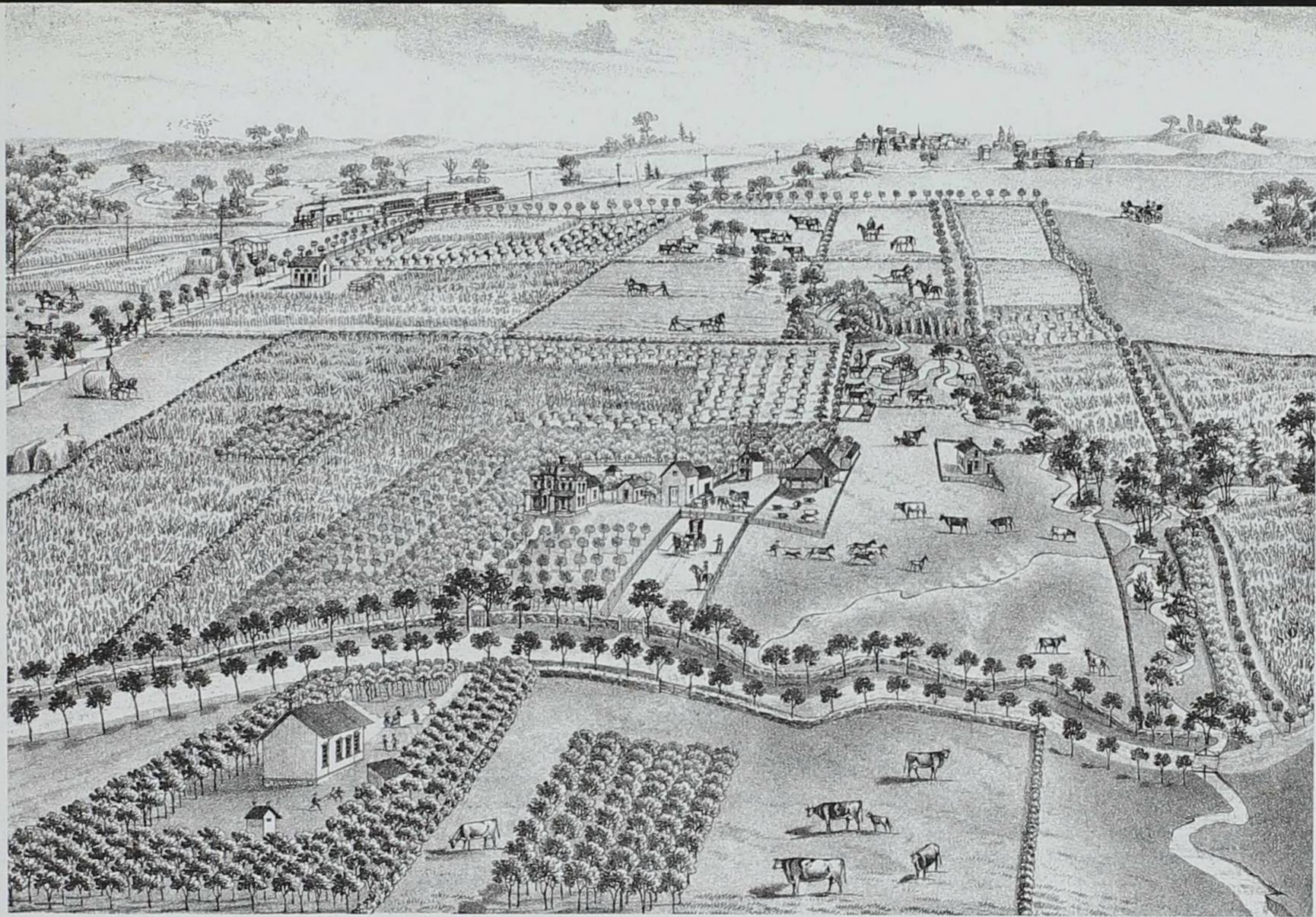
This awkward transitional stage, as Iowa moved from prairie promise to garden of the world, was described disapprovingly by native Iowan Hortense Butler Heywood. Writing in 1910, she looked back on a state "in the first phases of its settlement" when it "had lost much of its natural beauty without a corresponding gain from the improvements which had been made."

Iowa, in Heywood's mind, "had exchanged the grandeur of the untouched prairie for that aspect of sordid poverty and struggle so often seen in a newly settled country. . . . The houses were small and unattractive, the outbuildings equally small and uncared for, the newly planted trees stood in slim unhealthy rows; where the breaking plow had run the prairie flowers had vanished and in their stead had sprung up the ugliest of weeds."

SHSI (IOWA CITY); KOCK COLLECTION; BOONE COUNTY, CIRCA 1914



In north-central and northwestern Iowa, where the land was particularly flat, tile was laid to drain sloughs and other wetlands.



An idealized 1875 depiction of J.T. Rankin's Page County farm shows a fenced and cultivated landscape, orderly and productive.

It took time to transform the prairie into the 20th-century iconographic landscape of emerald fields and red barns that was glorified in state songs. The transformation also required expert advice. One source was the State Horticultural Society, founded in 1866. This group of nursery operators and orchard keepers issued a steady stream of annual reports, many of which registered concerns about aesthetic lapses in the Iowa landscape. The problems were similar to the ones Nehemias Tjernagel reported. In 1867, for example, the State Horticultural Society advised a new farmer to put first things first. In order to insure harmony and order in his new home, "before drawing a furrow or locating a house," the farmer should "sit down and draw a plan . . . where every building is to be, the site for garden, orchard, wind-breaks, screens, groves, barn-yard . . . where his fields are to be divided, and if he cannot do this, better employ some one with taste to do it for him."

For a generation, from the 1870s until the early 20th century, the State Horticultural Society tirelessly advised Iowans about how to achieve true beauty in their landscape. They cautioned against undue formality in planting trees, specifying variable heights and curving lines rather than straight rows reminiscent of the fields. Evergreens were particularly recommended, "those beautiful and gracious friends that so tenderly remind us of

the old home among the hills; and in the white and dead winter, of the fact that things are not dead though they seem so." The natural garden of the prairie in fact required extensive tending, and alien species as well, to meet more modern standards of beauty.

Beauty was not the only goal. The Horticultural Society warned that nothing less than the future of Iowa society was at stake. If farms were not made sufficiently comfortable and cozy, then farm children would inevitably seek out a more attractive life in town, where there were gardens and shaded parks for them to enjoy, and less back-breaking work. In another version of the concerns that haunted the Williams and Warner families in the 1850s, Iowans of the 1880s and 1890s and early in the next century worried that agricultural productivity alone was not enough to sustain farm life.

The Horticultural Society's concerns were echoed by commentators like Tjernagel, who advised farmers to make their land more pleasant to look at. In addition to paying attention to farm layout, he exhorted them to tend the fencerows so as not "to obstruct the way-farer's view of the fields, or the general vista beyond."

Thus instructed, Iowans remade their landscape. Earlier they had struggled simply to plow the prairie and build houses. It hadn't mattered so much if the fields were disordered or weedy. In the late 19th and early



20th centuries, responding to the aesthetic prescriptions of the horticulturists, and later to the scientific advice of the new agricultural extension service, they created a self-consciously progressive terrain. They planted orchards and flowers, and regularized the layout of their farms. They drained low-lying land, graded roads, and

planted windbreaks. According to the dictates of the experts, they enlarged their fields and built silos. The result, after just a few generations, was a state characterized by orderly farms, the now-familiar landscape and imagery of the agricultural heartland.

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SHSI (IOWA CITY)

astically predicted by the Columbian Commissioners did arrive, and cities did grow in Iowa, its popular image remained resolutely rural. The farmscapes achieved so laboriously by successive generations of Iowa farmers came to be its distinguishing visual features, "those vast horizontal lines of land, crops, woods, and sky,

Many Iowa farmsteads were as utilitarian as the Olund family farm (above) in northwestern Iowa in the 1890s. At the same time, another image of Iowa was taking hold, as horticulturists pushed for harmonious and aesthetic plantings of windbreaks, screens, and orchards, and engravers and illustrators depicted grandiose farmhouses and outbuildings.



SHS (IOWA CITY)

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which are the peculiar glory of the prairie," as landscape architect Wilhelm Miller described them. Once considered wild and symbolically "empty" by Euro-Americans, the Iowa prairie by 1915 was fully populated and cultivated and had finally emerged as the garden of the world. The state inspired in Miller visions "of a united and prosperous humanity." Iowa had at last fulfilled the hopeful predictions of its promoters of 75 years earlier.

In 1899, according to the cover page of "Iowa—'Beautiful Land,'" the state had grown "old enough to have a song of her own." Lyricist Tacitus Hussey, however, seemed uncertain just what that song should say. After enumerating the usual charms of "a land kissed by sunshine and show'rs; Of corn lands, wild roses and flow'rs," he depicted an Iowa poised between its bountiful past and a future of unknown contours:

*Her tale of the past has been told,
in Iowa Beautiful Land,
The future is not yet unrolled,
of Iowa Beautiful Land.*

By the mid-20th century, however, no such uncertainty prevailed. Rural imagery still reigned supreme in songs about Iowa. In 1944, Eugene Chenette of Wa-

terloo wrote music and lyrics for "A New Song of Iowa":

*If you ask me which land I love the best
'Tis the state in the middle of the West
Where the soil is so rich and the rain is so free
That the lands are all laden with grain like gold.*

*It's a fairy land, prairie land, merry land, IOWAY
Fairest state of all in this fair land,
Glory land, story land, wonder land, IOWAY
Lovely homes and farms on ev'ry hand . . .
Garden of Eden in the U.S.A.*

Carrie Dean Pruyn summarized the matter more sedately in her 1938 essay for the Iowa Federation of Women's Clubs, but she reached a similar conclusion about Iowa's significance: "The great prairie still casts its spell over Iowa, but today the wind ripples over vast acres of oats and wheat and tasseling corn."

In the course of a century, the invigorating, open prairie of the emigrant guidebooks had been consigned to the past. Its denizens had entirely refashioned it and now happily proclaimed its new identity as the perpetual "Garden of the World." It was, indeed, something for Iowans to sing about. ❖

C. Elizabeth Raymond is professor of history at the University of Nevada-Reno. This essay developed from an Iowa Sesquicentennial Research Grant.



As Iowa grew "old enough to have a song of her own," to quote this 1899 sheet music, bottle gentian (left) and other native wildflowers gave way to cultivated crops like corn, and prairies yielded to farms (opposite page: western Iowa, near Denison).



SHSI (IOWA CITY); JOAN LIFFRING-ZUG COLLECTION

NOTE ON SOURCES

Sheet music at the State Historical Society of Iowa (in both Iowa City and Des Moines centers) includes many Iowa songs; those mentioned in this article were drawn from those collections. Among early descriptions and emigrant guides are these: Albert M. Lea, *Notes on The Wisconsin Territory, Particularly with Reference to the Iowa District, or Black Hawk Purchase* (Philadelphia: H. S. Tanner, 1836); Nathan Howe Parker, *Iowa As It Is in 1855, Iowa As It Is in 1856, and Iowa As It Is in 1857* (Chicago: Keen & Lee, 1855, 1856, 1857); Broadside, Gowers' Land Agency, Iowa City, Iowa [1852?], SHSI-Iowa City; [Isaac Galland], *Galland's Iowa Emigrant, Containing a Map and General Description of Iowa Territory* (Chillicothe: William C. Jones, 1840); [John G. Wells], *Wells' Pocket Hand Book of Iowa* (New York: John G. Wells, 1857).

Letters and reminiscences yielded particularly rich descriptions. Those quoted in this article are all from Special Collections, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City): A. C. Sutliff to Flavel Sutliff, Esq., Nov. 23, 1838, typescript; Rev. Era Hyde to William L. Hyde, Nov. 10, 1844; David Rich to "Dear Brother," July 28, 1857; Sjoerd Aukes Sipma to "My Family," Sept. 26, 1848, typescript, translated by G. A. Sipma; Kitturah Penton Belknap, "Reminiscences," typescript; S. Atkinson to Robert Lucas, March 20, 1840, Robert Lucas Papers; Sarah Morse to Aunt Eliza, Sept. 6, 1858, and Francis Morse to Aunt Eliza Sept. 7, 1858, Feb. 28, 1859, Morse Family Letters; Henry Rickey to Jacob and Mary Dick, Dec. 1, 1857; T. K. Warner to Hester Ann Warner, Oct. 5, 1851, Thomas K. Warner Family Letters; Frances Olsen Day, "Pioneering"; Nehemias Tjernagel, "The

Passing of the Prairie," typescript; Hortense Butler Heywood, "Country Roads and Motor-Cars," c. 1910; and Carrie Dean Pruyn, "Seeing Iowa First—Iowa Beautiful Land," manuscript, 1938. The Eleanor Williams letter to James Williams, May 1859, appears in John Kent Folmar, ed., *"This State of Wonders": The Letters of an Iowa Frontier Family, 1858-1861* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1986).

Keokuk is quoted in James G. Edwards, "Indian Affairs," *Palimpsest* 10 (May 1929); "The Brightest Star in the American Constellation" appears on the cover of *A Hand Book of Iowa . . .*, by Charles Ashton, James O. Crosby, and J. W. Jarnagan (Iowa City: Iowa Columbian Commission, 1893). Published sources include these: Mildred Thorne, ed., "The Memories of Aristarchus Cone," *Journal of Iowa History* 49 (1951); *History of Hardin County, Iowa* (Springfield, IL: Union Publishing Co., 1883); *Atlas of the State of Iowa* (Davenport: Iowa Publishing Co., 1904); Dr. Thomas Wardall, "Raising Groves and Timber-Belts in Northern Iowa," *Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1867* (Des Moines: Mills & Co., 1868); "Secretary's Report," *Annual Report of the Iowa State Horticultural Society for the Year 1872* (Des Moines: Dudley W. Adams, 1873); Wilhelm Miller, *The Prairie Spirit in Landscape Gardening* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1915; Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Mather-Bush Papers, typescript memoirs, Box 3, Special Collections, SHSI-Iowa City.

Annotations to the original manuscript are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City center).

Outside In and the Idea of Community Involvement in Public History

by Bill Silag

Nearly one hundred years ago, historian Carter G. Woodson urged Americans from all walks of life to join him in a quest to know the past. "History belongs to all of us," declared Woodson, who founded *The Journal of Negro History* and created Negro History Week, a precursor to Black History Month. True to his beliefs, Woodson insisted that membership in the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (publisher of the *Journal*) be open to everyone, with or without "professional credentials" or institutional affiliation. Other historical organizations of the era—including the American Historical Association—shared Woodson's concern for inclusion, but their campaigns to attract non-academics proved unsuccessful. As a result, over time the historical profession has taken on the guild-like character familiar to us today. This trend no doubt saddened Woodson, who believed strongly that historical research and writing would enrich all citizens—whether formally trained in historical methods or not—because the study of history leads to a greater understanding of humanity. According to historian Spencer Crew, Woodson was convinced that in order to be meaningful, historical study must be inclusive lest perspectives be missed.

