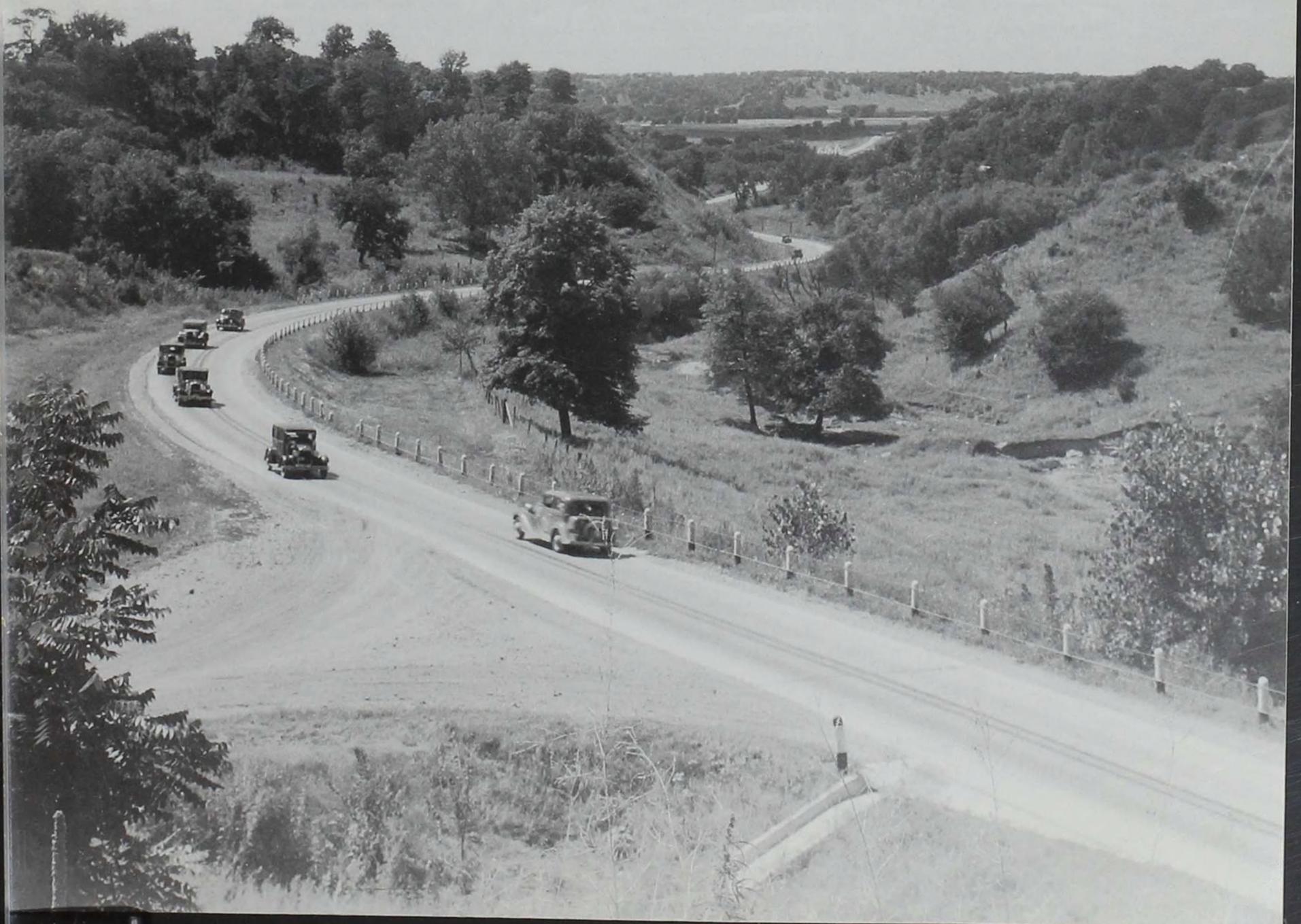


Early Marshall County • The Lincoln Highway • Stereographs • Victorian Pleasures & Parlors

Fall 2005 • \$9

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

I still remember a sight that broke my heart. My mom and I were driving into Davenport from our farm. I noticed an old farm couple out in their field tediously rolling up the wire fence that had bordered the ditch. Bulldozers would soon be arriving to carve another highway through the countryside. These new "interstates" disgruntled some in our rural neighborhood. Building interstates took not only precious farm land for four lanes and a median, but sizable swaths of land on each side.

All this came back to me while editing this issue's Lincoln Highway stories. The Lincoln, after it was paved, was the precursor of today's highways—smooth, reliable ribbons of cement meant to fulfill the promise of the American automobile and the wanderlust of the American traveler.

I suppose if I had experienced Iowa gumbo in previous decades I might have understood the wonder of a newly paved road. Decades ago, country roads were subject to the weather: frozen ruts in the winter, quagmires in the spring, dust in the summer, and then pure muck again during the fall rains. Iowa's mud roads were legendary. Notorious would be a better word.

But I was born after all that. By mid-century farm-to-market gravel roads were generally reliable year-round. But for farm families, a country road was not only a way to get to town or a neighbor's, but a long, narrow stage upon which an occasional "actor" strode. There was so little traffic on our road that the appearance of any vehicle was worthy of comment. For instance, once or twice in the summer one of us would yell, "Here comes the maintainer," as the county's monstrous yellow machine diligently graded the road, maintaining the crest, pushing gravel into pot holes.

The sound of a tractor chugging down the road caught our attention. Any car speeding past our farm stirred up a wake of dust that drifted and settled over the fields. We recognized our neighbors' tractors and cars easily: "There goes Arnold Heuer" or "That's Helmuth's John Deere." When cars we didn't recognize went by, we'd ask, "I wonder who that could be. They're sure in a hurry to get somewhere."

I knew our road intimately. I learned to ride my bike on gravel; my skinned knees proved that. I rode that silver bike three-quarters of a mile up to the schoolhouse corner to get the

mail, standing to pedal uphill, and flying back down, pony tail straight out like a rudder. As long as I stayed in the smooth strip worn down by car tires, I was safe. Veering into the loose gravel meant a spill, and more scraped knees. And elbows. And wounded pride.

From living on that road, I learned to visualize a mile, broken equally into four parts: A quarter-mile from the schoolhouse to the crick, another quarter up to the little house on the hill, a quarter down to our lane and the culvert, and the final quarter-mile up to the T-intersection by Schwarzs' farm.

There surely was a time when our road was impassable, but that was before I was born. One spring, however, a short patch just past the T-intersection did become impassable after too many days of rain. The schoolbus couldn't plow through it, so we neighbors kids had to catch the bus a mile away. My sister and I walked up the quarter-mile to Schwarzs', joined up with their five kids, and then our little troop headed off. When we came to the stretch of gooey clay, we edged around it carefully or tromped through the ditch.

That walk was glorious. Winter was over; I no longer had to wear corduroy jeans under my dress to keep my legs warm. Now I was in freshly ironed cotton skirts and seersucker blouses. The world was turning green, the meadowlarks were tuning up, and there was a lightness and sweetness to the air. Traipsing along that road instead of riding in a noisy schoolbus was a delight. I probably would have thought differently if the mud hadn't dried up after a week.

Who would have guessed that years later I would marry an urban army brat with wanderlust, who loves country roads, remembers every crossroads he's ever come to, and yearns to find a road in our part of the state that he has not yet driven.

Do I sometimes zip along Iowa's interstates and highways? You bet (especially when my husband's not with me). Do I take Iowa's great road system for granted? Probably so. Am I wallowing in nostalgia? Sure. But the articles in this issue on the Lincoln Highway may stir up your imagination and memories, too—back when roads were really part of the journey, whatever your destination.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

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Submissions, Queries, & Reprint Permission

Contact the editor (see address at top of column). Submission guidelines also appear at www.iowaHistory.org.

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY of IOWA

Iowa Heritage Illustrated (ISSN 1088-5943) is published quarterly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, a division of the Department of Cultural Affairs, State of Iowa. © 2005 State Historical Society of Iowa. The State Historical Society of Iowa and the editor are not responsible for contributors' statements of opinion. Printed with soy-based ink on recycled paper.

Our two locations for collections and programs are in Des Moines (515-281-8741) and Iowa City (319-335-3916), with historic sites throughout Iowa.

Periodical postage paid at Iowa City, IA. Postmaster: Send address changes to State Historical Society of Iowa, 402 Iowa Ave., Iowa City, IA 52240-1806.

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED

Formerly The Palimpsest

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On the Cover

Cars travel along a picturesque turn on the Lincoln Highway just outside of Boone, Iowa, the county seat of Boone County. The town of Ogden lies beyond the Des Moines River and its hills, seven miles in the distance. B. Lloyd Singley photographed this view on his cross-country trip in 1935. This issue includes examples of how Singley saw Iowa—as well as more on the Lincoln Highway, Victorian parlors, and early Marshalltown.

PHOTO: KEYSTONE-MAST COLLECTION, UCR/CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE

Marshalltown's Henry Anson Town Builder & Land Speculator

by Michael W. Vogt

When 25-year-old Henry Anson rode across the central Iowa prairie in the spring of 1851 and chose the future town site of Marshalltown, he claimed to have "found the prettiest place in the world." Undoubtedly, Anson saw not only a picturesque scene of nature's beauty but also the potential to profit from the resale of the land under his gaze.

Purchasing land and speculating that the price would rise was a common activity repeatedly played out as settlers trekked westward. Land speculation in Iowa, for example, exceeded that of any other state. Both the federal government and private entrepreneurs published literature advertising the natural and economic advantages of western settlement. For 19th-century speculators, the only requirement was enough money to purchase land from the government.

Historian Ray Allen Billington identifies two types of frontier speculator, the "small propertied farmers who acquired excess holdings in the hopes of resale, and the professional land jobber who absorbed . . . spots suitable for development as towns." Henry Anson's activities in Marshall County, like those of many other settlers on the frontier, do not fit conveniently into either category. Instead, he represents a successful hybrid of farmer and businessman. Furthermore, his diversified and adeptly timed investments and business activities filled the needs of the growing community of Marshalltown while increasing his own income and social status.



Henry Anson, as portrayed in an 1867 history of Marshall County.

The story of Henry Anson as speculator and entrepreneur is not another stereotypical, romanticized account of a settler building a cabin and overcoming the burdens of frontier life. Rather it personifies the story of land speculation on the Iowa frontier in the 1850s and provides what historian Susan Gray calls "the specificity of time and place."

The county of Marshall was established in early January 1846—the year Iowa became a state—and was organized in 1849. According to a biography (circa 1890), "Anson had his eye on Marshall County from his start westward [because] it being

near the center of the State possibly some point in the county might be selected" as the new capital as the population expanded into central Iowa. From the time of Anson's arrival in Marshall County in 1851, he focused on establishing title to land, eliminating rival claimants, and developing the town site of Marshall (which was renamed "Marshalltown" in 1862, to end confusion with a Henry County town also named Marshall).

Anson immediately paid a squatter occupying a cabin to the south of the planned town site \$50 to vacate the area. Having seen the squatter off, Anson built the required "preemption cabin" in May 1851. (The cabin was built on the south side of what would become Main Street.) He then traveled to Dubuque to file the claim for 160 acres under the provisions of the 1841

Preemption Act, and headed back to his wife, Jennette, and two young sons in Illinois. Returning to the site in the spring of 1852, Anson bought 320 more acres north of his own claim; he paid \$400 to William Ralls for the land, on behalf of his brother-in-law John A. Kelly. In the summer of 1852, members of Anson's family and several in-laws arrived to settle the new community, including his mother and two sisters. His third son was born that year, Adrian Anson (who would later achieve baseball fame as "Cap" Anson).

The next summer the town was laid out. Stones marked street corners; wooden stakes marked off 60x180 foot lots (twelve per block). A Mr. Ridsen from Iowa City surveyed the town site and filed the plat in August with Marshall County Justice of the Peace Joseph M. Ferguson. The town was now officially on the Iowa map.

Anson eventually acquired hundreds of acres at the minimum price of \$1.25 per acre, buying land outright and through the purchase of military land warrants. His timing was impeccable and his choice of location beneficial. According to historian Robert Swierenga's studies of land speculation, the "per dollar earnings on frontier land investments in central Iowa in the mid-nineteenth century were superior to many other contemporary investment outlets." The proximity of the Iowa River just north of the town site encouraged settlement in Marshall Township and the two adjacent townships, through which the river coursed. Within the first four to seven years of settlement, 90 percent of the original entry acreage in these townships had been claimed, and by 1856, settlers had "improved" nearly two square miles in the county—accomplished by tediously breaking the tough prairie sod with single-share plows pulled by teams of oxen and horses.

County records document rising land prices during the town's first decade. In 1851 Anson originally paid \$1.25 an acre—about 31 cents for a quarter-acre, the size of a city lot. In 1854 one of these lots sold for \$50, resold two years later for \$100, and sold again the following year for \$125. In 1857 a corner lot at the intersection of Main Street and First Avenue sold for \$200. By 1862 the best business lots in town sold for \$1,000. Anson frequently sold land between February 1852 and March 1856. By 1860 he owned \$10,000 worth of real estate.

As historian Billington has written, "Speculators were everywhere along the fringes of settlement." The same was true in Marshall County. Even at the peak of Anson's speculative ventures, when he owned nearly 1,570 acres of Marshall County (about two and a half square miles), two others out-ranked him as original entrant landowners—Thomas Abell with some 3,700

acres and Delos Arnold with 3,200 acres. All government land in Iowa was purchased by 1865, bringing to an end large-scale speculation in the state.

Wisely, Anson diversified. While maintaining a town address, he owned and supervised a 1,000-acre farm south of Marshall, at a time when most farms were closer to 160 acres. Anson's farm was valued at \$8,000, including \$500 worth of implements and \$1,000 worth of livestock (8 horses, 15 milch cows, 25 swine). Anson probably hired tenant help, given the farm's yields: 1,000 bushels of wheat, 3,000 bushels of corn, 1,000 bushels of oats, 500 bushels of potatoes, 250 bushels of barley, 1,000 pounds of butter, 25 tons of hay, 250 gallons of molasses, 25 pounds of honey, and \$300 worth of slaughtered livestock. Despite the success of this enterprise, Anson stopped farming before 1870, presumably to direct more time toward managing his real estate, the neglect of which had caused some of his town properties to appear on the delinquent property tax list in 1863.

In addition to his roles as speculator and farmer, Anson was a town booster from the start, investing in the business development of the new town of Marshall. In 1852, well aware of the need for local building material, Anson ordered sawmill machinery, including a 30-horsepower steam engine from Ohio. It was transported by rail to Cleveland, by boat to Chicago, by rail to Rock Island, and then overland to Marshall. The early construction of sawmills (the first burned in 1856) demonstrates Anson's talent for providing citizens with what historian Lewis Atherton has called "the immediately useful and the practical." By 1860 his second \$2,000 sawmill investment was producing 400,000 board feet of lumber per year valued at \$8,000. He had also expanded the operation to include a sash-and-door factory and cabinet shop, with \$6,000 worth of yearly output. Despite the success of these ventures he sold the businesses during the 1860s, probably to focus more on his land investments, valued at \$17,500. Nevertheless, his penchant for "the immediately useful and the practical" did not stop with millwork, nor did his investments. He founded a brick and tile company in 1880 and a coal company in 1892. As late as 1887 he still owned 110 acres of town property.

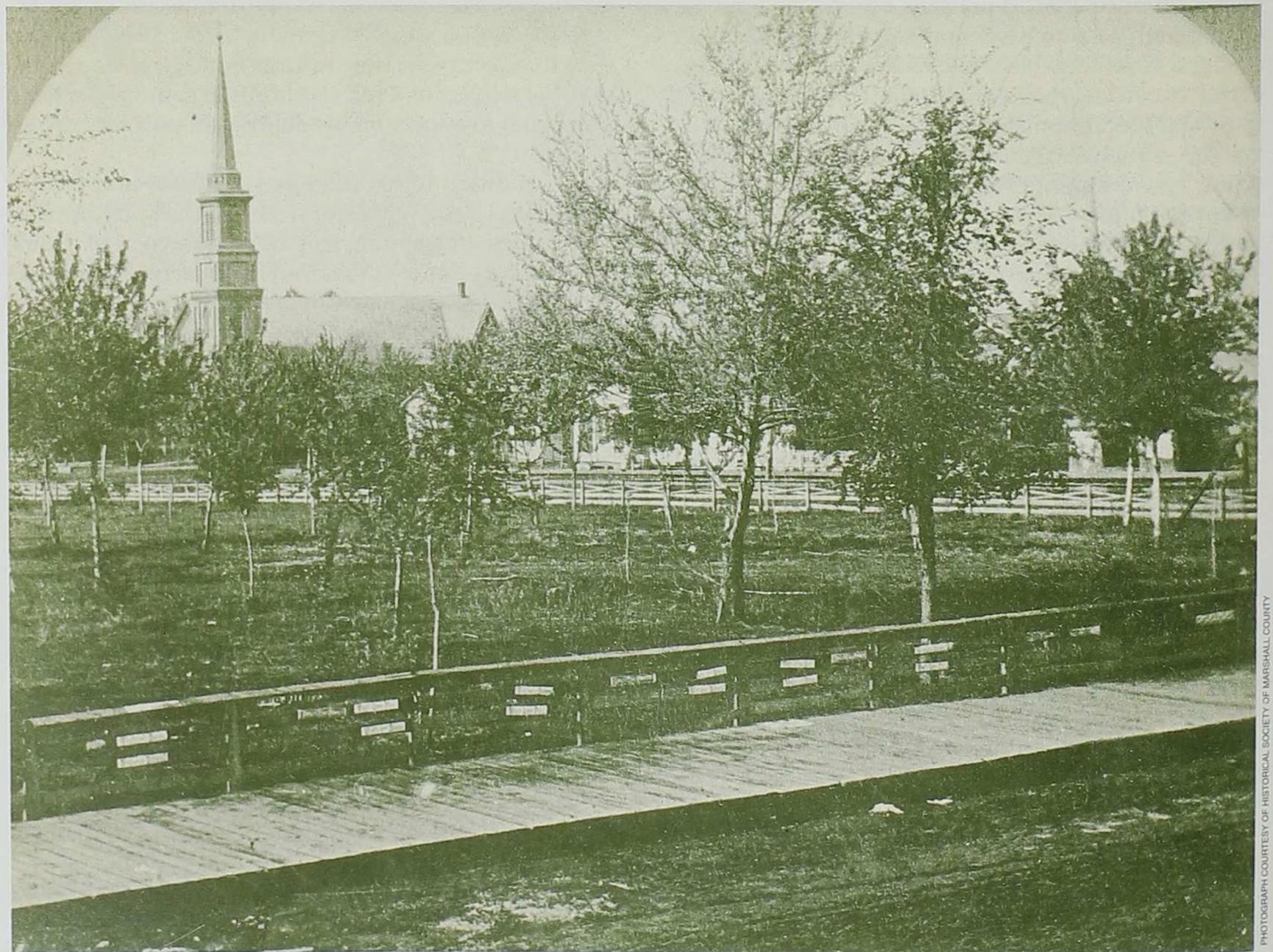
From the beginning, Anson's investments primarily hinged on the growth and success of Marshall as a community. Marietta, just six miles to the northeast, was its nearest rival for business and settlers—and for county-seat status.

