

WPA Recreation • Ancient Mill Creek • Julia Addington • Summer Storm • Brushy Creek Trial

Fall 2007 • \$7

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers:

Before I introduce this new issue, a few final notes on basketball history, which was featured in the last issue. Between February 26 and March 8, 2009, a musical comedy, *SIX-ON-SIX*, will be performed at the Hoyt Sherman Theatre in Des Moines. Funded in part by the Iowa Arts Council, the two-act musical celebrates the tradition of Iowa girls' high school basketball, including "its storied history, bizarre rules, phenomenal popularity, and colorful personalities." Sounds like fun, as well as a good reminder to us that history can be just that—fun.

Now, two letters from readers.

Cedar Valley Indians

I was so excited to see my favorite Cedar Valley Indians on the cover of the recent issue [below]. I was in the stands the day of



that game. However, the player [blocking the shot, in the dark suit] is mis-identified as Mary Jo Bassett. It is actually Janet Hanson. Mary Jo was on the team that year, but was not #53. The player on the far left in the dark suit is Betty Carlson, who also appears on page 71. Having played girls' basketball at Cedar Valley, 1960–1962, I really enjoyed your article.

Judith A. Walrod, Somers, Iowa

Fueling the Fires of History

Thanks for your article about basketball in Iowa. I found it very informative. I happened to run across a page in the Drake *Quax* yearbook (my mother's copy) dated 1921, [which says]: "This year under the supervision of Coach Banks, Drake staged an elaborate Basketball Tournament for High School Girls. Twenty-four

schools were entered. . . . The finals [were] played by Correctionville and Nevada, Correctionville winning. . . . This was the first contest of this kind ever played in the state." There seems to be some contention around the state as to who really got the ball (i.e., basket) rolling. The information adds more fuel to the fires of history.

Lowell Titus, Indianola, Iowa

Mr. Titus brings up an excellent point about history—the difficulty of nailing down a "claim to the first" in history. So often it's a matter of defining and qualifying what "first" really means. Then, can it really be verified against other claims?

Cheryl Mullenbach, one of the authors in this issue, encountered a "claim to the first" while researching the history of her hometown, Stacyville. As she looked more deeply into the claim, she uncovered a testy political campaign with vociferous candidates and media rivalry. Sound familiar?

Anyway, for those of you delving into the past, here's a little advice. First, have a healthy skepticism about "claims to the first." Second, expect to encounter stories you weren't even looking for. Third, give free rein to your curiosity.

Paul Juhl, another author in this issue, is one of those curious souls who is always undertaking a new project based on where his curiosity has led him. Certainly curiosity was a guiding force for archaeologists Charles R. Keyes and Ellison Orr, whose discoveries about Indian mounds in northwestern Iowa led to the designation of one of the state's first National Historic Landmarks. And without Cheryl Mullenbach's curiosity, Julia Addington's name would remain unknown.

Another commonality in this issue is a lyricism about the Iowa landscape. You'll find it in Michael Perry's article on Keyes and Orr; in a 1904 letter from Lake Okoboji; in Paul Juhl's memories of Brushy Creek; and in Sherrill Kerbaugh's evocative description of a summer storm.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor

Iowa Heritage Illustrated

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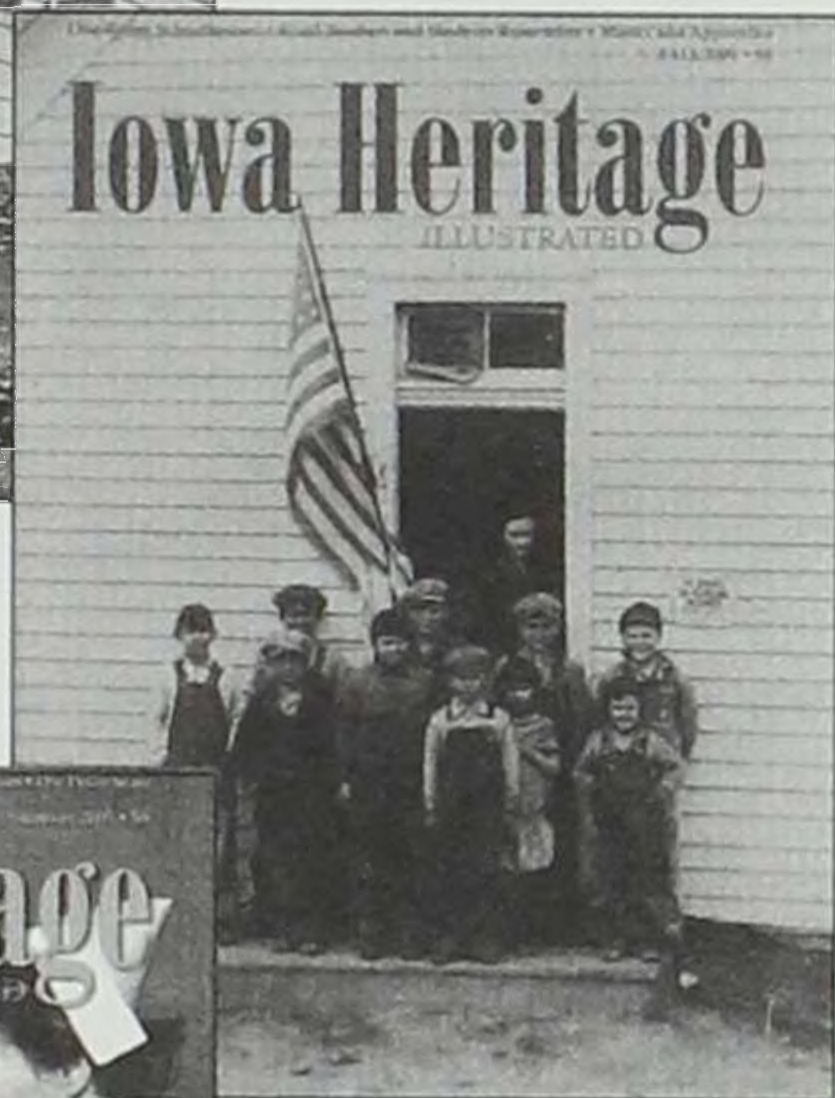
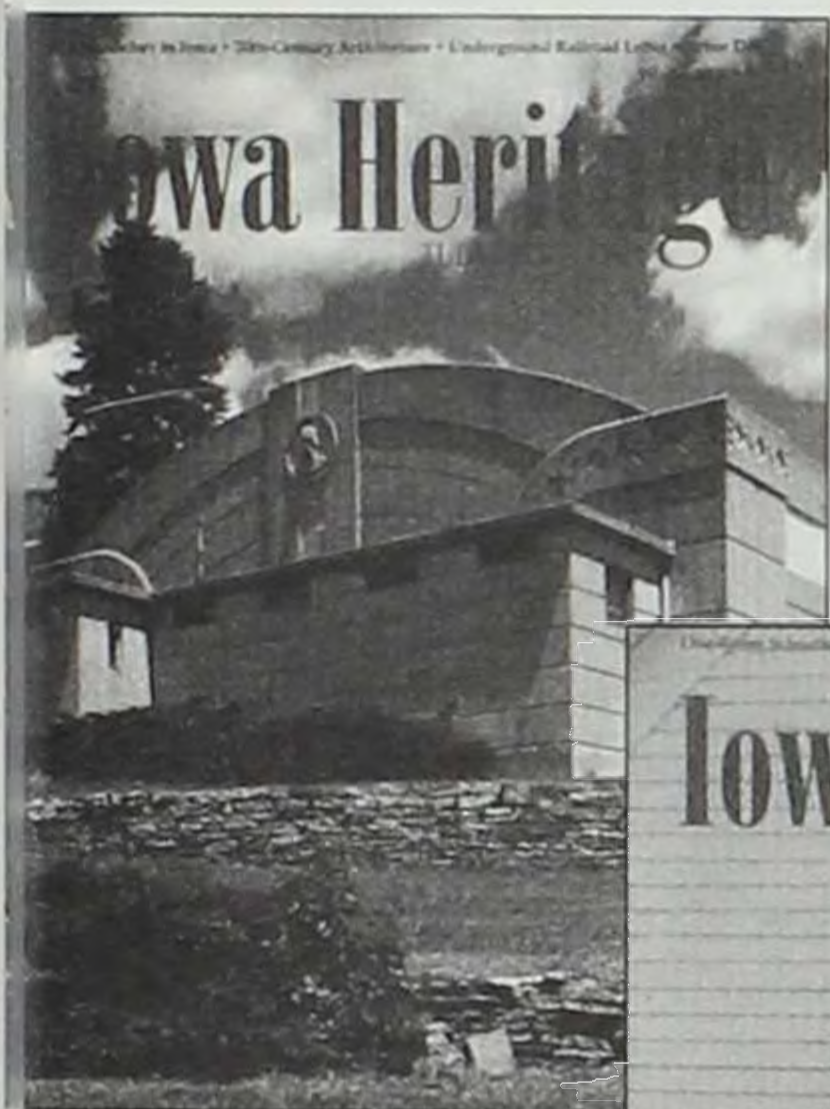
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the best tour guide
you can find
for traveling into
Iowa's past.

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Rare photos
and rich history
in every issue.

he girls gracing our cover.
Negro Girls Dance Team,
1941, the picture was taken
during recreation programs
at some of the people in the
please let us know.

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On the Cover

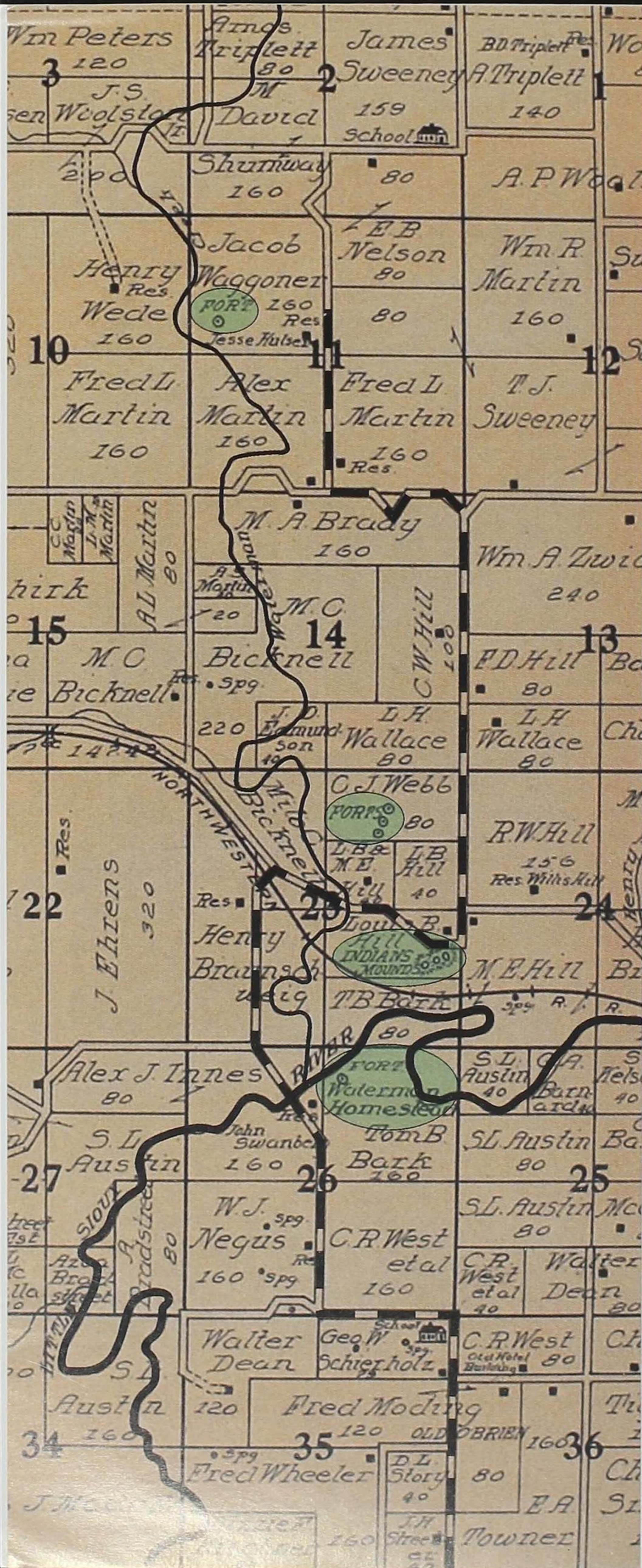
We wish we knew the names of the girls gracing our cover. Labeled only as a Des Moines "Negro Girls Dance Team, Blue Triangle Y.W.C.A.," May 1941, the picture was taken by a WPA photographer documenting recreation programs in Iowa. Perhaps you'll recognize some of the people in the other WPA photos featured. If so, please let us know.

ANCIENT WATERMAN CREEK

by Michael J. Perry

Unique among the historical county atlases of Iowa is the 1911 plat of Waterman Township, which lies in the rugged, timbered hills of southeastern O'Brien County, and through which meanders Waterman Creek, named after the area's first white settler. Here, scattered among the small squares marking farmsteads, the icons denoting schoolhouses, and the hand-written names of property owners, Chicago mapmaker George A. Ogle had lettered the word "FORT" and labeled tiny circles "INDIANS MOUNDS." For ancient mounds and fortifications to appear on a map intended for farmers, mail carriers, and salesmen is perhaps a testament to the northwestern Iowa citizenry who first saw these curious yet somehow important earthworks. Given prevailing early 20th-century attitudes about Native Americans as poor and uneducated, or sly, warlike savages, the ancient earthworks amid Iowa farms must have stirred the imaginations of many to thoughts of the civilization that preceded.

The green ovals highlight the Indian mounds and fortifications that appeared on the original 1911 map of Waterman Township, O'Brien County. Note how they appear along waterways—Waterman Creek and at its confluence with the Little Sioux River. The heavy dashes mark the route traveled by archaeologist Charles Keyes through the valley and hills in 1921. By the time of later investigations, some of the farms had new owners. (For the ease of the reader, the author added the green ovals and heavy dashes and darkened the waterways.)



The Waterman Creek earthworks were also reported in rare detail in the 1914 O'Brien County history, whose authors noted that "it may not be generally known that there are definite evidences of prehistoric burial mounds and fortifications in O'Brien county. . . . [The] most important of the fortifications . . . is to be found on the farm of Jacob [Waggoner], covering about an acre . . . with an open entrance way on each of the four sides, the earthworks forming a very plain and distinct square. [Another fortification lies] not far from the Waterman Siding, on the farm of Henry Braunschweig. The last . . . of the forts is found about a stone's throw east of the iron bridge on Mr. Innes' farm." Groups of mounds near the junction of Waterman Creek with the Little Sioux River were also described. Relic hunters were attracted to these features early in the history of the township and soon began digging up bits and pieces of the past. There was enough local interest that a sizable collection of "pottery, specimens of stone implements, and other articles on which the handiwork of man had left its impress [was placed on] exhibition in the Quaker school" a few miles south of Primghar.

While the nature of Waterman Township's mounds (in which some 19th-century excavations yielded human remains) may have been understood by turn-of-the-century relic seekers, the county historians promoted an air of mystique about the fortifications. "We see that the authorities in other states and counties differ as to the dates of origin of these earthworks, and even as to their purpose. Some authorities limit them to the Indian, other authorities date them back into the thousands of years and even into the stone age. Also some good authorities conclude that these earthwork squares were but places of worship for ceremonies of a religious nature and not as a means of defense. We will leave that question for the archaeologist [*sic*] to settle."

Despite the interest in their ancient earthworks, most Waterman Township farmers would not spare them the plow or halt the relic hunter's shovel. Today the mounds are no longer to be seen. The outlines of all but one of the old fortifications have disappeared under the weight of heavy machinery, and only the well-practiced eye might still spot the occasional artifact. Who were those ancient builders? How long ago did they walk the paths between their lodges? What new homeland destination would cause them to forsake the

scenic Waterman hills? In the years since Waterman Township farmers first discovered their ancient earthworks, many have sought answers to such questions. The story of the first to document the search for ancient Waterman Creek follows.

The call for professional study of Waterman Township archaeology was answered seven years after the 1914 county history book had first suggested the extent and complexity of prehistoric use of the region. In July and August of 1921, Charles R. Keyes, 50 years of age and about to become director of the State Historical Society's Iowa Archaeological Survey, was a faculty member at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory's three-week summer session in natural history. During that session, the rustic cabins near Miller's Bay at West Okobojo housed university students and Iowa's most distinguished naturalists of the day, including State Geologist George Kay and botanists Bohumil Shimek and Louis Pammel.

Over the preceding three decades, Keyes had developed his largely self-taught expertise in Iowa archaeology by building his own artifact collection, examining other eastern Iowa collections, developing his own detailed artifact classification scheme, and compiling a bibliography of published references, which included an entry about the description of the Waterman Township earthworks in the O'Brien

"Every civilized people desires to know in human terms the story of the land it occupies."

— Charles R. Keyes, March 1935

County history.

For Keyes, the 1921 trip to the Lake Okobojo area was a pilot project, an opportunity to inspect and document archaeological sites in the region as an example of how a statewide survey might operate. On a working vacation from his duties as a Cornell College professor of German language and literature, Keyes used the time to instruct students in archaeological survey methods, identify local informants who were familiar with sites, and make field trips. With such students as he was able to enlist, Keyes hiked along the West Okobojo lakeshore, rode across the lake on *The Queen* or in a "kicker" to Arnolds Park, and traveled to Spirit Lake, Milford, Spencer, and Waterman Creek.

Early in the Lakeside Lab session, Keyes learned of Jens Thompson, a Spencer lumberyard manager and collector of Indian relics who was familiar with some



Five giants of Iowa's natural history: (from left) archaeologist Charles R. Keyes, botanists Bohumil Shimek and Louis Pammel, geologist George Kay, and ornithologist T. C. Stephens. Photo taken at Iowa Lakeside Laboratory, West Okoboji, 1921.

of the Waterman Creek sites. Keyes arranged a field trip with Thompson, and on July 24, the two went on "a long trip by automobile to southern Clay and southeastern O'Brien counties," according to Keyes's notes. In those days when motor cars were just beginning to replace horses and carriages for personal transportation, the trip followed roads that had no elevated grade or finished surface, and travel must have been slow by modern standards.

