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Summer 2014 • \$7

Iowa Heritage

ILLUSTRATED



Front Porch

Dear Readers,

As I started work on this issue's photo essay of Jamie Beranek's evocative images of railroad depots, I hadn't yet heard that he had been awarded a Governor's Volunteer Award for Length of Service. It shouldn't have surprised me. Besides being a skilled photographer, Jamie has been a dedicated volunteer for the Iowa City center of the State Historical Society of Iowa since 1988—well over 10,000 hours, most of it as a photo archivist. He is generous in every way. And he's a fine photographer, as you'll see.

In addition to working with great images, my job has many pleasures, but hearing of the passing of one of our longtime readers is painful. Recently the post office returned a copy of the magazine from New Jersey marked "No Current Address." Wanting to make sure the copy got to our reader, Stephen Stenstrom, we searched for him on the Internet and, unfortunately, found his obituary. An obituary offers only a glimpse of one's life, but Mr. Stenstrom's included one line that caught my notice. "Born in Des Moines, Iowa, Stephen was raised at the Iowa Ordnance Plant in Burlington." Mr. Stenstrom started life in 1941, the same year the plant opened for manufacture of ammunition. We might guess that his mother or father worked at the plant during World War II, when he was a young child.

For years Mr. Stenstrom read stories in our magazine of other Iowans, those who played large roles in the past and those who had minor, often overlooked, roles. I wish now that I had published an article on the workers at the Burlington plant (actually in Middleton), if only to affirm for Mr. Stenstrom that those workers had important stories to tell, too, even if they only saw themselves as cogs in U.S. wartime industries. I hope they did not.

It's often difficult to know how ordinary workers felt about their work. That makes the first article in this issue particularly valuable, as it looks at wartime workers who were involved in the Manhattan Project in Ames, Iowa. Author Susan Futrell realized that their stories were important, so she set about interviewing them. Although the stories of the head scientists have been researched, those of the every-

day workers had not, and I am pleased to present them here.

Speaking of the Atomic Age, check out the Summer 2014 issue of *The Annals of Iowa*, also published by the State Historical Society of Iowa. Historian Joanne Abel Goldman delves into Iowa's leading role in educating citizens about the Atomic Age. Perhaps some of you remember elementary or high school film strips and classroom materials in the early 1950s, or adult classes in your community. To order a copy, contact editor Marvin Bergman at 319-335-3931 or marvin-bergman@uiowa.edu.

Several of you sent comments and compliments on the Civil War issue of *Iowa Heritage Illustrated*. Here's one of my favorites.

Dear Editor: Thank you for the wonderful issue. The articles seemed more personal and universal than a collection of facts—stories on the soldiers, families at home, the treatment of the dead, wounded, and aged soldiers. The story about the young woman serving as a nurse and teacher is timeless—youth's desire to be on a path of service and success. Lucinda Humphrey's death after childbirth seems so undeserved. So, your issue covered the war and soldiers dying and ended with a woman giving birth. A completion of an old story.

John Hurley, Belfast, Maine

Finally, just for fun, I have to share something I ran across in a 1910 history of Davenport and Scott County. The table of contents is in the old style, in which all the topics covered in a chapter are listed in brief phrases. The penultimate chapter is titled "The Salad Course" and is described this way: "In this chapter may be found almost everything aside from the item the reader is searching for—There are some things that will prove of interest to somebody—Other things that everybody knows—Some incidents are unusual and others just so-so—There seemed to be a necessity for this sort of chapter."

Readers (and Mr. Stenstrom), we hope you agree that there is "a necessity" for *this* magazine, which brings you solid history brought to life through stories and images of the people and the times.

—Your editor, Ginalie Swaim

Iowa Heritage

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Letters to the Editor

Share your thoughts with us here on the Front Porch. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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PHOTO BY JAMIE BERANEK

On the Cover

In July 1980, Jamie Beranek photographed the West Liberty depot, once one of Iowa's busiest transfer stations. It served the Rock Island Railroad from 1897 until the railroad closed in March 1980. After years of neglect, the depot was acquired by the West Liberty Heritage Foundation and renovated. It now houses a museum and the Chamber of Commerce. This issue showcases more of Beranek's images of Iowa's vanishing depots.

Atoms Amidst the Cornfields

Pride, Patriotism, and Secret Atomic Research at Ames, Iowa

by Susan Futrell

The young chemist hunches over his workbench, only noticing the time when he looks up to check his experiment. He makes a few notes in a numbered logbook, adds his initials, then crosses the small room to carefully lock it in a cabinet, as he does every night. On his way out, he nods to the security guard before walking back to the apartment he shares with five other graduate students a few blocks from the Iowa State College campus in Ames, Iowa. They are a close-knit group—they cook together, share ration coupons to buy gas for the one guy among them with a car. They put in long days, often 70 hours a week. Some return after dinner to their experiments, which run around the clock. The work is classified as top secret. Their families and friends know not to ask.

It's 1942. News of war is everywhere, and one of the hardest things about keeping the young chemist's work a secret is that even though he's young and healthy, outsiders think he must be 4-F, "unfit for service." They have no idea he's part of one of the most significant, far-reaching U.S. government projects ever undertaken. Although his story is little known in Iowa and even less so beyond, his and others' work in Ames during World War II played an early and crucial role in the Manhattan Project, as the United States raced to develop the atomic bomb.

Today, the Manhattan Project is most often associated with more famous places like Los Alamos, New Mexico; Oak Ridge, Tennessee; Hanford, Washington; and Chicago, Illinois. But critical components of this massive and complex effort also operated at other locations, including Ames, Iowa. By the war's end, the Ames Project, as it was known, employed more than 500 individuals in this top-secret work.

In 2007 and 2008, more than a dozen former employ-

ees and their families recounted memories of that time, revisiting the secrecy, urgency, and risks of their jobs. Their oral history interviews reveal ordinary people engaged in extraordinary work.

Just after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Frank Spedding, head of the physical chemistry section of Iowa State College's chemistry department, was quietly recruited by the Metallurgy Laboratory at the University of Chicago to be part of the Manhattan Project. Spedding's expertise in spectroscopy and separation of rare earth elements had caught the attention of Nobel physicist Arthur Compton, who headed the new lab. Compton tapped Spedding to lead the chemistry division in Chicago.

Nobel physicist Enrico Fermi also worked under Compton in Chicago, where he was attempting furiously to create the first-ever self-sustained and controlled atomic chain reaction. For that, he needed a large quantity of extremely pure uranium metal. The scientists knew how to purify small quantities of the metal, but the methods were slow and costly. Spedding's first assignment was to find a way to transform bulk uranium ore into highly purified uranium metal as rapidly and cheaply as possible.

Because the lab in Chicago was small and speed was essential, Spedding convinced Compton that the uranium research and production should be carried out at Spedding's Iowa State lab, where he had the equipment and scientific talent already in place. College president Charles Friley gave his permission, even though he did not know the details of the project until he received his own security clearance weeks later.

Spedding spent most of each week in Chicago coordinating the two labs. He enlisted Harley Wilhelm, a fellow chemist at Iowa State, to direct the metallurgy section in



The Ames Project hired several Iowa State graduate students and other talented, dedicated scientists eager to do cutting-edge research. Front: Henry Lipkind, Bob Nottorf, Oliver Johnson, Amos Newton, and Ray Fisher. Back: Arthur Tevebaugh, Fred Vaslow, Paul Figard, Tom Butler, Jack Powell, and Walter Tucker. Powell and Fisher were interviewed for this article.

Ames. They quickly assembled a team of chemists, physicists, research assistants, and laboratory technicians, starting with their own graduate students and colleagues at Iowa State and recruiting from other universities and industry. Local residents were hired as secretaries, security guards, machinists, shop workers, and maintenance staff. Work was under way by February 1942.

Ray Fisher was one of the first young men to join the project. Fisher was a chemistry graduate student and an acting lieutenant in an ROTC field artillery unit. While working at the lab, he received his draft notice and was advised to report to Camp Dodge in Des Moines for a physical. "I got a letter . . . saying I was to report in two weeks for . . . active service. Well I took the letter in to Dr. Spedding and showed it to him, . . . and he puffed on his cigar, and said, 'We'll see about that.' So he made a few phone calls, and he called me in the next day and he says, 'Fisher, you're staying with us—you're more important here than you are out as cannon fodder.'"

Norman Baenziger, also a grad student, recalled, "I got my notice, I got on the bus, went down to Camp Dodge. . . . And they said I was supposed to go and wait in the Colonel's office. . . . He says, . . . 'I've got this telegram here from Major General Hershey [the director of Selective Service], telling me I am not to draft you. What

are you doing?' I said, 'Well, I can't tell you what I'm doing.'"

Fisher wasn't told what the project was about until six weeks after he was hired. "[The FBI] came to Anamosa, Iowa, which was my hometown. And they did a thorough check on my background. People there wondered what I'd done wrong. And then when we went back [home], and we weren't in uniform—they thought we were draft-dodgers. Well that was the hardest part of it, yes. Because you were just busting over with news and couldn't reveal it to anybody."

Fisher remembered the space where they worked: "We walled up the two floors of the chemistry building, put in doors, and had a guard at one of the doors, which was right near the main entrance to the building. . . . There was a guard there stationed all the time, twenty-four hours a day. . . . They had a full-time FBI agent assigned to this area, and they kept a close guard on things."

Fisher's friend Jack Powell also joined the project early on. "I was recruited by Dr. Spedding and the physical chemistry department to work on a mysterious war project. And essentially I was told I would be working with a heavy metal. I asked, of course, if it was dangerous, and they said, 'Well, probably no more toxic than barium and things like that [that you work with] in chemistry.' For the first week that I was hired, I didn't get to attend seminars . . . but I did start analyzing for impurities in uranium. And of course, at that time, the light-bulb dawned on me,



The uranium reduction process at the Ames Project yielded "biscuits" that could be cast into ingots.

because some articles had appeared in the *Science Digest* and [other] places, that it might be possible to make an atomic reactor using uranium as a fuel."

Powell remembered, "We kind of were looked on as draft-dodgers, because we were perfectly healthy men in the right age group. . . . It was kind of embarrassing at that time, that we couldn't say what we were doing, which we considered many, many times more important than firing a rifle, because we knew what the goal was."

The work was painstaking, but Fisher found camaraderie and excitement in the knowledge that they were

doing something important. "We worked twenty-four hours a day. . . . We had little cots set up along some of the experiments, so we could monitor them, because we had to take samples or write down data every hour on some of the work we were doing."

Spedding commuted between Ames and Chicago by train every week for reports and briefings. Every Thursday night the Iowa team gathered to hear the latest. Week after week, their fundamental research added to the larger project, but they still needed a breakthrough on uranium purification.

Late one night in September 1942, Wilhelm made his way to the train station in Ames, boarded a special car, and rolled through the darkness to meet Spedding in Chicago. He carried an unassuming travel bag. Inside was a cylinder about 16 inches long and 2½ inches thick—an 11-pound ingot of pure uranium.

On his arrival the next morning, Wilhelm took the ingot—so heavy that the bag had torn, and it had to be carried under his arm—directly to Spedding's office. They proceeded to the Metallurgy Lab and presented it to an amazed Compton. Some of the most brilliant scientists in the world stared at it, held it, tapped it, and wondered if it was too good to be true. Wilhelm reported later that "Compton's eyes bugged out when he saw one 11-pound piece, and said, 'I bet there's a pipe or hole inside.'"

To prove that it was indeed what they claimed, Spedding and Wilhelm insisted on having it sawed in half. Not only was it solid, it was the largest block of pure uranium metal that had ever been manufactured.

Spedding and Wilhelm's staff had successfully converted uranium ore into uranium metal at a fraction of previous costs and with exceptional purity. They moved quickly to scale up production. The research had taken place in the Chemistry Building, but, needing more space, they set up on the east side of campus in a nondescript wooden building that had once been

used for women's sports activities. Officially called the Physical Chemistry Annex, the building was nicknamed Little Ankeny—a reference to a war-production facility in the nearby town of Ankeny. According to some, the nickname was an attempt to make curious passersby think that the work inside had to do with ordinary munitions. A machine shop full of equipment was purchased intact from a local machinist (who also came along to run the shop). By December, more than two tons of pure uranium, formed into cylinders, had been produced and shipped to Chicago.

Meanwhile, in a former squash court hidden below the stadium at the University of Chicago's Stagg Athletic Field, Fermi's team continued work to design a "pile," or reactor, that could produce a controlled chain reaction. After many trial versions, they built a large lattice made of alternating layers of pure graphite bricks to contain the reaction, and specially designed bricks containing small spheres of pure uranium. As more layers, and more uranium, were added, the pile came closer and closer to being able to produce a sustained reaction. Control rods, some mechanical and some manually operated, could be moved in and out of the side of the pile to regulate the reaction occurring inside. Fermi, deftly thumbing his slide rule, was able to calculate almost to the exact brick when the reaction in the pile would become self-sustaining.

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Wartime production of pure uranium took place in this small building on the Iowa State campus. It was torn down in 1953.



On December 2, 1942, from a balcony in the squash court, Frank Spedding stood with Fermi and a group of about 40 scientists to watch as the test began (*see above*). As the control rods were withdrawn, the clicks of a Geiger counter indicated with increasing speed that the reaction was under way.

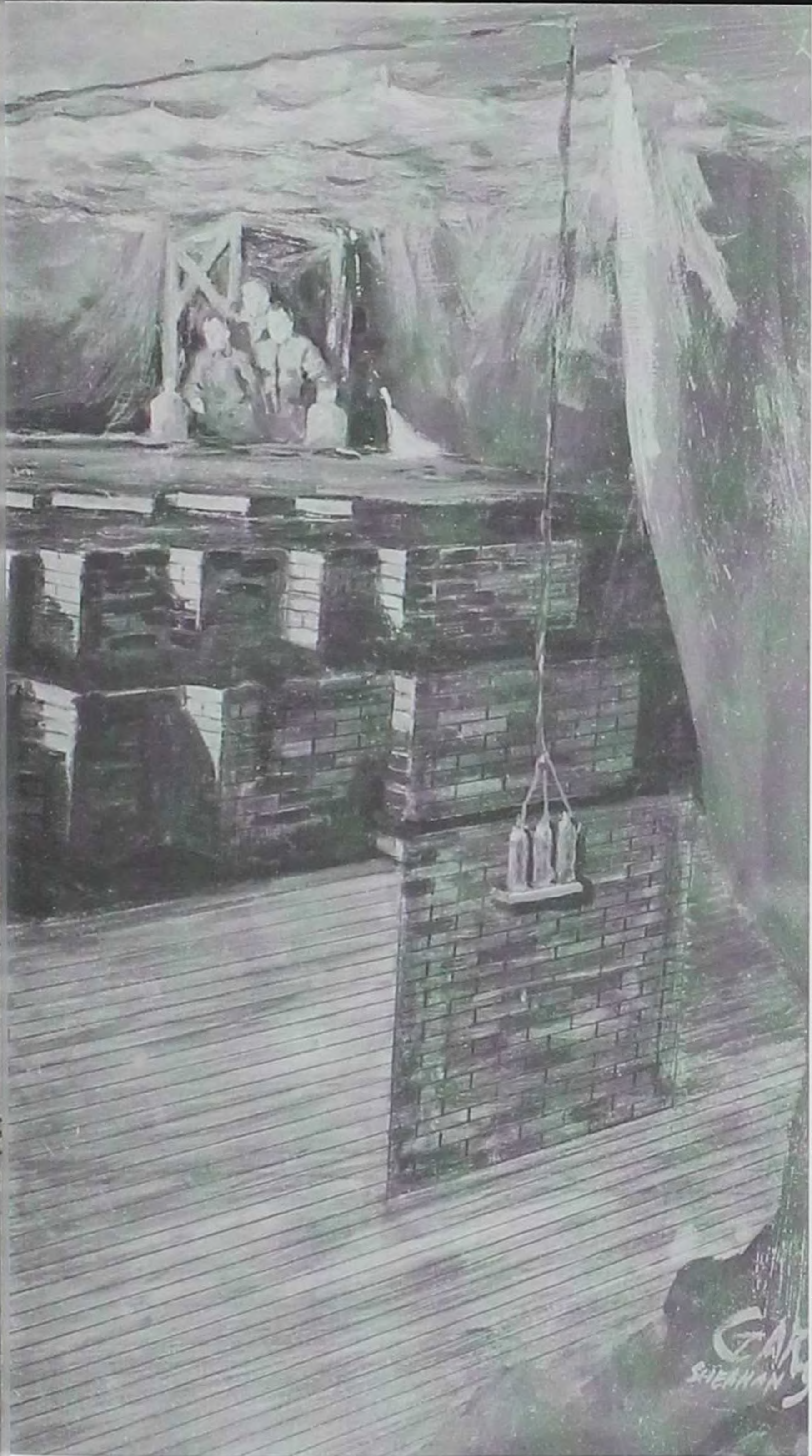
The reactor operated for 28 minutes. It produced only a half-watt of power. But when Fermi gave the order to "throw in the safety rods," the reaction stopped, just as predicted. The scientists toasted the occasion somberly with a bottle of Chianti; a round of signatures on the label was the only written record of who was present that day.

Laura Fermi wrote afterward about a dinner party she and Enrico hosted that evening. As the scientists arrived at their front door, one after another said simply to her husband, "Congratulations." None of them, not even Fermi himself, would tell Laura what had happened earlier that day. Not until nearly three years later, when her husband brought home the first official account of the

Manhattan Project, did Laura realize what had occurred the day of their dinner party.

Although Frank Spedding witnessed the test along with Fermi, Compton, and other giants of atomic research, he is not mentioned in most published accounts, at the time or since. Yet Fermi's experiment would not have been possible without the uranium produced and transported from Ames. "In the last month before the reactor went critical in Chicago," Spedding later said, "we managed to supply them with two tons of [uranium] metal." Over one third of the uranium used in the Fermi pile came from the workshop at Ames. Powell learned about the success directly from Spedding: "We knew the day after it happened," he recalled. "Oh, we were overjoyed. Nuclear energy actually worked. The conversion of mass to energy was theoretical up to this point. But it was demonstrated it could happen."

Powell chuckled as he remembered the train cars that carried the uranium ingots from Ames under tight secu-



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The success at Stagg Field meant the pace of work at Ames remained intense. Production of pure uranium continued, while Ames scientists also began teaching the process to industries that would take over. Meanwhile, research continued on a range of other atomic materials and processes, including development of a way to retrieve valuable uranium from the slag and crucial aspects that contributed to projects in full swing at other Manhattan Project facilities in the U.S.

With news of the bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, the top-secret Ames Project was suddenly all over the airwaves and front pages and was the talk of both the Iowa State campus and the town. The *Des Moines Register*

headline on August 8 blared, "Hiroshima Believed Destroyed; Blast Equals 2,000 B-29s." Below it was a story headed: "I.S.C. EXPERTS SPEEDED WORK ON ATOM BOMB." *Register* staff writer George Mills began, "On the peaceful Iowa State college campus, where the campanile plays 'Lead Kindly Light,' scientists have helped created the atom bomb. It can now be disclosed that: 1. Millions of dollars in federal money have been spent on the atom bomb project here. 2. Iowa State research played a major role in speeding the introduction of the bomb in the Pacific war. 3. Scientists, sometimes numbering up into the hundreds, have worked long hours on the campus for more than three years on the well-kept secret project. 4. A new process for making a very critical and scarce material was developed here. 5. Part of the work has been dangerous for the scientists, although there never was any possibility that the town of Ames would be blown to bits."

The *Ames Tribune* and the *Iowa State Student Daily* carried stories headed "All American Team" and "Little Ankeny Plays Part in Victory," proudly announcing the contribution of the local atomic workers and naming those involved.

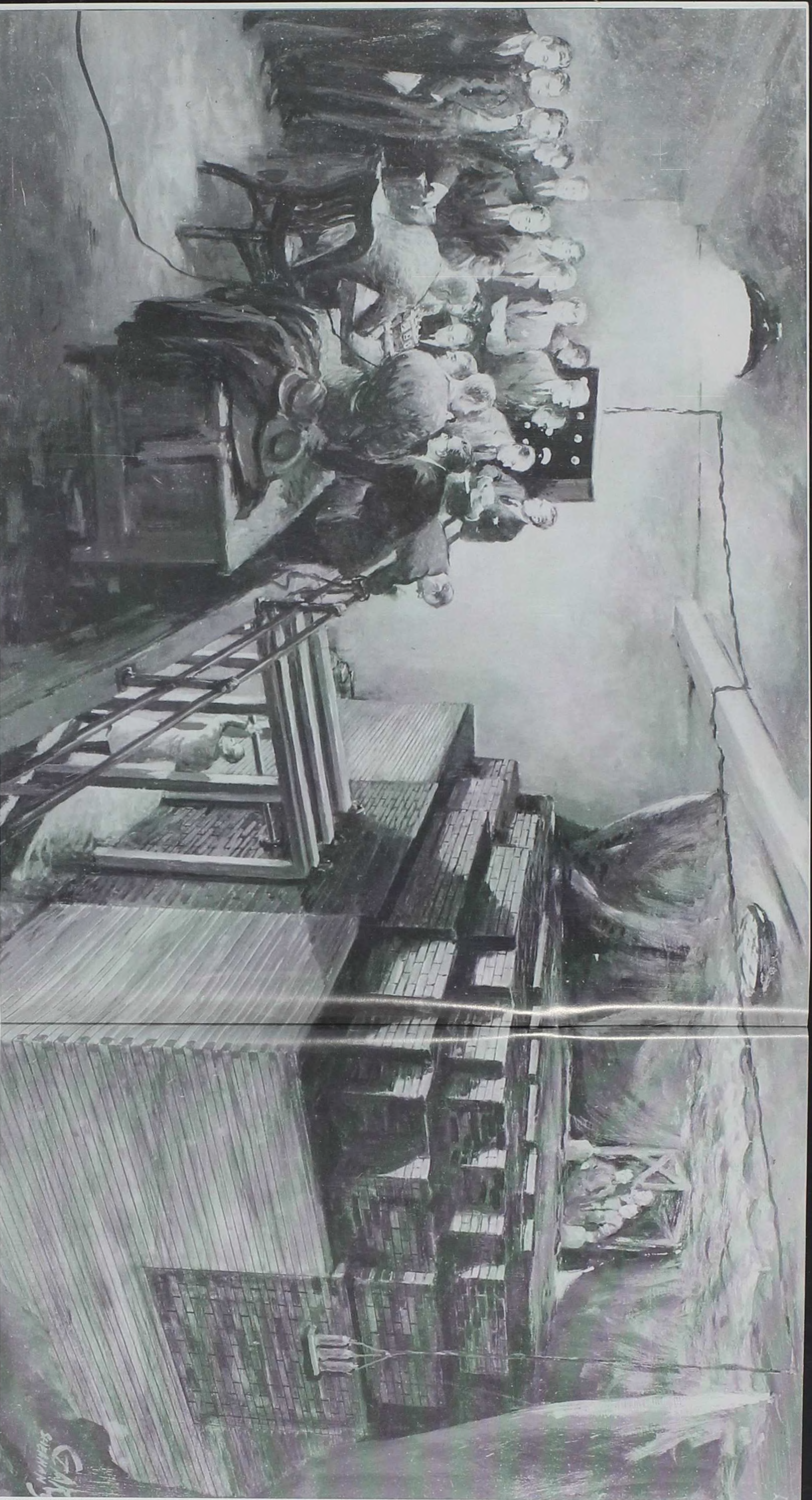
Jack Powell remembered feeling relief as well as pride: "People stopped looking at us with suspicion." It was finally clear they hadn't dodged the draft.

