

Harboring the history bug?

In January 1900, the satire magazine *Punch* identified the frazzled fellow below as “a calculating gentleman (not at all a bad looking chap) who has solved the problem as to whether we are in the nineteenth or twentieth century.”

Today, a hundred years later, he might be identified as “a weary fellow (having a bad hair day) who has read one too many lists of the ten most significant people or events of this century ... or millennium ... or geological epoch.” Certainly the na-

tional media has saturated the public with historical looks and lists—perhaps to the point of weariness and ennui for many.

But perhaps not for people like you and me—right? I would suspect that most of you loyal readers of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* had been contentedly harboring the “history bug” long before the new-century-and-new-millennium hoopla ever began. For people like us, looking back at the past, wondering what it was really like, comparing it to the present—this is just part of how we view the world we live in.

So here at *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*, we’re not rushing into this “make a list and move on” mentality. This issue savors the end of the 19th century as Iowa was poised to begin a new one and, like everyone else in the world, was a bit puzzled over when the new century actually began. The issue also looks at our state in 1899 through the lens of that Iowa icon, the State Fair, at a time when Iowans were just as interested in looking back as looking forward.

There’s even more in this issue, of course, and much more lined up for the coming year. We plan to feature some special articles on the 20th century in Iowa, culminating in a special collector’s edition—a companion issue to the State Historical Society’s upcoming museum exhibit about the 20th century. Titled “A Few of Our Favorite Things,” the exhibit is scheduled to open in December 2000.

But first, let me wish you and yours a happy new year. And please join me in looking forward to more of the past—brought to you in every issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*.

—The Editor