In the fall of 1851, according to an Anson biographer, commissioners had arrived to name the county seat. County seat towns were ideal locations for early merchants and tradesmen; county residents traveling to the courthouse to pay taxes or register claims were likely customers for town businesses. Anson and another man spent a day talking to the commissioners, "exhausting their logic in favor of Marshall for the county seat." Although the commissioners had agreed to visit Marshall, they instead chose Marietta "and fled the county—doubtless to escape the tongue lashing they would have received from Mr. Anson for their duplicity."

Marshall citizens were not about to give up on the county-seat battle. Thus was set into motion a seven-year squabble, barely avoiding gunfire. Anson was a major player; his "force of language," a biographer later

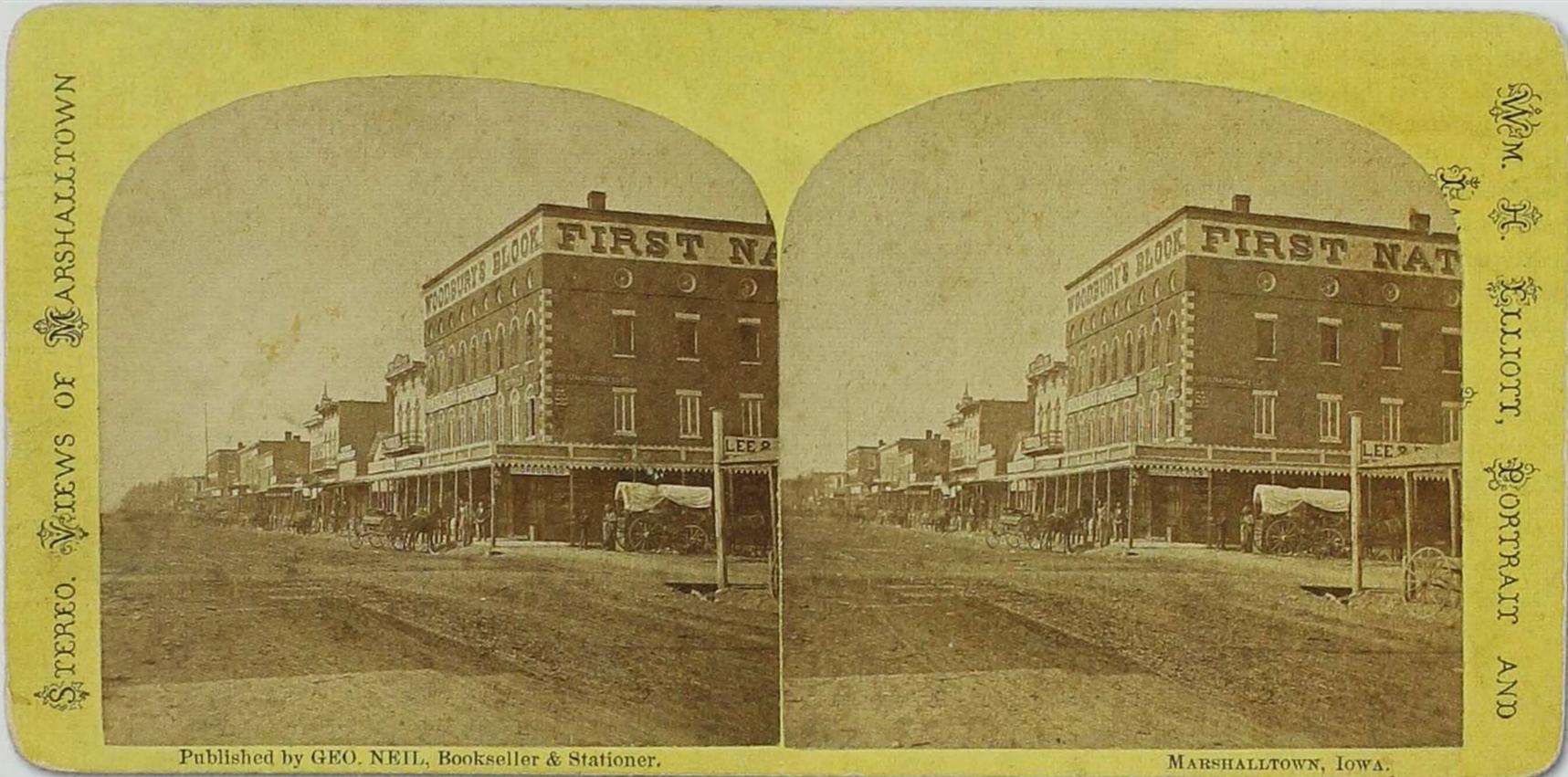
noted, "made him a most formidable antagonist." Anson bribed the county attorney with "\$100 and the deeds to a few lots" for his help. Using the federal land he had acquired cheaply, he offered a free town lot to any new settlers "likely to favor" Marshall in the struggle for the county seat. It is estimated that Anson gave away a "half mile square" in his campaign to attract settlers. Greenleaf Woodbury, for example, received 40 acres on the nearby Iowa River and a \$500 bonus in June of 1854 for constructing a gristmill to lure farmers to do business in Marshall. Soon other tradespeople and merchants located businesses in the community, which, by 1856, comprised 658 residents.

Although Marshall eventually proved victorious, being named the county seat in 1860, town boosters had lost sight of the bigger prize. They had failed to lure the



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MARSHALL COUNTY

A wooden sidewalk borders Marshalltown's public square, dotted with young trees, in 1876. Anson and sons Sturgis and Adrian played baseball here before the courthouse was built in the mid-1880s. Adrian later achieved baseball fame as "Cap" Anson.



This 1872 stereograph shows Greenleaf Woodbury's brick building on Main Street, 21 years after Henry Anson built his pre-emption cabin to claim the prairie land that would become Marshalltown, Iowa.

state capital to the same location, losing out to Des Moines in 1857. Anson later surmised that "if the same effort in time and money had been spent during the period of the seven years' war over the county seat, Marshalltown would today be the capital of Iowa."

By 1863, through the efforts of Greenleaf Woodbury, Marietta was effectively deprived of a rail line during this crucial period, thus ending its years of growth as a community. "The death blow had been given to Marietta," wrote a county historian in 1867. "Soon after, her wealthiest and most enterprising citizens sold out at a ruinous sacrifice, and went to Marshalltown to live, where they were heartily welcomed. The stores and shops soon followed, the brass band dispersed, the literary society was obscured, away sped the houses one after another down to the new city, which had become a vampire to suck [Marietta's] blood—the work of demolition went on, until now, Marietta, six miles from a railroad, dismantled and ruined, is left with scarcely a trace of her departed glory."

By comparison, Marshalltown in 1867 boasted 2,300 residents, described in a self-congratulatory county history as "intelligent, enterprising, and industrious." The effect of county-seat status on property values was terrific. By 1878 the value of Marshalltown's city lots exceeded \$634,000 (Marietta's, just over \$4,000). The following three decades were a period of unprecedented growth.

In his advancing years Anson could look back with pride at what had prospered from the town site he had chosen on the Iowa prairie in the spring of 1851. Self-described in 1888 as the "Queen City of the West," Marshalltown was home to over a dozen successful manufacturing and industrial concerns, seven public school buildings, a professional fire department and police force, an electrified streetcar system, over three miles of paved streets, and three railroads, securing its status as a "modern city" by the standards of the time. By the turn of the century Marshalltown's population topped 10,000.

Anson died of pneumonia on November 30, 1905, at age 79. His body lay in state at the county courthouse. All city buildings, council rooms, the mayor's office, police headquarters, and both fire stations were draped in mourning. All places of business were closed during the hour of his funeral. In a front-page obituary, the local *Times-Republican* eulogized that "after becoming the founder of the town [Anson] exercised a father's care and interest in its welfare. . . . Until he was replaced by younger and more active men, he was one of the city's leading and more influential citizens." Henry Anson's record of contributions to the community included donations of land for the first gristmill, fire station, and Anson School. He served on the city council in 1881 and was elected mayor for one term in 1891. The site of his brickyard became a public park bearing his name.

Anson School, Marshalltown, Iowa.

Right: Anson School, built in 1900, was named after the town founder. Below: Paved with bricks, lit by streetlights, and decked out in banners and flags, Marshalltown's Main Street bustles with pedestrians, businesses, and streetcars, shortly after the turn of the century.



BOTH IMAGES: SHSI (IOWA CITY)

The same obituary unfortunately included the incorrect assertion that Anson had donated the land where the courthouse now stands. That inaccuracy has continued down through the years to become a persistent local myth. Records on file at the offices of the county auditor and recorder, however, clearly indicate that Anson sold the "public square," where the present courthouse stands, to Marshall County in June 1881 for

\$2,000. The latest retelling of the myth is on a bronze plaque at the base of a recently erected life-sized statue of Anson on the courthouse square.

Today, the city of Marshalltown is a tangible link to the vision, business acumen, and determination of Anson to build a thriving community on the Iowa frontier—during a period when many Iowa towns did not survive. The story of its development from crude cabins and dirt streets into a major Iowa manufacturing center in the span of four decades underscores an exciting period of community boosterism when it was possible to make "nowhere somewhere." Through his efforts as a speculator, surveyor, farmer, real estate broker, businessman, and entrepreneur, Henry Anson is an inextricable part of Marshall County history and the larger story of land speculation in Iowa and the West. ❖

Michael W. Vogt is curator for the Iowa Gold Star Military Museum at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa. He is also a trustee of the State Historical Society of Iowa and co-chair of the Iowa Battle Flags Preservation Committee. This article developed from a paper delivered earlier at the Northern Great Plains History Conference. In 2003 his article "The Fighting 51st Iowa in the Philippines" appeared in this magazine.



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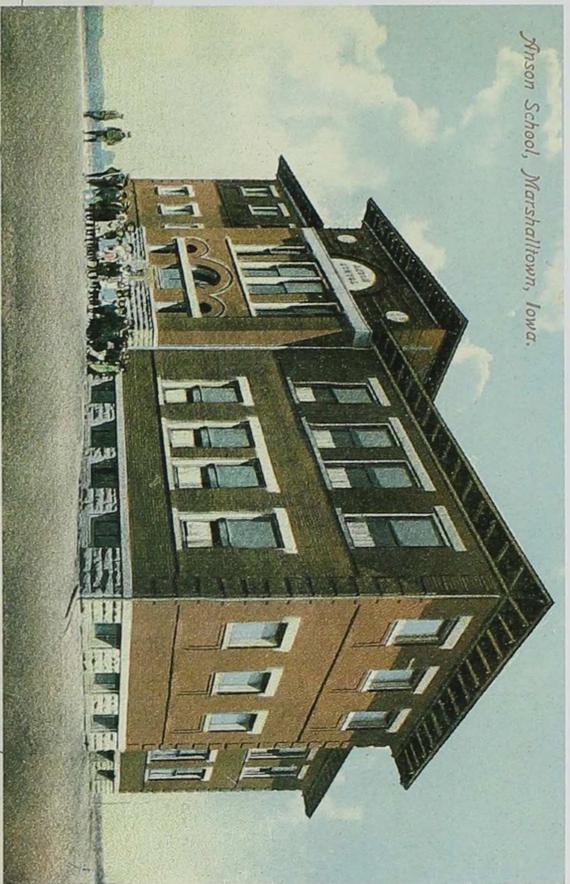
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The courthouse square transfer occurred June 21, 1881. Anson was paid \$2,000.00 before Aug. 22, 1881, warrant no. 1341, "Deed conveying Pub. Square." The origin of the "donation" myth begins with Anson's Dec. 1, 1905, *Times-Republican* obituary: "Mr. Anson's largest gift... was the solid block in the center of the city known as the courthouse square." Anson's autobiographical account in the 1890 "Old Settlers' Record Book" did not claim to have donated any land for any courthouse. The Anson biography in Gue's *Biographies and Portraits of the Progressive Men of Iowa* (1899) says that Anson "contributed" the courthouse block. Land records in the county courthouse and title abstract indicate that Anson was paid for the ground known as the public square. In fact, Anson was paid \$325.00 for the land where the first courthouse was built. The myth has been perpetuated by later researchers who relied upon the obituary as fact and reprinted it in subsequent community histories without examining the original land records.

Annotations to this article are held in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files (SHSI-Iowa City).

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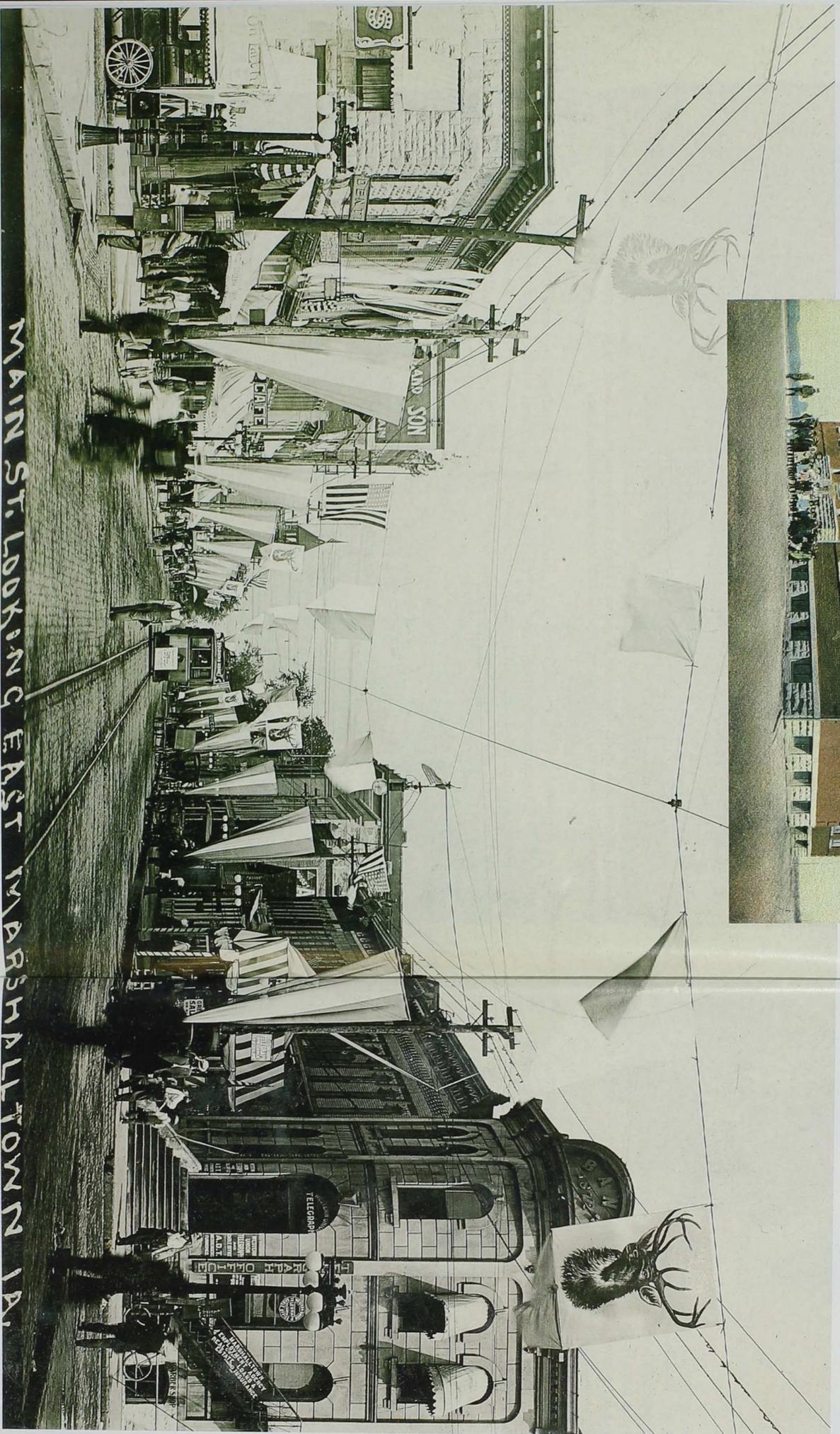
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Prairie Vignettes

The following three vignettes appeared in *History of Marshall County, Iowa*, by Mrs. N. Sanford. Published in 1867, Sanford's book, like most 19th-century county histories, is filled with the typical laudatory profiles of leading citizens, and descriptions of early businesses and schools. Although genealogists and historians have learned to use county histories with a critical eye, some of the stories within them are just too colorful to ignore. Here, Sanford portrays Marshall County as bursting with wild game and fruit, but also with good-natured humor and sophisticated entertainment such as theatrical tableaux vivants. —The Editor

HUNTING PARTIES

The prairie in the western portion has been noted for hunting parties, with dogs, guns, snack-baskets, and bottles of *corn coffee*. There is a tradition extant of one party who went to the head of Timber creek and killed seven hundred and eight [prairie] chickens. These broiled, with hot rolls, and a cup of good Java, is a dish fit for a king. No wonder our prairies present such attractions to English and other sportsmen. Last season a large party of hunters from Buffalo visited this section. They were highly pleased with their success, and as our railroad facilities are increasing, no doubt in a few years our lovely plains will receive a full share of the summer tourists who journey for health and comfort.

Mr. George Wills, with a party of five, went beyond Power's Grove and killed three hundred and eleven [prairie] chickens in one day, returning to town with their wagon loaded down with game. If this slaughtering should go on long at a time, the question is, where would the chickens be?

BLACKBERRY HUNT

There had been rumors of fruit across the river, so Mrs. Willigrod, Mrs. Bissell and a few others started out with a team, Mr. Pratt as a driver. Mrs. Willigrod prudently put on a pair

of her husband's boots for fear of snakes. On arriving at the canoe the whole party arranged themselves with Mrs. Willigrod in the stern. They amused each other by laughing and singing, also by plashing water on Mrs. W. She, to avenge herself, threw many handfuls from the river into their faces, but just as the boat struck the opposite bank, in reaching to give them a final baptism she fell backward into the river, boots and all. The party laughed, but like the frog in the fable it came very near being the death of her, for she rose the second time before the stupefied Mr. Pratt could rescue her from the perilous situation. Coming out of the water like a drowned kitten, she was glad to make her way home without any blackberries. Mrs. Willigrod has such a vein of genial humor, one enjoys an hour of her experiences in border life.