It was also clear that the consequences of their work would be far-reaching, in ways not fully understood. In the *Des Moines Register* on August 8, Spedding expressed a hope, shared by many, that the first use of the atomic bomb would "scare the human race into organizing for peace . . . and become a powerful tool for the good of mankind."

Accustomed to wartime secrecy, some who had worked there stayed quiet about their participation and role long after the war, or felt uncomfortable talking about the specifics. Reticence nearly erased these stories from public knowledge. Virginia Carlson, wife of one of the scientists, said of her husband, "He was very guarded for many years. The kids didn't really know what their dad did."

During the war itself, the workers' commitment to secrecy had added to the pressure and intensity of the job. Wilhelm's four grown children remember their mother, Orpha, saying that he had trouble sleeping during the war because "he was so afraid he'd talk in his sleep." They also remember seeing him off at the train stop, the train car parked off to the side with a guard at the door. One daughter remembered tinkering with a locked cabinet in his office many times while they waited for him after school, until one day she used her school locker combination and to her surprise, it opened.

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had a full-time FBI agent assigned to this area, and they kept a close guard on things. I think they visited the one bar we had in town, which was downtown, just to be sure that none of our workmen were spilling any information at all—although most of the workmen, the production people didn't know what it was they were doing, or why."

Virginia Carlson was a young war widow when she came to Ames in 1945. She began a courtship with a chemistry graduate student, Norman Carlson, who worked for the atomic project. He sometimes visited her while wearing his dusty lab coat, or she would stop by the chemistry building, knock on a specially guarded door, and he would come out, again in his dusty lab coat, to greet her. He couldn't tell her what he was working on—only that it was for the government, and it was top secret.

Ardis Johnson, a local resident who hired on at the lab after the war, recalled a wartime story told to him by Primo Chiotti, an Italian scientist on the project: "Because it was secret," Johnson recounted, "you couldn't wear your uniforms, they had to wear regular work clothes. And Dr. Chiotti, being a single fellow, . . . he rented a room from an older widow lady. And so he put his uniform clear at the back of his closet, and all of his civilian clothes out in front. Well, one day, she came to clean his room, and she thought, 'Well, I'd better give the closet a cleaning.' She found this uniform of his, stuck clear back in one corner of the [closet] on the wall. And she called the police. And of course that had to be squelched right away, and they said, 'No, no, no, he's working on a project and he just doesn't wear his uniform.' She thought he was a deserter. They had a laugh about it many years afterward."

Security measures sometimes resulted in comical situations. Norman Baenziger recalled, "My boss . . . always wrote a section reporting the x-ray work that was being done. . . . One summer he was gone . . . and it came time for that report to be written. He wasn't around to write it. So they asked me to write it. So I wrote it. As soon as I wrote it and turned it in, it was classified. . . . I didn't have enough clearance to read a report I wrote!"

Fisher remembered that one of their code names for uranium was "tubealloy," and for thorium, "mernalloy," in tribute to the movie star Myrna Loy. He also laughed about another challenge of keeping a secret in the midst of a public institution. "We were on the state payroll, and we had to be named—'cause the state yearly put out a listing of all of our names and our positions. So [in the paper] we were all janitors. Ray Fisher, janitor."

Accidents were a job hazard for anyone working with extreme heat and materials like magnesium, uranium, and beryllium—and accidents did occur. When there

were fires and explosions, the local fire department had to manage from the yard outside because they didn't have security clearance to go inside.

Powell described what happened when a device they were testing exploded. "The top blew off. It . . . was filled with uranium-tetrafluoride, which we called green salt, and there was green salt all over the place. . . . And the walls and the roof of the building on the north side were blown loose. The bottom was put out about two feet, and the roof kind of went with it. So we just had a group of our production people—they went out with two-by-fours and hammers, and they pushed up the roof, and they pushed the wall back in and nailed it—and that was done in just a short time, an hour or so. Well, that happened three times, and the third time was the charm, I guess, because we had an office down there, we had three secretaries, you know, three stenographers. And they survived the first two blasts, but after the third one, they all came in and resigned. Which nobody blamed them [for]." He made sure to add that "no one was ever hurt, in any of the explosions."

Fisher recounted another mishap: "We had a man down there who we called the Green Hornet. He would grind this uranium-fluoride through the biggest coffee grinder—commercial coffee grinder—we could buy during the war. He'd grind this uranium-fluoride down to a really fine size so we could mix it and make it more efficient in the reduction process. He'd come out of that place—it was only about six by eight feet, and it was closed tightly—and he'd come out spitting and sneezing green—and that's the reason we called him the Green Hornet. His clothes were always green and everything, and of course we had our own laundry service, and a shower down there—but we were concerned about him. Well, the concern for him kind of evaporated later on. . . . He [lived] to be eighty-three or eighty-four years old."

Humor helped take the tension out of the work—for some. "Well, you were apt to get practical jokes played on you," Powell recalled, describing one that unfolded "down in the area where they were storing the uranium turnings and such things. . . . The guards would have to go around and feel the barrels, which they stored the turnings in, because they would oxidize and catch fire. . . . There's almost no danger. But [feeling the barrels] was one of this guy's jobs. And somebody down there got the idea of wheeling out a barrel of hot water and putting it in the area. I guess the [guard] about had a heart attack. He thought it was the uranium turnings heating up."

Barrels figured in another wartime story, too. Purifying uranium produced slag that Spedding wanted kept and reprocessed later. One of the lab workers knew someone at a whiskey distillery down south where oak barrels were left over from aging the whiskey; the empty barrels could be used for storing the slag. An order for a thou-

sand barrels was sent off to Iowa State's purchasing office. "The central purchasing agent wasn't told what we were doing, but he was told he was to honor any order that we placed," recounted Powell. Due to a missing word or comma, "here came an order for a thousand barrels of whiskey. The purchasing agent stormed into the college president's office, to ask, 'Why do they need a thousand barrels of whiskey up there?'"

Powell continued, "And so, that got straightened out and the barrels came in a freight car, and we had to unload them. And we were looking for volunteers, to take them off the flatcar or the boxcar—and you know, we didn't have any trouble finding any volunteers. They fought for the job. There was about a cup of whiskey in every one of [the barrels]—this was when liquor was rationed, and they had just a waiting line to take those barrels and bring them up where we needed them. Oh, they poured them upside-down. . . . They had some good aged whiskey."

The risks experienced by the workers may seem foolhardy today. The urgency of wartime, and the knowledge that their peers were fighting and dying far from home may have made caution in the lab seem less important. Intense curiosity and genuine desire to understand materials and processes on the cutting edge of science also propelled them. And the dangers were not as well understood as they are today. Standards for exposure to radioactive materials were first established in 1934, and they have been questioned, tested, and revised many times since. Protection standards did evolve over the course of the Ames research, and practices changed as the urgency of the war subsided and the properties of the materials were better understood. Ray Fisher recalled, "We weren't worried about it, we were trying to win a war. . . . The whole project wouldn't have been successful under present conditions of secrecy and safety. . . . We did have our x-rays, monthly, and we had urine collection monthly. And so that was analyzed. And it was hot, of course, there was no such thing as air conditioning in those days. . . . these guys were running around in shirt-sleeves and if they did have special protective equipment, I think they took it off because they were too hot."

Virginia Carlson recounted that just a few weeks after they were married, Norm had a "terrible exposure." Dinner was on the table when he came home, but he was so sick he crawled up the stairs to the bedroom. Frightened, she called an ambulance to take him to the hospital. She recalled several other incidents over the next few years, including one that left him so weak he couldn't walk up the stairs for nearly a year.

"We knew they were working with toxic substances," she said. "The lab at that time wasn't really built for it. But at the time, during the war, this was the best-equipped lab

in the country." The men made much of their own equipment right on campus, where they could design it exactly as they needed. They wore lab coats, but a lot of them didn't wear radiation badges, and often the dust and substances that collected on their clothes, skin, and hair were "such a tiny amount you didn't know it was there."

Concerns over exposure to health risks for workers on the Ames Project and other atomic facilities around the country led to the establishment of a health screening and treatment program in 1996 for former U.S. government atomic workers; it was later expanded to include monetary compensation for workers and their families. Many Ames workers have enrolled in this program, operated by the Department of Energy.

Personal risk and secrecy were balanced against the thrill of scientific discovery and the rewards of patriotism and camaraderie. For many, those risks did not detract from their pride. "We were proud of what they were doing, proud they were working on something so important to the government," Virginia Carlson said. "They all were getting their PhDs, really on the cutting edge. . . . It was a wonderful bunch of young men—they came from farms and small towns, mostly Midwestern, and they were very loyal, salt of the earth."

Jack Powell remarked, "I think we were privileged—we fell into one of the most interesting things going on as research. We didn't serve in the Army, people think we didn't do our duty, but we worked with hazardous things."

Although women scientists like Marie Curie and Lise Meitner were prominent in the research that led to unlocking the power of the atom and the atomic bomb, very few women scientists worked on the Ames Project. Women were more likely hired for positions as secretaries, clerks, and support staff, including Wilma Chiotti and Mary Fawcett (both married to scientists), Dorothy Shimel, Doris Wallace, and Leona Wheeler.

In October 1945, the Ames Project received the Army/Navy E Flag for Excellence in production of a vital war material. The flag was flown over the campus for a year or more. Iowa State was the only educational institution to have received this prestigious award, which was usually reserved for industry.

For many who worked on the Ames Project, the personal satisfaction and knowledge of its importance were reward enough, and in many cases motivated them to stay on at Iowa State for many years to come. In fact, secret classified work on a variety of projects involving radioactive material and other rare earth elements continued at Ames for decades after the war. In the aftermath of World War II, as more details about the Ames contribution came to light, there were also reports of other secret



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The year is 1946 and World War II is finally over. Iowa State chemistry professor Harley Wilhelm, who oversaw the Ames Project, poses with an ingot of uranium, like those made during the war. He is flanked by Joan Visser, an Iowa State senior in home management, and Dorothy Beckheit, a sophomore in home economics.

research taking place at Iowa State College, at the same time but independent of each other.

A Manhattan District History, published in December 1947 (each page stamped SECRET and declassified in 1976), contains a lengthy chapter on the Ames Project that documents in detail all of the activity that took place at Ames beginning in 1942. It notes significant research and production not just of uranium, for use in the Fermi chain reaction, but also of cerium, thorium, plutonium, beryllium, x-ray structure, rare earth elements, and more.

The report goes on to note many pioneering contributions, ranging from "basic information in the fields of chemistry and metallurgy, needed in the manufacture of atomic weapons; . . . a large number of chemical and metallurgical processes in order to produce the raw materials . . . [and] a considerable amount of consulting work with many branches of the Manhattan District."

After the war, Spedding pressed for a continuation of government support for ongoing research, and in particular proposed that part of the funding be used to build a research reactor. In 1947, the Ames Laboratory was officially established on the Iowa State campus as part of the Institute for Atomic Research, under the Atomic Energy Commission. Spedding stayed on as director. A synchrotron, used to produce high-energy radiation for research, and a research reactor were both built and used extensively. In 2012, the Ames Lab celebrated its 65th anniversary, and continues today as a U.S. Department of Energy research facility, operated under contract by Iowa

State University. The lab is still producing cutting-edge research, some of it focused on solar and magnetic energy.

A boulder marks the site on campus where the humble building called Little Ankeny once stood. Taking its words from what had so quickly become only a footnote in postwar accounts, the bronze plaque reads: "A striking achievement among the many associated with the wartime atomic energy projects in the United States was the production of many tons of pure uranium by a group consisting of faculty and students working in a disused building on the campus of the Iowa State College at Ames."

Scientific curiosity, loyalty, and the desire to serve their country motivated the hundreds of individuals who were part of the Ames Project. Most of the interviewees highlighted here are no longer living, but there are still many who share vivid memories of their time at Ames. Their stories need to be restored as part of our national narrative of one of the most significant periods in modern history. The personal accounts here are a beginning. ❖

Susan Futrell is an Iowa City writer. She grew up seeing the Ames Lab reactor out her back window but didn't know the history behind it until she met Virginia Carlson while researching another story many years later. She is deeply grateful to all who told their stories of the Ames Project. She is currently working on a book about apples.

NOTE ON SOURCES

In 2007, with support from the State Historical Society of Iowa, the author interviewed 19 atomic research workers at Ames (1941–1978) and family members. The recordings are held and being transcribed at Iowa State University, Parks Library, Special Collections. This archive also holds material related to Frank Spedding and other Ames Project scientists. Ames Laboratory's library holds additional collections.

In-depth studies of the Ames Project include: Carolyn Stiltz Payne, "The Ames Project: Administering classified research as a part of the Manhattan Project at Iowa State College, 1942–45," Ph.D. diss., Iowa State University, 1992; and Steven Ray Karsjen, "The Ames Project: History of the Ames Laboratory's Contributions to the Historic Manhattan Project, 1942–1946," thesis, Iowa State University, 2003. Also see work by Joanne Abel Goldman on the Ames Project, especially "National Science in the Nation's Heartland: The Ames Laboratory and Iowa State University, 1942–1965," *Technology and Culture* 41:3 (2000); and "Frank Spedding and the Ames Laboratory," *Annals of Iowa* 67:1 (2008).

See also Corbin Allardice and Edward R. Trapnell, *The First Pile* (Oak Ridge, TN: United States Atomic Energy Commission, Division of Technical Information, 1955; rev. 1961); *Manhattan District History Book I-General; Volume 4-Auxiliary Activities; Chapter 11-Ames Project*, microform (Ames: Iowa State College, 1947); Samuel Glasstone, *Sourcebook on Atomic Energy* (New York: D. Van Nostrand Co., 1950); Henry DeWolf Smyth, *Atomic Energy for Military Purposes: The Official Report on the Development of the Atomic Bomb under the Auspices of the United States Government, 1940–1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945); and Laura Fermi, *Atoms in the Family: My Life with Enrico Fermi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954).

An extensive health screening project, led by Dr. Laurence Fuortes of the University of Iowa College of Public Health, has helped identify work-related health problems suffered by former workers exposed to hazardous material at Ames and the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant in Middleton, Iowa. Many of these workers have become eligible for compensation through the Department of Energy and more recently the Department of Labor.

Billy Robinson

Birdman of the Prairie

by Lynn Cavanagh

On one of the highest hills at Hazelwood Cemetery in Grinnell, Iowa, is an imposing granite stone. The stone, distinctive from the other grave markers surrounding it, belongs to a man who was also distinctive from those who surrounded him.

On the granite stone there is a bronze plaque that reads: "This stone marks the last resting place of William C. Robinson, pioneer non-stop flier and second authorized carrier of air mail. He met death in his plane, a few miles south of Grinnell, when making an altitude flight March 11, 1916. Erected by those who honor the memory of Billy Robinson."

Billy Cornelius Robinson was born in Redfield, South Dakota, on September 24, 1884. The Robinsons were poor. When Billy was eleven, his father, Franklin, moved the family to Florida, where he hoped to find a well-paying job. Franklin died within the year, leaving behind his wife, Cordelia, and four children. In 1896 they moved to Grinnell, Iowa, a college town of 5,000, to be close to relatives.

Twelve-year-old Billy and his two older brothers worked after school to support the family. Billy found a job at Walter Preston's Fix-It Shop. Here he repaired all sorts of things—bicycles, typewriters, farm equipment, wagons, baby carriages, and, eventually, one-cylinder automobiles. He had a knack for fixing things, and he didn't mind working long hours after school. Preston was a kind and patient boss who taught Billy his trade. Before long Billy had established a reputation, and people asked for him by name.

Short for his age and never having much to say, Billy surprised his classmates when a motor he had built won first prize in a seventh-grade science fair. He had designed and built the gasoline engine, crafting the parts from scraps around the shop.

Preston and Billy shared another interest, aviation. Fascinated with the experiments in flight going on all over the world, they endlessly discussed magazine and newspaper articles covering these attempts at flying.

During these first years in Grinnell, Billy made a life-



Billy Robinson, in his worn leather pilot's jacket. "Billy never had any money," a friend once said, "but lots of brains." The plaque on his gravestone is in the lower right.

long friend, Charley Hink, who was also fascinated by how things worked. Charley was boisterous and outgoing. Billy was quiet and moody, but Charley respected his knowledge and the two got along well. They spent long hours in Charley's basement pulling machines apart and putting them back together.

When Charley invited Billy and some other friends out to his cousin's farm to shoot owls, Billy had no in-

terest in shooting them, but rather in studying them up close. He wanted to know the proportion of the wings to the body, how the owls managed to lift off the ground, stay in the air, and change direction. The other kids thought Billy was a bit strange, but Charley always stuck up for his friend.

One day Billy invited Charley to go with him for a test ride in a Stanley Steamer automobile he had worked on at the Fix-It Shop. "After Billy got everything in order we went out for a ride. Boy!" Charley recalled years later. "That was some thrill, riding under power. There were a few single cycle gasoline cars out then but the Steamer would go twice as fast and fly up steep hills as long as the steam pressure lasted." It was the closest thing to flying the two friends had experienced.

In 1899, when Billy was 14, his mother moved the family to Oskaloosa, where her sons would work in the coal mines. Billy begged to stay behind. He moved into a small room over Preston's shop, went to school during the day, and worked at night and on weekends. A year later tragedy struck when Billy's brothers were killed in a mine accident. His mother and sister returned to Grinnell. Billy dropped out of high school to help support what was left of his family.

While working at the Fix-It Shop, Billy built his first glider out of wires and wheels and leftover materials Preston had let him have. He would drag his 20-foot glider down Fourth Avenue to the west edge of town, where there was a hill and a deserted barn. With the glider strapped to his back, he would race down the hill or jump off the barn roof. Most of the time it glided smoothly for a few seconds. Sometimes it crashed.

People in Grinnell eventually grew used to seeing the skinny kid hauling his odd-looking flying machine back and forth, both he and the glider dusty and dinged up. People began affectionately calling him "The Birdman of the Prairie."

Years later, a Canadian newspaper quoted Robinson discussing those early days: "First of all I read everything I could find on aviation, not only in American papers, but foreign ones as well. Then I decided that I would build a flying machine. The concrete result was that I made a little 20 foot glider, similar to the regular biplane, except it was much lighter, and to operate it, it was necessary to get on an elevation and coast downwards in the air. . . . You cannot imagine the first sensation that I experienced when I felt myself gliding into the air and I determined then and there that I must learn to fly."

By about 1906 Robinson had saved enough money to go back to school. He had been reading about the accomplishments of Orville and Wilbur Wright on the East

Coast and realized he needed to study math and physics to better understand flight. He was accepted by the Grinnell Academy for high-school level courses, and then by Grinnell College. But money problems again interfered with his plans and he left school. By then married to Katie May Crase from Wisconsin, he returned to work at the Fix-It Shop, where Charley Hink joined him. Eventually they bought the shop from Preston and moved it to a larger location.

Hink and Robinson spent hours talking about flying machines and what kinds of engine could keep such machines up in the air. In 1909 they built a 60-horsepower air-cooled radial engine with six cylinders. They had built the parts themselves, making molds for the castings and welding pieces together. Innovative for its time, the engine had a turning crankshaft attached to a wooden propeller with an 8-foot arc. More importantly, because it was air-cooled, there was no need for water, which had weighed down earlier engines.

On the first test, they strapped the engine to a light pole outside the shop. Robinson carefully poured a cup of gasoline into the engine as Hink watched from behind the corner of the building. The engine exploded and the fire department came running. The inventors dusted themselves off and tried it again a few weeks later. The second time it worked just fine.

Robinson worked relentlessly towards his dreams. He bought out Hink's portion of the shop, working on autos during the day and on flying machines at night. Before long he had designed and built himself a monoplane. His mother, sister, and wife put in long hours sewing the muslin strips needed for the wings.

In June 1910, Ten Big Shows Circus came to the Poweshiek County fairgrounds. It left town with Robinson and his monoplane as part of the show. For almost a year he traveled throughout the Midwest, mainly to county fairs, strapping his plane to a post and turning on the unmuffled radial engine to attract curious onlookers willing to pay money to see Robinson's airplane even though it never left the ground.