Keyes and Thompson spent a good share of the day along the lower reach of Waterman Creek, following a dirt road up the valley and taking nearly as many turns as the meandering creek itself. Heading in southern Osceola County and winding its way through eastern O'Brien, Waterman Creek joins the southwesterly course of the Little Sioux River. The day's first stop was near the confluence of the two streams. On the level bottomland west of the creek and surrounded by high hills lay the vestiges of an ancient village area. Keyes called it Waterman's Siding, after a former railroad siding of the old Chicago and North Western line that ran just north of the site. The freshly graded road cut through the old village area. The two men climbed out of the car and walked along the road, where potsherds, clam shells, bone fragments, and chips of flint and quartzite lay exposed. The variety of colors of the flint implements Keyes picked up—pink, gray, brown, white—was remarkable.

Continuing on, Thompson's car chugged up a high

hill to a view that spanned miles in all directions. From the hilltop farms of Myron Hill and H. J. Robinson they could see several mound groups, the resting places of ancient deceased and what some experts also consider territorial markers. Despite years of cultivation, a row of five mounds was still visible on the Robinson farm. The mounds were circular, each about 2 feet high and some 20 to 30 feet in diameter. Their alignment corresponded well with how they were described in the county history and how they appeared on the 1911 plat (when Louis Hill owned the farm).

The circuitous route next brought Keyes and Thompson to the old Waggoner farm, now owned by Clyde Martin and a mile or two upstream from the mounds. Here they parked the car and met Martin and his father, and Keyes inquired about the Indian antiquities he'd heard and read about. The Martins not only confirmed the reports, but also agreed to a tour of their farm. Carrying a shovel, Clyde Martin led the way on foot through a fine field of tall corn toward Waterman Creek. Always watchful, Keyes spotted no artifacts along the way.

The men emerged from the cornfield and came upon an impressive earthwork. About an acre in size, it was overgrown with grass but clearly discernible. Keyes described this plot of land as a nearly square elevation on the bank of Waterman Creek. The elevation was about 4 feet high, and was surrounded on three sides by a waist-deep ditch, 10 to 12 feet wide.

Shallow depressions indicated the site of ancient lodge pits. Clyde Martin stomped on his shovel blade several times before he could loosen and turn over the relic-filled soil near one of the lodge pits. "This site has never been plowed, because, Mr. Martin says, it contains too many stones and bones," Keyes recorded. "The whole area appears full of animal bones (some very large), stones, pottery fragments quite similar to those of the Broken Kettle mound [near] Sioux City, flint chips, bone implements, clam shells, etc, etc. We excavated only a few spadefuls, but everywhere bones and potsherds came to light."

Once back at the Martin farmstead, Keyes and Thompson thought there was time for an easy jaunt through a nearby pasture, and they hiked up a low hill projecting out from the bluffs. At the top, Clyde Martin led the way to a small group of mounds which, despite affording yet another fine view of the valley, had escaped the attention of most local residents.

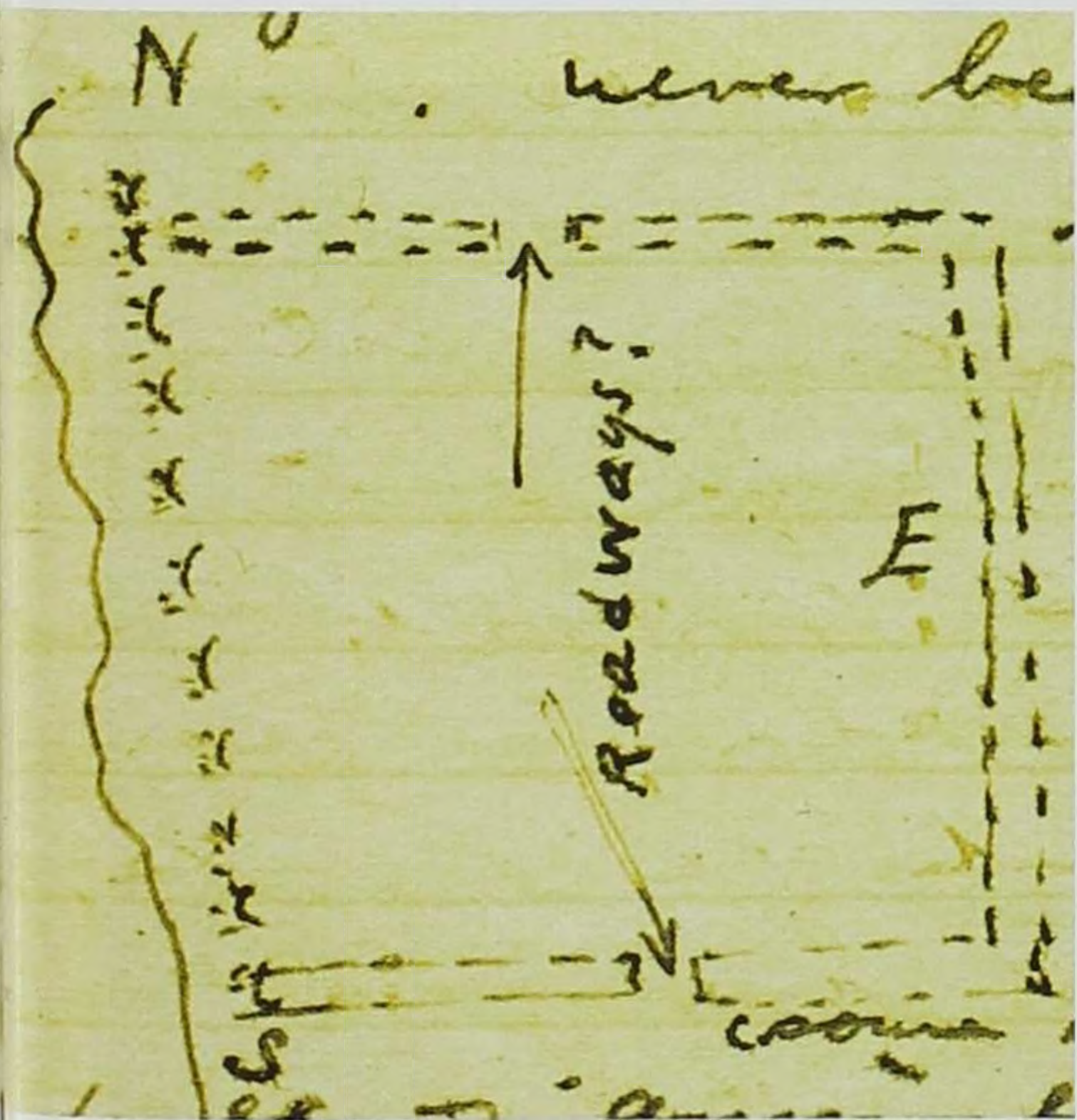
With daylight waning, Thompson and Keyes made the long trip back to Lakeside Lab. Keyes had easily recognized Clyde Martin's artifact-rich site on Waterman Creek as the remains of a village within an earthwork enclosure, and his description and thumb-nail sketch compares favorably to what the county

history had labeled the "most important" of the ancient fortifications.

Keyes had no idea of the age of what he had witnessed that day, but he returned to Lakeside Lab with small collections of pottery, flint, and bone artifacts "for further examination." He clearly recognized the archaeological importance of the locality.

Within five years, the Iowa Archaeological Survey was well established and Keyes was still spending his summers traveling the state in search of Indian sites. In the course of his surveys, the charismatic professor befriended many residents like Clay Jordan, who was willing to share his knowledge of local archaeological sites. Jordan accompanied Keyes on a return trip to the Waterman valley June 30, 1926. The two stopped along the road through the Waterman's Siding village site. A farmer had erected a new fence, and "in the fresh earth thrown from postholes . . . numerous potsherds could be picked up."

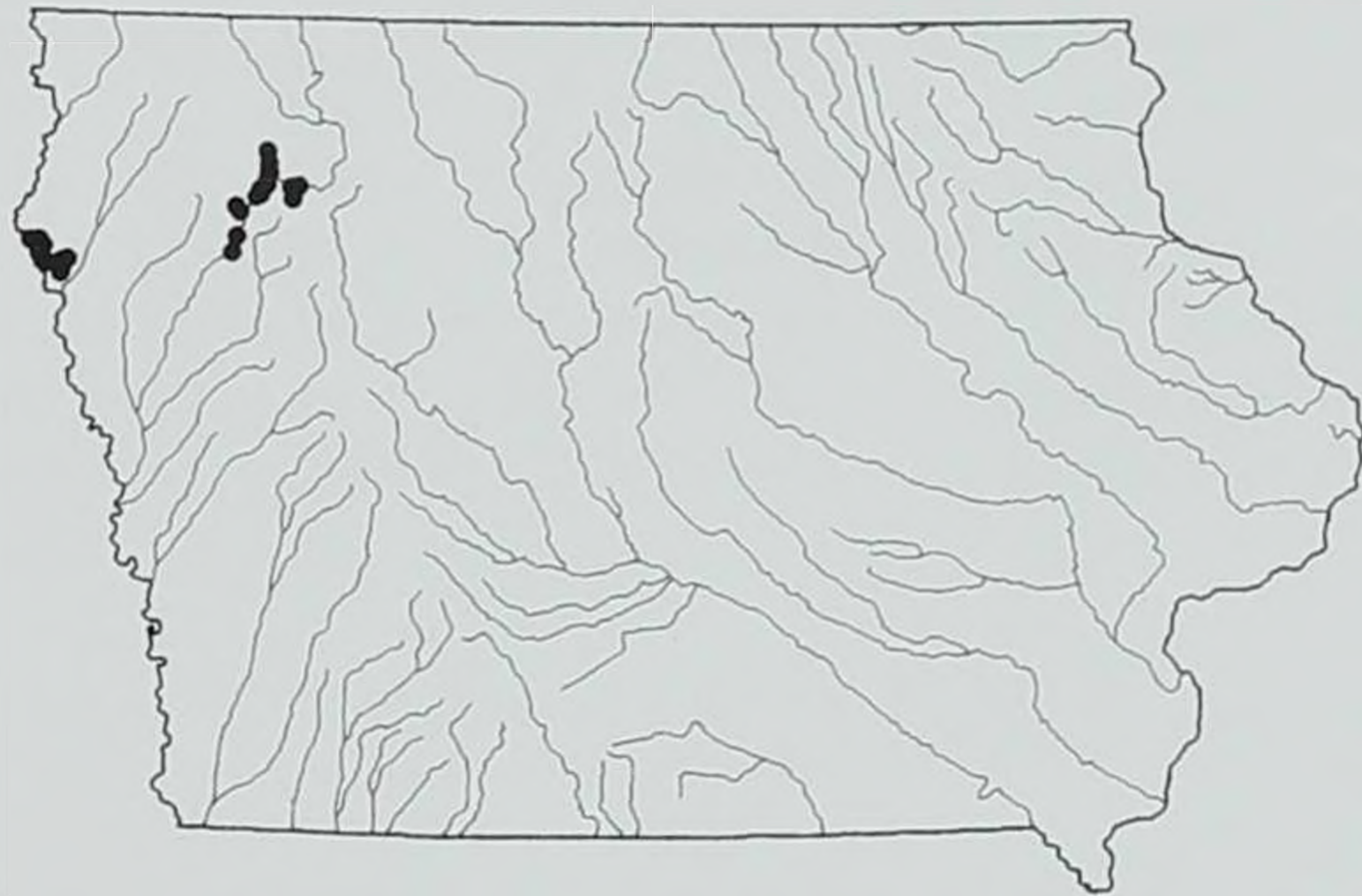
Then Jordan showed Keyes yet another village site, one of the fortifications that had appeared on the 1911 plat, near the old homestead of settler Hannibal H. Wa-



Keyes sketched the ancient village site on the Martin farm in July 1921. The dashed double line is the fortification ditch; the wavy line is Waterman Creek. The area was later known as the Wittrock site. Right: Aerial photo, circa 1972, oriented with the creek to the upper right. The three-sided fortification around the Wittrock site is still visible.



BOTH IMAGES: OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST



Mill Creek sites have been recorded along Waterman Creek and the Little Sioux River, and (on far left) along the Big Sioux River in Plymouth County.

terman. The hike through a pasture took only a few minutes before chips of flint began to appear, and, a few steps later, a potsherd, dark gray against the dry soil. The find of the day, a small triangular arrow point, brought a smile to Keyes's face. Looking out toward the Little Sioux, with the hills in the distance, he made a few mental notes about the large village area, and the two walked back to the car. Calling it simply the Waterman site (not to be confused with Waterman's Siding), Keyes noted that it lay along the bank of the Little Sioux opposite the mouth of Waterman Creek. Although past cultivation had erased the depressions marking the location of lodges, the fortification ditch was still visible. "Many relics found here in past. . . . Flint chips, an arrowhead, and potsherds picked up."

As the 1926 field season came to a close and another school year began, Keyes felt he had made sufficient progress along the Little Sioux to summarize what he had found. In the neighboring counties of Cherokee and Buena Vista, he had seen fortification ditches and artifact styles similar to those in the Waterman Creek valley. Recognizing a pattern in the remains, Keyes named this culture Mill Creek, after the Cherokee County stream of the same name and along which many villages had once stood.

Keyes also found similarities in the distinctive grit-tempered and incised pottery of the Mill Creek culture with that of the Mandan villages (an Indian nation living in North Dakota when Lewis and Clark encountered them). The archaeological evidence of the Mill Creek earthwork enclosures and lodges also had similarities with those of the Mandan. Inside wood-post palisades set into ditches, the people of both cultures had built lodges of heavy, supporting timbers with walls of interwoven sticks, twigs, and grass, plastered

with mud. The lodges housed extended families and protected stored food supplies.

The term Mill Creek continues to be used informally to identify the archaeological features recognized years earlier along Waterman Creek. Other sites in counties to the northeast and southwest (Clay, Osceola, and Woodbury) yielded shell-tempered pottery so unlike that of the neighboring Mill Creek culture that they would be distinguished as Oneota. Still other sites along the Little Sioux below Correctionville would later be linked to the widespread Woodland culture.

At this early stage of investigation, Keyes had no clue to the age of the Mill Creek villages, or of the other cultures he had found. Writing to the *Sioux City Journal* in November 1926, he described his findings, acknowledged the generous assistance of local informants, identified the limitations of his data, and called for more help filling the knowledge gaps. "Thus far several hundred persons have contributed information, ranging from the finding of a stone arrowhead to the discovery of a new mound group or an ancient village site. But Iowa is a big State and there remain thousands of square miles which are unknown territory as far as prehistoric man is concerned. Who in northwestern Iowa can help illuminate the dark spaces along the Little Sioux?"



This polished diorite discoidal was found at the Waterman's Siding village site. Width: 3³/₄ inches.

On his third visit to the Waterman valley, in July 1932, Keyes was accompanied by T. D. Kas of Sutherland, a physician with whom he had recently corresponded. Kas knew well the congenial farmers, scenic views, and archaeological richness of the valley, and would serve not only as a field guide, but also as a strong advocate for preserving its antiquities. He introduced Keyes to Alfred Wittrock, the new owner of the Clyde Martin farm, where Keyes had been shown the elevated earthwork enclosed by the three-sided ditch. Wittrock produced arrowheads and potsherds he had found since acquiring the land. Among them was a specimen Keyes had never seen before, "a very fine quartz lens." A similar lens-shaped stone, this one made of polished diorite, had been found at the Waterman's Siding village by landowner Paul Braunschweig.

The curious lens-shaped stones that local collectors called "door knobs" because of their size and shape, would come to be called discoidals. Keyes could not suggest a function for these unusual ground stone discs, and their use remains a mystery. Some archaeologists, though not all, suggest that discoidals were used in a game by people of the widespread Mississippian culture to the south and east of Iowa. Summed up by one modern archaeologist, the Mississippian tradition was practiced by people whose "areal extent of influence, ceremonialism, public works, technology, population density, and general richness is exceeded by no other aboriginal American culture north of Mexico." One of the major occupation sites of the Mississippian culture was at Cahokia (near present-day St. Louis). Could the influence of the builders of the gigantic Monks Mound and other flat-topped mounds at Cahokia have been felt as far away as northwestern Iowa, where the Mill Creek villages were then flourishing? Finds of distinctive

arrow points with multiple notches and finely made, shell-tempered, Mississippian pottery bowls among the Mill Creek villages suggest an affirmative answer.