TAMBOS

As they were called by a Marshall lady through some inadvertence of memory. "Tambos!" "Tambos!" she repeated. "Are they good to eat?" Many had never seen tableaux and knew nothing of scenic effect, and pious people in the churches talked of the rigors of discipline if they were repeated, denouncing them as an



incipient theatre. A large fund was raised from the entertainment, and it passed off pleasantly to all concerned. An incident occurred just before the performance began. Mr. Wasson in arranging the curtains was behind them. And a light showed him full length, with his hair sticking up as if in the need of a pair of shears. "Tambos, Number 1," whispered Pete Hepburn to a lady; as the head kept bobbing from side to side like a jumping jack, the candles being in just the right position to make a really laughable scene Mr. Wasson, now one of our dignified merchants and a perfect gentleman, perhaps may have forgotten his role in the performance. ❖

The Lincoln Highway's Seedling Mile

by Leah D. Rogers and Clare L. Kernek

On September 14, 1913, following months of publicity and speculation, the Lincoln Highway Association announced the official route of the nation's first transcontinental highway, to extend from New York City to San Francisco. The idea had originated with Carl Fisher, founder of the Prest-O-Lite Company, which manufactured carbide headlights for automobiles. Fisher had also launched the hugely popular Indianapolis 500 at his brick-paved Indianapolis Motor Speedway in 1911.

In 1912, there were approximately one million motor vehicles registered in America—up from only 8,000 in 1900—but few improved roads. Of the 2.5 million miles of roadway existing throughout the country, the vast majority were dirt roads that were often impassable when wet. Experiments with concrete as a road material had only recently begun, with the first mile of concrete road poured in 1908, near Detroit. Long-distance travel by car was still very much a novelty. Doing so definitely required a taste for adventure.

Although the Good Roads Movement, aimed at improving the condition of the nation's roads, had been gaining momentum since the late 19th century, there was still little central administration and no federal funding for road construction when Fisher began planning his highway. He had realized that for long-distance automobile travel to be practical, a network of reliable, all-weather roads must be built. The "Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway" he envisioned was to be a grand boulevard across America, threading together historic routes and the main streets of towns from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Fisher's proposal for a coast-to-coast highway met with an enthusiastic response—at first. Within a month of publishing his *Ocean-to-Ocean Highway Bulletin*, a million dollars had been pledged to the project. By the fol-

lowing spring, however, donations from the auto industry had fallen off. Determined to find some way to get his highway built, Fisher convened a series of private meetings with Detroit capitalists in the spring of 1913. The group consisted of men with ties to the auto and highway construction industries. They included: Henry Joy, president of Packard Motor Car Company; Roy Chapin, president of Hudson Motor Car Company; Emory W. Clark, president of the First National Bank of Detroit, who would later become president of Nash Motor Company; Arthur Paddington, a promoter friend of Fisher's involved with the Good Roads Movement; and Henry E. Bodman, Joy's attorney. On July 1, 1913, this group officially incorporated itself as the Lincoln Highway Association (LHA).

The route would start in Times Square in New York City, traversing 3,389 miles through a dozen states: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, and California. The route ended at the Pacific Ocean in Lincoln Square, San Francisco.

Despite being named vice-president, Fisher would play a less central role in directing the efforts of the association. This position now belonged to President Henry Joy. He and the other officers stated the association's primary aim: "To procure the establishment of a continuous improved highway from the Atlantic to the Pacific, open to lawful traffic of all description without toll charges: such highway to be known, in memory of Abraham Lincoln, as 'The Lincoln Highway.'"

Joy and the directors turned the building of the highway into a national cause, titling their public announcement of the route "An Appeal to Patriots." In their "Proclamation of the Lincoln Highway Association," issued

a month later, they explained how construction of the memorial highway was the "patriotic burden" of the states and counties through which the route passed.

Joy conceived of the organization's proper role as that of facilitating good roads activities at the local level and coordinating them into a national effort. A vigorous publicity campaign was launched. In addition to providing articles and photographs regarding the highway to newspapers and magazines, the LHA published a bimonthly magazine, *The Lincoln Highway Forum*, and produced short motion pictures showing the progress of the highway.

By tying the good roads campaign to themes of progress and economic prosperity for both the urban and rural dweller, the LHA hoped to appeal to the broadest audience and to convince them that good roads were good for all. America's love affair with the automobile had already begun, and good roads were the key to the automobile's success.

To initiate improvements on the highway at the local level, Joy and the directors implemented a multi-tiered organizational system of volunteer "consuls" to represent the association and promote its interests. The state consuls often created consular districts in addition to a network of county and town consuls.

There was never any question among the LHA directors that the nation's transcontinental highway would pass through Iowa; they needed a route to connect Chicago with Omaha and the Platte River Route, so of course the highway must pass through Illinois and Iowa. Joy later remarked that it was these two states that presented the biggest challenge in planning the highway. Because of the relatively flat terrain, there were any number of routes that could be taken across these states, all of them equally unimproved.

In Iowa, the bridge at Clinton was selected as the route's Mississippi crossing, and Joy traveled the state many times trying to determine the best means of connecting the two rivers. The route's 358 miles through the state passed through 13 counties: Clinton, Cedar, Linn, Benton, Tama, Marshall, Story, Boone, Greene, Carroll, Crawford, Harrison, and Pottawattamie. The main towns the west-bound traveler passed through were Cedar Rapids, Tama, Marshalltown, Ames, Boone, Jefferson, Carroll, Denison, Logan, and Council Bluffs.

The Lincoln Highway through Iowa consisted mainly of unimproved dirt roads. When dry, these roads made an "excellent" highway. In wet weather, however, it was a different story. The state's rich soil then was transformed into what motorists called "gumbo . . . a



particularly vicious and viscous and generally impassable brand of mud peculiar to that state." Travelers were advised against even attempting to cross the state in rainy weather.

By 1913, the Good Roads Movement seemed to be making headway in Iowa. That year a county road system was implemented, creating a network of "main-traveled roads" administered by county supervisors. The counties through which the Lincoln Highway route passed "replaced scores of culverts and



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

bridges with concrete and/or steel structures, improved curves and railroad crossings, and widened the roadway to the standard cross section established by the State Highway Commission."

Despite this progress, Iowa was still notorious as one of the worst "mud states," and it was hoped that the Federal Road Act of 1916, providing federal highway funds to states, would result in permanent highway construction in Iowa. However, to qualify for the funding, states had to provide matching funds, and the

financing of road paving proved to be a challenge in Iowa. Opposition was especially vigorous among farmers, who saw it as unwelcome interference in local affairs by elites and outsiders (described by one farmer as "one-hoss lawyers in patent leather boots") for a cause that they deemed unnecessary, but more importantly, one that came at their expense. The legislature ended up voting to accept the federal aid in 1917, matching it with motor vehicle licensing fees.

Fisher's original goal of building a crushed-rock

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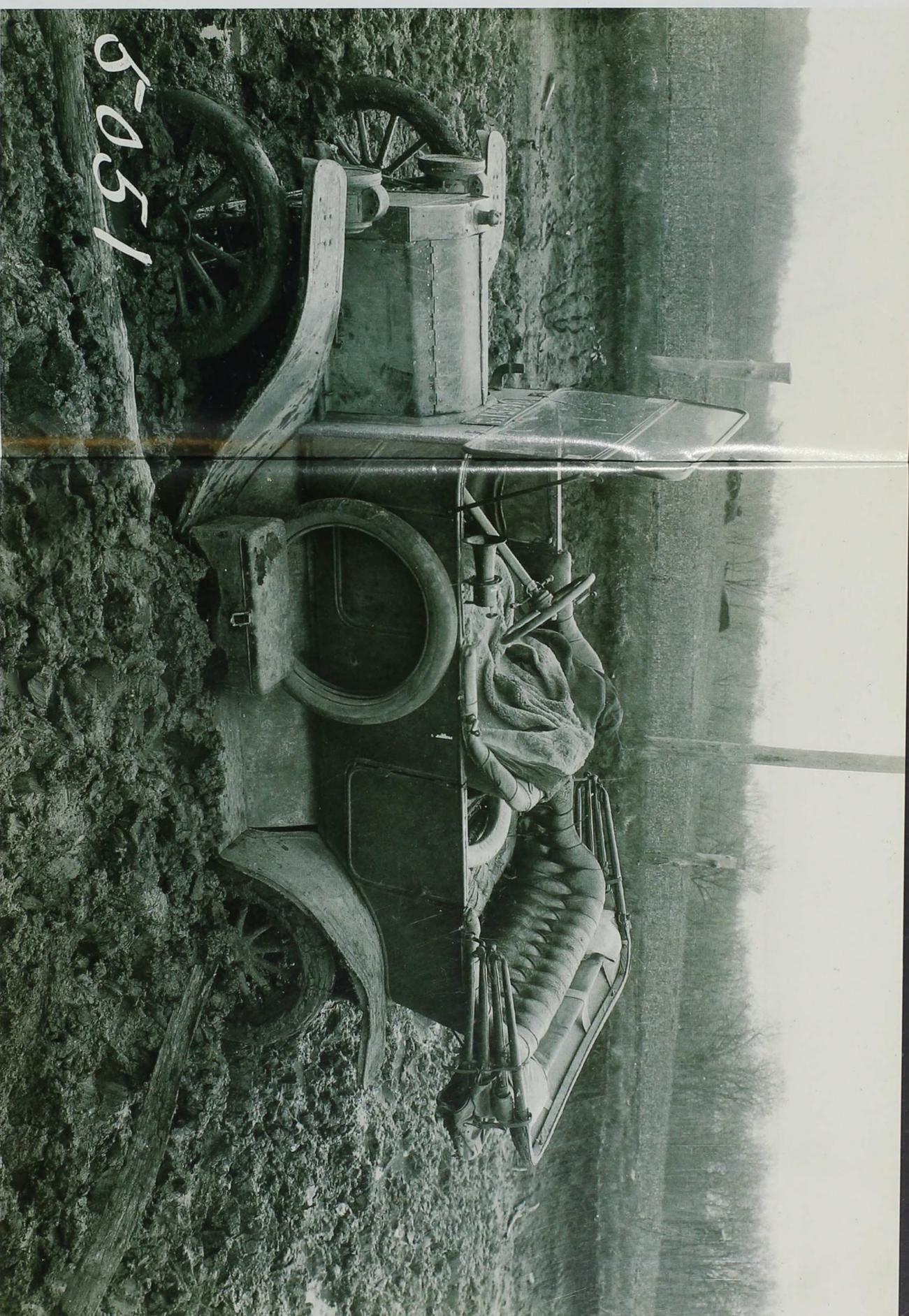
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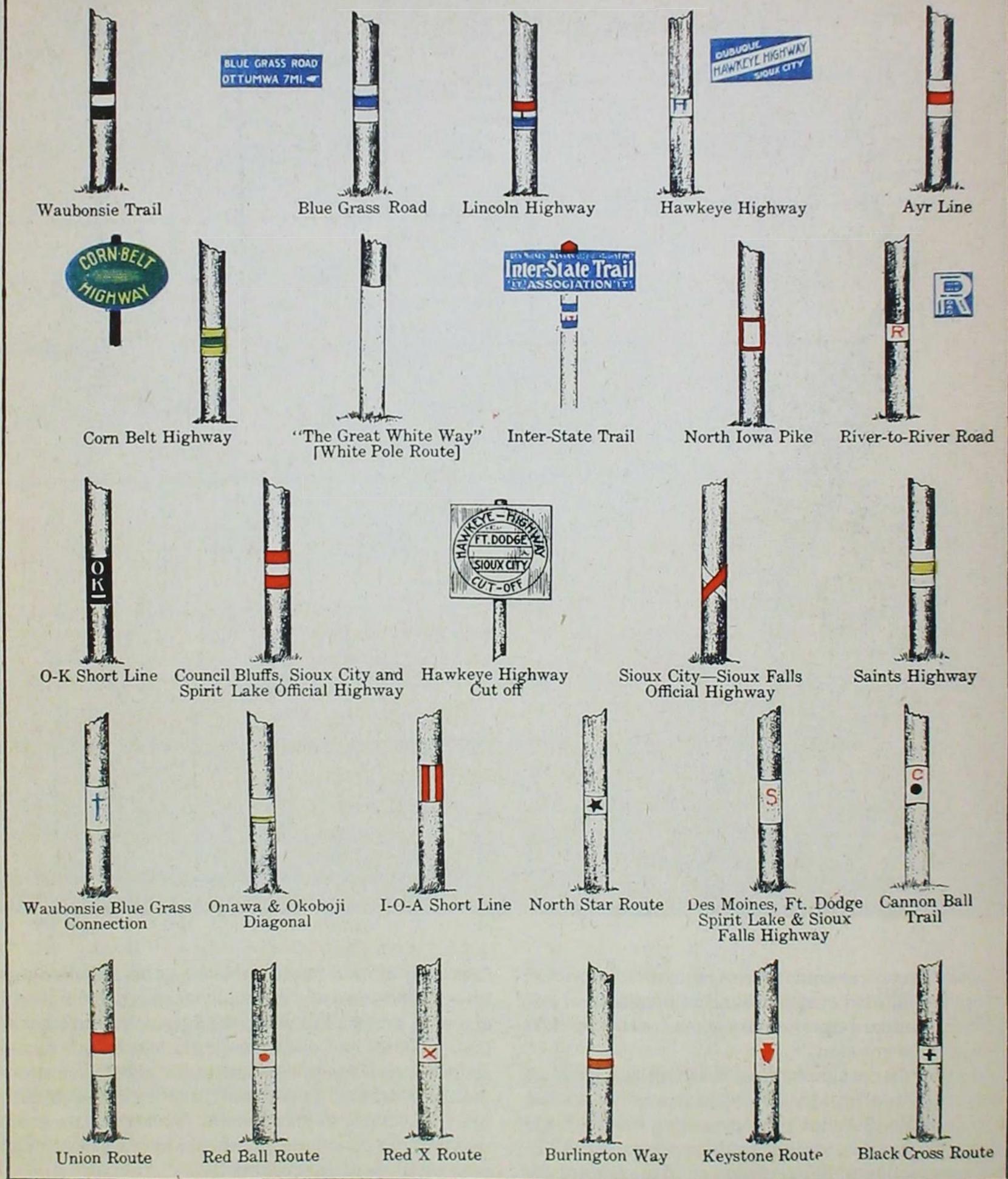
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Fisher's original goal of building a crushed-rock

BLAZINGS OF PROMINENT ORGANIZED IOWA HIGHWAYS



SHSI (IOWA CITY), HUEBINGER'S POCKET AUTOMOBILE GUIDE FOR IOWA (1915)

highway in time for the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition had by this time been replaced with the longer-term goal of paving the entire rural portion of the route with cement. Although concrete was initially more expensive than macadam or gravel, the LHA recommended concrete based in part on road tests that had noted superior aspects to cement paving for durability, better gas mileage, and less wear-and-tear on automobile tires. Hard surfacing meant "economy in maintenance and economy in operation." This idea bore "early fruit except in Iowa." Ironically, despite early experiments and "road school" training carried out by the State Highway Commission at Iowa State College in the early 1900s–1910s, Iowans remained resistant to road paving, lagging behind other states and earning Iowa the unwanted moniker of "The Gumbo State."

The "Seedling Mile" was an idea that Joy came up with to encourage rural communities to pave mile-long sections of the Lincoln Highway and to persuade counties and states to fund them. The Seedling Mile, it was hoped, would in turn create interest in additional improvements. "The easiest way to prove anything is by demonstration," Joy wrote, "and that is the principle upon which the Lincoln Highway is founded. It is a demonstration to the country at large of just what good roads, permanent roads, will do for the prosperity and happiness of the community. In most instances, the Lincoln Highway Association can persuade the communities to build their own demonstrating sections of Lincoln Highway; again, 'seedling miles' are necessary—miles built of cement furnished by the Association, upon the theory that one permanent mile established and built under the proper specifications will lead to further connecting miles of the same standard. And this theory has never failed to work out."

To that end, the LHA required that these paved miles be located out in the rural countryside, at least six miles from any town, at places where the topography made road travel difficult. The idea was this: once a driver was on the paved Seedling Mile and could speed along unfettered—and then suddenly had to drop back onto an unpaved, often mud, road—the dramatic contrast would demonstrate better than any other means the wisdom of paved roads.

The first Seedling Mile along the Lincoln Highway

was built near Malta, Illinois, in 1914. This was followed by seedlings built in Whiteside County, Illinois (1915), Grand Island and Kearney, Nebraska (1915), Linn County, Iowa (1918–1919), Paulding County, Ohio (1919), and a six-mile stretch near Fremont, Nebraska (1919–1920). Initially as narrow as ten feet, by 1918 the recommended width was 16 to 18 feet.

"The Iowa difficulty developed first during the efforts to establish Seedling Miles," according to the LHA. The association's "Secretary Pardington found that under Iowa laws the counties, which had full control of all road matters, were powerless to finance hard-surfaced highways even when the cement needed for the work was donated. The irony of this situation was that the Iowans were spending enough in maintenance to have amortized the cost of hard-surfaced construction in a few years. President Joy said they were practically rebuilding their dirt roads every summer and having them washed out by storms or torn up by struggling traffic every winter."

The LHA came to Iowa to promote Seedling Miles and to offer 8,000 barrels of donated cement for constructing four miles of pavement in four different counties. Unfortunately, because of "legal obstacles in Iowa state laws . . . the gift could not be accepted." By 1915, the LHA still had over 22,000 barrels of cement that had not been applied for and "offered 3,000 barrels to any community that would build one mile of concrete road on the Lincoln Highway." Preference was given to counties in Iowa, Nebraska, and Wyoming.

Eventually, Linn County competed with Greene, Marshall, and Pottawattamie counties for Iowa's first Seedling Mile. The July 1917 *Lincoln Highway Forum* noted that Linn County was assured delivery of 3,000 barrels of cement donated by Northwestern States Portland Cement Company of Mason City; however, by September the *Forum* was touting Marshall County as the site of Iowa's "first" Seedling Mile. That county had applied for 3,100 barrels of cement to be supplied by a Chicago company, and grading was reportedly already underway. However, actual construction of Iowa's first (and only official) Seedling Mile began in Linn County in August 1918.

The proposal for the Seedling Mile had been presented to the Linn County Board of Supervisors by local businessmen and LHA members Edward Killian and Willis G. Haskell. Killian owned a Cedar Rapids department store. Haskell owned a coal dealership but was also a state senator able to exert considerable influence on projects in which he was concerned.