In late 2001, the State Historical Society of Iowa published *Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000*, an in-depth look at the black experience in Iowa from territorial days to the dawn of the 21st cen-

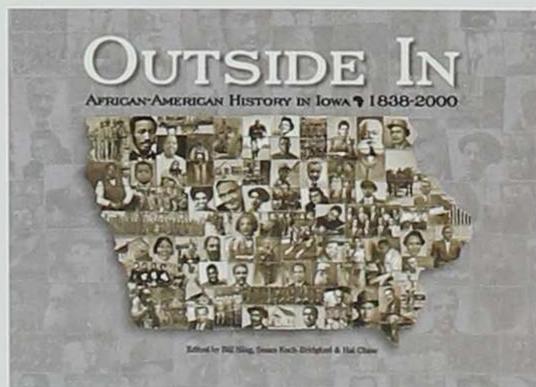
tury. I was the book's editor, and though I had edited many Iowa history books before, this project was special. For me at least, the research, writing, and publication of *Outside In* gave new meaning to the idea of community involvement in public history.

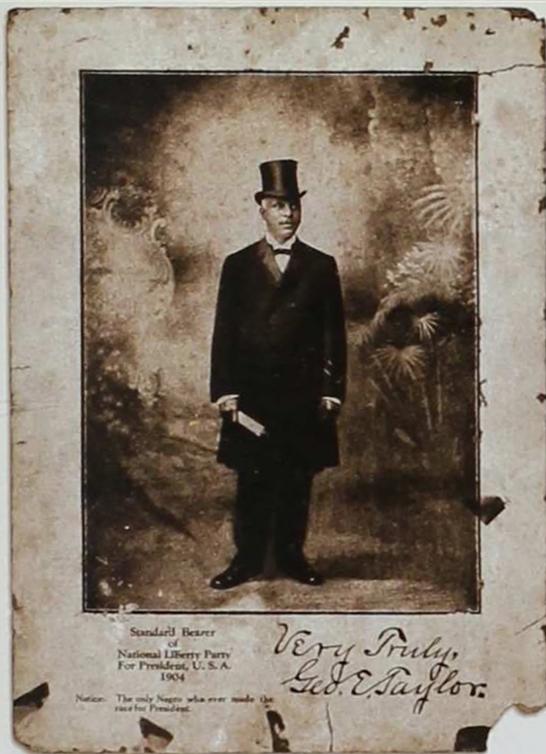
To a large extent, the project was organized along the lines Woodson advocated. *Outside In* brought together people from a wide range of professions and perspectives to shed light on the ways in which men and women of African American descent have taken part in Iowa history. The book's chapters show the diversity of attitudes and aspirations within Iowa's black communities, the ties that connect people in those communities with other Iowans, and the interdependency of all Iowans. In addressing these themes in Iowa history, *Outside In's* authors have provided a model of public history that can be adopted by other communities, be they small towns in rural counties, major metropolitan areas, or entire states. *Outside In* represents an approach to historical inquiry that engages as much of the community as possible and thereby draws on the variety of interests and talents to be found in all communities.

Hal Chase, instructor in history at Des Moines Area Community College, organized the team of writers and editors that produced *Outside In*. (The book's main title refers to Chase's boyhood years in the segregated South of the 1950s, when both Chase, who is white, and his best friend, John Sykes, who is black, felt themselves marginalized in the world of the other.) Chase called on three dozen authors to address various aspects of Iowa's black history: migration and other population trends, legal rights, employment patterns, community organizations, and individual achievements in sports and the arts.

Each of the authors has set a new standard for subsequent research in his or her subject area. Museum curator Jack Lufkin, who had prepared a major exhibit on Des Moines's African American community at the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1996, wrote *Outside In's* chapter about Iowa's black-owned businesses in the

Outside In: African-American History in Iowa, 1838–2000, edited by Bill Silag, Susan Koch-Bridgford, and Hal Chase. Des Moines: State Historical Society of Iowa, 2001. xx, 580 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$50.00 cloth.





PHOTOS FROM *OUTSIDE IN: AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY IN IOWA*. (1898-2000: SHS) (DES MOINES).
RIGHT: COURTESY HENRY G. MATTHEWS.

Among the hundreds of photos in *Outside In* are these two. Left: Iowa's George Taylor was a presidential candidate for the National Liberty Party in 1904. Right: Henry G. Matthews poses with friends on his farm between Beebeetown and Logan, Iowa.

19th and 20th centuries. Attorney Alfredo Parrish prepared the chapter on Iowa's black attorneys. Kathryn M. Neal, then project archivist for the Iowa Women's Archives, examined key themes in the history of African American women in Iowa. Other authors recruited by Chase included college faculty members, local historians, doctors, politicians, community leaders, journalists, anthropologists, art critics, sociologists, and school administrators. Each author was urged to approach his or her topic in whatever way seemed most appropriate for the scope of the book and for the availability of historical resources. Leola Bergmann, author of the path-breaking study titled *The Negro in Iowa*, which was published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1948, provided a foreword. Spencer Crew, director of the National Museum of History in Washington, D.C., wrote the book's preface, and Tom Morain, then administrator of the State Historical Society of Iowa, wrote the introduction.

Not enough praise can be bestowed on the authors for their dedication and determination. They participated in the project without financial compensation, and most of them worked with sources of information—letters, diaries, artifacts, and other items—that had never been examined by historians before. Because the authors drew heavily on interviews as well as on archival documents, interview subjects were given plenty of space to speak for themselves in the pages of *Outside In*. As a result, the tone of the writing typically reflects the subjects' own points of view. In so many cases—William S. Morris writing on the military, Raymond Kelso Weikal on music, and William S. Doan on the arts, to name a few—the authors established a deep connection with their subjects, and it shows in the vigor of their presentations. See for example the marvelous use David

Gradwohl and Nancy Osborn Johnsen have made of what they were told by Dorothy Mae Neal Collier, who lived in Buxton, Iowa's racially integrated coal-mining community, in the early 1900s. Another case in point is *Outside In*'s extraordinary chapter on black doctors in Iowa. The authors, Drs. Erin Herndon and Steven Berry, based their chapter on a series of in-depth interviews. The authors step in periodically to establish context or add interpretation, but for the most part the people interviewed are narrating the tale. It's a tour de force of fine writing, showing the effectiveness of letting subjects tell their own stories.

In his introduction to *Outside In*, Tom Morain writes about perspectives on race relations when he was growing up in small-town Iowa. "Had we been asked if there was racial discrimination in Iowa, we would have responded in good conscience that segregation was the practice in southern states but did not occur in the North. We believed it. For those raised in such innocence, *Outside In* will be startling and disturbing." As Morain suggests, though Iowa is proud of its record in supporting racial equality, especially since World War II, postwar efforts to end discrimination and segregation followed a century of less consistent commitment by white Iowans to ensure the basic rights guaranteed all citizens by the nation's constitution. True, the state's civil rights record was considered positive by white Iowans in the 19th century. Robert R. Dykstra's *Bright Radical Star: Black Freedom and White Supremacy on the Hawkeye Frontier* (Harvard University Press, 1993) puts Iowa in the vanguard of states seeking to protect the legal rights of African Americans. But achieving legal rights was still a long way from securing the dignity and respect due black Iowans. The segregated quarters at Camp Dodge and Fort Des Moines during World Wars I and II and



Women's Army Corp trainees stand ready at Fort Des Moines during World War II.

the Ku Klux Klan in Iowa during the 1920s were reminders of the distance that remained. Not until President Truman's 1948 executive order banning segregation in the armed forces and the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision outlawing "separate but equal" schools would federal government agencies begin taking action on behalf of black civil rights in the United States.

The impact of changes at the federal level took some time to be felt locally. In 1948, Edna Griffin led a successful boycott of Katz Drug Store in downtown Des Moines, charging the druggist with refusing to serve African Americans at the store's lunch counter. An Iowa Supreme Court decision was necessary to make the charges stick against Katz. Yes, said the state's highest court, it was wrong to discriminate among customers by race. But apparently the lessons of the Katz case were slow in reaching other Des Moines business establishments, for retired school principal Frances Hawthorne recalls segregation in Des Moines movie houses during the 1950s, when seats for whites were on the theaters' main floor and black seating was restricted to the balconies. In Cedar Rapids and elsewhere around the state, housing covenants kept black Iowans—regardless of income—residentially segregated well into the 1960s. And incredibly, from today's vantage point at least, not until the 1980s was the principle of desegregation institutionalized in such highly visible civil-service fields as police and fire departments.

Thus throughout the 20th century, black Iowans were forced to fight—in black news media such as the *Iowa Bystander*, in the city councils and the state legislature, and in the courts—to gain their constitutional rights. Beginning in 1915, Iowa branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

(NAACP) fought for the rights of full citizenship for African Americans in Iowa, applying steady pressure to Iowa's political institutions to correct injustices. *Outside In's* chapter on civil rights organizations, written by Professor Jeremy Brigham in collaboration with NAACP state conference president Robert A. Wright, chronicles the campaigns for equal rights led by brave NAACP leaders such as Marshalltown's Rose Bannon Johnson, Davenport's Charles Toney, and other black community leaders throughout Iowa. Considering its scant financial resources and the inertia of Iowa's major political parties on civil rights issues, the NAACP's efforts are praiseworthy not only for the tenacity of the organization's leadership but also for its successful appeal to white as well as black citizens for support.

Outside In's nearly 600 pages contain many stories that emerged unexpectedly during the course of the book's preparation from a network that the authors themselves pulled together—a community of public historians, if you will, that grew to include hundreds of people, each with an anecdote or a photograph to contribute. Material about the black firefighters of Des Moines, and about musicians Big Bill Broonzy and Eddie (Pickin) Bowles, found its way into *Outside In* courtesy of generous people who had no "official" connection with the book, individuals such as Leonard Feinberg, Linda Fobian, and Russell Lovell.

There were many others who lent a hand as well, and in my opinion their active interest in the project was especially significant. Lines traditionally drawn—between "experts" and "amateurs," for example, or between the "white community" and the "black community"—were ignored as authors researched and wrote about their topics. Drafts were passed back and forth



Dorothy Clayton runs a lathe at John Deere, Waterloo, 1940s. Robert M. Carney has practiced medicine in Grinnell since 1965.

among authors and editors for fact-checking; authors were alerted to items of interest that had turned up in someone else's research; and calls went out to people all over the country to have questions answered and details provided.

And what a difference the illustrations loaned to the project made to the book's final appearance. *Outside In* contains hundreds of photographs and other illustrations, thanks in large part to the archivists, librarians, and private citizens whose contributions provided *Outside In's* editors with the action shots, street scenes, and individual, family, and group portraits that convey a sense of the character of life for Iowa's African American citizens from the 19th century to today.

Even now, though *Outside In* has been out for more than a year, the work of collecting photographic images and other historical documents continues. Several chapter authors are working with Hal Chase to build up the State Historical Society's holdings in African American history in Iowa. Here again, the making of *Outside In* marked the beginning of an ongoing community of people committed to the preservation of Iowa's African American heritage.

That community was well represented at the annual "I'll Make Me a World" celebration held at the State Historical Building in Des Moines on January 24, 2002, which was *Outside In's* official publication date. Governor and Mrs. Vilsack were there, as were Juan Williams from the Washington studios of PBS News, Giancarlo Esposito from Fox Television, and many other prominent individuals. But the hallmark of the day was a shared sense of recognition—recognition of the people who had written the book and of those whose lives, or ancestors' lives, were described in its pages. January 24

was not simply a publishing event, but a day of triumph for all of Iowa in recognizing the aspirations and achievements of the state's African American community. That day I felt we had perhaps come a step closer to Carter Woodson's idea of public history.

"The African-American experience in Iowa has not only been a major one," historian Dorothy Schwieder writes in her afterword to *Outside In*, "but has exemplified the ideals and values that all Iowans have held to be important." *Outside In* shows clearly that the ideals and values held dear by black Iowans were the same: Healthy families and strong communities. Economic opportunity. And political rights and equal justice for all. White America has taken these things for granted, while black America's struggle continues. *Outside In* details the nature of the struggle in Iowa.

But for those of us who worked on the book, there was more, because the spirit of public history that infuses *Outside In*—involving authors from diverse personal and professional backgrounds, sharing information among authors, and welcoming contributions from the community as a whole—taught us a new way to learn about the past, about ourselves, and about the complex world around us. I for one hope that Carter Woodson is pleased. ❖

This column introduces selected books of pertinence and interest to readers keen on Iowa and the past. This issue's columnist, Bill Silag, earned his Ph.D. in history from the University of Iowa in 1979. A former editor of The Palimpsest, he has taught history, worked in program evaluation and organizational development, and served as managing editor and editor-in-chief of Iowa State University Press.



October Echoes

The 1929 Wall Street Crash in Iowa

by Lisa L. Ossian



The Wolf of Wall Street only played for a Friday and Saturday night—October 11 and 12, 1929—at the Iowa Theatre on Winterset’s town square, but the movie certainly advertised itself well. The ad in the local newspaper menaced, “A story of terrific power! Watch out Wolf, you know how to handle men, but you’re not so clever with women. Smashing! Tearing! Ruthlessly crashing to wealth and power. Wall Street lived by men who battle there. The great money mart has a corner on the thrill market.”

Two weeks later, Iowa heard the echoes of something else “ruthlessly crashing”—the stock market in New York.



Friday-Saturday at Iowa Theatre

**GEORGE
BANCROFT**

**'THE WOLF OF
WALL STREET'**

BY
BACLANDON · ERIC CARROLL
PAUL LUTAS

A Paramount Picture



A story of terrific power! Watch out Wolf, you know how to handle men, but you're not so clever with women. Smashing! Tearing! Ruthlessly crashing to wealth and power. Wall Street lived by men who battle there. The great money mart has a corner on the thrill market. George Bancroft in one of the greatest roles of his career supported by a superfine cast. Also Lupino Lane comedy, "GOOD NIGHT NURSE". Prices 16 and 26c.

ANOTHER ENDURANCE PLANE THAT SUCCESSFULLY
REFUELS IN MID-AIR



DES MOINES REGISTER, JAN. 3, 1929



Many Americans considered the 1920s not only as the Roaring Twenties but as a "New Era" of confidence and endless optimism. The three Republican presidents, especially Coolidge, had supported business expansion throughout the decade, and in 1929 the "Coolidge Market" appeared to be moving seamlessly into a "Hoover Market." Early that year, Ohio State University economist Charles A. Dice published *New Levels in the Stock Market*, and, in words that would later haunt his career, described a "mighty revolution" occurring in industry, trade, and finance. Dice called this new prosperity "The Stock Market Extraordinary." The sky appeared to be the limit.