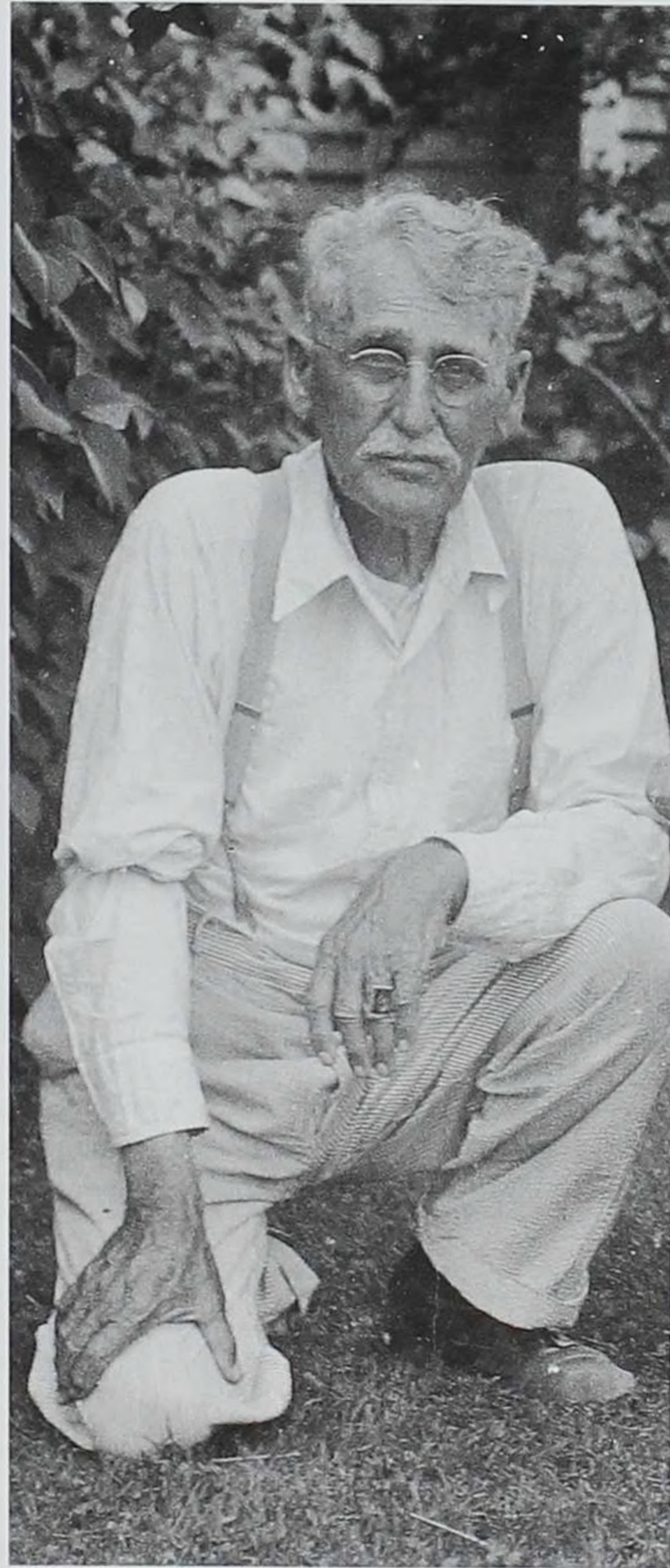
The Waterman Creek villages were still producing surprises and triggering questions that could only be answered by digging. Keyes would later justify the need for excavations by observing that prior to "June 11, 1934, no deep subsurface excavation on a modern scientific basis had been done anywhere within the state. Iowa is, in other words, a virgin archaeological field." In calling for test excavations, Keyes considered the nature of the Mill Creek villages "one of the unsolved problems of Upper Mississippi archaeology, confined wholly, so far as known, to the State of Iowa."

Sunrise of September 17, 1934, found three men from Waukon loading short shovels, garden trowels, a potato screen, camera, and surveying equipment into a car bound for northwestern Iowa. The men had spent the hottest summer on record excavating prehistoric remains close to home along the Upper Iowa River, where Allamakee County's eligibility for federal relief provided manpower for the excavations and much-needed income for those willing to brave the heat. Now embarking on a new adventure was Ellison Orr, retired telephone system worker, archaeologist, naturalist, trained surveyor, and 76 years

young. Orr, with his 51-year-old son, Fred, and Harrison Toney, left Waukon at 7 a.m. Their destination, the southeastern O'Brien County town of Sutherland, was the first of many stops that autumn in a great government-sponsored effort to map Iowa's most important mound groups and conduct the first professional excavations of Mill Creek villages.

Orr's mission, the rival of any modern archaeolog-

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Ellison Orr, in 1937. Orr retired in 1930, at age 73, and began a second career as an archaeologist—a career that lasted two decades.

ical investigation, had been conceived by Keyes earlier that spring. Governor Clyde Herring had asked Keyes to serve on the Iowa Planning Board's Committee on Scenic and Historic Features. Projects would be funded through the New Deal's Federal Emergency Relief Administration and later by the Works Progress Administration. P. H. Elwood, professor of landscape architecture at Iowa State College, was the director of the Planning Board. In his words, projects would provide "needed employment for worthy citizens; basic facts and plans for future public works; and a long time program for the utilization of our land and other natural and social resources."

As a member of the Scenic and Historic Features committee, Keyes immediately began formulating a plan, which would be called Project 1047 and would directly involve Ellison Orr. In addition to mapping important mound groups and excavating village sites, Keyes foresaw an opportunity to make recommendations to the state for acquisition of well-preserved sites. Based on his suggestions, the committee determined that its goal would be to collect and assemble "all available information on the historic and scenic resources of the state with a view toward preservation and restoration and proper use by the people, [and] excavating ancient village sites and Indian mounds now threatened with destruction."

The itinerary for Project 1047 was set by Keyes, whose summertime travels for the State Historical Society of Iowa had taken him to many of the archaeologically significant sites Orr was to survey and excavate. One choice of where to excavate was easy: the Mill Creek villages of the Little Sioux River and Waterman Creek. Keyes described the proposed excavations not as full-scale, "but merely a test of their possibilities."

As field supervisor of Project 1047, Orr was obliged to correspond regularly with Keyes about the progress of the statewide survey while keeping field notes and a diary of the crew's day-to-day activities. These would form the basis of a final report to Keyes containing maps, photographs, narrative descriptions of mound groups and excavations, and comments about the suitability of sites for acquisition by the State of Iowa.

Traveling west from Waukon on Highway 9, Orr, his son, and Toney stopped briefly at Pilot Knob State Park. Here, young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps were at work constructing a round tower of local glacial boulders. Orr noted, "From the 'Knob' near the center of the area, a wonderful panorama is spread out in all directions, the horizon dimly seen through the haze." They drove on to Spencer, where they spent the night, and then met up with T. D. Kas in Sutherland. Kas would introduce them to local farmers, as he had done for Keyes two years earlier. The next morning, the light chill of early fall greeted the men, and they donned their jackets as they left their Sutherland hotel.

The most intensive study of Waterman Creek archaeology yet undertaken began in a pale yellow field of ripening corn. (Keyes had called this site the Waterman's Siding village; Orr would refer to it as the Braunschweig camp site, after the current owner, Paul Braunschweig.) Just west of the road the men started digging their first pit. They cleared away the uppermost, "plow" layer (the first foot of soil) but found very little. Then the "chink" of shovel against potsherd was heard, and the collection screen began to fill. Braunschweig was digging, too, and he handed what he had uncovered to the crew. By mid-morning Pit 1 was barely large enough for one worker to crouch inside, but it yielded "many pottery fragments of the Mill Creek culture and many bones of buffalo and elk,"

Orr recorded. "Those of dog or wolf and deer were less plentiful. . . . The pottery was characterized by the great variety of its shapes and decorative designs and by its firmness."

Back at the site the next morning, Fred Orr and Harrison Toney doubled the size of Pit 1. They stopped digging at 5½ feet; Orr could barely see the tops of their heads from the nearby road. They found bone awls, a pair of notched arrow

points, a stone flake knife, and other stone tools. The artifacts revealed much about the daily lives of the ancient villagers. They had worked hides, fished in the river, produced weapons to bring down large game, ground corn into meal, and simmered their victuals in globular ceramic pots carefully decorated about the rim with incised lines and crosshatching. That same

"Until [now], no deep subsurface excavation on a modern scientific basis had been done. . . . Iowa is, in other words, a virgin archaeological field."

— Charles R. Keyes, March 1935



Ellison Orr's son, Fred, crouches in the pit, while Harrison Toney holds a shovel and Paul Braunschweig looks on. A trowel, mussel shell, and potsherds lie in the potato screen by the pit. Shot on the morning of September 19, 1934, either at the Waterman's Siding village or at Pit 1 of the Braunschweig site. Left: Arrow points from Waterman's Siding.

BOTH IMAGES: OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST

morning, the men opened Pit 2 a few paces beyond the first.

Before rain ended this second day in the field, the men headed to Charles J. Webb's blufftop cornfield east of Waterman Creek. There they surveyed a group of mounds that had first appeared on the 1911 township plat. They had already surveyed other mound groups on another hilltop the previous afternoon.

Over the next few days, work intensified. The men made a detailed topographic survey of the three-sided fortification on Alfred Wittrock's land. By this time Orr had inspected several private artifact collections that included impressive specimens from the Wittrock site. "Apparently some of the finest—the most elaborately decorated—specimens of pottery in the local collections have been dug up in this enclosure."

They also found more artifacts as they expanded and deepened Pit 2 at the Braunschweig site, and placed a third pit 20 paces away in line with the first

two. All three were about 6 feet by 6 feet, and nearly that deep. Pit 3 was begun and completed in one day, September 22, with the help of a group of Boy Scouts from Spencer. The work that day may represent Iowa's first public archaeology event. The importance of public interaction with the work of Orr's crew was not lost on Keyes, who expressed its significance to Planning Board Director Elwood: "Every piece of excavation has its frequent, and sometimes numerous, visitors. This means the answering of many questions, and the delivery of many an extemporaneous discourse on the methods and purposes of archaeological research. . . . The State of Iowa contains at least six hundred collectors of Indian relics. . . . The survey aims to keep more or less in touch with these, answer their inquiries personally as opportunity offers, and guide their activities into more nearly scientific and useful channels. In both cases, government appears to these people in a somewhat more human and kindly manner than usual. Is



Rims of pottery from the Mill Creek sites are distinguished by crosshatching, horizontal incising, pendant triangles, and filled triangular zone motifs. Far right: a fragment of a black ware vessel, inspired by the Mississippian culture.

there not a possibility that the future state will meet its people more frequently on this plane?"

Orr spent a rainy Sunday packing artifacts in two boxes for shipment to Iowa City and organizing his thoughts about the Braunschweig site by writing another progress letter to Keyes. Along with all the bones and stone tools, the shipping containers held a bewildering variety of pottery made by expert craftspeople. "There are 95 pieces of rims and with one exception I believe no two specimens alike as to decoration or shape. . . . The people who made them were past-masters of the art of decorating—and the shapes! There are two pieces of a heavy polished black ware without decoration—part of a jug or jug like vase that must have been a beauty."

The fieldwork for Project 1047, this great survey of the state's archaeological treasures, lasted throughout the fall of 1934 and was completed in the late winter of 1935. Orr's 124-page report devoted a few pages to each of the many sites visited across the state, so only the highlights of the Waterman valley survey were presented. Now Keyes had to summarize the results for Elwood and the Planning Board, focusing on the

broader significance of the work: "Every civilized people desires to know in human terms the story of the land it occupies. Appreciation of our Indian predecessors in America, both as individuals and as a race, is increasing rapidly in our day."

The inventory of Keyes's surface artifacts and Orr's test pit recovery at the Waterman's Siding site would not be summed until 1980, when the State Historical Society sponsored a major upgrade of Keyes's entire collection. The 640 specimens represent a cross section of Mill Creek material culture. Some noteworthy additions to Orr's abbreviated field inventory are six drilled pottery disks (possibly used as spindle whorls), a bone tinkler (or bell), two bone matting needles, one basalt or gabbro discoidal, and a ground stone thunderbird effigy—all artifacts that functioned in domestic and ritual/ideological aspects of culture.

The many rim and body sherds of clay vessels encountered in the first three test pits only hinted at the meaning or significance of Mill Creek ceramic designs.

Most have yet to be deciphered, although large, modern excavations have shown that certain sets of styles tend to be associated with individual households. Rims with horizontal incising, incised pendant triangles, triangular zones filled with incising, crosshatching, and fingertip impressions were common in Orr's collection. A few have incised diagonal lines and a series of short incised gashes or fingernail impressions that form an abstract running-deer motif. The polished black ware sherds are an example of a relationship between Mill Creek and Mississippian people living well beyond northwestern Iowa. Together, the variety of artifact types found at Mill Creek villages paints a picture of a complex society whose settlement, subsistence, and ceremonial or religious practices were among prehistoric Iowa's most elaborate.

From the three test pits at the Braunschweig camp site, Orr and his crew had moved nearly 600 cubic feet of soil—the equivalent of about 30 tons, enough to fill a large dump truck. They accomplished this in a very short time by skipping tasks that modern archaeologists consider essential. Orr used his potato screen simply to hold the artifacts found, rather than sifting the soil through the screen to catch small items. The excavations appear to have proceeded without recording the depth of specific artifacts as they were struck by the shovel or trowel, so variations in how many and what kind of artifacts could only be described qualitatively. Careful documentation might have suggested changes

in pottery styles, for example, over the generations.

To explain the unusually deep excavations needed to completely penetrate the middens, Orr believed that the villagers had laboriously covered each layer of garbage and debris on the spot with fresh soil hauled from the surrounding area. The excavations may have been large enough to reveal the layers of contrasting soil. Unfortunately neither pit wall profiles nor floor plans were drawn to document the depth and location of layers and artifacts, which could have shown how the midden accumulated, and possibly reveal

differences in artifact styles or dietary practices. Nor was a map of the test pit locations prepared; written remarks noted only their distance from each other. Orr took all the artifacts from the three pits and mixed them together, with the exception of the two points from Pit 1. If he kept the material Braunschweig

found on the first day of the dig, that too was mixed into the collection.

Nonetheless the Braunschweig (or Waterman's Siding) dig laid the groundwork for future research on various problems. Orr's work showed that the Mill Creek villages contained dense accumulations of well-preserved refuse and that they had been occupied by people who maintained contact with others from distant homelands. Based on the abundant charcoal found in house pits (the villagers burned their lodges when they abandoned the site), future archaeologists would use carbon 14 tests to date the Mill Creek villages to about

“The people who made them were past-masters of the art of decorating — and the shapes!”

— Ellison Orr, September 1934



Fragments of clay disks, with holes drilled in the center. These may have been used as spindle whorls for spinning fibers.

OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST

A.D. 1100–1200. Keyes’s suggestion that ancestors of the Mandan or their Hidatsa cousins had once lived on Iowa’s Little Sioux and its tributaries would also be confirmed. Following up on Orr’s ground-breaking work, archaeologists of the 1950s, ’60s, and ’70s would reveal the layout of Mill Creek houses, study the development of Mill Creek settlement mounds, define the variety of Mississippian trade goods, examine changes in how they farmed and hunted, investigate the possible effects of climate change on people of the Plains, and debate Mill Creek origins and possible reasons for abandoning northwestern Iowa.

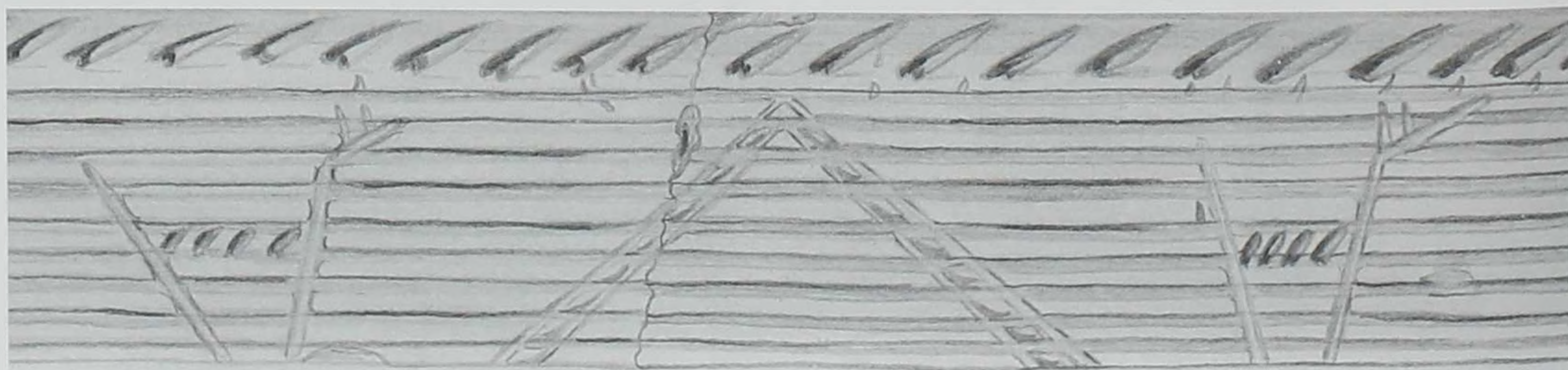
One more achievement emerged from the early investigations along Waterman Creek. Because the three-sided earthen enclosure on the Wittrock farm was largely undisturbed and long recognized as the most important of the Waterman valley fortifications, it was clearly a tar-

get for acquisition as part of the mission of the Iowa Planning Board. Orr stated the case succinctly: “As this Wittrock site is the only certain Mill Creek culture site not now under cultivation, and, except for desultory digging by ‘relic hunters’, which might be restored, is intact, it is greatly to be desired that it be preserved, and we unhesitatingly recommend that all possible steps be taken, locally, and by the State Board of Conservation, looking towards that end.”

Orr and landowner Alfred Wittrock discussed the sale of the village site to the state. Wittrock requested \$1,500 for a five-acre parcel containing the village. Orr considered the asking price prohibitive. Nonetheless, Keyes and the Planning Board recommended acquisition. George B. MacDonald, state forester and director of the Iowa Office of Emergency Conservation Work, made the trip to Sutherland in mid-May 1936. Accompanied by Kas, he met with the Wittrock family to inspect the site and finalize an agreement. “We staked out an area of about four acres which I believe includes



Pottery fragments found at Waterman’s Siding. Ancient inhabitants of the village incised the rims with indentations, rows of horizontal lines, and a stylized running-deer motif. The fragment on the left shows only the back portion of a deer; the fragment on the right shows the head, neck, and trunk of another. Below: In this “roll out” drawing of the running-deer motif, two stylized deer flank a large inverted V. The drawing is based on similar pottery fragments found near Sioux City.



THREE IMAGES: OFFICE OF THE STATE ARCHAEOLOGIST, DRAWING BY CHRIS KINEER



sufficient area about the Indian village site, and have made arrangements to purchase the area. The price agreed upon was \$500."