Left: For Iowa travelers in 1915, automobile guides like this one gave intricate directions, county by county, and depicted the terrain that travelers should expect. Roads marked by blazed posts as "highways" were graveled at best.

Killian wielded local power; the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* crowed that Linn County's "recent progress in road improvements" was thanks to his "energy" and "keen business management." Killian began promoting the idea of free cement to build a seedling mile after having been appointed the county consul for the LHA. Private subscriptions and matching funds from the board of supervisors would help fund the project. The *Mt. Vernon Record* reported in June 1918 that Killian helped secure an \$8,400 donation. Although the cement was donated by Northwestern States Portland Cement Company through the LHA, the county would end up paying \$2,100 just to haul it to the job site.

By mid-July cement was being delivered and stored in local barns. Three firms submitted construction bids: Ford Paving Company and Perry Jayne, both of Cedar Rapids, and Cook and Keane of Dubuque. The bids were rejected. Ford Paving successfully rebid at \$3.15 per square yard (two cents per square yard less than their original estimate) but was persuaded by the State Highway Commission to reduce their bid to \$2.84, based on the negotiated change from two-course concrete paving to one-course concrete paving using Muscatine gravel as aggregate instead of crushed rock.

A contract with Ford Paving was finally signed on August 1. "Mike Ford is said to have the county by the nape of the neck," commented the *Mt. Vernon Record*, "and he knows it." Meeting the deadline required moving more than 100 tons of material *a day* from Mt. Vernon to the job site—a distance of five to six miles. Ford reportedly had crushed rock in the vicinity "tied up in contracts, so that no one else [could] buy their crushed rock at a price that [would] allow them to make a favorable bid."

Ford guaranteed the project would be finished in the fall. In fact, the contract specified a completion date of November 1, 1918, and "that the time of completion of said work is of the essence of this contract." The deadline would not be met.

One problem was difficulty in finding enough laborers. Other problems, outlined by Linn County Engineer R. W. Gearhart, included the "leisurely" way that Ford Paving Company got equipment to the job site; difficulties in transporting gravel from the Northern Gravel Company in Muscatine by rail, owing to a shortage of open-top cars; ten straight days of rain; and equipment breakdowns. The nation's growing involvement in World War I probably contributed to supply and shipping delays as well as labor shortages.

The *Mt. Vernon Record* followed Ford's progress and described his method. "One of the secrets of Mike Ford's success as a contractor is shown in his work here. The

first thing he did was to rent a strip of ground. . . . He has the cars of gravel and sand set in on this track, and unloaded with a steam shovel. It takes about one hour to unload a car of sand or gravel. The local pulled in with a car of sand one morning, and before the local was out of Lisbon the car was reported empty.

"A steam shovel also does the work cutting down the roads where grading is necessary. The big shovel takes one bite out of the bank, depositing it in a dump wagon, then another bite and the wagon is full. When the shovel needs to be moved the big crane is swung around, the heavy plank it runs on is hooked onto it, and it swings around, dragging the plank into place ahead of it, looking like nothing in the world so much as an elephant swinging a plank around with its trunk. The engineer then runs the shovel ahead onto the plank releasing another, which is picked up in the same way when needed.

"Thus far twenty-seven cars of sand and gravel [have] been unloaded. The cars are coming in regularly now and there should be little delay from this cause. However, it is not at all likely that the paving will be completed this fall. In fact such a thing appears to be outside the range of possibilities. But at any rate it will be completed some day."

Jean Stoneking Moore (the Stoneking family farms lined the Seeding Mile) later recalled that the laborers lived in a tent camp across the road from her father's house. Her grandmother cooked meals for the workers; many were Russian immigrants, although she remembered one Irishman named Dinty O'Leary among the crew. Moore recalled that "when her family became disabled by influenza late in 1918, some of the workers milked for them and slipped the milk pail through the kitchen door quickly to avoid being infected."

By October the *Mt. Vernon Record* noted that the pavement was "growing slowly" because of labor shortages, but it "makes a pretty sight down the roadway, and will look even more beautiful to the traveler that strikes it on a muddy day."

"The Ford gang, with their steam shovel, have graded the roadway east, and are keeping well ahead of the paving crew," the *Record* continued. "The pavers, by the way, work on alternate days. They can use up as much sand and gravel in one day as can be hauled out in two. The grade through that mile will be a pleasant one to travel. The hollow at the T. C. Stoneking place has been filled three or four feet, and the hillsides cut down an equal amount, giving a very light and easy grade."

The November 1 deadline passed. Finally, on June 18, 1919, the road opened to traffic as well as contro-

versy, as there were immediate concerns about the condition of the pavement. One complaint concerned a "hump" on the "Stoneking Hill" that became evident shortly after the concrete had been laid. Greater concerns involved visible cracks that had opened lengthwise and the lack of true expansion joints, although "on the whole, the paving is in very good condition," the *Record* commented. "The cracks were given immediate attention," a county history relates, and over the decades the pavement proved to be a "fairly good surface, though its width [was] the basis of much criticism."

The November 1918 *Lincoln Highway Forum* had assured readers that "early in 1919," two more miles would be constructed—the long-awaited miles in Marshall and Pottawattamie counties. However, by this time, the Seedling Mile program was all but defunct. The *Forum* noted that there had been a ban on road building during World War I, which may account for some of the delays. However, it is suspected that Linn County had leaped to the forefront to obtain "first" status because of problems delivering the cement to the other counties.

"People of Iowa have heard a great deal about the Linn County Seedling mile of concrete road," the Iowa State Highway Commission commented in mid-1919. "Many have praised it. Some have condemned. Users say it is great. Engineers say it is a fine piece of construction. Some, usually those who have never seen the road, only heard about it, have worried themselves sick over the cost of it. These, however, most all seem to live outside of Linn County. No sickness for those who live alongside the road or near enough to make use of it. After pounding along for hours on the dirt either side of the road, to come suddenly and unexpectedly upon this stretch of beautiful white roadway, makes one think of an oasis in the desert, a shade tree on a hot, burning prairie, or a cool flowing spring when you're thirsty. It looks good to a man longing for a real road. Before you utterly condemn these Linn County people for having gone crazy and spent \$34,936.81 building this road, take a run out over the Lincoln Highway east of Cedar Rapids, look at this stretch, note the homes adjoin-

ing it, picture yourself living along it, and then question yourself whether you blame them or not. You know time is fleeting and you're only going to live once and what you get out of life, this time round, is all you're absolutely sure of. Strange to say, with others half sick with worry over the cost of it, you find the Linn County People, who built the road, almost to a unit perfectly satisfied with what they got for their money, and seemingly enjoying life along it. It certainly is good looking, as the picture indicates."

The Seedling Mile was a few miles northwest of Mt. Vernon, on what had historically been an old wagon road and stagecoach trail and where road conditions were historically problematic. After the paved mile ended, the highway continued northwest, looping through Marion and then down into Cedar Rapids. While the intent of the Seedling Mile was to promote additional paving projects, it did not have these immediate results in Linn County. Delays were related to funding difficulties as well as a political power struggle between the cities of Marion and Cedar Rapids.

Marion had long been the county seat of government and was situated on the original route of the Lincoln Highway through Linn County. Cedar Rapids, having long surpassed Marion in both population and industrial and commercial development, coveted the county-seat designation and a direct connection west



Above: Linn County's Seedling Mile heading northwest in 1928 offered a pleasant break from gravel. The 16-foot-wide ribbon of pavement was 200 feet short of a mile. In 1919, Greene County also paved a section of the Lincoln Highway, six and a half miles, with the help of federal funds.

COURTESY IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (AMES)

OMAHA TO MARSHALLTOWN

HERRING HOTEL HERRING CAFE
HERRING GARAGE HERRING FILLING ST'N
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 GARAGES NEARBY
 HEADQUARTERS FOR TOURISTS
 IOWA CITY, IOWA

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PRICE 25c

A Belle Plaine entrepreneur wisely advertised the Herring hotel, cafe, garage, and filling station for travelers (map c. 1920.) Right: A 1928 ad for a state bond issue for road improvements promises no extra taxes (*Des Moines Register*).

from the Seedling Mile, bypassing the loop up to Marion. Cedar Rapids was finally successful in wresting the county seat from Marion in November 1919, shortly after completion of the Seedling Mile. This set the stage for bond issues to fund more paving projects.

Marion citizens were "mad as hell" about attempts to cut them off from the Lincoln Highway, according to writer Gregory Franzwa, and rural landowners were loath to agree to road paving funded largely through tax assessments. At least one road meeting in Coggon degenerated into egg-throwing and man-handling of paving proponents. The *Marion Weekly Sentinel* observed "that the goods roads question is one of the most important factors in the progress of a community is certain, and Marion could not afford to be negligent in doing her utmost to keep the Lincoln Highway in the present course."

Nevertheless, the paved shortcut to Cedar Rapids was finally completed in October 1921, providing a direct link to the Lincoln Highway. By 1925, one could drive from Chicago to Cedar Rapids on a continuous paved road, thus sealing the rerouting of the Lincoln Highway directly into Cedar Rapids, bypassing Marion altogether.

The Linn County Seedling Mile was not the first stretch of rural concrete pavement in the state. (That honor went to the 14-foot-wide concrete pavement laid in 1908 near Eddyville's Highland Cemetery.) But while it was Iowa's first "Seedling Mile" along the Lincoln Highway, it would be among the last in the nation because by 1919 the Lincoln Highway Association had concluded that Seedling Miles had served their purpose as object lessons to promote local improvements. World War I "finally made roads a national question instead of a local issue," according to the association. In July 1919, eight months after the armistice, the LHA dramatically demonstrated the need for improved roads; it had persuaded the government to send a military convoy across the country over the Lincoln Highway. The much-publicized trip brought a sense of urgency to the nation's need for reliable roads, and contributed to the successful passage of both local bond initiatives and increased federal funding for highway construction.

The LHA now concentrated in part on developing road standards and proposed constructing an "Ideal Section" as the next object lesson. Recommended features included a 100-foot right-of-way, 10-inch-thick reinforced concrete slab paving, overhead lighting for nighttime driving, rounded corners, shallow curves, guard

ALL TOGETHER IOWA!



WE'VE GOT TWO WHEELS OUT OF THE MUD NOW!

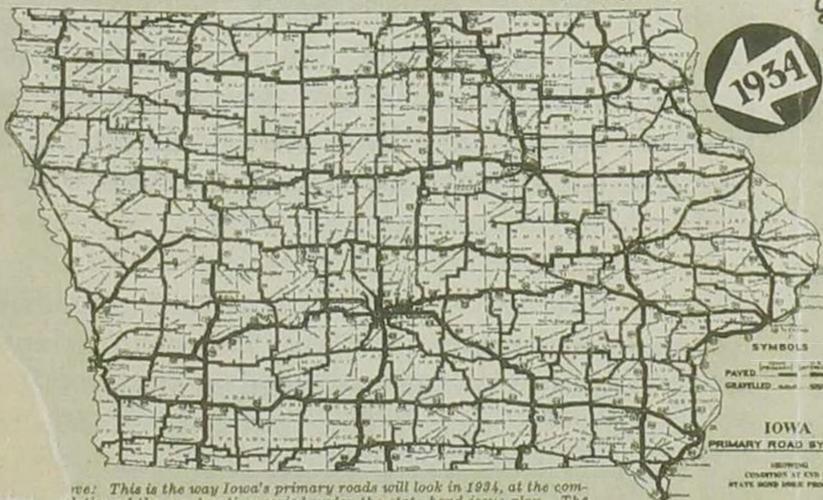
Let's Finish The Job By Voting "Yes" On The State Road Bond Issue Tuesday

IOWA will vote on Nov. 6 on whether we shall continue building our highways piecemeal, or adopt business-like methods for immediate construction of a connected state-wide road system.

The state road bond measure provides the following:

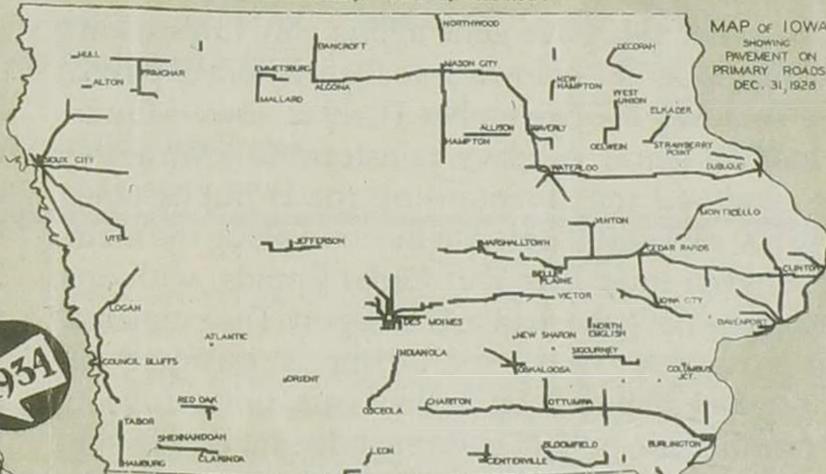
1. 4,933 miles of paving along main-traveled primary roads.
2. Graveling 1,732 miles of connecting primary roads.
3. Issue of not more than \$100,000,000 worth of state bonds to complete the work.
4. Assurance that all interest payments shall be paid for out of the primary road funds, consisting of auto license fees and part of the gasoline tax.
5. Assurance that the bonds will be retired by the primary road funds, without one cent state, county or municipal property tax.
6. Completion of the work within a six-year period.

Without additional taxes, here's what the state bond program promises:



This is the way Iowa's primary roads will look in 1934, at the completion of the construction period under the state bond issue plan. The black lines indicate paving, the checked lines gravel.

Iowa's Paved Primary Road System now:



Above: It has taken ten years under the county bond plan to build 1,000 miles of disconnected, paved roads as shown above. By comparison with the other map you can see how the state bond plan will complete, in six years, a statewide comprehensive and connected road system.

Iowa Is Paying for Good Roads Why Not Get Them NOW?

Iowa can have this completed primary road system without adding one cent to present state, county or municipal property taxation. Automobile license fees and the gasoline tax, which will provide funds to retire the bond issue, are fixed by law—AND MUST BE PAID WHETHER THE BOND ISSUE CARRIES OR NOT! If the bond issue carries, we get a connected, state-wide system of paved and graveled primary roads in six years, without extra cost. Early completion of our primary road system will hasten improvement of our secondary roads by many years. If the bond issue fails, we go on paying just as at present, but we will not have a completed primary road system for 16 years. IOWA IS PAYING FOR GOOD ROADS—WHY NOT GET THEM NOW?

This Advertisement Is Inserted and Paid For By the Following Organizations and Individuals Who Believe Approval of the State Road Bond Issue Will Advance the Welfare, Progress and Prosperity of Iowa.

- | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Iowa Harding Highway Association | Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce | Jefferson County Good Roads Committee | Audubon County Good Roads Committee | Denison Good Roads Committee | Shenandoah Chamber of Commerce | Citizens of Durant |
| Wm. Cochrane, Chairman Montgomery County Good Roads Committee | Brooks Laundry, Fort Dodge | Union County Good Roads Committee | Mills County Good Roads Committee | Anita Good Roads Committee | Casey Community Club | West Liberty Community Club |
| Henry County Good Roads Committee | C. Ed Beman, Chairman Oskaloosa Good Roads Committee | Bremer County Good Roads Committee | Ames Chamber of Commerce | Greater Atlantic Club | Harlan Good Roads Boosters | Town of Stuart |
| | | | | A Jefferson Greene County Good Roads Booster | Webster County Good Roads Committee | Adair Good Roads Committee |
| | | | | | | Adel Good Roads Association |

Be Sure To Vote "Yes" On The State Road Bond Issue On Voting Machine Or Separate Ballot

rails, warning signs, removal of visual obstructions, prohibition of advertising signs, underground utilities, dirt shoulders on each side of the pavement, elimination of side ditches, pedestrian footpaths, and abolishment of railroad grade crossings. Public facilities such as restrooms, tourist parks, and campsites were recommended as amenities. Because the Ideal Section was to be built at a flat location that posed no extraordinary drainage challenges, sites in Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Nebraska were considered. In 1922, the "Ideal Section" was completed in Lake County, Indiana, 40 feet wide and 1.36 miles long, at a cost of over \$166,000.

The Federal Highway Act of 1921 helped clear the way for further paving of the Lincoln Highway in Iowa. But even when Iowa was shamed by the national press for its poor roads, the state legislature was slow to act. By 1922, the state had only 334 miles of paved road—just 5 percent of the total road mileage. According to the LHA, "negative rural sentiment carried the day and the roads stayed dirt" until the unequal property-tax structure that placed a greater burden on the farmer "and created a general dislike for the notion of expensive, high-type roads" was finally relieved by federal funding and amended state law.

One event may have gone a long way towards influencing the people of Iowa as to the wisdom of paved roads. This was the November 11, 1922, Iowa-Minnesota football game. A heavy rainstorm following the game rendered the surrounding roads impassable. Nearly 500 cars mired down in the mud along the main road between Iowa City and Cedar Rapids, with another logjam along the road to Davenport. The estimated 1,500 stranded fans, including a number of out-of-staters, had to sleep in their cars, find refuge in local farmhouses, or trudge through the mud to the interurban railroad. The *Chicago Tribune* even took note of the muddy mess. "Enough was enough," and "the next spring the legislature reversed all previous stands and authorized the counties to issue bonds for road-building, the bonds to be retired from the proceeds of a state gasoline tax." Voters followed suit as counties began to approve bond issues for paving projects across the state.

By 1924, nearly 20 percent of the entire route from New York to San Francisco had been paved, although until that year, the only paved sections of the rural part of the highway in Iowa were in Greene and Linn counties. Part of the delay in paving was due to the State Highway Commission's requirement that extensive preliminary grading must be completed first. The other problem was funding. Between 1919 and 1926, no new county bonds for road improvements were approved.

By 1928, the entire length of the Lincoln Highway across Iowa was either graveled or paved. Within a few years a traveler could drive on pavement all the way from New York to Council Bluffs, where the highway crossed over to Nebraska.

The Federal Highway Act of 1921, a bill that the Lincoln Highway Association had helped draft, had drawn the government directly into the business of building roads for the nation. As the government assumed what the LHA had believed to be its proper role in road construction, the association ceased its central administration role. However, it had not foreseen that this would lead to dismantling both the "Lincoln Highway," as it was known, and the LHA itself. In 1927, having largely fulfilled its original mission, the LHA disbanded and closed its offices. Its last act was enlisting the Boy Scouts of America to memorialize the route by placing 3,000 concrete markers bearing a bronze bust of Lincoln along the entire length of the highway. The highway itself was no longer officially called the Lincoln Highway. Over the objections of the LHA, the coast-to-coast Lincoln Highway had been divided into federal routes 1, 30, 30N, 30S, 530, 40, and 50. In Iowa, the route was designated as Highway 30.