The New Era did appear to be a remarkable decade of unbelievable prosperity, as the United States emerged as the richest nation in the world following the Great War. By the late 1920s, the New York Stock Exchange had captured London's role as center of the economic world, and Wall Street experienced its first eight-million-share day in 1929. During the 1920s, Americans played the stock market as the newest version of the get-rich-quick game.

Not everyone shared in this new prosperity. Midwestern farmers had suffered through a decade of agricultural depression resulting from overproduction, land speculation, and other factors after the Great War. In 1918-1919, American farmers' share of the national income was 25 percent; in 1929 it was less than 11 percent. Still, there were some signs of recovery late in the decade, and farmers were becoming more optimistic that they would eventually share in this new urban prosperity.

In Iowa's business world, 1929 appeared to be a reasonably good year. Buying power showed gains, and state bank deposits increased \$2 million from June to October. Deposits were up and bankruptcies were down—at the lowest point in seven years, in fact, with only 169 business failures in Iowa during the first ten months of 1929. The Maytag Company in Newton, a national success story, had set new sales records for its washing machines for each successive month in 1929.

Des Moines, as Iowa's largest city, displayed a significant and further emerging industrial sector of 400 factories employing 13,000 people (10 to 15 percent more than in 1928) and a payroll of \$18 million. Industrial production in Des Moines amounted to \$120 million. In fact, 24 manufacturing and distributing organizations had opened in recent months. Conventions in the capital city were expected to attract some 50,000 people that year, and a hundred

conventions were already booked for 1930.

By 1929, Iowa ranked fourth in automobile ownership (only Texas, Ohio, and Illinois residents owned more automobiles, trucks, and tractors) and spent \$3 million on highway paving, resurfacing nearly 2,500 miles. Iowa even had its fair share of wealthy people: 85 millionaires and 196 "half-millionaires." Increased wealth meant more taxes; in 1929 Iowans paid nearly \$14 million in federal taxes, the largest increase since 1920. Taxes aside, the future of Iowa business appeared promising for the new decade.

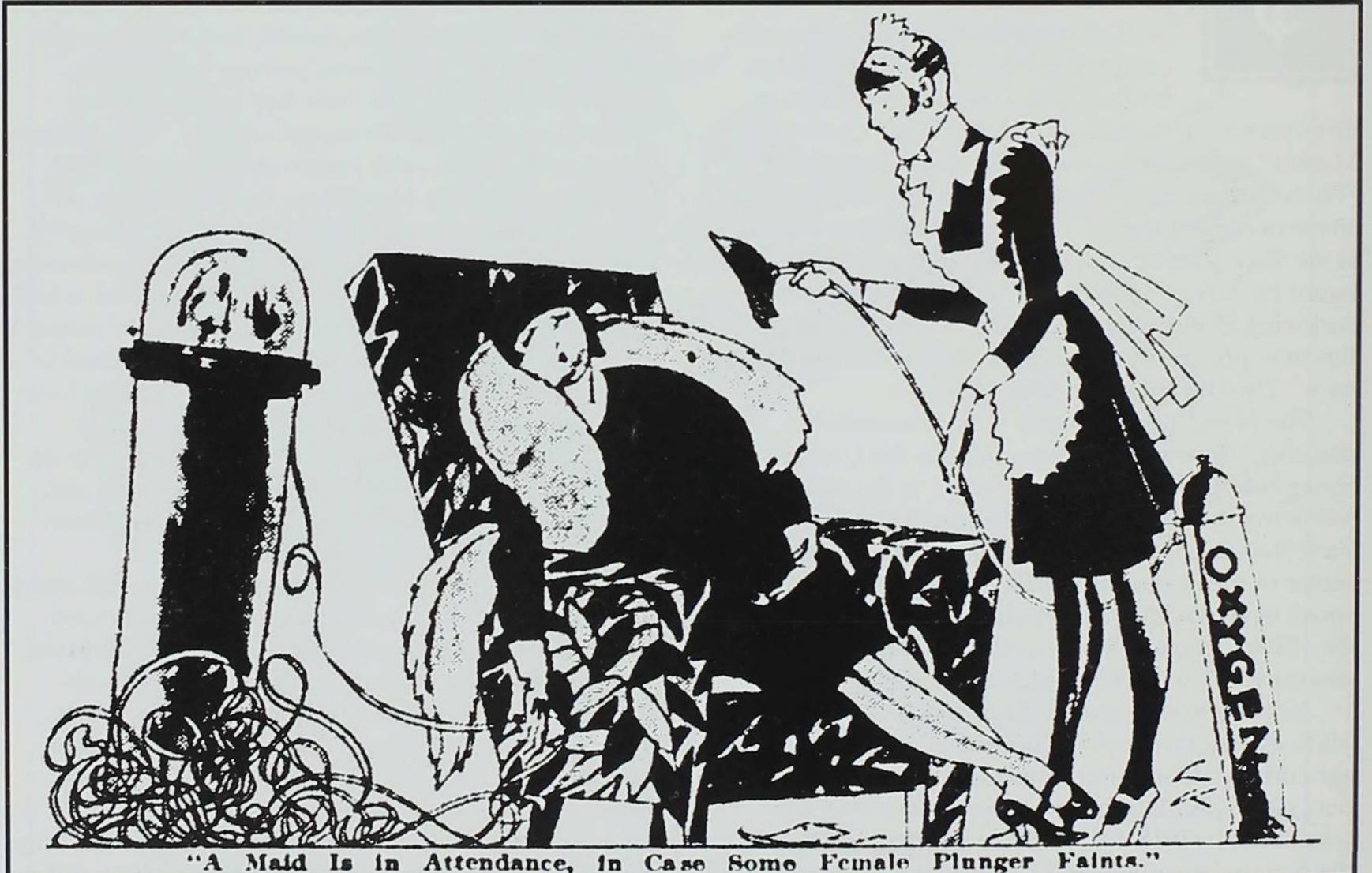
Especially promising was the stock market, which steadily drew new investors to the possibility of quick profits. Americans had become more accustomed to paper investments through the wartime Liberty Loan Drives. Furthermore, investors across the nation enjoyed improved communications and access to the East Coast business world, as telephone, radio, and stock tickers linked brokerage houses to Wall Street and its bullish stock market.

Despite the endless optimism of the get-rich-quick tales of the 1929 bull market, most Americans were not really involved or interested in far-off Wall Street, as economist John Kenneth Galbraith states in his classic history, *The Great Crash, 1929*: "To the great majority of workers, farmers, white-collar workers, indeed to the great majority of all Americans, the stock market was a remote and vaguely ominous thing." Out of the U.S. population of 120 million, only 1½ million Americans were thought to be invested and actively interested in the bull market. But the lure of easy money was strong, and as Iowa congressman Cyrenus Cole wrote years later, "Like sheep over a fence, the people leaped into the stock market."



Twenty percent of America's investing public were women—humorist Will Rogers called them "Ladybulls"—and women held considerable clout in some of America's largest corporations. In American Telephone and Telegraph, for example, 250,000 women held 55 percent of the shares; in General Motors, women composed nearly 40 percent of the shareholders, with almost 4 million shares. Women investors spoke the jargon and kept their own shrewd eye on the ticker tape. Membership of the Iowa Business and Professional Women had jumped 25 percent in only two years. Priscilla Wayne, representing its 2,000-plus members, believed women could be every bit as aggressive and ruthless as men in business: "For

WHEN WOMEN PLAY IN STOCKS



"A Maid Is in Attendance, in Case Some Female Plunger Faints."

every tight-fisted, hard-hearted selfish, scheming male grafter the feminine counterpart may be found." Mina M. Bruere, president of the National Association of Bank Women, put it more succinctly: "There is no sex in finance."

"Every day in the week in Des Moines a small group of women sit in the smoke filled rooms in local offices watching the figures on the board and on the tickers," Agnes Arney reported in the *Des Moines Register*. "Such a sight twenty years ago would have shocked every business man." Some male brokers credited women with more common sense than men and with the ability to take losses "like a man." In Des Moines broker J. T. Harper's opinion, Arney reported, "women are slower to make up their minds about buying and demand more information than men but stick to their decisions when they are made." Others, however, characterized women investors as "hard losers and naggers," and advised women to stay out of the stock market altogether. When young Des Moines stenographers were overheard comparing

stock market earnings and losses, local male financial circles joked that New York had "spread its contagion this far." Some brokerage managers believed women asked too many questions and were too emotional for the stock market business. Other men thought women should just go back to their bridge tables.



But if women were at their bridge tables, chances were good that many were talking about stocks, for the bull market was the focus of many American conversations in the late 1920s.

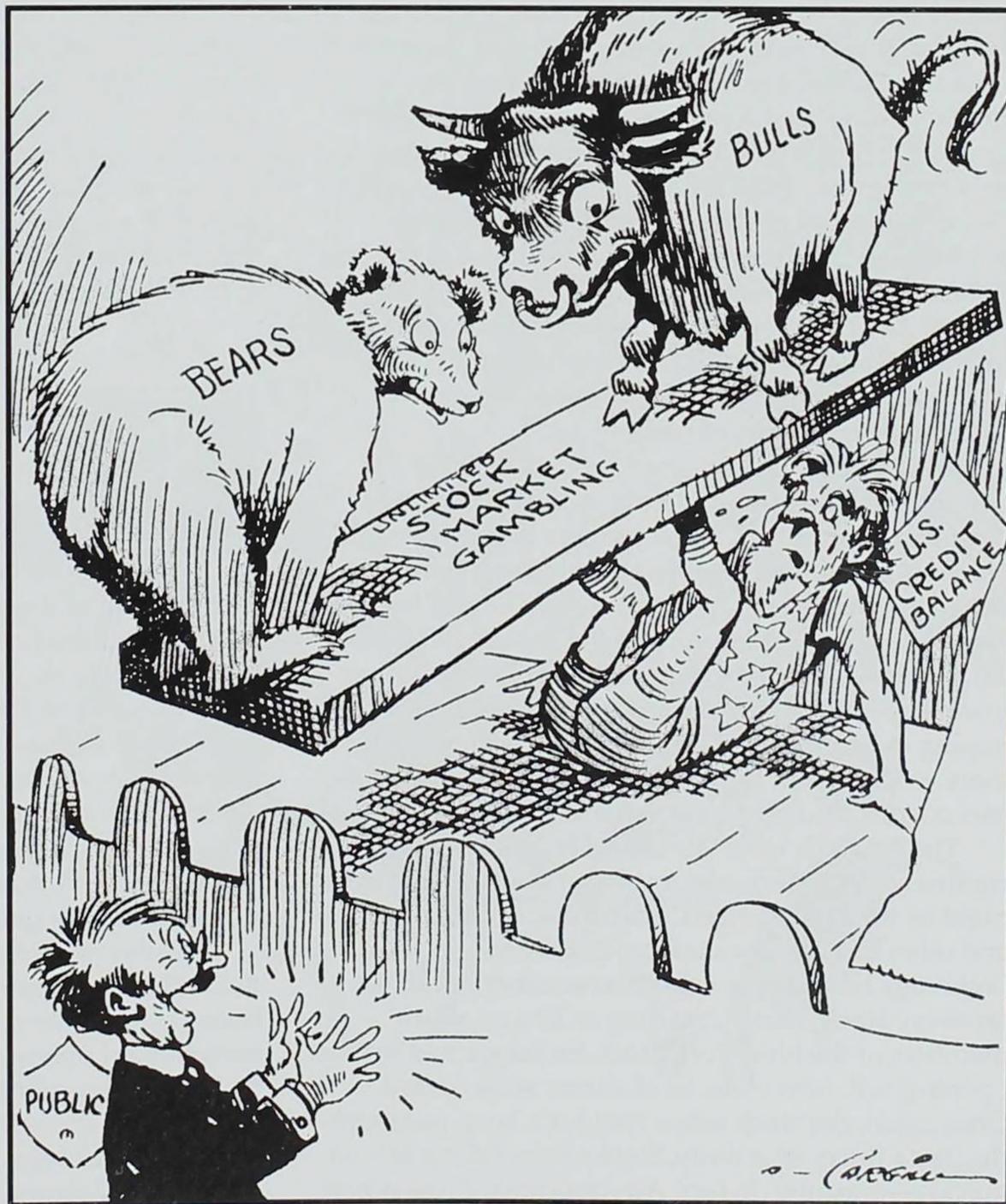
With market shares often overinflated and purchased on margin or credit, continued confidence in the market was essential, or the whole structure would topple over. Even when the market seemed unstable, the "buy-now, pay-later" attitude of America's new consumer economy enticed many into buying stock, sometimes through broker's loans or deferred payments.

An Iowa-Nebraska Light and Power Company advertisement in a Clarinda newspaper, for example, offered deferred payments for purchasing \$100 shares of 6 percent prior preferred stock in the United Light and Railways Company, "an excellent way to save money." An advertisement in the *Davenport Democrat* announced that Cities Service stockholders could purchase more stock "for cash or on the Doherty Partial Payment plan." Cities Service Company was a prominent example of recent "empire-building . . . in the rapidly growing electric power and light industry," according to historian Robert T. Patterson. It controlled more than 90 utility subsidiaries and 50 oil and gas subsidiaries. A favored stock on the smaller New York Curb Exchange (now the American Stock Exchange), Cities Service sometimes traded in higher volumes than the leader on the New York Stock Exchange, according to historian Barrie A. Wigmore. Many Cities Service stockholders in Iowa would later regret Cities Service's deferred payment option.

American investors, small and large, nervously watched the market—and, more specifically, the stock ticker in brokers' offices across the nation. Each transaction made on the floor of the Stock Exchange was recorded on the master stock ticker machine, a device that had evolved steadily, with much work by Thomas Edison, since 1867. "From its impulses go 600,000 miles of ticker tape each year," telegraphically relaying stock prices to 8,000 receivers across the nation, a New York reporter explained in 1929. But as a *Collier's* article in December 1928 pointed out, "the humble ticker—which everyone has taken for granted up to now—has suddenly become the big problem of the stock market. It is the neck of the bottle through which the day's story of the market must flow. And all of a sudden the neck has become too narrow—the flood cannot get through on time.

"Nobody could foresee four years ago, for instance, that the volume of stock trading would double in two years and quadruple in four years. Who could have guessed that the population of the country, so to speak, would come rushing like a great moving picture mob scene into Wall Street, with its money in its hands, clamoring to buy stocks?" The *Collier's* writer continued: "The struggle to gain speed has been incessant. It is a battle to gain not seconds but fractions of a second—the thousandth part of a second." After all, "anything less than right away is slow." Western Union, the New York Stock Exchange, and Teletype Corporation in Chicago were investing millions to develop a faster ticker, but installation was not expected until mid- to late 1930.

Meanwhile, Americans kept an eye and an ear to



BURLINGTON HAWK-EYE, OCT. 26, 1929

the little machines that connected them to the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. As a New York reporter noted, "Tickers from coast to coast click in unison as each figure is recorded."