Like many early pilots, Robinson went wherever opportunities presented themselves. Eventually he quit the circus and headed to Florida, where Swedish aviator Max Lillie operated his Pioneer Aeroplane & Exhibition Company flying school. Robinson learned to fly a Lillie-Wright pusher plane (the engine was behind the pilot) with an Anzani rotary engine and a chain-driven prop, and he earned his pilot's license in August 1912. Lillie was impressed with Robinson's keen mechanical ability and his steady flying skills. Later that fall the two were hired as chief mechanics and also as pilots for flying exhibitions for the National Aeroplane Company of Cicero, Illinois. Within a year Robinson was named a partner in the company.



DRAKE COMMUNITY LIBRARY, GRINNELL, IOWA

Robinson with Canadian schoolchildren and the biplane he flew from Montreal to Ottawa in a record-breaking flight in 1913.

During this era of fierce competition and rivalry, pilots wanted safer planes, but they were also willing to take risks in order to please a curious public. All too frequently planes crashed and pilots were maimed or killed. Robinson had a reputation for being a skilled and knowledgeable pilot. He wasn't a daredevil, but that's not to say he didn't have his share of mishaps. Once during a flying demonstration in Malvern, Iowa, his plane stalled in the air and then crashed. It was destroyed, and Robinson ended up with an ugly gash on his forehead. Another time his plane hit the brick wall of a house while landing. The engine was in the front of the plane; he claimed it had saved his life. Sometimes there were freak accidents, such as when his pop bottle exploded high in the skies above Chicago and left him permanently blinded in his left eye. From then on his wife reminded him to wear his goggles.

In early 1913 Robinson was flying a National Nieuport Aeroplane over downtown Chicago, attempting to break the altitude record of 10,000 feet. Deciding it was too windy, he headed back to Cicero Field. At 4,000 feet above Grant Park, the engine blew a fuse, and a spark from an engine fuse ignited the fuselage material. Flames erupted and black smoke trailed behind him. He put out the blaze with a fire extinguisher in one hand while steering with the other. When he landed he was met by hundreds of Chicagoans who had witnessed the event and

were amazed he had lived. "I thought I was a goner, too," said Robinson with a shy grin.

In October he broke an international long-distance record. In a 50-horsepower Gnome-powered Lillie Tractor biplane, he flew 116 miles from Montreal to Ottawa in 2 hours and 55 minutes, stopping four times to refuel. So many on-lookers covered the Ottawa airfield that he had no place to land. He quickly found a nearby farm field: "There was a horse in the field, but I reckoned on running along the other side and avoiding it. As I came down, however, the animal ran in front of me, and I had to raise one wing and make a very sharp turn to miss striking it. In the other fields where I landed there were cattle but I had no trouble with them."

Talking to a reporter about passenger airplanes in the near future, he said, "The only hindrance to development along these lines is, not the danger, but the cost of running the machines. . . . Flight by air will be found cheaper in the end. In preparation for such a day, the larger cities should provide open fields where airplanes could start and land and they should also have aviator's maps prepared."

Late that year the Robinson family returned to Grinnell. In addition to designing and building airplanes, he wanted to hire top mechanics and start a flight school. City leaders had been closely following his achievements in the news. Welcoming him with enthusiasm and open pocketbooks, they agreed to fund his Grinnell Aeroplane Company.

By mid-1914 Robinson had designed and built his first monoplane, named *Scout*. It weighed 900 pounds and had a 36-foot wingspan and a cruising speed of 90 miles per hour. The design allowed the pilot to see clearly both above and below the wing. Positioned in the front, the six-cylinder 100 horsepower radial air-cooled engine weighed only 400 pounds (whereas the popular Renault engine weighed 683 pounds). Unfortunately all of these early engines threw a lot of oil, splattering it over the muslin wings, the engine cowlings, and even the pilots, creating a big fire hazard. With his old leather jacket spotted with oil, Robinson learned to carry spare clothes and extra goggles.

In the fall of 1914, Billy tested *Scout* all over the Midwest, where flying fields were often half-mile tracks at fairgrounds or pastures that were rough and bumpy. Back in Grinnell, Robinson was again a novelty, as he had been with his glider. Townspeople now watched him haul his monoplane, tail first, with his Model T Ford, from his shop to the airfield. They had learned to be unobtrusive. Robinson was always a bit of a loner, and he was unusually protective of his inventions and didn't like people crowding around for fear his ideas would be stolen.

Robinson designed folding wings for easier transportation and storage. He invented oil-grooved piston rings, rudders, new landing gear, and also pontoon landing gear. The Grinnell Aeroplane Company's board of directors was constantly after Robinson to apply for patents, but he could be pig-headed and stubborn. Busy inventing, building, and flying, he didn't want to travel to Des Moines, hire a lawyer, and fill out paperwork.

Inventing didn't always pay the expenses. Money was going out of the company, but little was coming in. At the urging of the board, Robinson decided he could attract national attention and thereby generate business by showcasing his monoplane. At the time, the U.S. nonstop record was 264 miles. Robinson set his mind to breaking the record by flying from Des Moines to Chicago, a distance of 332 miles.

The *Des Moines Capital* and *Chicago Tribune* helped with expenses and publicity. He got permission from the United States Postal Service to carry mail on the flight. With over 150 letters onboard from supporters in Grinnell and Des Moines, he became the second authorized pilot to carry mail that distance.

Mid-morning on October 17, 1914, a rousing crowd in Des Moines watched as he took off in his monoplane. He headed east, flying at 5,000 to 6,000 feet, following the Rock Island Railroad tracks far below. Fifty miles east of Des Moines, he passed over Grinnell and heard the Spaulding Factory whistle blowing in his honor. Knowing friends and family were cheering him on, he dipped a wing in acknowledgment.

After flying over Iowa City he never really saw the

ground again. The railroad tracks—considered a pilot's "iron compass"—were blanketed by cloud cover. He needed to trust his small pocket compass and his instincts. "A storm was raging below and ahead," he later told a reporter. "To avoid it I shot the machine higher up, and soon I was above the clouds. I had been above the clouds before, but I never saw them so beautiful.

"The sight was like a vast sea of ice. Dazzling white clouds below me as far as I could see in every direction. Above me the sun was shining brilliantly. But it was cold. I carried no thermometer, so I don't know what the exact temperature was, but I am sure it was near the freezing point.

"The light was so intense from the sunshine on the white clouds that it affected my eyes like snow blindness.

"The cold was sharp and intense and I felt it even thru my leather suit. The wind above the clouds came straight from the north. Below the clouds when I left that region it was blowing northward from the northwest.

"It was a most wonderful sight. I imagine it must look like that in the polar regions."

Running low on fuel, Robinson feared landing in Lake Michigan. "At last I saw rifts in the clouds," he said, "and during the last half hour I was up, the clouds below me began breaking up and gave me a sight of the ground. My gasoline ran out about this time and I descended in a slow glide and found myself in Kentland, Indiana," southeast of Chicago.

Billy Robinson had broken the long-distance flight record. He landed in an Indiana farm field, which gave him a record distance of 390 miles. This was verified by two sealed barographs onboard, provided by the Aero Club of America. He had been in the air 4 hours and 48 minutes. The next morning, he flew 81 miles to Chicago to deliver the mail.

At a banquet attended by ex-President Theodore Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Arctic explorer Robert Peary, the Aero Club of America awarded him one of nine Medals of Merit for his contributions to aviation. He almost didn't make it to the celebration. It seems he only had the overalls and shirt he wore every day. He borrowed a suit from Charley Hink. Later in 1915 Robinson was named one of the 119 charter members of the American Society of Aeronautical Engineers. Robinson didn't have the money to travel to Washington, D.C., to accept the award, so it was mailed to him.

As World War I engulfed Europe, America's fledgling aviation industry began to explore wartime use of planes. Robinson was in touch with the army and the navy about supplying airplanes. Numbers and dollar amounts were discussed. He was not much of a businessman, however, so little or nothing

was put in writing. Most of his board of directors were not even aware that these discussions were taking place.

In late 1915, Robinson focused his energies on building a biplane, *Luxuria*, again with his radial engine. It had a wingspan of 37 feet and 6 inches and weighed 1,100 pounds. Larger than his monoplane, it could carry two passengers side-by-side, a convenience for flight instruction.

Robinson's Grinnell Aeroplane Company continued to struggle financially. Stockholders were grumbling. The board was not pleased. In fact, the company books show that in January 1916 an overdraft had to be settled by a few of the directors. Robinson's brains and determination were keeping the company in business. The board needed him on the ground, where he could design and build rather than risk accidents and injuries. Yet, the company also needed money. He needed to fly.

The U.S. altitude record was 17,000 feet in 1916. Robinson thought he could break it. He planned to make the attempt right over Grinnell and received authorization from the Aero Club of America in Chicago. He had already taken his plane up to 14,000 feet and he was confident that he could surpass 17,000.

He had, however, mentioned to his wife, Katie, that he got terrific headaches when he flew that high. She was worried but Robinson was confident, perhaps too confident, in his airplane and in himself. He was also stubborn. He insisted on going ahead with his flight.

Two weeks before his attempt, he tried to appease his board by applying for patents for a few of his inventions. Unfortunately, there were dozens of others for which he hadn't applied.

On a chilly, gray afternoon on March 11, 1916, Robinson climbed into his cockpit. There was a light dusting of snow on the Grinnell airfield, where hundreds of well-wishers joined his family and board of directors to watch him take off.

The plane could be heard high above them for about 30 minutes. Then the skies grew quiet.

About this time a farmer three miles south of town heard the sound of an engine sputtering. He spotted *Luxuria*. It seemed to catch itself for a few seconds, then fall again. Finally it skidded onto the ground at a tremendous speed, hit a ditch, and exploded into a fiery ball.

It will never be known if Robinson broke the record that day. The barograph, which would have proved it, was destroyed in the crash. Katie Robinson, along with just about everyone else in town, believed that her husband had broken the record. She also believed that his heart had given out at the high altitude and that he had faded in and out of consciousness as he battled to bring the biplane safely to the ground.

Billy Robinson was dead. He was only 31. Iowans, and especially Grinnellians, were stunned. Local schools, factories, and businesses shut down the day of the fu-

neral. Robinson's board of directors carried the simple wood casket down the wide stone steps of the overflowing Methodist church. Hundreds of silent mourners lined the streets to pay their respects as the funeral procession passed by on its way to Hazelwood Cemetery. The Bird-man of the Prairie was gone.

Without Robinson's leadership, the Grinnell Aeroplane Company folded in two years. Without the protection of patents, many of his ideas were used freely by others. The Dodge Tool Company took over manufacturing of the radial engine for a few years after World War I but then closed. The U.S. government had put in a large order for the radial engine, but after the armistice was signed, the engine was never manufactured in great numbers.

In 1930, the *Grinnell Herald-Register* printed a letter from noted aviator Erik Hildesheim: "It just struck me that the late Wm. Robinson had more claim to a pioneer title than most early birds. After the two Wright Brothers and Glenn Curtiss had by flight demonstrated their respective models, endless copies were made of them by people who made a living by flying at country meets until they were killed, as happened in most cases, or till there was no more money in the game. However while the planes were home-made contraptions, the power-plant (engine) was invariably bought from some manufacturer. Wm. Robinson is the only other known instance beside the above-mentioned three earliest birds, who made himself also the engine that powered the plane. Sure fine company to have been in."

Today, those of us inspired by Robinson's story might let our own imagination soar—as he did—and envision still more accomplishments of this intrepid Iowa inventor and risk-taker, had he only lived longer. ❖

Lynn Cavanagh, a long-time Iowa resident, is currently at work on a pictorial history of Grinnell.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Sources include unpublished materials on Robinson and Charley Hink in the collections of the Grinnell Historical Museum and Drake Community Library (Grinnell); *Grinnell Herald*, *Grinnell Herald-Register*, *Malcolm Leader*, *Des Moines Register*, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, *Montreal Daily News*, Grinnell College newspaper; E. Larue Jones, "Robinson's American Cross Country Record," *Aero and Hydro Magazine* (Oct. 1914); K. M. Molson, "Montreal to Ottawa by Air 1913," *CAHS* [Canadian Aviation Historical Society] *Journal* (Winter 1973); E. Larue Jones, "The Grinnell Aeroplane," and "The Robinson Radial Motor," *Aeronautics: Progress of American Aviation* (March 1, 1916; May 24, 1916); Jim George, "Billy Robinson, Pioneer Iowa Aviator," *Iowan* (June-July 1958); W. G. Ray, "Billy Robinson, Bird-Man," *Palimpsest* (Sept. 1930); "The Story of Billy Robinson," *Grinnell, A Century of Progress* (Grinnell: Grinnell Register-Herald, 1954); Grant Gale, "A Better Engine," *Goldfinch* (Sept. 1980); Ann Holtgren Pellegrino, *Iowa Takes to the Air* (Story City, IA: Aerodrome Press, 1980); and Robert Smith, interview with author, 2008.



Iowa's Vanishing Depots

by Jamie Beranek

By the mid-1970s, it was abundantly clear that one of the icons of American life, the railroad depot, was rapidly approaching extinction. Rail passenger service had been in free fall for decades, and changing technology meant that the railroads no longer needed agents or operators in depots to deal with the public or help dispatch trains. One of the final blows to the survival of depots was, ironically, the advent of Amtrak in 1971. While the carrier did save a skeletal national rail passenger network, it also ended service to much of the nation and, hence, the need for hundreds of stations.

In 1976, I began to photograph as many of Iowa's surviving railroad buildings—depots, freight houses, engine facilities—as I could (later, I expanded my project to cover much of the Midwest). There were still enough depots and other railroad buildings—and, my particular interest, architectural details—surviving to make the project worthwhile. A small sample of my Iowa work begins here.

Opposite: The West Union depot was built by the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Railway in 1872–1873. In the 1920s, parallel Highway 150, newly paved, killed off local business on the line, and its successor, the Rock Island Railroad, discontinued the last passenger train in 1932. It was replaced by a combination passenger and freight train that, despite spartan accommodations (passengers rode in the caboose) and a glacial schedule, was well patronized during World War II. Although the depot closed in 1973, these two ticket windows were still intact in 1976, seemingly ready to serve patrons who had vanished decades before.



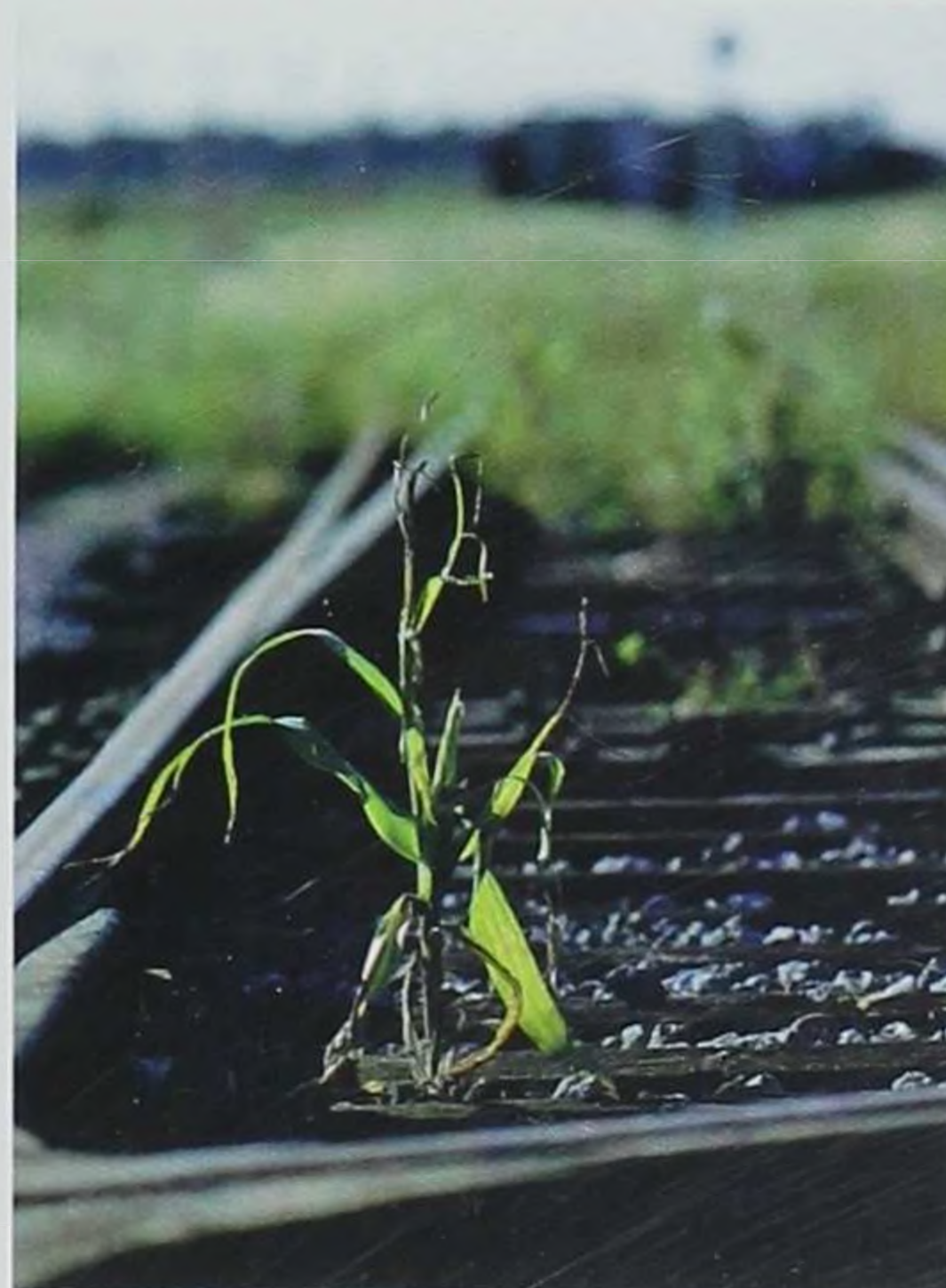
Above: Photographed in 1980, the Amana depot survived years of neglect, its brick platform stolen by souvenir hunters. Renovated by the Amana Preservation Foundation, it first served the Old Creamery Theatre and is now the trail head for the Amana Colonies Recreation Trail.

A TECHNICAL NOTE: Because I knew I would be out traveling for weeks at a time, I decided from the beginning to use 120 Panatomic-X and Ektachrome roll films instead of sheet film. My equipment was a Horseman medium-format view camera, outfitted with Schneider lenses, always attached to a sturdy Zone VI wood tripod. I printed all of my own black and white work, using a Beseler 4x5 enlarger fitted with a Zone VI cold-light head.



ALL PHOTOS PAGES 80–89 TAKEN BY AND COURTESY OF JAMIE BERANEK. COPYRIGHT JAMIE BERANEK

As a concession to safety, railroads installed three-sided structures (like this one) called telltales to warn of approaching tunnels or bridges. Before air brakes, railroaders had to set the brakes on each freight car by hand while walking along running boards on top of each car, regardless of the weather. If a brakeman felt or saw the rope or strips hanging down from a telltale, he hit the roof immediately. The need for telltales ended in 1974 when freight cars were no longer allowed to have running boards on their roofs. Photographed in 1976 (on the Alden branch of the Chicago & North Western Railroad), this telltale and the bridge beyond were later replaced by an open-deck span over the Iowa River.



In July 1980 a young corn plant was the only sign of life at the crossing of the Rock Island's Chicago–Denver and Burlington–Minneapolis mainlines at West Liberty. Four months before this photo was taken, the Rock Island had gone out of business.



Above: The Independence depot was one of Iowa's finest, built by Illinois Central and opened in 1892 to handle the crowds arriving for the horse races at famed Rush Park. After passenger service between Chicago and Sioux City ended in 1971, the depot was closed and its waiting room locked, as it is in this 1976 photo. A local nonprofit group bought the deteriorating building and in 1996 moved it one block east to Highway 150. Now restored, along with the baggage building and canopy (not shown), the depot serves as a museum and as offices of the Buchanan County Tourism Department.

Right: Described in 1892 by the *Grinnell Herald* as "a model of architectural beauty," Grinnell's union depot was located at the crossing of the Rock Island and the Iowa Central railways. The distinctive corner tower was divided inside to allow each company's ticket agent "half the bay window." Both passenger service and the Rock Island had been abandoned when this photo was taken in 1981. It now serves as a fine-dining restaurant.

Below: The Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota Railway laid out the town of Walker on swampland. In 1873, the depot was the town's first structure, on a site so soggy it had to be built on piles. The depot is a typical BCR&M design; the agent lived on the upper floor. The one-story baggage/freight room was added in 1892. After almost 103 years of service, the Walker depot was closed in March 1976 and was photographed only months later. Since then, the Walker Historical Society restored the building and opened it as a museum.