Despite local delays and political controversy, the Seedling Mile program, even in Iowa, had the desired effect; the LHA's "object lesson" had demonstrated the utility and cost effectiveness of concrete pavement for rural roadways. As such, the Seedling Mile played perhaps a small but notable role in helping to bring Iowa "out of the mud," even though it took longer to accomplish than first hoped. By 1930, the *Des Moines Register* was able to proclaim that "Iowa Has Stepped Out of the Mud!" Except for several short segments, Iowa's Lincoln Highway had been completely paved, along with 2,000 other highway miles in the state. ❖

Leah D. Rogers has been a member of Tallgrass Historians L.C. in Iowa City since December 2001 and is an archaeologist and architectural historian with that firm. Clare L. Kernek has been a research assistant with Tallgrass Historians L.C. since 2002. This article is adapted from their longer work, The Lincoln Highway Association's "Object Lesson": The Seedling Mile in Linn County, Iowa.

THE HAPPY VALLEY GAS STATION

The Happy Valley gas station was situated on the south side of the road at the east end of the Seedling Mile in Linn County. The station was built in 1928 by Harry Stoneking, whose family had lived along this roadway long before it became part of the Lincoln Highway. Typical of early gas stations along the Lincoln Highway, this canopied building was across the road from Harry Stoneking's bungalow house, which had been built c. 1913.

Willis Bachman of Cedar Rapids recalled his boyhood days living in the Happy Valley gas station in the years 1938 to 1942. His family rented the station from Harry Stoneking and they managed the business, which sold Skelly gasoline and oil.

Van and Bev Becker of Cedar Rapids recalled, "There were two hand-operated gas pumps and eventually one electric pump. The electric pump was used intermittently as the electric power was not very reliable. The family also operated a lunch counter inside the station.

A row of booths, a counter serving only cold meat sandwiches and pop. No beer. There were two pool tables in a back room (how was it possible to play pool without beer?), a small kitchen that served the entire family, one bedroom barely large enough for two double beds, and an indoor bathroom about the size of a small closet containing only a stool. In the winter the station was heated only by locally cut wood. . . .

"On Sunday mornings, the neighbors would come to the station to pick up their newspapers. By afternoon there were baseball games (home plate was down by the creek; right field up by the highway) and the lunch counter menu expanded to include the only hot food item—hot dogs. By evening, there were midget races. Yes, automobile races! A close neighbor brought a scraper and shaved about 3 inches of sod to form an oval track west of the baseball diamond."

While the gas station itself was never robbed, there was a close brush

with John Dillinger's gang in the late 1930s. One morning the Bachmans awoke to find the highway strewn with newspapers. "It seems that one of the Chicago gangsters (John Dillinger) had a run-in with the local law and was leading a hot pursuit back toward Chicago," Van and Bev Becker said. The gangsters threw out newspapers from their car to plaster the windshields of their pursuers, an attempt that was less than successful and primarily resulted in a mess on the highway. The gangsters managed to escape anyway.

The gas station ceased operations in the 1940s, with the building subsequently converted completely into a residence. More recently it had stood vacant until it was partially demolished a few years ago. The ruin of the gas station today stands sentinel near the east end of the Seedling Mile.

—by Van and Bev Becker,
with additional comments
by Leah D. Rogers

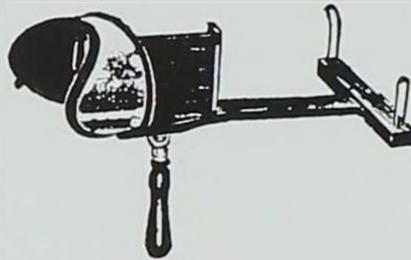
The Linn County Seedling Mile Today

In 2002, the Linn County Engineer's Office reconstructed Mt. Vernon Road from the city limits of Mt. Vernon west to what historically had been the western terminus of the Seedling Mile. The historic right-of-way, drainages, and pavement of the stretch of road that once contained the Seedling Mile were widened and reconstructed. In the process, 48 percent of the Seedling Mile pavement was overlaid with new concrete, and 52 percent of the older pavement completely replaced. Steps were taken in the design and materials of the new roadway to pay homage to the historical significance of the Seedling Mile. These steps included use of concrete surface pavement for this nearly one-mile stretch, with scored lines demarcating an older pavement width, and a stone marker with the Lincoln Highway Association logo placed near the west end of the Seedling Mile, among other actions. A booklet, *The Lincoln Highway Association's "Object Lesson": The Seedling Mile in Linn County, Iowa* (2004) was published as the final contribution to the commemoration of the Seedling Mile in association with the Mt. Vernon Road reconstruction project.

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Stereographs and Lantern Slides Along the Lincoln Highway



Classroom Views of Iowa in the 1930s and 1940s

by Paul C. Juhl

Iowa had been flirting with fall for several weeks when, on a warm October day in 1935, B. Lloyd Singley crossed the Mississippi River to enter Clinton, Iowa. Singley, a photographer, his face tanned and tired, had nearly completed the halfway point of a

journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Weeks on the road had taken their toll. The journey that had started in New York City would end over 3,300 miles away in San Francisco. Singley was following and photographing what was then officially U.S. Highway 30 as it wound through the state of Iowa. Many Iowans still referred to the highway by its previous name, the famous "Lincoln Highway," the first transcontinental highway across America.

At age 71, Singley (left) was

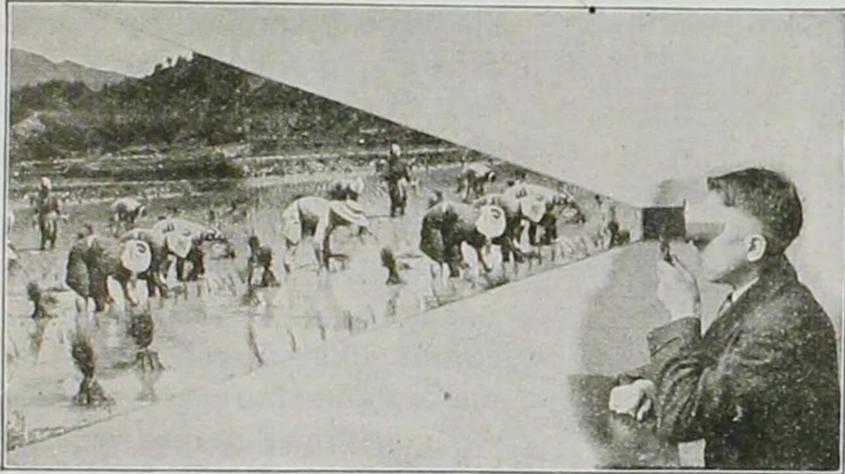
a successful man but not a young man; his death was just a few years away. He was president of the Keystone View Company located in Meadville, Pennsylvania. Founded by Singley in 1892, Keystone had risen to be the largest stereograph company in the United States. Singley was also one of several photographers for his company. This trip across America was to be his last major trip as a photographer. As his career was winding down, so was the age of stereoscopes and stereographs, replaced by radio and talking movies. But Singley had lived in the shadow of this famous highway for most of his life and he believed there was still a market for stereograph views that took the viewer across a continent. He would title the finished series of 100 views "The Lincoln Highway."

At the end of the 19th century, nearly every middle- and upper-class American home had a collection of stereographs. These cardboard rectangles with two nearly identical photographs were inserted into a stereoscope, an unusual-looking device with two lenses and a hood to keep out light. The twin photos and dual lenses added depth to the image. Looking through the stereoscope, viewers were



PHOTO COURTESY OF STUDIO 30

"Pictures Speak a Universal Language"



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The child learns through experience.

To provide adequate experiences for the child during his school life is the problem of the modern educator.

Keystone Stereographs and Lantern Slides, fully indexed to meet school needs, provide these necessary experiences.

There is a Keystone Representative in your district who is a trained and experienced educator. He will be glad to demonstrate Keystone material.

Write Today.

KEYSTONE VIEW COMPANY, Inc. MEADVILLE, PENNA.

Keystone has purchased the Stereoscopic and Lantern Slide Department of Underwood & Underwood

A March 1924 advertisement in *Midland Schools*, a magazine of the Iowa State Teachers Association, touts the advantages of using stereographs and lantern slides in the classroom.

amazed at the way the three-dimensional image seemed to "jump" out at them. The views were much more lifelike than a regular flat photograph.

Stereographs or, as some called them, stereo views were a part of American life for decades. Most of the earliest stereo cards had been created by local photographers of local scenes. In Iowa more than 400 men and women photographers made and sold stereos during the 1870s and 1880s. Iowans sought, from their local photographer, views of their homes and farms, their new downtown business buildings and rural nature scenes. Iowa families spent countless evenings at home looking at the views and enjoying their stereograph collections.

With the advent of the Kodak camera in the 1890s, people became less interested in local views made in the stereoscopic format. Now local images—"snapshots"—could be made by anyone who purchased the relatively inexpensive cameras. But there was still a need to see national and international places and events,

to which the stereographic format added depth and drama. Three large national stereograph companies (B. W. Kilburn, Underwood and Underwood, and H. C. White) soon dominated the market. Their photographers searched the world for views that were out of the reach for most Kodak-toting Americans. Without ever leaving their homes, viewers could "travel" through the stereoscope to exotic places like India, Africa, and the South Seas and witness thrilling scenes that most would never see in person.

In 1892, Singley's new company, Keystone View Company, entered the market. In less than a decade it surpassed the "big three" and became the largest manufacturer of stereo views. The company sent photographers all over the world in search of stereographs for the American consumer. By 1923, Keystone had bought out all of its competitors and in the 1920s and '30s was the only U.S. company producing the views.

Keystone's market, however, had shifted from the

KEYSTONE GEOGRAPHY UNITS
Stereographs and Lantern Slides

UNIT SEVENTEEN
FROM OMAHA EAST
ON THE
LINCOLN HIGHWAY

by
Zoe A. Thralls

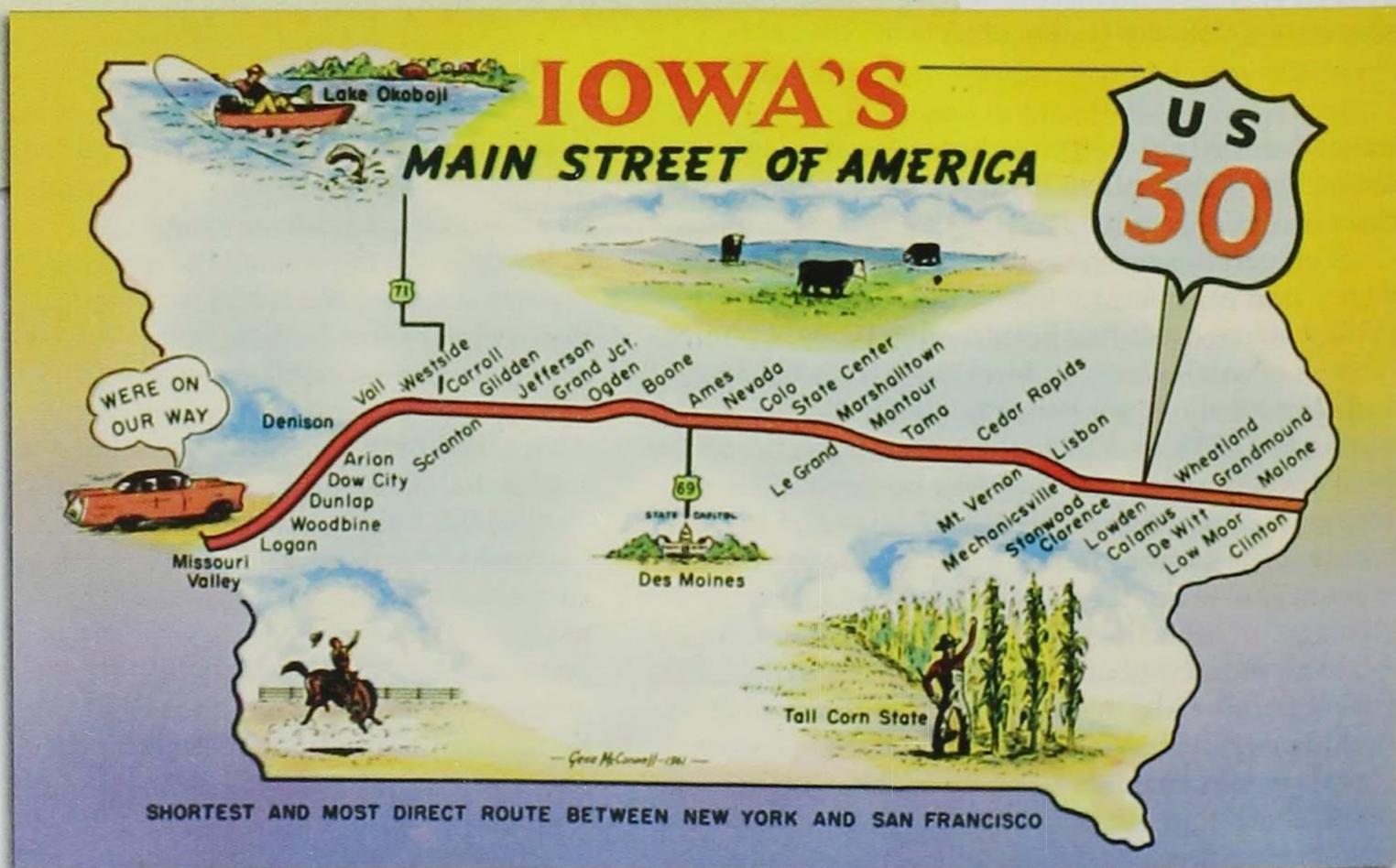


Keystone View Company
Meadville, Penna.

American household to schools and libraries. Series of stereographs in boxed sets of 100 featured tours of regions or industries, national sites, or even a "Tour of the World." Keystone advertisements claimed that every school district in cities of 50,000 or more had Keystone stereographs and slides available for their schools. In 1926, the company advertised through *Midland Schools* magazine, published in Des Moines, for "Three Teachers. Men under thirty-five who can be away from home to sell visual education to individuals. Excellent opportunity for summer or permanent connection. Write Keystone View Co.[in] Meadville, Pa."

Stereo images complemented other audio-visual aids that were making their first appearances in

A 1942 Keystone teacher's guide conveys the Lincoln Highway through social studies concepts. The postcard distills the highway to towns and tourism. Note the 1950s car on the left.



BOTH ITEMS FROM PRIVATE COLLECTION

American schools, such as 16-millimeter motion pictures, filmstrips, photographs, prints, and records. Social studies and geography classrooms came alive, Singley believed, with the added third dimension of stereoscope viewing. Teachers concurred. Two educators from Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Falls wrote in *Methods of Teaching in Town and Rural Schools* (1942) that the stereograph "gives pupils the feeling of reality as they look through the stereoscope at the three-dimensional views. The stereoscope is not expensive and the views are plentiful. Often only one picture is needed to make clear the size of the redwood trees or the height of the Rockies. The 'blindings' on the frame make it easy to imagine that one is on the location looking directly at the objects in the picture."

Keystone also produced glass lantern slides of the same images (though they lacked the three-dimensional depth of a stereograph). One of the twin photos was reproduced on a glass slide; some were then color tinted by hand, making the image especially vivid. The slide was inserted into a slide projector as a light source and projected onto a screen or wall so that several students could view it at the same time.

Lesson plans and worksheets accompanied the series of stereographs or lantern slides. Zoe A. Thralls, a noted educator and writer, created two teacher's guides (one for the western United States and one for the eastern). In the *Keystone Geography Units* manual, Thralls spelled out goals and objectives for the classroom teacher as she began to teach the unit (elementary teacher's guides at the time usually used the feminine pronoun). Emphasizing regional differences, the unit provided a beginning understanding of the size of the nation, its "variety of surfaces and scenery . . . and human activities [and their relation] to the natural conditions." The objective was to stimulate students to learn more.

For fourth graders and beginning fifth graders, the series would be introductory, an "imaginary" and "scenic trip" across the nation, requiring five or six days and using pictures, maps, and class discussion. At the end of fifth grade, the series served as a "summary and review of a fifth-grade study of the United States. . . . The pictures along the Highway should be used as a point of departure for discussion of the geography of each section."

The teacher's manual also explained why the Lincoln Highway series portrayed the sweep of the United States, quoting someone who had said, "Aside from being a delightful method of travel from coast to coast, a trip over this great road furnishes a true picture of America. It traverses the great industrial

centers of the East, the richest producing areas of the Middle West, and the scenic wonders and playgrounds of the West. It gives the traveler a glimpse of practically every phase of American Life."

The hometown of Keystone, in Meadville, was just a hundred or so miles north of the Lincoln Highway as it wound through western Pennsylvania. Since 1913, Americans had been hearing about this first coast-to-coast route in the nation. Some called it "America's Main Street." In Iowa, several communities along the route changed street names (such as Lincoln Way in Ames) to honor the highway and to lure highway travelers to their communities' auto repair shops, tourist camps, hotels, and restaurants. In the earliest years, the Lincoln Highway was actually an east-west network of existing roads. Over time, road improvements were made on the local level, including grading and paving. Trips prior to 1920 across its route of often muddy gravel and dirt roads took the traveler 60 to 90 days, but Singley, on the improved road conditions of the 1930s, would make the trip in just a few weeks.

As both Keystone president and photographer, Singley certainly knew what he was doing. His pack was full of film as he crossed the bridge into Iowa, his eighth state. He had already shot photos of the New York City skyline, a New Jersey truck garden, a Pennsylvania coal mine, an Ohio pottery manufacturer, and an Illinois canning factory. Now here was Iowa to consider. What views would tell its tale? How could Iowa best be interpreted to a nation of young learners? He used three standpoints: scenic, geographical, and historical. Earlier stereo series by Keystone and others had included Iowa views such as the Little Brown Church in Nashua, the Agricultural Experimental Station at Ames, and the large generators at the Keokuk Dam. By Singley's criteria, however, this new series must follow the Lincoln Highway through the central part of the state and must tell what Iowa was all about, as well as add to the concept of regional differences in America.

Singley wanted to give an essence of the road, a feeling of travel, so several of his views would include a small portion of the highway or highway markers. He avoided showing people in his images; clothing styles of 1935 might look outdated to viewers in the 1940s. He probably also sought out a focal point for each photo—a tree branch or post in the foreground to

enhance the stereograph's three-dimensional aspect.

Once he captured on film the importance and significance of the states, he and the Keystone staff, aided by social studies educators, would make the final choices, eventually selecting 100 views from nearly 400 finalists. Keystone employed historians and authors such as Carl Sandburg and Ernest Thompson Seton as consultants and advisors.