And so the October days of 1929 began to tick by ominously. On Friday, October 18, stock prices fell for the fifth day in a row. The *Sioux City Tribune* called it a "nose-dive." Unable to keep up, the stock ticker was more than 40 minutes behind the market.

The next day, stock prices tumbled under bearish pressure. Many leading issues dropped \$5 to \$25 a share. The *Davenport Democrat* described the day's events: "Weak holders of stock on margin were . . . unable to meet the persistent calls from their brokers for more funds" and were crowded out of the market "in a wild rush." That week, the New York Stock Exchange averaged a trading volume of 3,300,000 shares per five-hour weekday—but that Saturday, in only two hours, 3,488,100 shares exchanged hands. The ticker ran 90 minutes after the closing gong.

By Tuesday, October 22, the movement to sell had stalled. Stocks seemed to be rising again, with a good rally of \$3 to \$30 per share. Prominent economists and financial leaders optimistically reported that U.S. business was sound and asserted that the recent "market flurries" meant nothing.

Iowa's first snow fell the next day, October 23. Despite temperatures hovering around 25 degrees, farm work continued. Some farmers began their fall plowing, and the corn harvest would soon start, as the field corn was drying nicely. Webster County farmers planned a cornhusking contest for Tuesday, October 29, at Tom Machovec's farm near Fort Dodge. Some Iowans were looking forward to pheasant hunting, hoping to bag the legal limit of three roosters. But more would fall in the coming week than early snow, ears of corn, and an occasional unlucky pheasant.

Thursday, October 24, 1929: The cold wave continued its sweep over Iowa that day and into the night as snow blanketed Cedar Rapids, Davenport, and other eastern Iowa towns. But the talk in Iowa's brokerage houses was not of the weather but of the far-away stock market. Starting at 10 a.m. when members of the New York Stock Exchange met for the opening bell, heavy blocks of shares were traded. Once again, the stock ticker could not keep pace with the day's flurry of activity. Stocks were falling far too quickly—crashing, in fact. An Associated Press report

in the *Des Moines Tribune-Capital* described the scene: "The 3,500 men on the floor of the exchange needed a dozen traffic police. A surging, screaming, disheveled crowd pushed and fought their way back and forth through the lanes separating the new horseshoe trading posts as messengers and traders tried to keep abreast of the flood of orders."

Although a pool of New York bankers purchased large blocks of significant stock that afternoon to stop a further fall, \$5 billion was swept away in a trading frenzy, the biggest trading day so far in Wall Street history. The *Des Moines Register* attempted to put the astronomical losses into meaningful terms for its readers, equating the figure of \$5 billion to "almost one-fourth of the cost of the world war to the United States," or the same as \$2,000 for "every man, woman and child in the state."

"The torrent of selling orders poured into the market over the congested private wire systems of commission houses from all cities of the country, over telephone and telegraph wires, and came from abroad by cable, radio and trans-Atlantic telephone," the *Register* reported. "Foreign security markets and domestic and foreign commodity markets broke sharply in sympathy with the stock exchange, and intensified the terror of speculators."



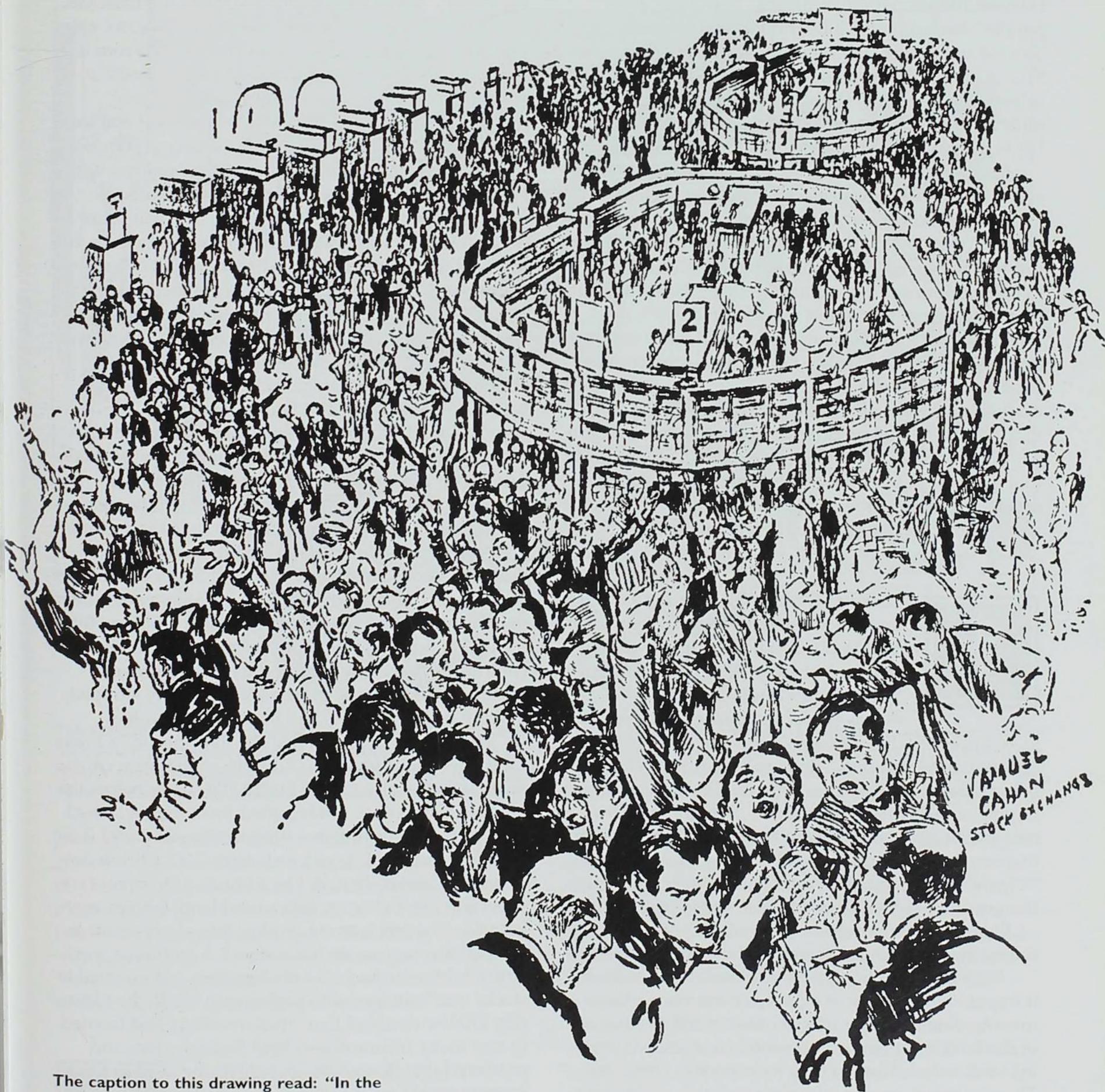
"The ticker system was completely overwhelmed by the deluge," historian William K. Klingaman writes, "which meant that the quotations it displayed were completely worthless, since stocks might have lost twenty or thirty points in the interval—and so many customers and brokers literally had no idea of where they stood." By 1:30, sales totaled 10,171,900 shares. By day's end, more than 14 million shares had been dumped.

The heaviest individual trading, however, took place that day on the New York Curb Exchange in a stock well known to many Iowa investors—Cities Service, which opened the day with a block of 150,000 shares at \$55.75. A record-setting 1,151,900 shares of this stock exchanged hands that day.

The day would be dubbed "Black Thursday." The ticker finally stopped in New York at 7:08 p.m., four hours behind. Junior partners, messenger boys, and switchboard operators worked through the night trying to sort out the tangle of paperwork.

Despite Thursday's debacle, the following weekend meant celebrations for many Iowans. College students and alumni gathered for homecomings at

Stock Exchange Floor During Panic, As Seen by an Artist



The caption to this drawing read: "In the foreground is shown the pandemonium around post No. 2, where steel stocks are traded. Back of it is No. 4, the General Motors post."

DES MOINES TRIBUNE-CAPITAL, OCT. 29, 1929

Iowa State, Simpson, and Drake. On Friday evening, thousands jammed Des Moines streets for Drake's Harvest Jubilee parade, a 40-float "electrical night parade" honoring the 50th anniversary of the incandescent light bulb. (Earlier in the week, in Dearborn, Michigan, Henry Ford had hosted his own elaborate celebration honoring Thomas Edison and the light bulb, with John D. Rockefeller Jr., Charles Schwab, Herbert Hoover, and Andrew Mellon in attendance.)

Meanwhile, on Wall Street that Saturday, "hollow-eyed commission house clerks struggled to clear away the debris left by the week's wild panic of selling," the *Davenport Democrat* reported. Elsewhere, prominent business and political leaders were trying to halt rumors and reassure Americans. Headlines in Iowa and across the nation repeated Hoover's message that "business is sound" and confidence and optimism would be restored quickly to American capitalism. Hoover had brought "joy" to many stock market bulls and confidence to big traders, the *Sioux City Tribune-Capital* reported. "Wall street was jubilant Saturday because President Hoover, with an authority that is magic in stock market circles, had said fundamental business of the country was on a sound basis, with production and distribution maintained."



Tuesday, October 29: The day started on Wall Street with a wild opening. Within the first half hour, the ticker tape was already 20 minutes behind. "Des Moines traders went wild Tuesday as stocks continued their seemingly endless nose dive in New York," the *Des Moines Tribune-Capital* reported. "Brokers' offices were crowded to capacity with the largest crowds in history, but little buying or selling was in order. . . . Telegraph operators and board markers were almost ready to drop in their tracks from the strain." The reporter continued, "Cigaret and cigar stubs covered the floor, a mute testimony of the nervousness of those watching the board. . . . Here and there could be seen a man with wide staring eyes watching every move of the board markets."

With the stock ticker so far behind, brokers found it impossible to know or even estimate stock prices. Iowa traders could do little buying or selling because of the inadequate information and constantly changing stock values. Hurried calls were made to New York. The occasional cry of a telegraph operator announcing a temporary rally sent hope to the heavy losers clinging to their pet stocks. But the rallies were brief, and the news remained bleak. Some wanted to

believe otherwise. "The market has about reached its depth," Des Moines broker John T. Harper stated for the record. "Stocks are beginning to stabilize themselves."

Cities Service continued to be many Iowans' chief interest throughout these panic-filled days. From its address of 60 Wall Street, Cities Service had advertised itself well throughout the year in national magazines such as the *Saturday Evening Post* and local Iowa newspapers; the Cities Service Concert Orchestra was broadcast across the nation and in Iowa each Friday at 8 p.m. Plus, small investors considered utility companies a wise choice, one that was more diversified and less volatile; many Iowa investors, for instance, also owned stock in Standard Oil of Indiana. Cities Service had established a recent record high of \$68¹/₈, then sagged to \$60 by October 22, dropped to \$45 with Thursday's collapse, and on Black Tuesday plummeted to \$22¹/₂, leaving investors to worry about meeting their margin calls from brokers or banks. "Several thousand Dubuquers held Cities Service," the *Des Moines Tribune-Capital* reported. "A brokerage house there declared that speculators had purchased more stocks than Des Moines, Cedar Rapids and Sioux City combined and that the majority had failed to liquidate in time to save their assets."

As the newspapers described it, crowds filled a brokerage house in Mason City, and Sioux City offices were "tense" and "in disorder." A cacophony of human voices and ringing phones filled brokers' offices. By the end of Tuesday, the tape was more than an hour behind, and specially installed wires had proved worthless. Most stock purchases eventually stopped; making price estimates had become impossible.

The *Tribune-Capital* called the day "hectic." Others called it "Black Tuesday." All stock exchange records fell that day—sales totaled 16,388,700 shares before the official closing. One unidentified Iowa man watched \$180,000 in paper profits vanish on Tuesday, and then \$6,000 in principal. *Register* reporter C. C. Clifton described the atmosphere in Des Moines: "On street cars, street corners, in homes, offices and bank lobbies, market talk, whether learned or idle, was as prevalent as football discussions on Saturdays." A Dubuque used auto dealer who had sold his business and invested in stocks was "plunged into bankruptcy." Still, the *Sioux City Tribune* doubted that small investors had learned to stay away from ruthless Wall Street wolves and predicted that "the shorn and shivering lambs of this country would come back for more in the stock market."

Under the *Davenport Democrat* headline of "Financial Fledglings Back to Overalls and Desks as Market Cyclone Shatters Air-Castles," nationally syndicated

Echoes of Wall Street Crash Heard in Des Moines



This Oct. 30, 1929, illustration was captioned, "It wasn't only the eastern millionaires who felt a bang in the pocketbook when the stock market went crashing on down Tuesday. These local scenes were found by a Tribune staff artist as he overheard Des Moines people discussing the Wall street panic." Women, shown here in the home or outside the broker's office, are less marginalized than the sole African American, a service worker, who is advised, "If ya don't know anything about it don't learn."

journalist Lemuel F. Parton noted that some "patient gleaners" had purchased stocks at rock-bottom prices, despite the "utter collapse of the clerical and communications machinery and staffs of both brokerage houses and the stock exchange." Describing the crash's consequences as a very human drama, he concluded, "Searching for a villain in the plot, one can find neither the 'wolf of Wall Street' nor his lair."



On November 5—for the first time in two weeks—the stock ticker caught up, printing the day's final quotation only a half-hour after closing. But those first weeks of November remained

volatile. On November 13, prices were still reeling, as 300 stocks reached new lows for the year; again the ticker lagged more than two hours behind. "No responsible person in Wall street would venture a prediction as to how much longer the decline would run," the *Burlington Daily Hawk-Eye* told its readers. Some analysts now believe that the crash did not officially end until Thursday, November 14—three weeks after Black Thursday. Economists have estimated the losses for those three weeks at \$50 billion, losses with both national and international consequences.

After the stock market collapse, stories circulated and rumors escalated about the number of suicides by stock investors who had lost everything. But the

suicide wave after the 1929 crash is more myth than reality. The number of self-inflicted deaths did not increase statistically in New York or in Iowa. Many investors were certainly stunned and depressed, as historian Robert Goldston notes, but did not immediately consider an action as violent as suicide.