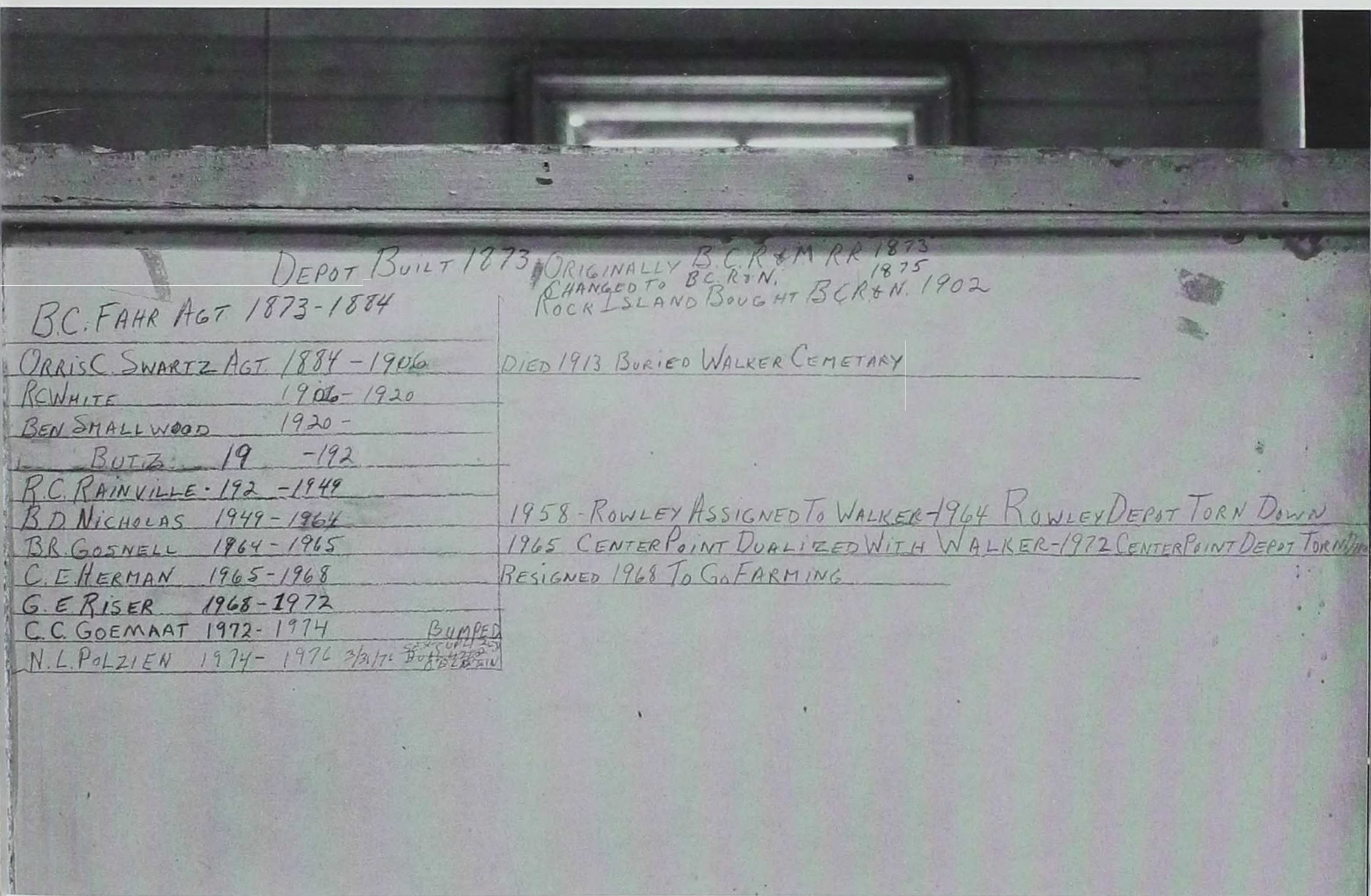






These images are emblematic of midwestern railroading in the 1970s and early '80s. Clockwise from top: an anonymous sentiment chalked on the wall of the closed Illinois Central depot at Independence (1976); Rock Island depot sign, Iowa Falls (November 1979)—the railroad would shut down for good only four months later; abandoned Milwaukee Road station and office building, Sioux City (1983).





Above: Written by an anonymous rail-roader on the office-side of the Walker depot's ticket window was this hidden gem, a complete listing of the agents assigned to the station from 1873 to 1976. The depot was closed that year. Several months later, both the ticket window and the agents' chronology had disappeared—presumably stolen by a souvenir hunter.

Right: West Union had the finest of the Burlington, Cedar Rapids & Minnesota's depots on its Cedar Rapids-Postville Milwaukee Division. Built in 1872-1873, the building was 80 feet long, with brick and limestone ornamentation over each window and door, and a spacious second-floor apartment for the agent. This photo was made in 1977. The depot was demolished the next year.







Dwarfed by modern-day grain elevators, the Illinois Central depot at Blairsburg stands abandoned in 1976. Built in 1942, it was an example of the ambitious program begun that year by the railroad to replace "old, over-size, worn-out and outmoded stations" system-wide. Under this program, the Illinois Central would demolish most or all of an existing depot and then use the resulting lumber to build a smaller replacement based on one of four standard plans drawn up by the road's engineering department. The Blairsburg depot was a so-called Type A, measuring 16x36 feet, with an agent's office, a freight room, and a waiting room. Passenger service to Blairsburg ended only eight years later, when the daytime Chicago-Fort Dodge *lowan* was cut back to Dubuque. The depot was closed by 1970 and removed by 1985.



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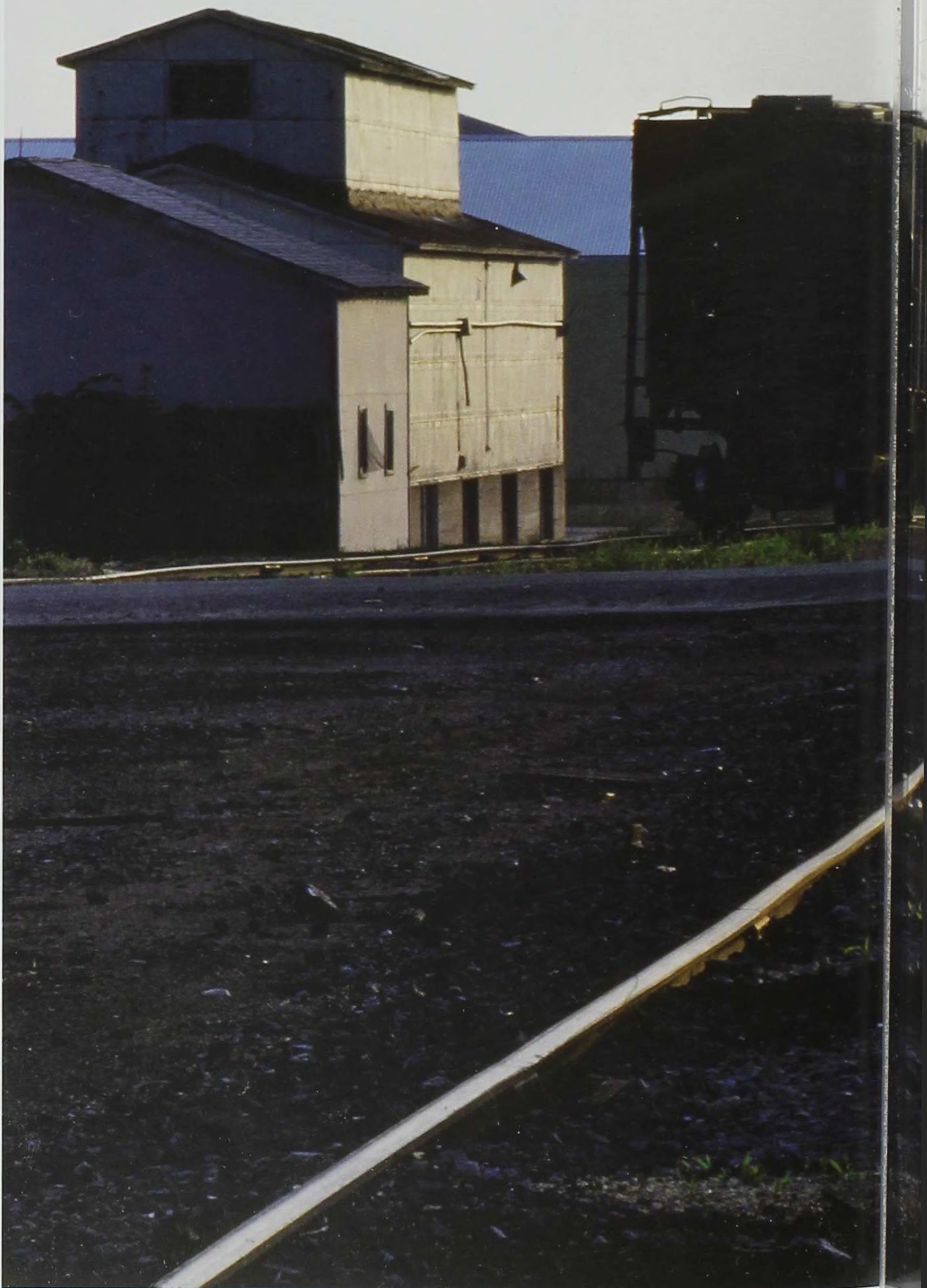
Chicago & North Western tracks
(former Chicago Great Western
Minneapolis–Omaha mainline)
in Clarion, 1982.

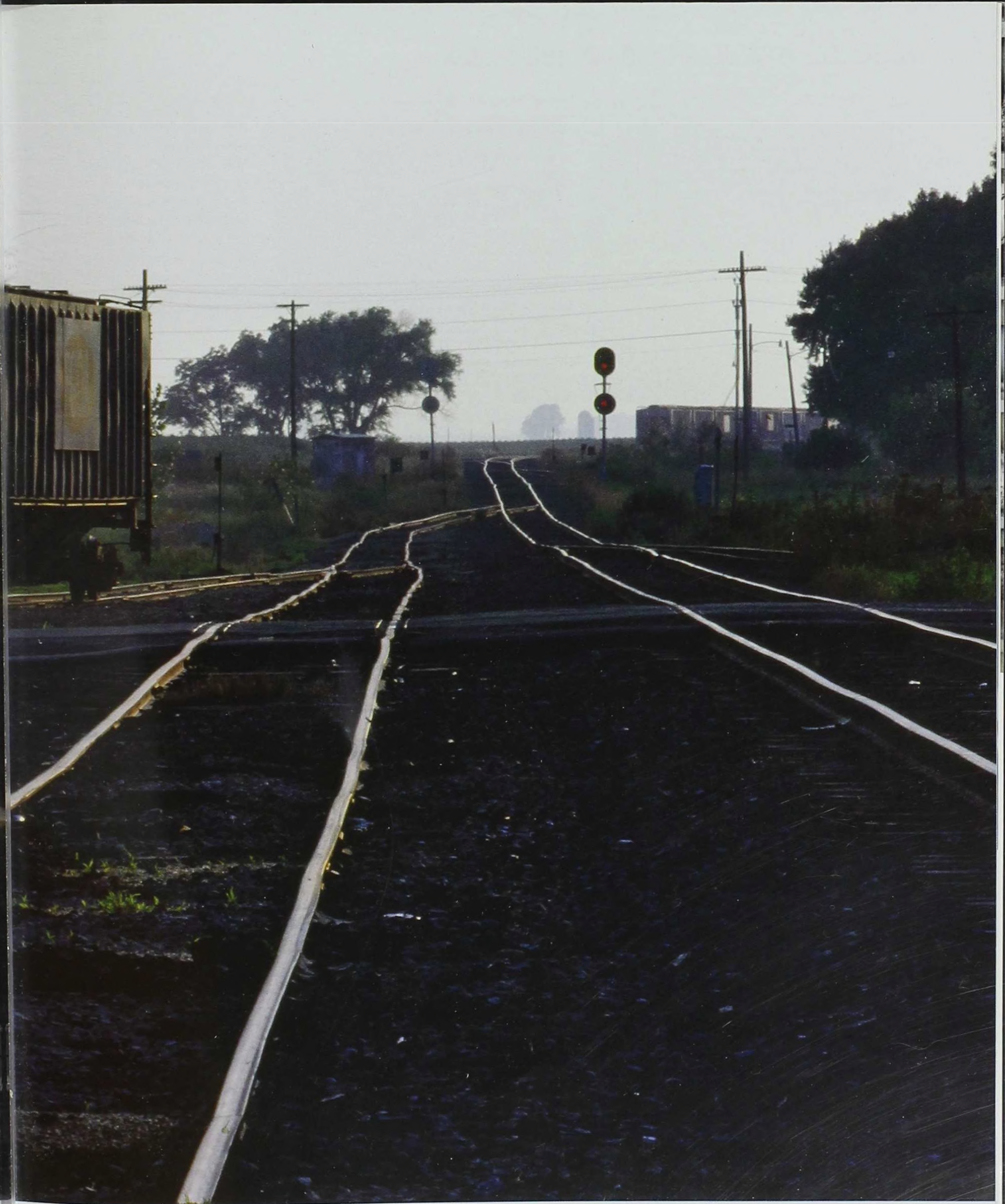
If the future of railroading as reflected in these photos looked uncertain in the 1970s and '80s, today it has experienced a renaissance with record tonnage and rebuilt track. Even the former Rock Island's east-west mainline has long since come back to life and is now operated by the Iowa Interstate Railroad. The depots and some of the other passenger facilities from the past pictured here didn't have a place in this rebirth and have either been reused or demolished. But the economic logic of steel wheels hauling freight on steel rails has ultimately prevailed. ❖



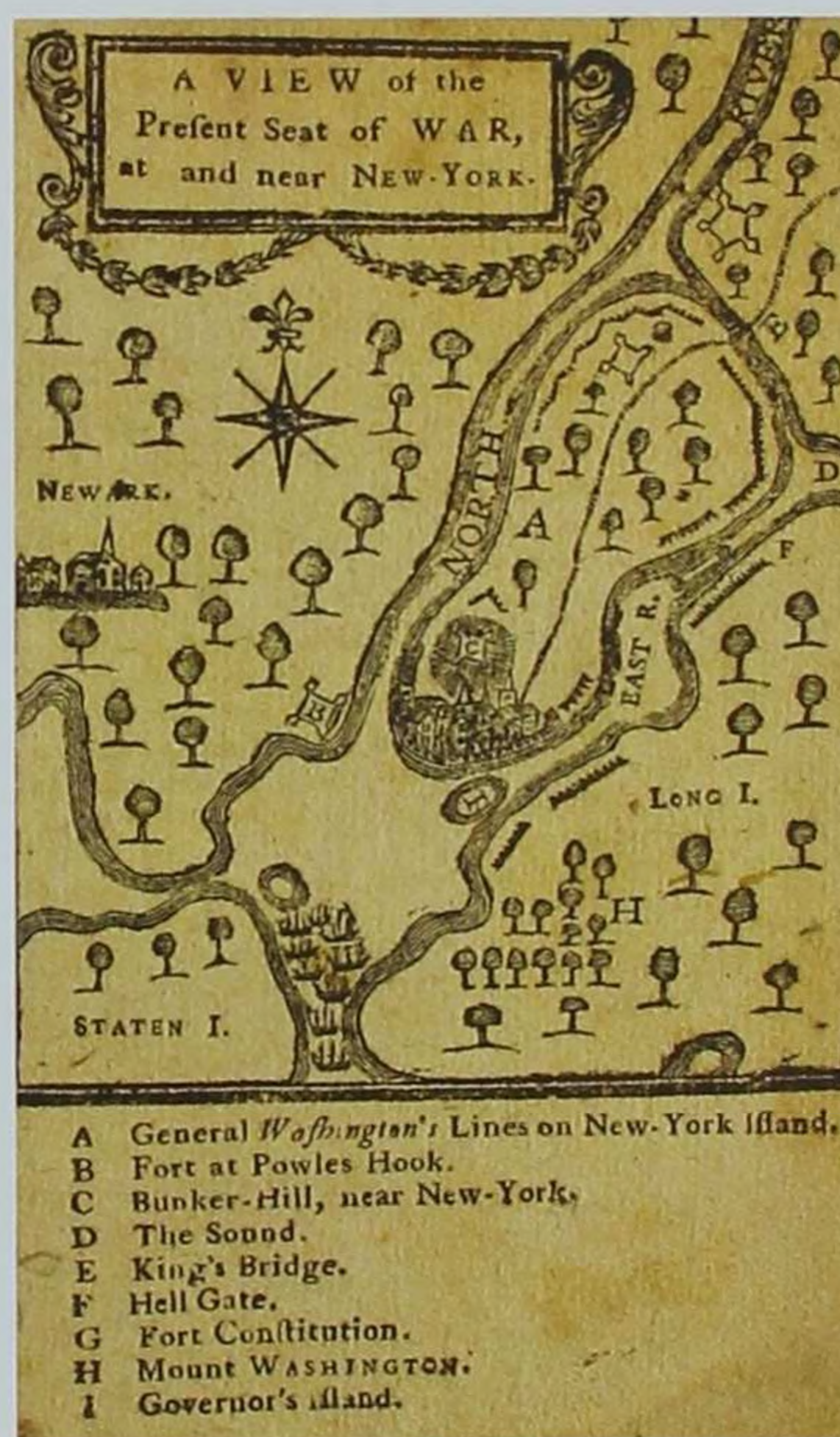
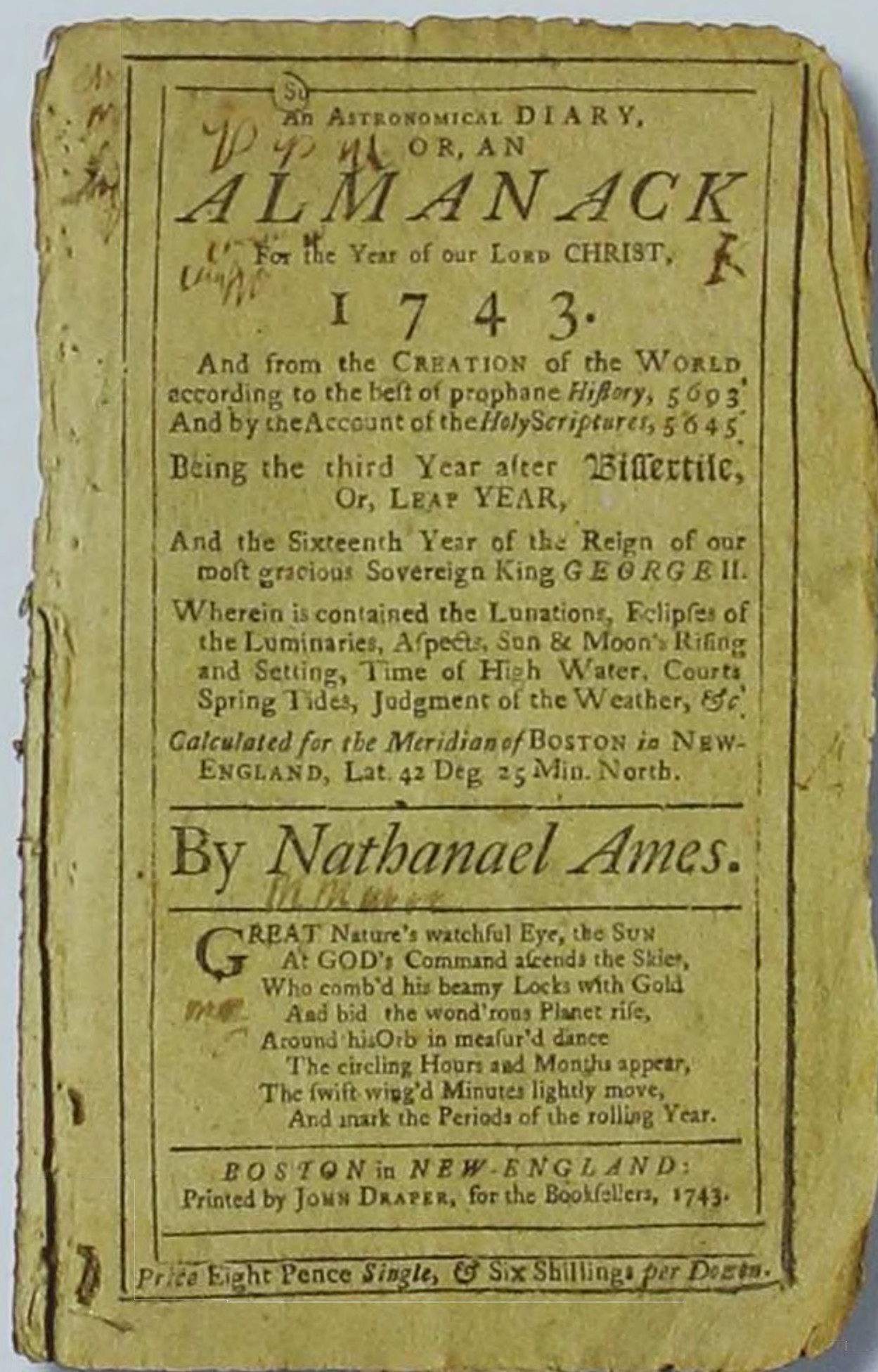
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Historical treasures from our collections



Almanacs from the 18th century remind us of our colonial era. Far left: The cover of this almanac is dated "the Sixteenth Year of the Reign of our most gracious Sovereign King GEORGE II." The next example shows a map of "the Present Seat of War" and "General Washington's Lines on New-York Island."

Self-rule and nationhood can be traced in later almanacs, which listed locations and dates of circuit courts, election returns, and names of office-holders.

A LOOK AT THE AMERICAN ALMANAC

BY KRISTINA HUFF

TWO AND A HALF CENTURIES AGO, Nathaniel Ames sent a message on the last page of the 1758 almanac he published in New England:

O! Ye unborn Inhabitants of America! Should this Page escape destin'd Conflagration at the Year's End, and these Alphabetical Letters remain legible, — when your Eyes behold the Sun after he has rolled the Seasons round for two or three Centuries more, you will know that in Anno Domini 1758, we dream'd of your Times.

Ames was far removed in time and distance from the "unborn Inhabitants" who would make his vision of westward expansion and agricultural prosperity a reality. With visionary confidence, he imagined the possibilities of "that fertile Country to the West of the Appalachian Mountains . . . all well provided with Rivers, a very fine wholesome Air, a rich Soil, capable of producing Food

and Physick, and all Things necessary for the Conveniency and Delight of Life: In fine, the Garden of the World!"

Ames and his son were perhaps the most successful developers of almanacs in the 18th century. Historian Jill Lapore estimates that "in the middle of the eighteenth century, about fifty thousand almanacs were printed in the colonies every year." Decade after decade, printers produced a smorgasboard of reasonably priced almanacs sized for portability. These handy little booklets were kept close at hand—in log cabins in New England, later in wagons headed to Indiana, and still later in farmhouses in Iowa. A few of Ames's 18th-century almanacs are among the dozens of almanacs in the State Historical Society of Iowa collections.