Singley and his staff deliberated at length over what photos to use. Fewer than ten views for each state had to convey the regional diversity of the nation. Iowa was obviously a farming state, and in 1935 farming was the livelihood for many Americans. Agriculture in Iowa needed to be shown, of course, and a major agricultural college in Ames was along the route. But Iowa had cities as well as fields of grain. Fortunately, one of these, Cedar Rapids, was along the Lincoln Highway. Geographically, Iowa was unique because it was bordered by two major rivers that students needed to know about.

In the end, Iowa was represented by six views (only Nevada had more with seven). Students sitting in an Iowa classroom during the late 1930s would have seen their state, among the eleven others on the Lincoln Highway, represented in the boxed set as presented on the following pages.

After his week in Iowa, Singley left Council Bluffs. He continued west to San Francisco and then returned to Pennsylvania. He became ill in the following year and died three years later. With declining sales and the death of the president, Keystone ceased regular production of stereographs in 1939.

At one time, Keystone View Company marketed more than 40,000 stereograph titles. This was a small portion of the company's 350,000 glass negatives and

prints, representing Keystone views and in addition negatives from competitors bought out by Keystone. For a while in the 1940s and 1950s, Keystone concentrated on making only the 4x5 lantern slide sets rather than the stereographs. In 1963, Gifford Mast of Davenport, Iowa, bought the company. Mast was in the business of instrument manufacturing in Davenport and used a small portion of the Keystone stereograph negatives with eye-training instruments that were popular with optometrists. In March 1977 the Mast family donated the thousands of negatives and prints to the California Museum of Photography at the University of California, Riverside, the third-largest U.S. photography museum, partly because of the extensive Keystone-Mast Collection.

In the following decades, U.S. Highway 30, still sometimes known as the Lincoln Highway, gave way to yet another highway, Interstate 80, which follows roughly the same transcontinental route. Nevertheless, a whole generation of Iowans, as well as U.S. students, probably learned much about American geography—and Iowa's place in that geography—through the Keystone series. Zoe Thralls's teacher's guides provided a rigorous and thorough program that should have produced some good results. Many schools later gave their stereographs, including the Lincoln Highway Series, to local libraries.

In today's elementary classrooms with videos and computers, stereographs and lantern slides would look quite antiquated. But for the students of the 1930s and '40s, many of whom had not traveled beyond their own counties, the images were some of the first visual education in the classroom, bringing something far more exciting than the words in their textbooks.

Paul C. Juhl is co-author with Mary Bennett of Iowa Stereographs: Three-Dimensional Views of the Past. His articles about photographer J. P. Doremus on the Mississippi and merchants' photographic advertising cards appeared in previous issues.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Special appreciation certainly goes to Steve Thomas, Curator of Collections at the University of California at Riverside/California Museum of Photography, who was instrumental in helping to complete this project. The museum has nearly 34,000 images from the Keystone-Mast Collection on its Web site: www.cmp.uc.edu. Click on "Collections." The librarians at the State Historical Society, Iowa City, especially Linda Brown, gave valuable assistance. Ron Labbe at Studio 3D provided information concerning the Singley family. Lyell Henry of Iowa City gave information on the Lincoln Highway, and county historians in Clinton, Linn, Boone, and Marshall counties detailed the highway in their counties. Professor R. Douglas Hurt explained farming and livestock information of the 1930s. As always, a special thank you to Ginalie Swaim, the editor of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, for her constant encouragement of my interests and her editing skills on this article.

Secondary sources include Drake Hokanson, *The Lincoln Highway: Main Street Across America* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988); *The Lincoln Highway: Iowa Map Pack* (1994); Gregory M. Franzwa, *The Lincoln Highway in Iowa* (Tucson: Patrice Press, 1995); Zoe A. Thralls, *Keystone Geography Units Stereographs and Lantern Slides, Unit Seventeen, From Omaha East on the Lincoln Highway* (Meadville, Penn.: Keystone View Company, 1942); and E. L. Ritter and L. A. Shepherd, *Methods of Teaching in Town and Rural Schools* (New York: Dryden Press, 1942). Additional sources include various articles on the Lincoln Highway from the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, including September 27, 1998, by Dave Rasdal and Liz Mathis; and Drake Hokanson, "Cross-country, Home and Away Magazine (July/August 2000).

For more information, see the Lincoln Highway Association's Web site, www.LincolnHighwayAssoc.org.

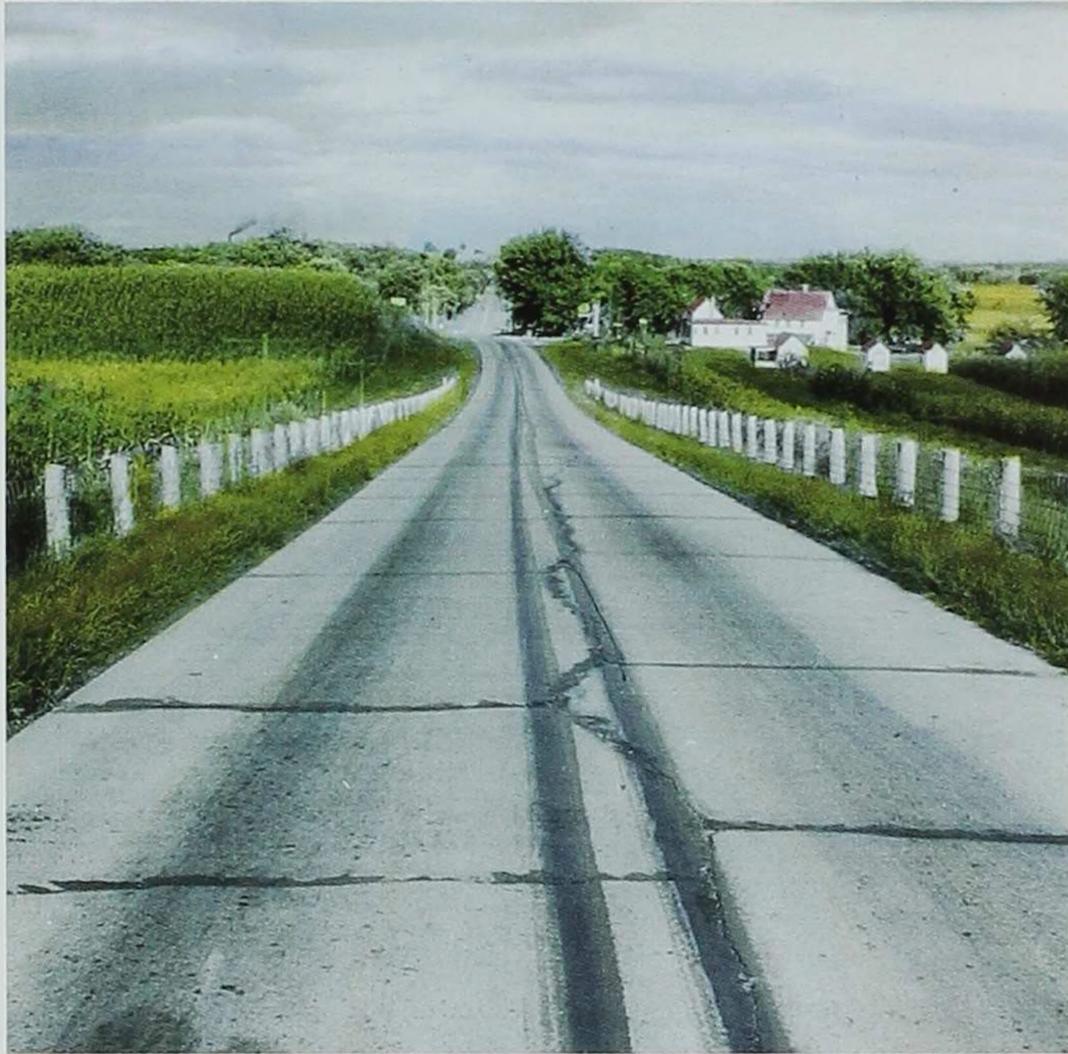


“Mississippi River From the Heights, Clinton, Iowa”

B. Lloyd Singley probably photographed this view from what is today Eagle Point Park, near Lock 13. On the far left, you can see a portion of a Civil War cannon, later melted down for military use during World War II. This is one of Keystone’s hand-colored glass lantern slides intended for projection on a classroom screen or wall. Explanatory text on the reverse of each stereograph card and in the teacher’s guides posed questions to involve the students and encourage them to look carefully (see below). The text allows today’s readers to gauge change and glimpse how social studies educators portrayed Iowa in the mid-1930s.

“At Fulton, Illinois, the Lincoln Highway crosses the Mississippi River into Iowa. On the Iowa side of the river is Clinton. This is a view of the Mississippi from the bluffs on that side. The Mississippi has its source in Minnesota, and flows southward into the Gulf of Mexico. On your map you can perhaps find where it rises in Minnesota. There it is a very tiny stream. In that state it winds from one small lake to another, through swamps and forests, and has many waterfalls. By the time it reaches Iowa it is a slowly moving body of water, hundreds of feet in width, winding back and forth across its flood plain. This flat plain is bounded by steep bluffs—two and three hundred feet high. It is from the bluffs that we are looking down the river. From here on, because of the great width of the river, there are few bridges. Between Fulton and Clinton there are two steel highway bridges.

“Notice how the fields reach clear to the edge of the bluffs. What crop or crops do you recognize? Down on the flood plain of the river, you can see houses and some fields. The soil is very rich there, but floods frequently destroy the crops and homes.”



“Along the Lincoln Highway, Twenty Miles West of Clinton, Iowa”

The route to the hamlet of Syracuse, near the Wapsipinicon River, was lined with white tenth-mile markers so motorists could check their odometers and speedometers. The photo compressed the depth of field; in a stereoscope the actual distance between markers was more apparent. Down the highway is a wayside tourist motel. Often with just enough room for a bed and a basin and no running water, roadside stops were still better than sleeping on the ground in a tent. Look closely in the lower left corner for Singley’s shadow, with hat and camera.

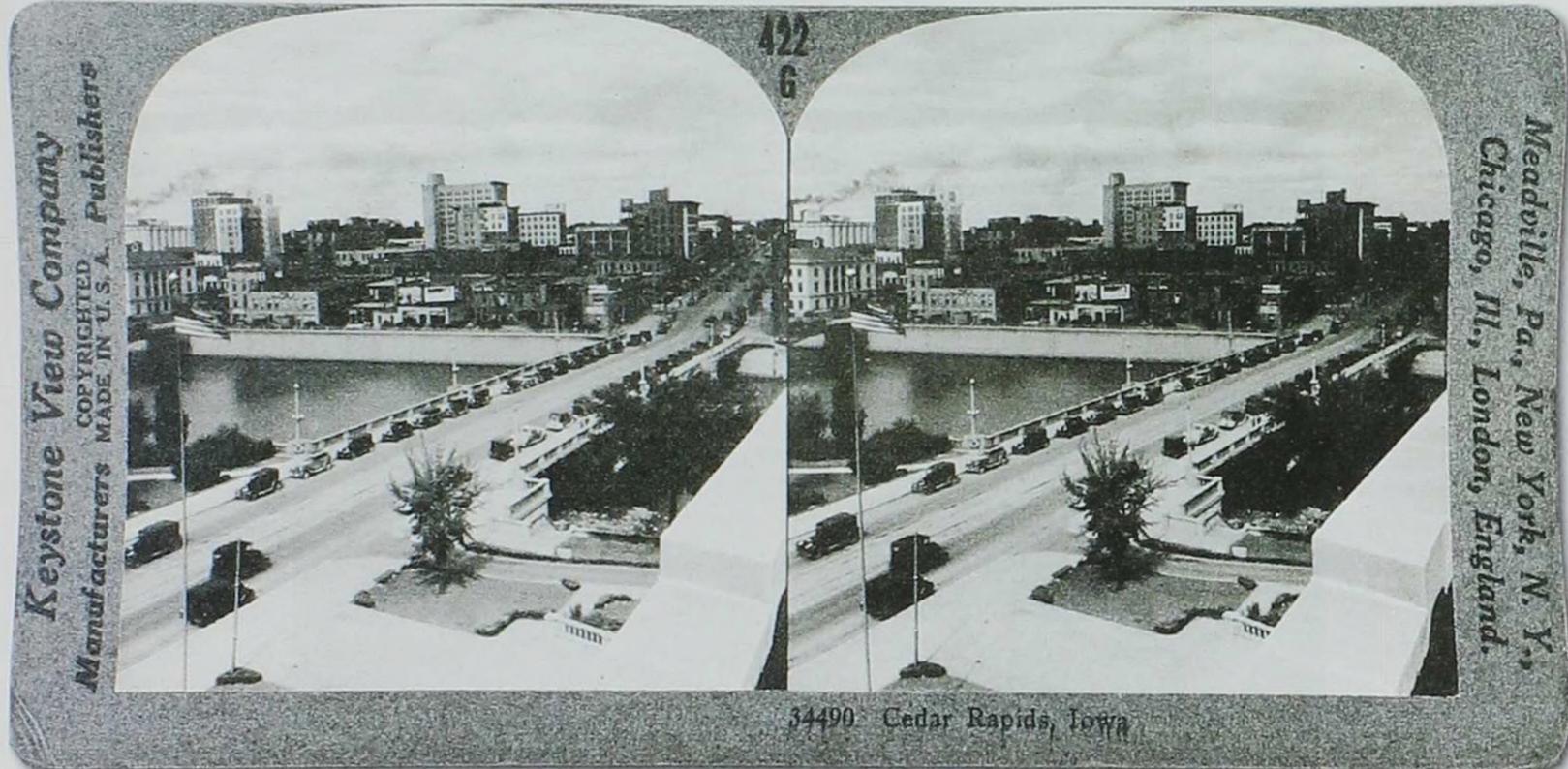
“We are now in Iowa, and the Highway goes almost due west across the state. Notice the difference between the surface of the land here and of that in Illinois. Although we are still on the great Central Plains of North America, in Iowa the plains begin to gradually rise. The Western half of Iowa is between 1,000 and 2,000 feet above sea level. There are still very flat areas, but the surface, on the whole, is rolling.

“What seems to be the chief kind of work here? What crop is growing in the fields? How can you judge the height of the corn?”

“Notice where the trees are planted. All through the Corn Belt, the farm buildings are surrounded by trees. Suggest a reason for this.

“What other activity besides farming is indicated? What are the signs? How can you find the main part of the city?”

“About what time of the year is this? How do you know? For many unbroken miles, we shall now see cornfield after cornfield stretching away in the distance, on both sides of the Highway. Occasionally there will be a field of wheat or oats, or pastures with cattle, horses and sheep grazing there.”



“Cedar Rapids, Iowa”

Although stereographs of the 1860s–1890s were flat, turn-of-the-century stereograph producers, including Keystone, discovered that concave cards, like this one, created a “warped” effect that increased the three-dimensional aspect. For this shot, Singley climbed on the north roof of the Linn County Courthouse on May’s Island in the Cedar River. At the extreme left, the industrial buildings are part of the Quaker Oats Company. On the same day Singley took several variations of this view of downtown Cedar Rapids; two showed the Veterans Memorial Coliseum (completed in 1927) on May’s Island. Including the urban center of Cedar Rapids and its industrial base in the stereograph series balanced students’ view of Iowa as a solely agricultural state.

“We are now approaching the largest city that we have seen since leaving South Bend, Indiana. Find Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on your map. According to the map symbol, how large is it? What type of city does this view suggest? It is rather surprising to most travelers to find such a large, busy manufacturing city here, because most people think of Iowa as only an agricultural state. There are nearly two hundred manufacturing establishments in Cedar Rapids. All of them either make things needed by the farmers, such as farm implements, or use farm crops to make various food products. The Quaker Oats Company has one of its largest mills here. If you look carefully you can see a part of the plant, with its elevators at the extreme left. Other plants are cornstarch factories, rail repair shops, and pump and furniture factories.

“Cedar Rapids is a collecting and distributing center for a large and rich agricultural area. This part of Iowa is very flat and crossed by numerous small rivers. At this point on the Cedar River there are rapids. The river has been dammed, and a power plant, which supplies electricity for the city and the factories, has been built.”



“A Corn Field, Iowa”

In 1935, corn harvesting took place at a much later date than today, often in November or even early December; without modern drying techniques, corn needed to dry in the field. Although some farmers in 1935 were using single- or double-row corn pickers pulled by teams of workhorses or tractors, much corn picking was still done by hand.

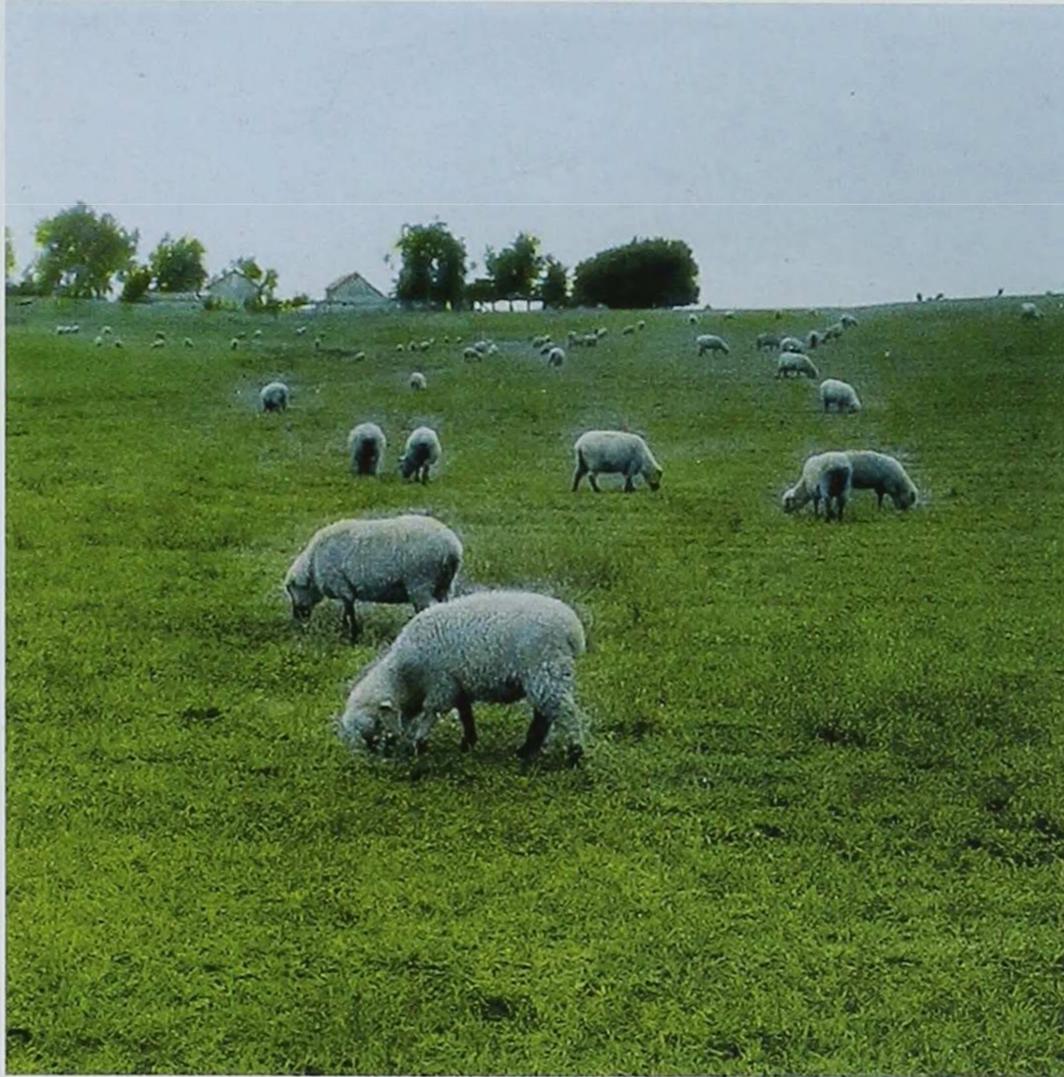
“If possible we see more corn in Iowa than we did in Illinois. We almost begin to think that Iowa is one big cornfield. How high does this corn seem to you? The corn of Iowa is noted for its height. The deep, rich glacial and alluvial soil and the long, hot summers, with their frequent thunderstorms and much sunshine, seem to suit the corn plant. The farmer insists that on a hot, sultry night you can hear the corn grow.