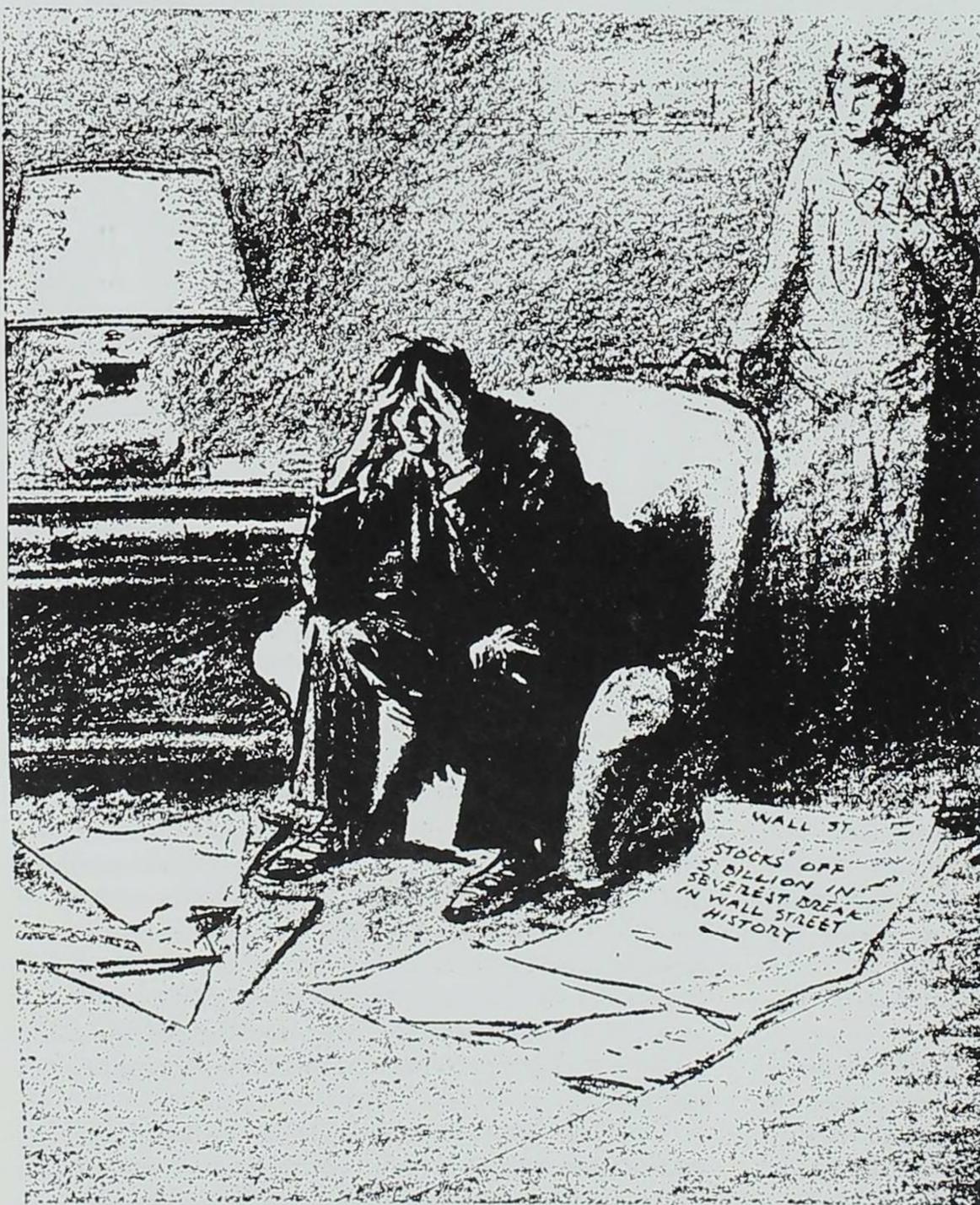
Yet as time went by, local rumor and the press were quick to link suicides to financial troubles. In Keosauqua, mayor Lee Fellows had worried over personal financial troubles following the crash. Fellows belonged to an old Keosauqua family, and he sold coal and ice for a living. One morning in early

November his wife discovered a letter of his intentions and then found his body in the barn loft. Five children and his wife mourned his death.

In Dubuque, rumors circulated that William Day Jr., who had inherited Central Lumber and Coal Company, had lost almost \$3 million in the crash. Local residents had interpreted certain of his actions—letting go of his servants and selling several expensive cars late in 1929—as signs of a failing fortune. On the night of February 12, 1930, he shot himself in his downtown office, having left letters for his wife, business associates, and friends. Day had been a popular figure in

local financial and business circles, and some of his friends believed ill health was to blame. "There will be no inquest," coroner Al Didesch said, "as the affair undoubtedly was a clear case of suicide."

SOLD OUT



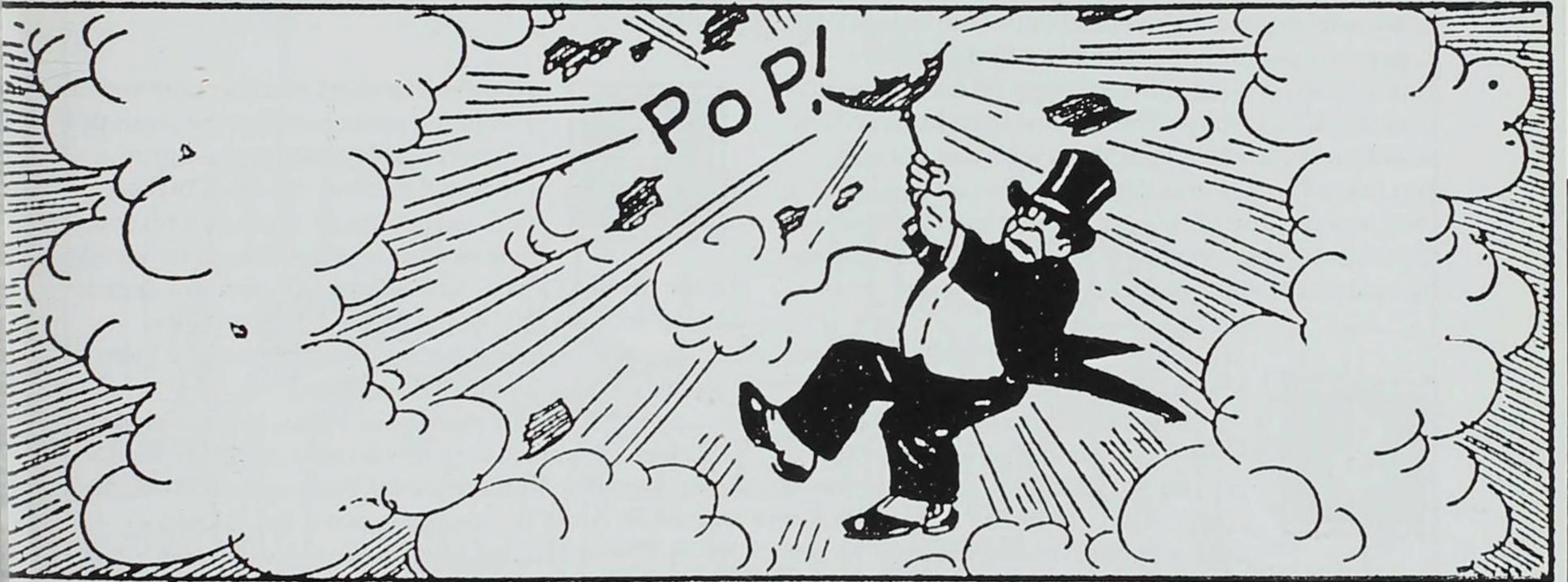
DES MOINES TRIBUNE-CAPITAL, OCT. 29, 1929, BY ROLLIN KIRBY (NEW YORK WORLD)



As the crash and its aftermath echoed through Iowa, the public and the press responded in one

of three ways to the Wall Street crash: with scorn, recognition, or optimism. Many said the crash came as no surprise; prosperity was typically short-lived. As the *Sioux City Tribune* commented, "Any abnormal prosperity must be at somebody's expense." The paper reprinted an article from *Commerce and Finance*, which called the October "prosperity panic" the "eleventh monumental crash in the stock market" since 1869. The *Davenport Democrat* editorialized, "Small boys used to have a saying, as they tossed something into the air, that 'what goes up must come down.'" Stocks had simply been valued too high and eventually had to fall. "People will begin to regard 6 and 8 and 10 per cent as a profit worth looking at, and not be wanting to get rich in a week."

Again They Meet on "Common Ground"



Iowans who condemned stock market investment as gambling or, at best, speculation, weren't surprised either. Gambling was a dangerous game, they admonished, and any gambler should know the risks. Will Rogers, whose humor column ran in many Iowa newspapers, echoed this sentiment on the weekend after Black Thursday: "But to have been in New York on wailing day, when Wall street took that tail spin! . . . You know there is nothing that hollers as quick and as loud as a gambler. They even blame it on Hoover's fedora hat. Now they know what the farmer has been up against for eight years."



Many in Iowa drew parallels between the stock market crash of 1929 and Iowa's "land crash" after land values peaked in 1920. Farm land after the Great War had reached \$200 to \$300 an acre, and bankers had granted many farm mortgages on this inflated value. When land prices fell, many investors lost not only paper profits but capital or land as well. The editor of the *Marshalltown Times-Republican* thought the stock market had "busted" just as Iowa farm land had. "Speculators were buying solely for the rise and not for the annual return upon their investment," he wrote. "This is exactly what happened in our midwest land boom."

Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mark G. Thornburg told reporters that "the same deflation which hit Iowa farm land was due to hit industry in the east." Charles E. Hearst, president of the Iowa Farm Bureau Federation, recognized that the business world was experiencing what farmers had gone through earlier: "At that time the farmer suddenly discovered that neither his land nor his farm products could command anything near the prices [of] a few months previous." Hearst believed that "safe home investments" would now gain more appeal, and that farm land would start to appreciate in value.

Henry A. Wallace, editor of the Iowa-based *Wallaces' Farmer*, also drew parallels between rural 1920 and urban 1929: "Back in 1919 and 1920, the farmers had their day of speculation, and they have been paying for it in terms of a long, slow, continuous deflation ever since. The farmers have been blamed again and again for their poor judgment in pushing their land values up to the price where they were in 1920." He concluded, "Now that some of our people in the cities have got into the same kind of trouble, they might use some of the advice which they handed

out so freely eight years ago to the farmers." Yet Wallace realized farmers would suffer as well as business people if the crash brought on unemployment.



Another standard reaction centered on continued optimism that the crash did not necessarily guarantee a future economic decline; the stock market had crashed many times before, and depressions had not always followed these former panics. As Cyrenus Cole wrote a decade later, "in Iowa the people entered 1930 with the determination to put the crash of 1929 behind them and to go on with business as usual."

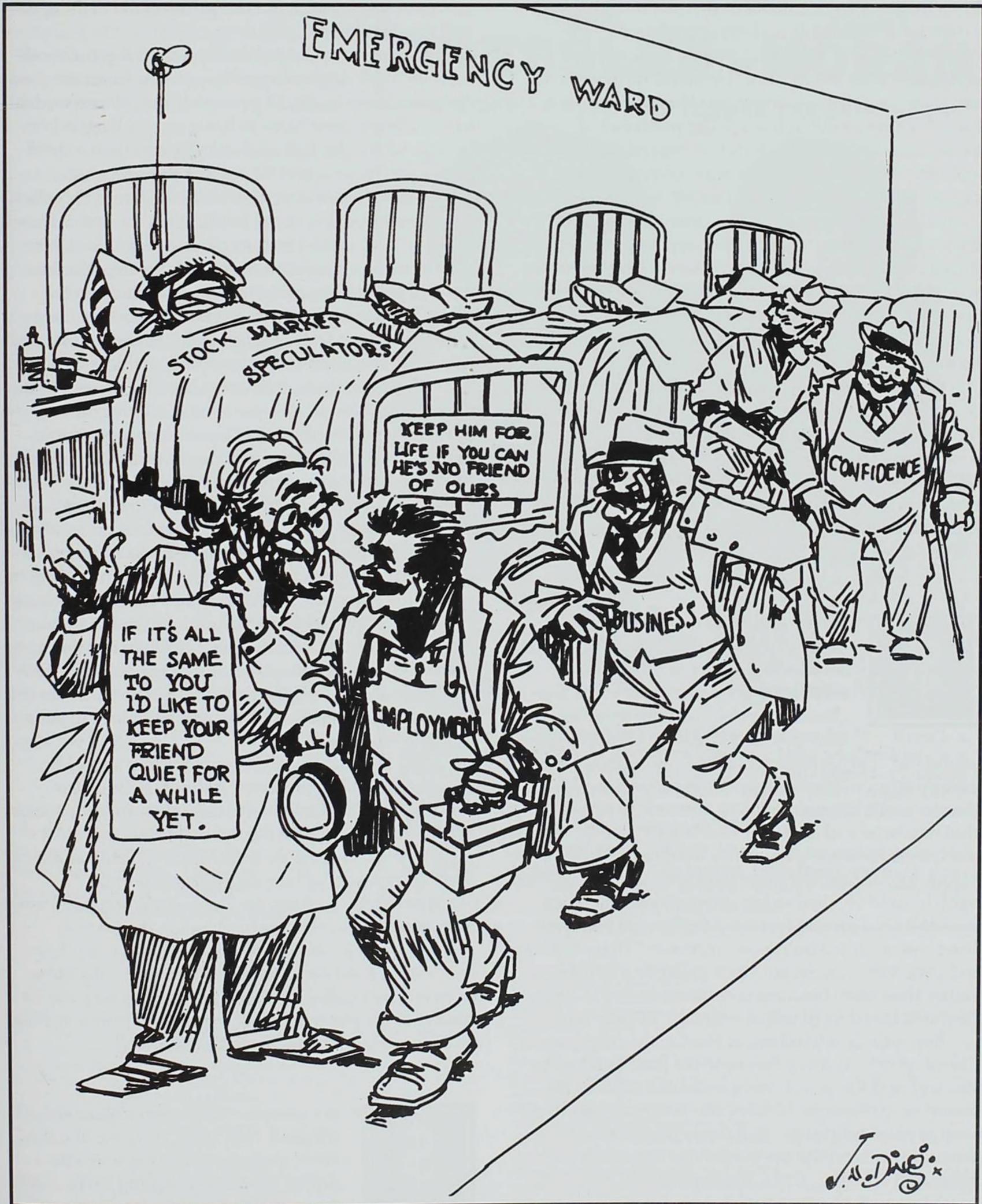
Some of Iowa's prominent voices claimed that the stock market crash might even help Iowa's economic development. To the *Waterloo Evening Courier* editor, the crash could be advantageous if the "slump in stocks" reemphasized the "basic value of lands."

"Money is coming back to Iowa," he wrote, "which was attracted to the east because of high money rates on the stock market; interest rates are lower and more money is available for local enterprises." State Banking Superintendent L. A. Andrew informed the Des Moines Kiwanis Club that "the recent stock market crash will be felt only indirectly in Iowa. It may prove a blessing in disguise if all Iowa money is again put to work in Iowa investments." The *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* told readers that the Iowa Weather and Crop Bureau looked at "the recent deflation of the stock market . . . as a medium to stop the flow of Iowa money out of the state and to 'keep it where it belongs and where it will do some good.'"