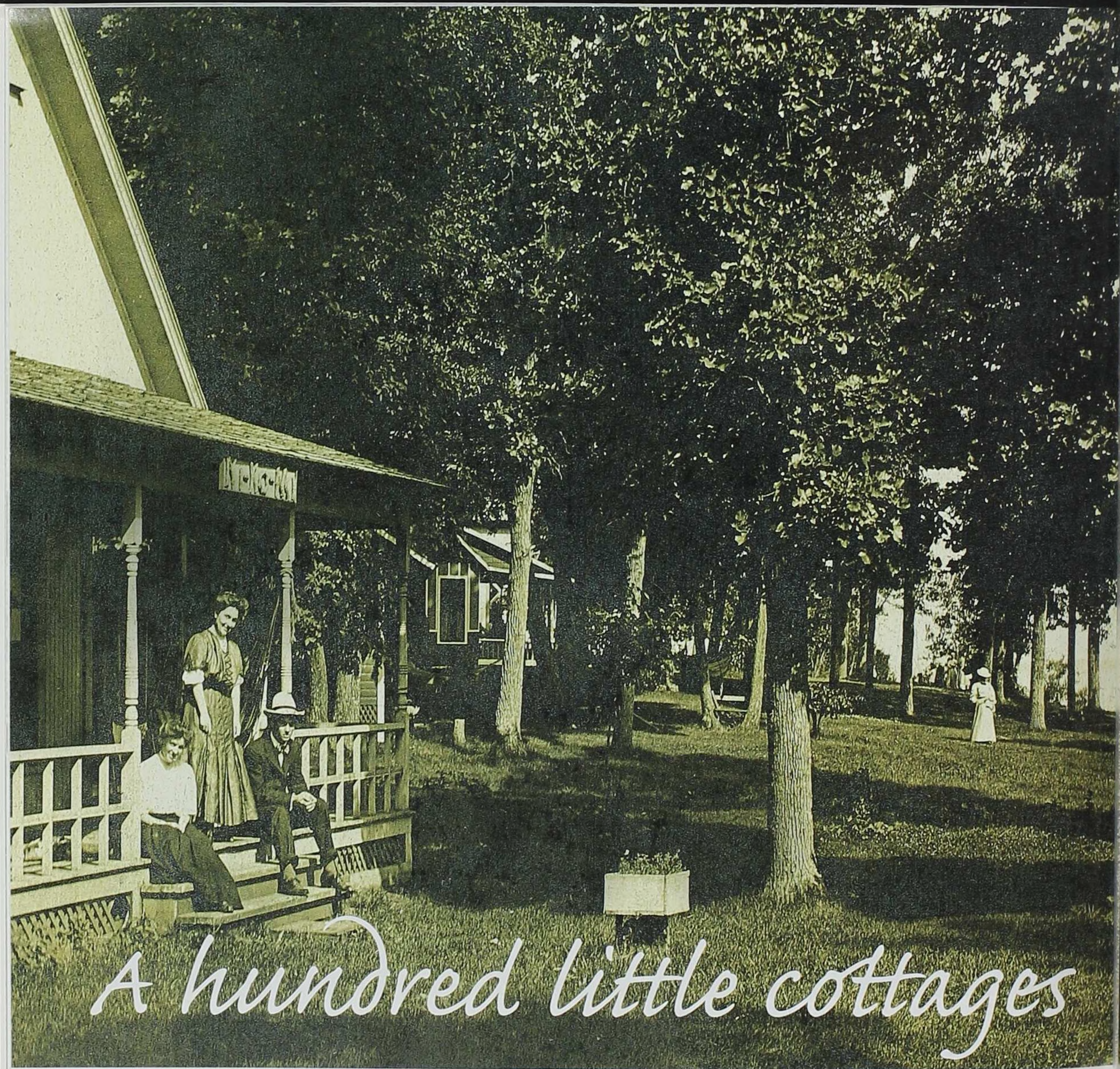
The transfer was completed in 1937, the third archaeological site and the first ancient village to be permanently preserved by the state. In the mid-1960s, the Wittrock village achieved National Historic Landmark status and then was transferred into the State Preserves System. Iowans owe a debt to Charles Keyes and Ellison Orr for their early investigations in Waterman Township, but also to the early settlers for documenting and describing the earthworks of ancient Waterman Creek, and to the Chicago mapmaker for depicting these mounds and "forts" on the 1911 plat. ❖

Bones were shaped into awls, matting needles, and other tools or decorative items, such as the toe-bone "tinkler" (far right). Top: The Wittrock site, photographed on a late summer day in 1940. Trees flank Waterman Creek; the village site lies in the distant grassy area beyond the shocks of grain.

Michael Perry is a project archaeologist at the Office of the State Archaeologist in Iowa City. He has written previously for this magazine on Charles Keyes's unpublished manuscript, "Preparing for War in the Fat Land" (Fall 2006).

NOTE ON SOURCES

Primary sources that informed this article are manuscripts, correspondence, field notebooks, and county notes archived in the Charles R. Keyes Collection at the Office of the State Archaeologist, Iowa City. A bibliography of specific citations is in the *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). Published sources include Duane Anderson, *Western Iowa Prehistory* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975); Jesse D. Jennings, *Prehistory of North America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974); Charles R. Keyes, "Prehistoric Man in Iowa," *Palimpsest* (June 1927); George A. Ogle, *Standard Atlas of O'Brien County, Iowa* (Chicago: George A. Ogle, 1911), digital reproduction from Iowa Digital Library, University of Iowa Libraries. <http://cdm.lib.uiowa.edu/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/maps&CISOPTR=1425&REC=5>; J. L. E. Peck, O. H. Montzheimer, and William J. Miller, *Past and Present of O'Brien and Osceola Counties, Iowa* (Indianapolis: R. F. Bowen, 1914), vol. 1, pp. 484-86; John P. Tandarich and Loren N. Horton, "A Memorial Bibliography of Charles R. Keyes and Ellison J. Orr," *Journal of the Iowa Archeological Society*, 23 (1976), 45-143; and Joseph A. Tiffany comp., *The Keyes Archaeological Collection: A Finder's Guide* (Iowa City: State Historical Department, Division of the State Historical Society, 1981).



For more than a century, Iowa's Lake Okoboji and the surrounding area in northwestern Iowa have enticed vacationing Iowans with its natural beauty, relaxed socializing, and lakeside cabins. In July 1904, University of Iowa botany professor Thomas H. Macbride and his 17-year-old son, Philip, took respite at the lake. Here he writes his wife, Harriet, urging her and their daughter, Jean, to escape the heat of Iowa City and join them for a few days.

Postcard above is dated 1907; title is added by editor. From State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). The letter is from the Macbride Collection, Box 3, Special Collections, University of Iowa Libraries.

Okoboji, July 23 — 04

Dear Hattie — Agreeable to our plans we came here Friday night. Yesterday I intended to drive out but the day was hot and the ways were dusty so I [stayed] in the shade and did some necessary writing. The work I have done has been pleasant work so far. The country roads in Osceola Co. are little travelled at this season and lead straight for the cardinal points through acres of grain and grass. It has been simply a long pleasant drive in finest weather. Today is Sun-

day and I sit beneath the shelter of a clump of bur-oaks, just such as shaded 20 years ago the well in your old home yard. Here are the little bur-oaks, thick, hundreds of them, and the out look is over Okoboji lake, the prettiest little lake I ever saw. We catch a breath from it now and then which makes the day enduring. And at night, when the sun is gone the lake takes matters into its own hands and laps its shores into coolness most delightful. This it is makes this a summer resort — for hundreds of people and they're here. There must be a hundred little cottages among the trees around the wooded shores of this beautiful lake. People are here from all Iowa towns, they bring the [hired] girl and live here. Then the Inn takes care of those who are cottageless. I should have gone to the inn I suppose but there are too many people there, for one thing, and there is no livery there for another thing. It would be a very inconvenient base for my operations. Where then am I? Well I am at the house of an old pioneer, Roderick Smith. The Smith bros. keep cottages for people like me. Simply a farm-house is here with scattering rooms thrown strangely together. Philip and I have room and bed together. When I lie down I look out through the open door, down past the bur-oaks and over the bluegrass sod to the silver path across the lake where a harvest moon already riding low seems to fill all the horizon with its metallic splendor — but — I go asleep! Philip sleeps as never before and eats! — you would be surprised — We had for Sunday dinner Roast beef, beans (kind P. likes) potatoes, cabbage, ripe currants, pudding, apple-pie. Well P. ate it all and called for more beans! such a boy — He was in swimming yesterday, but this is no place for a boy to learn the art. Like the Iowa river dangerous; gets deep too soon. One steps out beyond his depth unwittingly. I should say that the Smith's have rooms here for 20 or 30 people. P. and I are the only boarders. . . . The rates here are \$1.50 per diem for P. and me. You and Jean would enjoy it if you could entertain

yourselves. There is no body around. You could sail the lake or walk among the trees or by the cottages, but there is absolutely nothing but what you bring along. I am going to I.C. [Iowa City] next Monday or Tuesday and if you and J. would come up Saturday you could keep P. company until I could get back, Friday morning. Then we might spend a week or so here at comparatively small cost, but if you would enjoy it, you should bring a chosen party and rent a cottage. It is ideal for the student or the man who seeks quiet, rest. But if you wish to be "in the swim" you must go to the inn and attend the dances etc. — Society is in full blast a mile hence but 'neath the bur-oak trees here is silent (Browning). Beetles crawl undisturbed contentedly about even across my paper, [occasionally] an



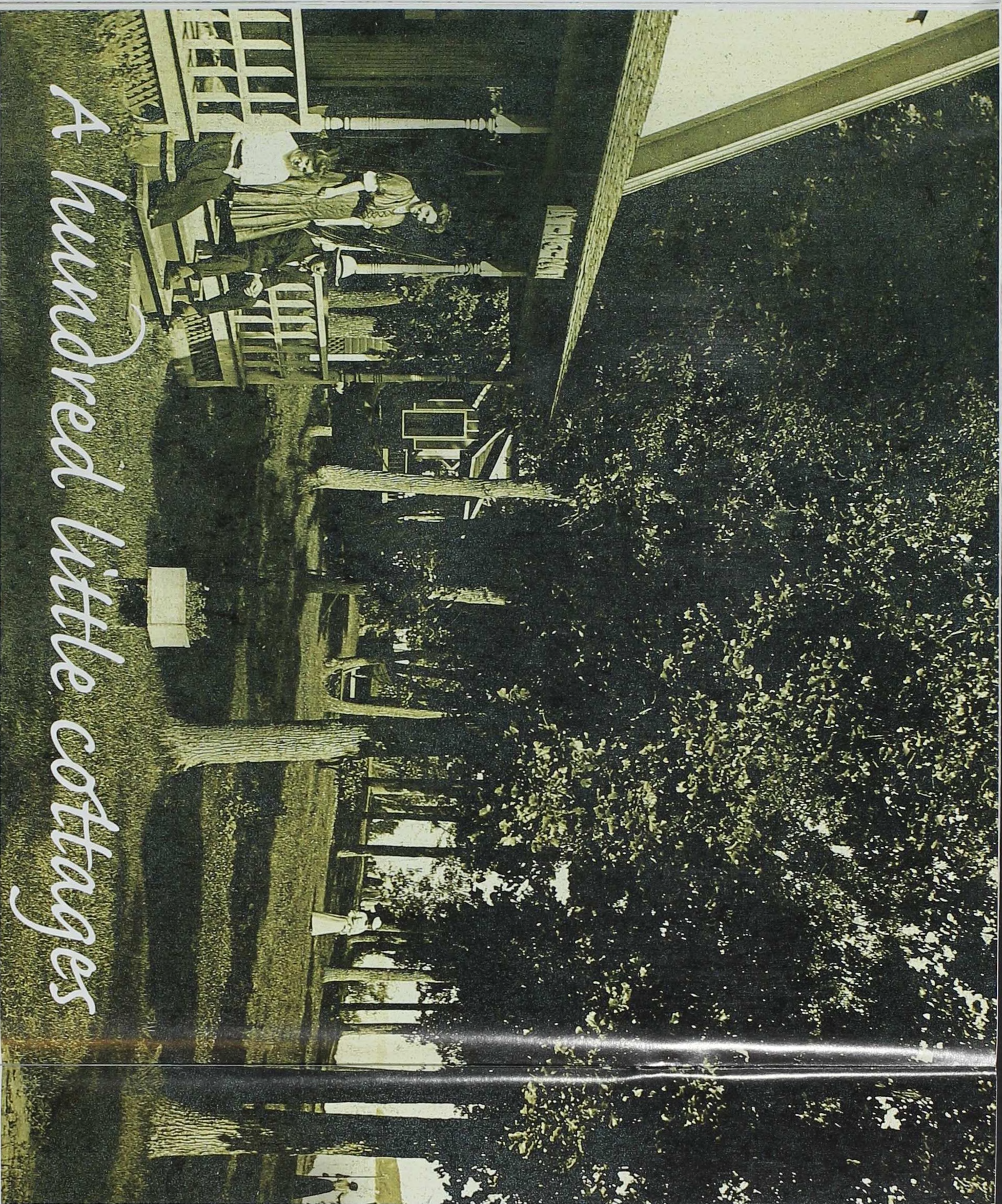
Thomas Macbride, 1928

*Society is in full blast
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old turkey comes along leading her half-grown flock, but even she suspends the voice of maternal cheer or chiding in this quiet grove. Philip has a book which gives political information galore. Just now he is finding the population of each [county seat] town — he knows most of them and the county to [which] each belongs. I will write you again the last of the week and tell you what rates you may expect here and you can think about the thing meanwhile. The fare is good, the beds & linen scrupulously clean. So far as I can see, everything all right but plain, old-fashioned — It is well worth any person's while to see this place and to escape the hot nights which follow in Iowa C. hot days. I fancy today in I. C. is simply unendurable. I trust the City has not yet ploughed out all my trees as it threatened to do. but I am not going to cry if the worst comes — Philip and I send all love to you & J.

T. H.

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A hundred little cottages

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T. H.

The Election of Julia Addington

An Accidental Milestone in Iowa Politics



by Cheryl Mullenbach

Susan B. Anthony. Amelia Bloomer. Elizabeth Cady Stanton. All women widely recognized as notable figures in the women's suffrage movement in the United States.

Julia C. Addington?

A name not likely recognized in any circles today. But an Iowan known to Anthony, Bloomer, and Stanton for the role she unwittingly played in the suffrage cause in 1869. And an educator who helped advance the right of women in Iowa to hold office.

A clue to Addington's legacy appears in a small, 55-page book preserved in the State Historical Society of Iowa library. *The Women's Columbian Souvenir of Mitchell County, Iowa, 1492-1893* tenders a glimpse of her and her place in history. The women of the Mitchell County World's Fair Association published the souvenir book as their contribution to the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In their words, the book was an attempt to render an "account of the public activity of the ladies of the county in their various societies." Almost as an afterthought in a section titled "Additional Items," the women noted the following: "Julia C. Addington of Stacyville, Iowa, was the first woman elected to an office in the United States. In 1869, she was

elected Superintendent of Schools in Mitchell county and served during 1870 and 1871 so acceptably, that she was called to fill the office again—ill health alone preventing her doing so."

First woman elected to an office in the United States?

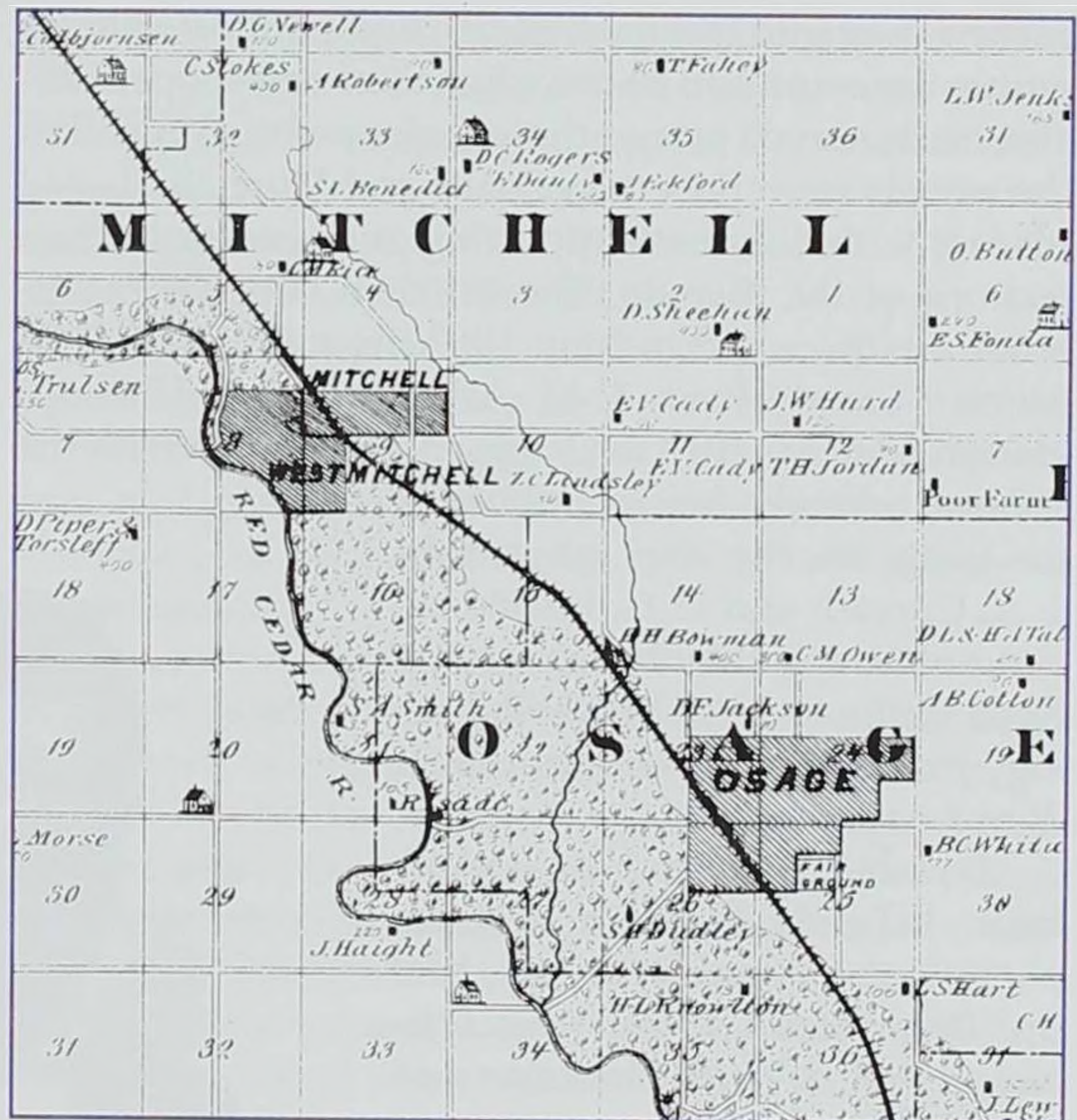
The statement is a questionable one. Nor does it begin to recount the events that swirled around the Mitchell County election of Addington in 1869.