“A poet has described Iowa as follows:

Flat as a pancake, fertile as can be,
All the way from Keokuk to Calliope;
Corn that kisses cloudlets when its tassels wave,
Land that laughs a harvest when the reapers slave.

“How does this scene check with the poet’s words? In what respect was he wrong? Which lines would our view illustrate?

“(Poem from Maurice Morris, ‘Iowa’ in *New York Tribune*, 1922)”

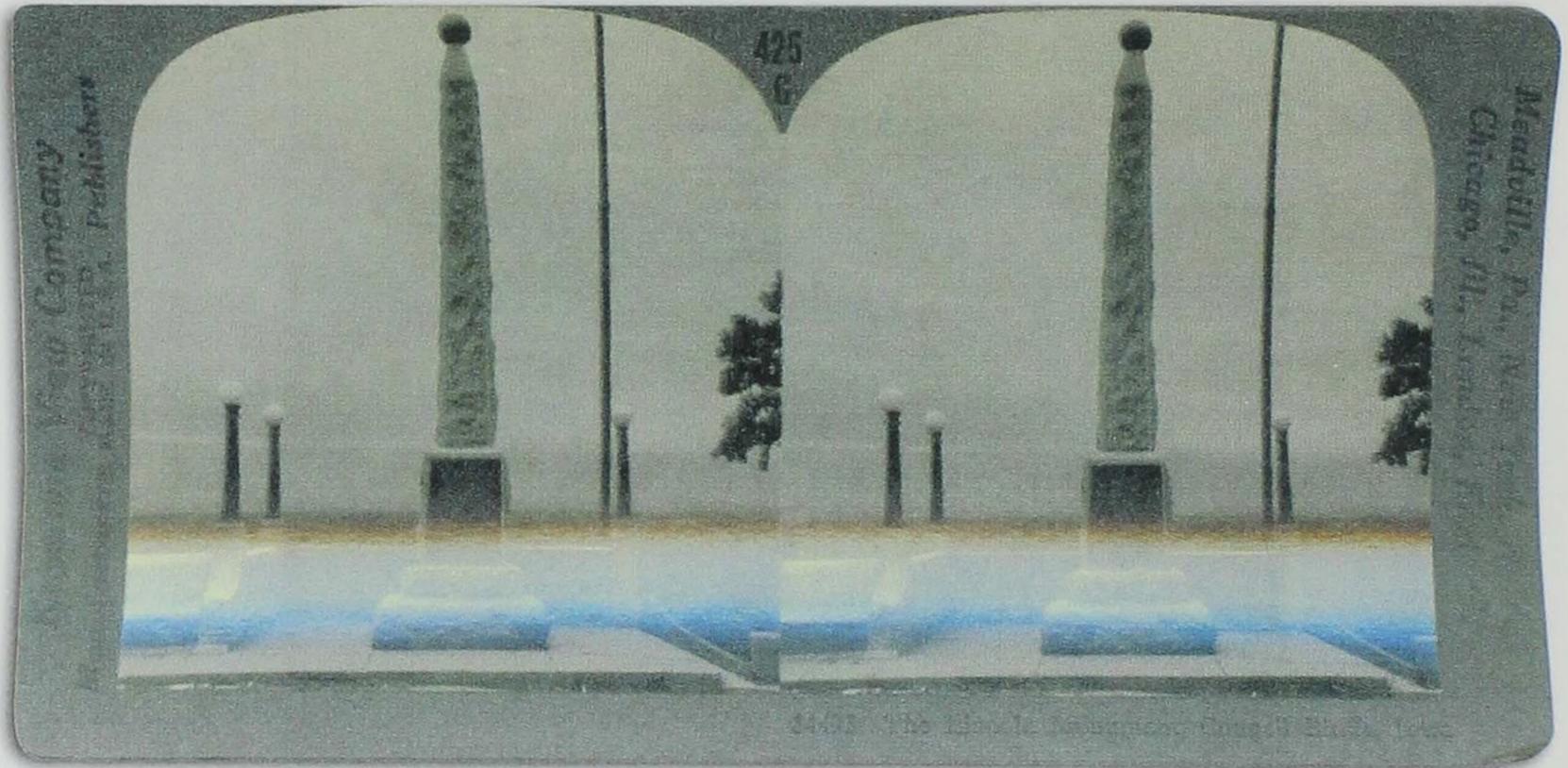


“Sheep on a Farm, Iowa”

Singley probably took this view east of Marshalltown. The bucolic nature of the scene might have been too much for Singley to resist, although it certainly did not represent the livestock industry in Iowa at that time. Hogs and cattle in Iowa dominated Iowa livestock raising, with sheep a distant third.

“However, not all of the land in Iowa is devoted to corn. What animals do we see here? With what type of region do we usually associate sheep raising? It may surprise you to find some sheep on most Iowa farms. In fact, though, the region known as the Corn Belt has more animals than any other section of the United States. But not all of the animals are born here. In October and November the farmers buy young animals, those from a few months to a year old, to feed until they are old enough and fat enough for slaughtering. Why does this pay?

“Representatives of the cooperative farm organizations in the villages buy ‘feeder cattle’ in the western part of the Great Plains, where the climate is drier than in the Corn Belt. These cattle are sold to the farmers through the cooperatives. Then later, usually in the late spring, when the animals are ready for the market, the cooperatives sell them for the farmers to the big meatpacking companies. Some farmers do their own buying and marketing, but it is easier and pays better to handle the animals through the cooperative organizations.”



“The Lincoln Monument, Council Bluffs, Iowa”

This monument was erected by the Council Bluffs Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution on October 1911. It still overlooks the Missouri River valley. The panorama has changed significantly, however, since it was viewed by Abraham Lincoln during an 1859 visit to Council Bluffs. Instead of an undeveloped river plain, one now sees the sprawling city of Council Bluffs and, in the far distance, its sister city of Omaha, Nebraska. An additional inscription on the monument describes Abraham Lincoln as “A King of Men/ Whose Crown was Love/Whose Throne was Gentleness.” Lincoln was often lauded in the first decades of the 20th century. At a time of much industrial and cultural change, Americans looked back for reassurance to earlier times and heroes in the nation’s history. This image at the state’s western border ended the Iowa portion of Keystone’s Lincoln Highway series of classroom stereographs and lantern slides.

“Iowa is bounded on both the east and the west by rivers. The Missouri River is its western boundary—and here we are on its banks. On the Iowa side is the city of Council Bluffs. Many rather interesting historical events have taken place here, such as the following: At this site the Indian tribes once held their powwows and, twenty miles to the north, Lewis and Clark held a council with the Indians in 1804; in 1819 the first steamboat on the Missouri ascended as far as Council Bluffs; in 1846 the Mormons established a temporary settlement here; at the time of the gold rush, in 1849, this was an outfitting post with a ferry to permit crossing the river. The inscription on the monument tells us something about the city: ‘This monument is to commemorate the visit of Abraham Lincoln to Council Bluffs, August 19, 1859. From this point he viewed the extensive panorama of the valley of the Missouri River and in compliance with the Law of Congress on November 17, 1863, he selected this city as the eastern terminus of the Union Pacific Railroad.’ The Union Pacific was the first railroad from the Pacific Coast eastward.”

More Views of Iowa Along the Lincoln Highway

During his 1935 trip on the Lincoln Highway, Singley photographed many views in each state he visited, including more than 50 in Iowa. Some may have been used in other series or for other purposes, but most survive only as black-and-white copy negatives in the vast Keystone-Mast Collection. This is probably the first time the following five photos by Singley have been published.

KEYSTONE-MAST COLLECTION, UCR/CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE



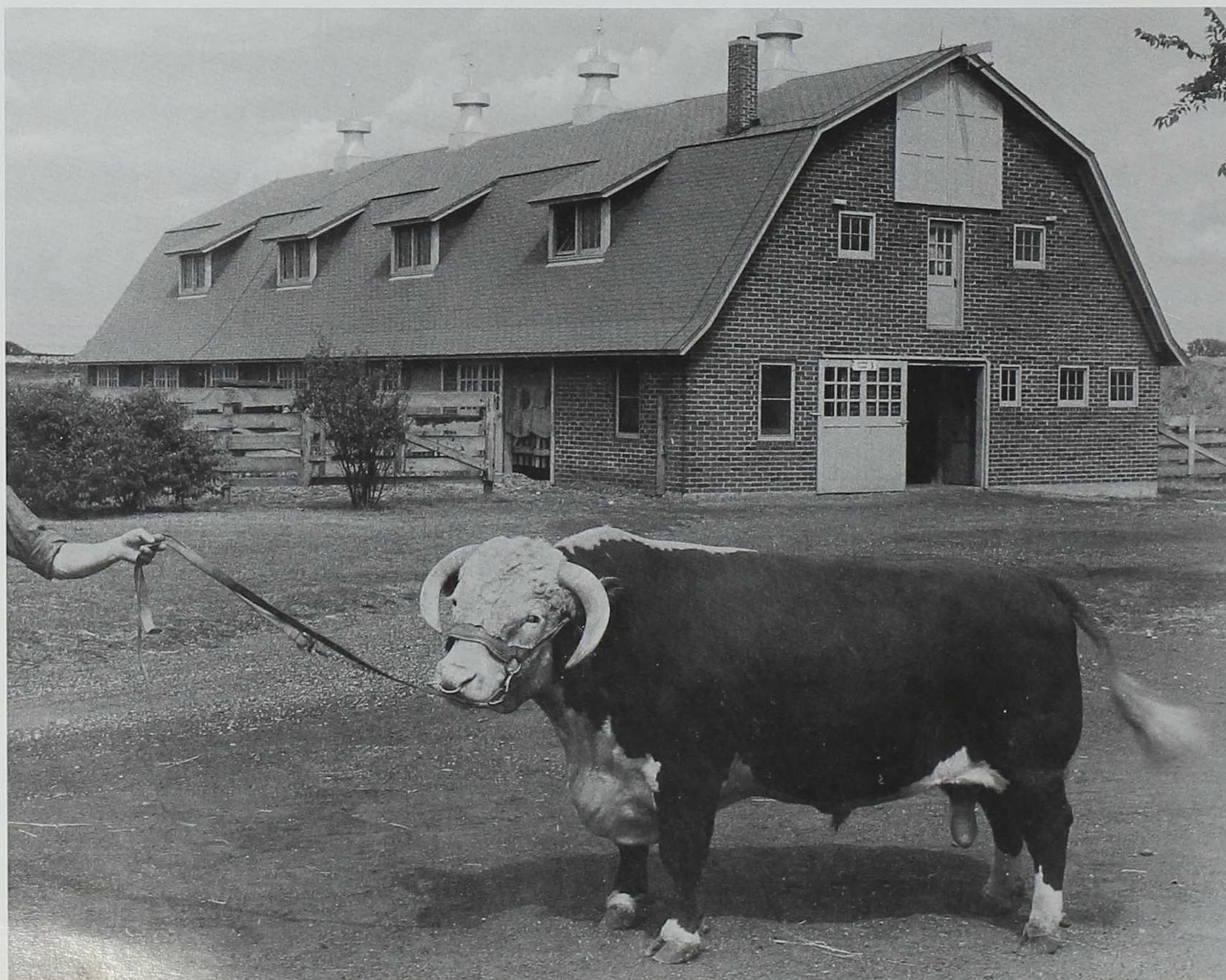
TAMA COUNTY. Titled in pencil on the reverse side as "Lincoln Highway; Indian Reservation, Tama Iowa," this is, of course, a photograph of a "summer shade" at the Meskwaki Settlement near Tama. The shelter provided shade on this October afternoon. The Meskwaki still live on their land. It is not a reservation, as Singley labeled it. The tribe began purchasing land beginning in the mid-1850s. Since then, the settlement has grown from 80 acres to more than 7,000. In another photo, Singley included a sign posted for the August 1935 powwow. The powwow is still held every summer at the settlement.

MARSHALLTOWN: A garden and an automobile with New Jersey license plates are the background for these Mexican firebush topiaries shaped as living room furniture—certainly a scene that would have caught the eye of any photographer. The four-foot plant is also called scarlet bush or firecracker shrub. Perhaps the small bouquet on the table is also part of the topiary. These topiaries probably lasted for only one season because the plant is tropical. It is prized by native people in Veracruz and the Yucatan, where its scarlet flowers bloom near the Mayan pyramids.

AMES: Named Bruce Domino 18th, this 2,000-pound bull was the head of the Iowa State College Hereford herd. Bulls were usually replaced after four or five years and taken to slaughter. Now part of the horse science programs, the barn still stands on the campus. Surprisingly, Keystone chose no photos of the agricultural college for its series.



KEYSTONE-MAST COLLECTION, UCR/CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE



KEYSTONE-MAST COLLECTION, UCR/CALIFORNIA MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, RIVERSIDE



COUNCIL BLUFFS: Part of the original Lincoln Highway, Broadway was the major street in Council Bluffs. Despite urban renewal and relocation of the highway, Broadway remains a central, downtown street.

COUNCIL BLUFFS: In a park near the Lincoln Monument, this log house was constructed of 100 oak and hickory logs in July of 1935, just weeks before Singley photographed it. The builders were two men who had been born in log houses themselves, and the structure served as the Pottawattamie County Historical Society's log cabin museum. At its dedication, Superintendent William Petersen of the State Historical Society of Iowa said, "I sincerely believe that every community in Iowa, large or small, should erect a cabin in which may be stored such pioneer relics as spinning wheels, candle moulds, yokes, and the like which otherwise might be thrown away." The log cabin was, for many years, in a dilapidated state and was finally torn down. ❖



The Thrill and Magic of Audio-Visual Day in a 1950s School

by Paul C. Juhl

In doing research for the previous article, I couldn't help but pause and remember personal experiences in audio-visual education at my country school in Webster County during the early 1950s. It was a very typical Iowa one-room school, heated by a cob and coal stove and without running water or even a well. For our geography preparation, there was the standard globe in the farthest corner of the building and wall maps of our state, nation, and the world rolled together and hanging on reels in the front. These maps had been purchased before World War II and so, at some point in the late 1940s, a teacher had drawn in the "new" boundaries of the European countries.

One Friday, late in the day and possibly in 1951, we received word from the teacher that during the next week we would experience audio-visual materials. This was a new word in our vocabularies and had a rather futuristic sound. Sure enough, on Monday morning a panel truck arrived from Fort Dodge, the county seat, loaded with phonograph records, slides, motion pictures, filmstrips, and the equipment necessary to use them. I am not sure if we had a pull-down screen, but most certainly there was plenty of empty wall space for that purpose. It was an exciting moment for me and the other nine students.

Our audio-visual education commenced at the very beginning of that same school day. One of the older boys pulled down dark window shades, blackening the room, and the teacher began the show. I am sure we had breaks for recess, lunch, and the use of the outhouses, but with this highly unusual event happening, we hurried back to our classroom. We didn't want to miss a moment.

The monotony of our little school existence had been broken with these new words to my ears, "audio-visual education." For a few magical days, there was no reading or writing or arithmetic.

Strange voices and sights that we had never heard or seen before came from records and films. By 4 p.m. we exited Washington #1 rubbing our eyes in the sunlight and anticipating the next day. There was no time to tie anything we were seeing or hearing to the curriculum. We would have plenty of time to contemplate it all after the images had moved on to the next school. In lives that had yet to experience much television and only occasionally movies at the theater, we felt honored to have this wonderful entertainment brought right to our door.

I'm not sure if this was planning (or a lack of it) on the part of our teacher to receive a year's worth of audio-visual all at once, or simply the way the county superintendent of schools had set things up. Perhaps they were trying a method similar to the traveling libraries that brought books to country schools: a school would receive different books for a few weeks and, after students had had an opportunity to read them, the books would be packed up and sent to the school two miles to the north. We then received reading books from another school that was two miles south.

As for stereoscopes and the Lincoln Highway stereographs, they never arrived at our school. Evidently they had either not been purchased by our county or were not included with our materials. If they had, I like to think that our Hawkeye pride at Washington #1 would have ensured that the Iowa views in the series were well worn and admired by the time they were passed on to the next school. ❖

COURTESY THE AUTHOR



Washington #1, 1952: the author, in second grade, is in the back of the middle row.

COURTESY SHSI (IOWA CITY)



Early Laptop?

Well, in a sense.

Ben Stevenson was a county extension agent in the early 1920s, when this photo was taken. Here, on a farm visit in Cedar County, he takes a moment in his auto to peck away on his portable typewriter.

Typewriters were nothing new in the 1920s. The first successfully marketed commercial typewriter was manufactured in 1874 by E. Remington & Sons, then better known for their guns and sewing machines. Variations emerged over the decades, and some designers aimed for smaller and lighter machines. By 1910, the Bennett typewriter, for example, weighed only a few pounds and fit into an 11x5 inch case, half the size of our laptop computers today.

How's that expression go? Something about "nothing new under the sun"?