Where it would do some good was road development, according to a *Dubuque Telegraph-Herald* headline, "Stock Crash Means Paved Iowa Roads." Plans for 1930 included paving 1,000 miles of highway and grading an additional 400. State Highway Commission auditor C. R. Jones commented in mid-December that he had witnessed a "marked improvement" in the bond market during the last four weeks: "We can now dispose of 5 per cent bonds at a premium." The *Des Moines Register* praised the economic growth: "Good roads are as necessary to a state as rain to a flower."

Bank presidents also took a positive stance. Willis G. C. Bagley, president of the Iowa Bankers' Association, had publicly predicted in Mason City on October 31 that the "debacle in stocks" would turn people to social investment or real estate. "The banks of Iowa, in my opinion, will not suffer through the drop in the stock market. True, some little money has been going out of

THE JOYRIDE VICTIMS ARE LEAVING THE HOSPITAL



THE J. N. "DING" DARLING COLLECTION, SPECIAL COLLECTIONS DEPARTMENT, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA LIBRARIES, IOWA CITY, IOWA. APPEARED IN DES MOINES REGISTER, MARCH 19, 1930.

Iowa for stock investments in the east but to a great extent for investments and not speculations." He concluded, "This will bring money back to Iowa for legitimate business in Iowa. I look for farm sales to increase. I still believe that good Iowa real estate is a basis for sure credit in Iowa." The publisher of *Northwestern Banker*, Clifford DePuy, surveyed Iowa's banks and determined that the state was "entering upon a new period of prosperity," as the *Des Moines Register* put it.

Bankers in Burlington also believed that prosperity would continue, though perhaps in different guises. One thought the recent stock market crashes would benefit the local bond market; another was convinced that land investment would now increase and that within three months the stock market would be nearing recovery.

W. B. Bonnifield, president of First National Bank of Ottumwa, also believed that although Iowans may have lost in the recent bear market, no serious harm had resulted in Iowa. He believed that Iowa's basic source of wealth was farm land, which had recently been overlooked and neglected. He added that "this [market] upheaval will bring Iowa back to normal and into its natural channels."



In an early November editorial, Ed Smith of Winterset's *Madisonian* touched on all three key points in Iowans' responses. He denounced stock purchases as gambling with promises of easy profits. "For two years, the good, sound old state of Iowa furnished call money for eastern stock markets. Thousands of Iowans played the stock market and woke up a few days ago with a dull headache and a general woe begone feeling." Smith also recognized the similarities to the early 1920s: "Stock speculators, like many land speculators [ten years ago], bought on shoe string down payments. They couldn't hold on and lost." Yet Smith also believed Iowa's economy would now improve: "There is every indication that the recent stock collapse will help, rather than hurt, business conditions in Iowa." Still, he ended his editorial with a warning: "History repeats!"

Yet optimism lived on, at least in the newspapers. "Iowa, good old Iowa, has now the least to fear. She has suffered the worst. Iowa is the one oasis in the desert of depression. Most of our farm troubles in the way of extra mortgages and debts have been eliminated. Iowa is on the up-grade," the *Iowa Falls Citizen* reassured readers. "Iowa, the experts tell, is now the most prosperous place on the map. Farm prices may

go down some more, but the prices of everything else will tumble down."

Iowa business leaders still predicted good conditions for 1930. Answering an Iowa Manufacturers' Association questionnaire, 53 percent of the 269 respondents said business conditions in Iowa would be good or very good for the first half of 1930; less than a third answered "poor"; and 92 percent thought wages would remain stable. In Des Moines, Gerard S. Nollen, president of Bankers Life, predicted at the annual meeting that 1930 would be the company's greatest year.

Other business reporting agencies also placed Iowa in a spotlight of optimism. According to the United Business Service Company in Boston, Iowa was one of four states (South Dakota, Oklahoma, and Delaware the other three) in which business was "good." The reasons cited were the absence of stock market speculation and the state road program: "Probably no one thing has been more responsible than the comprehensive hard surface road building program being carried on in the Tall Corn state."

In Knoxville that spring, U.S. Congressman L. J. Dickinson from Algona told a group of farmers and businesspeople about Iowa's expected and renewed prosperity. "Iowa is facing the greatest opportunity in years after six years in lowering of values," Dickinson stated. "The east took its deflation in six days while Iowa took six years for the job. . . . There is going to be more and cheaper money for Iowa agriculture, there will be an exodus of people from the cities back to the farm because they know they will be able to make a living from the soil."

Even the Harvard Economic Society's weekly newsletter in May predicted better U.S. business conditions: "Business—with due allowance for season movements—will turn for the better this month or next, recover vigorously in the third quarter, and end the year at levels substantially above normal."

Ultimately, perhaps the Democratic senator from New York, Royal S. Copeland, made the poorest prediction, as printed in July in the *Des Moines Register*: "As sure as fate," Copeland had said, "the chimneys will be puffing forth smoke, the farmers will be raising crops that will bring them good prices in 1932, and Hoover will be re-elected president."



In December 1929, when Columbia had released *Wall Street*, a movie about a stock market panic complete with a ruined speculator leaping to his death through an office window, a movie

critic at *Time* magazine wondered about the timing of this Hollywood film. Was it "extraordinary financial foresight or extraordinary speed in production?" The production company replied that it was "simple luck."

The next August, back in the Iowa Theatre in Winterset, *Caught Short* was playing, ten months after the crash. The comedy starred Marie Dressler and Polly Moran, "the screen's funniest team in the laugh panic." "From cleaning in the kitchen to cleaning up in the stock market," the ad read, "these two merry stars romp their way through the funniest comedy you ever saw! Then came the crash! It's a riot every inch of the way!"

If only the story of surviving the New York Stock Exchange crash of 1929 could be considered "simple luck" or "a riot every step of the way," as Hollywood producers once advertised it. Iowa's reactions to the actual crash were far more complex. The story of quick-and-easy fortunes in the bullish stock market of 1929 reflects a sadly familiar tale, a myth that Americans from New York to Hollywood to Iowa desperately wanted to believe. But busts follow booms. And simple luck simply runs out of time. ❖

Lisa L. Ossian completed her doctorate in Agricultural History and Rural Studies at Iowa State University in 1998 with her dissertation, "The Home Fronts of Iowa, 1940-1945." She now teaches history and English at Southwestern Community College in Creston, Iowa.

IOWA THEATRE TONITE, FRIDAY, SATURDAY

Great news! Now you're going to see and hear the screaming comedy that's being talked about from Coast to Coast!

MARIE

POLLY

DRESSLER - MORAN

THE SCREEN'S FUNNIEST TEAM IN THE LAUGH PANIC



Get ready for the biggest laugh you've ever had! Here's a picture guaranteed to give you the best time you've had in a theatre in years! From cleaning in the kitchen to cleaning up in the stock market these two merry stars romp their way through the funniest comedy you ever saw! Then came the crash! It's a riot every inch of the way!

Dedicated to those who believe there is no substitute for laughter. A picture that's bringing happiness to more people than any film on the screen today! Also showing "RADIO KISSES". Prices 15c, 25c, and 40c.

NOTE ON SOURCES

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COURTESY BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY



Immigration to Iowa is a tradition far older than the state itself, and the stories are legion of those who left behind their home to make a new life in Iowa. Here is one of those stories.

Albert Hirsch



From Frankfurt to Storm Lake

by William H. Cumberland

It was September 1946 when Albert F. Hirsch and his wife, Lilly, natives of Frankfurt, Germany, first walked across the Buena Vista College campus in Storm Lake, Iowa. The Hirsches were recent arrivals in the United States from England, where they had spent the previous seven years after their flight from Nazi persecution.

As the newest member of the Buena Vista faculty, the 58-year-old professor brought with him a sound German academic background, including a Ph.D. (1912) from the University of Munich. Buena Vista president Henry Olson needed a capable professor to teach German and French, and also Greek, when a course was added for seminary-bound students.

Olson and Hirsch had at least one thing in common: both had fought hard to save struggling institutions. Olson had steered Buena Vista College through the lean depression years. Hirsch had fought valiantly to save his Jewish school, the Philanthropin in Frankfurt, from the ravages of Nazi persecution.

Buena Vista was a Presbyterian church-related college that had struggled for survival since its founding in 1891. President Olson, arriving in 1931, inherited a nearly bankrupt institution and moved it into solvency.

Immigrant Albert Hirsch (above) taught foreign languages at Storm Lake's Buena Vista College (left) for three decades.



Immigration to Iowa is a tradition far older than the state itself, and the stories are legion of those who left behind their home to make a new life in Iowa. Here is one of those stories.

Albert Hirsch



From Frankfurt to Storm Lake

by William H. Cumberland

It was September 1946 when Albert F. Hirsch and his wife, Lilly, natives of Frankfurt, Germany, first walked across the Buena Vista College campus in Storm Lake, Iowa. The Hirsches were recent arrivals in the United States from England, where they had spent the previous seven years after their flight from Nazi persecution.

As the newest member of the Buena Vista faculty, the 58-year-old professor brought with him a sound German academic background, including a Ph.D. (1912) from the University of Munich. Buena Vista president Henry Olson needed a capable professor to teach German and French, and also Greek, when a course was added for seminary-bound students.

Olson and Hirsch had at least one thing in common: both had fought hard to save struggling institutions. Olson had steered Buena Vista College through the lean depression years. Hirsch had fought valiantly to save his Jewish school, the Philanthropin in Frankfurt, from the ravages of Nazi persecution.

Buena Vista was a Presbyterian church-related college that had struggled for survival since its founding in 1891. President Olson, arriving in 1931, inherited a nearly bankrupt institution and moved it into solvency.

Immigrant Albert Hirsch (above) taught foreign languages at Storm Lake's Buena Vista College (left) for three decades.

COURTESY BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY

The Buena Vista campus in 1946 consisted of an aging central building known as Old Main, constructed in 1891; a gymnasium built just after World War I and christened Victory Hall; and Science Hall, completed in 1926. An additional building, made of army surplus material, housed the library volumes. The 500 students resided in off-campus housing or commuted. The small campus was situated close to billowing Storm Lake, which invited both fishing and boating. In 1946 the college benefited from a large influx of World War II veterans eager to obtain an education via the GI Bill. Accreditation by the North Central Association, which had been postponed during the depression, was now a must. For the college, a seasoned European scholar like Albert Hirsch was a real find.

Hirsch had spent most of his life in Frankfurt. He served in the German army during World War I and then became a teacher. He was popular with his students and, though short of stature, he kept his English language class in good order. (In turn, his students, who

had learned the British word for policeman, affectionately nicknamed their teacher "Bobby.") During the 1920s he authored two widely used German language texts. In May 1925 he married another Frankfurt native, Lilly Hock, the daughter of a Frankfurt bank official. Lilly was a dynamic, intelligent woman of considerable courage, who was not afraid to make her opinions known. Her educational interests were statistics and mathematics and she was an experienced bookbinder. The couple had two children, Rudolph and Hanna. The Hirsches, like the majority of German Jews, were assimilated into German culture and national life. They thought of themselves as Germans and had not the slightest thought of emigrating to another country.

Indeed, Germany in the middle and later 1920s was a place of cautious optimism. It had been admitted into the League of Nations, the reparations debt had become more manageable, rampant inflation was under control, and a high level of German culture was again flourishing. Right-wing extremism, including Adolf Hitler's German National Socialist Workers Party, appeared to be waning.

Then came the worldwide economic debacle of 1929. The numbers of unemployed grew each year, the parties of extreme left and right increased dramatically, and violence rose out of economic misery. As confusion and intrigue reigned, Hitler muscled his way into power as chancellor of Germany in January 1933. The democratic era of the Weimar Republic had suffered an ignoble death.

Hitler's grip on power increased during the early months of 1933 and he soon declared open war on those elements in German society—communists, socialists, Jews, gypsies, homosexuals—whom he despised. There were boycotts against Jewish stores and increased beatings of Jews and others on the Nazi enemies list. Jewish teachers were forced out of schools and universities, Jewish doctors eliminated from the program of medical insurance, Jewish shops and homes vandalized, and German citizens of Jewish heritage ruthlessly pressured to emigrate. In the spring of 1933 Albert Hirsch found himself unemployed, his lifetime academic tenure terminated after 13 years at the Woehlerschule and the family forced to move in with Lilly's parents. He wrote an old friend that he was trying to utilize his time "profitably and guard against bitterness." The next year, Hirsch, like several other former city teachers, secured a position at the Philanthropin, first as a teacher and three years later as headmaster.

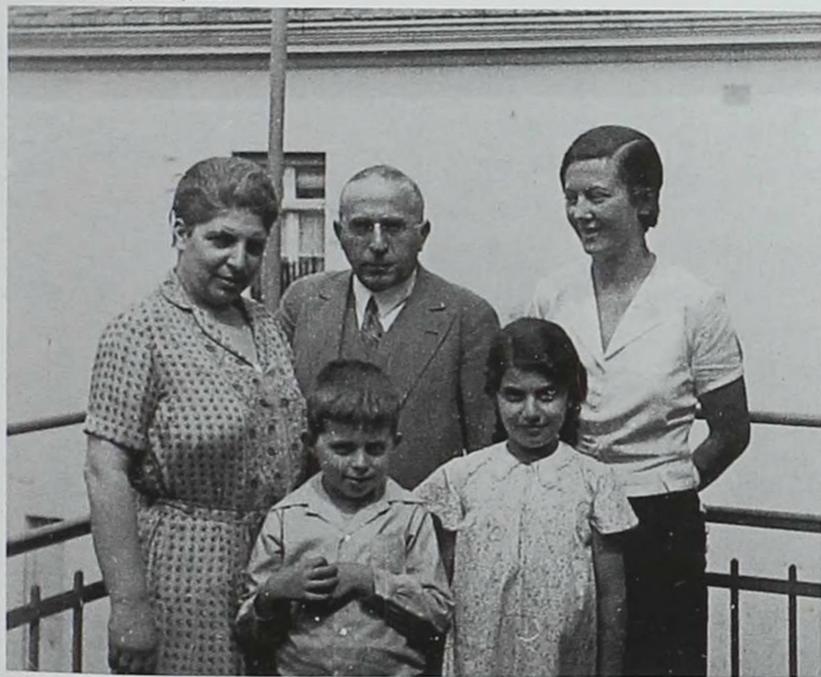
Founded in 1804, the Philanthropin had become one

COURTESY HANNA [HIRSCH] BLOCK



Albert Hirsch's father stands in the doorway of the family's butcher shop and home in Frankfurt, 1912.

COURTESY HANNA (HIRSCH) BLOCK



Albert and Lilly Hirsch stand with young Rudi and Hanna and their nurse (right) in Germany in the mid-1930s, when Hitler's oppression of the Jews was well under way. Below, an item from the *Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune*, one week after *Kristallnacht*.

of the most prestigious schools in Germany. During the 1930s its numbers grew substantially; Jewish students forced out of traditional German schools by the Nazis found their way into the Philanthropin, and enrollment reached a record 1,400. Hirsch, aware that many of these young people would be leaving Germany, wisely increased opportunities for foreign-language instruction in French, Spanish, Hebrew, and especially English.