Women were still decades away from winning the right to vote in national, state, or local elections. Although Iowans amended the state constitution in 1868 to grant black males the vote by striking out the word "white," the amendment didn't include women of any color. Certainly, the women's suffrage movement was under way—the first national women's rights convention had been held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. In 1868 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony launched their women's rights newspaper, *The Revolution*, in New York City. The next year, the first women's suffrage association in Iowa was formed at Dubuque,

soon followed by others in the state. So the election of Julia Addington to a public office in the fall of 1869 was certainly a milestone—even if it was the result of a rift in the Republican Party of Mitchell County and a war between two competing newspapers. Whether the participants paid any attention to their somewhat accidental role in women’s suffrage history is questionable.

Central to the 1869 election in Mitchell County was the long-standing feud over the location of the county seat. Two rival towns five miles apart—Osage and Mitchell—fought for the coveted title. County seat status brought certain advantages to the victor. As residents from all over the county traveled to town for business at the courthouse, they inevitably spent time at the local businesses—thereby making the county seat a hub of commercial and social activity. County seat designation could make or break a town. The struggle in Mitchell County erupted in 1855 when the town of Mitchell was named the county seat by commissioners appointed by the state legislature. A series of events including special elections, court injunctions, and appeals to higher courts over the years tossed the designation back and forth between Osage and Mitchell several times and finally resulted in the establishment of Osage as the county seat in the fall of 1870.

Throughout the intervening years the feud had



Five miles and bitter feelings separated the towns of Mitchell and Osage as they battled over which would become the county seat in the years up to 1870. Osage won, but bitterness continued and was manifested in local politics. (Map and view of Osage date to 1875.)

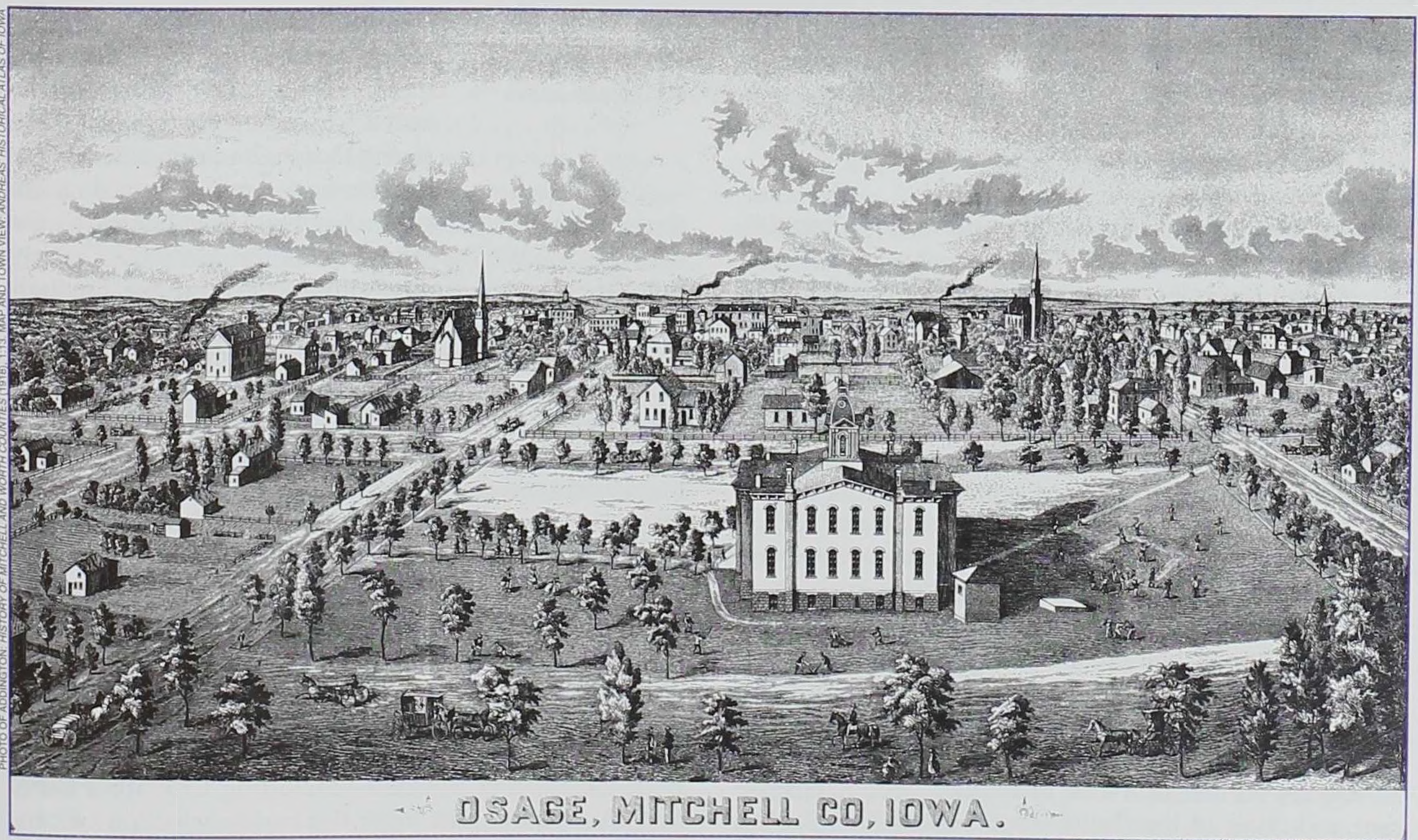


PHOTO OF ADDINGTON: HISTORY OF MITCHELL AND NORTH COUNTIES (1916), 1-13. MAP AND TOWN VIEW: ANDREAS' HISTORICAL ATLAS OF IOWA

carried over into business, social, and political spheres within the county. In an era when local newspapers unabashedly served as mouthpieces for political agendas, the weekly newspapers in Osage and Mitchell blasted readers with diatribes supporting or opposing the two factions of the dispute. The Mitchell supporters suffered a blow when in May 1869 the publisher of the *Mitchell County Press*, T. M. Atherton, moved his operation from Mitchell to Osage and combined with the *Tribune*, already being published in Osage. Shortly after, physicians S. A. Cravath and D. G. Frisbie began publishing the *Mitchell County News* in the town of Mitchell, having purchased Atherton's abandoned equipment.

It didn't take long for competition between the two newspapers—both Republican—to heat up. Publishers Cravath and Frisbie, as well as W. W. Blackman and A. S. Faville (prominent citizens of Mitchell), would frequently be the subjects of Atherton's journalistic vitriol, and vice versa. In one fracas, Frisbie and Cravath lashed out at the county treasurer for awarding publication of the county tax lists to their rival, the *Mitchell County Press*. Atherton, who as its publisher would be compensated well for printing the long columns of tax lists, vehemently defended the treasurer's actions and called upon fellow Republicans to join in his defense.

As the Republican county convention drew near, the bickering between the competing Republican editors was in full force, and Julia Addington would soon find herself in the midst of this wrangling. The business of the Republican county convention in Osage was to nominate a slate of candidates for county treasurer, sheriff, coroner, auditor, surveyor, and superintendent of schools. The state representative seat for the 56th District was also up for election that year. Because Mitchell County and Howard County were both in the 56th District, Mitchell County Republicans would vote by ballot for their choice for representative at their September 18 convention, and then join with Howard County Republicans on September 23 for the district convention in Riceville (located on the county line).

On September 18, W. W. Blackman, Mitchell physician and chair of the Republican Central Committee,

convened the county convention. Atherton and rival editor Cravath were both in attendance. Once the convention officers were elected and township credentials reported, the men recessed for nearly an hour before tackling the more important business.

When they reconvened, the Republicans couldn't settle on delegates so they moved on to choose the nominee for state representative. Blackman, Faville, and Atherton were among the half-dozen contenders.

After two ballots, Atherton was chosen by acclamation. He then selected 12 delegates to the Riceville district convention. None of the Mitchell men was among his group.

Atherton's *Mitchell County Press* described the convention as "harmonious and passed off with the best of feeling. It lacked the usual excitement attending such gatherings in this county." Atherton believed that the citizens of Mitchell County were tired of "the strife, turmoil, bitterness and enmity, aroused in the past" and would "frown down" attempts to "revive the local fights heretofore existing" in the county.

Atherton humbly informed his readers that he had been nominated for representative—emphasizing that he had not solicited the nomination—and assured them

that he had "no doubt" that his 12 delegates to the district convention, along with the Howard County delegates, would "ratify" him as the nominee. Furthermore, anticipating his win over the Democrat in the general election on October 12, he promised to "promote the best interests and welfare of the [56th] District" in Des Moines.

Atherton also assured his readers about the Republican nominee for county superintendent of schools. Osage lawyer Milton M. Browne, in Atherton's words, was "eminently qualified to well and truly fill that important position. . . . Having been a teacher for several years, he has had ample opportunities to become conversant with all the essential facts required to properly discharge the duties of that place."

Not all Republicans had found the convention so harmonious. In the following days, a splinter group from the town of Mitchell—including Cravath, Frisbie and Blackman—put forth their own selection of can-



HISTORY OF MITCHELL COUNTY (1883)

Editor and politician T. M. Atherton

didates. To oppose Atherton, the group chose A. S. Faville. To oppose Browne for county superintendent of schools, they nominated Julia Addington.

Six years earlier, Addington had moved from Wisconsin with her parents and siblings to Stacyville in northern Mitchell County, where they farmed. Her father, William H., Sr., was also an "agent" for the McCormick and J. I. Case farm machinery companies. (He was described as "an intimate acquaintance" of McCormick's and Case's.) He and his wife, Alvira, divorced around 1867. He moved to Missouri, and she remained in Stacyville with Julia and her other adult children.

By the time 40-year-old Julia Addington was chosen as the Mitchell faction's candidate for superintendent of schools, she owned land in and around Stacyville and had a successful teaching career—having taught in Waterloo, Cedar Falls, and Des Moines and at the Cedar Valley Seminary, a private high school in Osage. In the fall of 1869 she was already serving as the county superintendent, having been appointed to complete the unfinished term of the previous male superintendent, Rev. Alva Bush.

Incensed by the actions of Cravath, Frisbie, Blackman, and Faville, Atherton labeled them "renegades" and "bolters." "No efforts will be too desperate for the bolters to secure their ends," he proclaimed on the pages of his *Mitchell County Press*.

On September 23, the Mitchell and Howard county delegates met at the Riceville schoolhouse. Atherton was "by acclamation, declared to be the unanimous choice of the convention as candidate for the office of Representative to the State Legislature." However, five of the seven Howard County delegates, under the impression that Atherton was *not* the choice of Mitchell County, had refused to go into the convention.

A few days after the convention, Atherton and two fellow Republicans traveled to Riceville to meet with the five Howard County delegates, including I. A. Hoxie, the owner of the *Cresco Times*. They convinced the five that Atherton was indeed the choice of Mitchell County and left with promises of support from Howard County delegates. To dispel any lingering doubts, they invited the Howard County delegates to travel to Mitchell County to "see the people, as well as the delegates." Hoxie did just that and returned to Howard County "fully satisfied with the choice of Mr. Atherton."

In a letter published in Atherton's paper, J. L. Chase,

an Atherton delegate, described what happened next: "When the *Bolters* became aware that Howard county had decided to support the regular nomination, religious services were dispensed with, Sabbath School concerts postponed, and W. W. Blackman, A. S. Faville, A. Vanderpool and C. Sweatt, armed, as report says, with an old mortgage against the [Cresco] *Times* office, hurriedly left on Sunday for Howard county, where they arrived late at night, and early Monday morning, took possession of the *Times* office, and hoisted the name of A. S. Faville as 'stump' candidate for Representative."

As for the nomination of Julia Addington for county superintendent, a letter reportedly from Addington's hometown of Stacyville appeared in the same paper a week before the election: "Mr. Editor—I learn from the last issue of the Mitchell Co., *News*, that the people of Mitchell have become the earnest and zealous supporters of 'Women's Rights,' in as much as the *bolters* and *sore heads* of that place have originated a *Bolter's Ticket*, and placed in nomination, Miss J. C. Addington, of Stacyville, as a candidate for the office of County Superintendent.

"If the people of Mitchell intended this as a joke, it appears to me that they ought to have been more considerate, than to thus wound Miss Addington's feelings, by making her the subject of jest and ridicule throughout the entire county.—If they are in earnest in the matter, it seems to me that Miss Addington can consider it in no other light than a gross insult to her and her friends."

The letter writer cited three reasons to vote against Addington. "In the first place Miss Addington is ineligible, she could not hold the office if elected. The constitution, and the laws of this State expressly declare, that none but white male citizens of the United States, who have become residents of this State, shall be entitled to the right of suffrage, and to hold office in our State.

"In the second place, Mr. Browne, of Osage, the regular nominated, is better qualified by education and experience, to discharge the duties of the office. Mr. Browne is a graduate of one of the oldest Colleges in New England [Dartmouth], and is a thorough and finished scholar. He has been a practical teacher for several years. He taught the school at Stacyville for two winters, and [former county superintendent] Prof. Bush gave him the credit of teaching the best school in the county.

"In the third place, Mr. Browne is an Attorney, legal questions pertaining to school matters, are constantly arising, which must be decided by the Superintendent.

Trials and legal investigations will occasionally arise, in relation to the charge of district boundaries and other matters, and the Superintendent will have to act in a judicial capacity. How important then, that the Superintendent should have the necessary legal qualifications [to rule] intelligently upon matters that may be submitted to him, and to discharge the duties of the office, in a manner that shall be creditable to himself, and satisfactory to the people of the county.

"In conclusion, I would say to our Mitchell friends, that the good people of Stacyville do not feel very much flattered with the compliment which the people of Mitchell have seen fit to bestow upon them." The letter was signed, "Yours Truly, COMMON SENSE."

As the general election approached, Atherton again cautioned readers to beware of "a Bolters faction . . . backed only by the local interests of Mitchell, which have combined to secure the defeat of the regular nominated . . . county ticket." He warned voters to be alert on election day. "Spurious Tickets" with the bolters' names were already printed and were being circulated. "The bolters will make a desperate effort to elect their candidates on their mongrel Ticket." Voters were warned to "carefully examine" their ballots before depositing them in the ballot box to "see that every name is correct, and that they contain only the regular State and County ticket."

Meanwhile, over in Howard County, W. R. Mead, the editor of the Democratic *Iowa Plain Dealer* published in Cresco, reported a visit to his office by Atherton, "who we had supposed was the republican nominee for Representative from this district." But, he added, since his rival, the *Cresco Times*, "omits to make mention of the matter, perhaps our surmises are all fictions of the brain." He described Atherton and Faville as "two bats, instead of one, buzzing about the ear of power to regale themselves upon the insects that have fattened off the filth of opulence." Mead had reason to be amused by the split in the Republican Party in his district as he was the Democratic nominee.

The general election on October 12 delivered wins for most of the "regular" Republican ticket. Atherton headlined his coverage, "The Bolters Scooped!" and a "Glorious Victory for the Regular Ticket." However, he was a little premature in his report. He wasn't including the Howard County tally. When that total was added to the Mitchell County vote, Faville had defeated Atherton by 133 votes for the 56th District seat. The bolters' work seemed to have paid off in Howard County. Atherton came in last, even trailing the Democrat Mead.

Their work had also paid off in the election of county superintendent. Atherton's candidate Milton M. Browne had garnered 633 votes, but the bolters' candidate, Julia Addington, had also garnered 633 votes. Browne offered to let Addington assume the office. She declined. A solution was found in a "cast of lots." The winner was Addington.

In New York, suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony reported the outcome in their suffrage paper, *The Revolution*, in November and again in December: "Miss Addington is Superintendent of common schools in Mitchell County (Iowa). She was nominated by a convention in opposition to a Mr. Brown [sic]. When the vote was taken, lo! there was a tie. Mr. Brown offered to yield it through courtesy, but she said no; so they drew cuts and Miss A. was the victor."

Not willing to assume office in January under any clouds of uncertainty, on November 22 Addington wrote to the state superintendent of public instruction, A. S. Kissell:

"Sir—Having been elected to the office of county superintendent of common schools of Mitchell county, I am desirous of obtaining your opinion in regard to certain questions connected with the office before I shall assume its responsibilities, or attempt to perform its duties.

"1. Have I a legal right to hold the office, and could I collect pay for my services, in the performance of its duties?

"2. In the case of an appeal, would my decision be valid?

The Revolution.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY, \$3 A YEAR.

NEW YORK CITY SUBSCRIPTIONS, \$3.20.

ELIZABETH CADY STANTON, Editor.

SUSAN B. ANTHONY, Proprietor.

OFFICE. 49 EAST TWENTY-THIRD ST.

The national suffrage newspaper *The Revolution* published a notice of Addington's election.

"3. Do you think there would necessarily be any occasion for trouble to arise to the annoyance of myself, or the county?"

"The position is not one I should have chosen for myself, but since my friends have shown so much confidence in me and many of them are desirous that I should accept the office, I feel inclined to gratify them, if it be found there is nothing incompatible in my doing so."

Kissell consulted the state attorney general, Henry O'Connor, for his opinion on Addington's "first and second interrogatories." Kissell added, "I am personally acquainted with Miss A., and know her to be a successful teacher. If she can legally assume the duties of county Superintendent, the office would be filled with efficiency, and doubtless to the satisfaction of a large majority of the citizens of Mitchell County."