An almanac was a practical reference tool for the year, with detailed calendars, weather predictions, tide tables, astronomical charts, and more. Once the year was over, these particular features had outlived their usefulness. Despite this, almanacs were often kept into the following

years. An almanac, a Bible, and perhaps one or two devotional books constituted many families' entire libraries. These texts became crucial tools for teaching children to read. And when paper was scarce, the worn pages of outdated almanacs were probably used for notes, messages, food wrappings, toilet paper, and kindling "destin'd [for] Conflagration at the Year's End," as Ames had feared.

Of the hundreds of American almanacs published, two series have proven especially memorable. One of these is *Poor Richard's Almanac*, published by Benjamin Franklin under the pseudonym Richard Saunders. Although many almanacs offered advice on how to conduct one's life, *Poor Richard's Almanac* is particularly remembered for advice on how to become "healthy, wealthy, and wise." Franklin specifically identified "industry and frugality" as the cornerstone of Poor Richard's lessons.

Franklin's almanacs offered not only instruction in virtuous conduct, but also the foundations of a lifetime of literacy. As an older man looking back, he recalled the gratifying sales figures of his almanacs (nearly 10,000 each year, according to his estimates) and their laudable educational and moral mission. Proudly, he explained, "Observing that it was generally read, scarce any neighborhood in the province being without it, I consider'd it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people, who bought scarcely any other books."

The most enduring American almanac series is *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, which in its younger years was simply known as *The Farmer's Almanac*. First published by Robert B. Thomas for the year 1793, it became an Ameri-

can institution. Continuously in print, *The Old Farmer's Almanac* reportedly still uses the same weather-prediction formula developed by Thomas in the early years.

Almanac users (even George Washington was one) often scribbled brief phrases in the generous margins to mark significant events like births and deaths or to record relevant information, like these early jottings: "The Ship at Germantown Launched September 21, 1789." "Planted Potatoes Planted french Turnips and Corn." "April 6 Bought a cow of uncle." "Bees swarmed 10th." "Finished Hay-ing July 23/1789." The pages of some surviving almanacs are marked with initials, dots, and tick marks in pencil or ink—obviously meaningful to the user but a mystery to us today. Next to the official weather predictions, users jotted down the actual weather. In a 1762 almanac one user noted "a grater drought this summer than last. Many streams were dry."

Coincidentally, one almanac told readers that rain was likely for July 4, 1876—and to "Expect Thunder."

The familiar features of almanacs made them trusted guides, even in unfamiliar territory. For those whose concerns ranged beyond the boundaries of a family farm, almanacs provided information for travelers, such as the distance between towns and the location of inns.

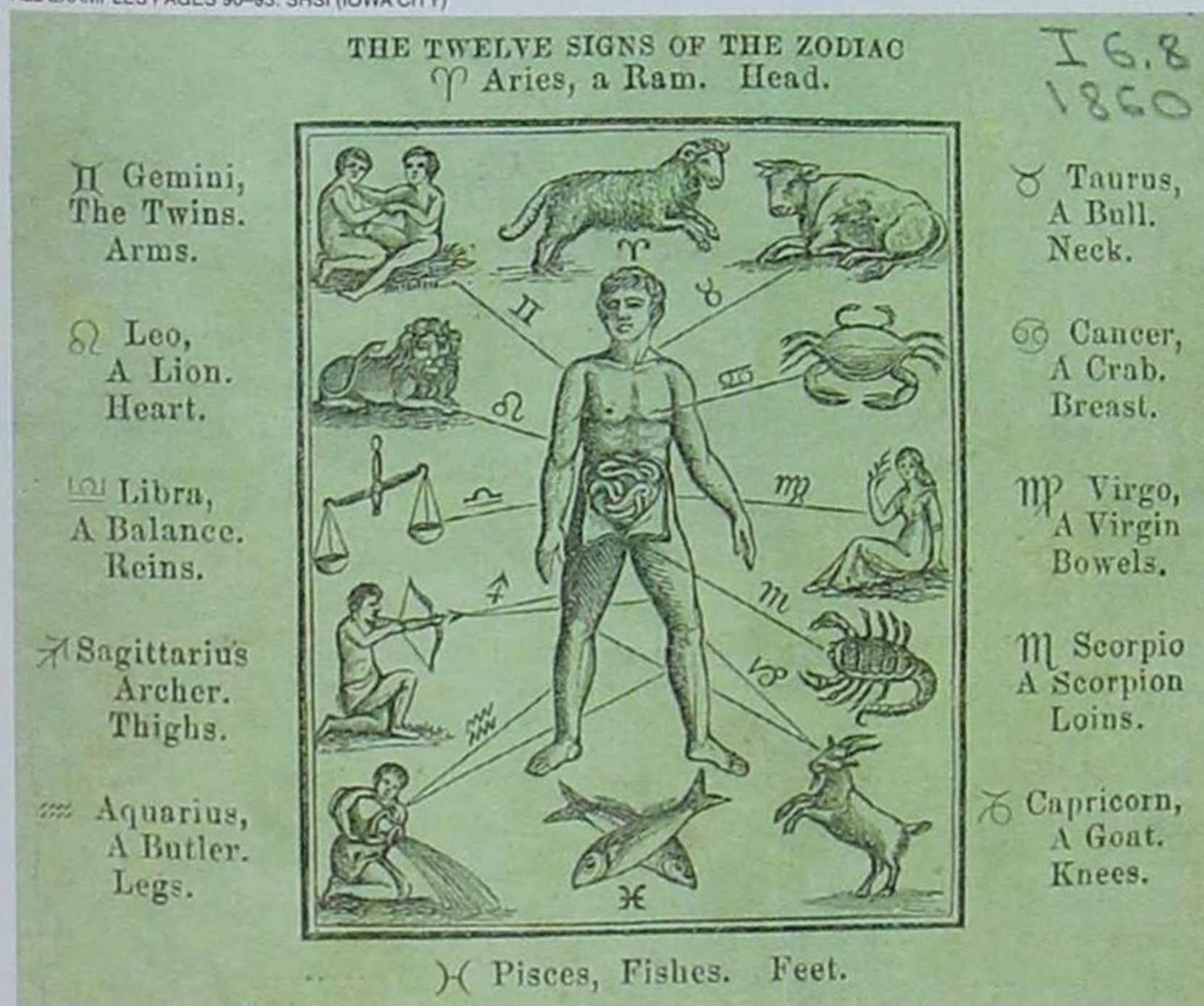
Household and horticultural advice was abundant, such as tips for fattening fowl, constructing beehives, growing grapes, and destroying bedbugs. Recipes and remedies were common fare. To treat sores, bruises, and burns, *The Northwestern Farmer Almanac* (published in Des Moines in 1862), recommended "Half a pound of rosin, half a pound of lard, quarter of a pound of beeswax; simmer all slowly together and strain through a thin cloth."

Because rural America was a major audience, almanacs often celebrated the benefits of farm life and discouraged young people from abandoning their lives of husbandry for the allure of city living. An 1864 almanac published in Dubuque argued that farmers enjoy lives of virtuous labor and good health, while city-dwelling merchants become nervous and eventually die "miserably."

Poking gentle fun at the aphorisms that were typical in almanacs, this same almanac presents this lighthearted story: "A mother admonishing a son, a lad seven years of age, told him that he should never defer till to-morrow what he could do to-day. The little urchin replied, 'Then, mother, let's eat the rest of the plum-pudding to-night.'"

An almanac often billed itself as a miscellany of "entertaining" material, such as a paragraph on British coal production or the lifespan of various mammals. (We might call these facts trivia today—though we're still likely to read them in spare moments.) Quotations by famous authors dotted the pages, as did verse and humor. In fact, almanacs seemed to provide something for everyone,

ALL EXAMPLES PAGES 90-93: SHSI (IOWA CITY)



The "Zodiac Man" or "Man of Signs" was a typical feature in almanacs from colonial days to the late 19th century. Astronomy, however, had as significant a presence as astrology. Dates were given for solstices and eclipses, morning and evening stars, and phases of the moon.

from charts for calculating interest to recipes for stewed celery. And for the bored, an almanac offered diversion. "I know of nothing new up here," an Iowa soldier in a Civil War camp wrote to his wife. "Times are quiet and dull. I have finished the almanac you sent me."

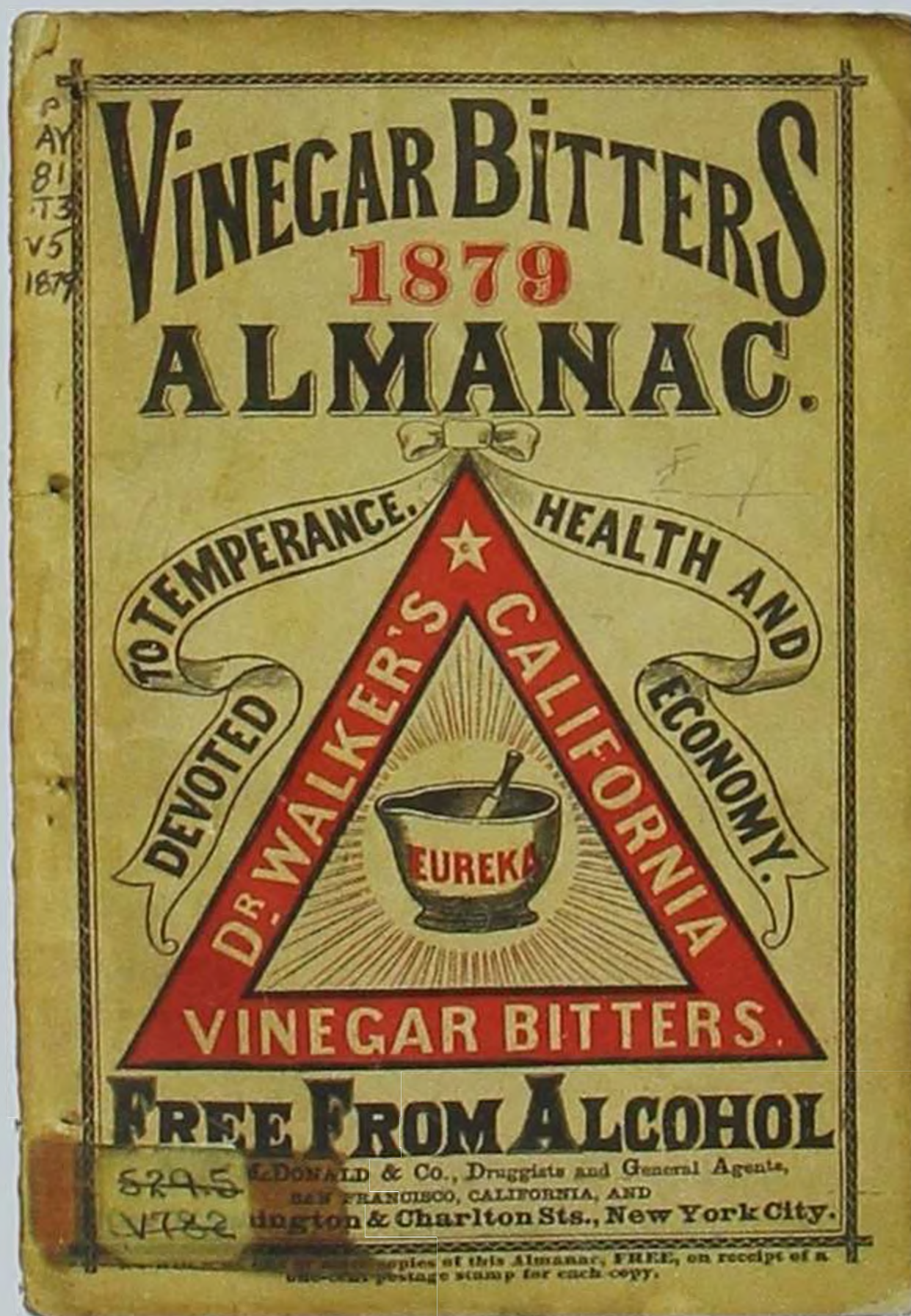
Publishers often had select audiences in mind. Immigrants could find almanacs printed in their native languages. The name of a denomination, Methodist or Presbyterian, for example, might appear in an almanac title. The partisan *American Banner* newspaper appealed to supporters of the anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic Know Nothing Party with its publication of *The Know Nothing Almanac, and True Americans' Annual for 1855*.

Increasing amounts of self-promotion and advertising characterized almanacs as early as the 1860s and well into the next century. Lee & Walker, a music publisher, distributed an almanac with the standard components of calendar and weather predictions, but they were followed by pages and pages of sheet music titles available for purchase. Horticultural periodicals published almanacs that were little more than promotional spin-offs, with a selection of reprinted engravings and short articles that their subscribers would have already seen.

Ads sometimes filled half of the yearly booklets. An 1882 Iowa almanac titled *The Washington County Press Annual* included an avalanche of advertisements for a local millinery, grocery, butcher shop, hotel, and windmill company, as well as a tombstone carver, jeweler, and photographer. Ads for crockery, farm implements, furniture, clothes wringers, and stoves were similar to those in the local newspapers. In fact, local newspapers often published almanacs and distributed them for free.

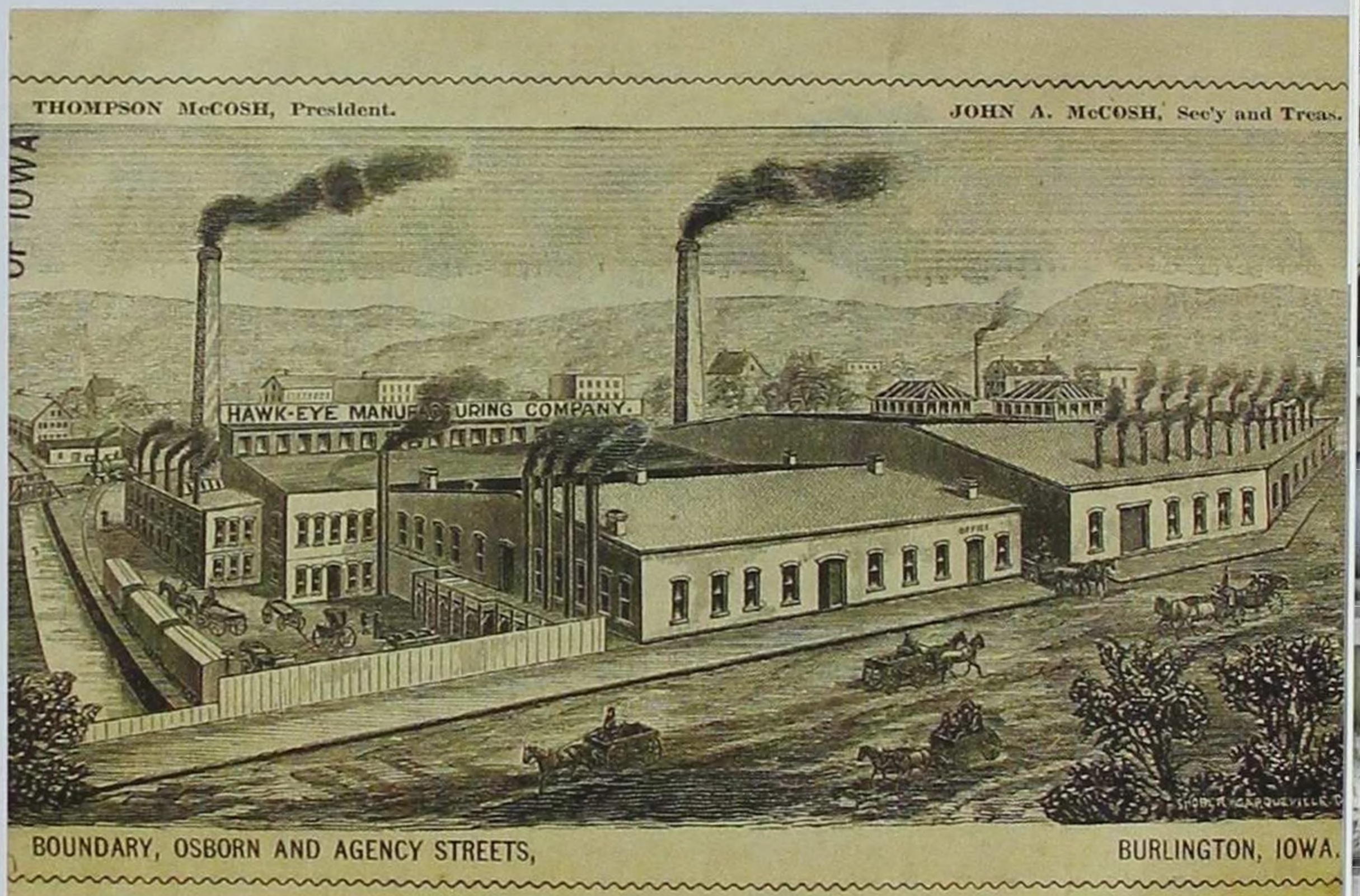
Patent medicine companies produced almanacs that were almost entirely promotional. They did not shy away from making lavish claims about their products. *Ayer's American Almanac* assured readers that Ayer's Cherry Pectoral "is annually the means of saving great numbers of valuable lives." The *Ladies Birthday Almanac* was filled with ads and testimonials for patent medicines to treat all manner of female maladies. Promoting Volcanic Oil Liniment, *Dr. J. H. McLean's Family Almanac* promised that "Rheumatism, Neuralgia and Nerve Pains will immediately yield to its MAGIC influence." The *Swamp-Root Almanac* made similar claims for its products. Patent medicine companies distributed thousands of these promotional almanacs to local pharmacies, which, in turn, had their own ads printed on the back, and then gave the little books free to their customers.

Published from our colonial era into the 20th century, the ubiquitous almanac provides a window into the lives, values, buying habits, and even senses of humor of generations of Americans. In 1758, publisher Nathaniel Ames wondered if his modest little booklet could possibly survive for "two or three Centuries more." We can assure him that that almanac, as well as dozens of others, did indeed survive—here at the State Historical Society of Iowa. ❖

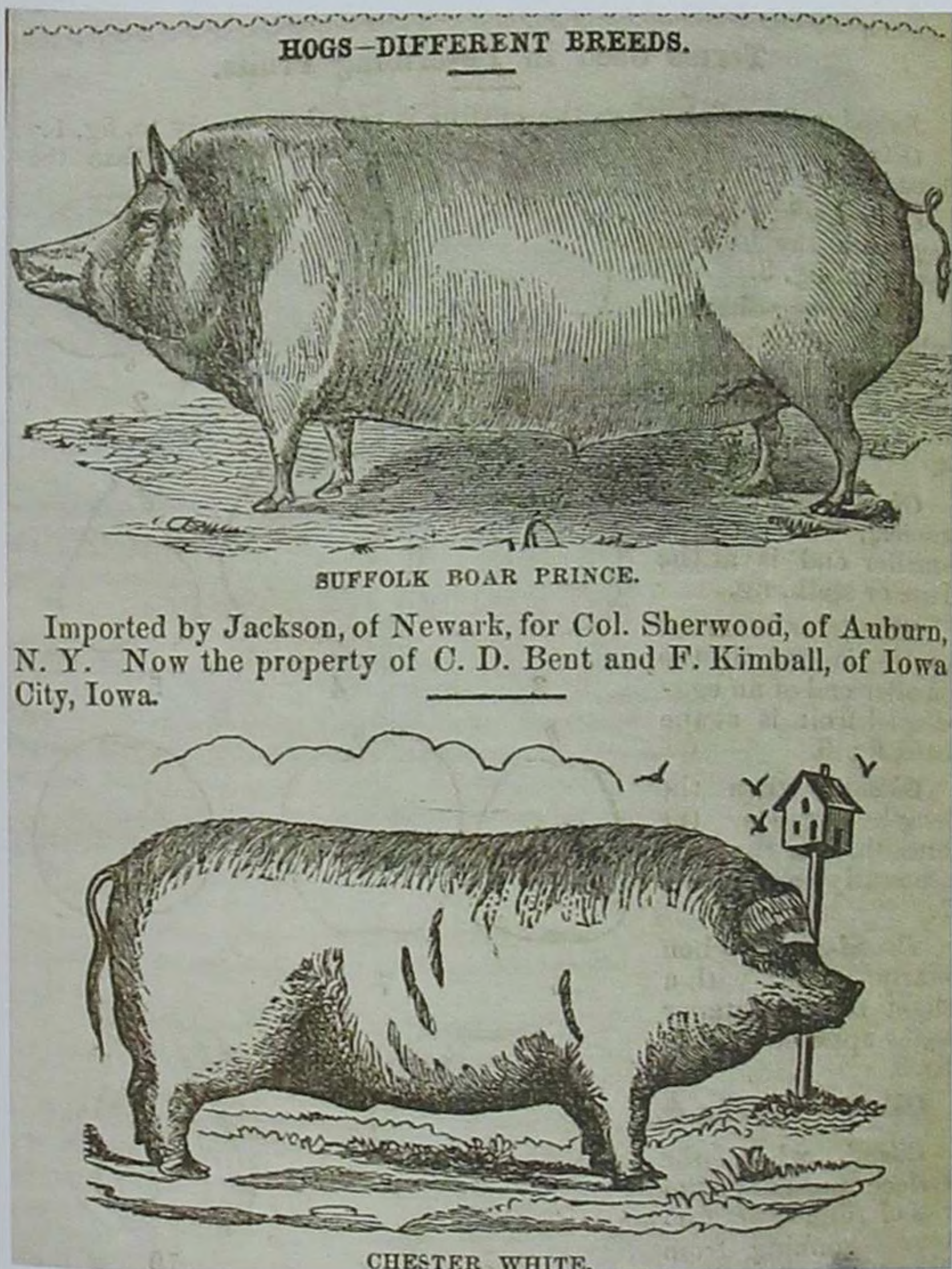


As almanacs evolved into commercial vehicles in the 19th century, advertisements often appeared on front and back covers and many pages inside. The one on the right was published in Burlington in 1884 by the Hawk-Eye Steel Barb Fence Co.

Kristina Huff earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Delaware in 2012. Her dissertation is titled "Printing Friendship and Buying Feeling: Exchange and Gift Books in the Antebellum United States." She worked as a reference librarian for the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City.