In the fall of 1938, among other acts of oppression, the Nazis rounded up some 17,000 Polish Jews residing in Germany and deported them to a border area between Germany and Poland (Poland would not admit them). Betty Rand-Schleifer, who taught at the Philanthropin, was married to a Jew from Poland. Late on October 28, 1938, she was instructing a class of girls on the historical fate of the Jewish people. As dusk fell, the students listened to the somber lesson. Suddenly, Hirsch walked into the room and took Rand-Schleifer quietly aside. "I just now learned by telephone that several of our pupils who are Polish citizens have been arrested by the Gestapo," he told her. "I know that you have acquired Polish citizenship since your marriage. I would like to ask you to return home immediately in order to await together with your husband further developments in the situation." Rand-Schleifer gathered her books and left the school.

Two weeks later, on the night

of November 9/10, Nazi thugs unleashed unprecedented destruction against Jewish persons and property in Germany and Austria. Although most Germans did not participate in the violence and destruction of *Kristallnacht*, "the night of the broken glass," few overtly aided the victims. Almost 100 people were killed, 267 synagogues destroyed, and 7,000 Jewish businesses and homes vandalized (Jews would be fined one billion marks—\$400 million—for damage to their own property). Nearly 26,000 Jewish men were arrested throughout Germany and sent to concentration camps.

Hirsch knew his students, faculty, and probably the Philanthropin itself were in danger. The morning of the 10th, he told veteran teacher Tilly Epstein, "The Synagogues are burning in the East end. I will send the children home." Realizing he would soon be arrested and sent to a concentration camp, he quickly instructed Epstein how to carry on in his absence. The following morning he telephoned her, "It is upon us." Several hours later the Gestapo came for Hirsch. His wife's desperate pleas were ignored. Twenty-seven male teachers were arrested.

Hirsch and the others were sent to Buchenwald. Established in 1937, the concentration camp lay on the outskirts of Weimar, the city of Goethe, in one of the most beautiful areas in Germany. Several hundred inmates died at Buchenwald within the year, from harsh treatment, murder, insanity, and suicide. Hirsch, fortunately, was released within a month. Suffering from a broken ankle, he had spent much of that time in the Buchenwald infirmary—probably a stroke of good fortune, even though the ankle had to be reset in Frankfurt after his release in early December.

Kristallnacht was a decisive moment for Hirsch. "Until then," he later recalled, he thought he could "remain in the narrow vicinity of the Jewish school and area in Germany." The November pogrom "destroyed conclusively the hope for further existence of Jews in Germany."

The Hirsches already had affidavits to get them to

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1938.

DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE

It's just about impossible for Americans to visualize the terror, pillaging and rioting that the Nazis are inflicting upon the Jews and Catholics in Germany and Austria.

England and then to the United States, their preferred destination and where they had relatives. Their children were already in England through *Kindertransport*, the informal relief network that brought 10,000 Jewish and other refugee children from Germany. Albert and Lilly Hirsch departed for England in August 1939 on the last plane to leave Berlin for London before the outbreak of war. They left with only a few belongings and five dollars. Like other Jewish emigrants, they had been fleeced by the Nazis.

"This week the Director left," teacher Fannie Baer wrote a friend. "I regretted it terribly because he was very friendly to me in the last difficult month and took leave of me very warmly." She lamented, "Many, many are gone."

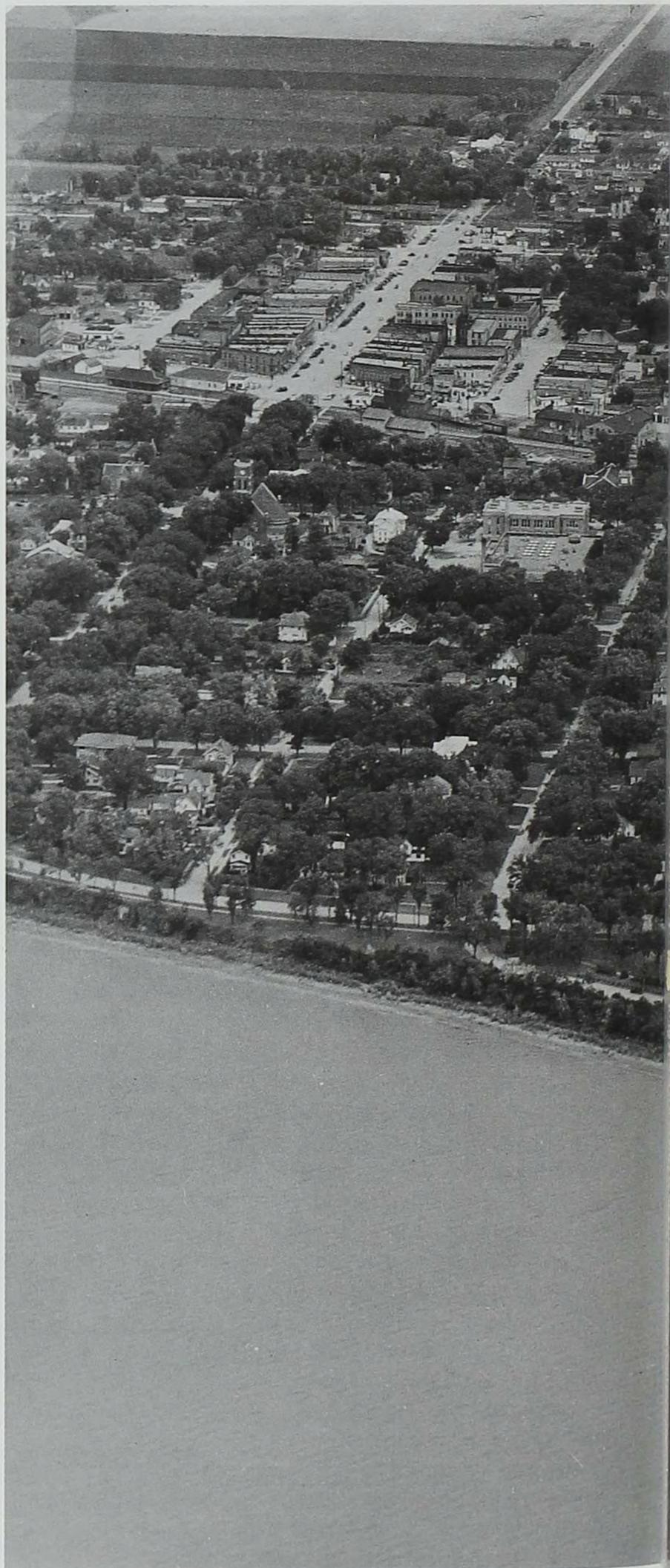
Philanthropin, much reduced in students and staff, continued for a time, but its demise was certain. The upper-level grades were ordered suspended in April 1941, and no Jewish child was permitted instruction after June 1942. The school's proud 138-year existence was at an end. Many faculty and administration found refuge in the United States, Palestine, England, Australia, South America, and South Africa. But not teacher Fannie Baer. She and two dozen others died in concentration camps.

As the Hirches weathered the fierce Nazi bombing of Britain, Albert gained insight into the British character and ability "to do to others something good and remain yourself in the background." He and Lilly soon left London for Birmingham, to manage a refugee boys school. Then, from 1943 to 1945, Hirsch taught at King Edward's School, "one of the great old schools."

Hirsch's first day in New York—July 3, 1946—was "hot and noisy." But he and Lilly were soon on their way to Storm Lake in northwestern Iowa and their new life at Buena Vista College. The pay was barely sufficient, but the community of 8,000 was clean and safe. The streets were wide, Dutch elms formed a shady canopy over the sidewalks, a large and inviting park stretched out along the lake. One could walk at night in total safety. People did not lock their doors. "This America is again quite different from what you imagine from films or books," he wrote.

"The houses lie between groups of trees and lawns. Near our house is a large lake where almost everyone goes fishing." The people, he discovered, were of Ger-

Storm Lake, Iowa, in 1941. Albert and Lilly Hirsch arrived five years later. The community, as well as the Buena Vista campus, became their new home after World War II.



SHSI (DES MOINES): DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE



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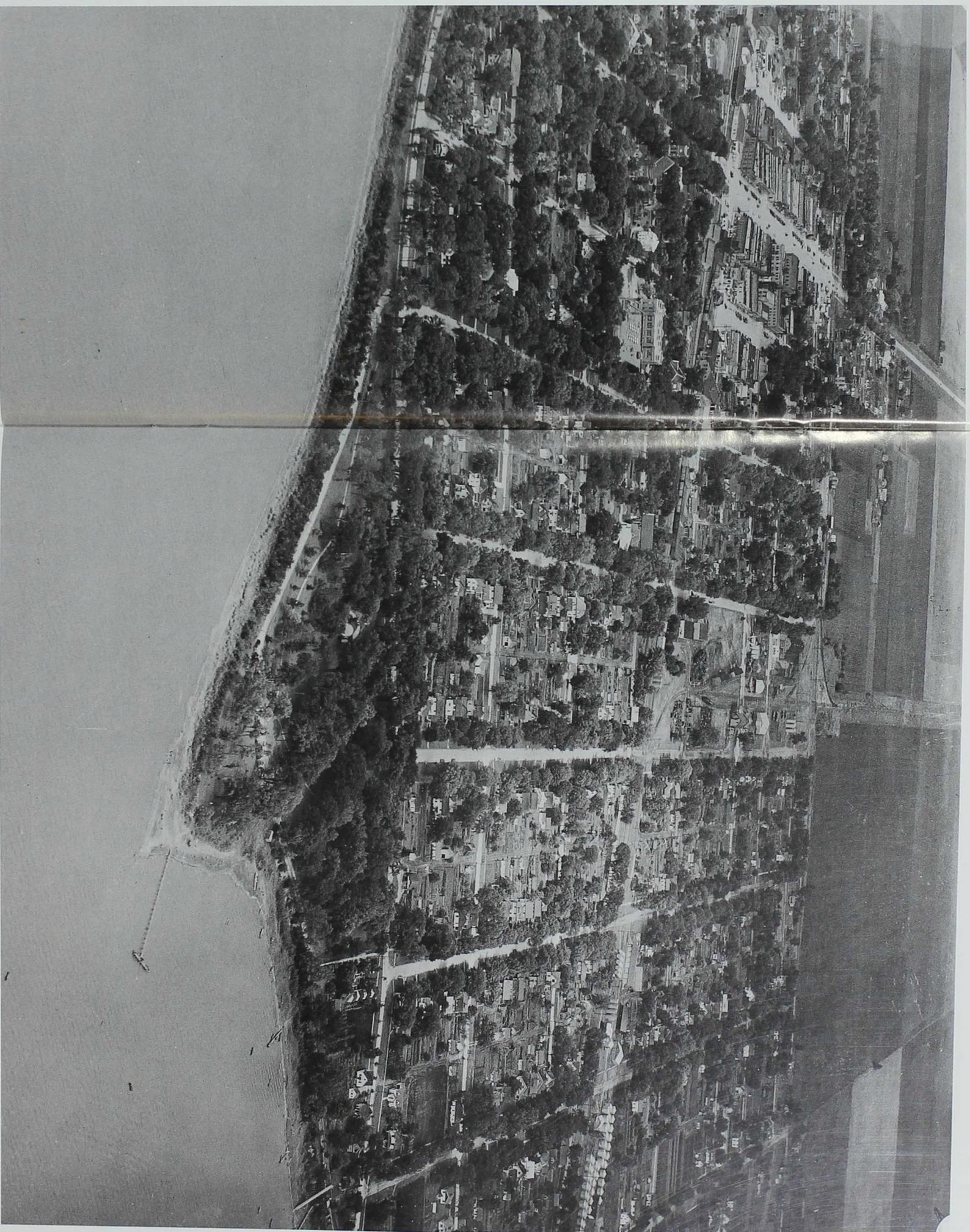
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SHS (DES MONIES); DES MONIES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE

COURTESY BUENA VISTA UNIVERSITY



A Buena Vista faculty gathering in the 1950s. Albert Hirsch stands in the front center, Lilly Hirsch is on the far right.

man, Swedish, Norwegian, and Danish ancestry. He marveled that among the variety of denominations, some churches still presented sermons in Swedish or German, and he hoped he might do more with German literature in his new position. Buena Vista's faculty at that time comprised approximately 35 men and women who were primarily devoted to teaching rather than research. They were all Protestants except for Hirsch.

He found that interest in Germany was "very strong" among the older generation, whose grandparents had left Europe, and they were absolute, he noted, in their rejection of any "Nazi inclinations." As he looked at the problems in postwar Europe, he mused "that the Gestapo threw us out at the right time and saved us the misery of today's Germany." In Storm Lake, he and Lilly had a happy family life in spite of all the horrors that went before. Still, he admitted, "the heart has gotten a little crack."

Sometimes, the American version of democracy perplexed the Hirsches. When Lilly spotted Buena Vista president Jack Fisher shoveling the snow from his own sidewalk, she shook her head and remarked, "Only in America." She knew that Fisher's counterparts in Europe would do no such thing.

Waiting for citizenship, she and Albert watched with pleasure from the sidelines when in November 1948 President Truman defied the polls and won the election. Hirsch informed a friend in Europe that "the American voter did not let himself be led astray through newspapers, radio, advertising, but coolly and independently voted for whom he liked best—a piece of living democracy became visible here." When the Hirsches obtained citizenship in the early 1950s, the college held a special patriotic program in their honor.

Hirsch observed that Americans were not indifferent to the misery in postwar Europe and wanted to help. He marveled at what he interpreted as a "lack of enemy feeling." As he told local Rotarians in 1946, "Personally, I am glad that I have reached this part of America, a small city in the Middle West, where I can see the real heart of America in close perspective."

There was an open spirit at Buena Vista and no one interfered with the contents of a professor's presentation. The teaching load, however, was excessive. Although Buena Vista's austere academic program and scarcity of foreign-language professors mandated that Hirsch concentrate on elementary and intermediate courses in German and French, his contributions exceeded that, and he became a respected and popular faculty member. He occasionally lectured on Brecht,

Goethe, and Hesse. He joined Storm Lake's Great Books Club, contributed to the new county hospital, and spoke at area junior high and high schools. He chaired the Division of Language and Literature from his arrival in 1946 to his semi-retirement in 1964. When the school achieved North Central Association accreditation in 1952, his value as a European-trained scholar was noted.

Sometimes he missed the rigor of the European academic world. After the war many U.S. colleges instituted letter exchanges between their students and German students. They were, Hirsch mused, in different worlds. The American students, less interested in world views or somber intellectual content and class work, wrote about baseball, football, basketball, dances, parties, cars, and "lastly, perhaps, something about their lectures."