O'Connor issued his opinion within two days. "Rights and privileges of persons (citizens) are frequently extended, but never abridged by implication," he began. "The soundness and wisdom of this rule of construction is, I believe, universally conceded. Two clauses of the constitution only contain express provisions excluding women from the rights and privileges in said provisions named.

"Section 1, of article 1, as to the right of suffrage, and section 4, of article 3, which provides that members of the legislature must be *free white male citizens*. Free and white have lost their meaning, if the words in that use ever had any suitable or good meaning, but the word male still retains its full force and effect.

"If this express restriction exists in the constitution as to any other office it has escaped my notice. It is true that the words 'person' and 'citizen' frequently occur in other parts of the constitution in connection with eligibility and qualification for office, and I fully admit that by usage—'time honored usage,' if you will—these phrases have in common acceptation, been taken to mean men in the masculine gender only, and to exclude woman. But a recent decision in the court exchequer, England, holding that the generic term *man* included women also, indicates our progress from a crude barbarism to a better civilization.

"The office of county superintendent was created by chapter 52 of the acts of the seventh general assem-

bly, laws of 1868, pages 52-72. Neither in that act, nor in any subsequent legislation on the subject, have I been able to find any express provision making *male* citizenship a test of eligibility for the place, or excluding women; and when I look over the duties to be performed by that officer—as I have with some care, and, I trust, not without interest—I deem it exceedingly fortunate for the cause of education in Iowa that there is no provision in the law preventing women from holding the office of county superintendent of common schools.

"I know that the pronoun *he* is frequently used in different sections of the act, referring to the office; but, as stated above, this privilege of the citizen cannot be taken away or denied by intendment or implication; and women are citizens as well and as much as men.

"I need scarcely add, that, in my opinion, Miss Addington is eligible to the office to which she has been elected; that she will be entitled to her pay when she qualifies and discharges the duties of the office, and that her decisions on appeal, as well as all her official acts, will be legal and binding."

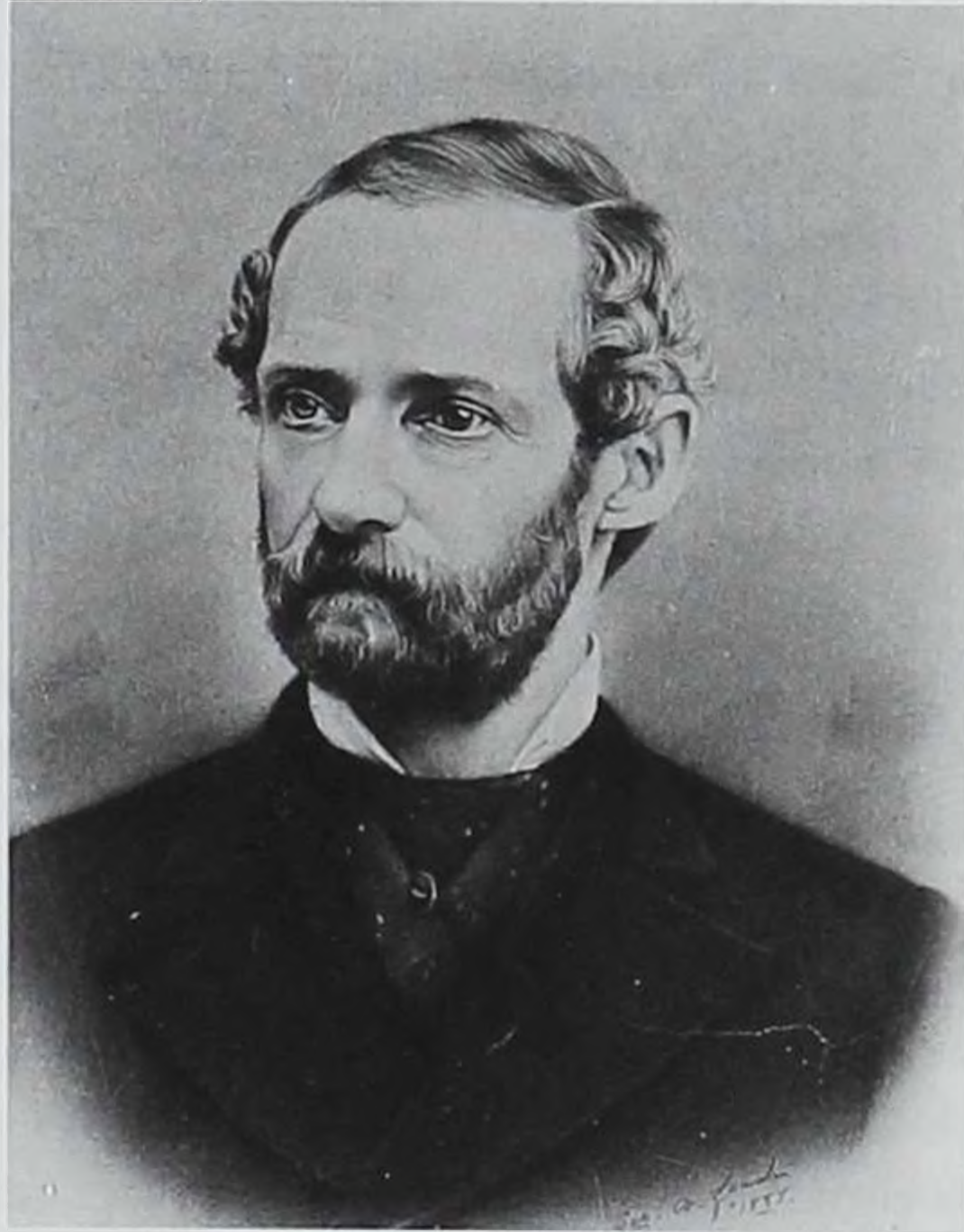
O'Connor concluded with an intriguing remark: "It is perhaps proper to state that an opinion on this question, substantially in agreement with the present one,

was sent from this office to a gentleman writing from Osage, in Mitchell county, several weeks ago, which, for some reason unknown to me, seems not to have been made public in the county."

O'Connor's final comment raises some interesting questions. Who was the "gentleman writing from Osage" who had already sought an opinion from O'Connor? And why had the mystery man not made O'Connor's opinion public when he received it "several weeks ago"? The answers to those questions have been lost to history.

On December 7, Superintendent Kissell wrote to Addington, apologizing for his delay and congratulating her on her election. "The Attorney General, who, we are glad to know, agrees with this Department in the opinion, that you can collect your salary, if you qualify for the office of county superintendent to which you were elected, as well as, that your opinions on cases of appeals will be valid in law."

SHSI (IOWA CITY)



Attorney General Henry O'Connor

He ended, "No better opportunity could be afforded you for elevating the schools, and the vocation which you have chosen, and in which you have labored for a number of years so successfully. Be assured, this Department will do all in its power to aid you in your efforts to advance the cause of education in your county."

Atherton published Addington's letter and O'Connor's opinion without comment. Two weeks into the new year, he also reprinted a long letter sent to the *Iowa State Register* by Osage's correspondent. It began this way: "Dear Register:—This letter comes to you from one of the best little towns in Iowa—a town that is an honor to be the first county in the State that ever elected a woman to office. Nobody here now can see any reason why Miss Julia C. Addington is less qualified to discharge the duties of County Superintendent of Schools *because* she is a woman, and indeed, we think that many who saw proper to cast their votes for her very worthy competitor, are now well enough satisfied with the result. Miss Addington is one of the most competent and successful teachers of Mitchell county, and about the first Monday in January next, will take her official place at the head of its public schools. From all we can hear we feel sure she will honor the position."

The news of O'Connor's ruling in Iowa was reported at the national level on December 30 when *The Revolution* ran this brief item, headlined, "Can Women Hold Office?" "Recently, the right of woman to hold office has been more directly declared in Iowa than in any other state, the Attorney-General having given an opinion in the case of a young woman elected Superintendent of Common Schools."

Addington assumed her duties in January. But resistance to her election surfaced at the state convention of county superintendents in Des Moines, as noted in the proceedings. When a severe March snowstorm prevented her from attending, most of her colleagues there issued a resolution of regret to their "worthy co-laborer" for her absence and with it a "cordial welcome to this field of labor." However, the "ungallant attitude of some members" was expressed when 5 out of 20 voted against the resolution.

As county superintendent, Addington oversaw 76 schools—including 3 log schoolhouses—with 2,231 students and 122 teachers scattered across the county. Male teachers earned \$8.57 per week. Female teachers earned \$5.63 per week (less than what a farm laborer

earned). The total school budget was roughly \$20,000.

The position of county superintendent was a two-year term and carried a variety of duties: testing applicants for teachers' certificates, issuing certificates to those who qualified, examining plans for new school buildings, holding meetings with the presidents of school districts, making an annual report to the state superintendent, visiting and inspecting each school in the county at least twice a year, and spending at least half a day in each visit. The most "agreeable" part of Addington's job, she reported, involved her visits to "nearly all the schools of the county—some of them as often as four or five times."

Under her leadership, 17 new schoolhouses were built and "a commendable spirit of liberality in regard to school accommodations is the rule in our county," she stated in 1872. "There is less frequent change of teachers than formerly," and teachers were better paid. She hoped that "the time is near at hand, when teachers will be paid according to the service they are capable of rendering." Her teachers were encouraged to read educational journals, and one teacher attended the Normal School at Winona, Minnesota—something she predicted would be attractive to more teachers in the future. Annual teachers' institutes, week-long events with lectures and discussions, were well attended. Addington saw her role as an observer—watching, examining, and commending. Rather than criticizing, she gave advice and made suggestions that she believed were an "encouragement to the teacher and a benefit to the school."

She recommended a more "suitable compensation" for county superintendents—making the position more attractive to well-qualified professionals. The average salary for county superintendent was \$550 (about \$9,000 in today's dollars). The office was currently "considered a burden and often given to him who will consent to take it, while too little regard is paid to his qualifications for the position."

As for Milton Browne, Addington's opponent in the election, he could again be found "dispensing law and justice, as he has fully recovered from the depressing effects caused by the triumph of 'Women's rights,' at the late election," Atherton reported. "'M. M.' is now a firm believer in 'strong-minded' women, and will hereafter give all such a 'wide berth.'" Browne died in 1892 at age 57.

History has remembered Henry O'Connor for his accomplishments as a Civil War hero and politician, but

in several biographies he is also recognized for his 1869 opinion as attorney general regarding Addington. Although earlier he had publicly advocated for women's suffrage, his ruling launched him as a sought-after spokesperson for the cause. When the first Iowa women's suffrage convention was planned for June 1870 in Mount Pleasant, organizers—including Amelia Bloomer—invited him to speak. (Bloomer described him as "a warm friend.") He replied that "nothing would give me more satisfaction than to see that good cause advanced." At the convention he "for half an hour spoke in his usual eloquent and forcible manner." But he later distanced himself from the movement when it became a liability to his political career. Susan B. Anthony met him in 1871 in Des Moines and sniffed that "he cares as do the *men* champions much more for his and Republican party success than for Woman Suffrage." In 1872, President Grant appointed him solicitor of the U.S. Department of State, a position he held for nearly 14 years. He spent his final years in the Iowa Soldiers' Home in Marshalltown, where he died in 1900.

Editor T. M. Atherton is remembered in county history books as "instrumental in bringing about the change in the county seat." He is described as "upholding in every possible way the highest standards of civic virtue and of civic pride." When he died in 1891 at the age of 62 he was cited for "the part which he played in the upbuilding of Mitchell county."

A. S. Faville, who had won the state representative's seat over Atherton, died in 1900 at the age of 76. Local histories note his accomplishments in Mitchell County politics, as well as his days as a gold miner in California and Australia.

Undoubtedly Addington's landmark election led the way for other women. Elsewhere in Iowa, two other women were elected county superintendent in 1871, and by 1874 five women were in the position. A year later ten women held the post. In 1876, the *Louisville Courier-Journal* remarked: "The women are county superintendents of schools in Iowa, and no person is deemed ineligible on account of sex to any school office in the State. Any woman there can practice law, sue and be sued, and do business in her own name, if she likes. The males will doubtless gradually drift back to agriculture, wander off to the Black Hills, or marry the lawyers and school superintendents."

Addington served for two years. Poor health prevented her from serving a second term. In 1871 she re-

corded a will in which she left her estate to her mother. Four years later she was dead.

Whether Addington was the first woman elected to public office in the United States—as the souvenir booklet claims—is not certain. There is little doubt that she was the first woman elected county superintendent of schools in Iowa, as well as the first woman elected to a county office in Iowa. And the opinion issued by Attorney General Henry O'Connor related to the eligibility of women to hold public office is cited as the first of its kind in the United States.

Over the years Addington's contribution to history has been ignored and ultimately forgotten. She is buried in a small country cemetery west of her hometown of Stacyville in northern Mitchell County. Her grave is marked by a simple stone marker. The inscription offers no hint of the pivotal role she played in history. It reads simply: "Julia C. Addington. Born 1829. Died 1875." But as the women of the Mitchell County World's Fair Association wrote in 1893, "In the early educational history of our county, she was a force for good, and the impress of her work still remains." ❖

Cheryl Mullenbach, a freelance writer, grew up in Stacyville and now lives in Panora.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Many sources identify Julia C. Addington as the first woman elected to the post of county school superintendent and/or the first woman elected to public office in the state of Iowa. Only the *Women's Columbian Souvenir of Mitchell County, Iowa, 1492-1893* makes the statement that Addington was the first woman elected to public office in the United States. However, in the author's e-mail survey of state librarians and historians in the states that were a part of the United States in 1869, none were able to identify the election of a woman to public office in their state as early as 1869.

Several sources, including *The Revolution* and Benjamin Gue's *History of Iowa*, make the claim that the opinion issued by Henry O'Connor was the first of its kind in the United States.

The following sources were used to compile this article: Mitchell County (Iowa) Souvenir Book Committee, *Women's Columbian Souvenir of Mitchell County, Iowa, 1492-1893* (Osage: H. E. Tuttle & Company, 1893); Mitchell County histories published in 1884 and 1918; *Mitchell County Press*, September 1869-January 1870; *The Revolution* (Nov. 18, Dec. 3, Dec. 30, 1869); *Iowa School Journal*, vol. 11, pp. 218, 146; Clarence Ray Aurner, *History of Education* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1914); Ruth Gallaher, *Legal and Political Status of Women in Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1918); Benjamin Gue, *History of Iowa* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1903); Jay J. Sherman, "History of the Office of County Superintendent of Schools in Iowa," *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, 21 (1923), 3-93; and Louise R. Noun, *Strong-Minded Women: The Emergence of the Woman-Suffrage Movement in Iowa* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1969). For an extremely detailed narrative of the movement in Iowa, see Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., *History of Woman Suffrage* (Rochester, NY: Susan B. Anthony, 1886), vol. 3, chap. 45, especially pp. 627-28. The Dec. 7, 1869, letter from A. S. Kissell to Addington is in Letterbook, Box 7, Dept. of Public Instruction, State Archives, State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines). A letter from Amelia Bloomer to Joseph Dugdale, which asks him to consider inviting Henry O'Connor to speak at the 1870 Mount Pleasant women's suffrage convention, is in the Iowa Women's Suffrage Records, 1866-1951, State Historical Society of Iowa (Des Moines). O'Connor's reply to Dugdale (5/10/1870) is at the Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College.

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



Murder on Brushy Creek

By Paul C. Juhl

On hot summer days when I was a youth, my friends and I swam in Brushy Creek and played in the timber. In the filtered light of late afternoon, we listened to the squirrels scramble through the trees. And when nightfall came, the Jameson mystery was sure to come up

The details were a little sketchy, even to those of us who had always lived in Washington Township, in southeastern Webster County. A middle-aged farm woman, Adelaide Jameson, had been approached by a robber. He demanded money, and when he thought she was going for a pistol, he shot her in the back. The murder was never solved, so in the minds of my buddies and me, the murderer might still be out there somewhere near Brushy Creek. If not the murderer, then surely the ghost of Adelaide Jameson.

For most of my 60-some years, I had stored this mystery in the back of my mind. Iowa history has always interested me, and in the summer of 2002, I attended an original play at the Old Creamery Theatre in Amana, Iowa. Titled *Lost and Found*, the play was about a small boy who had been abducted from a Marengo family in the 1890s. It started me thinking about the Jameson murder. If details were still available, could they be woven into a story? I had little to go on. Descendants of the Jameson family had come and gone in our township. I had never met a Jameson in the area during my growing-up years in the 1940s and '50s. The generations that knew the details of the story had long been dead. I didn't even know the date of the crime.

In the 1970s the State of Iowa determined that Brushy Creek valley would make a wonderful state park. The Jameson farmstead

was purchased by the state along with an additional 6,000 acres. In the 1990s the state constructed a dam and flooded most of Brushy Creek to create a 690-acre lake. The remaining buildings on the farmstead—an old barn sided with native black walnut and the house—had been torn down. But the actual site of the murder was on a hill above the lake, just off one of the equestrian trails in the eastern part of the park.

Determined to find out the whole story of the Jameson murder, I first gave some thought to where the victim might have been buried. The closest rural cemetery was Blanchard Cemetery, now surrounded by state-owned property on the west side of Brushy Creek Lake. A wagon carrying Jameson's coffin would only have had to travel down the east creek hill and up the west one to reach the cemetery. Seldom used in the 20th century, the cemetery is certainly an old one. It is a quiet place with only a hundred or so graves; a few date to the late 1850s. Although most of the grave markers had deteriorated, it didn't take long before I found Jameson's gravestone and the family plot. Now I knew the date of her death—September 15, 1884. She was only 41 years old.