These pages from various Iowa almanacs reveal both subtle and blatant promotion. Clockwise from top left: a Lisbon drugstore ad; an engraving of a Burlington factory; an ad for a dealer for cookstoves; and a testimonial for hogs.



FAVORITE STOVES
FAVORITE STOVE WORKS
CINCINNATI

ONE THOUSAND
"FAVORITE" COOKING STOVES
PER WEEK!

Is the number we can now produce. Dealers know we have been behind our orders each Spring and Fall for years. We have increased our capacity every year for the past eight years, and the present great demand is proof positive "FAVORITE" STOVES GIVE SATISFACTION.

Every Stove is warranted, and is a perfect Stove before it leaves our works. We would not ship a defective "FAVORITE" Cooking Stove for ten times its value.

FOR SALE BY

A. F. Keith & Son,
Des Moines, Ia.

Historical treasures from our collections

Autograph Books

"Well I was to the Christmas Tree last night," Florence Collins wrote to Frances Briggs on Christmas Day, 1892. "I got a very nice present its just awful nice. It was a Autograph Album. One side of it is plush and the other side is Celloyd with flowers on it. I tell you it knocks the socks all off of May's. I tell you, I wish you was here to write in it now."

Florence had reason to be excited about her Christmas gift. Autograph books were popular among young people and actually dated back centuries. These ex-

amples are only a sample of the many autograph books in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa. Most are from the 19th century.

The custom of signing autograph books often occurred at the end of a school year. Classmates added sentimental or humorous messages, though seldom original ones. A fellow named George wrote to a young lady named Effie: "May your good resolutions be like a crying Baby at church. Always carried out."

Teachers and students also ex-

changed autograph books. In her very best handwriting, one student wrote: "Dear Teacher: May your life be one Long season of love, Till the angels shall whisper Your home is above. Your Well Wisher, Arabella."

Lovelorn students might write flirtatious messages. And the artistic ones might add a sketch or calligraphic swirls and loops.

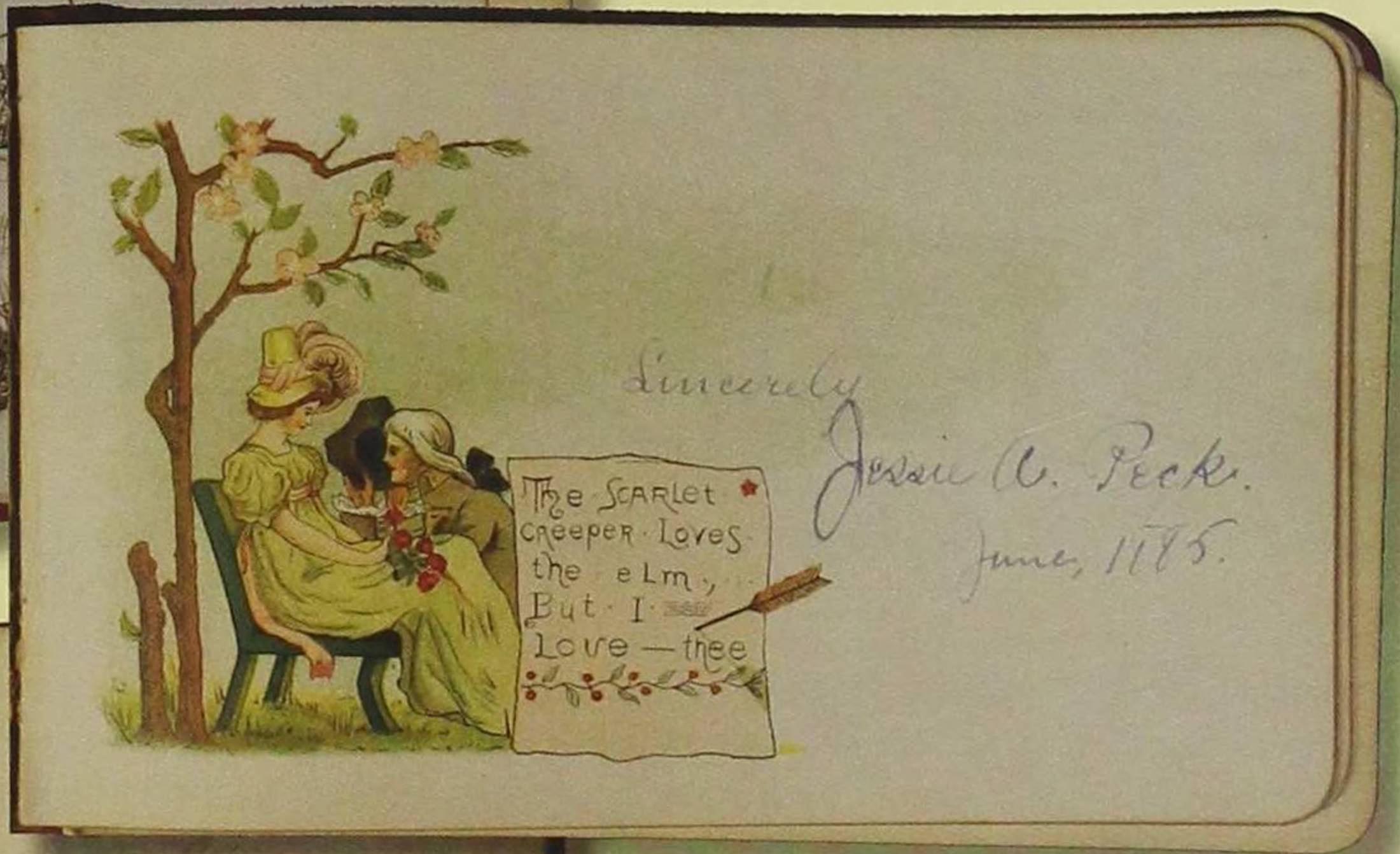
Autograph books lost popularity as schools began to publish yearbooks, which offered new territories for writing messages of friendship. —The Editor





Respectfully
your friend
Claud N. Neff

BOTH PAGES: SHSI. PHOTOS BY CHARLES SCOTT



The SCARLET
Creeper Loves
the elm,
But I
Love thee

Sincerely
Jessie C. Peck.
June, 1885.



your friend
Zella Wagoner

The typical autograph book of this period was about 5x3 inches. Some covers were particularly decorative. The pages inside were usually blank, although some included colorful illustrations, like the one above and on the left. The nature sketch in brown ink was by Claud Neff, who signed the page "Respectfully your friend" and dated it "Jan. 28th, 1883."

Historical treasures from our collections



The Meaning of Victorian Hairwork

"Hair is at once the most delicate and lasting of our materials and survives us, like love," author Leigh Hunt wrote in an 1850s *Godey's Lady's Book*.

The yellowing pages above prove that. They are from a small album created in the 1850s by Florida Collins. Florida traded locks of hair with friends and family and fastened them to the pages.

Florida was also learning to braid and weave longer strands of hair into modest examples of hairwork, a type of Victorian fancywork. Girls and women learned hairwork from each other or from women's magazines, which printed patterns and instructions and advertised the thin wire, wooden bobbins, and other supplies needed.

Hairwork was one way to remember those who

had moved away and memorialize those who had died. Civil War widows fashioned hairwork into brooches and lockets, rings and watch fobs. These were worn as mourning jewelry.

Those who excelled at hairwork created remarkably intricate wreaths. They wrapped long strands around wire and then shaped them into petals, leaves, and stems. Framed and preserved under glass domes, hairwreaths may seem a peculiar artform to us today, but to Victorians they represented great meaning and required considerable patience and skill. Although Florida Collins was a novice, her album, preserved in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa, bespeaks friendship, family, and memory, just as she intended 150 years ago. —The Editor

'The old war still continues'

Roe Howard's Letters from France, 1917-1918

by Nathan R. Mannheimer

In August 1917, Chester Roe Howard left Mount Vernon, Iowa, to join the vanguard of American soldiers entering the First World War.

Though he wrote weekly letters home, Howard received no mail from friends or family until January 6, 1918. This five-month gap in communication, which seems incredible in our world of e-mail and instant messaging, was equally incredible to Howard, who watched the men of his unit eagerly open letters and packages during mail call. "Have you all deserted me?" he lamented in a late November letter. "I never was so out of touch with everyone in my life." Then he repeated, for the seventh time, his address. Finally, a torrent of misdirected mail reached him in January, eliciting his understatement that "the mail service over here is far from being all it ought to be."

We do not have the letters that Howard did eventually receive while in France, but the family preserved 42 letters that he had sent home, excerpts of which appear here (with the original spelling and punctuation).

Howard, who went by "Roe," grew up in a middle-class family of five. His father, Christopher Howard, owned a lumber mill in the Mount Vernon area. However, his death in 1916 left Roe, at age 21, as the man in the Howard family. Roe's younger sister, Ruth, was preparing to attend college in New York. His older sister, Lois, was already married to Clifford Johnston.

Widowhood did not render his mother, Alice, destitute. Yet she looked to her children for future social support, and Roe showed every prospect of being a dependable provider. According to her grandchildren, Alice Howard was a woman slow to offer praise, and it was well known that she strongly disapproved of her son's decision to volunteer for the war.

When Roe Howard stood up as the first military volunteer from Cornell College, he was a starring mem-



ber of the senior class. A model liberal arts student, with all-state honors as a guard on the Cornell football team, he also played French horn in the college orchestra and belonged to the Amphictyon literary society. He was a tennis and basketball player and a founder of the Beta Omicron fraternity, later known as the Owls.

He left all of that, and his family, just months short of graduation in order to start his training at Fort Snelling in Minnesota. After earning a commission as a lieutenant, Howard departed for France, eventually serving in the 104th Regiment of the 26th Infantry Division.

Roe's letters, which begin on the next page, tell the story of an observant and intelligent soldier on the Western Front. While they display his growing cynicism about war, they also demonstrate a personal commitment to "do his bit" for the Allied cause and a deep pride for the men under his command.

Dear Mother: France, Wednesday, Sept. 26, 1917.

Rumors fly thick and fast so I knew you would be glad to get a line from me. I hope you received my cable O.K. . . .

Here in France we see very few high buildings and so the towns are scattered over a lot of ground with curious streets and old, old buildings. American towns outgrow the old parts of their towns but here they hang on to them and use them so you can imagine what it is like. . . . Shipping is very much congested in all coast towns and you see many, many ships of many types and of many countries. We have also seen all types of air machines from monoplanes to dirigibles.

. . . We will jump around quite a bit in the near future so it may be hard for me to hear from you but I'll drop a line occasionally but it's hard to get a letter thru. So don't worry for everything's fine with us and its some experience. . . .

There's lots of news I'd like to know but you know how good it will seem when I do hear it.

Remember me to all, so goodbye, Lots of love to you all.

Roe,

1st Lt. C.R. Howard

Inf. U.S.A.

Dear Mother: Sunday, Oct. 14, 1917

Well, I have had no mail yet and it has been a rather long time. I know I have written few letters but I have written you three times since I left the U.S. and I hope you received them all. . . .

I'm sorry we can't tell you of our work. You know it's interesting. We are no busier than we were at the Fort. That would be impossible as to what is ahead of us we know absolutely nothing ourselves.

A representative of the Y.M.C.A. dropped in the other day and was very gladly received. He brot a football, a baseball, candies, this paper, etc. He intended to get things organized directly and then maybe we'll have some place to go. . . .

Both in England and here bicycles are very, very common. So many of the men have rented them and are off to various towns and places of interest today. . . .

Must close before I tell too much. Officers censor their own mail and that of their men when assigned to their regiments so I must not overstep my bounds.

With lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother: Oct. 17, 1917

Just because I feel as though I'd like some mail I'll try writing for that seems to bring you a little closer. No mail at all yet. Maybe I'm looking for it too soon but I know you can't write too frequently or too lengthily. Short letters are forbidden in fact. All the fellows are talking of

packages of real eats and candy and all kinds of articles coming from the States and it sounds real interesting. . . .

Today was market day and the market place was crowded. You see, the people from the country had brot in their products. They eat lots of rabbits here so there were many crates of rabbits, lot of sheep, and all kinds of fruit. The grapes are larger than those plums in our yard at Mt. V. and wonderfully good. . . .

We handed in our pay vouchers today for Sept. pay and now we're eagerly waiting for our checks. You see, we have had no pay since we left the U.S. so we need it mighty bad. I have at the present writing just one franc (20 cents) left in my pocket. Tomorrow morning I'll buy a big bowl of chocolate for 75 centimes or 15 cents and have a nickel left. That's getting pretty low when you're as far from home as I am. . . .

. . . The French make almost a ceremony of their meals. They take so long. Everything is in courses. . . .

One of our chief amusements is planning wonderful dinners in American restaurants. Let's hope they come true some day. . . .

We see lots of American flags over here. But they are so funny. If they have red and white stripes and a patch of stars in the corner, it is an American flag. I have seen flags with only 9 stripes and any no. of stars from 13-48. . . .

I'll tell you all about this life when I see you and I'd like to think it would be next Fall.

I haven't much more to say. For fear you have lost or forgotten my address, I'll repeat it. American Infantry Officers' School A.E.F., France. Now be sure and get it right when you write me if you want me to hear from you.

Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother: . . . Oct. 21, 1917, 8:30 P.M.

. . . They are making a call for the U.S. men in France to buy Liberty Loan Bonds so today I signed up for \$150.00. They will take \$15.00 a month out of my salary to pay for it and so its saving money and a good invesment. . . .

. . . There is a new moon now, the first I have seen in France. It was moonlight when we came in last night from the field. We have some wonderful sunsets here and at night the skies are wonderfully clear. . . .

We are already looking forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas and even Halowe'en, planning some kind of celebration. We always like to plan, you know. There's no harm in that.

. . . We are all looking forward to the time when we come home. It is hard now for us all but I know you're glad I did the way I did and I know I am. And we'll always be so much happier for it. And we'll have a mighty happy time when we four get together again, for you mean home to me. . . .

It seems to me I've had some funny experiences in

my life. I'll always be sorry I couldn't be at Cornell for commencement and yet I had graduation exercises of my own. . . .

Goodnight, Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother: Oct. 24, 1917

. . . All over the country there are stone walls instead of fences, so every house has its gate and some of them are fine indeed, or must have been at one time. With a fertile imagination you can connect all sorts of pictures and stories with this country.

I know you would like to see our orderlies. They take care of our quarters and make themselves generally useful. Of course they are soldiers and are in uniforms. They are French so we learn something whenever we try to talk to them. I saw one fellow [who] must have been from the colonies. He was dressed like a Turk with a red turban, big baggy trousers and a long beard. . . .

Goodnight and lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother: Sunday, Oct. 28, 1917.

. . . I had a rather queer experience last night. It was raining hard when I came home from dinner and I didn't want to stay at the barracks so I took one of the orderlies and went to the "cinema" or "movies." I was the only American there. All the rest were French. So I could kind of imagine what those Chinese students must have felt like at Cornell. It's mighty little French I can talk but I get around all right. . . .

Rumor flies thick around here as to our future, so we don't know what to bank on. Two new instructors arrived here today and now we're going to use the bayonet a little. There's no rest for the wicked, all right, but let's hope that means the "Boche" this time. The French word for German is Allemande, but the terms "Boche" and "Fritz" are more common with all the allies.

I have often wondered if you receive all my letters. You know occasionally a ship is sunk and . . . the mail goes down with it. . . .

I am anxiously awaiting my first mail. This A.M. a letter came for Lt. C.R. Howard. . . . I opened it and it was for some one in the engineer's department; of course I was disappointed. So there is another Lt. C.R. Howard. You must be careful with my address or my mail will go wrong. . . .

The bells in the church this morning started ringing about 5:30 am and from then on they keep it up. This town is about 95% Catholic so they have services all the time.

The French were very happy the past week to receive news of a French victory. They are more impulsive than Americans and they were so happy they made us feel the same way.

I believe the soldiers have quit looking for the end of

the war. They now just take things as they come. Sometime I want to send home a copy of the newspapers we get. They are always optimistic like the papers are at home and I imagine the German papers are the same. It's a great game, trying to convince the people. . . .

I bought a good knife the other day as I thot it might be useful in the trenches. It has a big blade, a little blade, a can opener, a cork screw, an awl, and a screw driver, so you see it is nearly a tool chest in itself. . . .

. . . We arrived at a French port in the night. I came up on deck early, just as it was getting light and silhouetted against the skyline I could see a sentinel pacing back and forth with his bayonet fixed, and their bayonet is much longer than ours. It typified a country at war and the fighting goes on but from now on it will come closer home to you all, and the U.S. will be different. I have even heard rumors that Broadway was to be darkened at night to prevent air raids. If you have to go around pitch black streets at night you will know what it is like over here.

I send lots of love to you, mother on your birthday and hope it is a happy one, and I'll be with you on your next one "apres le guerre." . . .

Roe.

Dear Mother: France, Nov. 9, 1917

We're moving today. We leave at 4:30 this afternoon so now we're just busy getting ready. We each chose between the National Guard and the Regulars. I chose the National Guard so I am going to join the 26th Division so send my mail in care of the 26th Division. . . . It's kind of hard to see all these other men get mail every day and never get any myself. There are nearly fifty officers in this barracks and all but three have had mail. And now I'm moving and that'll mix it up again, also I may as well give up hope for a long while. You can send anything over. The men get newspapers, letters, and all kinds of packages right along.

. . . It is certainly true that you soon learn to really hate the "Boche" and all I want now is to get my chance at them. But I do hate to think of all the "slackers" in the U.S. The country is full of them. Wait till they've had war a while like France has. Then they'll realize a little more what it means. No matter what the cost is to myself, I'll never be sorry I went into it. I'm more anxious now than ever. But I'm nearly as mad at American slackers as I am at the "Boche." The worst of it is that the "slackers" continue to stand in good esteem. The people ought to let them feel their disgust. . . .

It will be a pleasure to get with troops and hear the good American language spoken. It is a strain to listen to broken English and try to understand it, and also to always hear the French language when you only understand it a little, and we have had to pay such close

attention to lectures to understand. . . .

I saw the funeral of a French General the other day. They had a long procession and it was very picturesque, little choir boys, priests in full regalia, and many officers and troops.

November second is French memorial day and so we marched to the cemetery in the procession. We gathered in a square by the city hall and it was a fine sight, many French soldiers, officers, French, English, Scotch, and American. Flags and flowers everywhere. . . . Every grave had ten or twenty bunches of flowers. . . .

Hope you are all fine and happy. You don't know how I'd appreciate a good American house and a real American dinner.

Heaps of love, Roe.

Dear Folks:

Nov. 25, 1917.

. . . Did you ever hear of a goose girl to tend the geese of a village? It's a reality. Also a man will go along the village street in the morning and blow his horn and the pigs will come running out of every doorway. He takes them out for the day and brings them back at night and they all run back into their own doorway. It is comical indeed to watch them.

Also the town crier. In our town it happens to be a girl and a pretty good looking girl at that. She goes along the street and beats a big drum. The natives all come to their doors and then she reads the latest proclamation. . . .

. . . According to schedule yesterday ought to have been "Homecoming" at Cornell and they ought to have played Grinnell. I think many, many times of you all every day and how things are coming in the States. You are much better informed of the War also than we are. Only we get the personal touches and you don't. It is kind of thrilling you know to have airplanes flying over your heads while you are at drill and you wonder whether they are enemy or friendly planes.

Tuesday is mother's birthday and I send you lots of love and hope it is very happy for you. Save your celebrations of all sorts till I get home for I'll be just as ready for them as you will. So goodnight all, and heaps of love. . . .

Dear Folks: France, Tuesday, Evening, Dec. 11, 1917

. . . The other day I was the most homesick I have yet been. And the reason for it was the previous night I had a dream about being back at school and we were getting up a party to go down to the river. It sure was hard to wake up and find myself over here. . . .

I think I told you I was eating up at the Y.M. now. We heard the whirr of a motor this noon and someone stepped to the door and there was a big French plane sailing around above us. We see groups of them nearly ev-

ery day. I was down at the officers' club at a neighboring town recently and saw some fragments of the I 49, the German zeppelin recently brought down in France.

. . . We hear great stories about your sugar rations, railroad tieups and all. Will be glad to get back to the States and give Pres. Wilson my personal aid.

Goodnight all, With love, Roe.

Dear Folks:

France, Jan. 1, 1918

At last I got some mail my first since I left the States. It was a bunch of newspapers Ruth sent me from New York. The latest one was November 8. There were two "Hawkeyes," one "Record," and two Cornellians and they had a lot of news for me. Those papers cheered me up a lot. In one of the Cornellians it gave a list of the fellows from school who are at Camp Dodge. . . . When you get a little news you want so much more. . . .

[Christmas] was a pretty lonesome day for me as I am over here with absolute strangers and at that time hadn't heard a word. Before I got up, however, my orderly came over and brought me a little package from my commanding officer. It had cigars, gum, and some real American chocolates in it and was tied up with a pretty ribbon and was very much appreciated.

The various companies had programs at the Y.M.C.A. and they were very good. We had a fine tree and lots of decorations and I forgot all about the war and just enjoyed myself. We had all the French children in town up there and gave them all presents and they were a tickled lot. I've made friends with the most of them and they don't let me forget it. . . . Christmas night it was softly snowing with those great big flakes and the place was wonderfully beautiful. We have about a foot of snow now and its quite cold so its pretty hard drilling but it's all in the war game. . . .

This morning while coming along the street I saw a wagon with a wolf on it. It had just been shot and the man had it propped up so that it looked alive. They have foxes and wild boars around here also. We are in a mountainous region with high hills all around us. And we get plenty of exercise climbing them. . . .

With lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother:

France, Jan. 6, 1918

Today has been my happiest day since that week at home with you all, for I received my first letter from you. I surely had to wait a long while but it was all the more welcome when it came. This noon while eating dinner the sergeant major brot me in a letter you wrote about Nov. 30. . . . And you said you had sent a sweater and scarf three weeks before that you had knit yourself, and I started worrying right away because it hadn't showed up

and I wanted it so much, cause it means so much to me for you made it and must have thot of me constantly but I have it on now. Tonight the sergeant major brot me in six more letters and when I got home here was the box with the sweater in it, and it is fine. I thank you very very much for it and from now on, I wear it every day. . . .

I took them out to the madam and showed them to her, and she said I had a "bonne mere." She said you thot more of me than I did of you, and I told her "No, No." Then she said I was a "Bon fils," good son. . . .

Mother, you said you were proud of your three children. I am glad it is three, and not two. It used to be the girls you were proud of, so I must be coming up quite a bit if you now claim me with them. I sure am glad I got to come over here so early. I envy the boys back in the States but this is my place now and the quicker they all get over here the better. I hate war more every day, but I want my chance at the Huns more every day also. And no matter how long it takes or what it costs me personally I hope the war does not end until the final and full hoped for result is achieved. The Germans have a big bill to settle and are far from being ready to do it yet. So we have a mighty big job already ahead and we're ready and anxious to do it, so just depend on us, and please don't worry for you'd rather have me here than anywhere else and I'd rather be here. . . .

. . . Tonight there was a little concert at the Y.M. . . . [One man] was a Roumanian. He speaks nine languages but not American, think of it. And he was really wonderful on the violin. Even critical Mt. Vernon would praise him highly. . . .

. . . With lots of love. Roe.

Dear Folks: France, Jan. 20, 1918

. . . We have been up to the practice trenches about eight miles from here twice this week. . . . Last Tuesday, it was raining something fierce and the roads were covered with ice.

The other day a flying machine high above us was cutting capers when they had engine trouble and had to come down. They landed on a hill near us. It contained a French sergeant as pilot and an American officer. Just to prove how small this world is, the other was a man I had met before, he came over on the same boat with me. . . .

A funny little thing happened over here recently. An American company had about a thirty kilometre march to make. The company had marched a long ways when they came to a town and the captain gave "Squads left"—"Company—Halt." They had visions of a nice rest. They had stopped just in front of an old church. The captain went up and looked at it. "This church is five hundred years old. Squads right, March." And their rest was gone. Join the army and see the world is an old story now.

Hope to hear from you this week and hope next week to write good news. I'd like to see the Hun's on the run

or a real peace movement. Anything rather than this restlessness.

Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Folks:

January 27, 1918.

There's one job that we officers have that I don't care for in the least, and that is censoring the men's letters. I hate to do it for it is very tiresome and I know they don't like to have it done, and their letters on the whole are very good and there is very little to cut out. I censored an awful bunch of them today and believe me, after you get thru with that job, you don't feel like writing letters, but I've got to write a few tonight.

Well, one mailman was good to me this week. I got about twenty four letters and three or four packages. . . . I also got that fine box of candy from Ruth with the eight boxes in it, and many a man over here thanks all who were responsible for it. . . . Keep candy on the way all the while, not home made candy for that won't keep, but good American chocolates. . . .

We are very busy now and if I never hiked any before, or if I ever lay abed before, I'm making up for it all now and some Hun's going to pay for it, cause it's getting rather personal. Your letters are all wonderful and you've no idea how much they're appreciated, only I'd like to have twenty five every day. . . .

Goodby for now. Lots of love. Roe

P.S. This regiment has a new colonel and yesterday we had a regimental review. I had the 1st platoon of A Co. so we were at the head, the first to pass him. The boys were proud of the honor and I was proud of them. I've got over fifty of the best fighters you ever saw and take it from me we're going to keep at the head of the procession. My only regret is that you can't see them. If I come back with them, it'll be worth your while to come half way cross the continent to see them, and they'll all be glad to see you. Roe.

Dear Folks:

January 29, 1918

Again today the mailman was good to me and brot me about twenty-two letters last night so I am catching up. They date way back last October and it is funny to read now your wishes for a happy Thanksgiving and that the White Sox won the World's championship as we knew that months ago. . . .

. . . It will be almost three months before you get weather like we're having now. We sit with no fire, with windows open, listening to the birds sing. That's sounding a whole lot better than it really is. You'd nearly imagine we were really living over here. We're not, we exist. That's all.

I was shooting my pistol this AM. My captain ranks

among the first shots of the U.S. and all the other officers have qualified as expert riflemen or sharp shooters so I am going up against real competition when I shoot with them. Just so I hit my target when the times comes I'll be satisfied. . . .

Must close for tonight. Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Folks: France, Feb. 3, 1918

Mail is much better now, almost up to date. . . . So I ought to be cheered up. Listen, never write blue letters. You must make them happy. I'll make mine happy and you all make yours happy. . . .

I don't believe I've told you about my new orderly. He's a jewel. He stays here in the room with me but never forgets his place. He's twenty four years old, and an electrician by trade and a might smart fellow. I like him as a personal friend so I've attached him to me, so he's with me day and night. I use him as my runner, and we shoot together, so he can shoot well enuf to protect us both and believe me, he'll do it.

My outfit combines all ages from eighteen to forty. One of my best sergeants is only nineteen while one of my worst "rum hounds" is my oldest man. I've got some slackers who cause trouble but it's a pretty good outfit and they all like me. . . .

Goodby, Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Mother: France, Feb. 14, 1918

Here's my valentine to you and it brings a whole lot of love. . . . We got up about four this A.M. and took a hike of about five kilometres to build some barbed wire entanglements. Our company built about 1200 metres which is a good morning's work, especially when you have to scout all over the country for everything. . . .

With best love, Roe.

Dear Folks: France, Mar. 8, 1918

It's been quite a while since I wrote, I know, but I couldn't help it. We've been busy. But it's interesting and we'll all have some stories to tell when we get back. You ought to see the big cave we're all living in. You could fly over this place and not see a thing but it's a regular city. These hills are made of soft chalk and they are all full of caves, and the walls are all carved up, that's what the soldiers do in their leisure time. . . .

I've got a French soldier making me a vase out of a France "75" shell (3 inch). It's hammered brass and if I can get it to you all right, I'm sure you'll like it. Its ultimate destination is that perfect home of Lois'.

. . . Do you know I haven't seen a woman, child or any civilian for a month. Just soldiers,—figure it out. . . .

It's good to be remembered clear over here, and fruit cake, chocolates, and American tobacco don't go amiss in this place that someone termed, "the place that God forgot." And really that isn't far wrong when you look around you. Not a house standing, trees cut down or girdled, and men sleeping in any place so long as it's under the ground. But I'd better be careful what I say. In the queerest places I run across officers that I met either on the boat coming over or at school on this side. And now they're scattered from Italy to the British front, in artillery, aviation, cavalry, and infantry, line of communications, newspaper work, and military police. . . . But the best of all would be to meet somebody from Iowa cause that's home, you know.

As soon as I can get a copy of the "Stars and Stripes" the official American force newspaper, I'll send you one, and you read it clear thru, cause it gives the real dope. . . .
. . . Roe.

France, April 9, 1918

. . . I came thru a town "still standing" almost within rifle shot and in easy view of the Boche lines and there was a Salvation Army Canteen with two young American girls, and a phonograph playing American tunes. That is really much too close to the line for women but all of the civilian population has not moved out of these towns. Any house inhabitable still has occupants. Old folks and little children, and they won't be driven away. They have their school and church services and the little children go to school carrying their gas masks. Can you imagine such a war.

My captain is now acting major . . . and I have charge of the company and if I never worried before I'm making up for it now, for it's a ticklish time for us all. . . .

. . . Spent Easter Sunday riding in trucks and saw the birthplace of France's famous heroine (the one with the war like nature). . . .

Lots of love, Roe.

Dear Folks: France, April 14, 1918.

The old war still continues and there's nothing slow about the action now. They're busy making history every day. Right now this old house is shaking with the boom of cannons. It may mean another barrage raid, or simply artillery action. I know this is none too healthy a spot. I'll be glad to get home and know that I can wake up O.K. in the morning. The U.S. seems like a dream to me, and I can't realize what it really is. . . .

I have been at the front over two months. You know what that means. There are some Boche prisoners in town yesterday and they ranged from 18 to 41. The 18 year old was crying hard. He should worry. He's safe enough now. . . .

I'm nearly due a service stripe. A little gold chevron on the left cuff. That'll be nice but it isn't much good to you.

In a certain sector the other morning the Boche came over on the Americans. Were the Americans scared? They were not. They were singing all the time as a matter of fact. They were singing "Hail! Hail! The gang's all here!" And take it from me the "gang" is all the service that counts. And I'm proud to be with such wonderful soldiers for the world never saw their better.

Much love, Roe.

Dear Folks:

April 22, 1918

... The past week has been full of varied experiences. I've sat in the kitchen watching American women make pies and doughnuts and you know I feel right at home. I've been in an officers' club, played billiards, smoked American cigars, read the latest magazines, played the Victrolas, and had negroes to wait on me.

On the other hand I've got my men ready to go into immediate hand to hand fight with the Boche, and waited on the road from nine at night till four the next morning, waiting for the word while the ambulances rolled past, full of, yes, full of Americans, dead and dying. Shell wounds, gas, everything and we wanted to go worse than ever yet the word never came. They didn't need us. Johnny Hun had had enuf. For every American casualty the Boche had thirteen.

Well, I'm proud to say our regiment is getting a wonderful reputation. It has been mentioned in orders by the French, praised by our own army corps commander and next month we are to have the "Croix de Guerre" [French medal for heroism] pinned on the regimental colors. ...

With love, Roe.

Dear Mother:

May 11, 1918. France.

Do you remember Mother's day in the States when we used to all wear a white flower? They have the same idea over here, an additional birthday "to add to her joys, and not to her years." So, Mother, here's a letter just to let you know that all of our home loving tendencies have not been forgotten. ... Do you remember the old saying, "You never miss the water till the well run's dry"? That's the way it is with me now. But we don't forget and always when I think of home, it's you I'm thinking of. In all this world, mother, you're always first in my thoughts.

I've seen you a thousand times since that morning I told you goodbye at Cedar Rapids, and I've pictured you everyday where ever you've been and I know just what you're doing and what you look like, and I know just how you'll look when I come home and how happy we'll all be.

Mother, it was just a year ago tonight you walked down to Billingsley's corner with me and then I left for

camp and year ago tomorrow night I held up my right hand and said I'd be a good soldier while Uncle Sam needed me, and things have come a lot faster since then than I ever thot they could.

... On my birthday I started the company back up to the line and we just got out this morning about one A.M. and that was the first time I have had my pants and sox off in ten days. It was the worst place we have struck yet. But we're still among the living and opposite us they carried in their casualties so once again they fared worse than we did. ...

I had a mighty good patrol out in No Man's Land the other night. How it will seem to come home and walk around without a gun, carry all the lights you want, roll into a real bed and have real eats!

Well, mother, this whole letter is a love letter just to you. I never can do enuf to repay you for all you have done for me. Just don't worry. There's really no cause for it and soon we'll all be together again.

Goodbye and heaps of love, Roe. ...

Dear "Crimp" [brother-in-law]: France, May 19, 1918

Last night's mail brot me about seven letters and one of them was one of those rare epistles from you and Lois, and you stated I hadn't told you enuf about warfare. Perhaps our company has a horseshoe but so far we have not had a single casualty, excepting sickness of course. But we have come close enuf several times. One time the entire company came thru a gas attack (mustard gas, at that) and no one is the worse for it. ...

At one place we were in an advanced position in the ruins of an old town. The trenches were full of water and mud coming in places way above your knees. There were no dugouts and we had all night "stand to" from darkness till dawn. It is one of the worst sectors along the front. The night we were to be relieved we had to turn the boots over to the relieving company so I held my men in town till dark and then took them out over the top, telling them to lie down and hug the parapet. ... The Boche had a sniper working with a machine gun. [My men] took to the trenches and stood in mud and water waiting, waiting for our relief and then it didn't come till 2:30 A.M. After that the boys had an eight kilometre hike before turning in and you can imagine how it left their feet. ...

We had patrols out every night. The lines were over a thousand yards apart and it was marshy in between but we made it "Our Land" instead of "No Man's Land." Our colonel likes to call it "Yankee Land" and it is. Opposite us John Boche is as worried as can be and keeps the night brilliant with his star shells.

One night just about midnight I was getting my patrol ready. The men were having hot coffee before they started. Shots were heard off to our right and a runner came down

to the company P.C. (Post Command) saying a Boche patrol had opened up on an American party. I was instructed to take my patrol up and investigate. . . . We started up the road and about one hundred yards from our right post I found an American corporal, dead—shot thru the back. I sent him in. The war is different now. It wasn't a fair fight. It was the way a sneak would do, crawl up and shoot a man in the back. I could hardly hold my men back, for the Americans are the best fighters you ever saw. . . .

I patrolled all around the spot and on out thru the barbed wire. . . . Then suddenly I heard them. They weren't over twenty feet away and were beating it back toward Berlin. One of our machine guns had a beautiful field of fire and could wipe them out if they could see them so what I wanted to do was make the target visible. I had a "Very light" pistol and three flares. I snapped the trigger twice on all three flares and not a one worked. That's defective ammunition for you. . . .

Just after we were relieved that sniper got five or six men of the company that relieved me. We had an artillery officer with us, so the night the sniper opened upon us, it was reported to him and he got the artillery to open up on the sniper. They sent over about eight shells and after that not a "peep" out of Mr Hun. The next morning they were observed carrying in a man either dead or wounded so our fire had some effect. . . .

We have exciting spy hunts here. This sector is infested with them. We'll all be detectives before the war is over. . . .

One of my friends took out a patrol of 30 men two weeks ago. They were out forty-eight hours and all showed up excepting the Lieut., one sergeant, and a private. They never showed up. They encountered a Boche patrol on the way in and the Lieut. stayed back to see all his men got in. Of such stuff are your heroes made.

Goodbye till next time. Roe.

Dear Folks: May 20, 1918

. . . The Boche sent over gas last night and the regiment on our left had quite a few casualties. If I ever get mine I want to get it in hand to hand fight and not by gas or big shells. But the individual don't count for much in this war and individual desires don't play much part.

Heaps of love—Roe.

Dear Folks: Sunday, June 23, 1918

. . . We are ten or twelve kilometers behind the lines, as I told you in my last letter, yet on Sunday they shelled us. They shelled these towns that haven't been shelled for ten months and it was like rain from a blue sky. We suffered rather heavily, the chaplain of our regiment being among the killed. And I heard him preach just the Sun-

day before. . . . Many of the civilians packed up and left and you could see a regular procession up the road of hay racks, baby carriages and people on foot. But some of them still remain. And it only makes me glad that the war is not in our country.

We expect to move very soon. They say that every move in the army is a move for the worse. But we manage to keep optimistic. Of course no one loves the front but we have to go back and new pastures mean new interests; so I'm glad it's a new place. I know nearly this entire divisional front and it will be hard to find a worse place. But here it was that the 104th made its reputation, and believe me, the boche know this division by now. . . .

With all my love, Roe.

Dear Folks: July 14, 1918.

Last night and today will always stand out in my memory as "one fine time." The mess sergeant of the company and myself came here to buy supplies, green stuff to change our menu a bit, and we've had the best time we've had in France. This is a fine old French town, just as beautiful as it can be, and we are enjoying it, for tonight we go back to the woods where our men are sleeping in holes, in the open, under their shelter tents or most anyplace. . . .

We passed through the suburbs of Paris on the last day of June and I was out on a flat car perched on a ration cart so I wouldn't miss any of the sights. We saw the Eiffel tower, and some wonderful houses and gardens and many very pretty mademoiselles. Everyone cheered and waved their hands and when the Stars & Stripes appeared from a big old chateau window the men went wild. But they hurried us through, and after a few days in rest it was up again to the frontest of the front lines in the very sector where the Marines won their fame last month. We relieved the Marines, in fact. You never saw such a battle scarred area. Many, many bodies are still unburied and the smell is frightful, but it is impossible to get to them. Shell holes of all sizes and equipment of every sort both American and French, and German. I have a fine Boche helmet, soft cap, and bayonet I will try to send home.

I know that sector very well for I patrolled it more than any other officer, and out there in No Man's Land at night as we crept quietly along we passed bodies. . . . This war has brought out some cruel, cruel things. . . .

I have been on so many patrols and yet here I am hale and hearty. When it comes, it comes in a hurry, but we all have to take our chances and I'm sure we'll make them pay the price.

We have lost quite heavily recently. When we came out of last time my orderly got hit in the neck with a shell fragment but I think he'll pull through all right, but I'm might lonesome without him.

My battalion had the honor of representing the division in a review before General Pershing July 12th, and I had the honor to march the company past as the captain could not attend. He complimented the parade very highly and we were all very proud of the honor and very glad to see him. There were six Generals in the reviewing stand, and of course, many pictures were taken and many reporters present. Many Distinguished Service Medals were given. . . .

Now I have something I wish to tell you that I would not ordinarily write, but I may never be able to tell you, as one can not tell what may happen in this war, so do not take this as an idle boast.

My captain said about three or four days ago that he was very highly pleased with my work. The battalion adjutant mentioned me as one of four officers of whom the battalion was proud, and I also received a good word from regimental headquarters. So, Mother, whether I return or not, you'll understand I was not a complete failure in the biggest and hardest test ever given to men as men at all times and under the hardest of conditions. And I want you also to know that we are not proud of what we have accomplished for ourselves, for it is all for you back home, and for your good opinion. Whatever I do, it is always for you and always, no matter where I am, I picture how things are back home. . . .

Now I am fully covered with \$10,000 insurance. . . . Don't forget that in case you have to collect it. Just write to the War Risk Insurance Section at Washington and everything ought to be lovely, but I hope you never collect it. . . .

Roe.

P.S. . . . I want to hear about Clark Bowen. I have heard the faintest of rumors that he is dead. But I can't believe it. There are too many rumors around. It can't be. Roe.

Dear Folks: July 24 [?], 1918

. . . We went over the top about 3:20 in the afternoon and before I had gotten forty yards in No Man's Land I was hit. It was a piece of shell, about an inch long and half an inch wide. I have the piece now. I carried it around in my right thigh for two days before I got back here to this base hospital where they cut it out. And now I'm getting along fine. I do not suffer at all, only I am restless from continually lying in bed.

I am flat on my back now while writing so I hope you will duly appreciate this little note. I'll be walking in three weeks easily. It missed all the vital parts and at the xray the doctor said it was a very lucky wound.

. . . With love, Roe.

Dear Folks: July 23 [?], 1918

It is twenty minutes to eight in the morning and I

guess every one else in this room is asleep. There are five of us in here,—one major, he has ten wounds, a shell exploded right in front of him and killed a man not a foot from him; one captain, who has shell shock; a first lieutenant of the medical corps who has shell shock; a second lieutenant whose ankles went bad on him; and myself. . . .

. . . Our battalion commander was shot thru the stomach but would not leave. He gave orders from the stretcher. Finally after the battalion had reached its objective, he permitted them to carry him back, but he died before he reached the dressing station. There were quite a few dead lying in the field, one young fellow lay there dead with the pictures of his mother and sweetheart in his hand. What a place for those pictures! What an awful contrast between back home and that battlefield. . . .

Some German Red Cross women were captured and they were put to work dressing the wounds of our men. The German prisoners were made to carry our wounded back. German girls were captured who were operating machine guns. . . .

The boche sniped at the stretcher carriers and wounded. . . . Later I was dressing a man and a bullet went right thru my hair and wounded him again. Close escape, well, I guess. Now this is poor stuff to be writing home. Once is enough to fight this war and I don't want to fight it out in every letter I write home. . . .

Goodbye for now, heaps of love, Roe.

Dear Folks:

August 14, 1918

Today would have been father's birthday. . . . It is only ten o'clock in the morning so you see I am an early bird. I went down to the dressing room and got my wound dressed early, then I dressed and came out here in the park to write letters. My leg is coming along fine. I have been out for about four or five days. I can almost walk without a limp but I go quite slowly. . . . I'm feeling fine, never was healthier in my life. And I'm might thankful, too, for if ever a man had a narrow escape, I did.

Did I tell you how I was dressing one man's wounds there on the field and a machine gun bullet went right thru my hair and hit him again. He died later. A fraction of an inch difference with that bullet and you would have been collecting my insurance.

. . . The day before we went over, our regimental adjutant told me I was next in line for captaincy. I don't know how this trip back here will fix things but within a couple of months I ought to have my two bars.

This hospital is a famous watering resort. The Red Cross has taken over all the hotels and baths and it makes an ideal hospital. . . .

Monday night I had a date with one of the nurses, Tuesday night, the movies, Wednesday night (tonight) we have a little vaudeville show, and tomorrow night a band

concert. Doesn't that sound like hard war? Sunday I was over to a nearby town to a ball game. . . . I don't suppose any one but the Americans understood the game. There were Americans, British, French, Turks, Africans, Afghans, Singalese, Italian, and I don't know how many other nationalities there. A big Italian bombing plane flew over town low the other day and caused a good bit of excitement. . . .

Must close now. Love to all. Roe.

Dear Folks: August 30, 1918
. . . [Today] we were on an American train with an American crew and an American engine, and we saw many Americans along the route. This country is full of them now, so different to what it was last Fall when I arrived.

My leg is coming along fine. They never sewed the wound up but waited for it to close itself and it is very small now and doesn't bother me much. I have played tennis for the past week, and danced several times, so you know I'm not very sick. . . .

The Americans are certainly doing wonderful work now, aren't they? And this past month has been a wonderful month for the Allies. let the good work go on and I'll venture Wilhelm's sleep will soon be a bit troublous.

Why did you never tell me about Clark Bowen? I must close now, with love, Roe.

Dear Folks: October 7, 1918
Am back with Co. A. This is my third day. Things are going quite well. I'm sorry I missed so much mail while I was gone, but it may catch up to me later. . . .

I have been informed through several sources that you have published certain of my letters in the paper. Please don't. They are entirely too familiar for the world at large. Then also if I know that my letters are liable to be read by others, it will make a great difference in what I say. So no more newspaper circulation.