—The Editor





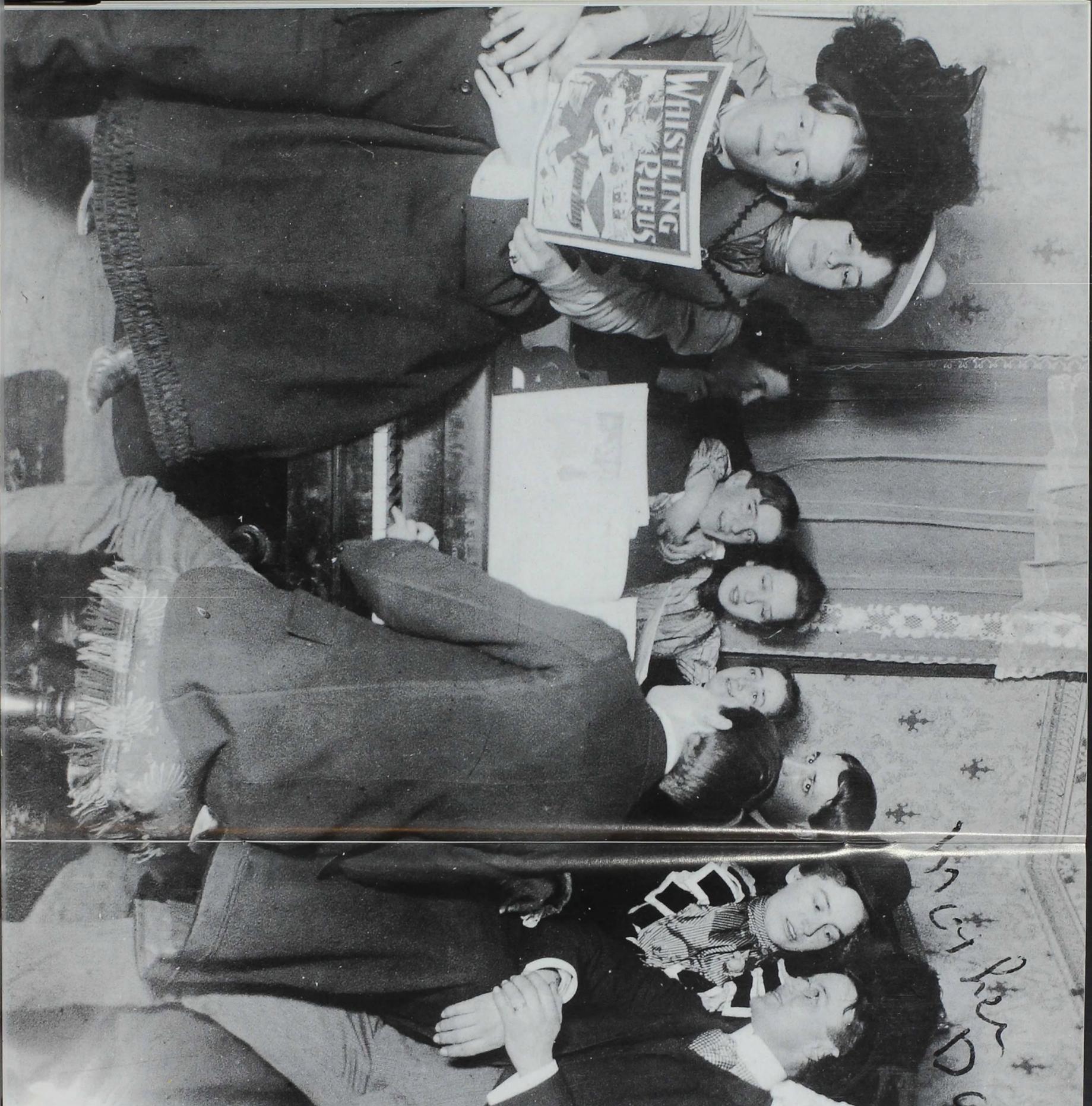
Pleasures *of the* Victorian Parlor

CONSIDER THE STEREOTYPE of the Victorian parlor as a place of rigid propriety, formal manners, uncomfortable furniture—a static, stuffy room crowded with possessions meant to impress visitors with a family's social status and refinement. Although social conventions dictated how a parlor should be decorated and used, one writer in 1883 pronounced the typical parlor as a room of “funereal gloom.” Reformer Harriet Beecher Stowe worried that over-decorated parlors would crush the life of a family “under a weight of upholstery.”

A few Iowa photographers captured several facets of the Victorian parlor. Their images, now a century old, remind us that the parlor was a place of various pleasures—quiet, solitary moments with a good book, or evening parties of silly costumes and spirited games.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

Perched on the piano—a mainstay of middle-class parlors after the 1890s—a young woman sings “Whistling Rufus” with friends. Thanks to an explosion of printed sheet music by the turn of the century, “parlor songs” filled many an evening. (Photograph possibly taken in Tipton.)



Victorian Parlor

of Fine Pleasures

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SHSI (IOWA CITY)

SHSI (IOWA CITY), FOSTER COLLECTION



With cupids watching over her, a woman dressed in satin flounces scrutinizes her hand, while her companion lays down his card. (Photo taken in Iowa Falls.) Mary Elizabeth Wilson Sherwood wrote in her 1881 book, *Home Amusements*: "That is a poorly-furnished parlor . . . which has not a chess-table in one corner, a whist-table in the middle, and a little solitaire-table at the other end near the fire, for grandma. People who are fond of games stock their table drawers with cribbage boards and backgammon, cards of every variety, bezique counters and packs, and the red and white champions of the hard-fought battlefield of chess."



Some wear short pants and ruffled shirts; others, baby bonnets and nightgowns. Victorian costume parties gave permission to masquerade as someone else, or even to try out a baby's pacifier (woman left of center).



The parlor was a place for music (as well as potted houseplants, decorative screens, and layers of curtains). In *Home Amusements*, Sherwood recommended music as a part of the family circle. "The only deep shadow to the musical picture is the necessity of practicing, which is not a Home Amusement; it is a home torture. If only a person could learn to play or sing without those dreadful first noises and those hideous shrieks!"

SHSI (IOWA CITY), FOSTER COLLECTION



Frank E. Foster relaxes and reads in his Iowa Falls parlor. Technological advances in printing late in the century engulfed the middle class with mass-circulation magazines, filled with serialized fiction and advertisements. Low-priced periodicals and novels accompanied Americans' increased leisure time.



SHSI (IOWA CITY)

While his family reads, the boy on the right looks through a stereoscope at the three-dimensional image within. Edwin E. Neal (back right) produced stereographs in his hometown of Keota, as well as photographs. The diagonal cracks indicate that this image was produced from a glass-plate negative

SHSI (IOWA CITY), FOSTER COLLECTION



Fred H. Foster takes on his father, Frank E. Foster, in a game of checkers (Iowa Falls). Certainly not a new game, checkers was joined by dozens of new board games created in the 1890s and manufactured in the hundreds of thousands. Competing manufacturers Milton Bradley, Selchow & Righter, and Parker Brothers introduced new games focused on sports, transportation, and industry, unlike the morally instructive games of earlier decades.

SHSI (IOWA CITY), FOSTER COLLECTION



Although the Victorian parlor served as a space for social rituals—weddings, funerals, social calls, and celebrations—it was also a private space, in which the woman of the house nurtured her children, instructing them in social morals and family values. Here, a mother shares a book with her daughter (Iowa Falls).



SHSI (IOWA CITY), FELTON COLLECTION

Her everyday dress suggests that this pensive musician may be ready to practice rather than perform. According to historian Katherine Grier, parlors “embodied the ideal family circle, the character of genteel social life, and . . . the cosmopolitan world of learning and high culture to which Victorian families aspired.”





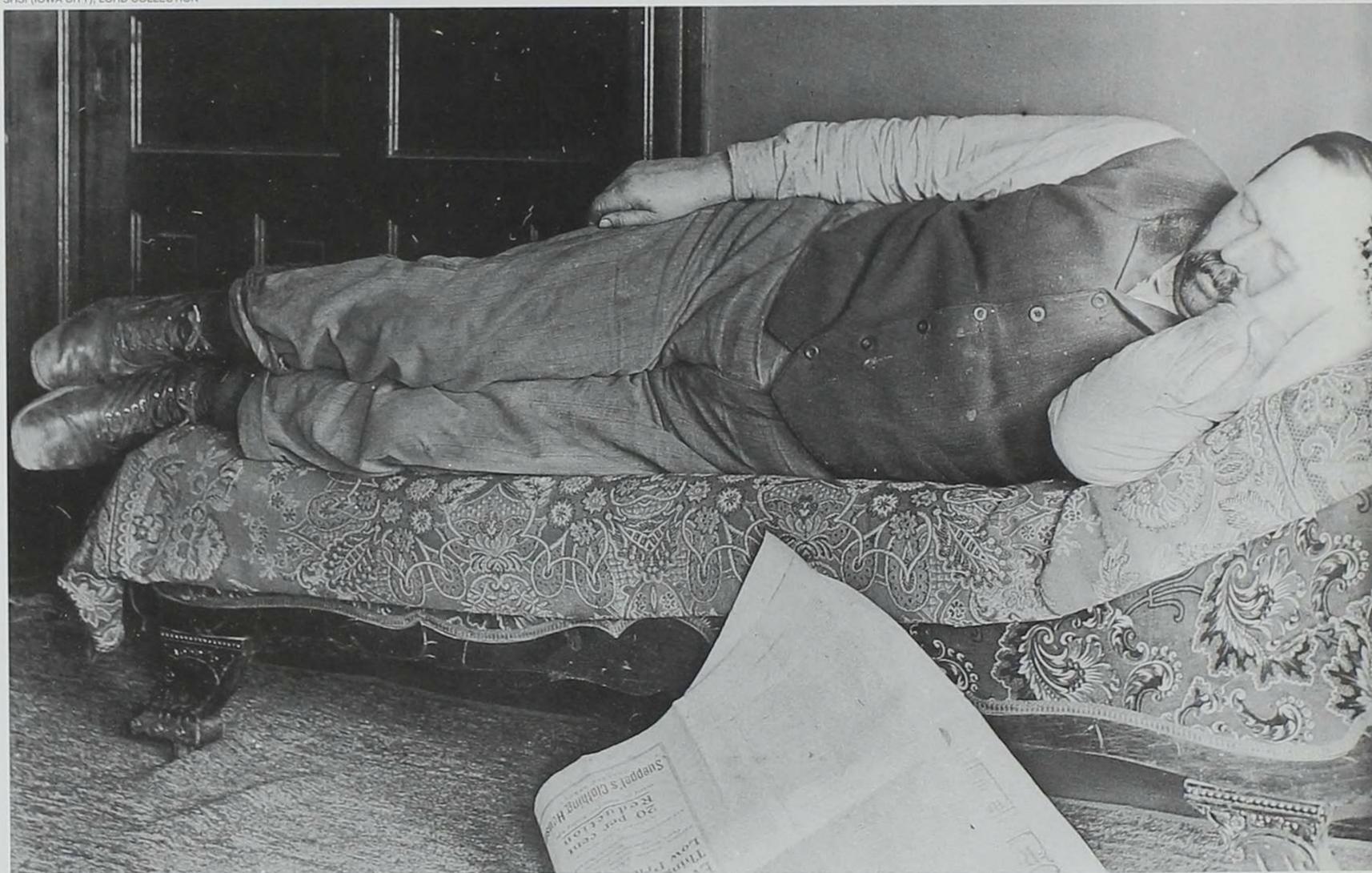
SHS (IOWA CITY), MOFFITT COLLECTION

Laughing behind their fans, two women take a break from cards to watch their friends play blind man's buff (or "bluff," as we know it today). Charades, another Victorian game, would have been a far safer game to play in a parlor filled with furniture and bric-a-brac.



SHSI (IOWA CITY), MOFFIT COLLECTION

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Games, parties, reading, music—few of these surpass the pleasure of a good catnap, as Iowan Frank Lord demonstrates. Some uses of leisure time just never change.

Discover Victorian Iowa

You and your family are invited to experience the Victorian era in a new exhibit, "Discover Victorian Iowa," opening October 1 at the State Historical Society of Iowa, in Des Moines. The exhibit will feature paintings by Iowa artist Mary Kline-Misol, inspired by *Alice in Wonderland* and 19th-century author Lewis Carroll. During our special Victorian Family Days, join in on Victorian parlor and yard games, explore Iowa stereographs, return to the Victorian era with storytellers, create a Victorian hat, learn proper Victorian etiquette and customs, and attend a fancy lady's tea. A Victorian parlor will serve as backdrop and an interactive space. Victorian Family Days are October 1 and November 12, and are free. On November 19, join us for a Lady's Tea Party for moth-

ers, grandmothers, and daughters (call for reservations). Exhibit dates: October 1–November 27. For more information, check our Web site, www.iowaHistory.org, or contact Heather King, 515-281-8754, Heather.King@iowa.gov.

Read about the Victorians

Parlors are just one aspect of the Victorian era. For many more, read *American Home Life, 1880–1930: A Social History of Spaces and Services*, edited by Jessica H. Foy and Thomas J. Schlereth (1992). The book was a useful source for this photo essay. You'll find more books about Victorian life in our historical libraries in Iowa City and Des Moines.

One in a Million

AMONG THE MILLIONS of items in the State Historical Society collections are a multitude of surprises—such as this book, *The New Idea Entertainer for Indoors and Out of Doors* (1903), by Nelle S. Mustain, “a leading teacher of physical culture.” Open its wonderful art nouveau cover and you’ll find fun ideas for every occasion: home, church, and school, as well as clubs and parties.

I love books like these. Even the table of contents gives me a hint of the times: A Kodak Social, A Silhouette Social, A Trolley Party, An Electric Social, An Old-Time Husking Bee, Literary Gleanings, and Dainty Work for Deft Fingers.

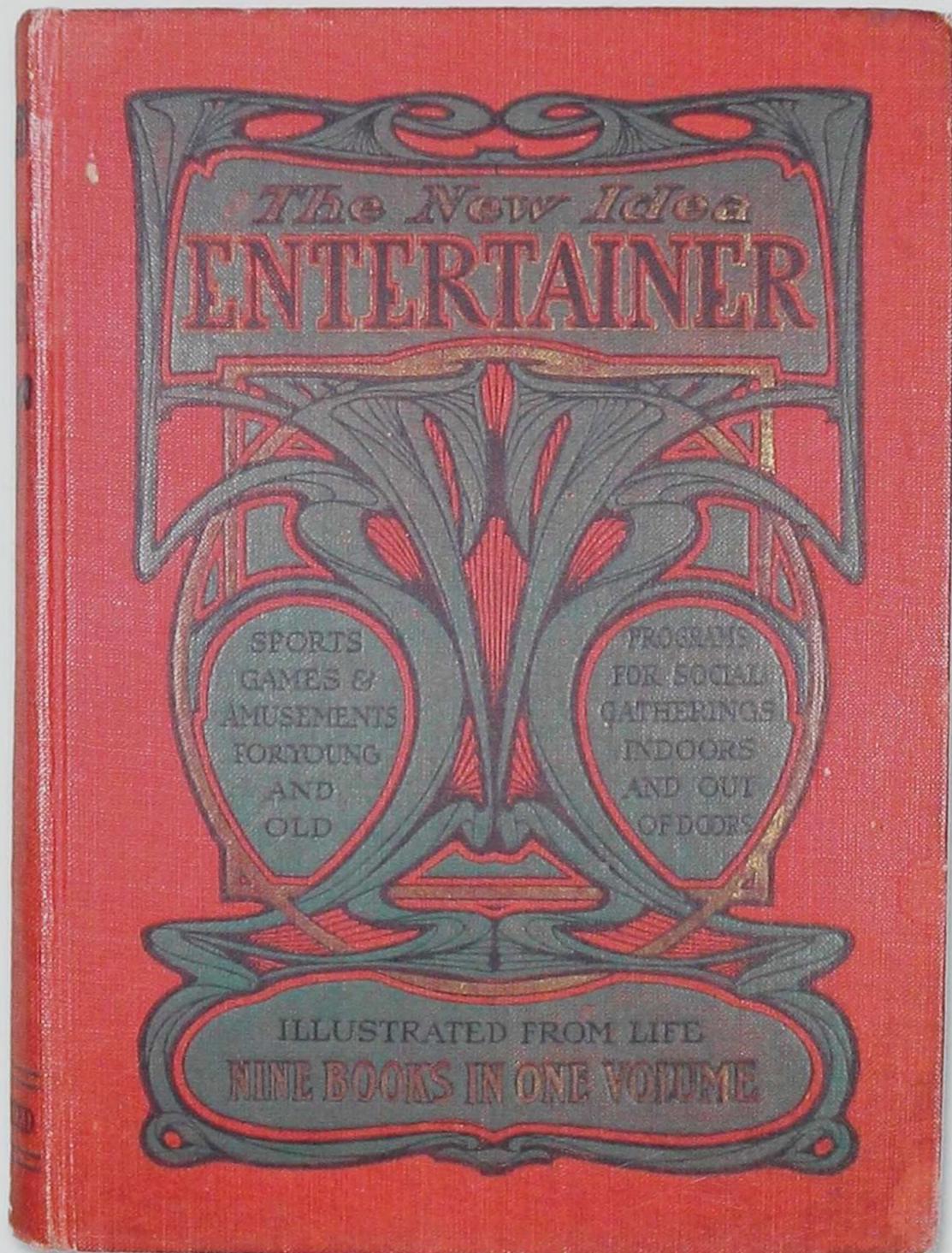
The author spells out hundreds of ways to have fun. Pyrography. Making Fudges. Illustrated Stereopticon Lectures. Pig in the Parlor. A Moonlight Masquerade.

She also knew that life was not all fun. Her etiquette department explains to widows and divorced women how their names should appear on calling cards.

I can’t begin to give a representative sample of this book. But I do know that if I were writing a novel on late Victorian life, or brainstorming for living history presentations, I would dip into this book for specific ideas as well as a general sense of the time.

The fact is, the library collections here at the State Historical Society of Iowa have far more than state, national, and family history. Our magazines from the 1850s detail the fashions of the day. Illustrated millwork catalogs from the turn of the century advertise newel posts, inglenooks, and etched-glass designs for front doors. Sales material from the 1950s depicts the modern kitchen of postwar America.

Consider using historical publications like these to date your heirloom clothing, your antiques, and the in-



terior of your home. Historians remind us, however, that what appeared in etiquette books, fashion magazines, and merchandise catalogs was not always what was practiced or purchased. For example, only a few of us have the designer kitchens featured in today’s mainstream magazines. Nevertheless, today’s publications will show our descendants what some early 21st-century Americans considered cutting edge.

Likewise, some party planners in 1903 surely consulted *The New Idea Entertainer* for fresh ideas on how to have fun.

—The Editor