Buena Vista student George Christakes recalled Hirsch warmly: "He was an early morning person, so he taught German at 7:30 A.M. For two years I struggled to stay awake, and only the fact that this remarkable personality was at the front of the room enabled me to present a semblance of life in his classroom. His was not simply a course in the German language, but one in which he shared with us his profound insights into the culture of that country and people. His knowledge of opera was also interspersed into the course. I'll always remember his commentaries concerning opera when he and his wife invited me into their home to listen to the Metropolitan Opera broadcasts with them." Christakes could not forget the "twinkle in Hirsch's eyes as he encouraged students in their struggle to pronounce German," or how he asked students to "make gargling sounds before we would pronounce Bach."

Buena Vista alumnus Glenn Theulen recognized that Hirsch "brought dignity and honor to our little college." A sophomore in 1948, Theulen later remembered how even grizzled World War II veterans in their thirties were not exempt from wearing the traditional freshman beanies through homecoming. Anyone who refused fell victim to a gauntlet of paddles and a ducking in Storm Lake. One young man, however, decided to defy the beanie rule on the grounds that he was the son of the college vice-president and therefore not subject to such an indignity. His mother even tried to intervene

on his behalf. The students, however, roared their disapproval, chanting, "Off to the lake."

Suddenly, Theulen heard a German accent join the chant. "Ja, to the lake, ja, to the lake." Theulen looked around. "Right next to me stood Dr. Hirsch, dressed in his impeccable style, homburg and all with an umbrella, upholding tradition and loyalty."

SHSI (DES MOINES): DES MOINES REGISTER AND TRIBUNE



Siblings Betty and Gordon McKinstrey clown for the camera in 1948. She was Buena Vista's homecoming queen; he, the quarterback. Hirsch was struck by the sometimes carefree attitudes of American students.

One of the most notable qualities of Albert and Lilly Hirsch was their lack of hatred (as distinguished perhaps from anger) towards the fatherland that had cast them out. Even though they had lost 30 family members in the Holocaust, they had no deep-rooted antagonism and no desire for vengeance. They wanted to see Germany reconstructed along democratic lines and restored to the community of nations. Democracy, Hirsch realized, "cannot be exported. It is a form of life which is in constant development." He was apprehensive lest Germans confuse democracy with the multiple political parties as they existed between 1919 and 1932. In the late 1940s, as the Cold War emerged,

he knew that there would be difficulties. "Germany is on the auction block," he told the Storm Lake Kiwanis Club in March 1950. Germans were neither democrats nor communists, "just Germans who wanted to be united." He did not think that they wanted to see American forces removed. In those days before the economic miracle had wrought its transformation, Hirsch, like others, believed it might take half a century to clear the rubble.

It was 23 years before the Hirsches returned to Germany. The opportunity came when a German commission invited Hirsch to help document the history of the Frankfurt Jews and to coauthor a history of the Philanthropin. The school had been reconstructed into a community center for scientific and arts events by what remained of the Jewish community in Frankfurt. Reunited with old friends, Hirsch was paid special tribute. Happy to again hear real "Frankfurtish," he mar-

COURTESY HANNA [HIRSCH] BLOCK



The Hirsches visited Germany in the early 1960s.

veled that "because of a little schoolmaster from America so much fuss is being made."

In Iowa, Hirsch was affectionately dubbed "Rabbi" by the tiny Storm Lake Jewish community and was its leader on special holidays. Since Storm Lake had no synagogue, the Hirsches attended services at the Mt. Sinai reformed synagogue in Sioux City, 60 miles west. As a friend recalled, Albert was more intent on attending services in Sioux City than Lilly, "who went along mostly for the ride."

When Hirsch retired from teaching in June 1966, he was honored with special awards. A humanities collection in the library was named in his honor, and scholarships were named after both him and Lilly. The

Hirsches' home in Storm Lake had long been the scene of gatherings of colleagues, students, and friends, and it remained a center of intellectual and social activity until their deaths in 1975.

Albert Hirsch never permitted personal suffering to infect him with hatred or bitterness. Still, there were times when a certain melancholy showed through his congenial nature. When a young professor once asked about his views on immortality, he shook his head and replied, "Once is enough."

Hirsch rarely spoke of his ordeal in Nazi Germany. Once when a student in his German class asked about those years, he started to explain but was overcome with emotion. But even though, as he once said, "the heart has gotten a little crack," he found nothing hopeless and moved confidently forward. The twinkle in his eye could not be diminished by adversity. He epitomized the humanity in our essence, which, for Hirsch, had been cultivated through long exposure and dedication to the liberal arts.

The memory of Hirsch was deeply etched in all those who knew him, whether in Germany or the United States. At his 80th birthday celebration in 1968, he was presented with a card that had come from afar: "Those of us who had the privilege of attending the ivory-clad Philanthropin and soaking up the teachings of 'Bobby' can never refer to ourselves as self-made." He gave his best to Buena Vista College, and the college became better because of his efforts. He not only personified Buena Vista's motto, "Education for Service," but he remained eternally true to the spirit of the Philanthropin, "Enlightenment for Humanity." ❖

William H. Cumberland is author of History of Buena Vista College and professor emeritus of history at Buena Vista University, where he taught from 1958 to 1991 and chaired the School of Social Science. He now lives in Cedar Rapids.

NOTE ON SOURCES

The author drew upon conversations and correspondence with Hanna [Hirsch] Block, Carl Adkins, George Christakes, Betty Silverberg, and Glenn Theulen for this profile, as well as upon his own research for his book, *History of Buena Vista College* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1st ed., 1966; 2nd ed., 1991). Materials compiled by Albert and Lilly Hirsch, and back issues of the *Storm Lake Pilot-Tribune* were also useful. Secondary sources include Dietrich Andernacht and Albert Hirsch, comp., *Das Philanthropin zu Frankfurt am Main, Dokumente und Erinnerung* (Frankfurt: W. Kramer, 1964); Kommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, *Dokumente zur Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden, 1933-1945* (Frankfurt, 1963); Paul Arnsberg, *Die Geschichte der Frankfurter Juden seit der Franzoesischen Revolution* (Darmstadt, 1983); Victor Klemperer, *I Will Bear Witness*, vol. 1 (NY: Random House, 1998); and Eugene Mayer, *The Jews of Frankfurt: Glimpses of the Past* (Frankfurt: W. Kramer, 1990). Manuscript annotations are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City center).

Traditions

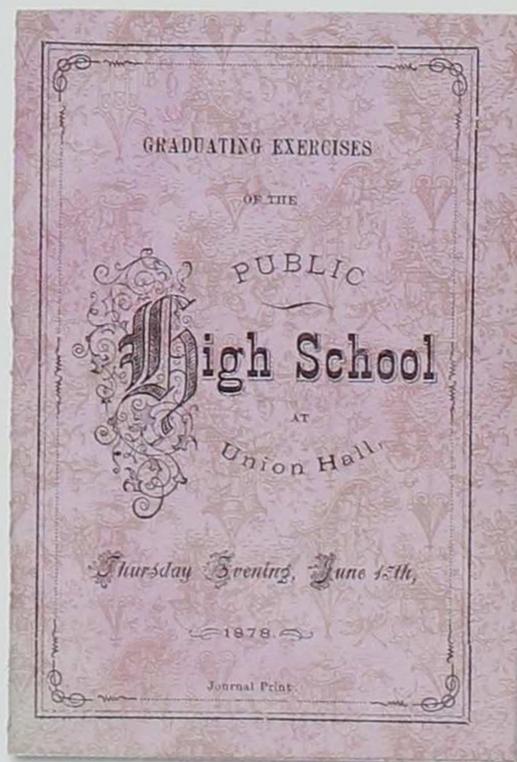


ALL ITEMS: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

Graduation

Above, in silent anticipation, the stage is set for graduation in 1910 in Silver City, Iowa. Five chairs await graduates, and dozens more on the floor await proud guests. Graduation has long been a traditional rite of passage for Iowans, and will surely continue to be for a very long time, for Iowa is a state that places great value on education, and graduation is celebrated as a major step into adulthood.

How we celebrate and commemorate graduation, of course, changes slightly with each graduating class, as new traditions take hold and old ones are discarded. What hasn't changed, however, is the importance of formal acknowledgement of the event, through photographs, announcements, and programs (the one on the left is from Alden, Iowa; on the right, unknown). Here on the following pages, for your pleasure, are a few such items from the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. — *The Editor*





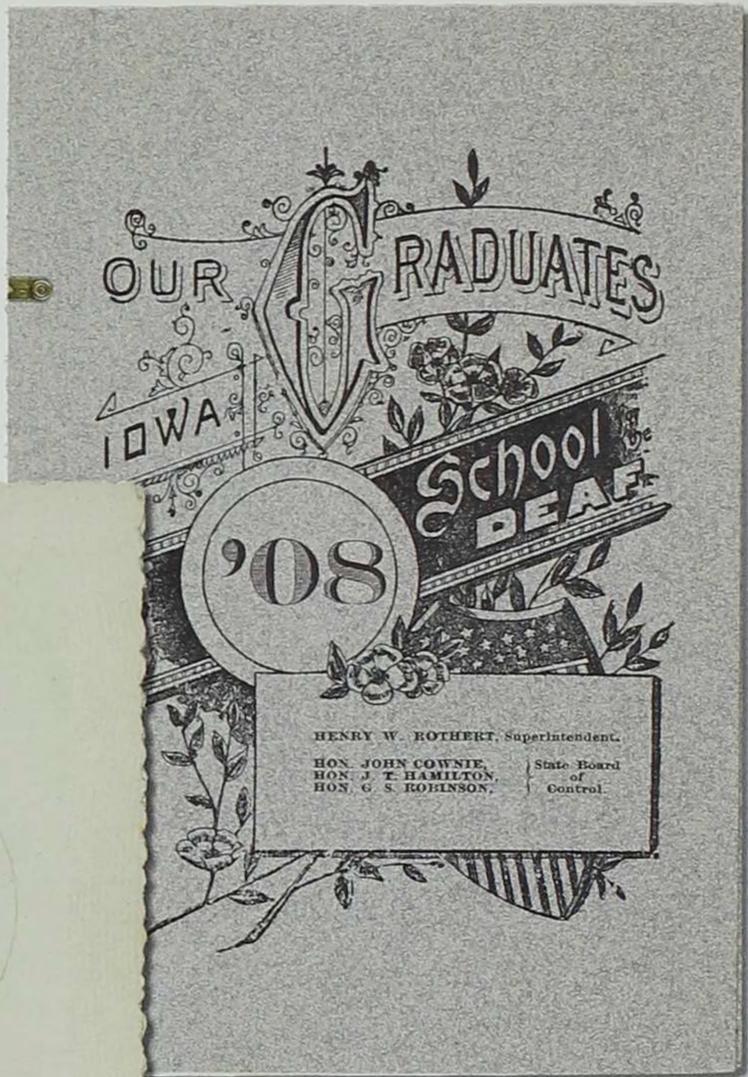
RURAL SCHOOL GRADUATION
JACKSON CO. IOWA, 1911
CUNDILL, P.



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12
OTO

RURAL SCHOOL GRADUATES
JACKSON CO. IOWA 1912
CUNDILL PHOTO





ALL ITEMS: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

Below: The high school graduating class of Washington, Iowa, in 1890.



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Iowa Heritage Illustrated

compiled by Karen Heinselman

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Iowa Heritage Illustrated

One in a Million



During World War II, the United States Armed Forces launched a nationwide program in American schools to build models of warplanes, in order to teach airplane identification. One Iowa town where youth took off with this model airplane project was Charles City, Iowa.

Junior and senior high school boys in Charles City completed 200 model airplanes—70 more than their assigned quota. Three of their models, shown above, are in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Overseen by industrial arts teacher Lloyd H. Seaver, Charles City boys (particularly the junior high students) devoted numerous

hours both during and after class to work on the planes.

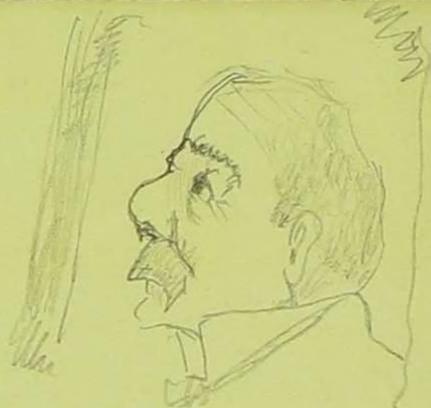
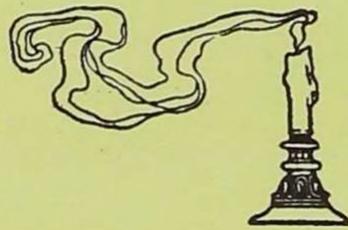
Before diving into the tedious and time-consuming carpentry project, boys first studied the airplanes using blueprints provided by the government. The project required that students learn the shape and form of 80 different planes. The boys used templates to ensure the utmost accuracy in size and shape. Planes were then fashioned out of soft pine on a scale of one inch to six feet. They painted the models a dull black to give the illusion of a silhouette. On average, it took a boy ten hours to complete one airplane.

Models were then shipped to air depots and distributed to

training centers. In return for their labor, students received certificates of thanks from the Armed Forces and were awarded "naval ranks" (such as "Captain Air Craftsman") for the quantity of planes produced, as well as for the finesse and accuracy of their models.

Seaver, credited with the success of his students' project, later enlisted in the navy. He became an ordnance officer, held active duty on a destroyer, and took part in the successful landing on the island of Saipan.

—Karen Heinselman
Editorial Intern



Program

GRADUATING EXERCISES

Minburn High School
M. E. Church

Thursday, May 17, 1923, 8:15 P. M.



- CLASS MARCHHIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA
- INVOCATIONA. B. ADAMS
- HONEY TOWN (Lullaby).....HIGH SCHOOL BOYS' GLEE CLUB
- ADDRESSRAYMOND A. PEARSON, L. L. D.
President Iowa State College
- A NIGHT IN MAY.....HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' GLEE CLUB
- PRESENTATION OF DIPLOMAS...R. L. GRIBBEN
President Board of Education
- A NIGHT IN JUNE.....HIGH SCHOOL ORCHESTRA
- BENEDICTIONREV. C. K. HOLSAPPLE

Apparently there was a doodler at the 1923 high school graduation ceremonies in Minburn, Iowa (population, under 300). At least this small yellow program would lead us to believe that. On the back are more pencil doodles of a man's profile, as well as scribbled notes including these words: "Idea of success — Rich, well fed etc in city. Some of you may find selves in small towns. Don't let that make you think yself failure. Ideal is Service, Service to mankind Use to the world — Ideals — happiness in life."

Rural and small-town Iowa had been experiencing an exodus since the turn of the century. In Iowa as in other states, rural discontent centered on social isolation, poor roads, inferior schools, and lack of electricity and other modern conveniences. By the 1920s, economic woes were added to the list. To counter this rural-to-urban population shift throughout the nation, social-change advocates argued for improving country life and bringing it up to par with city life. Perhaps one of the speakers at the Minburn graduation was voicing this very point.