On and off during the next year I searched for more. When I needed someone in Webster County to help with local research, I turned to my cousin Polly Doolittle, who lives outside Webster City. She, too, remembered growing up with the Jameson story. We talked with neighbors and prowled through dusty files in the Webster County Courthouse. The best resources, however, were the *Fort Dodge Messenger* and the *Fort Dodge Chronicle*. I followed the story through two

years of newspapers, winding my way through yards of microfilm at the State Historical Society of Iowa library in Iowa City. I was truly amazed at what I found. For starters, a reporter for the *Chronicle* had visited the crime scene on the evening of the murder. The article was bursting with details. A diagram of the Jameson house showed where the murderer had stood and the path of the bullet. Jameson's 18-year-old daughter, Abbie, described the murderer as wearing a slouch hat, a heavy beard, and a rubber coat. A possible motive was proposed: Adelaide's husband was treasurer of the school board; perhaps the murderer assumed that Jameson had several hundred dollars at home in preparation for the next day's school board meeting.

In the weeks after, the newspapers published leads in the case and comments by local citizens. One paper cautioned, "To all we say keep cool if you can, for be sure 'murder will out.'" Pieces of the mystery continued to tumble off the pages as I followed the story over the months. Then I came across the climax: in 1886, two years after the crime, a local man named Johnnie Porter had been arrested and charged with the murder. Porter's trial took place in the spring of 1887, involving the law firms of two local heavyweights in the legal profession, Jonathan Dolliver and John Duncombe. A reporter's coverage of the trial paraphrased the attorneys' questions to 32 witnesses and the essence of each testimony.

Every township in Iowa has a story—many stories, for that matter. It just takes someone to rediscover them, and then to remind others that local history can be fascinating. Perhaps the

A TERRIBLE CRIME.

A Woman Shot Dead in Her Own Home,

In the Presence of Her Two Little Daughters,

By a Cowardly Brute Who Demands Her Husband's Money.

A Heroic Daughter Picks Up Her Mother's Revolver and Attempts to Avenge Her Death,

But She Misses Her Aim and the Villain Escapes.

A Large Force of Armed Men Scouring the Country.

The Husband at Work in a Corn Field at the Time of the Murder.

Mrs. William Jameson Dies Without a Struggle or Moan.

The Supposition is that Death Was Instantaneous.

There Will be at Least Five Hundred Men Out in Search of the Murderer Today.

A Chronicle Reporter Visits the Scene of a Dreadful Crime.

He Finds the House Filled With Sympathizing Friends and Neighbors.

A Correct Diagram Showing the Residence of Mr. Jameson,

Which is Located on Brushy Creek, Fifteen Miles Southeast of this City.

Jameson murder still held interest for others in the township, as it did for me. I decided to re-stage Johnnie Porter's trial as best I could from the story I had uncovered.

Polly and I scheduled the event for Sunday, September 14, 2003, exactly 119 years and one day from the date of the murder. Because the site of the murder is part of Brushy Creek State Park, we had first contacted the park manager for his okay, and he helped arrange transportation for some of our elderly guests. The basement of the historic Methodist Church in the nearby ghost town of Homer was a bad-weather backup.

We sent invitations in somber, black envelopes to relatives and neighbors who we knew were interested in local history and encouraged them to dress in 1880s garb to set the mood—and to bring a folding chair, to rest the body. I had fashioned the witnesses' testimony into scripts for several speakers, and enclosed one into 32 of the invitations, hoping that these guests would read them at the trial. For instance, one would read the part of the local shoemaker, testifying that the cast of a footprint taken in the Jameson garden was from a size 7 boot. Another would play the part of the defendant's wife, testifying that Porter and she had spent the evening before the murder in her parlor and had plans to attend an entertainment of Swiss bell ringers in Fort Dodge the next day. One would take the role of the victim's husband, testifying that he had recently paid the premium for a joint life insurance policy. All of these rich details had come from newspapers published 12 decades ago!

The day dawned beautifully, a gorgeous early autumn day in Iowa. My aunt and uncle hosted a huge potluck at their home a few miles from the park and then we all proceeded to the state park grounds. Nearly 60 people wove their way back through the trees and underbrush, following the well-used horse trail. The seven-minute walk and quiet conversation added a certain curiosity and suspense. Brushy Creek Lake was just a few yards west of our path and filled the valley beyond. At the top of the hill we entered an opening in the trees.

The only thing left from the Jameson farmstead was a storm cellar, which had helped me establish the location of the house. The trial would take place at the exact site of the murder, the parlor. After giving some brief background, I announced the start of the trial. For over two and a half hours I called witnesses for the prosecution and defense, many of them costumed

Tricia Bird and Curt Lemon play the roles of witnesses in the murder trial.





Judy Ellerman reads her scripted testimony. The author is in the background.

in bonnets and aprons, or suspenders and hats. The "witnesses" read their scripts in character, and Sandy Mickelson, staff writer for the *Fort Dodge Messenger*, read the newspaper account of the reporter who had traveled 15 miles on the dark night after the murder.

At the end of the witnesses' testimony, those assembled acted as a jury. They were given a choice of four verdicts for Johnnie Porter: guilty of first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or manslaughter, or not guilty. Their verdict was nearly unanimous: Johnnie Porter was not guilty.

I then disclosed the actual results of the real trial in 1887. The jury had been out from 5 p.m. on

Saturday until 6 p.m. on Sunday. They found Johnnie Porter guilty of manslaughter. The case proceeded to the Iowa Supreme Court, where it was thrown out based on a procedural error.

We ended the day where we had begun—under the century-old oaks on my aunt and uncle's farm. While we enjoyed dessert and coffee, my cousin Carey Dubbert, a nationally known musician, played the dulcimer. The day had been a success. Donald and Cheryl Christopherson, farmers near the Brushy Creek area, agreed: "Our families have lived in Washington Township for over 100 years. Taking part in the re-enactment made local history come alive. Everyone at the enactment had a special interest in the place the murder occurred. Sharing the experience at the site with friends and neighbors was an enlightening afternoon of history."

Webster County historian Roger Natte also enjoyed the event: "I had a wonderful time and loved the presentation. I liked the use of local people who were asked to read the parts. I am sure that it made it much more fun for everyone there, including the participants. Obviously this was not a professional performance but that

wasn't the purpose. The 'actors' just rose to the occasion. The location of the site of the murder in a beautiful wooded area on a beautiful early fall day just added to the event. This approach may have a lot of merit for other communities and events, although it might be most successful when dealing with a trial situation."

As I drove away from Brushy Creek and my boyhood home, I was smiling and felt pleased with the way everything had turned out. Polly and I had brought together family and friends for a different perspective on a place we all knew well. Even though the murder of Adelaide Jameson was a tragic event, the trial re-enactment had given us all a chance to briefly stand in the shoes of actual individuals from the past. Perhaps we now had a better understanding of how our ancestors had confronted misfortune and defined justice. I left Brushy Creek hopeful that I, and others, would create more living-history experiences for Iowans and the communities they call home. ❖

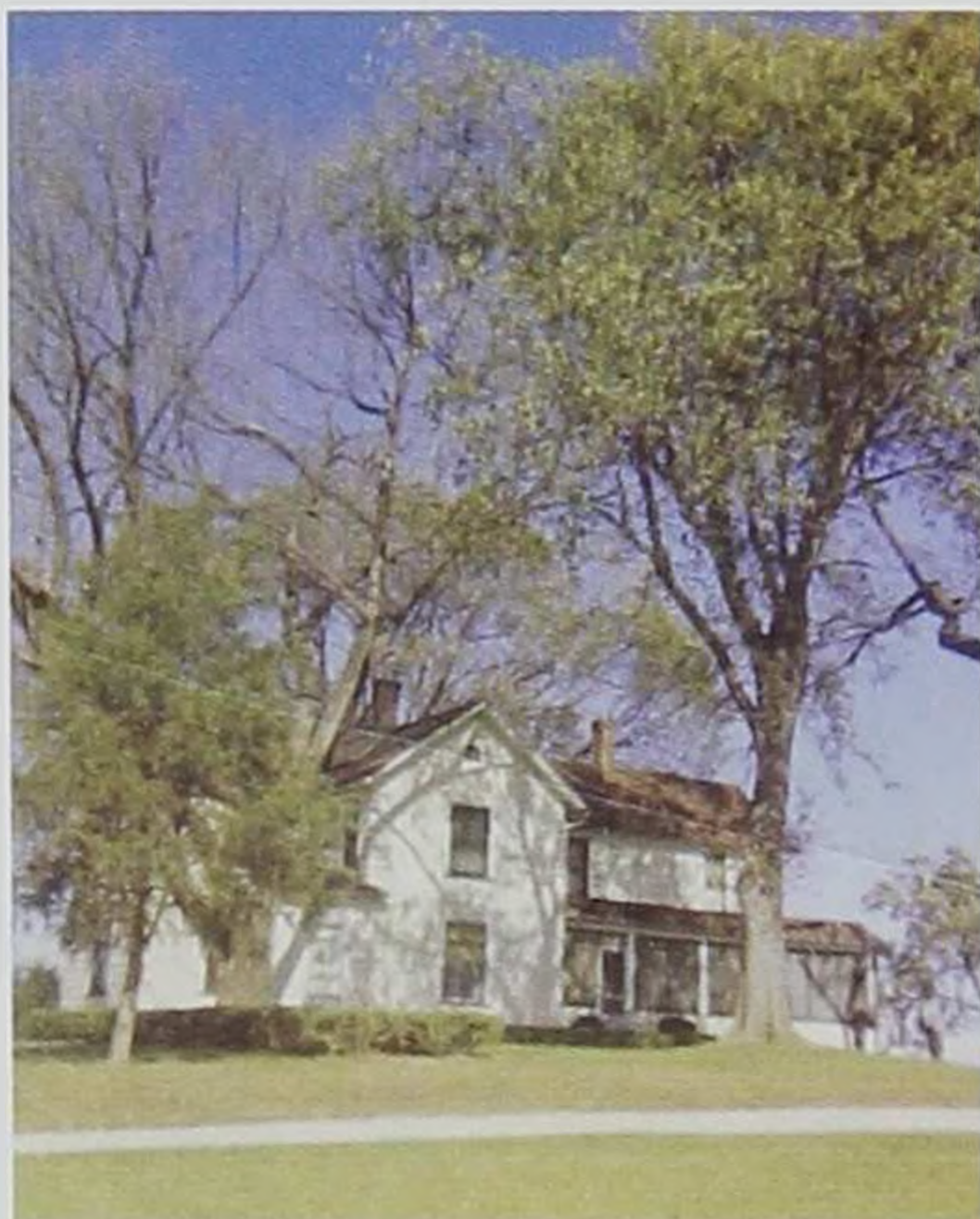
The author enjoys researching and writing about Iowa history. His work has appeared in The Palimpsest and Iowa Heritage Illustrated. Special thanks to Julie Krusemark for the use of photos and other materials.

Many of the guests to the trial came dressed in 19th-century costumes to add to the ambience. From left: Libby Doolittle; Shirley and Don Doolittle, hosts of the potluck; Louise Juhl; and Polly Doolittle.





PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR



The author, as a child, poses by a favorite tree on her grandparents' Iowa farm. Another favorite spot was the screened-in porch on the farmhouse.

Summer

by Sherrill Lynn Hofer Kerbaugh

I could hear distant rumblings as I played on the tall swing set behind my grandparents' farmhouse near Low Moor, Iowa. The air freshened, and a playful, little breeze became more determined as it gained a bit of strength. Storm clouds were forming against an enormous blue-gray canvas. My Grandma Johnson called to me from the kitchen door, which opened onto the big, screened-in porch. "Sherrill, a storm's coming! Come help me get the laundry off the clothesline!"

I ran to help her, and we laughed as we tried to grab the clothes flapping wildly in the wind. As we reached up to undo the wooden clothespins, the bed sheets billowed around us and covered our heads. While hurrying to get everything folded and into the clothes basket, I buried my face in each piece and smelled the sunshine.

Mid-afternoon was the time of day when Grandma and I took

lunch out to the field. Neighboring farmers and hired hands who were helping Grandpa would be waiting for us under the only tree in the field. This afternoon, however, Grandma said they would be coming back to the house for lunch. Sitting under a big tree wasn't a good idea during a thunderstorm.

I would have to hurry if I wanted to watch Nature's matinee. I helped Grandma put out sandwiches and cookies on the kitchen table and cups near the big enamelware coffee pot that was perking away on the stove. (I had once asked how the men could drink hot coffee on hot summer days; I was told that Swedes, Danes, and Norwegians just did that.)

The men had washed up outside and now found places at the table, chatting about the day's work and whose farm they would be working at next. I filled my plate, got my own cup of Swede-

Storm

Dane-Norwegian “summer” coffee (mostly milk and sugar with a teaspoon of coffee), and hurried to my favorite spot on the porch.

Grandma’s old couch had a freshly laundered cover with lots of pillows. The air had cooled off several degrees, so I grabbed one of the throws from the back and tucked it all around me, carefully balancing my plate and cup. The show was about to begin.

A line of cattle was heading for the barn to hunker down. The birds had stopped chirping. Even the usually noisy hens were quiet. The towering clouds were ominous but truly beautiful as they formed and reformed, moving across the farms and fields in the distance. Everything was still.

A bright flash of lightning and its equally impressive clap of thunder made me jump! The first raindrops were subtle, pinging ever so softly on the tin roof. As the storm came closer, the drops got bigger and bigger and in-

creased in intensity. I loved the thunder and lightning even though I closed my eyes and held my ears. As the wind changed direction, the rain blew in through the porch screen, and I squealed with delight and pulled the throw up around my face. It would have been more sensible to just get up and go inside the warm, dry kitchen, but it wouldn’t have been as much fun.

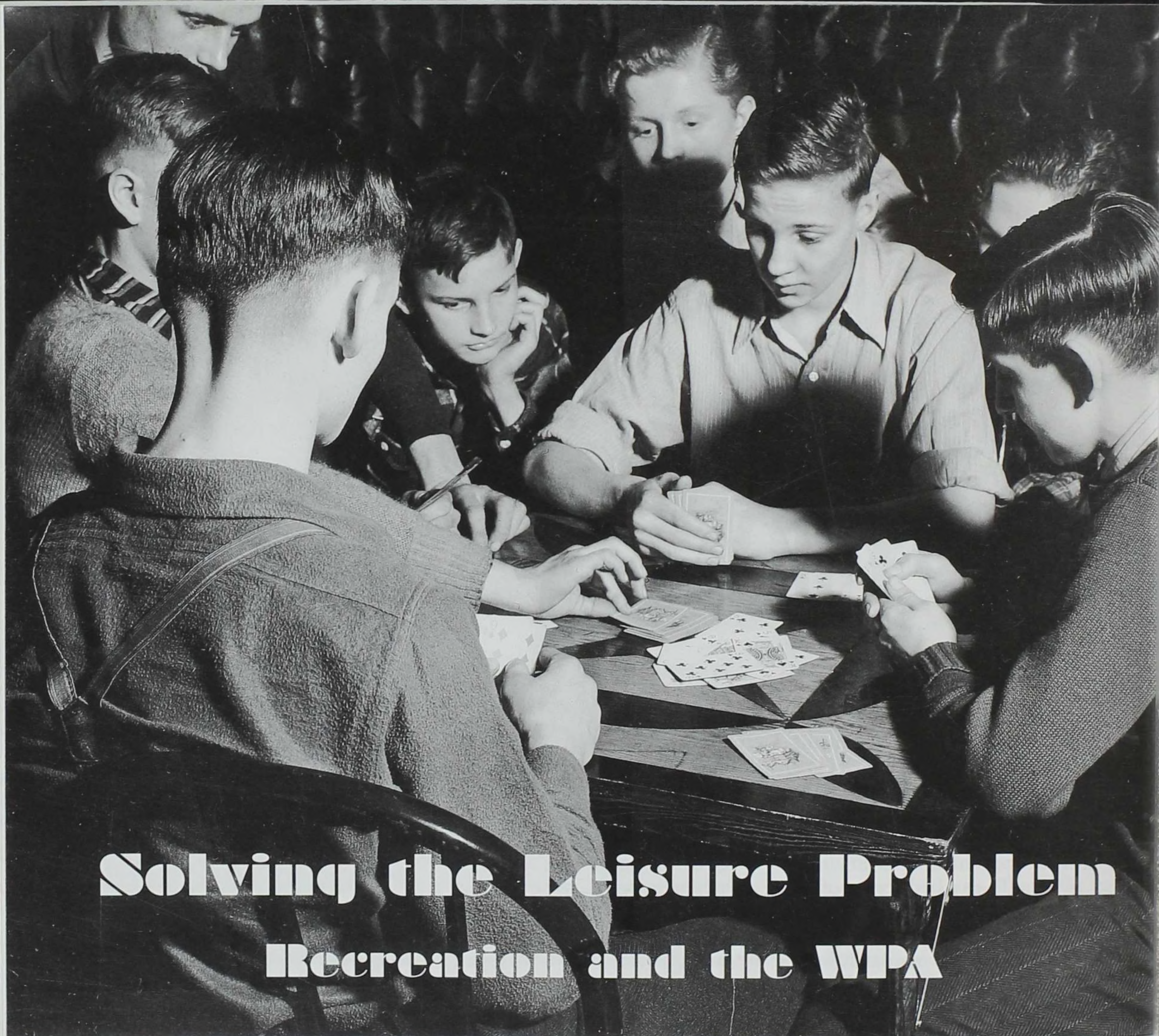
Then, as suddenly as it had come, the storm passed our farm and moved on. The thunder rumbled in the distance and the lightning wasn’t as bright. Patches of blue were appearing in the sky. As the rain tapered off, its song on the tin roof changed beat, back to just pings here and there.

The trees were still dripping, so I stayed on the porch. Besides, the old couch was still the best seat for what was coming—a gorgeous rainbow, a gift from the sun for those who had patiently waited and watched the whole

show. The air was warming up and smelled so good, so fresh, so clean. Grandpa’s cattle stepped out from the red barn and headed back to graze, oblivious to the mud puddles. Even the hens were clucking again, and it sounded as though every bird on the surrounding fifty farms was chirping at the same time.

Fifty-some years have gone by, and I often close my eyes and play this scenario again and again in my mind — a childhood memory that I have finally put down on paper so that others might sit with me on the old couch and listen to the raindrops . . . ping . . . ping . . . ping.