The papers continue to be full of good news. We are liable to be overly optimistic, which is a bad fault. Big things move slowly and the tide is now distinctly in our favor. The men have wonderful morale and are proud of their regiment and division.

. . . With lots of love, Roe.

Dear Folks: October 14, 1918.
We're constantly creeping closer. We're under shell fire now. But under all these disadvantages I'm going to write just to send this Christmas coupon. Be sure and use it to the best advantage.

. . . Am feeling fine, but we're living in the open in the mud in the worst sort of weather.

Was delighted to get mother's picture day before yesterday and it's going over the top with me.
Heaps of love, Roe.

Two days later, Roe Howard was killed in action. He was leading an assault in the Haumont Woods outside the town of Flabas, near Verdun, as part of the Meuse-Argonne Operation. With the 104th Regiment temporarily under the command of the 18th French Division, Roe was tasked with leading the men of his company on a brief "mopping-up job." However, the French light tanks that were supposed to support the infantry advance were knocked out early in the attack. This left the infantry exposed to heavy fire on three sides and outnumbered by German forces as much as ten to one. He continued to lead his men to their objective, but without support they were unable to resist the overwhelming fire directed against them. According to a newspaper report, Roe had said earlier that he "expected a massacre, and so it proved to be." The bodies of Roe and 17 of his men were not recovered until three weeks later, on November 7, lying close to their assigned goal, still facing the enemy.

An officer who served with Roe Howard remarked that the army lost in him "a man possessing all the necessary qualifications of youth, ability, and courage which combined to make one of the finest officers in the service." As Roe himself wrote in May 1918 about another officer's bravery: "Of such stuff are your heroes made." ❖

Nathan R. Mannheimer graduated from Grinnell College with a double major in history and biological chemistry. These letters were part of his Mentored Advanced Project with Grinnell professor Victoria Brown. He currently teaches English in Japan.

NOTE ON SOURCES

Essential sources include these newspaper articles: "Lieutenant Howard Wounded in Chateau Theirry [sic] Fight," *Mount Vernon Record*, 8-28-1918, p. 1; "Death of Roe Howard Casts Gloom Over Cornell," *The Cornellian*, 12-17-1918, pp. 1, 3; "Mount Vernon," *Marion Weekly Sentinel*, 12-17-1918, p. 8; and "Completes His Service," *Mount Vernon Hawkeye*, 12-19-1918, p. 1. Lt. Edwin L. Glasier gave a detailed report of Howard's death in "Tells Death of Mt. Vernon Officer," *Cedar Rapids Evening Gazette*, 3-17-1919, p. 1. Howard was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross but he declined the citation because he had been confused with a different soldier in the 104th Regiment; they suffered wounds two days apart near Belleau Woods. Additional information includes Chester Roe Howard, round-robin letter to Beta Omicron, 8-21-1917, Roe Howard File, Cole Library, Cornell College Archives, Mount Vernon, Iowa; Louise Johnston Cairns, phone conversation with author, 6-27-2011; and the 1916 and 1917 Cornell College yearbooks, titled *The Royal Purple*.

For a broad overview of Howard's regiment, see: James H. Fifield, *The Regiment: A History of the 104th U.S. Infantry, A.E.F. 1917-1919* (Springfield, Mass.: The 104th Infantry Regiment, 1931), 286-96, 343, 351; and Center of Military History, *United States Army, Order of Battle of the United States Land Forces in the World War, Vol. I* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1931), 113-29.

Howard's 42 transcribed letters are in *Iowa Heritage Illustrated* production files, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City) and at Cornell College.



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HUMAN STATUE OF LIBERTY
18,000 OFFICERS AND MEN
AT
CAMP DODGE, DES MOINES Ia.
COL. WM. NEWMAN, COMMANDING
COL. RUSH S. WELLS, DISBAND

This remarkable "living photograph" comprises 18,000 soldiers and officers posed at Camp Dodge in July 1918. Photographers Arthur Samuel Mole and John D. Thomas first roughed out the pattern on the ground and calculated how many men in light or dark uniforms were needed for each part. Once the men were assembled, the photographers stood on a 75-foot tower and yelled through megaphones to direct soldiers to move this way or that, until the precise formation was achieved. For more amazing details, visit this site: iowanationalguard.com. Click on "History," then "History Home," then "Human Photos." The Gold Star Museum at Camp Dodge in Johnston, Iowa, has an original print.

A Capital Librarian!

The Life and Times of Forrest Spaulding

by Timothy Walch

Forrest Spaulding isn't much remembered these days. Some may recall him as the genial fellow who guided the Des Moines Public Library during the early and middle years of the 20th century. For the most part, the job wasn't onerous or controversial, and Spaulding successfully ensured the smooth operation of library services in Iowa's largest city. As a result, his name occasionally appeared in the pages of local newspapers on matters related to reading and publishing.

But as important as this service was to the people of Des Moines, it is not the most important reason to remember Forrest B. Spaulding. He deserves major credit for his work in developing the public library as a center for civic engagement. In particular, Spaulding should be remembered as the author of the "Library Bill of Rights," a document that is a touchstone for intellectual freedom in this country. In fact, it was that specific achievement that led the American Library Association to include Spaulding on its list of the hundred most important library leaders of the 20th century.

So what do we know about Forrest Spaulding? He was born in Nashua, New Hampshire, in 1892, the son of Hollen and Lucille Spaulding, and attended the prestigious Phillips Exeter Academy and the Williston Seminary. His academic record was mixed. One colleague recalled that he left both institutions under questionable circumstances. He went on to attend the Library School of the New York Public Library, graduating in 1913. From all accounts, this was the extent of his formal education.

Spaulding was a restless man in the decade after he finished library school. Immediately following graduation, he became a library assistant and then a branch librarian in New York City. By 1915, he had become the head of the Traveling Library Department of the New York State Library System and worked with the YMCA to provide books to U.S. troops along the Mexican border.

It was also during this time that Spaulding courted Genevieve Anderson Pierson. He married her on August

26, 1916, and they would eventually have two children.

Less than a year after the couple married, they moved west to Des Moines, where he became city librarian and also took on the responsibility of maintaining a library for the troops stationed at Camp Dodge. Spaulding had high hopes for his work in Iowa. About a year after he arrived, he wrote a brief article for the *Des Moines Daily News* under the title "What the City Library Means to Des Moines." Most important to Spaulding was that the citizens "of the finest city, in the finest state, in this wonderful land" embrace the library as their own. He described his "dream of the future which I always have before me" and asked the people of Des Moines to help him make their public library "the best, most patronized, and helpful" library in the land.

Spaulding was confident in this quest and hoped to rally his constituency. "It can be done," he wrote, "and it will be done when all citizens take an active interest in the affairs, not only of their nation and their state, but of their city and its institutions." It was quite an ambitious vision.

But wartime presented at least one unusual challenge for librarians such as Forrest Spaulding. That issue was access to publications in the German language. There were some Iowans—even public officials—who believed that the German language should not be spoken in public or even on the telephone. And then there were the hundreds of books written in German, as well as books written in English that could be considered sympathetic to the German war effort. Should these books be removed from public libraries? That was a matter that must have crossed Spaulding's mind as well as his desk shortly after he arrived in Des Moines.

But Spaulding had nothing to say publicly on this controversial issue. On the contrary, he seemed to devote his time and energy during and after the war to civic boosterism. He eagerly joined local social clubs as well as state and national professional organizations. In fact, by April 1919, he proudly reported that he was a member of at least 14 different organizations—more, he believed,



By his activism and involvement, Forrest Spaulding showed that a library can be a civic force in a community and nation.

than even the mayor of Des Moines. Spaulding was quoted as joking that membership was easy, except when it came time to pay annual dues.

And he was no slouch when it came to participation. He told the *Des Moines News* that he was the president of one organization, the vice president of another, and the secretary of three others, all at the same time. All of these memberships reflected Spaulding's diverse interests—poetry, drama, libraries, hiking, the fine arts, and anything related to Des Moines. More important, he indicated if only by his memberships that he believed that as

the city librarian he should be actively involved in the life of his adopted city.

In his second year as city librarian, Spaulding had his first brush with the question of intellectual freedom and libraries. In the years after World War I, the so-called Red Scare gripped the United States. The federal government was on the hunt for socialists and communists who were seen as threats to the American way of life. During this time, some Americans could not speak openly and critically of the federal government without fear of arrest for perceived disloyalty.

In such a climate, Spaulding faced a decision about intellectual freedom and, frankly, he blinked. When the controversial socialist lecturer Kate Richards O'Hare came to Des Moines in March 1919, Spaulding refused to allow her to use the public library auditorium for her speech. He said that the auditorium had been reserved for the speech under false pretenses, which may have been true. That having been said, there is no question that Spaulding also was bending to public pressure. "In taking this action," Spaulding told the *Daily News* on March 3, "I believe that I have the support of the large majority of citizens of Des Moines whose interests I am endeavoring to serve as their city librarian."

Local socialists were outraged and threatened a lawsuit. Martin Johnson, a member of the organizing committee, told the *Daily News* that the committee had incurred considerable expense to bring O'Hare to Des Moines; the committee would hold Spaulding and the City Library Board responsible for these expenses. "Spaulding knew what the meeting was for," Johnson told the newspaper. "We told him at the time the auditorium was secured." But the socialists never followed through on the lawsuit. The committee scrambled to book the Workers of the World Hall on West Third Street for the evening of March 6. O'Hare delivered her speech, no thanks to Spaulding and the library board.

The O'Hare incident was a rare controversy for the city librarian during those years. He did, however, generate a lot of attention for the library, although sometimes the press reported on trivial or humorous matters. In the weeks following O'Hare's visit he remarked to the *Daily News* that his library card catalog was the "largest, most consulted and most comprehensive encyclopedia in Des Moines," with more than 800,000 cards that referred to subjects in 110,000 books. These facts, he believed, should be shared with the community as a matter of local pride.

Given his active involvement in city life, many presumed that Spaulding was in Des Moines to stay, but this peripatetic librarian had other plans. In fact, his wanderlust got the best of him; in 1920 he accepted a position with the Merchant Marine Department of the American



BOTH PHOTOS: SHSI (DES MOINES)

The American Library Association library at Camp Dodge in 1918. Spaulding directed similar ALA libraries for U.S. troops.

Library Association. The department was an outgrowth of the work that the ALA had done for troops during World War I. Spaulding had had a taste of this work before he had come to Des Moines and apparently could not resist the call. He moved back to New York City to take charge of the operation. "These 'special libraries' have proven that they fill a definite need," Spaulding wrote in the pages of the ALA journal *Special Libraries* in 1920, "and therefore the Merchant Marine Department feels itself warranted in seeking the interest and approbation of the members of the Special Libraries Association."

But serving the library needs of those at sea did not satisfy Spaulding any more than being a librarian in Iowa apparently had. In 1921, he moved to Lima, Peru, where he became the director of the Peruvian national library and museum and worked as a part-time correspondent for the Associated Press. He left no record of what attracted him to such an exotic locale, and he didn't stay long. By 1922, Spaulding had moved back to the United States to work as an editor in a publishing firm in New York. He never quite forgot Des Moines, however, and he returned to his previous position in 1927. This time he would stay for a long time.

It is surprising that Spaulding's return did not warrant much mention in the city's newspapers, nor did his many activities and innovations in the following years. In addition to his day-to-day responsibilities managing the library during financially hard times, he expanded the library's art and music departments and added a telephone reference service. "This is YOUR public library," the

staff would say in answering the phone. "How may we help you?" It was vintage Spaulding.

That Spaulding was proactive about reaching his constituents is evident in his use of the relatively new technology of radio. Starting in October 1928, he hosted his own program called "Radio Book Talk" on WHO; the station's powerful signal reached most of central Iowa. Each week, he would lead a discussion of new books and publications recently received by the library. The program continued for a number of years and featured a wide variety of topics. He also hosted a quiz show called "Is That So?" and appeared on just about every forum that invited him to be a panelist.

Spaulding also reached out to the African American community. Within a year after his return to Des Moines, he began a series of lectures and book discussions on topics of special interest to African Americans. He spoke on great works of "Negro art" and emphasized that African Americans had been deprived of opportunities to share and express their creativity. He commissioned his staff to review books by and about African Americans. He opened the local literary society and book forums to people of color and invited them to take leadership roles in the discussions. Several of these discussions were also featured on his weekly radio program. His tolerance and compassion would later be reflected in a major award from the National Conference on Christians and Jews.

Times were tough in the 1930s. By 1935, Spaulding had absorbed a 36 percent cut in his budget from what it had been in 1930. Just about every department had been reduced in size; the book budget was decimated; staff salaries were cut; and branch libraries were closed. Only the reference department was spared the librarian's axe. "How may we help you?" continued to be the mantra.

Spaulding realized that the public library was a haven for those who had few prospects and no other place to go. In 1934, therefore, he opened what he called a "waterfront university" in the basement of the library as a safe place for the homeless to spend their days. Thanks to assistance from the Works Progress Administration, he funded and later expanded a variety of educational, vocational, and recreational programs at his "university." He offered training classes on book mending and storytelling as well as field services for the visually impaired. Thanks to additional funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, he refurbished other public spaces in the library.

During the 1930s, Spaulding became increasingly concerned about the growing intolerance and censorship that seemed to be spreading from Europe to the United States. Although no documentation survives, it is clear that by 1938, Spaulding saw the need to set forth a statement on the right of every citizen to have access to information without restriction. The result of his concern is what we now refer to as the Library Bill of Rights.

It is not clear that Spaulding was the sole author of the document that he presented to the Des Moines Public Library board on November 21, 1938. It is possible that he consulted with staff and colleagues; he was active in the Public Library Division of the American Library Association as well as the Iowa Library Association. Library historian Christine Pawley has speculated that he may have been influenced by his friend and professional colleague Ernestine Rose, an important leader of the urban library community. It is logical to assume that Spaulding discussed the idea of a statement on censorship with others before he presented it to the board.

The document, which Spaulding titled "The Library's Bill of Rights," included a general introduction that decried the growth of totalitarianism around the world and the increase in censorship, and then articulated six points:

I. Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.

II. Materials should not be excluded because of the origin, background, or views of those contributing to their creation.

III. Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and histori-

cal issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.

IV. Libraries should challenge censorship in the fulfillment of their responsibility to provide information and enlightenment.

V. Libraries should cooperate with all persons and groups concerned with resisting abridgment of free expression and free access to ideas.

VI. A person's right to use a library should not be denied or abridged because of origin, age, background, or views.

VII. Libraries which make exhibit spaces and meeting rooms available to the public they serve should make such facilities available on an equitable basis, regardless of the beliefs or affiliations of groups requesting their use.

One can only wonder if Spaulding had given thought to the action he had taken nearly 20 years earlier when Kate O'Hare had come to town.

The library board considered the document and apparently approved it without fanfare. There is no evidence that there was any controversy or even much discussion. The board reiterated what Spaulding had written in the opening paragraph: "that the Board of Trustees of the Des Moines Public Library reaffirms these basic principles governing a free public library to serve the best interests of Des Moines and its citizens." As far as is known, there was no story in the *Des Moines Register* or the *Des Moines Tribune* about the matter.

After the board approved the document, Spaulding likely shared it with Rose and other ALA colleagues. He must have received congratulations and kudos from those colleagues over the next few months because as early as April 1939 press accounts refer to him as the "author of the Library Bill of Rights." In fact, on April 13, the *Register* ran a front-page story headlined "Spaulding in Line for U.S. Library Post." Written by Richard Wilson, the paper's veteran Washington correspondent, the story reported that Spaulding had come to President Roosevelt's attention as the author of the Library Bill of Rights and was being considered for the vacant position of Librarian of Congress. The paper suggested that Spaulding was one of three top contenders. The job would eventually go to a close confidante of the president, but Spaulding could not have been anything but pleased at such speculation.

Perhaps even more important to Spaulding was the validation that came his way at the annual meeting of the American Library Association in June. At that meeting in San Francisco, Ernestine Rose, his friend and the chair of the ALA Adult Education Board, moved that the ALA Board adopt Spaulding's work as its own. Of course, changes were needed to make the bill less specific to Des

Moines, but the spirit of his original Bill of Rights remained embedded in the final ALA document.

Spaulding must have been gratified. Certainly he must have been honored that the ALA Executive Board appointed him as chair of a special committee on censorship. The committee was charged with looking into the banning of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* by a number of libraries. He and his colleagues were to report back with an assessment of censorship in the United States.

On May 27, 1940, Spaulding and his committee recommended that the ALA establish a standing committee on intellectual freedom. Its function was to "recommend such steps as necessary to safeguard the rights of library users in accordance [with] the Bill of Rights of the United States and the Library's Bill of Rights as adopted by the Council."

The ALA Council approved the recommendation, and from that day forward, the committee has continued to meet and recommend appropriate changes in ALA policy on intellectual freedom. The Bill of Rights first proposed by Forrest Spaulding in 1938 has been amended numerous times by the ALA as conditions warranted. Yet the spirit of the first document continues—a testimony to Spaulding himself.

Spaulding's work on censorship issues continued, but most of his time was taken up with his duties as director of the Des Moines Public Library. As had been his practice through the 1930s, he was a presence in the community during the war years. Des Moines Mayor Mark L. Conkling appointed him to be the director of civil defense information and publicity for Polk County. He worked for the American Red Cross and the Midwest Institute of International Relations, among other organizations. And he continued to work closely with his professional colleagues and served as president of the Public Libraries Section of the ALA.

When Spaulding marked the 20th anniversary of his second tour in Des Moines in December 1947, the *Register* saluted him for his service. "Under his leadership," noted the editorial, "the library has not been a mere passive repository for reading materials, but a university for the people." Spaulding's many professional activities exemplified "his conception of the library as a living, participating force."

It seems that the people of Des Moines agreed. Over 350 people attended a reception in honor of Spaulding's 20 years of continuous service. They had come not only to pay homage, but also to hear what Spaulding had to say about his time in Des Moines. The city librarian did not disappoint. "The first attribute of a librarian is not to be a great lover of books," he said, "but a great lover of people." The press agreed. "This expresses not only his

personal philosophy," noted the *Register*, "but the touchstone of his administration as well, for service to people—not to books—is his first administration at the library."

But all good tenures come to an end. A little more than four years later, Spaulding left Des Moines for a second time. On February 26, 1952, he announced his plans to give up his post as city librarian and move back to Nashua, New Hampshire, to take a similar post. "In 28 years," Spaulding said, "I feel that I have given all that I can to the Des Moines library. I don't want to retire from active work so I welcome this opportunity to use my experience in a smaller library where as I grow older, the pressure won't be so great."

The *Register* published the story about Spaulding's departure at the top of its front page. "Spaulding Quits Post at Library," intoned the headline. The library board was bereft. "It is not only a blow to the library," noted board president Paul Atkins, "but [also] to the community and everyone interested in education in central Iowa." Atkins went on to note the numerous organizations and activities that Spaulding supported. He had been much more than a librarian.

Spaulding returned to New Hampshire later that year, and retired for good in December 1958. A story in the *Register* indicated that he had been in poor health for the previous two years.

He lived on in New Hampshire until he passed away in 1965. "Ordinarily," commented the *Register's* editorial board, "a community is not greatly stirred by the death of a man who has been away for 13 years, but it is different with Forrest Spaulding. He made himself so much a part of the life of Des Moines that the thought of him is warm and pleasant."

It has been more than half a century since those words were published. No doubt there are a few elderly residents in Des Moines who still can recall Forrest Spaulding for his work as their friendly city librarian. But for most Iowans today, appreciation of the man and his work rests with his compassion for people as reflected in the Library Bill of Rights. Thanks to that extraordinary document, he stands shoulder to shoulder with every librarian and every library patron who speaks out against censorship and in favor of intellectual freedom. That makes Forrest Spaulding an Iowan worth remembering. ❖

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NOTE ON SOURCES

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SHSI MUSEUM COLLECTIONS

One in a Million

AMONG THE MILLIONS OF ITEMS in the collections of the State Historical Society of Iowa is this vivid reminder that collecting birds' eggs was once a popular hobby.

Magazines about ornithology and oology (the study of eggs) advised how to collect, identify, label, and display eggs. In pages of *The Oologist*, which we have in our library, collectors shared tips on how to use tiny drills and blowpipes to remove the contents. One Iowan in Minnesota "blew and packed 365 eggs before dark."

The best way to identify eggs, a Smithsonian bulletin advised, was to shoot one of the parents for skinning and further study. Sometimes nests were collected as well.

A reader described camping in Fremont County, Iowa, and discovering "six beautiful pink eggs, laid upon a nest of hair moss and a few vegetable fibers. I took the eggs of course, but they met an untimely end, for upon reaching home I put them in some cotton, preparatory to blowing them, when my partner picked the cotton up and dropped all the eggs."

Another collector "had the pleasure of finding a nest of the White or Whooping Crane" in northern Iowa. "To

my delight she was sitting on her heavily marked drab egg, which lay in a neat cavity in the top of a well-built heap of tough, fine marsh grass 1½ feet high up on firm sod. The eggs were the first I had seen and were a rare prize to me."

In 1904, collectors' eggs of a whooping crane sold for \$10 each. By 1941, only 23 whooping cranes existed in North America. Still endangered, they are making a slow comeback; some 600 exist today.

For several reasons—including bird and egg collecting, hunting, habitat destruction, and women's hat fashions—bird populations were dropping at alarming rates. In the ornithology and oology periodicals of the late 1800s, the voice of conservation was beginning to be heard. One Iowan blasted, "Those who collect eggs simply as curiosities would do mankind and the birds a favor by turning their attention to stamps. . . . If such persons cannot be made to desist by gentle means, laws should be enacted by which they can be punished."

The conservation movement gained ground with passage of the federal Lacey Act of 1900, authored by Iowa Representative John F. Lacey. The law penalized several violations against illegally taking, transporting, selling, or possessing wildlife, plants, and fish.

—The Editor

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