The author lives in Aurora, Colorado. As a child in the late 1940s and early '50s, she often visited the farm of her grandparents, Carl E. and Esther H. Johnson, in Clinton County.



Solving the Leisure Problem

Recreation and the WPA

by Ginalie Swaim

“POVERTY OF PLAY has been as great, if not greater, than poverty of work.”

That’s not a complaint one would have expected to hear during the job-starved Great Depression, but social critic Katherine Glover was not alone in declaring that Americans needed to enrich their lives by learning the right ways to play.

Concerns over the “problem of leisure,” as social reformers called it, arose well before the Great Depression. Technology and mechanization were transforming the work day (in factory, office, farm, and home), and

leisure time was becoming part of the American way of life, and not just for the leisure class. Efforts were under way to transmit social mores and values through recreation. In congested urban areas, the playground movement created and staffed play areas to assimilate and Americanize immigrant children. In factories, management sponsored sports teams, family picnics, and social activities as ways to instill loyalty. Unions did the same to build solidarity.

Enjoying free time, of course, was not the problem. What alarmed social critics is that Americans were fill-

ing their newly acquired free time with the wrong kinds of activities—for example, movies, radio, and spectator sports (one critic labeled the problem “spectatoritis”).

What was so wrong about listening to the radio, or driving to a movie, or cheering in the stands for your favorite baseball team? Plenty, according to a cascade of sociological studies and books claiming that passive, commercialized, mass entertainment was undermining morals and destabilizing society. “Leisure became a battleground for widespread ambivalence about technology, social change, economic change, and new social habits,” writes historian Susan Currell in *The March of Spare Time: The Problem and Promise of Leisure in the Great Depression*. Then, as the depression cut jobs or reduced work hours, critics feared that Americans with time on their hands and despair in their hearts were now even more vulnerable and attracted to activities considered “wasteful, exploitative, and morally questionable.” The repeal of Prohibition and gambling laws added new concerns.

Reformers were already concerned that changes in society were emasculating American men. Sitting at an assembly line or pushing papers at a desk didn’t support the traditional image of a strong male possessing authority and autonomy. In the home, women were grabbing the purse strings as they bought into the trend of mass consumption. The depression eroded male self-esteem even more as the traditional breadwinner in the family took his place in a bread line. Sociologists warned that American men must “avoid stagnant loafing. It is not good for man to bite his nails and think over-much on his troubles.” The right kinds of recreation, they preached, could restore balance to the individual in a tumultuous world.

Reformers called for the government to step in. As one charged, a federal government that could “prevent the sale of unwholesome food” could also prevent “the sale of unwholesome recreation” by providing recreation facilities and guiding Americans to morally appro-

priate activities. “Pressure increased for a government response,” Currell writes, “which eventually led to an unprecedented federal policy to promote the ‘better’ use of leisure.”

The federal response came in the mid-1930s. The Works Progress Administration’s recreation program partnered with willing communities in every state but Maine. In Iowa, the *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune* explained how it worked: “The plan as now administered, provides for the salaries of the recreation leaders, paid by the Works Progress Administration while the equipment, materials and facilities are provided by the municipal government. [Its] share of the financing is set at 20 per cent of the amount provided by the [federal] government.” Communities were expected to call upon citizens, service clubs, and businesses for support. In Dickinson County, a local paper assured its readers that the recreation leaders hired would “be chosen from among those eligible on the Dickinson county WPA certified list. All will be young persons with clean character records and a capability to learn the supervision [and leadership].”

Although Italy, Germany, and Russia all had recreation programs directed at the masses, the U.S. veered away from fascist and nationalistic models. Instead, WPA recreation programs set out to democratize leisure—encouraging individuality, promoting exercise, celebrating American traditions. As Helene Amling, chair of Mason City’s WPA recreation program, explained in 1939, “We are still only at the beginning of the creation of a democratic program of leisure-time activities for the American public, but the WPA recreation program has turned a new page in social history by teaching thousands of communities how to procure for themselves the benefit of public recreation, and Mason City is one of these communities.”

Solving the leisure problem meant preserving American values in the face of a transformed society. “‘Bad’ leisure was urban, industrial, commercial, and disintegrated the home as a unit,” Currell writes, “whereas ‘good’ leisure reintegrated the community and family, was simple, and involved social interaction or proto-industrial artisan skills.”

Working with your hands, learning new skills, expressing yourself through music or drama, throwing horseshoes with your neighbors—this is what the WPA recreation program envisioned. Here’s how it played out in Iowa.

Left: Deliberating over a card game, Burlington, 1940. Photographers for the Works Progress Administration captured scenes of Americans participating in the WPA recreation program. According to leisure experts, playing games was useful for building social skills. “Life knows no greater testing medium for conduct and character than the game,” Ted Brewton, a WPA recreational director in Mason City, told townspeople in 1940. The WPA recreation program activities fell into four categories: physical, cultural, social, and therapeutic (for those with disabilities or in institutions).



Recreation Institute, Ames, 1941.

To operate local WPA recreation programs, leaders attended training institutes to learn the basics of various activities and tools for leadership.

"The principal aim of the recreation program," a Muscatine newspaper explained, "is to keep the younger children and adults off the street, get them in close contact with organized groups, [and] teach them sportsmanship and crafts, which may be of great value to them in later years."

Below: Gymnastic skills, learned at a WPA recreation program, Des Moines Jewish Center, 1939.

Right: Fitting costumes for the gymnastics performance.

ALL PHOTOS PAGES 126-148: SHSI (IOWA CITY) WPA COLLECTION: RECREATION







Painting plaster casts at the Community House in Sioux City, 1938.

Crafts like this one were believed to especially appeal to women. Recreation reformers worried that American women needed guidance in using their leisure time productively, rather than flocking to the movie theater. Too many movies, they believed, featured immoral women wearing elegant clothing and living in luxurious settings. Better that women return to the hearth, and enjoy sewing clothes and decorating the home on a reasonable budget.



A class in marksmanship, Des Moines, 1941.

The class may represent an additional focus of recreation—national defense, as the nation edged towards war. Programs also offered model airplane clubs and classes in aeronautics for boys.

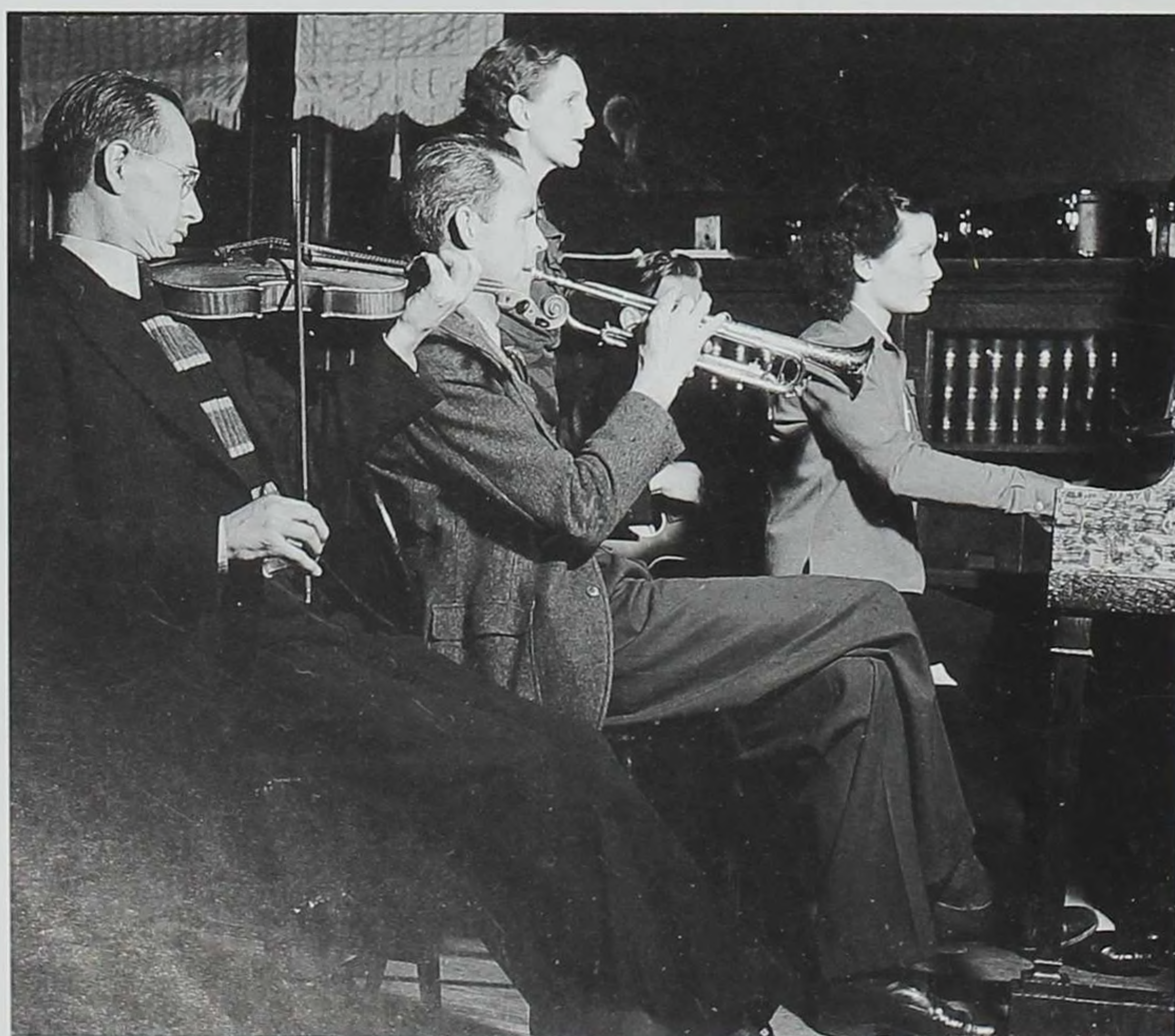
Instruction in drawing and painting, Waterloo, 1940.





This page, top: Young virtuosos, on harmonicas and guitars, a washboard and a glass jug, at Ottumwa's Garfield Grade School, 1936. Below: Musicians in Burlington, 1940.

Listening to music on the radio was extremely popular in the 1930s, but recreation experts considered it too passive and commercialized. Instead, they encouraged Americans to make their own music and reap the social and cultural benefits.



Right: Perfecting woodcraft skills with hand tools, Council Bluffs, 1940.

The WPA recreation program coincided with the 1930s craze for hobbies. Clubs, magazines, and radio shows devoted to hobbies sprang up across the nation. Hobbies were considered an appropriate use of free time, writes Susan Currell. "The married man 'puttering' about the house with an absorbing hobby . . . kept him happy and indoors, near his family and head of the household." As a WPA brochure advised, for a man without a job, a hobby kept "his mind from rusting and his personality from growing crabbed." Buying hobby supplies also gave a slight boost to an ailing economy.





Teenagers' dance in Burlington, 1940.

Supervised dances in well-lit recreation centers were considered a wholesome alternative to dark roadhouses. The WPA project saw benefits of socialization through certain types of dance—ballroom, tap, square, and folk, but definitely not jazz.

Right: Beading a necklace, Des Moines, 1941.

Arts and crafts were categorized as cultural recreation, along with music and drama, and the study and appreciation of folklore, art, and literature. Leisure experts believed that personal expression through the arts honored the individual and her choice of leisure activities—but the same experts were adamant that “good” leisure should also improve oneself and better society.







Negro Community Center, Ottumwa, 1938.

Recreation centers "draw citizens together in state, county and community," said Ted Brewton, the African American WPA recreational director in Mason City. "One can see these unifying influences at work in all neighborhood centers. Recreation is the great democratizer and unifier."

Brewton continued, "At his play, the child gives himself most fully, and is probably most susceptible to suggestion. It is obvious that great recreation areas and facilities of the United States and especially organized programs provided by recreation leaders are breaking down barriers of race and religious prejudice."

Brewton told his radio audience that in 1940, "recreational facilities of the Iowa WPA reach out to more than 1,265 Negro adults and 3,425 Negro children each week." He added, "On a yearly basis approximately 60 Negro men and women are trained, supervised and paid by the WPA to direct the activities of recreation centers in the state, 10 of whom are working in a supervisory capacity."



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Above: Puppetry class, Sioux City, 1938.

"Puppets, in the last few years, have come into their own," stated Archer McMackin, of the state WPA recreation department. McMackin taught 30 northeastern Iowa WPA supervisors to build and operate puppets and to stage shows. The classes were part of an effort to bring the art of puppetry back to Iowa.

Right: Woodcraft class, Cedar Falls, 1940.

Learning traditional skills of working with wood, leather, and tin was an "opportunity to discover just what [a boy] can do with his hands and with good tools," according to the *Muscatine Journal and News-Tribune*. New hobbies "bring out new skills or latent skills in the individual which will help him along in later life."







Children, some barefoot, playing a circle game, Polk County, 1939.

Physical exercise, playing outdoors, enjoying nature, and reviving traditional games were all aims of the WPA recreation program in its efforts to guide Americans away from passive and commercialized leisure activities.



Children, some barefoot, playing a circle game, Polk County, 1939. Physical exercise, playing outdoors, enjoying nature, and reviving traditional games were all aims of the WPA recreation program in its efforts to guide Americans away from passive and commercialized leisure activities.



Try-outs for Golden Gloves competition, Gilmore Center, Fayette County, 1939.

Setting up and maintaining WPA recreation programs in smaller communities, like Gilmore City, was challenging. At a 1938 meeting in Spirit Lake, a representative from Terril (population 400) announced that his town was "extremely anxious for the supervision and instruction necessary to keep a project going. . . . The various civic groups and women's clubs have started a project there, but now lack the proper supervision and training to keep it going."

Right: Croquet players, Des Moines, 1939.

In Oelwein in 1937, the newspaper outlined its summer recreation program: "A lovely new croquet set, horse shoes, and sand box are available," plus a busy schedule of picnics, carnivals, sports tournaments, dog races, pet shows, parades, handcraft exhibits, and an overnight hike for boys. In February, the paper reminded readers that "the Ping Pong tables . . . are proving a big drawing card for business men and women who are looking for wholesome amusement."

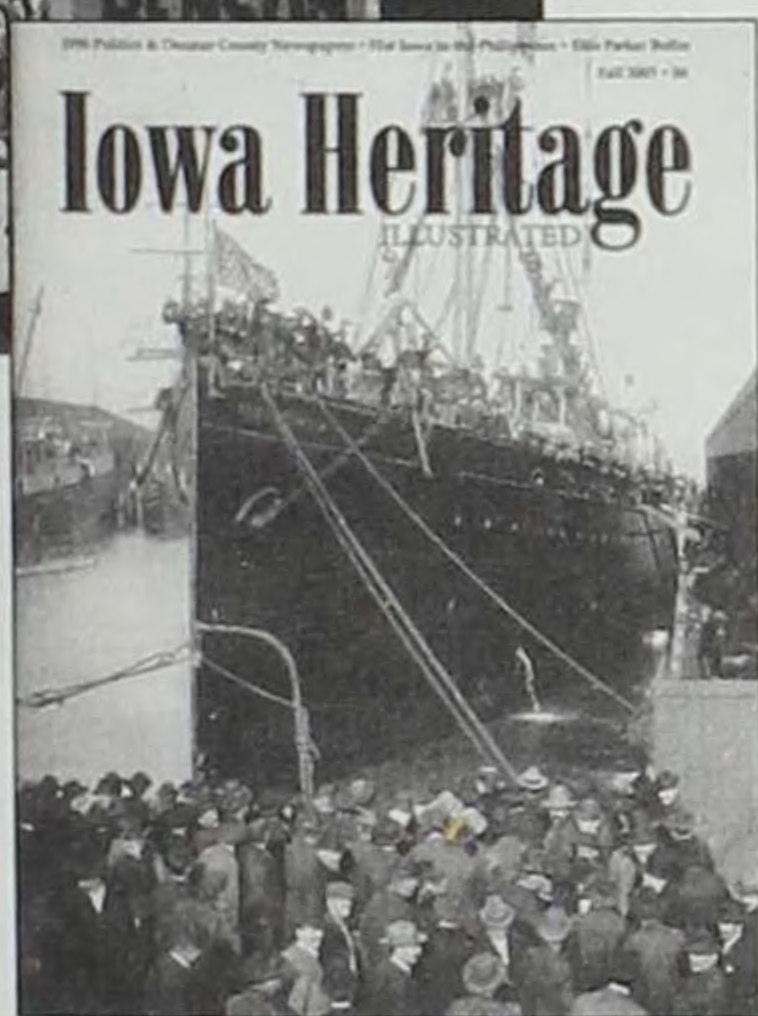




Playing horseshoes, Muscatine, 1939.

Adult and youth participation in Muscatine's WPA recreation program climbed from 20,000 in 1937 to over 56,000 in 1939. The local paper reported in 1937, "Muscatine is fortunate in having one of the programs as there are a great many cities standing in line awaiting the chance to install such an activity. The government does not plan on taking any such project away from a city in which it has taken a foothold if the program is given the support of the city and the project itself is reaping the result for which it was intended. With a trained corps of workers here, state and area officials . . . have voiced their complete satisfaction . . . and point to the Muscatine program as one of the outstanding in the state."

"With the outbreak of World War II," historian Susan Currell writes, "increased productivity and full employment put concerns with leisure into the background while workers entered the real battle with fascism. What remained, however, was a commitment to the notion of a self and society defined not only by work but also through leisure." ❖



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By the way, on November 4, Democrat Grover Cleveland beat Republican James G. Blaine by some 25,000 votes nationally, only .3 percent. The candidates for the Greenback/Anti-Monopoly Party and the Prohibition Party each pulled in less than 2 percent. Iowa went Republican.

—The Editor

SHSI (IOWA CITY): WPA COLLECTION



Girls in Burlington, 1942, concentrate on a game of checkers. In the 1930s and early '40s, the WPA partnered with Iowa communities to run recreation programs for children and adults. Inside, a gallery of photos of the programs in action.

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